

The Analysis of Views on Utopia in Fitzgerald's Work "the Great Gatsby"

Ochilova Nilufar Ulmasovna, Ph.D

Senior teacher, f.f.f.d. of Foreign Languages Department Bukhara State Pedagogical Institute

Rakhmonova Marjona Akmal qizi

Student of Master's Department the Faculty of Languages Bukhara State Pedagogical Institute

Abstract: This paper aims at analyzing the utopian aspect of American society in F.S. Fitzgerald's (1896-1940) *The Great Gatsby* (1925). "The Great Gatsby" is known as a work where all ideal society features are described, where utopian definitions are given. It aims at depicting those aspects of the society through a careful examination of the settings, particularly East egg and the Valley of Ashes. Utopian views in the work represent the protagonist's ideal reality in which he dreams of becoming famous, wealthy, and more satisfied.

Keywords: The concept of Utopia, F.S. Fitzgerald, paradise society, moral decadence, prohibition, society, *The Great Gatsby*, chaos.

As the majority of people know that the concept "utopia" is often associated with positive views of the future where they can live in an ideal society and attain satisfaction due to prosperity and technological developments. For instance, Thomas More (1478-1535) was the first writer to use it in his famous work "*Utopia*", in which he creates a vision of an ideal society that can never exist in reality. More's utopian society, along with its whimsical nature in which people are equal to each other parallels the equality, opportunity and other sets of ideas that characterized the American society during the Roaring twenties. America represented a new life of freedom, holding a promise of spiritual and worldly fulfilment. That promise and other wishes were reflected in Jefferson's Declaration of Independence of 1776, where it was stated, "**We hold those truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness**". Widely considered his greatest work, "*The Great Gatsby*" is set in the Jazz Age, a term popularized by Fitzgerald. It captures the prosperity of a post-war America, filled with jazz music and illegal alcohol. A story about the promise and failure of the American Dream, it describes around the character of Jay Gatsby, a young man who rises from rags to riches, and his love for a wealthy young woman. The book was unsuccessful when it was first published. Reviews were mixed, and the first printing sold slowly. The novel, however, was rediscovered a few years after Fitzgerald died and grew in popularity, becoming a standard text of high school curricula.

The fact that utopia has captivated readers for five centuries, inspired innumerable writers, and attracted hordes of wannabe "Utopianists" is evidence of its universality. However, in order to fully appreciate the work, one must look at the historical context of its creation. Keeping in mind that Utopia was released in 1516, we must also consider some of the significant occasions that occurred at that time, the notable figures who were among More's peers, and the main concepts and motivations that shaped the Renaissance's vibrant cultural trends. The publication of "*Utopia*" followed Columbus's first voyage to America by only 24 years. Utopia preceded by

just one year Luther's publication of the Ninety-five Theses that fomented the Protestant Reformation. Michelangelo had completed his four years' labour on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in 1512. Henry VIII had recently come to the throne of England (1509), was still married to his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and was being guided in his government by Cardinal Wolsey as his Lord Chancellor. Some of the principal literary figures of More's generation were Erasmus, Ariosto, Machiavelli, and Castiglione, along with More himself. One of the great periods in Western art was in full swing with Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo, and Titian heading a long list. The chief explorers in the first decades after Columbus were Vasco da Gama, John Cabot, Amerigo Vespucci, and Balboa.

The Renaissance age has been styled "this brave new world" by many historians, viewing it as a radically new and brilliant development in Western civilization. That view, however, is not universal, some scholars quarrelling with the claim that it was new, representing a great change from the late Middle Ages, and other scholars doubting its brilliance. Debate seems perpetual over the nature and the importance of the Renaissance; nevertheless, it can scarcely be denied that the outlook and the life style of Western people were greatly affected by certain achievements of the period; namely, the invention of printing, the development of gunpowder, and the improvement of navigational instruments and ship designs. Somewhat later than those developments, but still important contributions of the Renaissance, were the Copernican revolution in astronomy and the development of the telescope by Galileo. All of these factors not only produced substantial changes in people's lives, but they also generated a charged atmosphere of excitement and curiosity throughout Europe. The search for freedom and happiness goes back to the beginning of American civilization, to the time of the first settlers: the Puritan fathers, the Quakers, and other religious refugees who came to America. To these people, America symbolizes a new life of freedom, holding a promise of spiritual and worldly fulfilment, yet there is always a shocking truth that lies beneath the surface. The paper is concerned with the Utopian and the dystopian aspects of American society in *The Great Gatsby*. It shows how the chances, opportunities, and freedom offered in the American society demoralize its people and create a struggle among them as reflected in each setting, the pastoral as well as the industrial. Marx (1964) argues that "Fitzgerald's work evinces a tension between a complex pastoral ideal of a bygone America and the societal transformations caused by industrialization and Machine technology".

In *Great Gatsby*, the dreams and predicaments of the characters portray an early American in whom that dream was still very much alive in a society that is on the edge of destruction. The novel depicts the moral decadence of a society in which hypocrisy, corruption, exploitation, and suppression prevail. The predicament and the suffering of the characters turn the American dream into an illusion. West Egg people, Nick and Gatsby have their assumptions of East Egg as an ideal society. Still, those assumptions fail when they recognize the society's cruelty, carelessness, and the moral decadence of its people.

In the novel, characters have a favourable view of living in East Egg; for the New Money characters, it is something of a Utopia where everything is perfect and ideal. For instance, Nick Caraway has moved to East Egg to start his business bond, assuming that it is a perfect place where he can obtain opportunities. He says, "Instead of being the warm centre of the world, the Middle West now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe – so I decided to go East and learn the bond business". (Fitzgerald, 2002, p.3) Ironically, and as Mizener (1965) maintains, Nick "returns to Midwest after despairing of the decadence and indifference of the eastern United States". (p. 190) Towards the end of the novel, Nick becomes more disturbed and shocked due to the moral decadence and the carelessness of East Egg people, especially when his neighbour, Gatsby, dies. He says, "After Gatsby's death, the East was haunted for me". (Fitzgerald. 2002, p.110) Nick has always had a desire for peace and moral order that he could never find in East Egg, as Lisca (1967) maintains, "Nick embodies in extreme the principals of order and decorum," (p. 21) and he has failed to impose his moral standards upon other characters who embody all sorts of chaos and disorder. He says, "Even when the East excited me most, even when I mostly keenly aware of its superiority to the bored, sprawling, swollen towns beyond

Ohio, with their interminable inquisitions which spared only the children and the very old- even then it had always for me a quality of distortion” Instead of getting involved and accepted by East Egg society, Gatsby fails to integrate into it and is always seen as an outsider. Gatsby changes his real identity to fit the standards of East Egg society. Additionally, he speaks a different accent hoping to fit the standards American Eastern society; his real identity is vague. Vogel (2015) maintains, “Gatsby’s socio-economic ascent is deemed a threat not only due to his status as nouveau riche, but because he is perceived as an outsider”. (p. 38) Ironically, Gatsby’s wild parties bring him more isolation than the greatness and the fulfilment he aspires to achieve. Foster (2011) writes that *The Great Gatsby* “showed us in a bad light. Because it had all those things that should have been fun-wild parties and speakeasies and gangsters and affairs and jealousy – but was definitely not a romp. Because its main character was a fraud, a caricature of our dream of success that ended up very badly”.

Fitzgerald uses the automobile as a symbol of distinction between the riches and the working-class characters. In the novel, both Gatsby and Tom are cars owners, while, on the other side, Wilson does not own a car but a service station, that is, the worker is at the mercy of the money-owners. This way, the worker is literally left behind in the race for the Dream whereas the rich characters race themselves out to the finish line. But, we ought not forget the distinction that cars make between the two wealthy man in the novel: Gatsby’s Rolls Royce is described by Nick as “gorgeous” and a “sort of green leather conservatory”: “rich cream colour, bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with triumphant hat-boxes and supper boxes and tool-boxes, and terraces with a labyrinth of wind-shields that mirrors a dozen suns”

Conclusion. As a concluding part of the analysed work it can be surely say that the work “*The Great Gatsby*” is full of views about Utopia. By the help of these description, ideal fantasy writer wanted his society to be more independent, more developed, more democratic where only good things done. But in the end he shows as a result of living in a dystopian society, Gatsby goes through a tragic experience that begins when he loses Daisy, and continues when he tries to involve himself in that society. Gatsby is seen as the victim of East Egg society’s rituals and expectations. Instead of being spiritually satisfied, Gatsby lives in a state of dissatisfaction since he fakes his identity and gets engaged in illegal activities in order to live up to the expectations and the luxurious lifestyle of East Egg society, for the purpose of winning Daisy’s heart. As Harris (2015) maintains, Gatsby “Largely buys into the dominant ritual habit of the era, demonstrating a belief that his worth is judged by his wealth and status and that these are also the key to winning Daisy’s love.

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