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CH 203

Response Week 8

2 April 2017

**Group 1, Question B**

Henry Ford defined American modernity as we look upon it today. This is not undeserved, as he made many deliberate and intelligent decisions regarding the efficiency of his factories. This alone did not make him the most exemplary figure of American modernity. It was his actions combined with how he influenced the rest of the world’s factories and production that gives him this label. How he approached business was different than any of his competition at the time. He viewed the lack of investment as a tax, stating ideas such as “Getting along with the old-style architecture costs the five-story man the income of twenty-five floors” (Ford Ch. V). This type of business practice coupled with abnormal ideas like “… no one ever considers himself expert if he really knows his job” (Ford Ch. V) are what made Ford a household name to this day.

**Group 2, Question B**

In *The Great Gatsby,* Gatsby’s character provides a sense of mystery and sadness. He represents Romantic thought when it comes to his approach to life, business, and love. He places everything on a high pedestal, and needs what it seems he cannot have. He is the definition of an idealist, and this hurts him greatly in his life. Characters in the book viewed him in this way too. Nick once described that “… testimony to the romantic speculation he inspired that there were whispers about him from those who found little that it was necessary to whisper about in this world” (Fitzgerald 48). This provides an insight into how others viewed him, but Gatsby himself might self-label as a Romantic rather than a figure of modernity. At the forefront of his thought, especially later in the book, was love. He needed love more than he needed to even continue growing his wealth, something of which he once held so dear.

**Group 3, Question A**

The phrase “hyperrationalized economy” makes the assumption that there is or ever was such a thing as a rational economy. I believe that this is a falsehood, as I assume Henry Ford and Smedley Butler would have believed. Ford believed in the continuous striving for perfection, while maintaining the idea that perfection is an impossibility. He stated that “Hardly a week passes without some improvement being made somewhere in machine or process” (Ford Ch.5), a requirement of Ford’s caliber of efficiency. Butler made claims that the economy and the wealth of the few was driven and funded respectively by war. Butler had first-hand experiences in the atrocities of war, and wrote about how “… victory or defeat will be determined by the skill and ingenuity of our scientists” (Butler Ch.5) , an idea which has been proven to this day in conflict.

**Group 4**

*American Gothic* by Grant Wood is an excellent representation of the shallow aspects of American modernity. The gaudy window on the face of a simple and cheap-looking house shows the desire of lower social classes to climb the social ladder. This symbolizes American modernity in the way that these people probably thought social progress was inevitable with hard work and dedication. This piece also reminds me of the phrase “fake it ‘till you make it”. This mentality is foundational to American modernity, and also reminds me of the type of thought someone like Benjamin Franklin practiced and spread. My final thought is that the people in the painting bear absolutely flat expressions.

Works Cited

Ford, Henry | <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/7213/pg7213-images.html>

Fitzgerald, F. Scott | *The Great Gatsby* (physical book)

Butler, Smedley | <https://archive.org/stream/WarIsARacket/WarIsARacket_djvu.txt>

Wood, Grant | artwork provided as downloadable image