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## The Woman as Effective Factor in Writing the Novel

### With Reference to Great Gatsby

Dr. Ibrahim Adam Said Daier <sup>a\*</sup>, Dr. Muhammad Ali Abbakar Suleiman Al  
Tinawi <sup>b</sup>

*Taif University. Turaba Branch Faculty of Education and Arts. English Language Department*

<sup>a</sup>email: [ibrahimdaier@yahoo.com](mailto:ibrahimdaier@yahoo.com)

<sup>b</sup>email: [dr.tinawi01@yahoo.com](mailto:dr.tinawi01@yahoo.com)

#### Abstract

In this paper, the researcher deals with the Great Gatsby and focuses on the woman which contributes in portraying the image of the woman in the American Dream. The importance is analyzing high society during the 1920s through the eyes of narrator Nick Carraway, the researcher reveals that the woman in the American Dream has transformed from a pure ideal to a means of attraction. In support of this message, Fitzgerald highlights the original aspects as well as the new aspects of the American Dream in his tragic story to illustrate that the role of the American woman is now lost forever to the American people. The paper follows the foundation qualities of the American Dream depicted in The Great Gatsby are perseverance and hope. The most glorified of these characteristics is that of success against all odds. The role of the attractive woman can be found in the life of young James Gatz, whose focus on becoming a great man is carefully documented by the existence of a woman. He always has some resolves like this or something. The result after the analysis the novel portrays the continual struggle for self-improvement, which has defined the image of American woman as a means of opportunity.

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\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [ibrahimdaier@yahoo.com](mailto:ibrahimdaier@yahoo.com).

"By comparing the young James Gatz to the young Benjamin Franklin, Fitzgerald proves that the American woman is indeed able to survive in the face of modern society. A society naturally breaks up into various social groups over time. Members of lower statuses constantly suppose that their problems will be resolved if they gain enough wealth to reach the upper class in which the woman can play a good role in attracting the others.

**Keywords:** American woman, Jazz Age, happiness, ethics, morality, equality and bigotry

## 1. Introduction

The statue of liberty which is considered as a symbol for freedom is one of the first views of America for many immigrants who enter there through the New York Harbor. The very first and basic ideology of the founding fathers of America which gave way to the birth of the American Dream is best pronounced in this document drafted by Thomas Jefferson: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. In Currier [ 1 : 7 ] Freedom, equality and opportunity for all are the characteristics which best summarize what America and American Dream have long been considered to stand for. The founding fathers had this idealistic vision in their minds that an individual can succeed regardless of his race, religion and family background if he is willing to follow certain principles and work hard. Although as time goes by, the number of the people who have lost their faith in the American Dream is escalating, this Dream of Success still remains to be one of the major tenets that compromise a full American experience. The basics for achieving the American Dream were most suitably laid down by Benjamin Franklin who is considered an epitome of the self-made man. Hard work, determination, devotion and good ethics are the presuppositions for achieving the Dream of Success: "...no qualities were so likely to make a poor man's fortune as those of probity and integrity" . Nonetheless, the different circumstances in America led to different outlooks on the promise of the American Dream. In other words, during the course of time, the basic assumptions of this dream were twisted to be replaced by a distorted concept which ultimately would mislead and disappoint all the more its followers. *The Great Gatsby* examines the Jazz Age search for its own version of the American Dream: From the gaudy displays and glistening buffets of Gatsby's parties to the dismal drudgery displayed in his "Valley of Ashes," Fitzgerald invites the reader to taste, see, and smell the "Roaring Twenties". Gibb [ 3 : 593-597]

## 2. Discussion

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the deterioration of the American Dream in the 1920s focusing on the Jazz Age and how the Dream of Success was perceived and practiced by the people of the time and the role of woman in leading the author to writing a good novel . The goal is to make a clear distinction between what the American Dream originally is and how it might change in each age based on different readings of the same idea. The focus will be on the original definition and assumption of the American Dream and the ways it has been misinterpreted. The suggestion would be that equality and morality which are the two most important factors constituting the American Dream are definitely forgotten and twisted in the Jazz Age. In contrast to the original definition, the ideals of freedom, equality and happiness are replaced by infatuation with material possessions,

immorality and bigotry. The phrase, American Dream, was coined by James Truslow Adams in his book, *Epic of America* where he elaborated on the subject: It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position. The American Dream is the fundamental force which drives the characters in *The Great Gatsby* especially the main character, Jay Gatsby himself. The deterioration of the American Dream of Success into material gains is one of the most important reasons which lead the characters to their tragedy. The perception of the American Dream changed as America changed. Little by little, people became more and more obsessed with money and material gains. The pursuit of happiness changed into another concept: the pursuit of money! The wealthy try to become wealthier, and the poor struggle to become wealthy. In case of Myrtle, she even succumbs to lead an adulterous affair with a man who physically abuses her to have a little taste of what it means to have money. This interpretation of happiness proves to be even more hollow as the rich people are not satisfied with their lives either. Gatsby, representing the new money, cannot reach his ultimate goal, and Tom and Daisy, representing the old money, are bored with their lives. This infatuation with material possessions is evident even in Mr. Gatz's reaction to his son's big house when he arrives for Gatsby's funeral: when he looked around him now for the first time and saw the height and splendor of the hall and the great rooms opening out from it into other rooms his grief began to be mixed with an awed pride. Fitzgerald [4:106-107] The central character of the novel, Gatsby, who perfectly can stand for America itself, is certain that he can reach his dream by wealth and influence. All he can show for himself is his wealth. He always brags about his big house, car and material possessions as though they can account for his every need. Gatsby's dream proves to be "a naïve dream based on the fallacious assumption that material possessions are synonymous with happiness, harmony, and beauty". To further the argument, Gatsby's love for Daisy can be taken as his love for what Daisy represents. He is in love with idea of Daisy and what she embodies not herself as an individual. The green light at the end of Daisy's dock symbolizes what Gatsby longs for: American Dream. The color green, apart from being the symbol of Gatsby's optimism, can be taken as the green color of dollar bills. Daisy becomes an appealing ideal, the 1920s' American Dream which is capital: Her voice is full of money...It was full of money—that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals' song of it.... High in a white palace the king's daughter, the golden girl ....Fitzgerald [4:76]In her character, we can see all that went wrong with the original American Dream. In Gatsby's mind Daisy is the perfect woman: "Gatsby seems committed to an idea of Daisy that he has created than to the real woman she is". Although she is beautiful and charming, she can be selfish, shallow and hurtful. She cheats on her husband, lies and even murders a woman without showing any remorse. His devotion to her is misplaced because the object of his quest is not worthy of pursuing. In this sense, Gatsby's pursuit is doomed to failure: "The trouble with Gatsby's quest was that Daisy was completely incapable of playing the role assigned to her". Money and material possessions prove to be a small portion of what constitutes the American dream: Money *by itself* cannot buy happiness, and therefore Daisy cannot bring happiness to Gatsby. In this sense, *The Great Gatsby* becomes a study of the consequences of that generation's mindless devotion to false, or at least incomplete values: Whereas the American Dream was once equated with certain principles of freedom, it is now equated with things. The American Dream has undergone a metamorphosis from principles to materialism. ... When people are concerned more with the attainment of things than with the maintenance of principles, it is a sign of 64 Educ. Res. J. moral

decay. And it is through such decay that loss of freedom occurs. In addition, the two critical and important components of Franklin's ideal version of American Dream are missing in the distorted adaptation of the characters of the novel. They totally disregard morality and work ethics in their pursuit of happiness. Franklin believes that morality and hard work are the two integral parts of what one needs to achieve the promised success. But, Roaring Twenties, in this novel, is depicted as a time of moral and social decay. Fitzgerald's world characterizes "a sterile, immoral society". The parties, which Gatsby holds, are the epitome of the corruption of the age and its ideal as the American Dream. Dishonesty prevails in the whole world of the novel: Tom and Daisy engage themselves in adulterous affairs, the partygoers consume alcohol illegally, and Daisy runs over and kills a woman without taking any responsibility. In fact, the search for a character that can be taken as a perfect example of a morally upright citizen can prove to be futile as even Nick Carraway, the narrator, has his own instances of indiscretion. The decay of the American Dream is most vividly presented through the immoral character of Jay Gatsby as the protagonist. The ambitious Gatsby, on the surface, can be seen as the epitome of the self-made man, from rags to riches. Even Nick's first description of his can be misleading: If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. Fitzgerald [4: 3] But, during the course of the novel, it becomes clear that he is a "force of corruption: a criminal, a bootlegger, and an adulterer" Will , [5 :126] . Instead of what he is supposed to do, which is to go to school and work hard to get to the top, Gatsby drops out of College and chooses the short way of criminal activity, bootlegging, to move his way closer to the realization of his dream. In a sense, Gatsby is so consumed with his dream that ends justify the means for him: he will get what he wants even if he has to involve himself in criminal activities. God or religion is absent in this society as the absent eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleberg, an advertisement equated by Myrtle's husband as the eyes of God Fitzgerald [4:102]. The suggestion here is that the easy and quick road of immorality to reach a dream is doomed, at least in Gatsby's case. Moreover, America was based on the idea that all men are born equal, and therefore have the same opportunity as others to become what they want to become. The idea of a class-conscious society would be a curious issue for an American novel in the sense that it was more of a European concern. Racism, bigotry and snobbery of the upper class or the old money do not leave a room for ideal of equality. Everyone's place is determined unchangeably. Myrtle never gets out of the Valley of Ashes, and the difference between the old money and the new money, symbolically represented by the east egg and west egg societies, most suitably depicts the issue. Class and privilege goes hand in hand in the world of novel. Even though Gatsby now has the money which will enable him to have access to the finest people and luxuries, he is not welcomed to just any occasion. Deeply hostile to the notion of equality, the class structure in America defies the idealism of its founding fathers. During the 1920s, many people openly bigoted against people of different color, race or religion. Tom, as a white male, discusses a book, *The Rise of the Coloured Empires*, which he is reading in a dinner party: "This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It's up to us who are the dominant race to watch out; or these other races will have control of things" Fitzgerald [ 4 : 11]. Fitzgerald's description of Wolfsheimer, a criminal, is interesting in the sense that he seems to be "dominated by one characteristic, his nose, which, as Sander Gilman notes, served as the 'central locus' of Jewish difference in the Anti-Semitic imagination" . In addition, in a party in Tom's apartment in New York, a Mrs. Lucille condescendingly remembers one of her former suitors who was apparently a Jew: I almost married a little kike who'd been after me for years. I knew he

was below me. Everybody kept saying to me: 'Lucille, that man's way below you!' But if I hadn't met Chester, he'd of got me sure. Fitzgerald [ 4:23] .

### **3. Conclusion**

So finally even Nick Carraway, who was Daisy Fay's cousin and Jordan Baker's lover and Tom Buchanan's classmate at Yale, concludes that Gatsby was all right, that he was worth "the whole damn bunch put together." The commendation means a great deal coming from Nick, who is something of a snob and who disapproved of Gatsby from the beginning, largely because of his impudence in breaching class barriers. Gatsby met Daisy, Nick tells us, only through the "colossal accident" of the war. Knowing he did not belong in her world, he "took what he could get, ravenously and unscrupulously ... took Daisy because he had no real right to touch her hand." Gatsby's later idealization of Daisy and their love redeems him, however, and he dies protecting her by his silence. He no more deserves to be shot than Myrtle deserves to be struck by a speeding car. Get mixed up with the Buchanans, and you end up dead. The fact is, of course, that it is difficult for a contemporary commentator to detect a future masterpiece—particularly when the work later comes to be thought of as a masterpiece representative of its times. The reviewer is likely either to dismiss the work as trivial or to say that no such people as it depicts ever existed. Fitzgerald, now regarded as the historian of the Jazz Age, was frequently criticized during his lifetime for writing about unreal characters or unbelievable situations. A book like *The Great Gatsby*, when it was praised at all, was<sup>77</sup> praised for its style or its insight into American society; it was not given the kind of serious analysis it has received in the last twenty years, with emphasis on its symbolic and mythic elements. The novel may have been compared to works by Edith Wharton, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad, but it was not felt necessary to draw in Goethe, Milton, and Shakespeare, as Lionel Trilling has done.

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