

THE GREAT WAR REFLECTIONS ON AMERICAN LITERATURE: FITZGERALD'S THE GREAT GATSBY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON THE EMERGING COMMODITY CULTURE AND FALL OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

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Abstract

America's wars and American dream have been the source of an important body of literature for many of the nation's major writers. It is because of the fact that American nation is regarded as a nation that made by war and American dream is regarded as the most important determinant that shaped American identity. American nation is always guided by fulfillment, expansion and democracy. However, wars especially the Great War that Americans marched into idealistically have a great impact on perception of these concepts.

The Great War has two important outcomes as I examined in my paper: the emergence of commodity culture and fall of American dream. It is especially The Great War because before it began, Americans have a great faith in democracy, peace and prosperity or any institution that will bring them fulfillment. Americans marched idealistically into war, but they didn't get the kind of war they desired or expected, what they got was a war in which there was fatigue, disease, and millions of deaths; in which the fighting and individual effort was an utter futility. So, the result was devastating for American nation because pre-war American ideals were destroyed forever. After The Great War the aimless lives and escapist activities of postwar generation in their lostness drama reflect their disillusionment and loss of faith in every institution that will bring them fulfillment whereas this postwar condition of the nation has been portrayed in post-war literary canon. Their excessive alcohol consumption, distant and strange kind of love for each other, consumerist lifestyle and mostly vicious relationships compose most of their daily activities. They are a lost generation whose unique aim is to seize the day through escapist activities, because they lost their faith in future. On the other hand this sense of aimlessness turns into a life style and they consume to prove their presence because the most important outcome of the Great War is the commodity culture emerged in the aftermath of war. As The Great Gatsby reflects the gap between low and high classes of the society generated and deepened by commodity culture, and how this social abyss transformed American society to destroy American ideals that cloaked their American dream forever.

In essence, The Great Gatsby shed light on the decaying values of the newly emerging "nouveau riche" class who worshipped holy capitalist economy and make money the upsurging power of the period. Even dreams that seem romantic at first glance are revolving around the upsurging power of money. When money is allowed to predominate or persist over conscious mind, it zips individual's minds and makes them submissive to the destruction of ideals as we witnessed in post-war America. I especially refer to Fitzgerald's Gatsby as the social emblem of post-World War I period. As I stated above Fitzgerald, war veteran himself, shed light on the lives or minds of Americans who fought in Europe during war, and the experience they have had in the years following their return.

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