

Color Symbolism in THE GREAT GATSBY: Chinese Dream and American Dream

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I. Introduction

On behalf of the American social life, the book *The Great Gatsby* enjoyed its high admiration and reputation among the world. The author, whose name is F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896- 1940), is best known for his novels and short stories which chronicle the excesses of America's Jazz Age during the 1920s. His fictions profoundly embodied the spirit of the American society in which he particularly described the upper class, since they only ran after material wealth and extravagant life. To satisfy their physical pursuit, they not only engaged themselves in casual sex and heavy drinking, but also spent money extravagantly and enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content. Common people's social value trend was the hedonism that money is first and materials are supreme.

The America, which has been regarded as the "dreamland" for years, became a fairy land that cultivates dream and illumination. However, from the hero Gatsby, we could see from his age that it was greedy and disillusionment that covered by the so called American Dream.

This paper gives a brief introduction of the definition of the term "American Dream", including both spiritual and material aspects. It also focuses on the deep analysis of the dream of the hero, Gatsby, and what it stands for. It aims to reveal the disillusionment of American Dream through the analysis of the colors in the novel, and at last gives an inclusion about the value of this novel.

II. Brief History of the American Dream

2.1. The origin of the American Dream

The term “American Dream” , one of the remarkable spirit all over the world, could be derived from the European Puritan religious ideals and beliefs. Broadly origins can be traced back to the times when European settlers came to North America. Original forests and fields which had striking similarities with the scene of "Garden of Eden" that the "Bible" as described could be seen. Therefore, they believed that, as those who were chosen by the God, they will be able to rebuild a new nation or a state on this land. However, the new concept of "Garden of Eden" is not only spiritually, but also on the aspect of substance. Confession and labor were used by the people to seek for forgiveness of God, so that they can return to the paradise, the "Garden of Eden", which is the spiritual definition of the "American dream". The early concept of the "American Dream" is the desire of a country based on a equality, justice and freedom.

2.2. Franklin, the Material Side

In 1706, Franklin was born in a poor family who believed in Puritanism in the United States. His life was thrifty and totally obeyed Puritan abide by laws and regulations. It was his belief that anyone who can seize the opportunity and make arduous as well as unremitting efforts could achieve his own goal, succeeding in this new state and get rid of poverty.

Franklin, as an American politician, scientists, industrialists and social activist of eighteenth-century, his success reflected his own understanding of "the American dream". Because of his humble origin, he had to drop out of school when he was ten, becoming an apprentice at a local printing house.

After finished learning the works, he opened his first printshop which expanded in several continents and the West Indies, and after several years it became the leader in printing and publishing industries of United States and North America. As a scientist, his research contained mathematical, optical and thermal aspects , and even related to sonar science, botany and oceanography. The lightning rod invented by him are still playing an significant role today.

As an eminent politician, he was actively contributed himself to the "American Revolution" (1775-1783), the only founding pioneer who signed the three most important documents of the bill, knowing as the "founding father" of the United States.

The spirit of Franklin was the expansion of North American immigrants who exploited territories, continuation of the "American Dream" embodies and reflecting the core of American Puritanism: only by hard-working could someone become people chosen by God while ultimately, achieve success and wealth. His idea was the successor to the goal at that time and even the Americans now believe in. Franklin's materialistic thinking about "American Dream" offered a powerful ideological support to its definition.

He summed up the essential tips of the American consciousness a half century ago before this country was build, and taught the world the experience of his own success which were written down as his autobiography, sublimating as the national spirit. His autobiography is still regarded as the Bible by American winners, like a torch ignited the minds of American youth martial arts great ambition flame.

2.3. Emerson, the Spiritual Side

Ralph Waldo Emerson, the wise man who came from north America, was both an idealism and a pragmatism. Emerson gave his opinions to nationalism of the culture in *The American Scholar* which was known as "the Declaration of Independence of American intellectuals", predicting that the situation of "we American has been a long time to learn from others" would come to an end. However, the significant aim of this speech was to analyze the life of "ideologist". As scholars, they should be encouraged to form their own idea instead of using others. He emphasized that it was man of thinking that a scholar should be, which meant that those kind of individuals kept thinking all the time rather than following ideas from anyone else blindly.

He elaborated his ideas about Transcendentalism published in *Nature*. He mentioned that God is everywhere in nature, while there existed the awareness of "super-spiritual" which could communicate with nature and God directly, thus humankind was also sacred. He stressed that personal divine thoughts and personal interests were above all values, and in fact that was a further critique of Puritanism. Some people think that individualism of Franklin and Emerson constituted separately material and spiritual aspect of typical American individualism. In fact, they also made up both idealism and pragmatism part of the definition of "American Dream".

In America, people acknowledge that they can achieve the dreamy life through years of unremitting efforts, and obtain the prosperity through their diligence, originality and determination instead of relying on others' support, especially the high-classes. In the last two

centuries,American Dream lures millions of hot blooded youths around the world to come to create themselves' value on this amazing land. For which,America became the heaven of hunters for victory. American Dream has a positive significance for inspiring people to fight on. And this kind of spirit produced great results both on material civilization and spiritual civilization since the eighteenth Century to twentieth Century.

III. The American Dream of Gatsby

3.1 . The pursuit of love and wealth

In the novel, the infinite and cordial love for Daisy of Gatsby was actually a reflection of the unlimited pursuit to the American dream. Daisy's beauty was just like the American dream that was an allure attraction to Gatsby. The uncertain and unrealistic definition about "American dream" was selfish, flashy and false.

"He took out a pile of shirts and began throwing them, one by one, before us, shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel, which lost their folds as they fell and covered the table in many-colored disarray. While we admired he brought more and the soft rich heap mounted higher- shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple-green and lavender and faint orange, with monograms of Indian blue. Suddenly, with a strained sound, Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily.

'They're such beautiful shirts,' she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick folds. 'It makes me sad because I've never seen such - such beautiful shirts before.'" (P57)

He became exactly rich enough to attract Daisy which made her sobbed at the moment they met again after several years while looking at the piles of shirts. It was because Gatsby was much more rich than her husband instead of adoring.

"..(Mr Wolfsheim) He paused. 'I see you're looking at my cuff buttons.'

I hadn't been looking at them, but I did now. The were composed of oddly familiar pieces of ivory.

'Finest specimens of human molars,' he informed me." (P44)

Gatsby had a large group of rich friends who built "good relationship" with him, while none came to his funeral at the end of the story. Take Mr. Wolfsheim for example, his cuff buttons, which was a symbol of the upper status, totally highlighted his noble identity.

"There was music from my neighbour's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like months among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars."(P24)

Huge parties were held all summers which were used to appeal Daisy. Gatsby spent his whole life on constructing a fantastic world for the purpose of the so-called true love and his main reason was that he could not distinguish reality and dream. He only realized that Daisy was money-worshipping. However, what he didn't understand was that they belonged to different worlds which means that there existed remarkable gap between their social status.

He paid for his "American Dream"- the legendary "American Dream" together with losing himself in his dream. The main reason for this tragedy was that in the upper Society, he advocated, all the so-called noble spirits have ceased to exist, and Gatsby didn't understand this point until his death. It was a tragedy of Gatsby and of American idealists.

Thus, although Gatsby gained lots of fortune, he could never be in the same social class with Daisy. In other words, even if the rich lose all of his money, he is still the rich one and can never equivalent to the poor; even though the poor become rich, his bone will be considered to be poor forever, and can never maintain an equal status.

The gap between upper class and lower class can not be narrowed. In the film, the tragedy of Gatsby was owing to the fact that he and Daisy were in entirely different classes. Their different social status brought in a lack of foundation which was significant for them to live together. The reach individuals in the film could be divided into two types: one was like Daisy's husband Tom who was hereditary, privileged class which has a sense of the "upper society" with an aristocratic arrogance, self-righteous, In their traditional concept, they were those the privileged class, so other outsiders were not allowed to join them, especially "the upstart"; Such Gatsby and his like, although they become very rich rely on their own efforts, but fundamentally can not be compared with them. In their eyes, this social phenomenon also implied that the United States is bound to his dreams shattered.

3.2. The misunderstanding of the American Dream

dreams despite of failures. The belief to the love and life which Gatsby held stood for that of the primary generations. While people led a boring and odd life, slaved by the desire for material in an age of extravagance and waste. Gatsby still maintained his innocent soul, pure love and kindness compassion which were essential and commandable. His own dream which turned out to be a fantasy, was just like his "American Dream". Thus, his tragedy was a reflection of the destructions of spirits in the capitalist system, even a cothurnus of the whole age.

In addition, those "wealthy upper class friends" of Gatsby often invited to his banquet, ultimately betrayed him by absence of his funeral. we can see that no matter how rich Gatsby became, how luxurious banquets were, he was finally doomed to a tragic. It illustrated that apathy and hypocrisy overwhelmed the society instead of truth emotions.

The book also profoundly criticized the ideas of young generation poisoned by the "American Dream", and allowed us to reflect: it is not true that every foreign thing is good

and everything can be imitated or acceptance. We should learn to use the view of real dialectical critique of the capitalist world to look at the culture and wealth. The book left the readers infinite melancholy and great thinking space: those dreams that can bring opportunities and wealth can only exist in people's imagination, like a beautiful myth .

In brief, in both material and spiritual aspect, the "American Dream" did not bring any results. Because, advances in material prosperity still exist beneath the poverty, discrimination and exploitation; while on the moral and ethical values, there remained hypocrisy, corruption and repression. "American Dream" was an illusion eventually, like Fitzgerald himself said it:"The whole burden of Gatsby is the loss of those illusions that give such color to the world that you don't care whether things are true or false so long as they partake of the magical glory. The United States brings people infinite hope by claiming that this hope will be realized, but in fact it will not. It is just a rising moon of America. "This is the best summary for the "American Dream" .

IV. Writing Techniques--Colors in Symbolism Meaning

4.1. White and red—superficiality and jealousy

Hester is introduced as young, tall and beautiful, with an elegant figure, abundant glossy dark hair, a rich complexion, and deep-set black eyes. In addition, white, in the stereotype of the Western people, symbolized the beauty of purity, but emptiness occasionally. As it was the same in *The Great Gatsby*, white contained both of the meanings.

In the novel, the first time when the hero met the heroine, Daisy was dressed in beautiful white clothes, driving a white car, decorated by the white gorgeous linger which ironically spotlighted her inner hollow.

“A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at one end and out the other like pale flags, twisting them up towards the frosted wedding-cake of the ceiling, and then rippled over the wine-colored rug, making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea.”

...(Daisy and Miss Baker) They were both in white, and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house.”

First time when Nick visit Daisy, he was totally shocked by his cousin's beauty and wealth. These are descriptions of Daisy's luxury villa: white curtains, furnitures and even dresses could be seen everywhere, demonstrating that she enjoyed the great wealth but actually spiritual emptiness. However, the more graceful the writer wrote about them, the emptier and more superficial their spiritual world was.

If white was used to describe Daisy, then red must belonged to Tom, Daisy's husband. Red makes people think about barbarousness, arrogance, selfishness and cruelty. That were exactly the ways how Tom behaved.

“His speaking voice, a gruff husky tenor, added to the impression of fractiousness he conveyed. There was a touch of paternal contempt in it, even towards people he liked-- and there were men at New Haven who had hated his guts.”

That was his wealthy family that made him superiorly cocky and arrogant. He always brutally pushed everyone who was standing in front of him, like a red reckless bull. At the end when the accident occurred, he instigated his mistress' husband to kill Gatsby because of his jealousy for Gatsby. From this point, it was Tom who made this tragedy.

4.2. Gold——money-worshipping

In the novel, Daisy the heroine, who was possessed of superiority in all aspects including the economy as well as their appearance, illustrating an imaginative fantasy image that become a pure heroine in Gatsby fictional world.

However, opposite to that Gatsby had imagined, Daisy was not pure in her heart like a white jade in the moral quality. As a utilitarian, she always believed that all of the people were closely related to their own interests and money was linked to all the useful things in the world. Based on her belief, she abandoned Gatsby and married Tom.

We can draw the conclusion that Daisy only cared about wealth but nothing. She will marry anyone if he could fully satisfy her material requirements. However, Gatsby believed naively that he was the one whom Daisy loved, thus making him desperately making money to win back the love.

Gold was used several times in the novel.

“The flowers were unnecessary, for at two o’clock a greenhouse arrived from Gatsby’s, with innumerable receptacles to contain it. An hour later the front door opened nervously, and Gatsby, in a white flannel suit, silver shirt and gold-colored tie, hurried in. He was pale, and there were dark signs of sleeplessness beneath his eyes.”

This plot happened when Gatsby was going to meet Daisy privately who was intended to attract Daisy’s attention with white and gold. Despite of this, the vessels of his weekly fantastic parties held in his garden, the fancy roadster and even an unnoticeable comb were all in the color gold.

When talking about gold, the first thing that crashes in to people’s mind might be the dazzling gold and that’s the reason why it is inevitably becomes a synonym of noisiness and superficialness. What’s more, leaves fall from trees when autumn comes, thus making the color yellow as well as gold becoming synonymous of the decay of corruption. People lose their original character under those kind of circumstances.

Therefore, Gatsby could only use his wealth to get love and heart of Daisy without no choices. Fortune was not everything, but in the midst of such a materialistic and money-worshipping society, a man without a good fortune was totally unacceptable. Through the novel, Gatsby’s pursuit for love was actually another manifestation of his dream of money. His dream was shattered and declared a failure of certain concept - false attitudes

towards money that given by this superficial connotation ages brought him wrong concept of money.

As mentioned above, there was no doubt that Gatsby's desires were beautiful and colorful while the outcome was mournful. That was mainly caused by his blindness of pursuing. At the some time, we can't deny fact that external causes accelerated the destruction of himself and his dream --the idea of money-worshipping everywhere full of material desires of the real world.

What the wealth meant to the hero and heroin and what position Gatsby had given to money, to some extent, were on behalf of the attitudes towards money of people at that time. Under a symbol of wealth, the color gold was used to highlight the worshipping of the money among entire group of people under a specific historical background. At the end of the novel, it was the very car which was full of extravagance that crushed Mrs Wilson down. As a result, as it was mentioned before, the appearance of gold and yellow in the end of the novel served as a symbol of the collapse and corruption of the Jazz Age.

4.3. Green—the disillusionment of dreams

The first time the writer wrote about the green light is in the end of the chapter one.

"I decided to call to him. Miss Baker had mentioned hime at dinner, and that would do for an introduction. But I didn't call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone- he stretched out his arms towards the dark water in a curious way, and , far as I was from hime, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward - and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and fad far away, that might have been the end of a dock. When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness."

Nick saw his neighbor staring at the green light from Daisy's dock while enjoying the serenity and quietness, wondering if the faint light meant something. "The green light" appears several times, make it an important indicator to the development of the plot. The light, however, has strong relationship with Daisy, who was the stunning woman loved by young Gatsby during the World War I, which brought special significance to Gatsby. Their love story did not have an happy ending because Gatsby could not offer sufficient money for their wedding. Soon after that, Daisy married another rich man, Tom.

Because of his past emotions companied with the beauty of Daisy, Gatsby believed that only if he earn a large sum of money, could Daisy come back to his arms, with a fantasy dream in his mind.

Years past since Gatsby made his effort to be one of the upper class, luxury banquets and huge parts held in his palace-like house frequently which were used to draw Daisy's attention and adore. It was his dream that one day Daisy will show up in one of his parties one night. The green light of Daisy's home over the coast gazed by Gatsby everyday serves as a symbol of his futural happiness.

It was in Chapter 5 that "green light" emerged again.

"If it wasn't for the mist we could see your home across the bay," said Gatsby. "You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock."

...Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one."

At that time, Gatsby "happened" to meet each other with Daisy at Nick's home which was in fact planned by Gatsby. While after that Daisy was invited to visit Gatsby's palace-like villa, who was really touched and even wept by his wealth and fortune as he expected before. For Gatsby, the woman whom was dreamed by him day and night was standing in front of him which made it possible for him to get happiness if he brought her into his life that and it seemed that the dream would come true soon. Gatsby talked leisurely with Daisy. At that moment

In order to have a cozy and stable life, Daisy chose Tom instead of Gatsby after sufficient contemplation.

An accident led by Daisy when she was driving Gatsby's car and rushed Tom's mistress down. Driven by extreme anxiety, Daisy and Tom schemed to slip the responsibility to put the crime to Gatsby. Thus, making Gatsby became the one who commit the crime and even lost his own life. While at that moment, Daisy's love had all gone without any trace. Gatsby's poor dream disillusioned at last and vanished under that circumstance. After Gatsby's death, the green light crashed into Nick's mind.

"And as I sat there roofing on the old, unknown world, I thought Gatsby's wonder when first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock, He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did

not know that it was already behind him,somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city,where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night."

The color green light up people's desire of hope and dream.Green has instinct meaning in American culture which is the color of the notes thus making it a symbol of money and wealth.In addition, according to its origin resource of the natural vitality, the color green exactly becomes the symbolism of life,dream and hope. As the light shone on the lake, the bright of love gave Gatsby constant recalls and comfort.

This image's existence serves as a clue for the development of the plot,it also plays an important role in schapping the character of the hero which has a profound meaning including both aggressiveness and hypocrisy.

A whole life Gatsby has spent to pursue the green light in the far distance.....However, this was destined to be a dis-illuminated dream at the very beginning.

The ending of his dream itself was irreversible and his obsession was overwhelmed with "vulgar, flashy beauty". In a word, all that Gatsby was chasing after was of nothing but a joke. The most sad part was that he was indulged in so deeply that he awared nothing, and eventually abandoned by the so-called love and dreams, leading himself to destruction.

Conclusion

The development and connotation of American Dream have close relationship with American development history. When European puritans firstly colonized the United States, they had the early American Dream. The Westward movement in the 19th century made American Dream reaches its summit. They believed that in America, everyone has the equal opportunity and can be succeeded through hard working. In the 20th century, American has developed in a high speed. But during this period, the traditional American Dream has lost its attraction and the commercial and material thought has been popular. So the disillusionment of American Dream has been the main subject of literary works.

Superficially, *The Great Gatsby* is a fail love story between a couple, however, the range that the theme of this novel contains is much wider than this, not so romantic either. Though all plots of *The Great Gatsby* took place during a few months of the summer of 1922, and was put in a limited geographical area near Long Island of New York, but it is the highly symbolic introspection of American of the whole twenties of the 20th century. The application of symbolism is a great characteristic of the novel even more, the author uses various scenes, objects and especially colors to symbolize the evaporation of the American dream in an unprecedentedly prosperous and material--surplus era.

And the resemblance between the story in this novel and life experiences of the author, with many personal feelings in the author's life especially, lets readers see the importance of the money and love in Fitzgerald's life. But the money and love symbolize the American dream in Fitzgerald's heart exactly. It's a pity that his life ruined along with the American dream, like the death of Gatsby in his works.

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