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THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE AMERICAN DREAM CONCEPT: IN F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S *THE GREAT GATSBY*

The research focuses on the expressive means used by F. Scott Fitzgerald to portray the transformation of the *American Dream* concept from its early ideals of freedom, equality, and moral integrity into materialism, social corruption, and moral decline in *The Great Gatsby* (1925). This theme is examined through a comparative literary and conceptual analysis based on scholarly studies, exploring how Fitzgerald connects the *Dream* to class, gender, illusion, and historical context. The examples from the novel demonstrate the reflection of decay in values and the illusion of success within 1920s American society through symbols, settings, and characters. The study concludes that Fitzgerald's critique of the *American Dream* is still relevant today because it reveals the enduring conflict between individual aspiration and the moral consequences of a society driven by wealth and status.

In literary and cultural studies, the *American Dream* has consistently been described as a historically adaptive concept, whose meaning changes in response to social and economic transformations. Scholars such as Alexander Bruno and Zarifa Sadigzade emphasized that the early *American Dream* was rooted in moral responsibility, personal effort, and equality of opportunity rather than in material accumulation [1, p. 1-2; 2, p. 15-16]. However, studies focusing on twentieth-century literature and culture demonstrated a gradual narrowing of this ideal. Ivana Nakić Lučić and Garbiñe Maruri Pérez observed that by the Jazz Age the *Dream* became increasingly associated with wealth, social mobility, and visible success, often detached from ethical values [3, p. 70-72; 4, p. 8-12]. Similarly, Mariwan Hwayyiz Rustum highlighted that the prosperity of the 1920s intensified social stratification and encouraged the pursuit of pleasure and status at the expense of moral integrity [5, p. 978-982]. Within this scholarly context, *The Great Gatsby* is often read as a reflection of the *American Dream's* shift toward materialism.

A central theme in the scholarship is the link between the transformed *American Dream* and rigid social stratification in *The Great Gatsby*. Researchers stressed that Fitzgerald presented a class system in which wealth did not ensure moral value or real social mobility. Studies by I. Nakić Lučić, G. Maruri Pérez, and Zamira Hodo converged on the idea that the division between "old money" and "new money" served as a structural metaphor for the corruption of the *Dream*, where inherited status outweighed effort and ambition [3, p. 70-74; 4, p. 14-17; 6, p. 303-305]. This division was further contextualized by John Izaguirre's analysis of self-reliance and individualism, which suggested that Gatsby's failure reflected the collapse of the traditional belief that personal effort alone ensured success in American society [7, p. 45-58]. Similarly, Alexander Bruno highlighted that the economic prosperity of the 1920s intensified social exclusion, transforming the *Dream* into a competitive and morally indifferent pursuit of status [1, p. 3-6].

Scholars widely noted that Fitzgerald represented class inequality through symbolic spaces that reflected the social hierarchy of 1920s America. Studies by

M. Hwayyiz Rustum and Z. Hodo emphasized that East Egg signified inherited wealth, stability, and social authority, while West Egg stood for newly acquired fortune lacking social recognition [5, p. 982-984; 6, p. 301-305]. Although Gatsby's mansion equaled those of East Egg in luxury, its location underscored his exclusion from the established elite. Critics further identified the Valley Ashes as a central image of social neglect. It represented individuals who were excluded from economic progress and bore the consequences of unchecked material ambition. Characters connected to this space lacked both financial security and social protection, which made them especially vulnerable within the social order depicted in the novel.

The transformation of the *American Dream* in *The Great Gatsby* is also expressed through gender relations and the illusion of romantic fulfillment. These aspects are closely linked to material desire and social ambition. Across the reviewed studies, women in the novel were often interpreted as symbols of status, consumption, and aesthetic value rather than as autonomous individuals. I. Nakić Lučić, G. Maruri Pérez, and Z. Hodo emphasized that Daisy Buchanan embodied a feminized version of the *Dream*: beautiful, desirable, and seemingly perfect, yet ultimately empty and unreachable [3, p. 72; 4, p. 18-21; 6, p. 301-303]. Her close association with wealth, luxury, and "old money" supported the belief that love could be obtained through material success, a belief Gatsby fully adopted. Scholars also found that this illusion also appeared in the character of Myrtle Wilson. Her attempt to achieve social advancement through her relationship with Tom led to moral compromise and destruction [5, p. 984-987; 6, p. 303-305]. From a broader perspective, A. Bruno and Z. Sadigzade argued that these gendered portrayals reflected a modern version of the *American Dream* shaped by consumer culture and persistent social inequality [1, p. 10-14; 2, p. 16-18].

The reviewed papers demonstrate a broad agreement that *The Great Gatsby* presents the *American Dream* as a distorted ideal formed by materialism, social hierarchy, and loss of moral values. Across literary and cultural studies, Fitzgerald's novel is consistently interpreted as a critique of a society in which wealth replaces ethical responsibility and social mobility remains largely illusory. Class division, symbolic spaces, and gender relations function as interconnected mechanisms that expose the limitations of the *Dream* in 1920s American culture.

Despite extensive research on *The Great Gatsby*, several important aspects of the *American Dream* remain underexplored. Most studies focus on individual dimensions of the *Dream*, such as moral corruption, class inequality, gender roles, or philosophical ideals. However, these elements are rarely examined together within the same narrative moments. For example, the Valley of Ashes reflects social inequality, moral decay, and vulnerability, yet these meanings are usually discussed separately. As a result, current scholarship lacks an integrated approach that views ethics, class, space, gender, and symbolism as interconnected forces that form the illusion of the *American Dream*.

Future research would benefit from a more multidimensional analysis of the novel. One productive direction is the close reading of key scenes, such as Gatsby's parties, Myrtle's death, or life in East Egg, where social hierarchy, moral failure, spatial symbolism, and gender inequality operate simultaneously. Another promising area is the study of environmental decay, especially in the Valley of Ashes, remains largely

unexplored and may reveal how material success is linked to destruction rather than progress.

In addition, the role of silence and failed communication deserves greater attention. Although the novel is rich in dialogue and social interaction, characters often fail to express their true intentions and emotions. This pattern suggests that the collapse of the *American Dream* is linked not only to social barriers but also to an inability to communicate authentic desires. Finally, the psychological dimension of the novel remains insufficiently studied. The emotional states of characters such as Gatsby, Daisy, George Wilson, and Tom Buchanan are rarely examined from a mental health perspective. Exploring how obsession, anxiety, despair, and aggression interact with ambition and failure could expand current interpretations and demonstrate the continuing relevance of Fitzgerald's critique of the *American Dream*.

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