



## Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel (Contemporary American Literature)

By Bob Batchelor

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In 1925, F. Scott Fitzgerald produced his third novel, a slim work for which he had high expectations. Despite such hopes, the novel received mixed reviews and lackluster sales. Over the decades, however, the reputation of *The Great Gatsby* has grown and millions of copies have been sold. One of the bestselling novels of all time, it is also considered one of the most significant achievements in twentieth-century fiction. But what makes *Gatsby* great? Why do we still care about this book more than eighty-five years after it was published? And how does *Gatsby* help us make sense of our own lives and times?

In *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel*, Bob Batchelor explores the birth, life, and enduring influence of *The Great Gatsby*—from the book’s publication in 1925 through today’s headlines filled with celebrity intrigue, corporate greed, and a roller-coaster economy. A cultural historian, Batchelor explains why and how the novel has become part of the fiber of the American ethos and an important tool in helping readers to better comprehend their lives and the broader world around them.

A “biography” of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s masterpiece, this book examines *The Great Gatsby*’s evolution from a nearly-forgotten 1920s time capsule to a revered cultural touchstone. Batchelor explores how this embodiment of the American Dream has become an iconic part of our national folklore, how the central themes and ideas emerging from the book—from the fulfillment of the American Dream to the role of wealth in society—resonate with contemporary readers who struggle with similar uncertainties today. By exploring the timeless elements of reinvention, romanticism, and relentless pursuit of the unattainable, Batchelor confirms the novel’s status as “The Great American Novel” and, more importantly, explains to students, scholars, and fans alike what makes *Gatsby* so great.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Poignant, penetrating, and persuasive! Bob Batchelor's keen reading of the cultural matrix underlying *The Great Gatsby* is must reading for anyone seriously interested in American literature in the 1920s. *Gatsby* is seminal reading for both the serious scholar and lay reader interested in America's richest literary period. The cultural insights and literary interpretations are overflowing in accessible prose."

-- Phillip Sipiora, Professor of English and Film Studies, University of South Florida, and Editor, *The Mailer Review*

Bob Batchelor's book is both a powerhouse cultural history of *The Great Gatsby* and an impassioned plea for the importance of literature and the humanities in the digital era. He takes readers on a lively tour of America's on-going fascination with the novel, shedding light on core American ideologies and how literary texts like *Gatsby* become touchstones that both shape and reflect those values over time.

-- Leigh H. Edwards, Florida State University, author of *Johnny Cash and the Paradox of American Identity*

Bob Batchelor -- cultural historian, literary critic, media expert -- provides multi-layered interpretations of the many Gatsbys -- of and within the novel, film adaptations, popular perception, and within Fitzgerald himself -- that demonstrate how the novel is both of and beyond its time, and why the book, and literature, must continue to matter. Batchelor's *Gatsby* is not merely American but America itself.

-- Jesse Kavadlo, Professor of English and Humanities Maryville University of St. Louis, author *Don DeLillo: Balance at the Edge of Belief*

Few are bold enough to use the term "great American novel" anymore. Fewer still are those who can make a compelling case for its application. . . .Batchelor claims this status for *The Great Gatsby*, and his arguments are captivating, readable, and convincing. His embrace of didactic purpose for literature is daring. . . .Putting the genie of postmodernism back in the bottle is impossible--even if one wanted to--but a return to appreciation of the worth of "deep" reading in the development of critical thinking skills would have salutary results in the general reading population as well as the critical realm. To that end, Batchelor asserts early on that Fitzgerald's "inherent ambiguity enables readers to use the novel as a barometer for measuring their own lives and the culture they inhabit." He demonstrates how *Gatsby* accomplishes this feat by carrying enough intellectual freight to defy categorization and to remain relevant to American society. Summing Up: Recommended. Lower- and upper-division undergraduates; general readers. (CHOICE)

Batchelor seeks to capitalize on the success of Baz Luhrmann's recent *Gatsby* film adaption with this exploration of the ways in which F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel *The Great Gatsby* has been employed in American culture. The book works best when it sticks to examining concrete uses of the book throughout the years. For example, it features a brief but intriguing discussion of how David Lynch included a passage from the novel in a late 1980s television ad for Calvin Klein. Batchelor does a good job of neatly summarizing the details surrounding the novel's composition and initial reception. (*Library Journal*)

Great *Gatsby* fans [should] check out author and Munroe Falls resident Bob Batchelor's *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel*. Batchelor explores the novel's birth, life, and enduring influence, from the novel's appearance in the heady year of 1925 through today's headlines filled with celebrity intrigue, corporate greed, and a roller-coaster economy. Batchelor shows why and how *Gatsby* has become part of the fiber of the American ethos and an important tool in helping readers to better comprehend

their lives and the broader world around them. (*Tallmadge Express*)

*The Great Gatsby's* enduring legacy can be attributed, at least in part, to the shared experience Americans have with the book. However, the work's staying power in the national consciousness is due to far more than mere exposure. Beyond being included on many high school syllabi and reading lists, Batchelor argues that its enduring popularity is also due to its accessibility to readers and its inherent ambiguity [that] enables readers to use the novel as a barometer for measuring their own lives and the culture they inhabit. These seemingly conflicting characteristics create the foundation for *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel* as it sets out to chronicle not just the book's reception through the decades but also its connections to some of its main concepts such as the meaning of the American dream. Most significantly, Batchelor seeks to explain and validate *The Great Gatsby's* continued significance in many facets of American, and even international culture. . . . *Gatsby* achieves these aims while also balancing the sometimes incompatible demands of being enlightening for scholars and being approachable for a broad audience. . . . [I]t is obvious that Batchelor not only has great affection for his subject but also a wealth of knowledge of the text, its history, and its use over the years. The sense of warmth and the depth and breadth of knowledge regarding the novel and American culture provide *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel* with its readability. . . . *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel* is an important and worthwhile resource for those well-versed in *The Great Gatsby* as well as for those who want to know more about the book and its impact on American culture. (*The Journal of Popular Culture*)

In what seems to be the first in the Contemporary American Literature series, Bob Batchelor, James Pedas Professor of Communication and executive director of the James Pedas Communication Center at Thiel College, author or editor of more than 20 books, founding editor of the *Popular Culture Studies Journal*, and editor of the Contemporary American Literature series, gives a narrative history of the critical and cultural fortunes of F. Scott Fitzgerald and the novel *The Great Gatsby* from its publication in 1925 until 2013, when a new movie version starring Leonardo DiCaprio was released. The author includes extensive notes, a bibliography, and an index. . . . Batchelor covers the ground well, pointing up the similarities between the 1920s and the 2010s in America—the culture of fame, the gap between rich and poor, and the conspicuous consumption of the rich. . . . There have been numerous book-length studies about the novel, including those by Fitzgerald experts such as Matthew J. Bruccoli, but this is the most up-to-date source on its reputation and relevance for our times. This work . . . could be assigned to the reserve rooms or reserve shelves in high school or college libraries where *The Great Gatsby* is taught. (*American Reference Books Annual*)

Batchelor's *Gatsby* [is] impressively researched and smartly organized. (*The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*)

One of the bestselling novels of all time, *The Great Gatsby* is also considered one of the most significant achievements in twentieth-century fiction. In *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel*, Bob Batchelor explores the birth, life, and enduring influence of *The Great Gatsby*—from the book's publication in 1925 through today's headlines filled with celebrity intrigue, corporate greed, and a roller-coaster economy. A cultural historian, Batchelor explains why and how the novel has become part of the fiber of the American ethos and an important tool in helping readers to better comprehend their lives and the broader world around them. By exploring the timeless elements of reinvention, romanticism, and relentless pursuit of the unattainable, Batchelor confirms the novel's status as "The Great American Novel" and, more importantly, explains to students, scholars, and fans alike what makes *Gatsby* so great.

#### About the Author

Bob Batchelor is James Pedas Professor of Communication and Executive Director of the James Pedas Communication Center at Thiel College. He is the author or editor of 26 books, including: *The 1900s; The 1980s; The 2000s;* and *American Pop: Popular Culture Decade by Decade* (4 volumes), *Cult Pop Culture* (3

volumes) and *John Updike: A Critical Biography* (2013). He is founding editor of the *Popular Culture Studies Journal* and on the Editorial Review Board of *The Journal of Popular Culture*. Batchelor edits the Contemporary American Literature series published by Rowman & Littlefield.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Mark Hernandez:**

Do you certainly one of people who can't read gratifying if the sentence chained from the straightway, hold on guys this specific aren't like that. This *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel (Contemporary American Literature)* book is readable by means of you who hate those straight word style. You will find the data here are arrange for enjoyable studying experience without leaving actually decrease the knowledge that want to supply to you. The writer of *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel (Contemporary American Literature)* content conveys the idea easily to understand by lots of people. The printed and e-book are not different in the content material but it just different such as it. So , do you nonetheless thinking *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel (Contemporary American Literature)* is not loveable to be your top list reading book?

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The actual book *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel (Contemporary American Literature)* has a lot of information on it. So when you make sure to read this book you can get a lot of advantage. The book was authored by the very famous author. Tom makes some research previous to write this book. This particular book very easy to read you may get the point easily after reading this article book.

#### **Dave Edwards:**

*Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel (Contemporary American Literature)* can be one of your starter books that are good idea. All of us recommend that straight away because this e-book has good vocabulary that could increase your knowledge in vocab, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nonetheless delivering the information. The article writer giving his/her effort to get every word into joy arrangement in writing *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel (Contemporary American Literature)* nevertheless doesn't forget the main point, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource data that maybe you can be among it. This great information may drawn you into fresh stage of crucial contemplating.

#### **James Roberts:**

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the content will not disappoint an individual. The inside or content is fantastic as the outside or perhaps cover. Your reading sixth sense will directly direct you to pick up this book.

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