

The Female Images of *The Great Gatsby*

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The Great Gatsby is set in Long Island and New York City in the 1920s. It is the novella written by the American writer Scott Fitzgerald in 1925 and established Fitzgerald's position in the history of modern American literature. However, the researches about *The Great Gatsby* are almost always confined to the interpretation of the American dream, writing skills and the fate of the characters analysis and the interpretation of the original language style. The papers on female images from the perspective of feminism are comparatively few. This paper firstly introduces *The Great Gatsby* and domestic and foreign researches on it. The first part analyzes the three main female characters in the novel in detail, the second part tells their final fates in the novel, and the third part analyzes the deep root causes of the tragic fates of these female characters from three aspects.

Keywords: *The Great Gatsby*, female images, feminism

Introduction

American writer Scott Fitzgerald wrote *The Great Gatsby* and it gradually became a household classic in American literature, even was made into a movie, which was shown in various theaters. The researches about *The Great Gatsby* are almost always confined to the interpretation of the American dream, writing skills and the fate of the characters analysis and the interpretation of the original language style. The papers on female images from the perspective of feminism are comparatively few.

The Great Gatsby caused a big stir in the literary world in the United States when it was first published in 1925, and it also improved the position of Fitzgerald. *The Great Gatsby* is regarded as "one of the most structured novels in the history of American literature". As a result, previous scholars and critics have focused on the novel's stylistic features, exquisite layout and poetic language. As for the language and structure, there are many papers which respectively analyze the patterns of language and structure in the novel. Most of the research on this work has focused on "American dream" and symbolism and so on and there are few studies on this novel from the perspective of feminism abroad.

The studies on *The Great Gatsby* mainly focus on the theme of the American Dream, mostly about its connotation, development and disillusionment of it, as well as the analysis of the roots for the inevitable disillusionment of the American dream. In addition, in *The Great Gatsby*, the moral theme is also the focus of the research community, so papers on this subject occupied a large proportion of *The Great Gatsby*'s earlier research.

The novel *The Great Gatsby* has been accepted after experiencing the tortuous process in China. Similar to foreign studies, the study about it mainly focuses on the topic about disillusion of American Dream, the unique narrative style of the novel and symbolism. Nevertheless, different from foreign studies, there are many domestic studies on this work from the perspective of feminism.

The Images of Women in *The Great Gatsby*

The Great Gatsby is a novel written by Fitzgerald in 1925. Its great success hailed Fitzgerald as the spokesperson of the “Jazz Age” and the “angel of 20 years”. The author describes the tragic love between Daisy and Gatsby and the process that Gatsby’s American dream is doomed to be broken. *The Great Gatsby* is an effective description not only of the mysterious man Gatsby, but also of all kinds of women. Many scholars are influenced by Nick’s masculinity. Many critical articles condemn Daisy’s youthful beauty and desire for material enjoyment. This article tries to analyze the female images in the book from a feminist perspective, including Daisy, Myrtle Wilson and Jordan, each of whom are victims of the patriarchal society and full of tragic roles.

In this novel, three women—Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker and Wilson—chase money and material and indulge in the luxurious life of the Jazz Age. However, when we look at the content from the perspective of feminism, we can find that these three women have different views and different cultures. Daisy is a traditional model of patriarchal society, Myrtle is a victim of the consumption culture of industrial society, and Jordan is a new woman seeking independence after the war.

Daisy Buchanan: Female Representation in a Patriarchal Society

As the most popular young girl in the upper society, Daisy lived in a luxurious house, which surprised Gatsby. As one of the young officers in Taylor Camp, Gatsby also admired Daisy very much. Because she was from a famous family and received a good education, Daisy believed that she was superior to others and could become a socialite.

The patriarchal ideology’s demand on women is also the reason for Daisy’s compromise and difficult marriage relationship in her teens. Gatsby and Daisy are deeply in love with each other for more than a month. Although she is a popular woman now, she is still the representative of the patriarchal society. It is not objective to place the responsibility for Gatsby’s death on Daisy, because Gatsby always places his trust in Daisy to realize the American dream.

Daisy is very clever, she clearly saw the status of women in the patriarchal society, the fate of her daughter will not change too much, will inherit her fate, to be a beautiful fool. Then Gatsby came back, because she remembered the old love and her husband’s affair, the balance of feelings began to tilt Gatsby, but when she learned of Gatsby’s business, and turned to choose Tom, these are realistic considerations. She accepted all the values given to her by the patriarchal society to judge the personnel, and never jumped out again. Daisy is no longer the former Daisy, she has been completely assimilated and changed by the society.

Myrtle Wilson: A Victim of Consumer Culture

If Daisy is one side of the coin, then Mrs. Wilson is the other side. Mrs. Wilson was dissatisfied with her husband and her own life, and became Tom’s mistress. On the pretext of going to my sister’s house, every time

I went to Tom's date, I came here at the moment, and got some sweet words and small money gifts from Tom by my own body. She also followed the social law of that time, the woman is just a man's plaything and vassal, when a mistress has become a thing to boast of. Tom showed no respect for her, and he was sarcastic, violent and rude. She shouted at Daisy's name and was slapped, giving her a nosebleed. Mrs. Wilson did not see the essence of Tom, the wrong false for the true heart, died under the wheel.

The United States began to urbanize in the 1920s, a century in which a new ethic reflected the market's demand for new products. In the early 20th century, the agrarian society and the consumer society in the United States changed. At that time, there were all kinds of pictures in movies, advertisements and photos, and we spread these pictures to popular magazines and media.

Myrtle Wilson is in sync with the industrial society and influenced by popular consumer culture. She does not realize that she is inferior in the patriarchal society. She has a bad attitude toward her husband. But the car accident was only the immediate cause of her death, and the biggest cause was the consumer culture of an industrial society.

Jordan Baker: A New Image of Women Moving Towards Independence

After the First World War, the status of women in American society improved greatly. Because of the war, many men went to the battlefield, which brought a lot of job opportunities for women. With the rise of feminism and the change of economic and political status, women's moral concept had a great change. It also changes the fate and choices of women. Jordan Baker is one of many women who are independent and eager for their own happiness.

If Daisy was a pretty idiot, then Jordan wouldn't have his own thoughts and judgments. Nick believes that Jordan instinctively distanced himself from intelligent people. Because she thought it was safe. Jordan has a clear head. Daisy's friend Jordan represents another type. She has her own career, is a successful golfer, keeps the world, falls in love with Nick, and then breaks up. She also accepted the values of the patriarchal society, through cheating, get good grades, learn all kinds of deceptive tricks, thus "hopelessly dishonest." Even if independence is like Michael Jordan, you will eventually have to return to marriage and family. Women did not gain economic independence at that time, so they were still collateral to men, earning money, status, security and their own value through their marriage with men.

The Fate of Three Women

All three of the three main female characters in the novel are ultimately unable to get rid of the fate of death or failure. Mrs. Wilson died under her wheels, lost her precious life; Daisy lost the innocence of her character; and Jordan Baker's high hopes of love fade, they are like three different flowers: wild flowers on the roadside died; cold roses were abandoned; After fighting hard, he finally reached the suppression and manipulation of patriarchal ism, and ended in failure.

Fitzgerald knew how to tell a story in the first person. From the perspective of male society, many readers see *The Great Gatsby* as a romantic tragedy about the shattered dreams of love and money. But much of the research to date has distorted the picture of these three women. They are obsessed with money and material things, but Daisy, Jordan and Wilson are all victims of a patriarchal society.

The Deep Cause of Gatsby's Death

Daisy, the protagonist described in the novel, is selfish, addicted to money and material. After her marriage to Tom, she gained fame and fortune, and became more and more worldly, selfish, and mercenary. She thinks she is very noble, so she is very lofty, but her private life is very messy. After knowing that Gatsby is rich, her attitude towards him has changed greatly, from contempt to worship. Even when there is a car accident, she and Tom will blame the car accident on Gatsby, leading to his death.

In the novel, readers can feel that Daisy is selfish and unkind, she only cares for herself and completely ignores others. Although Daisy shows kindness in life, she is in fact extremely selfish and has no empathy and sympathy. In her opinion, money is the most important thing, morality is not important at all, and she only cares about the behavior that damages her own interests.

The Violent Death Under the Wheel

Another female character in this novel is Mrs. Wilson. Although she was married, she gave up her husband, because she liked Tom's noble status and wealth, so she became Tom's mistress, thinking that she could become a member of the high society. The result is an end to his relaxed and happy life, involved in a complicated situation, become a tragedy. Mrs. Wilson is the representative figure of self-deception in the novel. She comes from the bottom of society, but she looks down on other bottom of society people. But the patriarchal authority is challenged, Tom abandoned her, eventually died in a car accident.

The Abandonment of the Fiance

In *The Great Gatsby*, Although Jordan is given the image of a woman in the new era, but after all, he lives in a society dominated by the patriarchal culture, more or less showing the characteristics of traditional women. Jordan also had the basic characteristics of social women at that time. For example, Jordan was good at lying and had a poor sense of responsibility. In terms of personal quality and money values, Jordan and Daisy may be the same kind of people. Jordan's attitude towards her career and the borrowed convertible seemed to protect her own safety, but it was what she used to cover up her unsound mental world.

Jordan Baker is Daisy's best friend. She has the same personality characteristics as Daisy. She has the same views on money and Daisy. In order to win the game, she moved the position of the ball and broke the rules, but she never regretted what she did. Besides, after she got engaged to her fiance, she had an intimate relationship with another man, and finally was abandoned by her fiance, which was a tragedy.

The Root of Tragic Fate

The Influence of Patriarchal Ideology

The patriarchal ideology is also one of the reasons for their tragic fate. The author himself is deeply influenced by patriarchal thoughts and has prejudice against women, which is also reflected in his novels. The main female characters in the novels are basically negative images and are greedy for fame and wealth. In fact, this phenomenon is a challenge to the patriarchal society, but we can see from the novel that the society at that time could not accept such a challenge. This reflected the reality of American society at that time, so it was difficult for women to become independent under such circumstances, so they began to rely on men, hoping to get the fame and wealth they wanted.

The Negation of the Female Ideology

The strangulation of the female ideological trend is also one of the reasons for their tragic fate. At that time, women's rights in the United States were improved, and there were corresponding changes in moral concepts. New women gradually became independent and wanted to break away from their attachment to men, which was unacceptable to the society at that time, and even punished women in the new era. Therefore, in order to obtain social status and rich material wealth, or a compromise choice to cling to a man.

The Materialistic Social System

The overly materialistic social system had a crucial influence on women's thinking. After the First World War, the American society and economy flourished, and the wounds brought by the war gradually healed. People were addicted to the pursuit of wealth and social status and materialism, which was the trend of the society and full of hedonism. People's spirit was empty, the traditional order collapsed, and the whole social order fell into chaos. But the status of women did not change, although women's ideas began to change, but they still had to be attached to men so the degradation of women in society was closely related to the overly materialistic social environment of the time.

Compared with the tragic fate of the three female characters in the novel, the fate of the three male characters in the novel is completely opposite: despite the death of Gatsby, after his death, he was respected by the narrator Nick, and the title of the hero; Tom, the death of Mrs. Wilson, not only no loss, but also get rid of the entanglement of Mrs. Wilson, this selfish and rude patriarchal guard, never respect the woman, in his opinion, women is just the private property of his wealth and status or pastime for his fun; Nick, after finally unable to accept Jordan Baker's too independent character, broke up, implying that he cannot bear and oppose the trendy women, and finally said goodbye to everything in the east and returned to the Midwest with traditional values, which means his identification and embrace of the patriarchal ideas under the traditional patriarchal system.

Conclusion

In *The Great Gatsby*, the female image described by Fitzgerald is very characteristic of *The Times*. In the background of the prevailing feminism at that time, the fate of women under the suppression of the patriarchal culture was usually controlled by men, and with a certain tragic color. Fitzgerald, with delicate brush strokes and precise perspective, accurately described the different female images in the social background of that time, with deep thought on the society of that time, attacked the male heroism advocated by people in the background of patriarchal society.

Fitzgerald's depiction of women in *The Great Gatsby* is tragic. They are selfish, shallow and obsessed with material life, such as Daisy's vanity, Jordan's hypocrisy, and Martell's pursuit of fame and profit. However, at that time, women had a low social status, and they also resisted the reality, but unfortunately, they failed. If we consider these factors, I can know that in fact, materialism and the male chauvinism era is the root cause of their degradation and their tragic fate.

The Great Gatsby, though seemingly with some negative female characters, seems to promote patriarchy. However, before and after the change of the female image, the novel is in secret revealed to readers they later show ruthless is not entirely women's fault, although under the influence of the feminist movement, female

independent consciousness in constant awakening, but in the era, patriarchal women struggle ultimately futile efforts.

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