

THE PROBLEM OF THE “AMERICAN DREAM” IN F. SCOTT FITZGERALD’S THE  
GREAT GATSBY AND NATHANAEL WEST’S THE DAY OF THE LOCUST

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**Abstract:** This article explores the concept of the "American Dream" as depicted in the works of 20th-century American writers — F. Scott Fitzgerald and Nathanael West — examining its origins and its influence on literature, creativity, and the masses. The concept of the "American Dream" is revealed as a myth of a society based on "equal opportunities," invented to create and sustain national and social values. However, there is a darker side to this pursuit of self-realization: the ideology destroys the personality of honest individuals, who lose themselves in the relentless chase for wealth; an obsessive desire for material success can ultimately lead to a tragic downfall — what may be called an “American tragedy.”

**Keywords:** American Dream, ideal, search for meaning, society, illusion, chaos, selfishness

The “American Dream” is an ideal according to which every individual, regardless of origin or social status, can achieve success and happiness through hard work, talent, and perseverance. This concept has become a symbol of opportunity and freedom in the United States, yet its realization is often questioned, especially in literature, where authors highlight the social, economic, and moral costs of this idea. One of the key aspects of the American Dream is the illusion of equal opportunity. In reality, social barriers, inequality, and class divisions often hinder its achievement. As for material values, success within the framework of the American Dream is frequently measured by wealth, which leads to moral decline. Many protagonists of 20th-century literary works strive to fulfill the dream of a better life, but their pursuit often ends in tragedy [3].

The idea of the "American Dream" has been shaped throughout the entire history of the United States and has undergone various interpretations, reflecting changes in the country’s society and economy. In the colonial period, the dream of freedom and the opportunity to build a new life in the New World became the foundation for the first settlers, who sought religious liberty, social equality, and the chance to own land. The Declaration of Independence of 1776 enshrined the principles of equality, freedom, and the right to pursue happiness, which later became the core of the American Dream. In the 19th century, the dream of material prosperity was closely linked to Westward expansion, the Gold Rush, and the Industrial Revolution, when many pursued wealth and new opportunities.

In the 20th century, mass culture, Hollywood, and industrialization promoted the idea of “rags to riches,” which became a symbol of success and social mobility. However, in the 21st century, the American Dream is being reconsidered. In the context of social inequality, discrimination, and environmental challenges, many now view it through a critical lens, focusing not only on personal achievement but also on issues of justice and societal sustainability.

In literature, the American Dream is represented in various forms and expressions, each reflecting the aspirations and values of society at different stages of its development. The economic dream is associated with the idea of success and prosperity through capital accumulation and the attainment of high social status. Symbols of this aspect include wealth, home ownership, a car, and career advancement — all representing material well-being and

success. The political dream is based on the principles of freedom and equality before the law. Inspired by democracy and human rights, it emphasizes the struggle for civil rights and equality as core elements of the American social order. The social dream focuses on opportunity for all, regardless of race, gender, religion, or background. This dimension reflects the desire to combat discrimination and ensure equal opportunities for every individual, forming an essential part of the national ideology. The cultural dream affirms the value of unique identity and freedom of expression, symbolizing individualism, creativity, and freedom of speech. In this context, the American Dream is associated with the recognition of diversity and the encouragement of personal ambition. The educational dream, in turn, represents the aspiration to make quality education accessible as a pathway to a better life. It highlights the importance of knowledge and learning in achieving both personal and societal goals, traditionally considered a key to success in American culture. Thus, the American Dream encompasses not only the pursuit of material wealth but also the values of freedom, equality, individuality, and education, reflecting the ideals and ambitions that have evolved alongside society.

The reflection of the American Dream can be found in various cultural domains, where it takes on different forms and interpretations depending on the context. In cinema, this idea is often examined from a critical perspective. For example, in *Citizen Kane* (1941), the protagonist's tragedy—achieving material success but losing his sense of self—illustrates the illusory nature of the American Dream, where wealth fails to bring inner fulfillment. In *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), greed and immorality that often accompany the pursuit of wealth are exposed. The documentary *American Dream* (2020) explores contemporary issues of racial and economic inequality, raising important questions about social justice.

In music, the American Dream is also frequently called into question. Bruce Springsteen, in his songs, portrays the struggles of the working class and the illusory nature of the dream. In contrast, Jay-Z, in «*Empire State of Mind*», idealizes New York as a symbol of success — a place where dreams can come true. In Childish Gambino's «*This is America*», a harsh critique of social injustice and violence is expressed, highlighting the obstacles that prevent many from realizing the American Dream in reality.

Visual art also actively reflects this theme. Edward Hopper, in his paintings, often depicts loneliness and emptiness, symbolizing the alienation that can accompany the American way of life. Andy Warhol, on the other hand, draws attention to commercialization and mass culture in his works—elements that have become central to the modern interpretation of the dream of material prosperity. In politics, images of the American Dream play a significant role in election campaigns. Barack Obama spoke of a “return to the roots of the dream,” while Donald Trump popularized the slogan “Make America Great Again,” appealing to ideas of national revival and prosperity.

In business, the success stories of entrepreneurs such as Henry Ford, Steve Jobs, and Elon Musk illustrate the dream of self-realization and ingenuity. They serve as examples of how individuals can achieve success through innovation and entrepreneurial initiative. In advertising, the American Dream is also employed as an ideal. Products and services are often associated with the fulfillment of this dream—for instance, Coca-Cola has become a symbol of all-American optimism and the pursuit of a better life.

Modern criticism of the American Dream focuses on several key aspects that call into question its accessibility and realism in today's society. One of the central issues is social inequality. The growing gap between the rich and the poor makes the dream of material prosperity and success unattainable for a significant portion of the population. While a small group continues to

accumulate wealth, the majority faces economic hardship, challenging the validity of the “rags to riches” ideal. In addition, racial and gender discrimination have historically limited — and continue to limit — access to the American Dream for women and minorities. Opportunities promised by the dream were far less accessible to people of certain races and genders. Despite progress in civil rights, many minorities still face systemic barriers that prevent them from achieving what is considered “American success.”

Environmental issues also raise questions about the relevance of the American Dream in its traditional form. The idea of endless growth and expansion, which underpins the dream, contradicts today’s ecological challenges. The ecological crisis and the finite nature of natural resources demand a rethinking of the concepts of progress and material prosperity, calling into question the sustainability of a model based on unchecked consumption and expansion. Finally, the American Dream is increasingly associated with a culture of consumption and materialism, rather than the spiritual values that may have once formed its foundation. The pursuit of success and happiness is now often equated with financial gain and accumulation of goods, distancing the dream from deeper, humanistic ideals. All of this contributes to the growing perception of the modern interpretation of the American Dream as utopian and unattainable for the majority of people in the face of today’s social, economic, and environmental realities.

The idea of the American Dream has transcended the borders of the United States and has been exported worldwide through mass culture, media, and politics, becoming a symbol of capitalism and democracy. In different countries and cultures, it has been adapted and reinterpreted according to local realities and social contexts. The American Dream continues to serve as a powerful cultural concept, embodying aspirations for success, freedom, and self-actualization. However, its perception has changed. In many parts of the world, it is no longer viewed solely as a positive ideal, as it was during the peak of its popularity. Today, the American Dream is both a subject of in-depth analysis and an object of critique. In developing economies, where the dream of material success is still associated with the Western model of prosperity, it may be seen as a symbol of social mobility and individual opportunity. At the same time, in cultures where the emphasis on capitalism and consumerism conflicts with local values, the concept is often criticized for its excessive materialism and exploitative nature.

Various authors have either supported or challenged the ideal of the American Dream in their works. One of those who supported the concept was James Truslow Adams, who introduced the term “American Dream” in his book *The Epic of America* (1931). He described it as an ideal in which every individual, regardless of social background, could achieve success and prosperity through honest work, ambition, and personal initiative. Adams claimed that “America is a land of opportunity,” where everyone is given a chance for personal and social well-being.

Similarly, in his poetry, Walt Whitman portrayed America as a land of opportunity, where each person could find their place and build their own life. He was a strong advocate of democratic principles, believing in individual freedom and equal opportunity, which are closely aligned with the core values of the American Dream.

Although Franklin D. Roosevelt was not a literary figure, he had a significant impact on the perception of the American Dream through his political activity. In his 1932 inaugural address, delivered against the backdrop of the Great Depression, he emphasized the need to restore the American Dream. Roosevelt highlighted the importance of work ethic and social justice as fundamental values that should uphold the ideal of equal opportunity for all citizens. In a time of economic crisis, he called for the creation of a more just and sustainable society, where every individual would have a chance to improve their life. Thus, Roosevelt not only defended the idea



of the American Dream but also adapted it to the realities of his era, proposing ways to restore it through government reforms and social responsibility.

Theodore Dreiser, in works such as *Sister Carrie* and *The Titan*, explored how an individual could achieve success in American society. Human aspirations are confronted with the harsh realities of capitalism, offering a more critical perspective on the concept of the American Dream.

Many American authors have either supported or expanded upon the idea of the American Dream, enriching it with various aspects such as hard work, social mobility, and the possibility of achieving success regardless of one's background. However, equally significant is the fact that many writers have criticized this concept, emphasizing that not everyone can attain prosperity and success despite their efforts and ambitions. These authors drew attention to the existing social, economic, and racial barriers that hinder the realization of the American Dream for the majority of people. In their works, they analyzed how these obstacles limit opportunities and leave individuals in unequal conditions, rendering the dream of prosperity unattainable for many. One of the first such authors was Frank Norris, who depicted how monopolies and corporate giants hinder ordinary citizens from achieving the American Dream, making it accessible only to a privileged few. John Steinbeck, in his famous novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, vividly exposes social injustice, illustrating how the poor and oppressed become victims of harsh economic conditions and corporate power, especially during the Great Depression. Steinbeck emphasizes that the American Dream becomes unattainable for workers and farmers facing systemic barriers. Richard Wright, in his novel *Native Son*, portrays the harsh realities of African Americans in the American South, criticizing racism and social injustice that prevent many—particularly Black Americans—from achieving what is traditionally associated with the American Dream. Similar issues of racial inequality are explored in Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, where through the character of Atticus Finch and his fight against a biased justice system, it is shown how the dream of equality and justice often remains unfulfilled for African Americans and other marginalized groups.

Ken Kesey, in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, critiques the American system, including psychiatric institutions and social structures that suppress individuality and the desire for freedom. Through characters like Randle Patrick McMurphy, Kesey demonstrates how society can oppress personal aspirations, calling into question the reality of the American Dream.

Toni Morrison, in turn, often explores issues of racism and the legacy of slavery in her works. She challenges the notion that the American Dream is accessible to everyone, especially to African Americans, who face numerous barriers and social exclusion.

Arthur Miller, in *Death of a Salesman*, criticizes the concept of the American Dream through the character of Willy Loman, a man disillusioned with life and the idea that success and material wealth are the keys to happiness.

These authors criticize the American Dream through various social, economic, and racial lenses, highlighting its limitations and inaccessibility for many groups of people, despite official claims of equal opportunity. The American Dream, as a powerful cultural and social ideal, has consistently attracted the attention of writers, serving as a foundation for the critique of societal structures and human ambitions. Through the fates of their characters, the authors show that the dream of wealth and success can lead to moral decline and tragedy. Literary works continue to remind us that true success is not always tied to material wealth, and that happiness lies in spiritual values.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925, is rightfully considered one of the most important works of American literature. This novel not only tells the story of

love and ambition of its main character, Jay Gatsby, but also offers a deep analysis of the problems of American society during the "Roaring Twenties" — a time of rapid economic growth, cultural change, and social inequality. At the center of the plot is the story of Jay Gatsby, a young man who, starting from nothing, strives for wealth and success, believing that this will bring him happiness and love. However, as the novel shows, his dreams and ideals turn out to be illusions. Gatsby is a man willing to sacrifice morality and honesty for the sake of his goal, using questionable means to achieve financial prosperity, including involvement in illegal schemes. Despite his material success, he remains lonely and never finds true fulfillment. The essence of Gatsby's tragedy lies in his dream of reliving the past — of reclaiming the love of Daisy Buchanan, the woman he once loved. For him, Daisy is not just a woman, but a symbol of an idealized past he is desperate to recreate at any cost. Yet Daisy, like the society she represents, proves to be unattainable and hollow, unable to appreciate his sacrifices. Through Gatsby's character, Fitzgerald criticizes the American Dream, portraying it as a distorted pursuit of material wealth and status, stripped of genuine human values. Gatsby becomes a symbol of this dream turned illusion — one that bears little connection to true happiness or spiritual fulfillment. The novel sharply highlights the conflict between outward prosperity and inner emptiness — a defining feature of the 1920s, when society was undergoing a drastic shift from traditional moral values to a culture of consumerism and individualism. Fitzgerald depicts a world where money, status, and surface-level success have become the ultimate goals — yet in the end, these values lead nowhere. Even the arrogant and shallow characters like Tom Buchanan and his wife Daisy are not truly happy; their lives are built on lies, irresponsibility, and a lack of depth. The relationships between the novel's characters also reflect the themes of emptiness and alienation within society.

Jay Gatsby, despite his deep passion for Daisy, finds himself trapped in his own illusions, while Daisy either cannot or does not want to acknowledge the true nature of their relationship. Against the backdrop of this idealized world, Fitzgerald masterfully portrays the tragedy of lost opportunities, shattered hopes, and unfulfilled desires.

The Great Gatsby is not merely a story of love and tragedy; it is a philosophical and social analysis that explores the nature of human aspirations, illusions, and disappointments, as well as the disintegration of the dream of happiness in a world where material values dominate over spiritual ones. As the narrator reflects: "And as I sat there brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock... I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes" [1, p. 246]. The novel illustrates the cultural and moral contrasts between East and West in the United States, symbolizing a broader philosophical opposition. "This story is really about the West, after all—Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, we were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life" [1, p. 124]. Even as the East seduced the characters with its promise of glamour and success, the narrator confesses to feeling "a haunting loneliness sometimes, and a vague unpleasantness" [1, p. 125]. The hedonistic lifestyle of the 1920s, depicted through Gatsby's lavish parties, underscores the illusion of fulfillment through wealth: "On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors d'oeuvres, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs... By seven o'clock the orchestra has arrived—no thin five-piece affair but a whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos" [1, p. 29]. The guests "formed and dissolved themselves in the same breath," revealing the ephemeral nature of such gatherings [1, p. 48], while others confessed: "I like large parties. They're so intimate. At small parties there isn't any privacy" [1, p. 35]. Fitzgerald highlights how the characters, including Tom, Daisy,

Gatsby, and Jordan, struggle to find their place in society, yet all ultimately fail to escape hypocrisy and moral collapse [1, p. 123]. Gatsby's relentless pursuit of Daisy and his dream of reliving the past culminate in his disillusionment: "He had come such a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. But he did not know that it was already behind him" [1, p. 246]. The house he built as a monument to his dream became for him more real in a photograph than in its actual presence: "It was a photograph of the house... he had shown it so often to his friends that it had become more real than the house itself" [1, p. 116]. Thus, Fitzgerald critiques the American Dream by portraying it as an illusion—one that promises happiness and success, yet often leads to moral decay, alienation, and unfulfilled desires. The novel reminds readers that the pursuit of material prosperity may obscure deeper values, and that the dream, once so near, may already belong to the irretrievable past.

The author portrays society as chaotic and morally bankrupt. The upper classes, exemplified by characters such as Tom Buchanan, act without regard for consequences, displaying selfishness and destructive behavior. East Egg and West Egg, divided not only geographically but also culturally, symbolize the profound rift between old aristocratic wealth and the unstable, newly acquired bourgeois affluence. This division emphasizes that even within the elite there is no unity; instead, the pursuit of material superiority prevails over moral values. Gatsby embodies the tragedy of the American Dream, which is built on the illusion of equal opportunity and the attainability of happiness through wealth. His green light, symbolizing that dream, remains out of reach despite all his efforts.

Fitzgerald illustrates that the American Dream is mired in corruption, vanity, and moral emptiness. It becomes a mechanism that drives individuals to pursue an unattainable ideal, ultimately leaving them disillusioned and hollow. He argues that American society has lost its foundational values, replacing them with a cult of wealth and superficial success. Fitzgerald's critique is universal, extending beyond the Jazz Age to any era in which materialism takes precedence over spiritual and ethical integrity.

The story of Gatsby in F. Scott Fitzgerald's eponymous novel serves as a cautionary tale, illustrating that a dream detached from reality inevitably leads to downfall. The protagonist, Jay Gatsby, aspires to an idealized vision of success and social status, attempting to construct his life around unattainable ideals. His efforts to conform to the notion of the "American Dream" ultimately end in tragedy, underscoring the fragility and illusory nature of that dream.

The story of Gatsby in F. Scott Fitzgerald's eponymous novel serves as a warning that a dream detached from reality is doomed to collapse. The protagonist, Jay Gatsby, aspires to an idealized vision of success and social status, attempting to shape his life around unattainable ideals. His efforts to align himself with the "American Dream" ultimately end in tragedy, highlighting the fragility and illusory nature of that dream.

The story of Gatsby in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel of the same name serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of pursuing a dream divorced from reality. The protagonist, Jay Gatsby, aspires to an idealized image of success and social status, attempting to construct his life around unattainable ideals. His efforts to conform to the expectations of the "American Dream" ultimately end in tragedy, emphasizing the fragility and illusory nature of this cultural concept.

At the same time, in Nathanael West's novel *The Day of the Locust*, the author uses the character of Tod Hackett to illustrate how a society consumed by the pursuit of success ultimately becomes a victim of its own ambitions. Unlike Gatsby, who actively strives to attain the American Dream, Tod Hackett embodies the destructive consequences for an entire society that, in its chase for wealth and fame, collapses into its own abyss. Thus, both works offer a



critique of the illusory nature of the American Dream; however, *The Day of the Locust* emphasizes collective downfall, whereas *The Great Gatsby* focuses on the tragedy of individual aspiration.

Nathanael West's novel *The Day of the Locust*, published in 1939, presents a powerful satirical analysis of American society—particularly of Hollywood—through which the author explores the dark underside of the dream of fame and success. The novel reflects the destructive consequences of the pursuit of recognition, especially within the cultural and social atmosphere of 1930s America. By constructing this grim portrayal, West reveals how the desire for popularity and material prosperity turns into a catastrophe both for individuals and society as a whole. One of the central themes of the novel is the critique of illusions associated with Hollywood as the heart of mass culture and the dream industry. The characters live in constant anticipation of a miracle that will transform their lives, yet despite their efforts, most remain disillusioned. Hollywood in *The Day of the Locust* is not only a dream factory but also a symbol of a society consumed by the thirst for fame, wealth, and recognition—where outward prosperity masks inner emptiness and moral decay. In West's vision, Hollywood appears as a cruel and cynical machine that relentlessly exploits people's ambitions and dreams, only to discard them, leaving behind nothing but shattered lives. The protagonist, Tod Hackett, initially filled with enthusiasm and admiration for the cinematic world, dreams of becoming a part of this glamorous and mysterious realm. However, his romantic ideals gradually give way to deep cynicism and disillusionment. He witnesses how the Hollywood industry crushes human lives, pushing people to chase unattainable ideals of fame, only to abandon them in isolation and ruin. In this context, Hollywood becomes a metaphor for the American Dream—a vision that promises a great future but ultimately leads to deception and spiritual emptiness. The characters in the novel frequently find themselves in a state of deep depression and despair. Their relationships are marked by selfishness, deceit, and the desire to exploit one another for personal gain. For example, the character Madge, a young and ambitious screenwriter, realizes that the world of Hollywood offers no space for honesty or sincerity, and her pursuit of success ultimately leads to moral compromise and self-destruction. The interactions among characters throughout the novel reveal a stark absence of authenticity, love, or emotional connection. Their actions are driven purely by self-interest, emphasizing the emptiness and cruelty of this world. Another significant theme is the self-destruction of individuals who, obsessed with recognition, lose their sense of identity and moral compass. West vividly depicts this process as a collective cultural collapse in which success becomes the only value, while personal integrity and ethics are pushed aside. Despite their aspirations for success, the characters end up profoundly unhappy and spiritually hollow, destroyed by the very dreams that once inspired them.

Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust* also addresses issues of social injustice, racial and class inequality, illustrating how Hollywood—and the broader cultural landscape of the United States—unjustly exploits individuals, turning their efforts and hopes into deeper alienation and loneliness. The novel is not only a dark and satirical critique of Hollywood but also a disturbing exploration of the destructive consequences of the "American Dream" in its most distorted forms. Thus, *The Day of the Locust* is not merely a narrative of personal tragedies, but a portrayal of an entire era in which society relentlessly chases false ideals, and happiness and success are transformed into inescapable traps: "Many of them wore sports clothes that were not really sports clothes. Their sweaters, socks, light slacks and blue flannel coats with brass buttons were costumes. A fat lady in a yachting cap sailed into a grocery store instead of a yacht basin; a man in a hunting jacket and Tyrolean hat had come from a brokerage office, not the mountains; a girl in slacks, tennis shoes, and a bandanna had just left a switchboard, not a tennis

court” [2, p. 244]. “He already regretted interfering. But when the dwarf came out of the bathroom wearing a hat, Tod felt better. The hat almost made everything right. That year Tyrolean hats were all the rage on Hollywood Boulevard, and the dwarf had a splendid specimen. It was the proper magic green, with a tall, conical crown. All that was missing was a copper buckle in front. Otherwise, it was perfect. Unfortunately, the rest of his outfit didn’t match the hat. Instead of turned-up shoes and a leather apron, he wore a blue double-breasted suit and a black shirt with a yellow tie. Instead of a crooked stick in his hand, he held a folded copy of the Daily Racing Form” [2, p. 248]. “All these people came here with a dream, but Hollywood offered no hope. It broke them, drained their last strength, and left them to die under the bright sun like so much garbage” [2, p. 375]. West underscores the dissonance between the promises of freedom and equal opportunity and the actual social barriers that persist beneath the surface. The novel reveals how the dream of success, when manipulated by systems of entertainment and power, becomes a mechanism of exploitation and despair. Hollywood, in this portrayal, serves as a deceptive beacon—a site where illusions flourish but authenticity and humanity are systematically erased.

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that in *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, the critique is directed at how the pursuit of material wealth leads to spiritual emptiness. The protagonist, Jay Gatsby, becomes a symbol of the illusory nature of the American Dream, as despite his riches and achievements, he remains unfulfilled and unable to attain true love or genuine recognition. On the other hand, Nathanael West’s *The Day of the Locust* portrays Hollywood as a symbol of the American Dream taken to the extreme. The characters encounter a reality in which the entertainment industry transforms their dreams into nightmares, ultimately destroying their hopes and personal identities.

Thus, literature analyzing the concept of the “American Dream” reveals that its realization requires not only individual effort, but also the overcoming of structural obstacles such as social inequality, discrimination, and the cult of materialism.

In F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, the society of the Jazz Age is depicted as one dominated by hedonism, emptiness, and superficial values. Wealthy characters such as Daisy and Tom Buchanan embody the heartlessness of the elite: “You see, Nick, I think everything’s terrible anyhow... Everybody thinks so—the most advanced people. And I know. I’ve been everywhere and seen everything and done everything” [1, p.15]. “At every party the laughter grew louder and freer, and the behavior more uninhibited and natural. Groups formed and dissolved with equal spontaneity” [1, p.30].

In Nathanael West’s *The Day of the Locust*, Hollywood is portrayed as a world of glamour, behind which lie disillusionment, poverty, and deception. The crowd, a recurring motif in the novel, symbolizes the destructive potential of mass society. The final scene, where the mob transforms into a chaotic force, reflects the egocentrism of a culture obsessed with fame and wealth: “When the stars start showing up, they’ll have to double the police force. The crowd goes berserk when it sees its heroes and heroines” [2, p.384]. “There was no hysteria in this part of the mob. On the contrary, most of the people seemed to enjoy themselves. In front of Tod stood a fat woman with a man pressed tightly against her from the front. His chin rested on her shoulder and he had his arms around her waist. She paid no attention to him and chatted with her neighbor. ‘I hardly knew what was happening,’ Tod heard her say, ‘and then all of a sudden everybody started to rush.’ ‘Yeah. Someone yelled, “There goes Gary Cooper!” and that was it.’ ‘That’s not it,’ said a short man in a linen cap and pullover. ‘We’re part of a riot.’ ‘Yes,’ said a third woman, with gray hair snaking around her face and shoulders. ‘A degenerate attacked a child.’ ‘He ought to have been lynched,’ everyone agreed fervently. ‘I came from St. Louis,’



announced the fat woman. ‘We had one of those degenerates living on our block. Cut a girl up with a pair of scissors.’ ‘He must’ve been crazy,’ said the man in the cap. ‘What kind of entertainment is that!’ Everyone laughed. The fat woman turned to the man embracing her. ‘Hey, you,’ she said, ‘do I look like a pillow?’ The man smiled blissfully but didn’t change his position. She laughed without trying to free herself. ‘He’s a sly one,’ she said. Another woman laughed. ‘Yeah,’ she said, ‘today’s the day to grab what you want.’ The man in the pullover thought they were laughing again at his earlier joke. ‘Cutting a girl with scissors! That’s not even the right tool!’ He wasn’t wrong. They burst out laughing louder than before. ‘You’d do it differently, huh, uncle?’ said a young man with a kidney-shaped head and waxed mustache. Both women laughed” [2, p.393].

Members of the upper class take pleasure in the chaos unfolding on the streets: “Among the crowd were people in costume mingled with others of a different sort. Their clothes were drab and poorly tailored—ordered by mail. While the others moved briskly, darting in and out of bars and shops, these lingered near intersections or stood with their backs to shop windows, watching every passerby. When someone met their gaze, hatred flared in their eyes” [2, p.244]. “All their lives they had toiled at tedious, exhausting jobs—behind counters, desks, in the fields, or at mind-numbing machines—saving penny by penny and dreaming of the day when their savings would buy them leisure. And that day finally arrives. They receive a steady income, ten to fifteen dollars a week. Where else to go but California—the land of oranges and sunshine? But when they get there, they find that sunshine alone is not enough. Oranges lose their appeal—and even avocados grow tiresome. Nothing happens” [2, p.386]. “Here, at the ‘Persian Canal,’ thousands of people had gathered... When the stars appear, the crowd will become uncontrollable” [2, p.384]. “Faye explained why. He had nothing to offer her—no money, no beauty—and she could only love a handsome man” [2, p.252]. ““You’re just being mean. Think how happy you’ll be showing it to your guests and listening to their genuine gasps of admiration”” [2, p.257]. ““It’s not about talent. It’s about connections. What does Shirley Temple have that he doesn’t?”” [2, p.339]. The author depicts a chaotic and fragmented society steeped in conflict and social injustice.

Disillusioned by the monotony and routine of their lives, people turn to vivid yet superficial symbols of success and happiness. In this context, Hollywood serves as a metaphor for a society of illusions—a place where outward appearances and the cult of personality prevail over genuine value and substance. Self-interest and materialism become the driving forces behind personal relationships and professional achievements, leading to cynicism and social fragmentation. The “American Dream,” once a symbol of opportunity, equality, and individual success, has long captured the attention of writers—both its proponents and its critics. In literature, this idea has been repeatedly subjected to in-depth analysis, serving as a lens through which social, economic, and moral dimensions of American life are explored. The novels *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald and *The Day of the Locust* by Nathanael West stand as prominent examples of a critical approach to this concept. In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald illustrates how the pursuit of wealth and status—the foundations of the American Dream—leads to spiritual emptiness and tragedy. The protagonist, Jay Gatsby, achieves material success but remains lonely and disillusioned. His yearning for love and recognition becomes a symbol of the illusory nature of that dream. Through Gatsby’s character, the author underscores how a dream rooted in material values can become a destructive force, undermining lives and eroding the moral foundations of society. In turn, Nathanael West’s *The Day of the Locust* portrays Hollywood—the embodiment of the American Dream of fame and success—as a site of disillusionment, despair, and the loss of human dignity. The novel’s characters, in their pursuit of

fame and recognition, encounter a reality in which their dreams are doomed to failure. West depicts Hollywood as a factory of illusions, where a society obsessed with success transforms into a destructive mechanism, obliterating individuality and humanity.

Both works expose the darker aspects of the "American Dream," revealing how it can become a source of disillusionment and destruction. Despite differences in setting and narrative approach, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald and *The Day of the Locust* by Nathanael West are united by the idea that the American Dream can be illusory and unattainable for the majority. They explore themes such as social barriers, selfishness, material dependency, and human alienation.

Thus, the "American Dream" in literature appears not only as an ideal but also as an object of criticism. These works remind readers that true happiness is not always linked to wealth or recognition and emphasize the importance of human values such as compassion, sincerity, and spiritual fulfillment. The literary critique of the American Dream remains relevant today, as its analysis helps to better understand not only the past but also contemporary society.

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