
The Representation of Men and Women in the Great Gatsby

Men have been overpowering women for many years now. The power that men have over women is shown throughout many different works of literature. Many readers believe that women have less power than men do in the book, *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald. This statement is accurate, due to the date that this book was written; the year 1925, seeing that women during that time period were treated more as objects rather than being treated as people. In *The Great Gatsby* Ivan Štrba said “The men constitute ‘the world’” and the women are merely ‘it’s mistress’” (42). In addition to what Ivan Štrba said, there have been many feminist scholars that have been known to criticize *The Great Gatsby* for their way women are portrayed. I agree, along with many others, with the statement that Ivan Štrba said in response to the novel and will be proving this statement even further. Women and men may be equal in how men are supposed to respond when they are spoken to, but Fitzgerald shows that women are overpowered by men through the way their physical appearance and personality are described. As well as how it is looked down on women when they have an affair but it is more accepted by society for a male to have an affair.

The way that Fitzgerald describes females physical appearance is clearly represented in very different ways than males are throughout the course of the novel. The way Tom Buchanan is described by Fitzgerald in the novel is in a way that he’s not describing him as if he is an attractive man or not. The way he is described makes it seem like Fitzgerald does not have an interest in the way a male is described:

A sturdy, straw haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and a supercilious manner. Two shining, arrogant eyes had established dominance over his face and gave him the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward. Not even the effeminate swank of his riding clothes could hide the enormous power of that body—he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing and you could see a great pack of muscle shifting when his shoulder moved under his thin coat. It was a body capable of enormous leverage—a cruel body (Fitzgerald 9).

When Fitzgerald described Tom Buchanan’s eyes having dominance over his face as well as being arrogant, then proceeding to say that even his clothes cannot hide the power his body has, gives an even stronger suggestion that men have more power over women. It gives a strong and clear dominance that Tom has and also gives the reader a clear feeling that he is a lot stronger and or more dominant than the other characters in the novel. The way that the women are described in this novel is much different. As a reader, it seemed like Fitzgerald had a larger interest in trying to capture the beauty of women by describing what they are wearing:

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

Enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. 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 (Fitzgerald 10)

He had a larger interest in women, this is prominent because when he described the men he did not include near as much detail in the what the men were wearing nor in their physical appearance. “Her face was sad and lovely with bright things in it, bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth—but there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget” (Fitzgerald 12), the author decided to talk about what the women were wearing before he had described their physical appearance. “Jordan Baker is introduced with an impression that defines her: ‘...chin raised a little, as if she were balancing something on it which was quite likely to fall.’ Throughout the story she is preoccupied with maintaining her precarious image of herself” (Hollister). In his writing, Fitzgerald had made an assumption that the way a women looks is more important as well as the assumption that women are always trying to work on their physical appearances. Michael Hollister, a university student has written an article on the novel, *The Great Gatsby*, has also made a statement that in this novel, women are more occupied with making sure the way they look is where they way them to be as well as being acceptable by society, but when he spoke about men he talked about both their physical appearance as well as their physical appearance. The way he did this shows that he had been more concerned about women’s bodies instead of the personality of the women, since men tend to not care as much about their looks it makes them “Constitute the world” (Štrba).

In the novel, *The Great Gatsby*, it is not acceptable for a woman to have an affair but it is acceptable for a male to have an affair. Daisy’s husband, Tom, was having an affair on her with a woman named Myrtle Wilson. Once the story went further on, Daisy and Jay Gatsby had reunited, while this occurred he expressed his love to her and she expressed it back to him as well. The moment Tom found out about this he got very mad at her, but when Daisy found out about Tom’s affair it was not acceptable by society for her to get made or upset about it. This had been a surprise to Daisy’s cousin once removed, Nick, when he had found out about this affair he was not upset or mad about it. Nick and Jordan Baker had been talking together and then the phone rang, it was Tom’s mistress “‘Why-’ she said hesitantly, ‘Tom’s got some women in New York.’ ‘Got some women?’ [she] repeated blankly. Miss Baker nodded. ‘She might have the decency not to telephone him at dinner time. Don’t you think?’” (Fitzgerald 18). It was normal for males to have affairs on their wives but the women did not believe it was okay. The females in the novel were shocked that Tom was on the phone with his mistress in front of them, which shows a level of power that men have over women. Tom had not respected that his wife was sitting right there while he was speaking with his mistress and he had expected Daisy to be okay with it. “What a low, vulgar girl!” (Fitzgerald 124) Jordan Baker had said to Daisy. When this was said to Daisy she did not care because she was in love with Gatsby and she wanted people to know about their love. This text said that it was okay for a man to have an

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

affair but if a woman had one she would be considered and called a unsophisticated and 'showy' person. According to Gatsby she never loved Tom, which was not true because she did love her husband but the moment she saw Gatsby again, she knew that she still loved him. "Tom bought Daisy a pearl necklace before their marriage and implies that he is continuing to buy her off, probably because he is continuing to have affairs" (Hollister). 'Buying her off' is an implication and another example of how women had been seen more as objects than people. Most men had affairs on their wives during the time period that this novel was written but it was very uncommon for females to have an affair. It was expected that women were to stay loyal as well as truthful to their husbands.

In conclusion, I agree with Štrba's statement on how "men constitute 'the world' and women are 'merely its mistress'" (Štrba). Men are supposed to respond to females when they are spoken to, all of the other evidence goes towards what Štrba had stated. Men have more rights as well as more freedom in the novel and they were allowed to participate in activities that women were not allowed to. It was also made clear that Fitzgerald thinks women only want to keep their focus on their appearance, instead of their personality. Looking at how the portrayal of men and women in The Great Gatsby is, it was made clear that men are more important than women through Fitzgerald's eyes.

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

[GET HELP](#)