

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE AMERICAN DREAM IN THE GREAT GATSBY

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Abstract

This article explores the representation of the American Dream in *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The American Dream, traditionally understood as the belief in upward mobility through hard work and determination, is critically examined in the context of the 1920s American society. This study employs a qualitative literary analysis method to investigate how Fitzgerald portrays the transformation of this ideal into a corrupted and unattainable illusion. Through the analysis of major characters, symbolic elements, and socio-economic context, the research reveals that the American Dream in the novel is distorted by materialism, social stratification, and moral decay. The findings suggest that Fitzgerald presents a pessimistic view of the American Dream, emphasizing its failure to provide genuine fulfillment or equality.

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqola F. Skott Fitsjeraldning "Buyuk Getsbi" asarida Amerika orzusining tasvirini o'rganadi. An'anaviy ravishda mehnat va qat'iyat orqali yuqoriga ko'tarilishga ishonch sifatida tushunilgan Amerika orzusi 1920-yillardagi Amerika jamiyati kontekstida tanqidiy o'rganiladi. Ushbu tadqiqotda Fitsjerald bu idealning buzuq va erishib bo'lmaydigan illyuziyaga aylanishini qanday tasvirlaganini o'rganish uchun sifatli adabiy

tahlil usuli qo'llaniladi. Asosiy qahramonlar, ramziy elementlar va ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy kontekstni tahlil qilish orqali tadqiqot romandagi Amerika orzusi materializm, ijtimoiy tabaqalanish va axloqiy tanazzul tomonidan buzilganligini ko'rsatadi. Topilmalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, Fitsjerald Amerika orzusiga pessimistik qarashni taqdim etadi va uning chinakam qoniqish yoki tenglikni ta'minlay olmasligini ta'kidlaydi.

Keywords: American Dream, illusion, materialism, social class, Jazz Age, symbolism, wealth, morality, corruption

Introduction

The American Dream has long been regarded as a foundational concept in American culture, symbolizing the promise of success, prosperity, and upward mobility for individuals regardless of their background. Rooted in ideals of freedom and equality, it suggests that hard work and perseverance can lead to personal achievement and social advancement. However, this optimistic vision is challenged in *The Great Gatsby*, where the dream is depicted as increasingly unattainable and morally compromised. Written during the Jazz Age, a period marked by economic growth, cultural dynamism, and widespread social change, the novel reflects the contradictions of American society in the 1920s. The rapid accumulation of wealth, the rise of consumer culture, and the erosion of traditional values created an environment in which material success often overshadowed ethical considerations. F. Scott Fitzgerald captures this transformation through the tragic story of Jay Gatsby, a self-made millionaire whose life is driven by an obsessive desire to reclaim a lost past. This study aims to analyze how the American Dream is represented and critiqued in the novel. It seeks to answer the following research questions:

How is the American Dream portrayed through the characters and narrative structure?

In what ways does the novel reflect the socio-economic realities of the 1920s?

What role do symbols and settings play in conveying the theme of the American Dream?

By addressing these questions, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of Fitzgerald's critique of American society and the enduring relevance of the American Dream as a literary and cultural concept.

Methods

This research adopts a qualitative approach based on literary analysis. The primary source of data is the text of *The Great Gatsby*, which is examined through close reading and interpretative techniques. The analysis focuses on narrative elements such as characterization, symbolism, setting, and thematic development. In addition to textual analysis, the study incorporates a socio-cultural perspective to contextualize the novel within the historical framework of the 1920s. This includes consideration of economic conditions, class structures, and cultural values that influenced the formation and transformation of the American Dream during this period. Theoretical frameworks applied in this study include:

Marxist criticism, which examines class relations and economic inequality

Symbolic analysis, focusing on recurring motifs and imagery

Cultural criticism, addressing the broader social and ideological context

By combining these approaches, the research aims to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the novel and its central themes.

Results

The analysis of *The Great Gatsby* reveals several key aspects of the representation of the American Dream: 3.1 The Illusion of the American Dream One of the most significant findings is that the American Dream is portrayed as an illusion rather than a tangible reality. Jay Gatsby, the central character, embodies the ideal of self-made success. He rises from a humble background to achieve immense wealth, seemingly fulfilling the promise of the American Dream. However, his success is built on questionable means and driven by an unrealistic desire to recreate the past. Gatsby's dream is not merely about wealth or

status; it is deeply connected to his love for Daisy Buchanan. He idealizes her as the ultimate symbol of success and happiness. Yet, this idealization blinds him to the reality of Daisy's character and the impossibility of their reunion. As a result, Gatsby's dream becomes unattainable, highlighting the gap between aspiration and reality.

Materialism and Moral Corruption The novel illustrates how the pursuit of wealth leads to moral decay. Characters such as Tom and Daisy Buchanan represent the established upper class, often referred to as "old money." Despite their wealth and social status, they exhibit selfishness, irresponsibility, and a lack of empathy. Their careless behavior, particularly their involvement in tragic events without facing consequences, underscores the moral emptiness associated with excessive wealth. This suggests that the American Dream, when reduced to material success, loses its ethical foundation.

Social Stratification and Inequality

Another important aspect revealed in the analysis is the rigid class structure of American society. The novel distinguishes between different social groups:

Old money (Tom and Daisy Buchanan)

New money (Jay Gatsby)

Working class (George and Myrtle Wilson)

Despite Gatsby's wealth, he is never fully accepted by the old-money elite. This indicates that social mobility is limited and that the American Dream does not guarantee equal opportunities for all individuals.

Symbolism and Its Role

Symbolism plays a crucial role in conveying the themes of the novel. Several symbols are particularly significant: The green light at the end of Daisy's dock represents Gatsby's hopes and dreams, as well as the broader concept of the American Dream. It is always visible yet unreachable, symbolizing the elusive nature of success. The Valley of Ashes

represents the moral and social decay resulting from the pursuit of wealth. It stands in stark contrast to the opulence of East Egg and West Egg. The eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg symbolize the loss of spiritual values and the absence of moral oversight in society. These symbols reinforce the idea that the American Dream is not only unattainable but also deeply flawed.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that F. Scott Fitzgerald offers a critical perspective on the American Dream. Rather than portraying it as a source of hope and opportunity, the novel exposes its limitations and contradictions. Gatsby's tragic fate serves as a powerful commentary on the dangers of pursuing an ideal that is disconnected from reality. His unwavering belief in the possibility of achieving his dream ultimately leads to his downfall. This reflects a broader critique of a society that prioritizes wealth and status over genuine human values. Furthermore, the novel highlights the role of social inequality in shaping individual outcomes. The rigid class divisions depicted in the story suggest that the American Dream is not equally accessible to all, challenging the notion of meritocracy. From a contemporary perspective, the themes explored in the novel remain relevant. Issues such as economic inequality, consumerism, and the pursuit of superficial success continue to shape modern societies. As such, the novel serves as both a reflection of its time and a timeless critique of enduring social ideals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *The Great Gatsby* presents a complex and critical representation of the American Dream. Through its characters, symbols, and narrative structure, the novel reveals that the dream is often illusory, shaped by materialism, and constrained by social inequality. The study demonstrates that:

The American Dream is depicted as an unattainable ideal

Material wealth is associated with moral decline

Social class limits true upward mobility

Symbolism reinforces the theme of illusion and disillusionment

Ultimately, Fitzgerald's work challenges readers to reconsider the meaning and value of the American Dream, emphasizing the need for a more authentic and ethical understanding of success.

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