



---

## CONCEPTUALIZING SELF-EFFACING WOMEN IN F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S *TENDER IS THE NIGHT AND THE GREAT GATSBY*

M. Thanumalayaperumal<sup>1</sup> and Dr. A. Selvaraj<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English, Annamalai University, Chidambaram.

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of English, Annamalai University, Chidambaram

### ABSTRACT

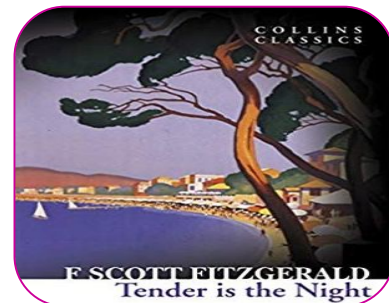
Human imagination is involved in light and shadows, in presence and absence, in doubt and certainty- man carries on the mystery to be solved: that of imagination in continuous labour, through the ages, exciting, in uninterrupted activity, the curiosity of men, avid in knowing and in revealing themselves. *The Great Gatsby* is thematically based on the concept of the American dream in general, and the degenerated 1920's vision of it particular. F. Scott Fitzgerald's view and ideas about women changed, and in what degree, throughout his career. He examined the effects of social changes and tradition, as well as social classes, money and work, showing more and more insight as his career went on. The paper aims to study by a feminist approach the formation and understanding of virginity as a social constructed concept. It will also focus on the patriarchal attitudes about gender roles, women sexuality, the cult of women's virginity and the honour and shame associated with it and also study sexual violence committed by the patriarchy on women's mind and body in the novel.

**KEYWORDS:** Sexual Violence, Gender role, Public Shame, Family Honour and American Dream.

### INTRODUCTION:

F. Scott. Fitzgerald is famous for his depictions of jazz Age. He lived a glamorous life of parties and money-spending. It is the pursuit of material wealth that corrupts man. Through his novel he puts across the idea that that American dream has been corrupted by the desire for materialism. The American dream has increasingly focused on material items as an indication of attaining success. The hot and mad pursuit of the materialistic goals, the prevailing obsession with amassing wealth through fair means or foul, seems to have engulfed the ideal America. The American society was enjoying hither-to-unknown levels of prosperity during the 1920's. The economic state of America in 1920's brought about the lifestyle of Americans. Fitzgerald thus exposes the hollowness of the American rich who failed to illuminate their minds through their riches and who could not acquire a certain taste for living.

Fitzgerald's works were the result of his sexual bonds; he had a belief that women were the inspiration of his fictions. He worshiped Zelda as his muse, thus he has created the Dick Diver who celebrates his wife as co-host and financial support in *Tender Is the Night*. His writings are peculiar not because of his handling of Sexual Connotation, but because of his plain expression of male sexual desire. It is toward sex lead him to write. Fitzgerald used Myth to express modern human emotions, his myth about Jazz Age one among his mythical creativity, he was considered to be a follower of the western androcentric culture and his power to create new kinds of women. Therefore, the feminine mystique made him to worship his own authority to write and compose women's existence, which is evident in his characterization of Daisy Buchanan and Judy Jones. Fitzgerald demonstrates that a man who loses his (control over his image) of a woman loses control of his creativity thereby lacks in his creative knowledge. His failure in love life



eventually made him to understand that relationship in stories should be complementary. In *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy seemed to be the soul of the dreams of Gatsby but when she comes closer to him he sees only the flaws in her, which shows that if the image of the woman in man's creativity would lose its control the man loses himself.

Fitzgerald created the characterization of Gatsby like a prophet, he realises a harsh reality through Gatsby by controlling Gatsby's dream with Daisy's reality. Fitzgerald has created Gatsby in the image of himself hence the character becomes a visionary. Gatsby's dream of life with Daisy becomes his life support and when it turned to be a mirage it hurts him. Before he started loving Daisy his ambition was to become rich and powerful, after falling in love with her he changes his every inch and longed to live with her a beautiful life, though Gatsby's dream is vulgar it is fascinating nevertheless. Daisy on the other hand never had trust in Gatsby and she deceived him by her materialistic needs which Nick reflects as,

I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe [the call] would come, and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living to long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass, [it was a] new world, material without being real. . . (Gatsby 169)

Fitzgerald personifies not only his anticipation of sexuality but also his understanding that stories cannot be followed in real life, if someone disturbs then it will be disastrous. Fitzgerald tries to transport his personal emotion in his writings.

Trying to recapture the hysterical Nicole, in *Tender Is the Night* Fitzgerald did not create a world with the inspiration which the feminine would give him. Unlike in *Great Gatsby* in *Tender Is the Night*, Dick and Nicole plays equal role, Dick controls Nicole but she exercises her power through riches and madness, here Fitzgerald uses his historical perspective to show the decline of Western Man. He shows Women as a beast and creates a myth that the Western Men declined.

Through his writings it is evident that he was away from believing the existence of gender equality. He created *The Great Gatsby* purely with masculine supremacy where as his work *Tender Is The Night* shows the effort of women in modern world to gain power he satirizes women as if they were trying to become men, so he has given them masculine roles, for example one of the Doctor Dicker's favourite patient is syphilitic woman live like the "Iron Maiden" (Tender 183). Dick thinks that past of his aim is to dissuade women from the insane desire to become artistic.

At the end of the story the audience feel that the hero has worked hard to make Nicole learn his genteel manner of living. Whenever he tried to implant his genteel manners all that nothing can be changed in her, and she was so stubborn to accept his teachings, so Dick was helpless, which is clearly seen in the conversation between her Tommy.

'Why didn't they leave you in your natural state?' Tommy demanded presently. 'you are the most dramatic person I have known.'

She had no answer.

'all this taming of women I' she scoffed.

'in any society there are certain.' she felt Dick's ghost prompting at her elbow but she subsided at Tommy's overtone. . . (Tender 290-1)

In order to save himself by letting Nicole take an impulsive decision of choosing uncivilized Tommy. Fitzgerald describes Tommy as a dark, sacred and handsome, his eyebrows arched and uncurling, a fighting puck, earnest Satan. Everything Tommy did to Nicole was barbaric.

Symbolically she lay across his saddle-bow as surely as if he had wolfed her away from Damascus and they had come out upon the Mongolian plain... she was ever nearer to what she had been in the beginning, prototype of that obscure yielding up in the world about her. Tangled with love in the moonlight she welcomed the anarchy of her lover. (Tender 295)

Fitzgerald in his characterization of Caroline and Mary Minghette shows the lesbian relationship in the Western World. He considers that homosexuality is a threat to patriarchy. Dick has been shown by the writer as the spirit of the men of that generation that calls the insane attitude of American women to become men as obscurity and he emerges as a saint when he feels sorry for calamity of the World War I.

From both the female characters both *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender Is the Night* it is clear that Fitzgerald shifts his muse image of women to deadly witch that sucks the happiness of men. His characterization of Daisy as a muse in his early novel and the inhuman Nicole in his later novel, *Tender Is the Night* shows the deterioration of women's image in the mind of the writer. Through the characterization of Baby he warns the readers that modern women are causing decaying of men's good spirit. Fitzgerald in *Tender Is the Night* after the marriage of Nicole calls her sexuality as animal, as it is so barbaric.

'I laid her down here.'

'I took her behind the vines there.'

'she doesn't care- -neither does he. It was that sacred dog.

Well, I laid

Her down here- -"

...

'well, I don't care where you laid her down. Until that night I never even felt a woman's breast again my chest since I married twelve years ago. And now you tell me- -'

'but listen about the dog' - -(Tender274-5)

This conversation shows how Nicole's sexuality activity is connected animal making a surrealistic tone. Thus, all this shows how much Fitzgerald has harmed himself to live a fictitious happy life. He has a self-destructed writer blames every action of women in his later works and readers can see his pain and sacrifice for his muse through his male characters Gatsby and Dick. Fitzgerald was always so concerned about his Novels. Though he lacked seriousness in his writings he did not convince when it comes to profession and personal pride in the art of writing. "I have asked a lot of my emotions - -one hundred and twenty stories. The price was high, right up with Kipling, because there was one little drop of something - - not blood, not a tear, not my seed, but me more intimately than these, in every story, it was the extra I had. Now it was gone and I am just like you now." (Notebooks, 165)

Even in his poor health and bankruptcy he never let go his craftsman's pride. His commitment to his writings was so high but he was a poor judge of his writings. He had great independence in his writings which he considered to be his trick to attract the publishers. This article is based on the belief that to comprehend Fitzgerald's novels *Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night* for better understanding of female characters of 20<sup>th</sup> century through the eyes of Fitzgerald and it also aims to bring Fitzgerald's changing views on women. Fitzgerald is not notably successful in his career as a writer with various dreams. He is most successful in developing plot through characters; this creates an interesting psychological texture to the concerned theme. Thus, his Novels are in detail gives a modern exploration of dark and funny side of Modern American life.

While creating the characters of his fourth novel, especially Dick and Nicole, Fitzgerald was stimulated by some events which had occurred in his own life, the people he had met, such as Sara and Gerald Murphy, his wife, Zelda, her mental collapse, her affair with a naval officer, his own emotional conditions, his charm and later disillusionment by his early success, his ambitions and bewilderment, his alcohol addiction and its inevitable consequences, and also his convincing social allure. According to Fitzgerald's description, none of these facts would confirm that Dick could be identified with the author, as the common supposition suggests (Fitzgerald, 1964). So many critics would certainly diminish the book's massive inherent riches and the sense of the author and the features he bred in his novel. Some reviewers,

presents Dick as the man of 1920s throughout the incidence of the events within the book and of 1930s when most current readers read and reviewed it rapidly.

Fitzgerald ornately defines his approach towards the protagonist of the novel who was unbreakable with "the heightened promises of life", and was to be broken by means of his own idealism and the deceptive, illusory world surrounding him which had aimed at his destruction (Tate, 2007).

So far, there are still so many false suppositions made of the way Fitzgerald structures his heroes. Fitzgerald had to revise the story several times to come to a final version that might decrease the vagueness concerning the chief causes and the readers' misperceptions of Dick's character, the hero of the book. Then, when he changed the chronological order of the story, he managed to magnify the richness of the material of the book. Cowley(1976) states that "there was a hesitation whether the author had intended to write about a whole group of Americans on the Riviera— that is, to make the book a social study with a collective hero— or whether he had intended to write a psychological novel about the glory and decline of Richard Diver as a person". Plainly by starting with Diver as a young doctor in Zurich, Fitzgerald declared that the novel is psychological story about Dick Diver, and that its social meaning is gained by addition or synecdoche. The other characters are grouped around him in their subordinate roles. From beginning to end Dick is the center of the novel.

Through Nicole, Fitzgerald conveys, all that is sexually and socially pleasing in youth and beauty. Only at the end of the novel she has aged. She is an empty child, representative of her social class, of the etiquette and morals of the 20's, and of the world of principles for which America, like Diver, was once more selling its soul. But it is mainly Nicole's appearance of everlasting youth that allows Fitzgerald to exploit her as a central element in the narrative correlative he is constructing for his vision of American life. Uncommonly he handles her in a way that goes beyond social criticism, entering, and the realm of religious apprehension. Diver, at the end of the novel, with full awareness of the oath, blesses the Riviera Beach before returning to the dimness of small-town America. He never neglected to keep it grounded in a precise social and economic world, and it is in this realm that most of his correspondences are established. Nicole is the typifying object of her class and society, particularly in the terms she proposes for the obliteration of her victim's moral and rational integrity. Basically, some controlling lines of theme can be observed in this novel. The man of imagination is damaged by that American dream. On the historical level, the critique is of the error of American romanticism in attempting to exceed and thus escape historical responsibility. On the economic level, the critique is of the lethal beauty of American capitalism, its destructive appeal and irresponsibility. On the religious level, Fitzgerald intermittently insinuates the possibility that human kind are prone to muddle themselves with the obvious similarities between the city of man and the city of God, paying scant attention to their more radical disparity.

## REFERENCES

- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd,1993. Print.  
 -- . *Tender Is the Night*. New York: Scribner, 1934. Print.  
 Tate, M. J. *Critical Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Literary Reference to His Life*. Foreword by Matthew J. Bruccoli. New York: Facts on File, 2007. Print.  
 Wilson,Edmund. *The Crack- up- Notebooks*. New Directions: New York, 2009. Print.



**M. Thanumalayaperumal**  
 Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English, Annamalai University, Chidambaram.