



Misogyny Reflected in the Movie *The Great Gatsby*

ZHU Yuwen^{[a],*}

^[a]Lecturer, Zhongbei College, Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

The famous movie *The Great Gatsby* ever creates a peak in movies world. Whether the famous stars or the people's make-ups in the movie are the forever attraction for the watchers. It is one world-known great work and wins many prizes in the world. In the movie there are two main male characters and three female characters and misogyny is shown off through the words and plots.

This paper tries to analyze the images of the three main female characters and the narrator Nick's prejudice against women to explore misogyny embodied in the work. In Nick's description, Daisy is empty and indifferent, indulged in material life; Jordan is a golf player, a new female, but she deceives more and benefits herself first; Myrtle is the label of vanity and ridiculousness, the ugly and dark image in materialistic society. In fact, Nick's has double moral standards. In his eyes, the females are lure, sexy and pump and depending on the man while the males are the representative of power, strong and tough. The female characters are arranged many miserable punishments for their breed and vanity, such as some being killed in accidents with miserable ending, some abandoned by men and some losing her real lover. But the man's bad behaviors receive less punishment, such as Tom betraying Daisy and playing Myrtle's love.

Key words: Distorted images; Misogyny; Double standards

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INTRODUCTION

Actually the adaptation of the spirit and the development of the movie are basically faithful to the original novel, that is one of F. Scott Fitzgerald's work.

"Misogyny" is widespread in literature, art and reality, known as a kind of ideological disease, distorting and belittling the female's images. The concrete performance of Misogyny is to disgust all the things related to women, especially it puts females' sex as death and pain rather than a symbol of life and happiness. Conservative morality is always sensitive and strict with the female's words and deeds. On the one hand, it speaks highly of female following the traditional rules and expects through the individual compliance model to redeem the whole social ethics. On the other hand, it would condemn the women once they have some behaviors against traditional rules set for women. Even they may be killed by the traditional rules and their relatives also feel shamed for her. In fact, whether the praise and condemnation for the women, all the two reflect the double moral standards. And the condemning especially shows misogyny in people mind which is a kind of discriminatory subconsciousness. The final purpose behind misogyny is to protect the male-centered traditional moral value through strict and vicious requirements for women sex. Nowadays misogyny is still hot in many works.

1. THE FEMALE IMAGES ARE DISTORTED

Not only in the movie *The Great Gatsby*, but also in the original novel, there are three main female images all which are distorted. From example, Daisy is indifferent and a slave of money; Jordan is an egoist; Myrtle is a ridiculous character.

1.1 Daisy Buchanan: A Slave of Money

Daisy is a slave of money and luxurious life for which she would rather abandon the love with Gatsby and get marry

to Tom who she does not love. She is eager to have upper-class life and prefers to fame. All day in her mind there are only how to spend money, how to enjoy the next day and how to choose beautiful clothes, etc. We can say she is married to money and material life rather than Tom. In the male-center society Daisy has only beautiful face without any initiative, relying on males. She tightly depends on men to live and to achieve her life value by man's sex and chase. Only the rich material life can make her realize the survival significance. Empty life actually has flooded into Daisy's heart while Daisy also has to put on an upper-class mask. Really she wants to use the material life to hide and fill the endless emptiness and pain. In the book and movie males actually put Daisy as their own possession and the representative pride for men.

Daisy lives a parasitic life where she has the strong lust. In Louisville when first meeting Gatsby Daisy does not know the background of Gatsby and mistakenly regards that Gatsby is the young officer and then she dreams a promising life together with an officer and falls in love with Gatsby. After Gatsby goes to the battlefield which makes her dream becomes a mirage. So she immediately turns to wealthy Buchanan, which fully shows her snobbish side. Many near passing, at Gatsby's mansion, she is shocked by the internal luxury. Gatsby buys various styles of women clothing suitable for different seasons and all these are flowing and spilling down. At that time, Daisy cries to tears which contain the pain of her unhappy marriage with Buchanan as well as the regret of leaving Gatsby and other complex mood. When Gatsby advises her to leave Tom, she hesitates for she does not have the courage to change absolutely and does not want to lose the present luxurious life. Though she has sensed Gatsby's current wealth she is not clear whether this extravagant life can last forever. So facing Gatsby's aggressive advice, she chooses to retreat but not go with him. After Gatsby's death, she even goes on a trip with Buchanan. Her betrayal highlights her aloof character. What a naked slave of money she is!

1.2 Jordan Baker: An Egoistical Being

Jordan Baker is an Egoistical being who brings her own interests over others. Though she makes mistakes she will never admit her faults and even lie to others.

Jordan comes from the upper class and she looks down on everything and always puts herself over others. She is an athlete which gives her confidence and power. But her self-identify is beyond the limits. She becomes selfish and only focuses on her benefits even ignores others for her own benefits. Nobody would like the self-centered woman while egoism of her also leads her deeply into a sad ending that her self-centered characteristic makes her lose the love of Nick.

Jordan has a lot of scandals and bad behaviors such as impenitence and lies when doing wrong things. Otherwise Jordan has always been selfish and egoistical with no

sense of responsibility, for her own interests by hook or by crook. Finally Jordan falls in the tragic fate that she is jilted by her fiance Nick which to some extent is caused by her egoism.

1.3 Myrtle Wilson: A Ridiculous Creature

Myrtle Wilson is a ridiculous creature who has already got married Wilson however when meeting the rich man-Tom she becomes the play of him. She desires wealth and honor greatly who is really a woman of vanity.

"Ridiculousness" is the best label for Myrtle Wilson. Since she is born in a lower class, she has been eager to marry the rich to live in comfortable upper class. At the first meeting at the train station, Myrtle expects to get money and status through Tom. Although she has got married she still becomes the lover of Tom. She attempts to close the upper society through Tom's status and follows him in various public places. In fact, she plays the role of Tom's mistress to meet her vanity. In her mind, she has been one member of the upper class society but Tom treats her as a plaything only to satisfy his lust. When arriving at Tom's apartment, she is like a queen coming back to the palace. Her laughs and words both reflect her arrogant attitude and ridiculousness. She imitates the rich, looking down on her husband that her husband has dragged her down and can not give her the ideal life. To squeeze into the upper society she is willing to be Tom's lover and does not know who is who. As Tom senses she shows off her new identity, she is severely beat and scolded by him. She expects her so-called love to meet her expected vanity but at last she loses all the things.

2. FEMALES' SOCIAL VALUES ARE CONDEMNED

In the movie, the three main female characters were performed according to characters setting from the novel original, that is all with a distorted social value. Daisy is indifferent inside; Jordan is a representative of new women who are not welcomed by males' real love; Myrtle is even a woman of vanity.

2.1 Daisy: An Indifferent Soul

Daisy is an indifferent soul. Gatsby really has a sincere love with Daisy and he holds so many banquets only to wish Daisy's coming. Actually he has his own dream and bright future however Daisy's indifference and vanity destroy the millionaire. One day, Gatsby, Tom and Daisy have a quarrel and then they take their own car back home. Unfortunately in the way Gatsby has an accident which kills Tom's mistress. As Daisy has known that Gatsby's wealth is not through an illegal way which she is afraid of. So finally she comes back Tom's arm and then they two have a travel together. Even when Daisy has known Gatsby's death, she still gives no response. As a

result no one attends the funeral of Gatsby; so does Daisy! What an indifferent soul!

2.2 Jordan: A Representative of New Women

Similarly, Jordan Baker is as well as a representative of new women. She is popular among American upper-class society and often invited to a variety of celebrities. So many rich young men want to marry her. She is a good friend of Daisy but she is not willing to depend on men like Daisy. She would rather rely on her own ability to pursue career success and financial independence. In the sport field where the male is the main body, Jordan will inevitably face more pressure, but she is always able to cope with it. In daily life Jordan also ignores the limits. Instead to some extent it is her style like the male eventually leading to her break up with Nick. After all in a patriarchal society, a woman with economic independence and spiritual independence is difficult to have her own happiness. She often maintains a proud and cold air and she has watched the society's spiritual emptiness and the tragedy of women so she turns into a truly independent woman to firmly pursue her own rights and happiness. But her ending is losing Nick's love. She is rejected by Nick's man-centered value.

2.3 Myrtle: A Woman of Vanity

Myrtle is from the lower class and her vanity drives her to the upper class society. She wishes to have much money and extravagant life. The envy of others is also her expectation. She feels proud of being Tom's lover that she can make up herself like an upper-class lady. Always she complains about her husband's incompetence. When she senses Tom can bring her what she wants, she immediately leaves her husband alone and goes with Tom. All these show her vanity and fallen feature. Her story is like a joke filled with judiciousness. In her life she puts the extravagant life as her living goal. But at last her vanity has her losing self-knowledge and even her life. She is exactly a woman of vanity in the movie.

3. BIASED ATTITUDE IS SHOT TO FEMALE CHARACTERS

In the movie Nick is the narrator. In Nick's eyes, the females are sexy as if they are born to lure others and they depend on males to live. It is certain that all the women in the movie have no good ending or even punished highly with different miserable results.

3.1 The Different Ways to Show Male and Female

Nick regards females as lure that are depending on man to live while the male are with power and positively contrive to success. Furthermore the female characters in the book have no happy endings such as Myrtle Wilson's miserable death. Otherwise the males are less punished for their bad

behaviors even the arrangement of Gatsby's death also calls people's sympathy to Gatsby and hates to Daisy.

3.1.1 The Description of Appearance

Nick is the narrator of the story and in another hand his words are the author's ideas. Nick describes Myrtle as low moral woman. When he firstly sees Myrtle, she was sexy and full of enthusiasm to attract others. Her clothes are colorful and her short skirt can not hold her most skin. In fact, her enthusiasm is the representative of strong sexual lust. In his description Myrtle is pump and sexy. She is like a clown. In Nick's eyes as if they are all fallen women. At the banquets the females bedecked with jewels, drink cups of wine and then dance in the center, enchanting and sex, to attract the males. Sometimes they throw their bodies into the males' arms. Nick's biased attitude towards female characters also can be found in the appearance of Daisy. Nick several time points out Daisy's artificial smile and tempting action. So we can see that Nick is standing in the male aspect to evaluate the female.

Otherwise in the movie the males' characters are more positive. Gatsby has dreams and Tom is respected. He regards Gatsby as the representative of real love and devotes all the things. Even Tom also has power and wisdom and independent personal idea. In Nick's mind, the male is with power and tries to go success. They all be strong or with learned and refined characteristic. Self-confidence is always their friends.

3.1.2 The Description of Death

To some extent, the movie of *The Great Gatsby* is really a tragedy. Nearly all the women have unfortunate endings. Myrtle is vanity woman like a clown with ridiculous affectation. Daisy is engaged in extravagant life and has an indifferent soul which makes her empty. As for Jordan, she loses the love of Nick finally.

Next there will be the comparison of the description of Myrtle's death and Gatsby's death to arouse the reader's response. The movie organizes a traffic accident that kills Myrtle. We can see Myrtle's death is the punishment and condemnation for her evils. It obviously reflects author's strong biased attitude towards female characters. In the story Gatsby thanks to the quarrel with Daisy and Tom goes death, which makes the readers more anger with Daisy. Daisy's evils become greater just as the story shows Daisy life is filled with money and emptiness without happiness and love, which is the punishment for her vanity.

3.2 Double Standards Toward Male and Female

Nick is strict with the faults of females and there are heavy punishments for woman's evils. However he holds another tolerant attitude to males' evils. That is to say he has double standards toward male and female.

3.2.1 Double Moral Standards

In the movie Tom and Daisy is a couple and they all have betrayed each other but they receive different

punishments. As is known in the movie Tom has his own mistress, but Nick has less condemnation and criticism for him. Tom takes use of his money and status to deal with Myrtle like a plaything. The movie allows Tom's betrayal to Daisy but can not accept the same behavior of Daisy. Finally Tom nearly receives no punishment but Daisy loses her real lover—Gatsby. Tom puts Daisy as the honor and he just likes her beauty.

Another great man—Gatsby is also struggling for power and money as well as Myrtle and Daisy. Daisy and Myrtle are all the slaves of money and luxurious life and they pay the price of their vanity. Myrtle's death and Daisy losing her real love can respond to it. In fact, the males still can not avoid the human's evil nature. Gatsby also puts the money and status as the goal of life. He wants to marry beautiful wife and he is eager to get the respect from others. To get wealth he has done many illegal things. But in the book Gatsby is still a positive character. The movie makes up Gatsby a man with sincere love but ignores the way he gets wealth and to some extent his love for Daisy is based on Daisy's beauty.

In that era the females can not have the right to be independent and have to rely on males. It is the male-centered society depriving the female's rights.

3.2.2 Double Critical Standards

The female's goodness is ignored by Nick in the story. He always focuses on the female's vanity but mentions less about their good sides. For example, Daisy is cute and gentle and she is born in rich family with elegant temperament and good manner. Ever she also has the idea to wait for Gatsby's coming but Tom takes bad means to stop it. She, as a beautiful girl, should have the right to choose the comfortable life style of marrying Tom when Gatsby is absent. When it comes to Jordan, she is the representative of new woman. She is free in spirit and she tries to control her own fate. She has a living goal and ever tries for it. She gets the awards by her effort. But in Nick's mind, she is self-centered and he leaves her alone. Jordan is the woman who can not be controlled easily in the movie. On the other hand, although the male has evil behaviors they do not get the corresponding punishments. As if the males play with females' love is permitted that the male can have mistresses but the females can not. The females must pay for their betraying or vanity but for males these are common with no punishment. Instead the females in the movie never have a lucky story and the males less have been punished. It is so obvious that the double critical standards in Nick's eyes.

CONCLUSION

No matter the movie or the novel *The Great Gatsby* are both for males. The three females' characters are regarded as low moral. From the male's aspect, Daisy is indifferent,

selfish and with vanity. She always pursues money and luxurious life and for these she would rather abandon the love with Gatsby and get marry to Tom who she does not love. Jordan is an egoist and has independent spirit. She has lower morality for her impenitence and lie and she always ignores others' interests. Myrtle is a ridiculous character in the movie. Although she has already been married to Wilson she still becomes the lover of Tom. She attempts to close the upper class society by Tom's status. She shows off her parasitic life and is killed in the end. All the three characters reflect misogyny in that era.

In the movie Nick's has double moral standards. As he can see the females are lure, sexy and pump and depending on the man while the males are the representative of power, strong and tough. Otherwise as for the faults of women he is very strict with and arranges many miserable punishments for their breed and vanity, such as some being killed in accidents with miserable ending, some abandoned by men and some losing her real lover. However he shows his tolerance when facing the males.

So it is easy to find misogyny in *The Great Gatsby* which also the best weapon to struggle for females. The causes of immorality in the three women characters which lie in the author himself, who maintains traditional recognition of women characters. The dissertation points out that women's rise in political status and appearance of professional women run into conflict with men's traditional recognition of women. The negative portrayal of women characters reflects to some extent, men's prejudice against, dissatisfaction with and fear of women and women's increasing rights from that early 20th century. The three women characters are victims of the society as well as of men.

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