The Great Gatsby: Gatsby’s Illusion Of Himself Essay, Research Paper

The Great Gatsby: Gatsby’s Illusion of Himself

F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby is considered a novel that

embodies America in the 1920s. In it, the narrator, Nick Carroway, helps his

neighbor Jay Gatsby reunite with Daisy Buchanan, with whom he has been in love

with since 5 years before, during World War I. The affair between the two fails,

however, and ends in Gatsby being shot and killed. The reason that this was

inevitable is that Gatsby created a fantasy so thoroughly that he became part of

it, and he fell with it when reality came crashing down.

The basis of all of this is Gatsby’s obsession with Daisy and with

meeting her. He did not want to deal with the reality that confronted him upon

returning from the war. Fortunately, he had “an extraordinary gift, a romantic

readiness,” and he found in Daisy someone to focus this on. She is perfection

to him, something for which he can strive, so he puts all of his energy into

finding her again. He uses his inherited money to travel around the country,

searching; when he runs out, he goes into the drug business, then oil, then

liquor. He clips out articles about Daisy from every newspaper he can find; he

buys a huge, romantic house that he hopes will merit her approval. The parties

that he throws every night in hopes that she will come become almost famous for

their extravagance and the variety of people that come.

A result of this is that Gatsby creates an illusion around himself,

also. His past is shrouded in mystery and speculation: some favorites of the

party-goers’ theories on why he is so free and generous with his resources are

that he once killed a man and that he was a German spy during the war. He does

nothing to discourage these rumours; rather, he often adds to them. He lets

people believe that he was an Oxford man and that his money was inherited from

his father, when in fact he only attended Oxford for a short time and his money

all came from outside his family. Jay Gatsby is not even is real name, but part

of the illusion of his identity; his real name is James Gatz.

This involved deception does result in a meeting with Daisy. After years

of staring at the green ight at the end of her dock like a symbol of all of his

yearning, he arranges for a meeting at Nick’s house. Gatsby of course tries to

make it perfect, hiring men to cut Nick’s lawm and decorate his house with

flowers, and “unexpectedly” showing up after Daisy’s arrival. At this first

reunion Gatsby is childishly nervous and embarrassed. He has decorated his house

with lights, and he takes her on a tour of it. When later she does come to one

of his parties and he detects that she is not enjoying herself, he discontinues

them.

Gatsby, however, cannot plan for reality. While he and Daisy are driving

in his car, Daisy accidentally hits Myrtle Wilson, a woman who lives above a

service station in New York. Her husband, George, thinking that Gatsby was

driving, comes and shoots him in the pool. This, however, is merely symbolic of

reality crashing down on what Gatsby had created. Firstly, his fantasy could not

have ever worked because Daisy is not perfect. She is instead more like her

husbad, Tom: reckless and spontaneous. In fact, Daisy was probably planning on

leaving with Tom anyway. He had suspected her and Gatsby’s affair and found out

about his bootlegging operation. This darker side of him is what primarily

destroyed her illusion about Gatsby. He, on the other hand, probably still

believed in her to the end; the knowledge that Daisy was leaving with Tom would

have ha devastating effects perhaps equal to even his murder.

This hopefulness was the basis of what made Gatsby great and why the novel

was so representative of the 1920s. The American attitude was one of hopes and

dreams and the illusions created fromt hem. And oftentimes the meeting with

reality had tragic consequences as it did with Gatsby.