

## INTERPRETING THE CONCEPT OF THE “AMERICAN DREAM” IN THE WORKS OF THOMAS DREISER.

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**Abstract.** The relevance of this research topic stems from the need for a deeper analysis of the main character of Thomas Dreiser’s novel “An American Tragedy” from the point of view of the destructive influence of capitalist society on his character and fate. This society imposes false life goals and imaginary ideals on people, especially young men and women, and gives priority to material values at the expense of the spiritual component of life. Condemning the external well-being of Americans and their ideals, the American writer critically analyzes such vices as class inequality and corruption inherent in modern reality, which makes his works very relevant.

**Key words:** socio-critical direction of his works; apologetic and anti-Soviet mythology; problem; devastating impact; human activity.

To achieve the goal of our research, we have set the following tasks: solution to reveal the meaning of the concepts of “American Dream” and “American Tragedy”; to identify the means of self-expression of destructive social influence in the novel; to study the main motives of the crime of Clyde Griffith; to conduct a comparative analysis to identify plot similarities between the novel by T. Dreiser and F.M. Dostoevsky’s “Crime and Punishment” and M. Puzo’s “The Last Grain”.

The theoretical basis of this article is the work of scholars of American literature of the 20th century devoted to the interpretation of the concept of “American Dream” in the works of Thomas Dreiser. Thus, M.K. Bakaeva and Z.Kh. Shamamedova in their articles reveal the concept, origin and essence of the “American Dream”, describe in detail the necessary conditions for the emergence of this concept and interpret it mainly in the context of historical facts [1]. In the analysis of the main issues of the novel “American Tragedy”, literary studies on the work of the famous American writer and general trends in American literature of the 20th century were used as a basis. In particular, Ya.N. Zasursky drew attention to the socio-critical orientation of the works of T. Dreiser. In the monographs of E.Ya. Batalov, a comprehensive comparative study of the “Russian idea” and the “American dream” as two great national myths that have had and continue to have a significant impact on the consciousness and self-awareness of Russians was carried out. Gumerova O.F., “Artistic models of the individual in

creativity”, showed how the works of progressive American writers reject bourgeois apologetic and anti-Soviet mythology. E. Yu. Gordeeva directs the vector of studying the heritage of T. Dreiser to reflect the national traditions of Americans [2].

Inspired by this sensational work, Dreiser wrote fifteen short stories, the resulting manuscript of which he called “American Tragedies.” Each story dealt with a topical theme of the time: an American young man, trying to fulfill his dream of becoming rich by marrying a rich woman, decides to commit a crime. In a letter to Jack Wilgus, Thomas Dreiser admitted: “I thought about this story for a long time, because it seemed to me not only to reflect all aspects of our national life - politics, society, religion, business, sex, but also to be a story that was very common to every boy growing up in small American towns. It was a particularly true story of what life can do to an individual and how helpless an individual is against it.”

Moreover, according to the writer himself, his goal was not to moralize, but to reveal the circumstances and psychology that could at least serve as an explanation, if not to justify such murders, which, unfortunately, are very common in the United States.

Thomas Dreiser enters into a polemic with a plot that was popular at that time: the main character, a young man from a poor family, marries a rich bride from high society and achieves success. It should be said that novels of this type glorified the desire of every American for material wealth and instilled hope in the ease of changing one's fate. This is the essence of the concept of the “American Dream”: self-realization, equal opportunities and wealth for all [3].

In his novel “An American Tragedy,” T. Dreiser, without departing from the above-mentioned plot, on the one hand, rejected the idea of the pursuit of easy happiness, the thirst for profit, and on the other hand, exposed the corruption of society, which causes and strengthens the desire of the average person to get rich by any means.

The first two chapters are intended in part to interest readers. If they have not read all the literary works that I will consider, they should not despair; many literary critics have not either. I hope that my reading of literary works will enrich and perhaps change the understanding of legal scholars about the legal history of the era. For those interested in the contract, the subtle sense of human activity expressed in realistic works should be especially difficult.

My identification as a literary critic marks another difference between this work and my previous one. When I began that book, I like many others, was struggling to understand how to move literary studies beyond formalism. The advent of continental theory had successfully complicated the New Critical Readings, but that theory often seemed to produce a kind of formalism, while at the same time retreating from pressing social and political issues into a textual field that was incomprehensible to those not versed in its specialized language. My work on law and literature was an attempt to

move beyond formalism by connecting the study of literature to the important legal issues of antebellum America.[4]

It is difficult to describe literary studies today as a retreat from the political and the social. This book, like my previous book, is concerned with both. Yet it provides a more direct answer to what some consider formalist questions: why do some literary works retain their appeal more than others?

I believe that the appeal of a work does not depend solely on the prepared audience; it also arises from the structural relationships that the work establishes with its readers in relation to the issues it addresses. One answer to my question, then, is that for a work to retain its appeal, it must engage readers in a complex world like history, rather than leaving them confused and insecure about evaluating events both within and outside the text. If I am right, such appeal, while dependent on the specific issues being addressed, is not measured solely by the political stances of the work.

It is important to clarify that the impact of a work cannot be measured solely by its political stances, and not simply because we can rarely pinpoint the politics of a work. In my view, there is no such thing as a non-historical category of literary work. On the contrary, what we call literary work today has a history of its own. But because literary work is historically constructed, it has become a form of discourse that is not the same as political stances. Some argue that such a discourse is impossible. But there are, of course, socially and historically determined differences between political discourse and Henry James's novel. Of course, we can take a political stance on the question of whether we should continue to value an institution like literary work. For some, it is not worth maintaining a discourse whose primary purpose is not to take definite positions on particular issues. Rather, I argue that because there are so many institutions that allow us to declare our politics, literary discourse can serve an important political function in our society, not only because it serves as a guide to political action, but also because it creates a space where our political beliefs can be tested and questioned through the dramatization of hypothetical events.[5]

Of course, this is not the only function of texts produced and read in the field known as literature. There are also many other ways in which political beliefs can be tested and challenged: for example, by directly confronting and arguing about opposing positions, or by experiencing, observing, and reading about historical events. Nevertheless, my own experience as a reader and teacher convinces me that the way literature provides them is valuable. The works reviewed in this book, both realistic and non-realistic, are important to me because their reading in conjunction with legal history has contributed to a reconsideration of the role of the contract. This reconsideration marks another difference between this book and a book about the prewar period. The methods that realists developed to engage their audience are among the most important contributions that realists made to the creation of literature as it is

currently defined.[6] Through a series of comparisons, I will emphasize that the secret contract between a work of realism and its reader differs from that of other works written at that time.

Of course, the motives for the crimes of Raskolnikov and Griffiths were different, but they were united by a common theme: achieving a high position in society in the easiest way. Both, having made their own internal choices, consciously crossed the line of what was permissible. It is noteworthy that after committing a serious crime, the heroes behave differently.

Raskolnikov confessed to the murder, because he could no longer live as before. Griffiths, in turn, did not change his usual lifestyle after the murder of Roberta and until the end of his life justified himself by arguing that the girl had accidentally fallen into the river and therefore had nothing to do with her death.

Among other things, a distinctive feature of Thomas Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* is that the characters in the novel are not strictly divided into good and evil, and the author does not use only black and white terms when describing them and describing their actions [7]. The main goal of the writer in this novel was to describe the "American Dream", to demonstrate with concrete examples the impossibility of achieving it by legal means.

Among the American authors who proclaimed the philosophy of success of the last century, the primacy of pragmatic values, and militant individualism, Thomas Dreiser was one of the first to question the main components of the bourgeois "American Dream" - the embodiment of social and moral ideals of success and prosperity.

In general, in the novel *An American Tragedy*, T. Dreiser reaches the peak of his skill as a realist writer. This work demonstrates the close connection between the author's deep psychologism and social analysis, demonstrating the formation of human spirituality under the influence of the surrounding social environment. [8]

We see prospects for a deeper study of the problem outlined in this article in a more detailed study of such aspects of T. Dreiser's work as the exposure of human vices, the conflict between the "American Dream" and reality, etc.

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