An Analysis Of The Jay Gatsby In The Great Gatsby Essay, Research Paper

Jay Gatsby believes he can buy happiness; and this is exhibited through his house, his clothes, and through Daisy. He owns a large portion of finances due to some mysterious source of wealth, and he uses this mystery source to buy his house, his clothes,and Daisy, for awhile. Gatsby’s house, as Fitzgerald describes it, is “a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool and more than forty acres of lawn and garden” (9). This house is an immaculate symbol of Gatsby’s incalculable income. It has its own entrance gate, and is big enough to hold hundreds of people at a time. His careless

use for money to impress others is portrayed through his clothes. The shirts and clothes that are ordered every spring and fall show his simplexes in expressing his wealth to his beloved Daisy. His “beautiful shirts . . . It makes me sad because I’ve never seen such beautiful shirts before” (98). It seems silly to cry over simple shirts, but they symbolize an American Dream which people desire. These shirts represent the opulent manner of

Gatsby’s wealth and his ability to try and purchase Daisy’s love, this time through the use of extensive clothing.

Fitzgerald wisely shows how Gatsby uses his riches to buy Daisy. In the story, we know that “They were careless people, Tom and Daisy–they smashed up things . . . and then returned back into their money” By this, we know that Daisy’s main (and maybe only) concern is money. Gatsby realizes this, and is powered by this. He is driven to extensive and sometimes illegal actions. He feels he must be rich and careless for his five year love. All these enlighten us to Gatsby’s personality, therefore we know Gatsby is willing to use an unlimited source of income to actually buy trifles to prove his worth to

Daisy. He will buy a house that takes, even him, three years to pay for and purchases clothes every Spring and Fall. He does all he can in order to buy, what he feels is his only happiness, the woman he has watched for five years, the woman who’s only concern is money, the infamous, Daisy.

Gatsby’s obsession is with the buying power of money, however, this obsession does not limit itself merely to possessions, but also to physical attributes. Jay Gatsby attempts to recapture his past with money. He also implies he has a past at Oxford, he entices Daisy with wealth, and sometimes spins absolute obvious lies. However, Fitzgerald candidly avoids saying forhow long, for what reasons, or why he has indeed

attained entrance at Oxford. Being misplaced by the Military at this local prestigious college unfortunately serves as a hindrance. Gatsby shows Nick a picture “A souvenir of [his] Oxford days . . . ” (Fitzgerald), as if to imply that he was there. In realization, Gatsby had only dreamed of attending a school such as Oxford, and even a small, dishonest taste of this makes him dream of changing his past. With a photograph, Gatsby effectively, and

almost unmistakably, recreates his past. Not only does Oxford involve lies, but most of this recreation involves numerous obscene and unbelievable lies. Nick even jokes about it and says that Gatsby, “live[s] like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe . . . With an effort I managed to restrain my incredulous laughter” ( ). These and numerous other lies prove how James Gatz tries to recapture the past through the use of deception. There is

only one reason only why Gatsby tries so desperately to alter his past: his pursuit of Daisy.

Not only does Gatsby buy many material items to impress her, but he continues to accumulate as much money as he can in order to physically buy her. As Jordan states, “He wants her to see his house, and you live right next door” ( ). Perhaps the only reason he does is to show how much money Gatsby possesses. When Daisy finally realizes this, a problem occurs. Clearly Gatsby has the money, unfortunately he does not have the right type of money, he comes from the wrong class of society. Due to the dream of attaining a

higher social class and for Daisy, Gatsby tries to recapture his past, even if he is being forced to tell lies.

In order to achieve a certain reputation, so that Daisy will love him (she may already love him, but she won’t live with him), Gatsby uses his dirty money, his association with well known people, and numerous gestures to obtain this level of respect. Gatsby’s “mysterious source of wealth” (Fitzgerald), as Fitzgerald describes is through an activity called bootlegging. This illegal business is very risky, yet very prosperous. Gatsby uses it to “get rich quick”. While this may be, this enterprise does not raise Gatsby’s level of

respect. The kind of wealth he needs is “acquired” wealth. The kind of wealth he achieves is earned. In the prominent East Egg, and with Daisy, this type of wealth is unacceptable. Also, association is used in Gatsby’s struggle for prestige. When taking Tom through his party, he stops at every famous person available. Gatsby includes anyone famous, even those who are morally bad. However, “fixing” any game, let alone the world series, is something believably wrong. Gatsby actually goes to the extent of putting his name to someone who wears teeth for cufflinks.

Even though his money and his associations are important, perhaps the most important way that Gatsby tries to earn his importance is his gestures. Due to Gatsby s poor upbringing, he goes so far as to try and alter his form and speech to obtain a respect. “He smiled understandingly . . . It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it . . .” ( ). To gain a certain level of integrity, Gatsby modifies his speech, his manners, his whole body language in order to seem respectable. Gatsby almost perfectly creates the illusion that he is what he is trying to be. What he is trying to be is respectable, and his dirty money, his association, and his “gestures” nearly accomplish that.

The realization that he can never buy Daisy Buchanan, the American Dream , or true happiness never fully dawns upon Jay Gatsby. Satisfaction must come from hard work and effort, not from an easy illegal job. Jay Gatsby tries to fool everyone by putting on a facade, a mask of opulence and wealth. However, he is never fully accepted and his dreams of attaining Daisy Buchanan are never completely fulfilled. Money in itself can buy many things: houses, cars, fancy clothes. These are all material things; Jay Gatsby wants the the immaterial, a love he lost long ago. But, the dawning of realization comes too late for many, and Jay Gatsby never quite understands that you cannot purchase happiness.