

GENDER IN DOCTRINATION THROUGH LITERATURE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE GREAT GATSBY

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ABSTRACT

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) is often referred to as one of the best exemplification of the Jazz Age or the Roaring Twenties. The wealthy Gatsby is the American dream incarnate and his parties exhibit the enthusiasm of the 1920's. The Roaring Twenties also propagated the feminine ideal of the "new woman" who could defy the norms of patriarchy. However, even with the emergence of the "new woman" the inequities did not cease to exist. This paper analyses how *The Great Gatsby* is essentially written from a man's perspective and how it presents women as objects of ornamental importance to men and as inferior beings. Fitzgerald blatant sexism is voiced through the narrator Nick Carraway when he says "Dishonesty in a woman is something you never blame deeply. . . ." In the novel patriarchal order categorizes women either as "Madonna" or as "whore" based on their submission to or rebellion against, the rules of patriarchy. This paper focuses on how the representation of women in literature aims at providing "the role models which indicate what constitutes acceptable versions of the feminine and legitimate female goals and aspirations" (Barry 117). The paper through Fitzgerald's novel illustrates how women like Daisy internalize the norms and values of patriarchy that emphasize the superiority of men. Daisy on the birth of her daughter says as if to reaffirm the inferior status of women "All right, I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool—that the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool". The paper analyses how women have been constructed in *The Great Gatsby* and reaffirms Simone De Beauvoir's statement "one is not born but becomes a woman".

KEYWORDS: Patriarchy, Gender, Women, New Woman, Feminism

INTRODUCTION

The *Great Gatsby* (1925) exemplifies the power of the American Dream with its promise of upward mobility and happiness, regardless of where one was placed on the social ladder. The story is set in "the Roaring Twenties, or the Jazz Age, a term coined by Fitzgerald" (Tyson 121), almost a decade after World War I. A central concern of the novel is how the American Dream motivated people to succeed through Machiavellian means. Another turning point in American history was the grant of suffrage to American women in 1920 and this led to several changes. Women began to move freely in public and the dress code also underwent a change:

Before the war, standard dress for women included long skirts, tightly laced corsets, high-buttoned shoes, and long hair demurely swept up onto the head. A few years after the war, skirts became shorter, laced corsets began to disappear,