



The American Dream and Materialism in The Great Gatsby

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الحلم الأمريكي و الماديات في رواية كاتسبي العظيم

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Abstract:

This research paper will critically analyze the themes of the American Dream and materialism in The Great Gatsby. By delineating the characters' motivations and the impact of their pursuit of material success, we seek to understand the underlying implications for individuals and society as a whole. Furthermore, we will examine the novel's exploration of the devastating consequences that arise from intertwining personal identity with the pursuit of wealth, ultimately shedding light on the fragility of the supposed path to happiness.

To accomplish this analysis, we will draw upon a range of literary sources, scholarly articles, and contextual research, which will enable a comprehensive understanding of Fitzgerald's craft and the socio-cultural environment in which he wrote.

المخلص:

تتناول هذه الرواية التأثيرات السلبية للحلم الأمريكي و السعي خلف النجاح المادي على شخصيات الرواية و تعكس الاثار الانحطاطية التي يسببها السعي وراء هذه الأهداف التي تقود الى الفساد و الانحطاط لان الساعين وراء هذه الأهداف لديهم الاستعداد للأنخراط في طرق غير قانونية او أخلاقية لأجل تحقيق النجاح بأي ثمن وينتقد الكاتب هذه التوجهات بشكل مكثف لأننتشارها بشكل واسع آنذاك و التي نشهد أنتشارها في الوقت الحالي حيث التفضيل بين الأشخاص يتم على وفق الأزدهار المادي و ليس الأزدهار الفكري و الأواصر الاجتماعية الخالية من التبادل السلبي القائم على النفع المادي فقط.

Introduction:

The Great Gatsby is one of the most famous American novels that was written by F. Scott Fitzgerald in the Roaring Twenties¹. Exploring the link between the American Dream and materialism. In his novel he showcases a link between those themes, and their effects on characters, individuals and society, as they seem to affect people of bearing shallow values prevailed by corruption.

These two themes have a great impact on society. Dividing and declining the morals of society. F. Scott Fitzgerald criticizes through the character, and the events of the novel The Pursuit of wealth. Showcasing its effects on people, and Society. This novel serves as a warning against the prioritization of materialism over human relationships, and moral integrity. A cast of characters whose desires, dreams, and hardships are shaped by their never-ending pursuit of wealth, status, and the material holding it affords.

Literature Review

The American Dream and Materialism in *The Great Gatsby* was written by F.Scott Fitzgerald and, there is a wealth of literature that delves into these themes and their importance within the story. Academics have looked at how Fitzgerald criticizes the distorted quest of the American Dream, which frequently centers on material wealth and social standing. Many contend that the characters in the book Jay Gatsby and Tom Buchanan in particular are illustrations of the detrimental effects of materialism and the shallow ideals that go along with it. Fitzgerald's depiction of Jazz Age² society and its fixation with materialism is examined from a variety of critical angles in this literature review. It explores the characters' disillusionment and the catastrophic results of their unrelenting quest of material goods. The review also examines Fitzgerald's portrayal of the American Dream as a myth, emphasizing the moral decay and emptiness that can result from the unrelenting pursuit of wealth and status. When considering the wider ramifications of materialism and the American Dream in the 1920s, researchers frequently make analogies to the social environment of that time. Overall, the literature review provides a thorough examination of how materialism and the American Dream interact in "*The Great Gatsby*" (Hodo, 2017, p. 299).

Historical Context of the American Dream in the 1920s

The Great Gatsby was written in 1925, amidst the Roaring twenties, and the ascent in consumerism during a period of prosperity after WWI. In Fitzgerald's novel he gives a brief look into the life of the elegant through the eyes of a genuine, open-minded and level-headed young fellow named Nick Carraway. Through the storyteller relationship with high society. The novelist shows how current qualities have changed the unclear beliefs of the Pursuit of happiness into a plan for materialistic power, how the universe of high society misses the mark on feeling of ethics. In order to help this message Fitzgerald presents the first parts of the pursuit of happiness alongside its cutting edge face. To show that the once impossible dream is presently lost everlastingly to the American public.

The American Dream came to be closely associated with materialism and wealth accumulation during this time period. Industrialization and technological advancements fueled the booming economy, which created an environment that seemed to be ready for endless possibilities. The stock exchange was flourishing, and individuals accepted that monetary achievement was accessible for anybody who can work hard enough.

The 1920s denoted a period of social change and social rebellion. The conventional qualities, and severe moral codes of the past started to be neglected, and another feeling of freedom and individual opportunity arose. This social shift permitted people to dream of being liberated from cultural limitations and characterizing their own look on what could be an achievement. (Jillson, 2016, p. 4)

Evolution of the American Dream

The American Dream is fundamentally the conviction that anything an individual can dream of is achievable in the US domain assuming hard work and dedication. There is different definitions in regards to the Fantasy like : " a broadly involved expression for the standards of a vote based system, uniformity, and opportunity whereupon the US was established." what's more, among numerous others "the American Lifestyle; American society or culture"(Anitaria, 2006, p. 26) Nonetheless, the credit for the expression "American Dream" goes to James Truslow Adam , who created the term in 1931 in his book The Epic of America. Trusiow expressed that the Pursuit of happiness is:

That dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement 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. (Pérez, 2019, pp. 214–215).

Unveiling the Complexities of the American Dream and Materialism

F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby" has long been regarded as a literary masterpiece because it captures the essence of the Jazz Age of the 1920s and explores topics like materialism and the American dream. Throughout the long term, various critics have dug into the novel, offering exceptional viewpoints and uncovering hidden away subtleties. In this paper, we will sum up existing exploration on the novel's subjects, and feature the key experiences given by abstract critics in regards to the Pursuit of The American Dream and Materialism.

"The Great Gatsby" envelops different repeating topics that have been broadly examined by researchers and critics the same. One such topic is the quest for the American Dream, which Fitzgerald

depicts through the character of Jay Gatsby. Critics have featured the book's

investigation of the deception of the American Dream, and the bad idea of that pursuit, and the inescapable dissatisfaction that follows.

Materialism is yet another prominent theme in the book. Fitzgerald presents a general public fixated on riches, extravagance, and economic wellbeing, which at last prompts moral rot and the deficiency of real human connections. Critics have investigated the imagery of material belongings, the difference among old and new cash, and the outcomes of persistent consumerism. (Akesson, 2018, p. 3).

Key insights from literary critics regarding the American Dream and Materialism

a) The Illusion of the American Dream

Literary critics have underlined the thought that "The Great Gatsby" uncovers the emptiness and inconceivability of accomplishing the American Dream. Gatsby's determined quest for wealth and Daisy is viewed as an endeavor to reproduce the past and accomplish bliss. In any case, critics contend that Gatsby's fantasy is based on a deception, as it is generally founded on material achievement and the shallow upsides of the period.

b) The Corrupt Nature of the Pursuit

Critics frequently examine the characters' determined quest for riches, influence, and societal position, featuring the ethical debasement that goes with the American Dream. The foolish behaviour of the characters like Tom Buchanan and Jordan Cook epitomizes the corruption of values chasing material riches. Fitzgerald depicts the results of this corruption, eventually prompting misfortune and the crumbling of relationships.

c) The Disillusionment of the American Dream

That's what critics contend that "The Great Gatsby" investigates the dissatisfaction that follows the accomplishment of the American Dream. The characters' underlying confidence and

yearnings are broken as they understand that material belongings can't help them with their quest.(Izaguirre, 2014, p. 19).

The American Dream in The Great Gatsby

The American Dream is depicted as the ideal of making progress, riches, and bliss through hard work and determination. Different characters have various translations of the American Dream. For Jay Gatsby, it addresses the quest for his old flame, Daisy Buchanan, and the longing to reproduce their previous sentiment. For Tom and Daisy, the American Dream is tied in with keeping up with their favored way of life, no matter what the outcome is. On the other hand, characters like George Wilson and Myrtle see the American Dream as a way to escape the circumstances in which they find themselves less fortunate.(Cain, 2020, p. 470).

Illusion vs. Reality

In "The Great Gatsby," F. Scott Fitzgerald skillfully explores the theme of illusion versus reality. Throughout the novel, characters are depicted as living in a world of illusions,

where appearances and surface-level impressions take precedence over truth. Jay Gatsby himself is the embodiment of this theme, as he creates an elaborate facade and throws lavish parties to mask his true identity and his pursuit of the American Dream. Similarly, the opulent lifestyles and extravagant parties of the wealthy characters in the novel serve as illusions that conceal their inner emptiness and moral decay. Fitzgerald portrays the stark contrast between the glittering surface of the Jazz Age and the harsh realities that lie beneath, ultimately highlighting the futility of chasing illusions and the tragic consequences that can arise when reality is ignored or distorted. (Keshmiri, 2016, p. 1296).

Gatsby: False Prophet of the American Dream

F. Scott Fitzgerald's depiction of The American Dream in his book, "The Great Gatsby." by Roger L. Pearson, as he contends that Fitzgerald's portrayal of The American Dream veers from the conventional idealism and satisfaction related with it. Fitzgerald's protagonist, Jay Gatsby, represents the defiled American dream, without the feeling of satisfaction present in the previous works of the fantasy. The paper examines different understandings of Gatsby's personality, for example, being compared to a bogus savior or a delegate of the libertine Jazz Age. The novel's symbolism, such as the valley of ashes and Dr. T. J. Eckleburg's omnipresent eyes, is further explored by the author as a reflection of Gatsby's dream's decay and false worship. The paper likewise

digs into Gatsby's quest for Daisy Buchanan and his inevitable terrible downfall. Pearson inspects Gatsby's off track yearnings, materialistic way of life, and extreme bafflement, drawing parallels among Gatsby and the scriptural figures of Christ and Judas. The paper finishes up by stressing Gatsby's abandonment, his worthless quest for the past, and his sad destiny as a commentary on the distorted American Dream predominant in Fitzgerald's book.(Pearson, 1970, p. 639).

Materialism and Consumer Culture

In "The Great Gatsby," wealth and material possessions play a significant role as symbols throughout the novel. They represent the pursuit of the American Dream and contribute to the characters' desires and ambitions.

Wealth and possessions symbolize social status and success. Characters like Jay Gatsby showcase their wealth through extravagant parties, a grand mansion, and luxurious items such as a Rolls-Royce. These symbols depict the idea of achieving the American Dream by attaining material prosperity.

The pursuit of wealth and possessions becomes intertwined with the characters' pursuit of the American Dream. Gatsby, for example, accumulates wealth to win back Daisy's love, believing

that his material success will make him worthy of her. Similarly, Tom and Daisy Buchanan value their wealth as a means to maintain their high social standing, however the novel also portrays the emptiness and shallowness of a materialistic and consumer-driven culture. (Rohaniyah, 2016, p. 19).

Critique of Consumer Culture

In "The Great Gatsby," Fitzgerald offers an evaluation of the materialistic qualities that were predominant during the Jazz Age, featuring the unfortunate results of consumer culture on characters' way of behaving and connections.

The novel studies the extreme materialism of the Jazz Age, where individuals valued riches and assets regardless of anything else. Fitzgerald depicts this as a shallow and empty pursuit, as characters like Tom and Daisy Buchanan focus on their own desires and economic wellbeing over genuine connections with others. The never-ending pursuit for wealth prompts an ethical rot and a negligence for the outcomes of their activities.

Consumer culture impacts characters' way of behaviour and relationships in more than one way. Characters who are obsessed with material possessions engage in reckless and immoral behavior, such as Gatsby's illegal wealth accumulation. The constant desire for more fuels a feeling of disappointment and an

absence of satisfaction. Relationships are viewed many times as superficiality and the trading of status and extravagance as opposed to real love and emotional connection. (Zhang Cong-wen & Xiao Ming-wen, 2022, p. 970).

Characters and the American Dream

Gatsby's aspirations and pursuit of the American Dream revolve around the desire to reinvent himself and win the love of Daisy Buchanan. Born into a lower-class family, Gatsby dreams of attaining immense wealth and becoming a member of the upper echelons of society. He believes that wealth and social status will erase his past and bring him happiness.

Materialism has a significant impact on Gatsby's life and relationships. His relentless pursuit of wealth and possessions becomes an all-consuming obsession. Gatsby accumulates his fortune through questionable means, engaging in bootlegging and other illegal activities.

However, his materialistic approach isolates him from genuine human connections, as he focuses solely on impressing others and acquiring material symbols of success. Gatsby's relationship with Daisy is also influenced by materialism. He believes that by demonstrating his wealth and luxury, he can win her back.

Daisy's understanding of the American Dream is shaped by her privileged upbringing and social status. She sees it as a life of comfort, wealth, and social acceptance. Being born into a wealthy family, Daisy has always been accustomed to a life of luxury. Her understanding of the American Dream is closely tied to material abundance and the ability to maintain a desirable social standing. Materialism heavily influences Daisy's decisions and relationships. Her desire for material comfort leads her to marry Tom Buchanan, a wealthy man who can provide her with the luxurious lifestyle she craves. Daisy's materialistic tendencies make her value wealth and social status above all else. This is evident when she chooses to stay with Tom despite her love for Gatsby, as Tom can offer her the material security she desires.

Moreover, materialism impacts Daisy's perception of love and relationships. Her attraction to Gatsby is partly fueled by his wealth and the extravagance he displays in his pursuit of her. (Cain, 2020, pp. 455–456).

Impact on Society

Critique of the American Dream: "The Great Gatsby" challenges the notion of the American Dream, which traditionally emphasizes hard work, success, and upward social mobility. Through the characters of Jay Gatsby and others, Fitzgerald portrays the illusionary nature of the American Dream, revealing

its dark underbelly and questioning its attainability. This critique has prompted society to reflect on the true meaning of success and the consequences of pursuing material wealth at all costs.

Examination of Social Class: Fitzgerald's exploration of social class in "The Great Gatsby" resonates with readers, as it highlights the stark divisions and inequalities within society. The stark contrast between the opulent lives of the wealthy characters, such as the Buchanans, and the struggles of characters like George Wilson, exposes the disparities and challenges faced by different social classes. This examination of social class has sparked discussions about privilege, social mobility, and the impact of wealth on individuals and society.

Depiction of the Jazz Age: "The Great Gatsby" clearly portrays the Jazz Age, a time of cultural and social unrest in America during the 1920s. Fitzgerald's portrayal of extravagant gatherings, overabundance, and a general feeling of debauchery encapsulates the time. The novel gives readers a brief look into the breathtaking and lavish way of life of the time, yet additionally dives into the void and moral rot that hides underneath the surface. This depiction of the Jazz Age has impacted society's view of the 1920s and has added to a more profound comprehension of the cultural changes that happened during that period.

Exploration of Gender Dynamics: "The Great Gatsby" also delves into the complexities of gender dynamics during the 1920s. The

female characters, such as Daisy Buchanan and Jordan Baker, are portrayed as independent and assertive, challenging traditional gender norms. However, they are also subjected to objectification and limited by societal expectations. Fitzgerald's exploration of gender roles prompts discussions about the evolving role of women in society and the challenges they faced during that time.

Themes of Love and Idealism: Love and idealism are central themes in "The Great Gatsby." The character of Jay Gatsby, driven by his love for Daisy, represents the power of romantic idealism and the lengths people will go to achieve their desires. However, the novel also highlights the destructive nature of unattainable dreams and the consequences of chasing an illusion. This exploration of love and idealism has resonated with readers, provoking contemplation on the nature of love, the pursuit of happiness, and the sacrifices people make in the name of their dreams. (Falth, 2013, p. 9).

Implications for the Larger Society

Firstly, the excessive focus on wealth and material success creates a stark divide between the rich and the poor. The novel showcases the stark contrast between the opulent lifestyles of characters like Gatsby and the Buchanan's, and the struggles of those from lower social classes. This divide leads to social inequality and reinforces class distinctions.

Secondly, the pursuit of the American Dream and Materialism fosters a culture of superficiality and shallowness. Society becomes obsessed with appearances, status symbols, and instant gratification. The characters in the novel engage in extravagant parties, excessive spending, and shallow relationships, all driven by their desire for material wealth and social recognition. Additionally, the pursuit of the American Dream and materialism leads to moral corruption and a loss of values. The characters in the novel often engage in deceit, infidelity, and illegal activities to achieve their desires. (Vaca Vink, 2021, p. 19).

Social Commentary

The social norms of the 1920s, also known as the Roaring Twenties or the Jazz Age, are the subject of "The Great Gatsby," which offers a powerful commentary on these norms. F. Scott Fitzgerald investigates the horrendous impacts of the American Dream and materialism on society during this period.

The novel portrays the pursuit of wealth and material success as a corrupting force that leads to moral decay and the degradation of relationships. The characters in the story are obsessed with attaining wealth and social status, often resorting to immoral and illegal means to achieve their goals. Fitzgerald criticizes the excessive materialism and the shallow pursuit of pleasure that dominated the era.

Through the character of Jay Gatsby, Fitzgerald highlights the hollowness of the American Dream. Despite Gatsby's immense wealth and lavish lifestyle, he remains unfulfilled and unhappy. The novel suggests that the pursuit of material wealth alone cannot bring happiness or genuine fulfillment. From the portrayal of the characters' shallow and superficial relationships. (Lindberg, 2015, p. 4) .

Conclusion

Through an analysis of "The Great Gatsby," it becomes clear that the novel serves as a commentary on the societal values of the 1920s, particularly the pursuit of the American Dream and materialism. This novel serves as a warning against the prioritization of materialism over human relationships, and moral integrity. A cast of characters whose desires, dreams, and hardships are shaped by their never-ending pursuit of wealth, status, and the material holding it affords.

The novel portrays the destructive effects of the relentless pursuit of wealth and material success. It highlights the moral decay, shallow relationships, and social inequality that arise from this obsession. The pursuit of wealth and material success in the novel are a corrupting force that leads to moral decay and the degradation of relationships. The characters in the story are obsessed with attaining wealth and social status, often resorting to immoral and illegal means to achieve their goals. Fitzgerald criticizes the excessive materialism, and the shallow pursuit of pleasure that dominated the era.

F. Scott Fitzgerald criticizes the excessive materialism and the shallow pursuit of pleasure that dominated the era. He suggests that the American Dream, when solely focused on material wealth,

cannot bring true happiness or fulfillment. He highlights the hollowness of the American Dream. Despite Gatsby's immense wealth and lavish lifestyle, he remains unfulfilled and unhappy. The novel suggests that the pursuit of material wealth alone cannot bring happiness or genuine fulfillment. From the portrayal of the characters' shallow and superficial relationships.

The pursuit of the American Dream and materialism in the novel leads to a stark divide between the rich and the poor, reinforcing social inequality and class distinctions. The contrast between the opulent lives of the wealthy characters, such as the Buchanans, and the struggles of characters like George Wilson, exposes the disparities and challenges faced by different social classes. This examination of social class has sparked discussions about privilege, social mobility, and the impact of wealth on individuals and society.

Additionally, it fosters a culture of superficiality. As society becomes obsessed with appearances, status symbols, and instant gratification. The characters in the novel engage in extravagant parties, excessive spending, and shallow relationships, all driven by their desire for material wealth and social recognition, where appearances and statuses are more important than true love.

The American Dream and materialism in "The Great Gatsby" significantly affect society by making social divisions, encouraging shallow qualities, and adding to moral debasement.

F. Scott Fitzgerald criticizes the relentless pursuit of wealth and material success through the characters and events of the novel, highlighting the detrimental effects it has on individuals and society as a whole. The novel fills in as a useful example, cautioning against the risks of focusing on materialism over authentic human relationships and moral uprightness. As it is the case in most modern societies where appearances and statuses is more important than true relationships and moral integrity, specially when the Iraqi societies is put under the microscope of this research paper, as they seem to be portraying the same effects of those that were discovered in *The Great Gatsby*.

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