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Hostility in the American Dreams: A Study of *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Abstract

Fitzgerald's dominant theme in *The Great Gatsby* is the American Dream which has driven the people berserk leading to cleavages in the society.. This paper precisely focuses on 20th century corruption of original

Idealistic American dreams. It deals with the American society dreams reflected as more of materialistic possessions than idealism and spiritual satisfaction. It takes up Gatsby's struggle showing the seeds of future fructification. As a representative of fate, Gatsby strives to get his love and reach his career. The paper depicts his strong determination of reaching his goals.

The materialism of this period of time in America corrupted the American dreams with much focus on gaining wealth and power. The so-called Jazz Age of 20's compelled the life of Fitzgerald to deal with social imbalances calling for urgent attention. Tanfer Emin tersely comments on Gatsby's "hidden violent nature. . . .Driving his instinctual self for possession." .

This paper also covers some facts like greatness of Gatsby which drove him to give his all to achieve his love. He reached the heights of riches just for his love. Gatsby's death can be compared with death of Jesus. The way he spent his whole life struggling for career is a milestone. When he finally meets his love, the surrender of his life for love is another height he attains .

Keywords: - American Dream, Sociological, Jazz Age, Materialistic, Struggle

Introduction

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was an American fiction writer. In 1920 he got most of the success in his career and this time period is known as Jazz Age. He was born on September 24, 1896 at St. Paul Minnesota. He was an American writer of short – stories and novels. His wife tried a lot to divert his mind toward writing short –stories rather than novels

so as to earn more money. But he gave a fantastic novel “The Great Gatsby”. Some of his other main works include

The Side of Paradise and *Tender is the Night*.

He got much popularity after his death. He died of a heart attack on December 21, 1940 at the age of 44 in Hollywood, California. After his death one of his writings “The Last Tycoon” got published which was much loved by people.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, the famous American modern novelist, reveals corrupted American dreams in his works. *The Great Gatsby* in particular delineates how these dreams were first conditioned and then corrupted by materialistic activities

. Gatsby, the protagonist in the novel taken up for scanner in this paper, belongs to a very poor family. With his hard - work he gets to enter upper - class. After entering upper - class he comes to feel the pressure of his dreams and aspirations.

The thrust of this novel underlines Gatsby’s unconditional love for Daisy.

Gatsby, however, does not get her because they both belong to different classes. Nevertheless Gatsby as an upper class individual puts his all to get Daisy in his life. During one sitting session with Daisy, Gatsby feels “ . . . twinkle bells of sunshine in the room. . . smiled like a weather man, like an ecstatic pattern of light. . . “ (p 104). Daisy, however, cheats him. She promises Gatsby that she will wait for him until he comes back from war. But she marries a rich man when Gatsby was in Army.

The Great Gatsby

Gatsby’s rich lifestyle and lavish parties are an attempt to impress Daisy that one day she will come back to his life. He lives for her and in the end he dies for her. But Daisy

leaves the town with her husband and doesn't even attend Gatsby's funeral. D. Gross in her book *Understanding the Great Gatsby* rips through "the tragic scenario" created in the novel.

The writer in this novel brings to the fore many aspects of American society.

The novel taken up for research throws light on how American society has turned from production- oriented to a consumer- oriented society.

When Gatsby was a boy he was very well- mannered and disciplined. He had this potential to achieve success in his life by his hard work. He prepared a schedule for himself about his daily routine and also a list of what to do and what not to do. He did all this because he knew his ambition and goals. Gatsby's father Henry Getz was a very poor moderate man. Gatsby took his father to a stable position by working hard for his career.

Some of his resolves like the few given below reveal his determination to stay in tune with his targets. Through these resolves his bent of mind and his set goals can be seen as always staying before his eyes.

"No more smoking or chewing"

"Bath every other day"

"Read one improving book"

"To be better to parents"

Gatsby was not lazy at all and led an active and healthy life. When Gatsby was serving in the Army, he met Daisy. He fell in love with her. They spent a month together. Then suddenly Gatsby had to leave for the war in Europe. Before he left, Daisy promised that she would wait for him to come back from the war and then they would settle down. But Daisy did not keep her promise. She married a rich man Tom Buchanan. Tom was a football player and a successful businessman. When Gatsby came back from war he got to know about Daisy's marriage. He is thus portrayed as a wise and hopeful person in the novel. He didn't give away to despair and determined to get Daisy back in his life. He was a kind of

person who had the ability to get success by working hard with Mr. Dancody's help. Gatsby came to learn about business. He changed his fortune overnight. He didn't realize that Daisy was his past and now he had no chances with her. He did the entire struggle just to get her back. He thought with the support of money and high status he would get Daisy back. H. Guo in *Seeking Lost Paradise: An Archetypal Interpretation of the Great Gatsby* underlines the hopeless in American society which clings to "the loving heart" in terms of "money, matter and material."

In the 1920's things were evolving and there were many radical views. There was a sense of optimism and aspiration. People believed that they could be whoever they wanted to be, no matter how difficult it might be. For instance, Gatsby got to where he wanted by means of bootlegging.

By and large Gatsby was a self-made man. Later on he claimed some properties which were shared by Cody's mistress. He bought a big villa and had lavish living by throwing expensive parties. Nick Carraway, in the novel is Daisy's cousin. He shifted to New York to learn bond- business. He stayed with Daisy and her husband Tom Buchanan.

In Daisy's home Nick met Jordan Baker. Jordan Baker was Tom's sister. She was a cruel woman and a golfer by profession. Nick fell in love with Jordan. Jordan told Nick that Tom was having affair with Myrtle Wilson and was cheating Daisy. After knowing this Nick left Daisy's home and shifted from there. This side episode in the novel brings out the true running relationships in American society, Greed, cheating, double-speak, etc are projected as dominating drives in the people. Ousby in her critical study *An Introduction to 50 American Novels* shows how "no-value system" in place of "some-value system" has related in American materialist culture.

Despite rejection by Daisy and her consequent marriage with the man of her choice, Gatsby used to give lavish parties to become a part of upper- class and in a hope that one day

Daisy might come in his party. Gatsby arranged a meeting between Mayer Wolfsheim and Nick to help Nick for his business. Jordan had already told Nick that Gatsby was madly in love with his sister, Daisy... After the party Gatsby told Nick about his feelings for his sister and requested Nick to arrange Daisy's meeting with him. Nick agreed and convinced Daisy to meet him. Daisy visited Gatsby's mansion Gatsby showed her the whole mansion. Gatsby even after becoming rich still lived a simple life. His bedroom was the simplest room in the mansion. He did not drink like those upper- class people who got drunk in his parties.. He knew importance of self- discipline and decency. He did not even look towards other women. Nick found Gatsby a magnificent person. So he helped him in meeting Daisy. Gatsby was very happy to meet Daisy after long time. They memorized their old memories and came closer to each other. "He hadn't once ceased looking at Daisy, and I think he evaluated everything in his house according to the measure of response from her well-loved eyes" (p 116).

After few days Daisy invited Gatsby, Jordan and Nick on lunch. She did this to make her husband. Tom jealous, because she had come to know about Mrs Wilson's affair. She deliberately expressed her love for Gatsby. Tom took Daisy and the group of guests to town. There by seeing Daisy's closeness with Gatsby Tom lashed out on him. He told Daisy that Gatsby had made money by illegal activities and criminal works. On this Gatsby asked Daisy to let her husband know that she had no love for her him. But Daisy didn't respond to this she kept silent. After this Daisy left from there along with Gatsby."Gatsby asked Daisy to drive too harsh and hit a woman with the car.

The woman who was hit by the car was Myrtle Wilson, the lady with whom Tom was in affair. The accident was too massive that Myrtle died on the spot. After this Daisy and Gatsby run away from the spot of accident. Myrtle's husband George B. Wilson was broken after his wife's death. He was madly looking for the person who killed his wife. Nick

suggested Gatsby to leave the city but he denied. Tom played a game. He informed George B. Wilson that his wife was killed by Gatsby. Mr. George got mad with anger after listening this. He killed Gatsby and after killing him he committed suicide. Carline Zilboorg in her reactions notes the “ topsy-turby life” of American couples who are dissatisfied with their losses and “ wrong fulfilments.”

Conclusion

The novel *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald is thus all about the struggle of achieving the American dream, and how a person is ready to do to anything to reach it. The focus is on the problems of Gatsby, the protagonist, and his feelings for Daisy, a married woman with whom he was previously involved. The novel also focuses on Gatsby's determination to make her fall in love with him by the glamour of money and power. Fitzgerald uses the symbols of wealth, narrow- minded and irresponsibility to convey the idea that the American dream is unavailable. Wealth is a factor that propels the actions of the characters in the novel. In *The Great Gatsby*, most of the characters are wealthy and are able to do a lot because of their plenty. *The Great Gatsby* is a prime example of traditional American Literature. It shows the life in one of the most roaring cities of the 1920's, New York and is a great description of American life in those times...

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