

Evoked elements of modernism in tgg english literature essay

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Fitzgerald used new modern trends in literature with radical, innovative techniques to create a portrait of the decade. *The Great Gatsby* was a breakthrough in modernist writing because it was modern day at a time of prohibition and when trends were sweeping the nation. Materialism became the new way of life with for the first time in history the American population centralized within the cities instead of in the country. These changes were lived through by Fitzgerald and were described accurately in the novel. Modernist techniques are used to develop negative and cynical views, especially when consulting Gatsby; "from one place to another, anything could happen, even Gatsby could happen" (Fitzgerald 85). This negativity towards Gatsby can also be seen when he is murdered; "The holocaust is complete" (Fitzgerald 154). He describes himself as a self-mythologizing story and as a pastiche of cheap magazine stories. However, the "roaring noon" (Fitzgerald 67) and Manhattan as an expression of Gatsby's house and his beliefs in infinite possibilities almost summarizes the need for 'making it new' in the twenties. The eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg bring subtle connections between Nick's cynical view of life "distorted beyond my eyes" (Fitzgerald 167), which is influenced by Jordan, "There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy and the tired" (Fitzgerald 77). They are the all seeing, all knowing judging eyes which are meant to intimidate. Fitzgerald's way of indicating that the people of the 1920's were disgraceful, undignified and selfish because they spent large sums of money on themselves is shown through Gatsby's parties where people would attend when they didn't know the host. This type of behavior is why the 1920's were known as a decadent era. The eyes not only symbolize a god-like being but also Fitzgerald himself

and his negative views of 1920's society, which are also portrayed through his depiction of guests at Gatsby's parties such as the two women identically dressed in yellow. The novel investigates the theme of honesty in a new modern way which it is lacking in the characters of *The Great Gatsby* including Jordan who cheats at golf and when New York City is a symbol of what America has become in the 1920's, a place where anything goes, where money is made, bootleggers flourish, and where the Meyer Wolfshiem fixes the World Series. Gatsby's 'old sport' seems to invoke foul play, but seems to be more of a false affection. However, certainly there is a sense that Gatsby hasn't achieved his wealth honestly. The Jazz Age was a movement of youthful rebellion and futuristic expressive modernity when the rich went to parties at Gatsby's to indulge in the new hedonism of the time. Nick introduces the novel describing things that are manufactured, advertised and consumed. There are signs of the new economy (the modern capitalism) but these are in many cases also metaphors of the new materialistic mental landscapes of the 'Jazz Age', which the novel seeks to document. This need for the new was strong in the character of Myrtle Wilson who had her modern apartment as an attempt to turn herself into a 'Daisy' like modern society lady by mimicking what she had read in the "town tattle" (Fitzgerald 29) and trashy gossip novels. This is reflected in her party mannerisms and behavior, her pet dog, her manufactured furniture and rugs with tapestry of "Versailles" (Fitzgerald 31). Gatsby's house is a rather artificial place, which was originally built to impress Daisy with his so-called wealth, which is a sign of the corrupt way of 'winning' love through money, and wealth. Gatsby's house however is furnished well with old

looking ornaments and a library, which is full of 'uncut' literature. The conversation between Jordan and an unnamed man at one of Gatsby's parties' talks about the books; "Absolutely real - have real pages and everything. I'd thought they'd be a nice durable cardboard" (Fitzgerald 47). These books and antiques are just Gatsby's way of showing off his wealth to others, however Gatsby doesn't really care for materialism which is shown because his bedroom, the only room he really ever uses, is empty compared to the rest of the house. The expression of modernity can also be seen in the way the novel draws an analogy between his house, car and his character. Owl Eyes and Nick's views of Gatsby's interiors and analogy shows the novel draws between the eclectic room in Gatsby's house and interior consciousness of modernity more generally. The interior contains a range of items imported from Europe, and Daisy becomes overwhelmed with Gatsby's variety of "beautiful shirts" (Fitzgerald 89). The novel shows the emergence of a mass society with pressure placed upon individual integrity from advertising and fashion to American ideals and history that are put together using cross-cultural comparisons. There is a recurrent theme throughout the novel about the importation of European fashions, manners, and habits into the American context with are put as a disadvantage to American way of life. When Gatsby meets with Daisy, he wears his best outfit; "the front door opens nervously and Gatsby in a white flannel suit, silver shirt and gold colored tie hurried in" (Fitzgerald 81). To Gatsby his clothes create a vision of power and happiness that his money can buy. Fitzgerald focuses on Nick as an allegorical method of expressing modernism, as well as a sense of loss for southern gentility. Nick describes Henry Gatz as one who's more drawn

to the photograph of his son's mansion than the house itself and his naïve belief that Gatsby would have been a man like James J. Hill. The Great Gatsby is definitely connected to romantic commitment and a belief in the limits set by force, which in a materialistic sense shows there is a dualism between a mechanistic and organic view of the universe. The organic universe is living and the mechanistic universe is fixed, this therefore shows that the novel is also concerned with naturalism as a modernistic technique of writing.