Independent University **Bangladesh (IUB)**

IUB Academic Repository

Department of English and Modern Languages Thesis, B.A. (EL)

2026-04

A comparative study on the fragility of human bonds in The way of the world and The great Gatsby

Sultana, Sadia

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)

https://ar.iub.edu.bd/handle/11348/1556

Downloaded from IUB Academic Repository



A Comparative Study on the Fragility of Human Bonds in *The Way of the World* and *The Great Gatsby*

Sadia Sultana

ID: 2221621

A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Modern Languages in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts in English Literature

Department of English and Modern Languages

Independent University, Bangladesh

April 2026

©2026. Independent University, Bangladesh

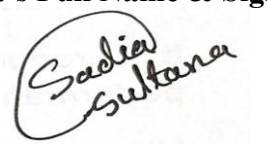
All rights reserved.

Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing a degree at Independent University, Bangladesh.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name & Signature



Sadia Sultana
ID: 2221621

Approval

The thesis titled "A Comparative Study on the Fragility of Human Bonds in *The Way of the World* and *The Great Gatsby*" submitted by Sadia Sultana ID:2221621
Of Spring, 2026 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English Literature on 21 April 2026.

Examining Committee:

Supervisor:
(Member)

Dr. Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman
Professor
Department of English and Modern Languages

External Expert:



Dr. Afia Arafat
Assistant Professor
Department of English, East West University

Internal Expert:
(Panel Members)

Full Name	Full Name	Full Name
Designation	Designation	Designation
Department	Department	Department

Departmental Head:
(Chair)

Full Name
Designation, Department

Office of GSRIR:
(Director)

Full Name
Designation, GSRIR

Office of Librarian:
(Librarian)

Full Name
Designation
Library, IUB

Abstract

This study offers a comparative analysis of emotional fragility in William Congreve's *The Way of the World* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, drawing on Marxist literary criticism and New Historicism. It contends that love, trust, and loyalty in both texts are structurally produced within socio-economic systems that privilege wealth, status, and social performance. Through close reading, the analysis demonstrates how material conditions, class hierarchies, and processes of self-fashioning mediate intimacy, rendering emotional bonds conditional and unstable. In Congreve, marriage operates as a strategic negotiation embedded in aristocratic property relations, while in Fitzgerald, romantic desire is shaped by capitalist aspiration and the illusion of social mobility. By placing these texts in dialogue, the study reveals a transhistorical pattern in which socio-economic structures systematically undermine emotional stability, reframing intimacy as contingent upon external systems of value rather than individual sincerity.

Keywords: Emotional fragility; comparative analysis; Marxist criticism; New Historicism; class structure; social performance.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to those whose unwavering encouragement and support have been the foundation which guided me throughout my scholarly endeavor. My deepest gratitude to my beloved parents whose endless love, sacrifices, support and faith in my potential and effort have been the driving force behind my achievements. To my professors and mentors, whose knowledge, feedback, and inspiration have shaped not just this thesis, but my growth as a student and an individual Writing this thesis would have not been possible without the love, support and faith of everyone who stood by me. Thank you.

Acknowledgement

This thesis marks the completion of my journey as an undergraduate student of English Literature in the Department of English and Modern Languages at Independent University, Bangladesh. I am truly grateful for the past four years, during which I have continually learned, unlearned, and grown both academically and personally. First and foremost, I express my sincere gratitude to the Almighty, the Most Merciful, for granting me the strength, wisdom, and perseverance to complete this thesis. Without His guidance and blessings, this achievement would not have been possible. I am deeply indebted to my thesis adviser, Dr. Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman, for his unwavering support, insightful feedback, and constant encouragement throughout the development of this research. His guidance has been invaluable to the completion of this work. I would also like to extend my appreciation to all my faculty members, whose teaching, mentorship, and academic expertise have played a significant role in shaping my intellectual growth. They have been instrumental in developing my critical thinking and passion for learning. My heartfelt thanks go to my parents for their unconditional support and for always believing in me and my aspirations. Their encouragement has been a constant source of strength. I am equally grateful to my friends at IUB, with whom I have shared invaluable experiences throughout this journey. I cherish the memories we have created together and take pride in the bond we share. I also acknowledge Independent University, Bangladesh, for providing access to extensive online databases and academic resources that greatly supported the literature review of this comparative study. Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to everyone who, in one way or another, contributed to the successful completion of this thesis.

Table of Contents

Declaration ii

Approval iii

Abstract iv

Dedication v

Acknowledgement vi

Table of Contents vii

Glossary viii

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem 21.2

Research Questions and Hypothesis

21.3 Research Methodology 4

1.4 Outcome

51.5 Limitations 5Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction 7

2.2 Critical Studies on *The Great Gatsby* 8

2.3 Critical Studies on *The Way of the World* 9

2.4 Emerging Parallels in Critical Discourse 10

2.5 Research Gap 11

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction 13

3.2 Marxist Literary Criticism and the Material Foundations of Intimacy 133.3 Structures of Feeling and the Historical Formation of Emotion 153.4 New Historicism and the Cultural Construction of Identity 163.5 Integrating Marxism and New Historicism

173.6 Conclusion 18Chapter 4 Discussion

4.1 Social Systems and the Fragility of Emotional Bonds 19

4.2 Marriage, Social Strategy, and Emotional Negotiation in *The Way of the World* 20

4.3 Wealth, Desire, and the Illusion of Romantic Fulfillment in *The Great Gatsby* 234.4 Identity, Social Performance, and Self-Fashioned Desire 254.5 Comparative Insights: Emotional Fragility Across Historical Contexts 276

4.6 Addressing the Research Questions 287

Chapter 5 30

Conclusion

Works Cited 34

Glossary

Commodity Fetishism:	A concept developed by Karl Marx referring to the process by which social relationships between people are perceived as relationships between things, particularly commodities. In this study, it explains how emotional relationships become mediated by wealth and material value.
New Historicism:	A literary theory that examines how texts are shaped by and reflect the historical and cultural contexts in which they are produced, emphasizing the relationship between literature, power, and society.
Wit (Restoration Context):	A valued social skill in Restoration society involving intelligence, cleverness, and verbal skill. It functions as a form of social capital in *The Way of the World.*
Exchange Value:	A Marxist concept referring to the value of a commodity based on what it can be traded for in the market, rather than its intrinsic or emotional worth. In this research, it reflects how individuals are evaluated based on wealth and status.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Human relationships have long occupied a central place in literature, serving as a reflection of the moral, emotional, and social values of particular historical contexts. Across different literary traditions, writers have explored how love, trust, and loyalty are shaped, sustained, and often destabilized by the social systems within which individuals operate. Rather than existing as purely private or psychological experiences, emotional bonds are frequently influenced by broader structures such as class hierarchy, economic organization, and cultural expectation. Literature, therefore, provides a critical space for examining how intimacy is conditioned by forces that extend beyond individual control.

William Congreve's *The Way of the World* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby,* though separated by more than two centuries, offer two distinct yet comparable representations of socially mediated emotional life. Congreve's Restoration comedy portrays an aristocratic society governed by inheritance, reputation, and wit, where marriage operates as a strategic negotiation embedded within systems of property and social advantage. Fitzgerald's modernist novel, set in the consumer-driven culture of Jazz Age America, depicts a world in which identity and desire are shaped by wealth, spectacle, and the illusion of social mobility. Despite their differences in genre, period, and cultural context, both texts reveal that emotional relationships are deeply entangled with material ambition and social performance.

In these works, intimacy rarely appears stable or autonomous. Instead, it is often calculated, conditional, and vulnerable to disruption by external pressures. Love is not simply an expression of personal feeling but a negotiation within systems that define value through wealth, status, and recognition. By placing these two texts in comparative dialogue, this study explores how emotional bonds become fragile when shaped by socio-economic structures and cultural expectations. Drawing on Marxist literary criticism and New Historicist theory, the

research examines how love and loyalty are undermined not merely by individual weakness but by broader systems that regulate identity, legitimacy, and belonging.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

While *The Way of the World* and *The Great Gatsby* have been extensively examined within their respective literary traditions, critical scholarship has largely treated them as products of distinct historical and cultural contexts. Studies of Congreve's play typically focus on satire, marriage, and Restoration social conventions, while analyses of Fitzgerald's novel emphasize the critique of the American Dream, illusion, and modern identity. Although these approaches offer valuable insights, they tend to remain confined within single-text or period-specific frameworks.

As a result, limited attention has been given to the shared representation of emotional fragility in these works as a structural condition shaped by socio-economic systems. In many interpretations, the breakdown of relationships is attributed to personal illusion, moral weakness, or psychological instability. Such readings risk overlooking the extent to which emotional bonds are shaped and constrained by external forces that regulate value, status, and identity.

This study addresses that gap by examining how emotional instability in both texts emerges from material and social structures rather than solely from individual failings. By placing Congreve and Fitzgerald in comparative dialogue, the research seeks to demonstrate that the fragility of human relationships is not confined to a particular historical moment but reflects a broader pattern in which social systems condition emotional life. In doing so, the study repositions emotional fragility as a structural phenomenon that transcends temporal and cultural boundaries.

1.2 Research Questions and Hypothesis

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do social and economic pressures, including material ambition and social performance, shape love, trust, and loyalty in *The Way of the World* and *The Great Gatsby*?

2. To what extent do socio-economic structures, rather than individual moral choices, determine the fragility of emotional bonds in these texts?

The hypothesis of this study is that in both *The Way of the World* and *The Great Gatsby*, human bonds are rendered fragile not primarily because of individual moral failings but because social systems prioritize wealth, reputation, and performance over emotional sincerity and ethical integrity. As a result, intimacy becomes conditional and unstable, shaped by external pressures that undermine genuine connection.

1.3 Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive research methodology, which is particularly suitable for the close reading, thematic exploration, and comparative analysis of literary texts. Qualitative research is concerned with the interpretation of meaning rather than numerical measurement, focusing on how individuals, texts, and cultural practices construct and communicate significance. As Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln argue, qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in terms of the meanings individuals bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln 139). Similarly, John W. Creswell defines qualitative research as an approach that explores and interprets social or human problems through in-depth analysis of texts and contexts (Creswell 99).

Within literary studies, this approach is particularly relevant because it treats literary texts as forms of non-numerical data that require interpretive analysis rather than empirical measurement. The primary texts under examination are The Way of the World and The Great Gatsby. Through detailed close reading, this study examines how emotional relationships are

represented and how they are shaped by socio-economic and cultural structures within each work.

The methodology is grounded in a comparative qualitative framework, allowing the study to place two texts from different historical periods in dialogue. This comparative approach facilitates the identification of both similarities and differences in the representation of love, trust, and loyalty, particularly in relation to material ambition and social hierarchy. Rather than treating each text in isolation, the study interprets them relationally, revealing shared structural patterns across distinct cultural contexts.

The research is further informed by Marxist literary criticism and New Historicism. Marxist theory is used to analyze how material conditions, class relations, and systems of value shape social interaction and influence emotional bonds. In particular, the concept of commodity fetishism is applied to examine how relationships become mediated by wealth and status. New Historicism provides a framework for understanding how identity and desire are constructed within specific historical contexts, with particular attention to Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning.

Methodologically, the study relies on close reading and thematic analysis, which are central tools in qualitative literary research. Key passages, narrative structures, and character interactions are examined in detail to trace how emotional relationships are negotiated, performed, and destabilized. The analysis focuses not only on explicit statements but also on implied meanings, symbolic structures, and recurring patterns.

In addition, the study engages with relevant scholarly sources to support and contextualize interpretation. These materials were accessed through academic databases such as JSTOR, Project Muse, ResearchGate, and IUB e-library resources. By combining textual

analysis with theoretical interpretation, this qualitative methodology enables a nuanced understanding of how emotional fragility is structurally produced within the selected texts.

1.4 Outcome

This study is expected to demonstrate that both Congreve and Fitzgerald portray societies in which emotional relationships are fundamentally shaped and often destabilized by material ambition and social performance. The analysis aims to show that love fails not due to the absence of genuine feeling, but because individuals operate within systems that reward status, security, and social recognition over sincerity and vulnerability.

Furthermore, the research is expected to establish that emotional fragility is a recurring concern across different historical contexts, reflecting broader structural conditions rather than isolated personal experiences. By highlighting the parallels between Restoration aristocratic culture and Jazz Age capitalism, the study contributes to comparative literary scholarship and offers a deeper understanding of how social systems influence emotional life. Ultimately, the research seeks to demonstrate that the instability of human bonds is not merely a thematic feature of these texts but a reflection of enduring tensions within socially structured environments.

1.5 Limitations

This study is limited in scope to a comparative analysis of two primary texts: *The Way of the World* and *The Great Gatsby.* It does not extend to other Restoration comedies or modernist novels, and therefore does not aim to provide a comprehensive survey of either literary period. The focus remains specifically on the representation of romantic and social relationships, with less emphasis on other forms of connection such as familial or political bonds.

In terms of theoretical approach, the analysis is primarily grounded in Marxist literary criticism and New Historicism. While these frameworks provide valuable insights into the relationship between socio-economic structures and emotional life, the study does not engage

extensively with other critical perspectives such as psychoanalysis, feminism, or poststructuralism, which might offer alternative interpretations.

Additionally, as a work of qualitative literary analysis, the study is interpretive rather than empirical. Its conclusions are based on textual evidence and critical interpretation rather than quantitative data. The comparative approach also necessitates a degree of generalization, which may simplify certain historical and cultural complexities in order to highlight thematic connections. Despite these limitations, the study provides a focused and theoretically informed analysis of emotional fragility within the selected texts.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Critical scholarship on William Congreve's *The Way of the World* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* has developed in distinct traditions shaped by genre, period, and nation. Restoration comedy has largely been examined through discussions of satire, property, gender politics, and social performance, while Fitzgerald's modernist novel has been interpreted primarily as a critique of the American Dream, illusion, and capitalist modernity. Although both works examine unstable love and loyalty within socially structured worlds, they are rarely placed in sustained comparative dialogue. This chapter surveys major critical approaches to each text and identifies the research gap this thesis seeks to address: how material and social systems structurally produce emotional fragility across historical periods.

2.2 Critical Studies on *The Great Gatsby*

Scholarship on *The Great Gatsby* overwhelmingly situates the novel within debates surrounding the American Dream and its corruption in the Jazz Age. One of the earliest and most influential readings remains Marius Bewley's "Scott Fitzgerald's Criticism of America," which argues that the novel constitutes one of the sharpest literary critiques of the American Dream in American fiction (223–24). According to Bewley, Gatsby's tragedy lies in the "withering of the American dream" within a society where material success and spiritual aspiration have become dangerously conflated (235). Gatsby's devotion to Daisy is not merely a romantic obsession but an extension of a national myth that equates wealth with transcendence. While this reading powerfully links personal desire to national ideology, it tends to frame emotional collapse primarily as a moral and symbolic failure rather than as a structurally produced condition.

Lionel Trilling similarly interprets Gatsby as a romantic figure whose moral imagination exceeds the spiritual capacity of his social environment. In "F. Scott Fitzgerald," Trilling suggests that Gatsby represents a "heightened sensitivity to the promises of life," yet this sensitivity cannot survive within a culture dominated by consumption and social display (249). This interpretation persuasively highlights the tension between idealism and materialism, though it risks privileging individual sensibility over the systemic forces that constrain emotional life.

More recent scholarship continues to emphasize illusion and spectacle. Naina Kumari and Mohd Farhan Saiel argue that Fitzgerald contrasts the idealistic conception of the American Dream with the moral and social decay of 1920s America. Through symbols such as the green light and the valley of ashes, the novel exposes the widening gap between aspiration and lived reality. They maintain that Gatsby's emotional commitment collapses because it is grounded in illusion rather than reciprocal understanding (Kumari 6039–40). While this interpretation effectively highlights the role of illusion, it risks reducing Gatsby's emotional collapse to personal misperception, overlooking the broader socio-economic conditions that shape and sustain such illusions. Similarly, Muhammad Saleh Habib contends that the corrupted ideal of success transforms Gatsby's pursuit of Daisy into a destructive fixation. This reading insightfully connects emotional devotion with class aspiration, yet it leaves underexplored how such desires are structurally produced within capitalist systems.

Collectively, Gatsby scholarship convincingly demonstrates that emotional collapse is tied to ideological corruption. However, these readings tend to privilege symbolic and moral interpretations over structural analysis, leaving underexplored how socio-economic systems themselves produce emotional instability. This suggests that emotional fragility in the novel may be better understood as structurally produced rather than solely as a result of individual illusion.

2.3 Critical Studies on *The Way of the World*

Critical approaches to *The Way of the World* have traditionally emphasized satire, property relations, and the performative nature of Restoration society. Laura Brown argues that Restoration drama reflects the consolidation of property and inheritance systems in late seventeenth-century England, where marriage functions as a mechanism for preserving wealth and stabilizing class hierarchy (78–81). In this context, emotional attachment is inseparable from financial negotiation. Brown's analysis of the "proviso scene" between Mirabell and Millamant demonstrates how romantic discourse mirrors contractual logic, revealing marriage as a conditional agreement rather than a purely emotional union. While this reading effectively situates marriage within economic structures, it stops short of fully articulating how such structures produce emotional instability. The contractual nature of marriage is further emphasized in the proviso scene, where the detailed negotiation of personal freedoms resembles legal discourse rather than romantic exchange (Congreve 61–65). This reinforces the idea that emotional commitment is mediated through structured agreement.

J. Douglas Canfield expands upon this perspective by suggesting that Restoration comedy dramatizes an aristocratic culture structured by theatricality and strategic self-presentation (115–18). Wit operates as social currency, and identity becomes a carefully managed performance. Within such a system, authenticity is perpetually suspect, and emotional sincerity becomes difficult to distinguish from calculated manipulation. This interpretation compellingly highlights performativity, though it leaves implicit the broader structural implications for emotional vulnerability.

Recent thematic and linguistic studies further emphasize how Congreve's dialogue encodes power relations and economic anxieties. Analyses of the play's conversational structure reveal that negotiation, bargaining, and strategic language dominate courtship exchanges. Characters such as Fainall and Lady Wishfort treat marriage as a means of

consolidating financial advantage, underscoring the vulnerability of affection within patriarchal inheritance structures. Lady Wishfort's fear of scandal is not merely personal anxiety but a reflection of social surveillance, as her concern over reputation repeatedly shapes her decisions regarding marriage and alliances (Congreve 28–30). Feminist critics have also examined Millamant's insistence on autonomy prior to marriage. While her demands appear progressive, they simultaneously expose the precarious position of women within property-based systems. Her wit and independence must operate within the limits of patriarchal control, suggesting that emotional security remains contingent upon economic stability.

Although scholars acknowledge the material foundations of relationships in Congreve's world, relatively little attention has been given to emotional fragility as a central thematic concern. The instability of trust manifested in betrayal plots, inheritance disputes, and negotiated marriages is often treated as a feature of comedic convention rather than as a structural condition. This suggests that emotional fragility in the play is not merely a feature of comic design but is produced by property relations and social performance.

Taken together, these critical traditions reveal that emotional relationships in both texts are deeply shaped by economic and social constraints. Such parallels invite a cross-period comparative lens that moves beyond single-text analysis.

2.4 Emerging Parallels in Critical Discourse

Building on these insights, thematic parallels between Fitzgerald and Congreve invite sustained comparative investigation. Both texts depict transitional societies undergoing economic transformation: Restoration England consolidating aristocratic capitalism and 1920s America intensifying consumer modernity. In each case, wealth becomes the primary measure of value, shaping both identity and emotional possibility.

In *The Great Gatsby*, Gatsby must acquire wealth before pursuing Daisy; in *The Way of the World*, Mirabell must secure inheritance before marriage can occur. In both narratives,

romantic fulfillment depends on material legitimacy. Performance and self-fashioning operate as survival strategies: Gatsby reinvents himself socially, while Mirabell navigates aristocratic codes through wit and calculated civility. Love becomes conditional upon social approval and economic qualification.

Yet scholarship rarely synthesizes these parallels. Studies of Fitzgerald emphasize illusion and American myth, while Congreve criticism focuses on satire and Restoration politics. What remains underexplored is how both works converge in portraying emotional bonds as structurally unstable within materially driven cultures.

2.5 Research Gap

The review of scholarship reveals a significant gap. While critics have extensively analyzed *The Great Gatsby* as a critique of the American Dream and *The Way of the World* as a satire of Restoration marriage and property systems, few studies examine how both texts articulate a shared pattern of emotional fragility produced by socio-economic structures. In Gatsby criticism, emotional collapse is frequently attributed to personal illusion or moral weakness. In Congreve studies, instability in relationships is often treated as a feature of comic intrigue or social satire. However, neither body of scholarship fully develops the argument that emotional vulnerability in these texts is systemic rather than merely individual.

This thesis addresses that gap by offering a comparative analysis of how love and loyalty become precarious within societies where wealth, inheritance, and reputation determine value. By placing Congreve and Fitzgerald in dialogue, this study argues that emotional fragility transcends historical boundaries. Whether in Restoration England or Jazz Age America, material structures shape intimacy, rendering relationships conditional and unstable. Such a comparative approach not only broadens the scope of existing scholarship but also repositions both texts within a shared critical framework. Rather than viewing them as products of isolated literary traditions, this research shows that both dramatize the enduring tension

between emotional aspiration and socio-economic constraint. In doing so, it contributes a new perspective to Restoration and modernist studies alike, revealing a transhistorical pattern in which the pursuit of wealth and status undermines the possibility of stable human connection.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

This study examines the fragility of emotional bonds in *The Way of the World* and *The Great Gatsby* through the combined lenses of Marxist literary criticism and New Historicism. Rather than interpreting emotional collapse as the result of personal weakness, romantic delusion, or moral failure, this framework argues that emotional instability is structurally produced. Intimacy in both works is shaped and ultimately destabilized by material relations, class hierarchies, and historically specific systems of value that determine who may love, marry, or belong.

Although William Congreve's *The Way of the World* is often read as a Restoration comedy of manners and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* as a modernist tragedy of romantic idealism, this study repositions both texts within a shared structural logic. It contends that each dramatizes how material ambition and social stratification systematically condition emotional life. While the historical contexts differ, both Restoration aristocratic property culture and Jazz Age American capitalism organize value through wealth, inheritance, and reputation. The result, in each case, is a world in which love is never autonomous from economic legitimacy.

By integrating Marxist material analysis with New Historicist attention to cultural identity formation, this framework establishes emotional fragility not as psychological accident but as systemic contradiction. Intimacy becomes precarious because it operates within structures that prioritize exchange value over reciprocity and performance over authenticity.

3.2 Marxist Literary Criticism and the Material Foundations of Intimacy

Marxist literary criticism begins from the premise that material conditions shape social relations. In *Capital*, Karl Marx argues that under capitalism, social relations "a definite social relation between men … assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things" (48). This phenomenon, which he terms commodity fetishism, describes the process by which

human relationships are mediated and obscured by exchange value. What appears as interaction between individuals becomes, in effect, interaction between commodities (48).

This insight is crucial for understanding the emotional economies of both texts. In *The Way of the World*, marriage is inseparable from inheritance law, property negotiation, and financial security. Affection is articulated through wit and civility, yet it remains legally and economically structured. Similarly, in *The Great Gatsby*, Gatsby's devotion to Daisy is inseparable from his accumulation of wealth and his pursuit of social status. Daisy herself becomes entangled with the symbolic capital of East Egg privilege. In both cases, love operates within systems governed by material legitimacy.

Although Congreve writes in a pre-industrial aristocratic context rather than industrial capitalism, Marx's analysis of property relations remains applicable. Restoration England was structured by inheritance systems and landed wealth that functioned as the primary determinants of social power. Marriage in *The Way of the World* is effectively a transaction embedded within these structures. Mirabell's union with Millamant depends not merely upon mutual affection but upon securing her fortune through legal maneuvering and negotiation with Lady Wishfort.

In Jazz Age America, capitalism operates in a more overtly commodified form. Gatsby's wealth, accumulated through dubious enterprise, functions as a means of purchasing visibility, legitimacy, and access. Yet his capital cannot erase his origins. The novel exposes a distinction between economic acquisition and inherited class authority. Tom Buchanan's dominance derives not only from wealth but from entrenched lineage. Gatsby's tragedy, therefore, is not excessive romanticism alone but a structural misrecognition: he believes capital can convert into historical legitimacy.

Marx's insight that value is socially produced illuminates this dynamic (48). Emotional worth in both societies is filtered through material structures. Love becomes conditional upon class stability. When those conditions falter, intimacy collapses.

However, this study does not adopt reductive economic determinism. Marx himself acknowledged the relative autonomy of cultural production (48). Literature does not simply mirror the economic base; it registers and negotiates its tensions. Emotional fragility in these texts emerges precisely at the point where human aspiration confronts structural constraint.

3.3 Structures of Feeling and the Historical Formation of Emotion

To refine this material analysis, this study draws upon Raymond Williams's concept of "structures of feeling." In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams defines these as forms of social experience that are lived and felt before they are fully articulated experiences that exist "in solution," not yet solidified into formal doctrine (132). Emotional life, in this view, is historically produced and collectively conditioned. This concept allows emotional fragility in Congreve and Fitzgerald to be understood not as individual instability but as historically situated tension. Millamant's insistence on personal autonomy most notably in her negotiation of marital terms reflects a transitional moment in gender and property relations. Her desire is sincere, yet it must operate within a system that binds marriage to financial survival. The emotional negotiation is therefore structured by material necessity.

Similarly, Gatsby's romantic idealism reflects the emergent "structure of feeling" of 1920s America, where consumer culture and the ideology of self-making saturate social life (Williams 132). The belief that identity can be reinvented through acquisition is not Gatsby's private illusion but a culturally produced logic. His emotional devotion to Daisy is inseparable from the national narrative of upward mobility and the American Dream. Yet this structure of feeling collides with entrenched class hierarchy, producing contradiction.

Williams's framework clarifies that these contradictions are not merely thematic but experiential. Characters feel deeply; their emotions are genuine. What renders them fragile is the historical formation within which they arise. Emotional experience is shaped by material organization even before it becomes consciously ideological. Thus, fragility emerges as the lived consequence of structural tension (132).

3.4 New Historicism and the Cultural Construction of Identity

While Marxist analysis foregrounds material relations, New Historicism illuminates how identity is culturally constructed within those relations. Stephen Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning is particularly relevant. In Renaissance Self-Fashioning, Greenblatt argues that there emerges "an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process" (2). Identity, therefore, is not innate but constructed through negotiation with social norms and institutional authority.

This framework clarifies the performative dimension of both texts. In *The Way of the World,* wit, decorum, and reputation function as mechanisms of aristocratic self-fashioning. Characters perform civility in order to maintain social legitimacy. Emotional expression must conform to codes of politeness and strategic restraint. Love is intelligible only when articulated within acceptable forms.

Gatsby's transformation from James Gatz into Jay Gatsby exemplifies modern self-fashioning under capitalism. His identity is constructed through spectacular lavish parties, tailored clothing, and architectural display. He performs the role of the wealthy gentleman in order to secure recognition. Yet this performance depends upon continuous social validation. When his origins are exposed, the structure sustaining his identity begins to fracture. Greenblatt further asserts that "any achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss" (9). This principle directly informs the present study's argument. Because identity is fashioned within restrictive systems of authority, it remains inherently unstable.

Emotional bonds attached to such identities are therefore equally precarious. When social recognition falters, intimacy collapses alongside performance.

In both Congreve and Fitzgerald, identity is constructed through alignment with dominant value systems. Those who fail to embody the sanctioned model whether through financial insufficiency or questionable origins find their emotional aspirations undermined. Intimacy becomes vulnerable because it depends upon socially regulated performance.

3.5 Integrating Marxism and New Historicism

Although Marxist criticism and New Historicism originate in distinct intellectual traditions, they converge in their insistence that social relations are historically produced. Marxism foregrounds material inequality, while New Historicism reveals how such inequality is internalized and enacted through cultural practice. Their integration enables a comprehensive analysis of emotional life as both economically structured and discursively mediated.

Marxist analysis alone risks reducing love to economic function. New Historicism alone may understate the determining force of material stratification. Together, however, they reveal how economic systems shape the cultural scripts through which identity is performed. Emotional fragility emerges at the intersection of these forces.

In Restoration England, aristocratic property culture governs marriage and inheritance. In Jazz Age America, capitalism structures aspiration and belonging. Though historically distinct, both systems organize value through wealth, status, and lineage. Individuals must fashion themselves according to these metrics in order to secure legitimacy. Emotional bonds formed within such frameworks cannot escape their conditional nature.

Thus, the collapse of intimacy in both texts is not a matter of defective character. Instead, it reflects the structural contradiction between human longing and socio-economic organization. Love seeks permanence, while material systems prioritize exchange, advantage, and reputation. The tension between these imperatives produces instability.

3.6 Conclusion

This theoretical framework establishes the conceptual foundation for analyzing emotional fragility in *The Way of the World* and *The Great Gatsby*. By combining Marxist literary criticism with New Historicism, the study demonstrates that intimacy in both texts is shaped by material conditions and cultural performance rather than autonomous sentiment. Marx's analysis of commodity relations clarifies how economic structures mediate human connection (48). Williams's concept of structures of feeling reveals how emotional experience is historically formed (132). Greenblatt's theory of self-fashioning exposes the instability inherent in socially constructed identity (2). Together, these frameworks illuminate how love becomes conditional within materially stratified societies.

Across Restoration England and Jazz Age America, emotional bonds are subordinated to property, lineage, and social legitimacy. Intimacy falters not because characters fail to feel sincerely, but because sincerity operates within systems that convert human value into social capital. Emotional collapse, therefore, emerges as a structural symptom rather than a personal defect.

By reframing emotional fragility as systemic rather than psychological, this study contributes to Restoration and modernist scholarship alike. It shows that materially driven societies whether aristocratic or capitalist, generate analogous contradictions in emotional life. In doing so, it positions both Congreve and Fitzgerald as acute observers of a persistent historical condition: the instability of intimacy in worlds governed by exchange, performance, and class power.

Chapter 4

Discussion

4.1 Social Systems and the Fragility of Emotional Bonds

This chapter examines how emotional relationships in *The Way of the World* and *The Great Gatsby* become unstable within social environments that privilege wealth, reputation, and social performance over sincerity. The fragility of love, trust, and loyalty in these texts cannot be reduced to individual moral weakness or emotional inconsistency. Rather, it emerges from social systems that regulate identity, status, and economic value. When societies encourage individuals to evaluate relationships according to economic advantage and cultural prestige, emotional bonds become inherently fragile, as they are subjected to pressures that extend beyond personal feeling and private intention.

To develop this argument, insights from Marxist literary criticism provide a crucial framework. The theoretical work of Karl Marx demonstrates how economic structures shape social relations and cultural practices. In *Capital*, Marx argues that in capitalist societies social relations often appear distorted because economic value mediates human interaction, observing that "a definite social relation between men… assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things" (165). This concept of commodity fetishism is central to understanding how relationships function in both texts. Individuals are repeatedly evaluated through visible markers of wealth, reputation, and economic power, and this evaluative process transforms emotional attachment into a socially mediated exchange.

As a result, emotional bonds are not formed in isolation but are shaped by systems that assign value to individuals based on material and symbolic capital. Love becomes entangled with aspiration, and desire is filtered through social hierarchies rather than grounded in mutual recognition. This dynamic aligns closely with Marx's broader argument that value is socially constructed and that human relationships are reorganized according to systems of exchange. In both Congreve and Fitzgerald, emotional life reflects this transformation, as relationships are consistently measured against standards of wealth and status.

At the same time, New Historicist theory, particularly Stephen Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning illuminates how individuals internalize these structures. Greenblatt argues that identity is not fixed but constructed through culturally regulated performance, shaped by social norms and institutional expectations (2). This insight reveals that characters in both texts actively produce identities that conform to dominant cultural values. Emotional fragility therefore emerges not simply from deception or insincerity, but from the necessity of aligning personal identity with socially sanctioned forms of legitimacy.

When Marxist and New Historicist perspectives are combined, a more comprehensive understanding of emotional fragility emerges. Economic systems determine the conditions under which relationships are formed, while cultural practices shape how individuals perform and negotiate identity within those systems. Emotional instability arises at the intersection of these forces. Individuals must simultaneously pursue economic legitimacy and maintain socially acceptable identities, creating a tension between authentic feeling and performative behavior.

This tension ultimately explains why emotional bonds appear unstable in both texts. Love and loyalty are not undermined solely by individual choices but by social systems that consistently reward ambition, wealth, and reputation over sincerity. Both Congreve and Fitzgerald therefore depict worlds in which emotional life is inseparable from social evaluation. Personal attachments remain vulnerable because they depend upon external validation, rendering intimacy contingent rather than secure. In addition, this structural perspective challenges conventional readings that prioritize individual psychology over social context. By foregrounding the role of external systems, the analysis shifts attention from personal failure to institutional constraint. Emotional instability, therefore, becomes indicative of broader social contradictions rather than isolated moral deficiencies. This approach not only deepens the interpretation of both texts but also reinforces the relevance of literary analysis in

understanding how social structures shape human experience. The fragility of emotional bonds thus reflects not only narrative conflict but also the limitations imposed by historically specific systems of value.

4.2 Marriage, Social Strategy, and Emotional Negotiation in *The Way of the World*

In *The Way of the World,* romantic relationships unfold within the regulated structures of Restoration aristocratic culture. Marriage functions not merely as an expression of love but as a strategic alliance shaped by inheritance, reputation, and family authority. Emotional relationships therefore appear fragile because they must coexist with a system that prioritizes social advantage and financial security above personal feeling.

The relationship between Mirabell and Millamant illustrates this tension with particular clarity. Although the characters demonstrate genuine affection, their relationship cannot exist independently of economic considerations. Millamant's fortune is controlled by Lady Wishfort, whose approval determines whether the marriage can occur. As a result, Mirabell is compelled to devise an elaborate scheme to secure consent. This situation demonstrates that love within Restoration society is inseparable from social calculation. Emotional attachment alone is insufficient; it must be supported by strategic negotiation within a rigid hierarchy.

This dynamic becomes especially visible in the proviso scene, where Mirabell and Millamant negotiate the terms of marriage. Rather than presenting romantic union as spontaneous or purely emotional, Congreve stages it as a structured agreement. Millamant's insistence on autonomy and her refusal to become "a professed friend to all the men of sense in town" (63) signals an awareness of the constraints imposed by marriage. Her demand reflects a desire to preserve individuality within a system that reduces relationships to contractual arrangements.

This moment is particularly significant because it reveals the coexistence of sincerity and strategy. Millamant's affection is genuine, yet it must be expressed within the limits of a

social structure that commodifies relationships. The negotiation itself mirrors economic exchange, reinforcing the idea that marriage operates as a transaction governed by property relations. In this sense, the proviso scene exemplifies how emotional bonds are shaped by broader socio-economic frameworks.

Furthermore, the interaction between Mirabell and Millamant highlights how emotional stability depends upon successful negotiation. Their relationship is not inherently secure; it becomes viable only when it aligns with economic and social expectations. This condition introduces an element of fragility, as the relationship remains dependent upon external approval and structural compliance. A similar dependence on social legitimacy can be observed in *The Great Gatsby,* where emotional fulfillment is likewise contingent upon recognition within elite society.

Lady Wishfort's character further reinforces the role of social surveillance. Her anxiety about scandal demonstrates how aristocratic identity is shaped by public perception. When she laments becoming "the subject of a most scandalous libel," it underscores the extent to which reputation governs social life. Emotional relationships are therefore constrained not only by economic structures but also by the constant threat of social scrutiny.

Raymond Williams's concept of "structures of feeling" provides a useful framework for understanding this dynamic. In Marxism and Literature, Williams describes how lived cultural experiences shape behavior before becoming formalized ideology (132). In Congreve's play, the prioritization of wealth, wit, and reputation forms such a structure. These values are internalized by characters and influence their expectations of marriage and intimacy.

From this perspective, emotional fragility emerges as a cultural condition rather than an individual failing. Even when genuine affection exists, it remains vulnerable to the pressures of inheritance, reputation, and ambition. The play thus reveals how social strategy and

economic necessity complicate emotional sincerity, demonstrating that fragility is structurally produced within aristocratic culture.

Moreover, the conditional nature of Mirabell and Millamant's relationship underscores the extent to which emotional fulfillment depends upon successful negotiation within established power structures. Their eventual union does not resolve the tension between affection and strategy; rather, it demonstrates how emotional stability is achieved only through alignment with social expectations. This outcome suggests that even the most harmonious relationships in the play remain contingent upon external validation. In this sense, Congreve does not simply satirize aristocratic society but exposes the structural conditions that render intimacy inherently unstable.

4.3 Wealth, Desire, and the Illusion of Romantic Fulfillment in *The Great Gatsby*

While Congreve examines aristocratic relationships, *The Great Gatsby* portrays a modern society shaped by consumer culture and economic ambition. In this context, wealth and social status fundamentally reshape emotional relationships, producing fragility in bonds that might otherwise appear stable. Gatsby's devotion to Daisy provides the most compelling example of this dynamic. His attempt to recreate their past is not merely emotional but structurally conditioned by wealth and status. This is evident when Gatsby reunites with Daisy at Nick's house, where his anxiety and performative display of wealth such as his collection of expensive shirts function as a means of asserting legitimacy (Fitzgerald 92–94). In my reading, this moment demonstrates that Gatsby's love is inseparable from his need to be socially recognized.

Nick Carraway's observation that Daisy's voice is "full of money" (Fitzgerald 120) encapsulates the relationship between wealth and desirability. Daisy is not simply loved for her personality; she embodies the prestige of inherited privilege. This association reduces her to a symbol of class identity, suggesting that emotional attraction is inseparable from economic

value. Gatsby's love therefore reflects both genuine longing and social aspiration, demonstrating how desire itself is shaped by cultural and material conditions.

Gatsby's insistence that the past can be recreated further illustrates this dynamic. His response "Can't repeat the past? Why of course you can!" (Fitzgerald 116) reveals a belief in the transformative power of wealth. This belief aligns with the ideology of the American Dream, which promises that success can overcome social barriers. However, the novel ultimately exposes the limitations of this ideology. Gatsby's wealth enables imitation but not acceptance; it cannot convert economic capital into inherited legitimacy.

This failure reflects a structural contradiction within capitalist society. While economic mobility is theoretically possible, social hierarchies remain resistant to change. Gatsby's tragedy therefore lies not only in personal illusion but in a misrecognition of structural limits. His emotional investment in Daisy collapses because it depends upon a system that cannot fully accommodate his aspirations.

The moral dimension of this system is further revealed through Tom and Daisy. Nick's description of them as "careless people… they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money" (Fitzgerald 179) highlights how privilege enables irresponsibility. Wealth functions as a protective barrier, allowing individuals to evade consequences. This dynamic undermines emotional accountability, as relationships are shaped by unequal distributions of power.

The green light serves as a final symbol of unattainable desire. It represents both romantic longing and social aspiration, emphasizing the gap between ambition and reality. Gatsby's pursuit of the green light illustrates the persistence of hope within a system that ultimately renders fulfillment impossible.

This symbolic framework further emphasizes that desire in the novel is future-oriented yet perpetually deferred. The green light represents not only Gatsby's personal longing but also

a broader cultural fixation on unattainable ideals. As such, emotional fulfillment is continually postponed, reinforcing the instability of relationships grounded in aspiration rather than reciprocity. This dynamic illustrates how capitalist ideology reshapes emotional experience, encouraging individuals to pursue ideals that remain structurally out of reach. Consequently, the fragility of Gatsby's love reflects a systemic condition rather than an isolated personal tragedy.

Like the negotiated marriages in *The Way of the World,* Gatsby's pursuit of Daisy is structured by the need for social legitimacy. In both texts, emotional relationships depend upon recognition within systems governed by wealth and status. This parallel reinforces the argument that emotional fragility is not historically specific but structurally recurrent.

4.4 Identity, Social Performance, and Self-Fashioned Desire

Both texts depict identity as a form of social performance shaped by cultural expectation and economic context. Characters construct personas in order to navigate hierarchical societies, demonstrating that identity is not inherent but strategically produced.

In Congreve's play, wit functions as a key marker of aristocratic identity. Characters must display intelligence and refinement to maintain status. Mirabell's manipulation of Lady Wishfort and his negotiation with Millamant demonstrate how performance mediates access to both romantic and economic outcomes. Millamant similarly balances sincerity with strategic self-presentation, preserving autonomy while conforming to social expectations.

In *The Great Gatsby*, identity is constructed through material display and social performance. Gatsby's transformation from James Gatz into Jay Gatsby exemplifies this process. His persona is built through spectacle lavish parties, clothing, and architecture all of which signal wealth and status. This performance reflects the pressures of a society in which identity is evaluated through visible markers of success. Gatsby's constructed identity is further exposed during the confrontation at the Plaza Hotel, where Tom reveals his background and

undermines his social legitimacy (Fitzgerald 130–134). This moment demonstrates how fragile self-fashioned identity becomes when subjected to public scrutiny.

Greenblatt's assertion that identity contains "the signs of its own subversion or loss" (9) is particularly relevant here. Gatsby's identity collapses when his past is revealed, exposing the instability of socially constructed personas. Similarly, in Congreve, performance is always vulnerable to disruption. Identity must be continuously maintained, and any failure threatens social standing.

Because identity is constructed rather than inherent, it remains fragile. Emotional bonds attached to such identities are equally unstable, as they depend upon sustained performance and social validation. This dynamic demonstrates how self-fashioning, while necessary for survival, introduces vulnerability into emotional relationships. The instability of such self-fashioned identities becomes evident when performance fails or is exposed. In *The Great Gatsby*, Gatsby's carefully constructed persona begins to collapse when Tom Buchanan reveals his past, undermining the legitimacy of his social identity. Nick's reflection that Gatsby "sprang from his Platonic conception of himself" (Fitzgerald 98) highlights the artificial nature of this identity, emphasizing that it is sustained through imagination and performance rather than stable social recognition. Similarly, in *The Way of the World*, the reliance on wit and calculated behavior reveals that identity must be continuously maintained through performance. Any disruption in this performance threatens both social standing and emotional relationships, reinforcing the inherent fragility of identities constructed within hierarchical systems.

Moreover, self-fashioning is closely linked to material and cultural capital in both texts. In Congreve, wit and inheritance regulate access to social and romantic opportunity. In Fitzgerald, wealth and spectacle perform a similar function. Despite historical differences, both systems prioritize performance over authenticity, reinforcing the structural conditions that produce emotional fragility. This instability also reveals a paradox at the heart of self-

fashioning. While performance enables social mobility and access to opportunity, it simultaneously undermines the possibility of authentic connection. Relationships formed through constructed identities remain vulnerable because they depend upon maintaining appearances rather than sustaining genuine understanding. In both texts, the effort to secure recognition ultimately compromises emotional stability, demonstrating that identity formation within hierarchical systems carries inherent risks for intimacy.

4.5 Comparative Insights: Emotional Fragility across Historical Contexts

When examined together, *The Way of the World* and *The Great Gatsby* reveal significant structural parallels. Both texts depict societies in which emotional relationships are shaped by systems that prioritize wealth, reputation, and hierarchy. These systems constrain the possibilities of intimacy, demonstrating that emotional fragility arises from external pressures as well as individual choices. In Congreve's play, marriage functions as a mechanism for preserving aristocratic wealth and social order. In Fitzgerald's novel, Gatsby's pursuit of Daisy reflects the promise of social mobility through economic success. However, both texts expose the limitations of these systems. Emotional fulfillment depends upon legitimacy and recognition, which are not equally accessible to all individuals.

Despite their historical differences, both societies operate according to similar principles. Restoration aristocracy relies on inheritance and etiquette, while Jazz Age capitalism emphasizes consumption and spectacle. In each case, relationships are mediated by social structures that assign value based on status.

These parallels extend to the moral implications of social systems. In Congreve, strategic behavior is normalized within aristocratic culture. In Fitzgerald, privilege enables moral irresponsibility. Emotional fragility is therefore linked not only to structural inequality but also to ethical ambiguity.

This comparative analysis demonstrates that emotional instability is a recurring feature of societies organized around wealth and status. Across different contexts, social systems shape the conditions of intimacy, reinforcing the argument that fragility is structurally produced. Furthermore, this comparison highlights the persistence of structural constraints across historical periods. Although the specific forms of economic and social organization differ, the underlying logic remains consistent and value is assigned through systems that prioritize hierarchy and visibility. This continuity suggests that emotional fragility is not limited to a particular era but is a recurring feature of societies structured around inequality. The comparative approach therefore reveals a transhistorical pattern in which social systems consistently shape and often destabilize human relationships.

4.6 Addressing the Research Questions

The analysis developed in this chapter provides clear responses to the research questions guiding the study. The first question concerns how social and economic pressures shape emotional relationships. Both texts demonstrate that such pressures play a decisive role. Characters evaluate relationships through wealth, reputation, and visibility, indicating that emotional bonds are inseparable from material frameworks.

The second question asks whether individual moral choices or broader social systems determine the breakdown of intimacy. The analysis suggests that structural pressures are the primary factor. While characters exercise agency, their decisions are shaped by systems that reward ambition and performance. Emotional fragility therefore reflects systemic conditions rather than purely personal failings.

This emphasis on structural determination does not entirely eliminate the role of individual agency. Rather, it repositions agency within a framework of constraint. Characters make choices, but those choices are shaped and limited by the systems in which they operate. Recognizing this interplay between agency and structure allows for a more nuanced

understanding of emotional breakdown, one that accounts for both personal action and systemic influence. This perspective strengthens the argument that emotional fragility cannot be fully understood without reference to broader socio-economic conditions.

This finding is significant because it challenges interpretations that attribute emotional collapse solely to individual weakness. Instead, it demonstrates that instability is embedded within social and economic structures. Comparative analysis further shows that although historical contexts differ, the underlying pattern remains consistent. Emotional bonds depend upon legitimacy and recognition in both texts, confirming that structural factors play a dominant role.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This study has explored the fragility of emotional bonds in *The Way of the World* and *The Great Gatsby* through a comparative framework informed by Marxist literary criticism and New Historicism. By examining how love, trust, and loyalty are shaped within socio-economic

systems that privilege wealth, reputation, and social performance, the analysis has demonstrated that emotional instability in both texts cannot be adequately explained through individual moral failure or psychological weakness. Instead, it emerges from structural conditions that regulate identity, value, and belonging. Through detailed analysis of key characters and narrative moments, the study has shown that relationships in both Congreve's Restoration comedy and Fitzgerald's modernist novel are conditioned by external forces such as inheritance, class hierarchy, consumer culture, and social legitimacy. In *The Way of the World*, marriage is embedded within systems of property and negotiation, while in *The Great Gatsby,* romantic desire is mediated by wealth and the illusion of social mobility. Despite their historical differences, both texts reveal that intimacy is contingent upon alignment with dominant cultural and economic structures. By integrating theoretical insights from Marx, Greenblatt, and Williams, this study has established that emotional fragility is not incidental but structurally produced, reflecting the tension between authentic feeling and the demands of socially constructed identity. Thus, the research repositions both texts within a shared analytical framework that emphasizes the systemic nature of emotional instability across different historical contexts.

The findings of this study highlight the broader significance of understanding emotional relationships as products of socio-economic and cultural systems. By demonstrating that emotional fragility is structurally produced, the analysis challenges interpretations that focus primarily on individual responsibility or moral deficiency. Instead, it foregrounds the role of external forces in shaping the possibilities and limitations of human connection. This perspective contributes to literary studies by offering a more comprehensive understanding of how texts engage with the conditions that govern emotional life. Furthermore, the comparative approach adopted in this research reveals that similar patterns of emotional instability persist across distinct historical periods, suggesting that the relationship between material structures

and emotional experience is not confined to a specific era. In both Restoration aristocratic culture and Jazz Age capitalism, systems of value based on wealth, status, and reputation determine the legitimacy of relationships, thereby rendering intimacy conditional and unstable. This generalization extends beyond the texts themselves, pointing to a broader cultural pattern in which emotional bonds are influenced by social hierarchies and economic pressures. The study therefore underscores the importance of examining literature as a reflection of the structural forces that shape human experience. By integrating Marxist and New Historicist perspectives, it also demonstrates the value of interdisciplinary approaches in uncovering connections between economic systems, cultural practices, and emotional life. In this way, the research not only deepens the interpretation of Congreve and Fitzgerald but also contributes to ongoing critical discussions about the interplay between structure and subjectivity in literary analysis.

Finally, this study provides a foundation for future research by identifying several potential directions for further inquiry. One possible avenue is the extension of this comparative framework to other literary texts across different historical periods and cultural contexts in order to examine whether similar patterns of emotional fragility persist. Future researchers may also explore how additional theoretical perspectives such as feminist criticism, psychoanalysis, or postcolonial theory can offer new insights into the relationship between identity, power, and emotional experience. For instance, a feminist approach could further investigate how gender dynamics influence the structural vulnerability of intimacy, particularly in relation to autonomy and social constraint. Similarly, a psychoanalytic perspective might deepen the understanding of how internal desires interact with external pressures, while postcolonial analysis could reveal how global systems of power shape emotional relationships in different cultural settings. Another important direction for future research lies in the study of contemporary literature, where themes of consumerism, digital identity, and global

capitalism continue to influence emotional life. Examining modern texts through a similar framework could reveal how the structural conditions identified in this study persist or evolve in present-day contexts. Additionally, interdisciplinary research that engages with sociology, cultural studies, or media theory may further illuminate how emotional bonds are shaped by changing social realities. By building upon the insights developed in this study, future scholarship can continue to explore the complex interaction between individual experience and structural constraint. Such work would not only enhance the understanding of literary texts but also contribute to a broader recognition of how emotional fragility reflects enduring tensions within human societies. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that the fragility of human bonds is not merely a thematic concern within literature but a reflection of enduring structural tensions within society itself. Across both Restoration England and Jazz Age America, emotional relationships are shaped by systems that prioritize wealth, status, and performance over authenticity and reciprocity. By revealing how intimacy becomes conditional within such frameworks, this research underscores the broader implication that emotional instability is not an exception but a recurring consequence of socially organized life. In this sense, the works of Congreve and Fitzgerald continue to resonate beyond their historical contexts, offering insight into the persistent challenges of sustaining genuine human connection within materially driven societies.

Works Cited

Bewley, Marius. “Scott Fitzgerald’s Criticism of America.” *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 62, no. 2, 1954, pp. 223–46. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27538346. Accessed 22 Feb. 2026.

Brown, Laura. *Marriage and Property in Restoration Comedy.* Cambridge UP, 2008.

Canfield, J. Douglas. *Tricksters and Estates: On the Ideology of Restoration Comedy*. UP of Kentucky, 1997.

Congreve, William. *The Way of the World.* Edited by Ian Smith, Oxford UP, 2000.

Creswell, John W. Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. SAGE Publications, 2014.

Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln, editors. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications, 2018.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. Scribner, 2004.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare.* University of Chicago Press, 1980. http://sixteenthcentury.pbworks.com/f/Greenblatt.pdf

Habib, Muhammad Saleh. "The American Dream in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*: A Boon or a Bane." 2020. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341284511_The_American_dream_in_Fitzgerald's_The_Great_Gatsby_A_boon_or_a_bane. Accessed 22 Feb. 2026.

Kumari, Naina, and Mohd Farhan Saiel. "Study the Illusion vs. Reality of the American Dream in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby.*" *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews,* vol. 6, no. 7, July 2025, pp. 6038–6041. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/394544385_Study_the_Illusion_vs_Reality_of_the_American_Dream_in_F_Sc. Accessed 22 Feb. 2026.

Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy.* Vol. 1, translated by Ben Fowkes, Penguin, 1976. https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Capital-Volume-I.pdf

Trilling, Lionel. "F. Scott Fitzgerald." *The Liberal Imagination*. Viking Press, 1950, pp. 234–250.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford UP, 1977. https://mykelandrada.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/raymond-williams-marxism-and-literature.pdf