Advertising and conspicuous consumption have shifted the idea of the American Dream from being about morals and virtue to material accumulation. There are characters in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel The Great Gatsby that are believed to have achieved the American Dream based on their wealth. The Great Gatsby contributes to the changing of the American Dream by critiquing characters such as Tom and Daisy Buchanan, Nick Carraway, and Jay Gatsby.

“By the early 1920s, the meaning of success in America was in transition from the traditional notion that linked work with virtue to a more ‘secular understanding of the ‘American Dream’ that was ‘entirely economic and free of moral obligation’” (Brauer 23).

“Through Gatsby, Fitzgerald attempts to correct Americans’ misconceptions about the American dream” (Hearne 189).

“The dream itself is ambiguous, contradictory, romantic in nature, and undeniably beautiful while at the same time grotesquely flawed” (Hearne 189).

“Fitzgerald sees the American dream – its ideology and its very character – as a contradiction to and a distortion of reality” (Hearne 190).

All of these quotes are important because all emphasize what the idea of the “American Dream” was during the 1920s, and in The Great Gatsby.

“This quote shows that because of the money that Tom Buchanan had, he was able to afford things that other people couldn’t.

“This quote shows the emphasis on Gatsby being able to afford two cars because of his money.

“This quote is important because it is the narrator’s epiphany where he understands that he and the rest of the characters in the novel were unable to achieve the “Eastern Life” because they all had flaws in their ideas of what “Eastern Life” was like.

Car Advertisement from 1920

The Ads above are important to the idea of conspicuous consumption because they are geared toward people who have money. All three ads are saying ‘hey if you have money you can be like me’.

Works Cited

