

Using Sonnets I, XIII, XIV, answer this question. How is the development of love portrayed differently by Elizabeth Barrett Browning and The Great Gatsby.

The universal conceptualism of love and marriage is a subject of many poets and writers throughout history. Despite their antithetical contextual periods, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Sonnets from the Portuguese and Scott F. Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby both explore similar aspects of the multifaceted nature of love and deep affection. Whilst Browning's sonnets depict the authenticity and allurement of true and innocent love in the peaceful Victorian Era, Fitzgerald's novella reflects the superficiality of love, materialistic obsession in contextual setting of the demoralised world of 1920s America. The development of love is represented in both texts divergently as a human experience catalysed by both adoration and sentimentality and ingenuity and artifice.

The progression of love is dependent on the societal values placed apparent within a particular contextual period. Within Sonnets from the Portuguese, Browning's depicts the development of love with naivety and innocence, representative of the Victorian social constructs in which women were conservative and reserved, antithetical to Gatsby's morally corrupted roaring twenties. However, as a female poet during this era, Browning successfully subverts the accepted patriarchal dominance in literature by exploiting the male voice of the Petrarchan sonnet. In Sonnet I, the octave outlines the disheartened poet's reflection upon her 'melancholy years...the dear and wished for years' the assonance conveying the despondent and gloomy tone of the persona whilst in the absence of love. Nevertheless, the sestet depicts a dramatic turning point, and the unexpected development of love, conveyed through the violent and powerful imagery of the persona being drawn 'backward by the hair'. Browning therefore conveys true love is unforeseen and not deliberately sought after, such as the love conveyed by Fitzgerald. Furthermore, the symbolism of 'The silver answer...Not Death, but Love' juxtaposes against the bleakness of her life and her anticipation of death outlined in the octave, and highlight the profound impact this love has had during the Victorian era.

Contrastingly, F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby reflects the roaring 20s and the development of love founded on materialism and artifice that is deliberately sought after. Juxtaposed against the Victorian suppression of passion, the wildly liberalised and sexually expressive twenties are expressed by Fitzgerald to be detrimental to the progression of love. This is predominantly conveyed through the complex use of Nick Carraway's narration, which reveals the superficiality of the love Gatsby is pursuing with Daisy, based entirely on a fleeting moment in the past almost 5 years ago. Whilst Browning's persona transcends the past, Gatsby acted on the idea that he could repeat it, exemplified through the use of hypophora, "Can't repeat the past? Why of course you can?". Contrastingly to EBB, the physicality of Gatsby and Daisy's love is imperative in the development of their love. The pinnacle of their love is evidenced in Gatsby remark, "At his lips touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete". Fitzgerald's utilisation of floral imagery and religious allusion elucidate Gatsby's affinity for physical intimacy rather than emotional attraction. The flower simile also acts as a motif throughout the novel alluding to the ephemeral qualities of flowers in that their beauty fades with time. Thus, the

progression of love Fitzgerald one is transient and artificial, characterised by the superficiality and insincerity of the Jazz Age in America.

The evolution of love and affection is sometimes built on dissension from the tradition conventions of the contextual period. Browning reflects her strict Victorian patriarchal context through her exploration of the transformative power of love, yet Sonnet XVI is a subversion of the Petrarchan sonnets; conveying her assertive role in marriage. This is exemplified when she states, “For these things in themselves, beloved, may/ be changed, or change...” The persona challenges the Petrarchan tradition, which confronts the traditional conventions of Victorian women through the repetitive “I love her for her smile...her look...her way of speaking gently”, mocking gender expectations of womanly behaviour. The repetitive juxtaposition in “changed, or change...”, and the anadiplosis in “love so wrought /May be unwrought so”, highlights how easily love may come undone when it is based on transient qualities – by literally attaching prefixes to devotional connotations. The imperative tone of command delivered in “neither love me for thine own pity wiping my cheeks dry.”, highlights how Browning rejects a love built on the feminine role of women. This directly juxtaposes Fitzgerald’s characterisation of Daisy who conforms to the expendable, materialistic role of women during the 1920s. Browning’s dismissal of the ephemeral attractions of the physical is not only a rejection of Victorian female stereotypes, but also a statement to the attainment of true love.

Love founded on a facade and deception will not prosper and is ultimately unattainable. In The Great Gatsby, Jay creates a metaphorical facade, a ‘platonic conception of himself’ in order to rekindle his love with Daisy by portraying himself as a vastly wealthy man, contrasting the mediocre, soldier Daisy once knew him as. By throwing numerous decadent and extravagant parties, Gatsby believes he can lure Daisy back to him and thus allow their love to prosper. However, Fitzgerald connotes a transformation that is shallow and corruptive, contrasted with the transformative true love of EBB, captured in the extended metaphor “[The Green Light] had seemed as close as a star to the moon”. This ‘enchanted object’ symbolises the unachievable love that Gatsby has for Daisy, based entirely on his transformation from rags to riches. However, the attainment of Gatsby’s dream destroys what he had very much dreamed of attaining. That the green light “was again a green light on the dock” utilises sharp contrast of the celestial stars and moon against the the dock to create a literary warning of love based simply on obsession and attainment. Thus, Fitzgerald conveys his perspective of love during the Jazz Age, which was a love lacking in transformative power and orbited around the material and obsessive nature of a consumerist context.

In all, both texts explore the development of love as a driving force of transformation that can be genuine and true or transient and superficial. Contrastingly, Gatsby has an unattainable and physical love while Barrett Browning highlights the persona’s strong commitment of love, that continues long after death. Thus, a change of context shapes the perspective in which love has influenced the composition of both Barrett Browning and Fitzgerald.