

ENGLISH: *THE GREAT GATSBY/BROWNING'S SONNETS*

“Time changes but human values remain static.”

Both the *Great Gatsby* and *Sonnets of the Portuguese* reveal love's ability to provide hope and resurrection revealing personal aspiration and capabilities. Although the contexts of Browning's Victorian era and Fitzgerald's 1920s Jazz Age significantly differ, through a comparison of narrative voices and protagonists in both texts it is realised that the value of love remains universal, yet its capacity is determined by context and ultimately time.

In both GG and SOP, love as a source of hope is revealed as a transcendent human value however, differing contexts highlight that this optimism is diminished in Fitzgerald's world. In her SOP, EBB initially identifies herself as an individual who is destined for a 'melancholy' life as a result of the spinster status and physical constraints that has 'flung a dark shadow across' her. Like Daisy and Jordan, who longingly reflect upon their 'beautiful white girlhood', Browning reflects in the octave the 'sweet sad and melancholy' years of her youth, possessing no hope for the future. Yet, through Browning's love, embodied in the imagery of the 'silver iterance', EBB is provided with a new hope to pursue an idealised love confirmed in the imperative auditory of 'Not Death but Love.' EBB's extended metaphor, equating herself (in the sestet of Sonnet 32) as an 'out of tune worn viol' who would without love 'spoil the song at first ill sounding note' is sharply contradicted with her new found confidence and optimism, extending beyond the expected silenced nature of a Victorian Women instead her imperative auditory voice stating "Speak Once more thou lovest!" confirms her new found optimism. This love which EBB receives provides a hope for a transcendent future allowing her to metaphorically, 'rend the garment' and 'darkness' of her previous spinster life to instead live on 'through loves eternity,' an aspiration fully realised through conservative Christian devotion.

Similarly, like Browning in Fitzgerald's novel, the protagonist Gatsby reveals the hope provided by love as a universal human value. From the outset of the novel, the narrator of Nick allows audiences to trust in his observation of Gatsby as possessing a 'romantic readiness' which he has not seen in any other person', immediately establishing (unlike Browning) Gatsby as an antithesis to a jazz age era. Although Nick initially allows audiences to trust in his narration, as he affirms that he is 'one of the few honest people he knows, his proclamation of honesty is sharply contradicted to his dishonest dealings with Jordan Baker, realised in her equating of the relationship to a transient object questioning "I met another bad driver didn't I?" Jordan's symbolism of love as a lifeless commodity highlights to audiences that unlike EBB's 'alive and quivering' love which provides hope for a transcendent existence, Gatsby's love is denied this as a result of the 'foul dust' which surrounds him embodied in corruption and selfishness. Although EBB's 'eternal' love which allows the Victorian lovers to be 'isolated,' metaphorically encircled by the 'darkness and death hour', the replacement of religious belief with materialism in the 1920s, embodied in philosopher John Dewey's assertion that 'to me faith means not worrying,' results in Gatsby's hope to become more restricted. EBB's pure 'silver iterance' is juxtaposed to the figurative imagery of Daisy 'gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor,' highlighting the vacuous and transient nature of love which although provides Gatsby with hope, is ultimately doomed by selfishness and mortality (echoed in Myrtle's existentialist philosophy that 'you can't live forever'). Therefore although a comparison of narrative voices in both texts highlights love as a source of hope as a universal value to the human individual, it is realised that unlike the Victorian era, shifts in context results in the worth of the hope that love provides to be diminished in the 1920s Jazz Age.

A comparison of GG and SOP reveals the significance of love as collective to any time, valued for its resurrecting and spiritual qualities yet also highlighting that contextual change may restrict its capability. In her SOP, EBB equates her love as spiritual, the 'torch' which represents the lovers devotion equated as enduring again imagery of the 'rough winds' which threaten to extinguish the

love. This spiritual nature of EBB's love is further realised in imagery of the torch casting 'light on each' of the lover's faces, a mutual understanding and binding connection enhanced and further contemplated through ellipses. The resurrecting qualities of EBB's love is realised in Sonnet XXI, Browning's note professing 'I love thee' is met with imagery of the letters 'alive and quivering', personification enhancing the vitality and strength which is sustained through Browning's proclamation, contradictory to the 'dark' and 'doubtful' nature of EBB's past life. Additionally, imagery of the lovers 'drawing nigh and nigher until the lengthening wings break into fire' not only conjures the deep, binding and spiritual connection of the lovers (enhanced through the assonanic repetition of 'face to face') but also highlights, EBB's accession into a new life 'mounting higher' to an eternal life (aided by religious belief) where her love and aspirations can truly be comprehended.

Additionally, like Browning through Daisy's love Gatsby is provided with a form of resurrection, dying as James Jatz and reborn at Jay Gatsby. Gatsby's love is embodied in the 'Green Light' (symbolic of the American Dream), its resurrecting qualities realised through Nick's narration of Gatsby 'stretching his arms towards the dark water', revealing a new life and aspiration to pursue Daisy. However unlike Browning, Fitzgerald (part of the 'Lost Generation' of writers) was disillusioned by WW1 and the excesses that followed, reflected in the 'Valley of Ashes', based on T.S Elliot's poem the 'Waste Land' where 'men move dimly through the powdery air.' This vacuous and transient material world is embodied in the Eyes of Dr TJ Eckleberg (symbolising worship at a new altar), diminishing the green light, and hence limiting Gatsby's ability to 'climb' to 'suck on the pap' of new life through the 'incarnation' of Daisy's love, realised in her equation of Gatsby as 'an advertisement of a man.' Although both Gatsby and Browning face the 'darkness and the death hour' Browning's love provides rebirth into an eternal life while in contrast, The Jazz Age binds Gatsby to be 'continually alone in the unquiet darkness.' This is fully realised at the conclusion of the novel, where Dutch sailors 'capacity for wonder' and rebirth in the 'green breast of the new world' is restricted by morality and time resulting in Gatsby, although 'stretching his arms' to be equated as a vessel, continually 'borne back ceaselessly into the past.' Therefore through a comparison of characters in both texts, although love as a form of resurrection is value universal to all individuals, religious belief in a Victorian era allows this love to become transcendent while in a 1920s society this rebirth is merely artificial resulting from worship at a new altar.

Both GG and SOP expose the universal value of love in regard to its ability to provide hope and resurrection, revealing aspirations and individual's capabilities. However, although love remains a static human value, it is realised through a comparison of Fitzgerald's and EBB's worlds that as time changes the capabilities and significance of love can be enhanced or restricted, resulting from shifts in roles, doctrines and philosophy.