

## **American Dream in F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby**

**(Suleman Bouti\*)**

**Abstract.** This writing is mainly intended to reveal the aspects American dreams in Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*. The stressed aspects are Pursuit of happiness, Persistence, Self-reliance, Individualistic, and The way to wealth. This is a qualitative research. This tries to describe the aspects of American Dream in *The Great Gatsby* by using sociological approach. This study is started by an assumption that the collapse of American society is caused by the condition as shown in novel *The Great Gatsby*. So then, where is the American Dream? This question leads this writing in studying the values of American Dream as reflected in *The Great Gatsby*. The result of this analysis shows that, *The Great Gatsby*, a novel written by F. Scott Fitzgerald reflect the aspects of American Dream such as pursuit of happiness, persistence, self-reliance, the way to wealth, and individualistic.

*Keywords:* The aspects of American Dream, *The Great Gatsby*.

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**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini dimaksudkan untuk menggali dan mengungkap aspek-aspek American Dream yang ada pada novel *The Great Gatsby* karya F. Scott Fitzgerald. Aspek-aspek yang menjadi perhatian pada penelitian ini adalah Pursuit of happiness, Persistence, Self-reliance, Individualistic, The way to wealth.

Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif. Penelitian ini berupaya untuk mendeskripsikan aspek-aspek American Dream dalam novel *The Great Gatsby* dengan menggunakan pendekatan sosiologis.

Studi ini dimulai dengan asumsi bahwa penyebab terpuruknya kondisi masyarakat Amerika pada masa itu sempat tercermin pada novel *The Great Gatsby*. Kondisi sosial saat itu sangat terefleksikan pada novel ini. Lalu timbullah pertanyaan, ada dimanakah American Dream? Olehnya pertanyaan ini mengarahkan penelitian ini dalam penggalan nilai-nilai American Dream yang terkandung dalam novel *The Great Gatsby*.

Hasil studi ini mengungkapkan bahwa aspek American Dream seperti pursuit of happiness, persistence, self-reliance, the way to wealth, individualistic ada terkandung dalam novel *The Great Gatsby* karya F. Scott Fitzgerald.

*Kata Kunci:* Aspek-aspek American Dream, *The Great Gatsby*,

American society is one of the more significant themes in American Literature. They have several items that they believe such as freedom, individualism, self-reliance, competition, hard work, equality of opportunity and wealth.

The story of America is an exciting one, filled with evolution and amazing energy unprecedented in world history. The provocative reputation of America is the celebrated ideal of the American Dream, the fantasy of complete independence and self-reliance mixed with opportunity to attain wealth through

one's labors (tenaga kerja seseorang). On the other hand, this case seems almost enchanted, offering people the unprecedented prospect of achieving success. The American Dream is exactly what it appears to be, the opportunity the ceaseless temptation of pleasure.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is an immortal illustration of the American Dream. The novel begins by describing an intense infatuation with the American Dream. The characters are emphatically American, striving towards the goals of independence and financial success. The story is seen through Gatsby is an expert. Having been born to a poor agrarian household, Gatsby successfully escaped poverty. Without any noticeably extraordinary abilities, Gatsby was able to acquire millions of dollars and achieve widespread fame in the matter of few years. Along with the riches come the opportunity for a reinvention of his identity. The financial success of Gatsby implies that he is well aware of the American Dream, and he has mastered his own identity and realized the potential of his labors.

Even with the elusive qualities of the American Dream, Gatsby spends the next five years of his life striving to achieve his financial success. What he did to make his money is not really important. Fitzgerald intentionally illustrated Gatsby's history in a cloudy and ambiguous manner. Fitzgerald was only interested in where Gatsby was in the present, and Gatsby was only interested in where he would be in the future. That is part of the power of the American Dream. - The past is irrelevant a fabricated history is just as useful as a truthful history. All that really mattered was that Gatsby was completely occupied in reaching for that intense bliss his fantastic goal of living happily (and wealthily) ever after with Daisy. After five years of extremely focused labor, Gatsby was finally in the position to achieve his American Dream. He had the money, the house, the social connections-everything was in place for him to finally realize his aspirations. And yet, when he finally gets the chance to reunite with Daisy, completely on his own terms, he found no bliss, only disappointment. The novel illustrates this alteration by changing its focus from Gatsby's fantasies about Daisy to finding happiness.

With the attention of Gatsby's character that Fitzgerald represents in *The Great Gatsby*, the researcher is inspired to study the intrinsic aspects of the novel with the concentration of the American Dream in the novel *The Great Gatsby*.

Based on the statements above, this study is focussed in:

1. How do the American Dream extend in *The Great Gatsby* ?
2. To find out the American Dream in *The Great Gatsby*
3. To identify the American Dream value in *The Great Gatsby*.
4. To see about the problems which appear in American life at the novel made up.
5. To gain the important knowledge about the American dreams. Then it will be useful for the teacher and students. For the teacher it can be used in teaching the literature especially about the novel which dealing with American dreams. For the students, they can get more knowledge about the author's mind in social especially American dreams.

### **Method of Research**

This research used descriptive qualitative methods, because the literary work itself is a description of human life society. In this case, after analyzing the data, the writer then provided a description about the American Dream in the novel *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

The data were collected by using the library research. Library research is carried out by reading the books as a main source of the data, and the books which are relevant to the object of this research.

In analyzing the data, it was used qualitative method as what Bogdan and Taylor (in Maleong 2001:3) defines that qualitative method is the procedure of research that results in descriptive data, such as written or oral from people and actions that can be observed.

In this case, to analyze the data the researcher used some steps; firstly identifying the American Dream in the novel *The Great Gatsby*. Secondly, classifying. Thirdly is interpreting.

### **Finding and Discussion**

America was a country that really advanced in this current world. In various fields like economics, politics, social, science as well as American technology more superior than the other countries. Therefore, many countries in the world nicknamed America as the "super" country "power".

The American development is supported by many factors like the geographical condition and the development from his community personally. The American community was the community that multicultural. The community that consists from some of the cultures was different. So, we could see the existence of the blend of the culture that made the American country the country that most advanced. In the aspect of geography, the land in America was the land that naturally had 2 dimensions of the foundation that were the same as the lands in the other country. Those foundations are dimension geological and the dimension meteorological. The dimension geological is the main element from the form as well as the contents that were contained in the land, like the water and the mineral as well as the land kind. Besides that, the dimension meteorological is the element which in contact with the climate and the nature weather.

In the other hand, with the existence multicultural in the American country as well as supported by the geographical condition for the good country, then the American people could develop fast and dreamed of a welfare in the period that will come. And also, it is the reason for the community from the other country. They entered the American country and became an immigrant in the hope of can achieve the success later there. They dreamed of a success for their welfare in the future. And the dream from these immigrants became entrenched in each American citizen. It became one of the basic principle from the American citizen that is known by the name of "American Dreams".

Their dream to obtain the success and welfare was planted since beforehand. They made the arrangement become special that must undertake so as to obtain what was wanted by them. The arrangement that they in order to not

disrupt the person are other right. This arrangement was the traditional values from the American nation.

According to Albert and William in Luedtke book (1988:23) they are drew particular values, there are:

- An activist approach to life, based on mastery rather than passive acceptance of events
- Emphasis on achievement and success, understood largely as material prosperity.
- A moral character, oriented to such puritan virtues as duty, industry and sobriety
- Religious faith
- Science and secular rationality, encouraged by a view of the universe as orderly, knowable and benign, and emphasizing an external rather than inward view of the world.
- A progressive rather than traditionalist or static view of history, governed by optimism, confidence in the future, and a belief that progress can be achieved by effort
- Equality, with a horizontal or equalitarian rather than hierarchical view of social relations.
- High evaluation of individual personality, rather than collective identity or responsibility
- Self-reliance, humanitarianism, external confirmity, tolerance of diversity, efficiency and practically
- Freedom, democracy, nationalism and patriotism, idealism and perfectionism,
- Mobility and change

In the “ American Dreams”, it's emphasize to the moral of american as the requiremnt. As well as Ben Franklin hopes get for success and virtue, wealth and virtues honor and virtues. Virtues appear to be the means to success, wealth, and honor. Although , the american society, as we know it with all its problems and promises that is their true monuments.

Following Emersus in Roth Book (1976:83) “ All man plume themselves on the environment of society, and no man improves, society never advances”. His print is taht the society-in and of-itself improves neither itself nor individual. A person has to do the job personally if any headway is to be forth coming. Beside that, “ belief in the potential of american life “, that was the bases for Emerson's American dreams of self-reliant-individual-living-as-one.

So, American Dreams have many requiremnts'. It will eunning if we want get the success. Beside that , we have to solve the problems if we want to get a sucess. The problem cannot ended if we are not finished it and make the solving. In this case, the morality is needed for get the success. The maeracin dreams have source in the morality values from his citizens.

*The Great Gatsby* is a novel about what happened to the American Dream in the 1920s, a period when the old values that gave substance to the dream had been corrupted by the vulgar pursuit of wealth. The caharacter are

Midwesterners who have come East in pursuit of this new dream of money, fame, success, glamour, and excitement. For instance, Tom and Daisy must have a huge house, a stable of polo ponies, and friend in Europe. Meanwhile Gatsby must have his enormous mansion before he can feel confident enough to try to win Daisy.

In the analyzing of *The Great Gatsby* are found several characteristics of American Dream dreamed by American people. Characteristics and the aspects of American Dream itself, they are: Pursuit of Happiness, The way to Wealth, Persistence, Individualistic, and Self-Reliance. All of these American Dreams aspects will be discussed below.

### **Pursuit of Happiness**

In the United States several factors have long served to inhibit full realization of the traditional ideal of equal opportunity not the least of these factors is membership in a particular groups or cohort. Many members of such groups are categorically denied the right to fulfill their own potentialities in the "pursuit of happiness".

Pursuit of Happiness in the novel *The Great Gatsby*, can be seen through character of Daisy and Tom Buchanan. Tom and Daisy were married and even had a child, but they both still committed adultery. Like Daisy was having affair with Gatsby, as quotation below :

"Under the dripping bare lilac-trees a large open car was coming up the drive. It stopped. Daisy's face, tipped sideways beneath a three-cornered lavender hat, looked out at me with a bright ecstatic smile .... " Are you in love with me , " she said low in my ear," or why did I have to come alone ?" (p. 65)

.....

At the moment Myrtle called McKee and her sister Catherine come to her party. In the party when Mrs. McKee and Mrs. Wilson was talking, Mrs. McKee described Her husband has photographed her a hundred and twenty-seven times since they were married. then Mrs. Wilson tell about her husband, As the Quotation bellow:

"I married him because I thought he was a gentleman...The only crazy I was when I married him. I knew right away I made a mistake. He borrowed somebody's best suit to get married in...." (p.27)

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This quotation stated that Myrtle Wilson is talking about George Wilson and why she married him. George does not give Myrtle what she wants but Tom does. Money is a big factor for the affair Myrtle has with Tom.

Based on description above, it can be proved that they tried to find happiness with their lovers, but the risk of changing their lifestyles was not worth. Can be seen Tom and Daisy were not happy with their wedding but they also

could not find happiness with their lovers. So, in this case Happiness can not be found or bought with money.

### **The Way To Wealth**

The way to wealth in *The Great Gatsby* same with how to get Gatsby's success in his life. Actually James Gatz is the first name by Jay Gatsby. He had changed his name at the age of seventeen at the specific moment that the beginning of his career. why Gatsby changed his name.

"He was a son of God - a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that - and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end."  
(p.75)

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Gatsby, by changing his name, in a way creates himself a new, making his life more like that of God. Gatsby parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people-his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all.

When he saw Dan Cody's yacht drop anchor over the most insidious flat on Lake Superior. James Gatz had been loafing along the beach that afternoon in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants, but it was already Jay Gatsby who borrowed a rowboat, pulled out to the "Tuolomee", and informed Cody that a wind might catch him and break him in half an hour.

For over a year he had been beating his way along the south shore of lake Superior as a clam -digger and a salmon fisher in any capacity that brought him food and bed.

The data in citation describes that the opportunity with attaining such happiness. But in order to experience such fantastic revelations, Gatsby must climb to a solitary place, isolated and alienated from the rest of society, in conclusion Gatsby is on a Quest, a perfect era, moving up the class system from poor to rich but the process of which Gatsby gains his wealth is never mentioned directly in the novel and we just overlook the association often completely. Even with the elusive qualities of the American Dream, Gatsby spends the next five years of his life striving to achieve his financial success

### **Persistency**

Persistency in this novel can be seen through Gatsby who works hard for the love of Daisy, because Gatsby is still that poor delivery boy of many years before. The story begins when Gatsby knew a woman. That woman is a young virgin. Unfortunately the woman family didn't like him because he was a poor man.

Gatsby was revolt. After five years of extremely focused labor, Gatsby was finally in the position to achieve his success. He had the money, the house, the social connection; everything was in place for him to finally realize his

aspirations. To attractive attention of Daisy, Gatsby always celebrated a big party in order to Daisy come to his party. But in his party he does not drink, he does not dance and he does only an observer. Gatsby invited Nick to his party but Nick had never seen the host. The first introduction between Gatsby and Nick was described by the quotation bellow:

“This is unusual party for me. I haven’t even seen the host. I live over there-“ I waved my hand at the invisible hedge in the distance, “And this man Gatsby sent over his chauffeur with an invitation. “For a moment he looked at me as if he failed to understand. “I’m Gatsby,” he said suddenly. “What!” I exclaimed. “Oh, I beg your pardon.” “I though you knew, old sport. I’m afraid I’m not very good host.” (p.37)

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### **Individualistic**

The individual concept emphasizes the superiority on the individual. This concept relies much on the individualism performance. The individualism phenomena can be found growing well in urban people. In obvious in an urban people is a tendency to consider that the life must go on the individual effort. To reach the best achievement we need the perseverance courage. We do not have to expect aid from the other.

In *The Great Gatsby*, the individualistic can be seen in Tom Buchanan characters. He was wealthy man and support Wilson’s garage and help him. Beside that he disbelieved about Gatsby as an Oxford man. He suspects Gatsby lies about his past. He says that Gatsby have “Drug Stores” and he collaborate with Meyer Wofsheim in Chicago, as follow:

“Who are you, anyhow?” broke out Tom. “you’re one of that bunch that hangs around with Meyer Wolfsfeim-that much I happen to know. I’ve made a little investigation into your affair-and I’ll carry it further tomorrow.” “you can suit yourself about that, old sport,” said Gatsby steadily”. “I found out what your ‘drug-stores’ were.” He turned to us and spoke rapidly. (p.102)

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#### **4.1. Self -Reliance**

Self-Reliance in this story have several point the first is the beginning of the story when Nick come into the East and learn the bond business. His father advice to him, as follows:

“Whenever you fell like criticizing any one, “ he told me. “just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve had” (p.3)

Based on quotation above, before Nick left the Midwest his father advice him. His family has been prominent, well to do people in the Middle Western city for three generations. They have a tradition that we're descended from the Dukes of Buccleuch, but the actual founder of his line was his grandfather's brother, who came here in fifty-one, sent a substitute to the Civil War, and started the wholesale hardware business that his father carries on to-day.

Beside that Tom Buchanan assuring Gatsby that his wife love him and he don't know about Daisy five years ago but it is not important to him. He just explain that until now they had together. It can be seen as follows:

“You're crazy !” he exploded. “I can't speak about what happened five years ago because I didn't know Daisy then-and I'll be damned If I see how you got within a mile of her unless you brought the groceries to the back door. But all the rest of that's God damned lie. Daisy loved me when she married me and she loves me now.” (p.100)

In the end, Daisy confesses that she has loved Tom in the past and asked Gatsby why it is not enough that she loves him in the present. When forced to choose between her husband and her temporary lover, the choice is easy for the Golden Girl”.

### *Conclusion*

Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, the writers conclude that the central moral dilemma of American life that Fitzgerald illustration in the novel *The Great Gatsby* was an illustration of contemporary life of human being. He describes the possibilities of life among the wealth, the lack among the rich, and among the poor.

In our living, we often find people who are very sensitive to the promises of life and they may think that money (rich) is a necessary ingredient. The last may be called the people who are materialistic characterization. Besides many people in our living are corrupted by the pursue of wealth and other maybe corrupted by easy access on inherited wealth.

Therefore, *The Great Gatsby* is not only a great story, but it is the story of real life during the “Roaring Twenties”, and it is have a permanent place in American literature as well as referring to the problems of American weath. *The Great Gatsby* shows us the way people will fall into hands of money, greed and ower and get involved in illegal activities to get where they want and what they want. This story is a perfect example of the fall of the American Dream in the 1920s.

### *Suggestions*

Based the conclusion above, it is suggested to the readers especially teachers of English.



1. It is important to the students to study literature in regarding enrichment their view in facing life.
2. Viewing *The Great Gatsby* as a work that reflects history of 1920s, read or study *The Great Gatsby* is doing a study of American history in 1920s, too.
3. It is suggested to a further researcher to be detail in some areas of *The Great Gatsby* as a literary work.

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