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Games & Disguise: The Businessman in 19th & 20th Century Literature

Megan Koperna

John Carroll University, mkoperna17@jcu.edu

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Megan Koperna

Dr. LaGuardia

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Games & Disguise: The Businessman in 19th & 20th Century Literature

Recognizable through his unrelenting lust for power, status, and perhaps most importantly, money, the character of the businessman in U.S. and British writers in 19th and 20th century literature expresses the attitudes of these writers toward capitalism, identity, and relation to self and the world. The businessman first emerges simply as an evil, corrupting force; but over time, he becomes increasingly complex. Writers over the last two hundred years show that while games and trickery initially help businessmen advance themselves, the characters ultimately fail because of their selfishness. Concerns about business portrayed by the writers reflect concerns more widely held today, in a world with an increasing regard for ethics in business. The failures of the businessmen in the selected texts call for a need to consider all stakeholders in business; the use of the flawed businessmen anticipates today's notion of ethical business conduct by condemning corruption. Charles Dickens' *Dombey and Son*, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* each present a character situated in a different time and locale who uses games and disguise to advance himself. A careful investigation of Carker the Manager, the Duke and Dauphin, and Jay Gatsby illustrates their reliance on skill in games and disguise to advance their interests and their resulting failures.

To analyze Carker's role in *Dombey and Son*, one must first understand the attitudes held towards the businessman at the time. Literature on the Victorian period does not offer one clear definition of the businessman, nor does it offer a definite stance on how people of the time

viewed the new financial market. The unclear definition can be attributed to the rapid and confusing rise of new markets and terminology, as well as the interpretive liberty taken by scholars to come to their own definitions. Schmitt suggests that as contemporary scholars began to view the stock market as more important to them, in literature “the Victorian stock market was becoming more important to the Victorians” (7). One must consider how much or how little the Victorians were affected by the stock markets.

On the surface, Carker’s characterization emulates the typical business man of the time as Dickens exaggerates his features to make the parallels obvious to the reader, yet there are several ways in which Carker departs from the general traits of the businessman. For instance, Dickens characterizes Carker as manager of financials. As a manager, Carker holds a position of power in the hierarchy of the business. In the text, Carker manages financials, which requires mental agility and good planning to succeed. As a financial manager, Dickens presents the reader with a correlation between Carker’s skill at card games to his career advancement. That underlying mental skill also aligns with his seduction of Alice Marwood and Edith Dombey. Ultimately, Carker uses his skill at games to advance his business and personal agenda with women, and it leads to his failure.

Understanding Carker requires one to think beyond his simple role as manager and even his general reading as a villain. Anne Humphreys presents a detailed analysis of Carker in her essay “Dombey and Son: Carker the Manager”. Regarding the reader’s view of Carker, she says:

We first view him as the stereotyped melodramatic villain of flashing teeth and menacing smiles. . . Yet as the novel develops, another Carker appears, one with characteristics that do not seem to fit this stagy villain very comfortably—namely, intelligence, taste, sensitivity, and most interestingly the ability to evoke powerfully conflicted responses

from women (398).

Humphreys points to his characteristics of intelligence, taste, and sensitivity, and I argue that it is his use of games, both recreational and manipulative, in business and with women, that make him multidimensional and allow the reader to experience these traits in him.

In part, Carker's complexity comes from the financial and societal changes taking place at the time. The confusion of the new financial business world promoted fraudulent activities. In her research, Wilson found:

The arrival of the railway company transformed the importance of the joint-stock company. . . it allowed financial fraud to thrive. . . "Monitoring directors became increasingly difficult, while reduced opportunity for detecting derelictions of duties allowed incompetence to flourish, and, in some cases, actually provided incentive to partake in fraud" (Robb 199) (Wilson 1075).

Carker works in a business space with plenty of opportunity to gain personal responsibility and no one in the firm to monitor his activities.

The specific way in which Carker ruined Dombey and Son was not specified in the novel, but he had both ability and incentive to do so because he had autonomy in decision making while Dombey was away. Dombey entrusted the business to Carker; a risky decision in a time with minimal surveillance of business affairs. After Paul dies and Carker begins to gain authority in the firm, the narrator describes, "Mr Carker treats no one. . . and it would seem that there is something gone from Mr Carker's path - some obstacle removed - which clears his way before him" (267). Dombey's preoccupation with his grief gives Carker the space he needs to put his schemes into place and take part in fraudulent activities.

The air of confusion due to the rise of financial firms carried over to widespread

confusion about social class, pointing to the evolving influence of the aristocracy. For example, Conlin expressively stated that “concerns with the implications of class relations under the new culture of investment were pervasive” (13). In the text, this air of confusion presents itself through uncertainty about class on the basis of clothing, as evidenced by Mr. Toodle’s initial work “mostly underground” (30) and later advancement to working on the railroad. When Mr. Toodle and Dombey meet again, the narrator says Mr. Toodle was “dressed in a canvass suit. . . professionally clothed” and Mr. Toodle refuses Dombey’s offer of money, saying that his family is doing well (308).

While the author denotes Mr. Toodle’s rise in station by describing his apparel, his description of Carker’s apparel serves a different purpose—it shows one of the ways in which Carker uses his skill in games, specifically in the form of disguise, to manipulate others. The narrator’s description, “The stiffness and nicety of Mr Carker’s dress, and a certain arrogance of manner, either natural to him, or imitated from a pattern not far off, gave great additional affect to his humility,” (196) tells the reader that Carker dresses like Dombey by imitating the pattern. Imitation is one sort of game, and that Carker follows a pattern also points to the idea that he dresses per the rules of the game. Because dress symbolized social standing in Victorian England, it makes sense that Carker would use imitation to show that he should not be perceived as lesser than Dombey.

The example of Carker dressing like Dombey provides a starting point for showing how Carker uses games for self-advancement. In Victorian culture, games and gambling were one part of the greater social experience. With a greater access to capital, the Victorian period gave rise to several new leisure activities, and participants in this arena risk straying from traditional morals. In one example, Conlin describes, “Pleasure gardens such as Vauxhall are regularly cited

as typifying a nascent public sphere, one identified with the commodification of culture and the rise of the “middling rank.” . . . pleasure gardens join West End theaters, art exhibitions, and concert halls as “part of an established itinerary of cultural pleasures.” (721). The experiences available in the public sphere expanded, such as these pleasure gardens and concert halls, and Carker represents the shift from the old social norms to new ones. Wilson even suggests that financial crime has a considerable capacity to inflict societal damage not only economically, but socially as well (1074). The connection between the business world, gambling and games, and the social framework of the period is highly apparent and translates into how Carker conducts himself in business and with women.

As financial firms began to dominate business in London, the public knew little about finance or the working of the firms. The average person used their knowledge of gambling to make sense of investing. Schmitt observes that “there was eventually agreement as to the impossibility of distinguishing what it meant to invest from what it meant to speculate” (11). Evidently, gambling and investing were intricately connected from a societal perspective. Gambling actually made investing more understandable to the masses, which Schmitt explains: “the moral opprobrium lingeringly associated with the latter that something be invoked to legitimize it by contrast. Gambling served this purpose--especially the gambling enabled by new, hybrid institutions that involved themselves with both the racetrack and the market” (11). The rise of hybrid gambling and investing institutions made investing accessible to more people, and skilled gamblers found success in investment as well.

Business involves gambling and playing at odds, and Carker’s skill in games translates to his conduct as a manager. In regards to why he plays games and Dombey does not, Carker says, ““Oh! *He!*” returned the Manager. ‘He has never had occasion to acquire such little arts. To men

like me, they are sometimes useful” (415). Possibly, Dombey does not need to play games because he conducts business fairly, but Carker, with less power, only thrives in the business world through the tricks he has learned by playing games. With the games he plays using the people around him, Carker advances his desire for personal power and control, eventually destroying several households.

Dickens uses language pointing to Carker’s use of game-skill in his business dealings and interactions with women throughout *Dombey and Son*. In one example, Dombey notices Carker’s good memory: “‘You have an accurate memory of your own,’ said Mr Dombey. ‘Oh! I!’ returned the manager. ‘It’s the only capital of a man like me.’” (196). Memory is a skill that gives game players a distinct advantage over others, and here, Carker says his memory is his “capital,” tying his game skills into the business world.

Further game language appears when Carker plants Rob the Grinder into the Gills household as his spy. After skipping school and falling into trouble, Rob hangs around Dombey and Son, looking for a job. Carker eventually admits him, grabs him by the throat, and says, “‘I have got you, have I?’” (335) indicating that he has power over him, which positions Carker to control Rob and use him in a scheme. When establishing a position for Rob within the Gills house, Carker uses his skills to ensure that Uncle Sol cooperates. Carker senses Uncle Sol does not like the arrangement and “added quickly, in anticipation of what the old man was going to say” (337) further reasons why he insists Uncle Sol welcome the boy. Carker anticipates the way the conversation is going and adjusts to ensure he gets his desired outcome in the same way as a game-player adjusts his strategy to ensure he wins. To finalize the structure of the game and display his dominance, Carker and Rob the Grinder visit the Toodle home. Carker tells the Toodles how he came across Rob the Grinder “in his own way,” and creates a story that makes

him sound as though he is Rob's savior (341). Carker's creation of this story completes the game, as now Rob, Uncle Sol, and the Toodle family all become subservient to him.

Carker's game-like way of interacting with the world also plays out in his relationship with his older brother, John. Many years earlier, John committed a disgraceful crime against the firm. John regrets committing the crime, especially because of the pain it caused his family (204). Carker uses John's regret against him to maintain power over him, even asking John "Haven't you injured me enough already?" (200).

The skillset required to succeed at game play and in business quite easily translates to seduction. In one definition, "Seduction wants something; it desires some *thing*—to have, to possess the other. Seduction has a vested interest, a *telos*, an end" (Fleming 21). In games, one desires to win and triumph over others; the same goes for business. Additionally, seduction's "means may be many; its goal, however, is strictly delimited" (21), which is also the case with business and games.

The reader views Carker's seduction of Alice Marwood from her perspective, long after the events took place, yet his gaming ways remains poignant in her description of the past. When Carker no longer found Alice useful to him, he had her put to trial as a criminal "having perverted the gifts of nature" and she was sent abroad to "learn her duty" (531). For Carker, Alice is simply a pawn in his game, and he discarded her at his discretion. Alice provided another outlet for Carker's game-like desire for domination, and by having her sent away, he entirely asserted himself over her.

In Carker's seduction of and escape with Edith, Carker's skill in games takes the form of "winning" Edith. Clark claims, "Carker's interest is in sexual proliferation. . . Carker is not at all inhibited by the respect that name and position are supposed to induce: he sees the world as a

free trade marketplace in which his only duty is to corner as much as he can. Dombey's wife and fortune are his if he can take them" (79). Carker's unrelenting corruption becomes apparent by looking at Carker's business interests through this lens of sexuality.

Suddenly, Edith turns Carker's game against him, as Carker's use of games to succeed in business and with women leads to his demise. Once Carker and Edith make their escape to Bijon, Carker readies himself the way he would for another game. Edith beats Carker to the meeting place and two men with keys enter the private apartment to begin to make preparations for dinner. They tell her that Monsieur commanded them to ready the room, that he feared Edith missed his letter, and they reminded her of the commands Carker put forth in the letter (817). After Carker and Edith flee to Bijon together, Carker clearly plans out how he wants the evening to proceed, in a game-like manner, by offering "commands" Edith must follow, like the rules of a game. Monsieur (Carker) enters the dining room and embraces Edith, addressing her in French as his charming wife (818), which all aligns with his game-like intentions.

When Edith expresses her desire to depart from the game, Carker quickly demands "we must make a treaty of this" (826). To reassert himself in the game, he proposes a treaty between them rather than risk losing entirely. Edith rants about how he took advantage of her, twice using the words, "and calculated on it, and so pursued me" (823). Carker sees a business opportunity and a sexual escapade in the pursuit of Edith, in which pursuit he succeeds by using his game-skill, to which Edith calls attention when she says he "calculated". When Edith begins to assert herself over Carker, the narrator describes, "he feigned to be amused by her caprice" (821). Carker continues to play the game even when it begins to turn on him, as he feigns amusement at her reasonable arguments against him.

Carker nears his fall and desperately clings to his game-skills, refusing to admit defeat.

As Edith threatens to stab him, the narrator describes Carker's turmoil: "He would have sold his soul to root her, in her beauty to the floor, and make her arms drop at her sides, and her at his mercy" (826). Carker's desire to dominate Edith reveals his weakness—that he refuses to admit defeat. Edith almost taunts as she turns the tables on him, telling him "[you] played your traitor's part" (825). Carker arranges games under the presumption that his skills exceed those of the people around him. He pursues Edith as his accomplice using his skills of seduction, certain that she wants to continue the affair beyond their initial flight from the Dombey household. When she flees Dijon, Carker believes she contacts authorities and he cannot think clearly due to "the frustration of his schemes" (828). Rather than staying in Dijon and seeing if Edith truly alerts authorities of his location, Carker leaves, which shows that he fears defeat.

As Carker flees, he reflects on his employment of game skills. The narrator says, "He thought of how jealous he had been of the boy, how jealous he had been of the girl, how artfully he had kept intruders at a distance, and drawn a circle round his dupe that none but himself should cross" (832). Carker's "art" of gaming comes out of his jealousy of the Dombey children. He thinks back on how he has "duped" others and the error he made in designing this final game, in which Edith prevails over him. Before a train destroys him, Carker locks eyes with his pursuer, the man from whom he fled (842). In this instance, the reader sees a new Carker, Carker the victim, the played, and the games that brought him so much initial success turn to ruin him.

Carker ultimately fails due to the central role of self-interest in decision-making within the games he plays in business and with women. He does not see any potential repercussions for taking advantage of those less powerful than him, which leads to his fall. For example, Carker disregards the possibility that Edith may assert her own self-interests, thinking she is simply a sexual pawn who enables him to bring down Dombey. In "Reading Ruin: Failure and the Forms

of Characters, 1849-1865,” critic Aeron Hunt situates the businessman in novels of ruin. He explains the self-interest component of the businessman character as follows:

To say that economic self-interest is not the singular motivating force directing human behavior, and that it therefore should not be considered above all else when describing human character, is not the same thing as saying that economic self-interest presents a cognitive or moral impediment to character judgment (127).

Carker’s economic self-interest, along with his desire to dominate, directs him above all else, and inhibits him from always making good sound decisions. Economic self-interest and a desire to dominate do not always act in accordance with one another, as Carker’s pursuit of Alice Marwood gave him no economic benefit.

Many factors beyond economic self-interest motivate Carker to act and use his skill. Hunt later contends in his essay that “even within the sphere of business . . . behavior is guided by multiple psychological and social factors: emotions, relationships, social competitiveness, and so forth. And thus self-interest can’t be abstracted from those other qualities that it is supposed to overcome in situations where character judgment is required” (127). Because his self-interest is intricately tied to the social factors Hunt describes, Carker’s emotions and relationships become entangled with his self-interest. Additionally, Carker’s game play with the goal of advancing his self-interests takes place due to his social competitiveness and his relationships with others. He needed Edith to help him destroy Dombey and relies on her being submissive to him, and his own miscalculation causes him to fail.

The literature does not give one specific definition of the Victorian businessman, but in many ways, the reader gets a sense of the emergence of a new, corrupt businessman through Dicken’s characterization of Carker. At the same time, Carker represents far more than that—he

represents greater societal changes. For example, new social opportunities and venues for gambling and leisure became available to the middle class. The unregulated financial institutions provided other opportunities such as class mobility and fraud. The masses made sense of the economic changes through their knowledge of gambling, and Carker literally transfers his game skills over to the business world, leading to the destruction of Dombey and Son. Using skills acquired through game-play, Carker controls and manipulates those around him to elevate himself and advance his interests. In the end, his games turn against him when he becomes overly-confident, believing Edith is another pawn, rather than an opponent. Carker's game play translates to the business world and to the seduction of women until Edith reveals his weakness and he meets his fate.

Published in 1885, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* introduces a new American version of the greedy, scheming businessman. While Dickens' Carker emerges from the economic opportunities of the Victorian period in urban England, Twain's evil businessmen establish themselves in America's poor, rural South. While journeying down the Mississippi on a raft, Huck and Jim encounter a pair of vagabonds--the Duke and Dauphin--who use trickery and outlandish antics to swindle money from naive townspeople. The con men embody many of the same characteristics as the early businessman introduced by Dickens. Unlike Dickens' Carker, the Duke and Dauphin's use of games does not help them advance socially but simply provides them with a means of survival. The characters evolve due to the context of the South during the time period; still, the Duke and Dauphin end up tarred and feathered, again pointing to the ultimate failure of the scheming businessman. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the presentation of the American version of the aristocracy juxtaposed with the rising middle class comes through in a satirical manner rather than in the more serious style of *Dombey and Son*; yet

it reinforces the businessman's fall due to his selfish dealings.

The reader first encounters the Duke and Dauphin using games for personal advancement conning towns along the Mississippi. The men seek sanctuary on Huck and Jim's raft, and Huck critically assesses their disheveled apparel and points out that they both have "big fat ratty-looking carpet bags" (91). The two men give an initial backstory, revealing that they do not know one another but were both run out of a town along the river due to corrupt business ventures. The younger man describes the reason for his trouble: "I'd been selling an article to take the tartar off the teeth--and it does take it off, too, and gernerly the enamel along with it". The older man describes his situation as: "Well, I'd ben a-runnin' a little temperance revival thar, 'bout a week. . .somehow or another a little report got around, last night, that I had a way of puttin' in my private time with a jug, on the side," (91). The younger man's admission that the product he sold damages teeth suggests that he disregards the people he hurts when trying to make money. The older man's running of a temperance revival also shows disregard for the people along the river, as his own drinking habits are found out and he is driven out of town.

The Duke and Dauphin decide to work as a team to pull off scams. Huck says, "The king got out an old ratty deck of cards. . . Then they got tired of it, and allowed they would "lay out a campaign," as they called it," (99). The pair reference their scam plans as "campaigns" to make them sound more legitimate. While the campaigns are simply plots to make quick cash, the use of disguise and illusion turns thievery and theft into acceptable reality as the con men make their way from town to town (Vales 424).

The Duke and Dauphin mostly con uneducated people in impoverished towns, which illustrates their disregard for the welfare of the people impacted by their business ventures and their selfishness. The group comes upon a crowd attending an outdoor church service, and Huck

describes the attendees, “The women had on sun-bonnets; and some had on linsey-woolsey frocks. . .Some of the young men was barefooted, and some of the children didn’t have on any clothes but just a tow-linen shirt,” (99). Huck’s description points out the poverty prevalent in the group. The Dauphin gets up on stage and puts on a performance about being a pirate changed by faith who wants to evangelize the other pirates. He woos the crowd with his compelling “performance,” as Huck describes it, and he “collected eighty-seven dollars and seventy-five cents” (100) from the barely-surviving townspeople. The Dauphin finds no ethical issue with lying to naive townspeople and swindling whatever meager sum they can donate to his false cause.

One of the Duke and Dauphin’s most significant plots involves taking advantage of the Wilks family and attempting to swindle the family fortune. While they try to determine whether a village seems like a good place for the Royal Nonesuch, their fake Shakespearean routine, Huck and the Dauphin meet a young man who tells them all about a man everyone is expecting in town after many years, since his brother has died. The Dauphin asks the young man all sorts of details about the man, the brother, and the entire Wilks family, and realizes the economic upside to pretending he is the long lost brother (120-121). Huck says, “I see what *he* was up to; but I never said nothing, of course,” (122). The Dauphin creates a plan with the Duke to dupe the Wilks family into believing he is Harvey Wilks and steal the family fortune. Their plan ultimately fails due to Huck’s wit, yet the example illustrates again that the con men will steal from anyone, even young girls who just lost their father. (Do I need more about this con?)

The Duke and Dauphin commit the greatest con when they betray Huck and sell Jim. Driven by their lust for money, they sell Jim, as the Duke explains to Huck, “Fact is, I reckon we’d come to consider him *our* nigger; yes, we did consider him so--goodness knows we had

trouble enough for him. . . That old fool sold him, and never divided with me, and the money's gone," (163). The con men use Huck for his raft, and then sell his only companion, which shows the ruthlessness of the Duke and Dauphin and their disregard for the innocent. It also underscores an extension of their skills in conning; initially, the handbill the Duke creates to allow the group to travel the river by day, and then later, he is able to use the fake document to sell Jim as if he is his slave. The Duke and Dauphin constantly adapt their plans based on their greatest current needs.

The con men use their skills to reshape life on the raft and control Huck. As one critic describes, "The Duke and the Dauphin decide that it will be 'pretended' that Jim is a runaway slave captured by the three white travelers, because this scheme will enable the group to travel by day," (Valkeakari 37). The men bring their deception onto the raft and disrupt Huck and Jim's pattern. With a background in printing, the Duke enacts his legitimate skill to create something false. While traveling by day makes journeying down the Mississippi easier, it changes life for Huck and Jim. The Duke asserts his power as the skilled businessman to dictate Huck and Jim's plans, portraying the businessman's ability to influence and take advantage of those with less power. When Huck gets angry that the Duke sold Jim, the Duke threatens, "'Well, you can't *get* your nigger, that's all--so dry up your blubbering. Looky here--do you think *you'd* venture to blow on us? Blamed if I think I'd trust you. Why, if you was to blow on us--' He stopped, but I never see the duke look so ugly out of his eyes before," (164). The Duke no longer views Huck as useful in helping him advance his cause and begins to worry that he will alert the authorities of his schemes before he can make any money. When he realizes Huck could take away his advantage over him by turning him in, the Duke threatens him to restore his position of power.

In *Huck Finn*, the apparel and disguises worn by the evil businessmen relate to their

ability to dominate the poor and exemplify issues of aristocracy and social class. The Duke and Dauphin indicate a more literal use of the businessman's putting on of costumes and false identities in order to make money. Hiner references, "The Duke and the Dauphin are nothing but impersonators. We meet them in their grandiose roles of phony royalty and watch them as their scoundrelly natures lead them to impersonate," (621). Referring to the Duke and Dauphin as "nothing but impersonators" diminishes the irony in their choice of names and their role in the novel. Twain's choice to dub the con men with names reflecting back on the British aristocracy warps one's understanding of class in the South. The two men create elaborate stories of their ancestry and of how far they have fallen in comparison to their ancestors; but in fact, the Duke and Dauphin possess the same qualities as their false family members. Like the aristocracy of the past, the con men use their learned skills, as their "ancestors" would have possessed, to control and swindle those on the shore the way many kings and feudal lords took advantage of their peasants. Unlike the historical aristocracy, the false aristocrats are themselves peasants and end up outsmarted by townspeople at their stops and are sent away, in the same manner that kings would banish those who did not obey.

The Duke and Dauphin regularly discard one disguise, or "identity," and take on another. In terms of the Duke and Dauphin's identities, one critic claims:

The identities assumed by the King and Duke seem to be drawn not so much from life as from literature and the stage. However, Huck's re-creations of himself are hardly flawless. . . Both Huck's geographical and historical sense are limited, but he succeeds as do the King and the Duke with even this disguise because American society is, for the most part, so very gullible and ill-informed (Allingham 456).

Allingham argues that Huck adopts his false identities from the world around him, but the Duke

and Dauphin create themselves from literature and plays; yet, the con men also take on identities based on their sense of the world. One might consider the examples of the Wilks family or the Dauphin pretending to be a pirate to steal from a congregation as the Duke and Dauphin adopting disguises and identities based on the world around them, showing skill in conning beyond that of the Royal Nonesuch scam.

The fate of the businessmen in *Huck Finn* does not exactly parallel that of *Dombey and Son*, in which Carker dies a gruesome death by train. As the train symbolized progress in Dickens' novel and fittingly destroys Carker, who tries to cheat to get ahead, the Duke and Dauphin face justice at the hands of those that they cheat--innocent townspeople. Huck watches as justice befalls companions: “. . . here comes a raging rush of people, with torches, and an awful whooping and yelling, and banging tin pans and blowing horns. . . I see they had the king and the duke astraddle of a rail--that is, i knowed it was the king and the duke, though they was all over tar and feathers, and didn't look like nothing in the world that was human. . .” (174). Huck watches the wild scene, finally free of the influence of the Duke and Dauphin.

The businessmen of the novel fail because of their disregard for the innocent people affected by their harmful scams. One critic describes: “. . .it seems perfectly clear that sooner or later their confidence game would backfire, and their particular kind of punishment was usual then on the frontier--not only usual but eminently just. They have assumed different aliases and costumes throughout the book: let them get out of that costume!” (Rubenstein 73). The con men receive a punishment expected during the time period, and the tar and feather scene satisfies the desire for justice for all those the false businessmen harmed along their journey. As Rubenstein suggests, the tar and feather ending for the characters is also ironic in that, after shifting costumes and identities throughout the novel, their punishment comes in the form of another

costume of sorts.

The fate of the Duke and Dauphin also corrects the imbalance caused by the Duke and Dauphin on the raft. In his critical essay, Hiner develops, “Yet each world-heart and head, raft and shore-has its own determinants and follows its own laws and contradictory destiny independently of the other” (621). Huck and Jim’s sense of laws and right and wrong do not align with that of the values of those on shore, as Huck comes to view Jim as his equal rather than a slave, and certainly not those of the Duke and Dauphin. Once the Duke and Dauphin exit the novel, Huck is left on shore to determine whether his new moral understanding of race learned earlier on the raft still holds true, and he can focus on it without the constant disruption of the con men.

Additionally, Huck’s perception of the fate of the con men shapes that of the reader. Allingham writes, “He knew from his own upbringing that human beings “*can* be awful cruel to one another,” so that the fate of the King and the Duke merely served to reinforce that knowledge,” (453-454). Huck views the tar and feathering of the Duke and Dauphin as just, and in his reference to human beings being cruel to one another, he calls attention not only to the injustices committed by the false businessmen but also to the cruelty of the townspeople who tar and feather the con men. Hiner says, “The central fact of life on shore is its madness: thirteen deaths, most of them violent; the lynching of the Duke and Dauphin. . . The central fact of life on shore is its own will to violence and madness” (621). Huck must reconcile the tar and feather scene with his ideas of what is just and unjust.

The businessman of the 20th century became a more complex figure than earlier businessmen as rapid technological and social advancements changed his role in society. An analysis of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby* sheds light on this complexity,

while demonstrating the businessman's continued need for skills in gaming and the lasting if dwindling effect of the aristocracy on the business world. *The Great Gatsby* returns to an urban setting, paralleling *Dombey and Son*, and in the same way as *Huck Finn*, the novel provides insight into a unique time and setting in American history. In terms of business opportunities, Gatsby lives in a strange and exciting world of opportunity, similar to that which the Duke and Dauphin and Carker perceive in their pursuit of wealth and power. As a businessman whose intention is to gain wealth and power to win over Daisy, Gatsby uses games and manipulates the new aristocracy to find success, but fails due to the dark background of his work and his wastefulness.

To view Gatsby as businessman and his use of games and disguise, one must first note the business theme in the text. More subtle in the novel than the themes of disillusionment and the American Dream, the business theme coincides with the parties and rowdiness in the novel. At Nick's first Gatsby party, he narrates, ". . . young Englishmen dotted about. . . I was sure that they were selling something: bonds or insurance or automobiles," (42) hence, many party goers saw the events as business opportunities. Nick further noted, "They were at least agonizingly aware of the easy money in the vicinity and convinced that it was theirs for a few words in the right key" (42). Business deals could be made if they used "the right key," a description that fuses the musical element of a party with making a business pitch.

Other elements of Gatsby's parties that relate to business include his phone interruptions and the guest list--Gatsby nor his party guests are untainted from less-than-upstanding business affairs. Twice at Nick's first party, business calls pull Gatsby away--first, a call from Chicago (48) and later, a call from Philadelphia (53). While it is not explicit that these calls deal with anything illegal, Gatsby's hiding his job and affairs from his guests makes them seem less than

upstanding. Nick's description of the guests also gives the reader skepticism about the legality of their business affairs. When describing the guest list, Nick names Beluga the tobacco importer (62) “. . .and the De Jongs and Ernest Lily--they came to gamble, and when Ernest wandered into the garden it meant he was cleaned out and Associated Traction would have to fluctuate profitability next day” (62). Nick knows that the gamblers fake the profits of their company based on how well they do gambling the night prior. Nick says that the escorts of one prominent guest adopt the last names of flower “. . .or the stern ones of the great American capitalists. . .” (63) again highlighting the connection between business and the parties.

The business theme in *The Great Gatsby* extends after Gatsby's death. Gatsby's father reflects on his deceased son: “If he'd have lived, he'd of been a great man. A man like James J. Hill. He'd of helped build up the country” (168). Stephen Brauer suggests that while Gatsby's father mourned for what his son could have achieved in a lifetime, the reference to James J. Hill, an industrialist robber baron, signifies the connection between ruthlessness in business behind the decadent lifestyle presented in the text (52-53). Brauer more fully describes the significance of the reference to robber barons: “Historians had chronicled their ruthlessness in business matters from the beginning of their reign over the American scene. Their strict adherence to the tenets of capitalism, especially their stockpiling and display of wealth while other Americans were suffering economic hardships, illustrated that personal success could have broader social costs” (Brauer 52-53). Brauer's assertion supports the argument that Gatsby's characterization points to ethical issues in business. Gatsby's connection to a robber baron shows the ruthless side of his business ventures and the social costs associated with his opulent lifestyle. The novel heavily emphasizes the self-made man while also suggesting the shift towards the legitimacy of the means of making money did not matter as much as the results (Brauer 52).

Gatsby's uses games differently from Carker, whose literal skill with card games translates to his manipulative abilities in business, and the Duke and Dauphin, who come up with elaborate cons. Nonetheless, games in a more metaphorical sense play a significant role in the novel. Gatsby's coming into himself, making himself into the great man with elaborate parties, required skill in games, and all together, his persona is the culmination of his games. He creates a false version of himself for the world to see in order to gain enough power and influence to deserve Daisy; winning Daisy rather than merely achieving wealth through business cunning is his long-term goal.

Gatsby's game of creating himself plays out through the illegal nature of his business ventures. While Gatsby does not openly identify as a gangster, he deals with criminals and gamblers on a regular basis. As Gatsby drives Nick to tea with Jordan Baker--where Gatsby uses Jordan to convince Nick to stage a meeting between Daisy and himself--he is stopped by a police officer and gets out of a ticket by showing the officer a "white card." Gatsby says, "I was able to do the commissioner a favor once, and he sends me a Christmas card every year," (68). Then, Nick and Gatsby lunch with Meyer Wolfsheim, who Gatsby refers to as a gambler who fixed the 1919 World Series "because he saw an opportunity" (73), praising him for doing so regardless of the legal implications. Towards the end of the novel, after Tom conducts an "investigation" of Gatsby, and reveals, "I found out what your 'drug-stores' were. . .bought up a lot of side-street drug-stores here and in Chicago and sold grain alcohol over the counter. That's one of his little stunts. . . That drug store business was just small change," continued Tom slowly, "but you've got something on now that Walter's afraid to tell me about." (133-134). Tom discovers one of the ways that Gatsby illegally came into his wealth, which points to Gatsby's reliance on illicit business schemes to create himself. Evidently, Gatsby manipulates the people and systems in

place around him to advance his own interests.

Gatsby feels so confident about his underhanded means of generating wealth that, as a thank you for inviting Daisy over for tea, he offers Nick, a bond salesman, a job, “. . .you see, I carry a little business on the side. . . It happens to be a rather confidential sort of thing” (83). Gatsby conducts business “on-the-side” and “confidential sort of thing[s].” Allen Boyer argues in “‘The Great Gatsby’, the Black Sox, High Finance, and American Law” that in the novel, Gatsby’s connection to the fixed World Series and involvement in securities fraud “trace back in fiction to Meyer Wolfsheim. In life they trace back to Wolfsheim's real-life counterpart, Arnold Rothstein,” (329). Boyer explains that as a gambler and mastermind of securities fraud, Rothstein swindled hundreds of millions, perhaps billions, of dollars from naive customers at his bucket-shops--discount retail securities houses. As a con man, he is a much more successful and ruthless version of the Duke and the Dauphin. Additionally, Boyer speculates that when Fitzgerald rose in New York City as a young writer may have led to him mingle in the same circles as Rothstein, and he fashioned Gatsby after him (332-333). While Boyer makes an intriguing argument, Gatsby’s interaction with notorious crooks is tempered with his goal of something beyond self-making or profit. Gatsby and the villains use one another initially for the betterment of both parties but the strange balance becomes disproportionate and leads to his destruction.

Gatsby’s connection to illegal activities is not his focus, but a means to win Daisy, his ultimate prize. Viewing Daisy as a prize and love as a game, Elizabeth Morgan offers a reading of the text through the lens of courtly love in “Gatsby in the Garden: Courtly Love and Irony.” Morgan elegantly details how Gatsby’s love for Daisy fulfills the definition of courtly love; an elaborately praised lady, secret trysts, and the unattainable woman, to name a few of Morgan’s examples (165-171). Morgan’s argument supports the idea that Gatsby’s business decisions

make up part of his game to win Daisy. As Jordan Baker tells Nick, “Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay” (78). All of his choices, his moves, brought him closer to winning Daisy. Gatsby’s choice to build himself up, regardless of the people hurt along the way, aligns with Gatsby’s use of games to create himself in the hopes of winning Daisy.

Gatsby uses games to create his current persona and cover up his modest background. While trying to win Daisy, Gatsby gets close to Nick and tells him, “I don’t want you to get a wrong idea of me from all these stories you hear.” So he was aware of the bizarre accusations that flavored conversation in his halls” (65). Gatsby shows control by expressing his awareness of the rumors told about him. Gatsby tells Nick the truth about him:

“... I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford, because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition.” He looked up at me sideways--and I knew why Jordan Baker had believed he was lying. He hurried the phrase “educated at Oxford,” or swallowed it, or choked on it, as though it had bothered him before. And with this doubt, his whole statement fell to pieces, and I wondered if there wasn’t something a little sinister about him, after all (65).

Nick senses falseness in Gatsby’s self-history, and based on the false truth, becomes suspicious of him. Gatsby provides the rest of his self-history, describing “Little Montegro” (66) and showing Nick the medal he received after the war, as well as a photo of him at Oxford, and suddenly, Nick is convinced once more (67). Gatsby makes Nick suspicious initially, but adds the details and evidence necessary to con Nick into believing the self-fiction he has created.

Gatsby’s does not use disguise in the straight-forward manner of the Duke and Dauphin and Carker, but this false version of self that he portrays disguises his real self. The way he hides his illegal activities and pleads with Daisy that Tom’s accusations are untrue (134) also indicate

a sort of disguise.

Returning to the concept of the businessman on a broader scale, one must shift from the concept of games as a means of advancement and consider the role of the aristocracy. Compared to aristocracy in *Dombey and Son*, and the satirical aristocracy in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the aristocracy shifts into a distinction between “old” and “new” money. Nick describes the difference between East Egg and West Egg, “. . . a more arresting phenomenon is their dissimilarity in every particular except shape and size. I lived at West Egg, the--well, the less fashionable of the two, though this is a most superficial tag to express the bizarre and not a little sinister contrast between them,” (5). The difference in fashion reflects the societal notions about wealth.

After becoming wealthy himself, Gatsby believed he would be on the same level as Daisy, not realizing the distinct separation between new and old money. While having lunch at the Buchanan house, Gatsby rarely speaks. He tells Nick, “I can’t say anything in this house, old sport,” and when Nick notes Daisy’s “indiscreet voice,” Gatsby says, “Her voice is full of money,” (120). Gatsby is an outsider; his money is all “fake,” while Daisy comes from old money. Daisy’s wealth was inherited from her parents and she expectantly married into wealth; she inspires all those around her to reach her superior, perfect wealthiness (Morgan 175). It is Daisy’s influence that drives Gatsby’s business decisions, unaware that the origin of wealth can keep them apart.

Daisy’s distaste for the Gatsby party she attends exemplifies the division between her wealth and that of Gatsby. Nick explains, “She was appalled by West Egg. . . appalled by its raw vigor that chafed under the old euphemisms and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a short-cut from nothing to nothing. She saw something awful in the very

simplicity she failed to understand,” (107). Coming from old wealth, and the South, the style of Gatsby’s parties conflicts with the sort of opulence Daisy appreciates. Gatsby notices her disenchantment, saying, ““She didn’t like it. . . She didn’t have a good time,”” (109). The division between the wealthy causes Gatsby to fear his plan, his great game, may not be working.

The division between Gatsby and Daisy, representative of the difference between old and new money, shows a flaw in the motivation of the businessman. Gatsby’s goal of earning Daisy’s love by becoming wealthy is selfish; his sole focus is his goal, and anyone and anything that impedes on his achieving his goal does not matter. The division in wealth complicates Gatsby’s plan. Jacqueline Lance describes the intersection of love and wealth: “Of course, it is Gatsby's dream of winning Daisy's love and respect that is corrupted by his obsession with possessing wealth and material objects, a wealth that Gatsby believes will ensure Daisy's unwavering love,” (26). Gatsby cannot be par with Daisy by gaining the wealth through the power of capitalism; he failed to see the division that exists within the wealthy community.

Gatsby’s fate in the end parallels that of the previously described businessman characters- his death typifies the unraveling of his dream to reunite with Daisy and do over the life they would have had if he had had more money when they met the first time. His death also exemplifies Gatsby’s ethical disregard for those with less money and power than him, and the dark culmination of his business dealings. George Wilson finds out that Gatsby is the owner of the yellow car that struck and killed his wife, Myrtle, so he hunts him down and kills him before killing himself (161-162). One may question the justice of Wilson’s killing Gatsby when Daisy was driving the car that struck Myrtle; yet, as part of Gatsby’s dream of achieving perfection with Daisy, he tries to hide the car and cover up the accident to protect Daisy. He shows no remorse for the woman killed, and when Nick tells him about what he saw, Gatsby says, ““Don’t

tell me, old sport.” He winced. “Anyhow--Daisy stepped on it. . .” (144). Gatsby does not care about anyone who stands in his way, and dies as a result.

Over the course of the novel, Gatsby takes advantage of many other people. One such group is his household staff, and Nick makes several observations about how he treats them throughout the text. After one party, Nick notes, “A maid began opening the upper windows of his house, appeared momentarily in each, and, leaning from a large central bay, spat meditatively into the garden” (88). The maid spitting on Gatsby’s lawn shows her disgust for him, or perhaps for her role. A different time, Gatsby tells Nick that he fired his entire staff because he wanted people who would not gossip about Daisy coming over in the afternoon. Nick observes, “So the whole caravansary had fallen in like a card house at the disapproval in her eyes,” (114). Furthermore, Gatsby says of the new staff, ““They’re some people Wolfsheim wanted to do something for,”” (114) showing the relationship between Gatsby’s business affairs and his dream of being with Daisy. Gatsby fires his staff when they no longer please Daisy and deals with people as if they are commodities. His death, at the hand of the husband of a woman who meant nothing to him, represents his disregard for not only Myrtle, but all the other people he does not think of in his business negotiations.

The three characters presented in Charles Dickens' *Dombey and Son*, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* all use games and disguises of some type to increase their wealth. Why they need money and how exactly they manipulate others changes based on the time period and environment in which they live; but all three use their skills to the advancement of self and detriment of others. Carker’s game skill and disguises make it possible for him to destroy Dombey’s financial operation and seduce women; the Duke and Dauphin’s skills generate them enough wealth to keep moving down the river and

buy an occasional drink; and Gatsby's illegal enterprises give him a chance to achieve his dream woman. By ignoring the innocent people harmed in all of their schemes, the characters all face undesirable but just fates in the novels. In showing the consequences for businessmen who disregard the poor, the authors anticipate the call for ethics in today's business world.

The analysis of Carker, the Duke and Dauphin, and Gatsby's use of games and disguise leads to further questions about the employment of such means in the business world. One's success in business depends on his ability to leverage his resources (Barney 109). In each of the novels, the businessmen all lack one significant resource--power. Carker lacks power due to his middle class status, the Duke and Dauphin live on the outskirts of society, and Gatsby's modest background kept him from Daisy. The characters must substitute the resource of power with game skills, cons, and trickery to create false power over others. While the characters initially succeed in gaining power over others using substitutes, the illegitimacy of their power leads to their eventual failures.

In applying the concepts present in the text to business, the inability to substitute one intangible resource, power, with another, games and disguise, parallels the concept of isolating mechanisms. Isolating mechanisms, or barriers to imitation, account for stable profit and distinguish the success of one firm from another within the same industry (Kor 1). Power is an intangible resource that the characters fail to replace with other resources because of power's high barriers to imitation. Power becomes an isolating mechanism and separates the business characters with legitimate power from those with lesser intangible resources. In a resource-based framework, firms sustain a competitive advantage due to isolating mechanisms (1); the characters may succeed initially in faking power, but they cannot sustain their successes without actual power.

The argument that businesspeople need intangible resources that differentiate them from others is further supported by Ingemar Dierickx and Karel Cool's publication, "Asset Stock Accumulation and Sustainability of Competitive Advantage." The two write that above average returns come from superior information, luck, or both, and as a result, firms should focus on their own unique skills and resources more than the competitive environment (1504). In the case of the business characters, their focus on their skills certainly gave them an initial advantage over others. Dierickx and Cool later explain: ". . . the successful implementation of a strategy often requires highly firm-specific assets, as opposed to undifferentiated inputs. Firms may, of course, acquire imperfect substitutes for the desired strategic input factor(s) and adapt them, at a cost, to the specific use it intends" (1505). In the novels, the businessmen rely on undifferentiated inputs--their imitable skills of cunning and disguise--that imperfectly substitute for power.

In thinking about real world applications, entrepreneurs lacking power often rely on stale sales tactics and other overused business practices to establish themselves in a particular industry. The failures of the business characters shows why young businesspeople and organizations should focus more on their unique skills and less on making up for the intangible resources they do not yet possess. *Carker*, *the Duke and the Dauphin*, and *Gatsby* provide insight into the challenge faced by all businesspeople of whether to try to replace the resource they lack with lesser ones or work on building up their power through legitimate means.

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