

# *The Advantage of the Narrator in the Great Gatsby*

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**Abstract:** In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Caraway's setting as a narrator is a major innovation of Fitzgerald's work in the novel narrative. Nick is neither a traditional narrator nor a first-person narrator who is completely separated from the author. Its particularity lies in its personal value is to be discussed, but its value judgment is super guiding. Through the role of Nick, Fitzgerald tries to make innovation in form and passes on values in content. As the witness and the narrator of the story, Nick has a comprehensive understanding of the story and characters, and is able to examine the overall situation and judge the value. His firm moral concept and comprehensive perspective make him an important carrier for Fitzgerald to convey ideas and values in the novel.

## 1. Introduction

*The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald's masterpiece, features the presence of Nick Caraway as one of the author's most ingenious narrative ideas. The author's disturbing account of the "Jazz Age" before the Great Depression - the creation of the protagonist Gatsby - is shown to the reader through Nick's experience. The focus of this paper is to describe the significance of Fitzgerald's creation of Nick as a narrator in the novel and to discuss what qualities Fitzgerald gives to Nick that make him superior to others in the storyline.

### 1.1 The significance of formal innovation assigned to Nick

From the beginning of narratology to the 1960s, there was no breakthrough in the research related to the structure and technique of novels<sup>[1]</sup>. In this reality, the book *The Great Gatsby* was once called by Thomas Styne Eliot as "the first step in the American novel since Henry James", and Henry James, as one of the important American novelists, advocated the storytelling through the consciousness of the characters and made great contributions to the development of the novel narrative form<sup>[2]</sup>. Elliot's evaluation of Fitzgerald, then, naturally cannot be separated from his contribution to American literature in the form of novel narrative. Fitzgerald himself also said that he wanted to use *The Great Gatsby* as a "formal experiment"<sup>[2]</sup>, indicating that the author must have placed in this book the results of his thoughts and innovations related to the narrative form of the novel.

The setting of Nick as a narrator is clearly different from that of the traditional narrator: he is neither a narrator with a blurred line to the author himself before the concept of "narrator" officially

appeared (in the 18th century)<sup>[3]</sup>, nor is he exactly the same as a first-person narrator who is completely separate from the author after that. Fitzgerald says very little about Nick's own experiences, even in the opening chapter where the set-up of Nick being accused of being morally inferior in his early experiences can be seen, but the author uses Nick's father's mouth to implicitly give him qualities that make him superior to the rest of the world (advantage) and leaves the reader with the question "What exactly are his qualities that make him superior to the rest of the world? " The reader is left with the question, "What qualities does he have that make him superior to others? It is clear that the reader's judgement of Nick is unclear and the reliability of the narrator is questionable. Because Nick appears to follow the ideological norms of the work to tell the story<sup>[4]</sup>, it is worth considering whether his perspective is really exactly what the author wants to want to show, and whether there is any possibility for him to be used as a counter-argument due to the fact that we do not know much about this character. At the same time, Nick carries a strong personal value proposition in the course of the narrative, which subconsciously influences the reader's judgement of the story's characters. But when the reader does not know Nick as a character, such guidance is accompanied by a strong sense of fragmentation; it is less like a "first-person" viewpoint of a first-person's feelings, and more like the author's empowerment of the narrator's value judgement, allowing him to "judge" the other characters in the story. It is more like the author gives the narrator the power of value judgement, allowing him to "judge" the other characters in the story. Such a sense of separation creates the special character of Nick in the whole story, even though he takes on some roles in the story, such as helping Gatsby and Daisy to meet, organizing Gatsby's funeral, etc., he still seems to be a "God's point of view" as an observer.

Although Fitzgerald's portrayal of the character of Nick cannot be completely removed from the scope of the first-person narrator, his specificity is enough to facilitate the author formally, allowing him to incorporate his own expectations into this character, whose personality value is not absolutely distinctive, so that the character does not go against the out of character, and does not bore the readers as if he were directly preaching. Thus, although this is not a breakthrough in the novel's narrative technique, it still shows Fitzgerald's exploration of the novel's form.

## 1.2 The significance of value transmission assigned to Nick

When Fitzgerald formally began his novel in 1919, the American novel was in the throes of transition<sup>[5]</sup>. Fitzgerald keenly perceived the plight of the American novel at that time. At that time, the novel still carried a wide variety of responsibilities, unlike the novel today, where many of its functions have been taken away by other mediums or vehicles. At the same time, the era in which Fitzgerald lived was no longer the golden age of America's peak, and *The Great Gatsby* linked Gatsby's dream with the dream of modern America<sup>[6]</sup>, and the destruction of Gatsby's dream wrote about the disillusionment of the American dream of the young generation in the United States. In such an environment, the simple concept of "literature as a way of life" was obviously accepted by Fitzgerald. If the debut novel "Heaven on Earth" is Fitzgerald's attempt to use autobiographical writing to make a change and bring influence to the confused youth, then in "The Great Gatsby", Fitzgerald is obviously more clever to carry out this "indoctrination". He no longer intervenes excessively with his distinctive self, and although he still offers some help in making value judgements, Fitzgerald shares the opportunity for judgement with his readers more often, and the setting of the narrator is very important in order to achieve this effect.

The narrator, Nick, acts as an 'implied author'<sup>[7]</sup>; like a Victorian author with an indoctrination goal<sup>[8]</sup>, embedding his values in the narrator's thoughts, which are then experienced in the narrator's body, and expressed through the narrator's point of view, allowing the reader to think or finally agree or question. Such a narration satisfies the fun, generational and appealing aspects of fiction

writing and also conveys his thoughts without being annoying.

## 2. Nick's advantages

In the novel, if we briefly compare the various characters, we will find that Nick is not a person whose excellence is obvious. Compared to the other characters, he is not rich enough, not high enough, not capable enough, and not even outstanding in terms of charisma. But it's such a seemingly very middle-of-the-road character who possesses qualities that no one else does, so he can't be hasty or easy to mock others. Nick is both an insider and an outsider<sup>[9]</sup>. In the story, his personal morality grows, and he is the confidante whom the other characters trust; outside the story, he is the moral voice chosen by the author, who sees the emptiness brought by the destruction of the "American dream" pursued by the young people, and Nick sees it too. The author chose Nick not only because he saw it all, but also because he saw through it all and kept the morality in his heart. Nick came from the west, saw the filth in the east, and went back to the west to the place that symbolized purity and beauty to him. So it can be seen that Nick has a more holistic perspective and stronger morals for the characters in the book. As the narrator of the story, he is undoubtedly the one who knows the most about the story, and as the one to whom many people are confided, he is also the one who knows the most about these people. Therefore, he is able to look at the whole situation and judge the value like a "God". As for the reader, he is the one who experienced the story, and he has more layers of perception of the characters than we do. Selfish people are more selfish because they have no guilt, and generous people are more generous because they have no regrets. Nick sees it all with his eyes and feels what's happening in front of him with his heart, and that's what makes it especially shocking. The reader's imagination, although it takes them to "see" what happened, but there is always a layer of diaphragm, which can not be compared with Nick's personal experience. So while the reader will have a fuller, more objective view of Gatsby, Daisy or other characters, Nick is adamant in extolling the greatness of Gatsby and criticizing the selfishness of the Buchanans. Fitzgerald has highly praised dedication in *Heaven on Earth* "Dedication, by its inherent nature, is grand and impersonal; dedication should always be proud."<sup>[10]</sup> It can also be seen why Nick, and arguably Fitzgerald behind the scenes, praises Gatsby so highly, even though he is not an entirely irreproachable person.

## 3. Conclusions

This particular narrator, Nick, portrayed by Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby*, is a distinctive narrator when thought of from the point of view of the text, and a character imbued with expectations and advantages when thought of from the point of view of the content. In terms of Fitzgerald's desire to innovate in the form of the novel and his expectation that he could at least influence the world through his writing, there is no doubt as to the significance of Nick the narrator's existence. And he lives up to that expectation; he is ordinary, but he is what Fitzgerald wanted to see our readers all become.

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