**How Gatsby Represents the American Dream**

Student's Name

Institution Affiliation

Course

Professor's Name

Date

**How Gatsby Represents the American Dream**

The attainment of the American Dream or lack of it thereof is a discussion that many participate in, including Francis Scott Fitzgerald in his novel *The Great Gatsby.* The American dream roots back in the declaration of independence, where the founding fathers declared that all men are created equally, with the right to freedom, liberty, and happiness (Parshina et al., 2021). In other words, the American dream is where through hard work and determination, everyone has the chance to prosper and climb up the social ladder. While others support the attainability of the American Dream, others oppose it by claiming it is a mirage. Despite this contention, Americans strive to attain the American dream the way they interpret it themselves. Jay Gatsby from *The Great Gatsby* represents many Americans who strive to pursue the American dream at all costs but never attain it. The novel represents the American dream as declining and illusive; therefore, it advises people to put an end to dreaming.

**The Narrator**

The novel has the narrator, Nick Caraway, describe the life of a rich man from the West Egg area called Jay Gatsby. The narrator lives near Gatsby's gothic mansion, a man that lives in luxury and holds wild parties every weekend (Scott, 2017). Gatsby is an embodiment of a 1920s American that achieved the American dream. The novel takes its audience to the life of Gatsby, who pursues a wealthy lady, Daisy Buchanan. Although the novel has a romantic scope, it contains a much larger theme of the decline in the American dream. The narrator shows Jay Gatsby's life, from his poor background, his struggle to climb the social ladder, and his eventual destruction. He is born into a poor background of "shiftless and unsuccessful farm people..." (Scott, 2017). He then works for a rich man, Dan Cody, and decides to be rich and escape poverty in his life. He falls in love with Daisy Buchannan, whose social status barricades Gatsby from entering a romantic relationship with her. His love for the woman fuels his ambitions to be materially prosperous and impress her. Gatsby's upward social mobility from ashes to riches indicates the attainment of the American dream.

**American Dream vs Reality in the Novel**

The novel further represents the American dream as an elusive pursuit that people have blurred through materialism and a greedy scramble for wealth. Jay Gatsby represents the Americans that entered the bootleg business of the 1920s after the passing of the 18th amendment in 1919 (Bearce, 2021). After the government banned selling alcohol and intoxicating drinks, a new "black market" emerged to sell the drinks illicitly. The large market of both rich and poor made the business attractive. This attractiveness and the drive to make wealth so Gatsby can get Daisy to be his lover drove him to indulge in the illegal business. Unfortunately, his moral and ethical values pay the cost of attaining Gatsby's American dream of material prosperity. After Gatsby gets materially rich through "hard work and determination," he is still not happy because Daisy is married to Tom from an aristocratic background. Therefore, Gatsby holds parties to impress Daisy (Scott, 2017). Eventually, Gatsby gets Daisy to have an affair with him. However, Gatsby's illusive dream of getting Daisy for himself drives him to ask for Daisy's confession of never loving her husband but him (Scott, 2017). Eventually, Gatsby is led to destruction as he dies of a gunshot amidst pursuing this dream. Similarly, the novel represents the American dream as an optical illusion that leads to destruction.

**Why Is American Dream Still an Illusion?**

Gatsby vividly shows the consumer society of the 1920s that preceded the Wall Street stock market crash of 1929. The generation of young people coming from the cynical and carnage experience of war brought a generation of extravagant Americans. Also, the 1920s had an uproar of technologies like radios, televisions, and automobiles which further fuelled the materialistic aspect of the American dream (Moore, 2015). Gatsby's life embodies this representation fully, as seen by his lavish lifestyle that focuses on luxury. Both the twenties uproar and Gatsby's greedy wealth amassing came to quick destruction, further showing the dangers of chasing after riches without focusing on pursuing happiness. In the novel, Gatsby often admires a green light from Daisy and Tom's lawn. This light symbolizes the dream of having a relationship with Daisy, which ended in death before attaining it as he wanted. His pursuit of picking "…out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock" quickly led to death as he came closer to grasping it (Scott, 2017). Similarly, the American dream of infinite economic growth, as reflected in the splendid economic status of the twenties, came to a quick end due to Americans' garish and materialistic lifestyle with the crash (Thomas & Morgan-Witts, 2014). The destruction of Gatsby's dreams and the later stock market crash represent the American dream as unattainable.

**Conclusion**

In closing, *The Great Gatsby* participates in gauging the attainability of the American dream, representing it as unattainable. The Gatsby represents Americans` believing in the dream and striving to achieve it, while Daisy represents the illusive American dream. Material prosperity remains the center of the American Dream, whose pursuit leads to destruction. The blurry definition of the American dream has made many like Gatsby, who targets a luxurious and showy lifestyle as the mark of attaining the dream. Sadly, happiness, liberty, justice, and freedom are inferior markers of the dream, prioritizing material wealth that takes a lifetime to acquire. In short, the American dream will remain a dream, if not a nightmare.

**References**

Bearce, S. (2021). *Top Secret Files: Gangsters and Bootleggers*. Routledge.

Moore, L. (2015). *Anything Goes: A Biography of the Roaring Twenties*. Atlantic Books Ltd.

Parshina, N. D., Menshikov, P. V., Shobotenko, A. V., & Li, Z. (2021, May). American Dream as a Key Factor of Social Mobility in the USA. In *7th International Conference on Humanities and Social Science Research (ICHSSR 2021)* (pp. 176-179). Atlantis Press.

Scott, F. F. (2017). *The Great Gatsby*. Рипол Классик.

Thomas, G., & Morgan-Witts, M. (2014). *The Day the Bubble Burst: A Social History of the Wall Street Crash of 1929*. Open Road Media.