

Charles University in Prague

Faculty of Education

DIPLOMA THESIS

2013

Jonáš Kříž

Charles University in Prague

Faculty of Education

The Concepts of the American Dream
in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and
Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*

Jonáš Kříž

Department of English Language and Literature

Vedoucí diplomové práce: PhDr. Petr Chalupský, Ph. D.

Studijní program: Učitelství pro střední školy

Studijní obor: Učitelství všeobecně vzdělávacích předmětů pro základní školy
a střední školy anglický jazyk- základy společenských věd

2013

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci na téma *The Concepts of the American Dream in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby and Norman Mailer's An American Dream* vypracoval pod vedením vedoucího diplomové práce samostatně za použití v práci uvedených pramenů a literatury. Dále prohlašuji, že tato diplomová práce nebyla využita k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

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podpis

Rád bych touto cestou vyjádřil poděkování PhDr. Petru Chalupskému, Ph.D. za jeho odborné rady, čas věnovaný vedení mé diplomové práce a pomoc při zhodnocení získaných informací a podkladů.

Abstrakt

Práce nabízí srovnávací analýzu pojetí amerického snu ve dvou zásadních dílech americké literatury ve *Velkém Gatsbym* Francise Scotta Fitzgeralda a v *Americkém snu* od Normana Mailera. Teoretická část práce se zaměřuje na definici amerického snu v jeho obecném smyslu a sleduje vývoj tohoto fenoménu během historie Spojených států amerických. Jejím cílem je odhalit souvislost amerického snu s americkým národním povědomím v pro něj typických rysech jako je soběstačnost, individualismus a svoboda. Analytická část se zabývá izolováním jednotlivých literárních prvků obou románů, které mohou být nějakým způsobem vztahovány k tématice amerického snu. Analýza románů *Velký Gatsby* a *Americký sen* zahrnuje ústřední postavy obou děl, stejně tak jako jejich dramatické prvky za účelem prokázání klíčového významu problematiky amerického snu v jejich příběhu. Na závěr práce předkládá názor, že ačkoliv Mailer a Fitzgerald zpracovávají dané téma rozdílně, obě díla zpodobňují porážku individuální podoby amerického snu v souboji s kolektivní povahou americké společnosti 20. století bránící snahám jednotlivce o seberealizaci.

Klíčová slova: Norman Mailer, Americký sen, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Velký Gatsby, americký sen

Abstract

The thesis provides a comparative analysis of the American Dream's concept in the two essential pieces of American literature: Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*. The theoretical part of the text focuses on the general definition of the American Dream and its development throughout the history of the United States. It aims at exposing the close relationship of the idea of the American Dream and the American national consciousness in terms of self-reliance, individualism and freedom. The analytical part concentrates on isolating the individual literary motifs of each novel that can be regarded as related to the notion of the American Dream. It discusses the central characters as well as dramatic aspects of *The Great Gatsby* and *An American Dream* in order to prove the American Dream to represent an essential theme in their literary frameworks. As a conclusion the thesis presents the opinion that each author elaborates this theme differently. Both novels, however, expose the individual version of the American Dream as being defeated in a struggle against the collective nature of the 20th century American society restricting the efforts of an individual for his or her self-realization.

Keywords: Norman Mailer, An American Dream, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby, The American Dream

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1.Introduction

The aim of the diploma thesis is to provide a comparative analysis of the American Dream in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*. These novels were chosen because of their significance in their relation to this typically American phenomenon. The major intention of the work is to perform an analysis of how the two different American authors of distinct historical periods elaborate this concept in their selected writings.

The theoretical part of the thesis would provide a definition of the American Dream in its general sense and discuss the origins and the general development of this idea throughout the American history. By describing the evolving shape of the American Dream in different historical periods the text shall try to expose the concept in question as both an individual and collective idea possessing an essential importance for the national identity of Americans. It would also demonstrate its relation to the typically American values such as self-reliance, individualism and freedom. Additionally, it would comment on the changing role of the American Dream in the 20th century and its reflections in the American literature.

The major purpose of the research performed in the analytical part of the thesis is to isolate the individual literary themes of both novels and expose them in their relation to a concept of the American Dream. The analysis would address both novels individually and discuss them in terms of their central characters and major dramatic motifs. It shall try to prove the opinion that the concept of the American Dream represents an essential motif of both novels. In addition to that, the analysis would comment on the way how this theme is elaborated and mediated to a reader. In this sense the major focus of the analysis is to prove the essential role of the American Dream in both novels and analyse the ways in which the concepts of the American Dream in the selected literary works differ.

2. Theoretical Part

2.1 The Origins of the American Dream

In the American national identity the American Dream possesses a wholly unique place. On the simplest level it can be considered synonymy for the American way of life (Podhorská 24). Although the concept of the American Dream was popularized during the 20th century to such an extent that it became almost a sort of an advertising cliché, the term itself is much older and can be perceived as representing a stable symbol witnessing the history of the American Union from its very beginning. Despite being introduced into the general knowledge of the Americans in James Truslow Adams' 1931 book *Epic of America*, the notion of the American Dream was pioneered much earlier by Alexis de Toqueville as a symbol representing the unique character of a newly born nation. "Ours is the nation that prides itself upon a dream and gives its name to one: The American Dream" (Allen, "The Urgent West" 3) stated Lionel Trilling, an American scholar and literary critic. His words clearly illustrate the importance the notion of the American Dream has for all Americans. The American Dream represents an ideal upon which the American society is built (Podhorská 26). Trilling's words also express the huge spiritual gap between the nations of the old world and the new. Whereas in Europe every nation is inevitably destined to follow some more or less honourable model from its past, in America the nations were born on the commonly shared illusion of starting anew. And so while most European countries cherish their national achievements from past as well as historical relicts representing important part of their national heritage, in America the only symbol on which the settlers could build their new homes was the generally shared idea of a Dream. Viewed from this perspective the American Dream represents the essential spirit of the United States, a vision of America in which the country is interpreted as a land of seemingly unlimited opportunities, where each individual is fully able to fulfil his or her destiny both in terms of material property and professional career. The myth of the American Dream, the success story of an individual was not only shaped by the US history, but it was also actively participating in it (Podhorská 25).

The whole concept of the American Dream composes of two layers: the universal and the individual. On the universal level the American Dream involves every American individually and the idea itself extends into political, social and even economic spheres of the American society. In its general meaning the American Dream represents a part of American national consciousness standing for those ideas and values traditionally seen as essentially American. On the individual level, though, the American Dream differs despite the fact that all Dreams are sharing some essential common characteristics. If we accept the point of view in which the United States are representing a melting pot of different nations we easily come to a conclusion that the American Dream varies in its specific forms throughout the different social classes and ethnic groups. However, when focusing on its universal nature it is evident that the American Dream in fact contains exactly the same principles as those expressed in the Declaration of Independence drawn up by Thomas Jefferson in 1776:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (Allen, "The Urgent West" 4).

As Jefferson stated in the Declaration, freedom, equality and pursuit of happiness are the principles embedded within the founding document of the American Union and they bear high importance for each American. They are also in their abstract forms integrated within the very nature of each American Dream in its individual realization. The question what is the most general image of the American Dream might be perplexing due to the fact that it is also very difficult to define the American national identity in general. In Europe people most often define their nationalities by means of defining their national and historical heritage (Allen, "The Urgent West" 6). They do not feel the urge to reassure themselves about their national identities the way the Americans do. The melting pot nature of the American society makes the definition of what an American really is very difficult. Therefore, it is a matter of fact that a white Anglo-Saxon protestant of old New England or Dutch origin would inevitably interpret his or her American experience very differently than a Polish or a Mexican immigrant from lower social classes

(Allen, "The Urgent West" 7). There is, however, one aspect shared by the vast majority of Americans. They are all descendants of people who came to America from some different and remote place (Allen, "The Urgent West" 8) sharing their dreams of starting their lives once again on a new soil.

Because of their society being composed of people from different ethnicities, the Americans tend to define their national identity in relation to the abstract principles their country is related to. And an essential spirit of these principles bound together under one single label is the American Dream. One can find a relatively brief answer in the most generalized definition of the idea, in which the American Dream is regarded as the opinion that all Americans do have the opportunity by means of hard work to build a comfortable middle class life (Hopper, 23). This definition explains the concept in question in terms of upward social mobility and material property. According to this understanding of the American Dream, such opportunity to better one's economic and social status is freely available to any American and has to be reached by one's own individual efforts. This image of the American Dream, though, is not the only one that ever existed, although it may be considered as being the most characteristic. To be more specific, such definition of the American Dream corresponds with Abraham's Lincoln vision of America representing a wholly unique place compared to the rest of the world: a place of mutual equality and freedom in terms of civil liberties and equal opportunities in both political and economic areas (Cullen 8). Yet, the idea of the American Dream was not born with Abraham Lincoln. Having been a consistent phenomenon throughout the American history, the American Dream had been present even during the earliest days of the American conquest. According to Jim Cullen the author of the book *The American Dream: A short History of the Idea that Shaped the Nation*, the very origins of this idea lie within the motives and intents of the first Puritan settlers (Cullen). It is obvious the idea of the American Dream present in the early Puritan communities was by no means the same American Dream as the one Americans are having today. Yet, the essential principles of freedom, equality and individualism on which it stands had been present even in these early colonies. These are the principles that possessed a great value for the Puritan settlers and that can also be considered as the common grounds for both the

American Dream and the American national consciousness in general. Despite their minor differences, every individual variation of the American Dream presents America as a place which is somehow unique or exquisite compared to the rest of the world. In other words, despite the variability of people's Dreams all of them express the vision of America as a country of seemingly unlimited possibilities, where every individual human being is at least given a chance to fulfil his life.

The concept of the American Dream can be understood as a story of one's success reached by his own efforts and personal luck. It can be perceived as a story collectively dreamt by all Americans or as a collective idea fortifying their national consciousness. Similarly to many other national symbols, the American Dream can also be recognized as a useful device able to serve almost any advertising or political intentions. It reflects and reinforces the opinion of many Americans that it is their country that may serve as a model for other countries in terms of civil liberties and equalities. The chapters following this introduction would discuss the development of the Dream throughout the different historical periods of The United States. They would describe the American Dream of the Puritan settlers, the Dream of the social mobility or a notion of a self-made-man proposed by Abraham Lincoln and finally its early 20th century version involving the from rags to riches idea concerning such industrial magnates as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller. Each of these stages is important in order to understand the impact this idea had on the American society, because in all its measures, in public life as well as in personal, the American Dream is a creation of collective imagination (Cullen 6).

2.2 The Puritan Heritage

Although the immigrants coming to the new world from Europe were diverse, all of them shared certain similar features. One of these common features was the language as well as a shared sense of liberty and civil rights (Toqueville 33). The democratic principles of freedom and equality, which later proved as being crucial for the American national consciousness, had been present even within the early Puritan communities (Toqueville 36). To understand why those principles were so important for them, it is vital to take a

closer look at the Puritan ideology and the surrounding historical context. The Puritan movement originated around the year 1560 and consisted of religious renegades of the Church of England. These people wanted to dispense of their religious practise any features of Roman Catholic origin (Cullen). According to their beliefs, all men were created equal in a way that they were all equally equipped to find their way to heaven. It was not equality in the contemporary sense of material property. It was the equality in terms of religious and spiritual rights. The Puritans went to America with a vision that they would be able to create an ideal society in a place where they would be allowed to practise their religion without the fear of prosecutions and what is even more important according to their own opinion and belief (Hopper 3). The ideal society they dreamt about was expected, in accordance with the Protestant views, to be material as well as spiritual. It was to be created both by hard work and religious purity. Compared to Catholics, Protestants did not detest the material goods and success in general. In Protestant views the material well being and wealth represent a clear sign of god's favour.

The Puritans expected that in this new society freedom and mutual equality will have been playing the essential roles. They were sincerely convinced that they were the direct descendants of the ancient Israeli tribes and the new continent offered them a great opportunity of building a new more godly society (Cullen 16). Freedom, though it was very important for Puritans, was not that freedom as we understand it today in its contemporary sense. Viewed from the 20th century liberal perspective, Puritan communities were not free at all. The religious practice had an utmost priority in Puritan societies and it was placed far above the freedom of a human as an individual. In their communities there was no tolerance to other religious practices or beliefs at all. Although the Puritans went to America to worship god as they wished to, this was not a right they would gladly grant to the others. In other words, religious tolerance for them was non-existent in the same way as it was for the Catholics or the Anglicans of that historical period. For Puritans the opponents of their faith were nothing more than dangerous heretics (Allen, "The Urgent West" 22). As a specific example of the Puritan religious terror might serve the case of the Connecticut colony which laws penalized crimes as blasphemy, witchcraft, adultery and rape and even the disrespect for one's parents by the

death penalty (Toqueville 42). It is crucial to add here, though, that these apparently cruel laws were not imposed on the citizens from above. They were rather established freely by the votes of all those affected by them in a sort of a democratic way. This clearly shows that the democratic principles worked in the early colonies even on the simple level of the individual communities. In the frame of the historical context, a newly born society in America offered the settlers an unusual amount of equality and freedom compared to the rest of the western world. In his book *Democracy in America* Alexis de Toqueville states: "Monarchy was the state, but already the republic was alive in local government" (Toqueville 46). Toqueville's statement points to the fact that the king declared the colonists with the rights to establish a political society on their own. Thus, although the monarchy was still present as the governing institution, the democratic principles were already reflected within the administration of the local affairs of the colonies. In America the state and its institutions had been developed differently than in Europe. The local community had been organized before the higher governing structures such as a county or a state (Toqueville 45). These higher political structures had been created from the lower levels of the social hierarchy. This kind of freedom and self-reliance established the difference between the Puritan settlers and the rest of the world. Whereas the inhabitants of most other colonies were people without education driven out from their countries by either poverty or legal prosecutions, the Puritan immigrants in New England mostly originated from the English middle-classes (Toqueville 36). Rather than involuntary exiles the Puritan settlers tended to perceive themselves as being the founders of something new. The remote geographical location of the new continent granted them an opportunity to rule themselves on their own, deciding their own rules and thus actively form their own future.

The democratic roots and voluntariness of the Puritan cause can be traced into the signification of the *Mayflower Compact* (Cullen 22) document, which was elaborated by the first pilgrim settlers before they even landed on the new soil. In this treaty the first colonists actively decided that in their future presence in America they are going to obey only "just and good laws" (Ibid). The Puritan movement was unified by a common aim and by cooperation of its members. The Movement was releasing the powers of an

individual and uniting them for the sake of the community. In religious terms, though, the Puritans remained solitary individuals as one's salvation could have been accomplished only by the efforts of an individual and not the community. Contrary to the Catholics or Anglicans who belonged to the church as to the institution, the Puritan was an individual alone with the god (Allen, *The Urgent West* 23). Religious individualism went hand in hand with the individual sense for the economic issues. The material prosperity started to be recognised as a visible sign of god's favour whereas the poverty started to be associated with sinfulness or idleness.

If we treat the American Dream as the pursuit of one's good life, then the Dream of the Puritan settlers was rather a spiritual or an idealistic one. The new world, as they saw it, was intended to belong to them and their religious practice. To this practise everything else including unnecessary hard-work was seen as secondary and distracting. In such a perspective, a real good living was expected to come only in the afterlife. Despite this, the Puritans did not absolutely detest earthly issues. They were not extremists of such a degree as to reject them. They were always a minority in America (Cullen) and thus their efforts to establish a kingdom of heaven on earth were inevitably destined to fail. As the Puritan zeal in America gradually diminished so did the notion of the American Dream became more secular.

2.3 Abraham Lincoln's Dream of Social Mobility

After the decline of the Puritan movement and especially in the 19th century the American Dream started to shape into its more materialistic form. The personal goals started to be considered as representing an important part of the concept mentioned in the Declaration of Independence as the pursuit of happiness. Hard work was no longer understood as merely a distraction from the religious activities as it was for the Puritans. Labour and working enthusiasm in fact started to be regarded as useful tools serving the purpose of individual self-realization (Cullen 59). This stage of the development of the American Dream was where the idea of social mobility was born as well as the notion of general equality of economic and political opportunities. Therefore, it can be fully claimed

as expressing the American Dream as the dream of upward social mobility. Compared to Europe where any individual progress on the social ladder was strongly limited by the strictly given social hierarchy the idea of social mobility represented something utterly new and almost revolutionary. What is important to stress here is the fact that this notion of one's economic and personal success was not devoted solely to individuals of exceptional capabilities. The genuine idea of upper mobility was rather given to the American majority as something wholly natural and available for every hard working individual. The original idea of the self-made man as understood and proposed by Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln, was not only the idea of individual success but it was also an idea of a strong middleclass society where political and economic equality went hand in hand.

Alexis de Toqueville, a French scholar known for his detailed study on the United States called *Democracy in America*, during his travels throughout the United States said: "Nothing struck me more forcibly than the general equality of conditions" (Garfinkle 31). His words refer to the general middle-class nature of the country in which the majority of citizens were living in similar economic and material conditions while only a very small group of people were either extraordinary rich or very poor. This economic equality completely opposite to the societies on the old continent was the most significant factor contributing on behalf of the country's inner stability. Not only such equality directly contributed to the stability of the society but it also ensured the democratic spirit of the nation. It is a well known fact that the strong middle class always represents a barrier against social disorders and political turbulences whereas poverty and huge gaps between the economic standards of living among the different social classes stimulate the tension in the society and radicalism (Garfinkle 33).

"We are a nation of self-made men", said Henry Clay, a leading American statesman and Kentucky representative in his speech presented in 1832. He might not know that he coined the term that will enter the national lexicon later (Cullen 69). Education, morals, experience, common family background and hard-work: these were the merits, these American self-made men held for their own. There was however one

aspect which was most characterizing: a strong sense for self-reliance and individualism. The idea of a self-made man was sustained on the belief shared by Americans of that age that anyone in the society regardless his former social and economic status can possibly get ahead of others (Cullen 60). The opportunity to succeed in possibly any branch of society was believed to be available to anyone on condition of hard work and personal effort (Ibid).

This American Dream, however, faced a dangerous threat posed to its very existence. This threat was the American South and its slavery based economy. The existence of slavery in the form of a legalized institution seemed a bit ambivalent in the country that proclaimed to represent a land of freedom and equal opportunities. In an economic sphere the conflict between the dream of upper mobility and slavery was maybe even more significant than in its moral sense. The idea of upper mobility, as proclaimed by Lincoln and other northern thinkers, was largely based upon the idea of a man starting humbly and working his way up the social ladder by means of sheer discipline and persistence (Garfinkle 36). To be more specific, a young man entered an apprenticeship in a small company of an older and more experienced person and earned himself a modest salary. After a few years the former apprentice would have saved enough money to have started his own company and hired his own apprentices and labourers (Cullen 61). Thus would the chain of the social mobility continue and benefit the nation creating a strong middle class society. In South it was apparent that such system was too expensive compared to the free labour provided by the slaves. For Abraham Lincoln the individual freedom and the pursuit of happiness were the most essential principles the American Union was built upon. In his view the pursuit of happiness should be available to all citizens including those of different racial origin. In his 1859 speech in Ohio Lincoln stated:

This progress by which the poor, honest, industrious, and resolute man raises himself, that he may work on his own account, and hire somebody else, is that improvement in condition that human nature is entitled to, is that improvement

that is intended to be secured by those institutions under which we live, is the great principle for which this government was formed (Cullen 81).

Doubtless, slavery was a cruel and immoral institution but it also posed an economic threat. It divided the Union into two separate parts running on different economic systems. Whereas in the American North the true aim of the Union was to create a path for the upward social mobility of its citizens, in the southern states this mobility was blocked by the stagnant slave based economy (Garfinkle 29). The economic gap between the northern and southern states created not only mutual inequality in a sense of material conditions but it also spawned two different cultures with diverse values: the industrial, progressive north and the conservative south. Whereas the north represented a middle class society at its most, the southern social structure was sharply divided between the rich and the poor (Garfinkle 46). In terms of human values the south was based on the opposites of the officially proclaimed principles. In Lincoln's opinion, the American democracy was based on granting the equal rights to all segments of the society whereas in past most ancient regimes were based on strictly the opposite principles: denying the rights to some and granting them to others on the behalf of the discriminated social classes (Ibid).

In Lincoln's opinion liberty was closely linked to material and economic prosperity: in other words, the freely given opportunity to try and be prosperous (Garfinkle 28). Lincoln proposed the idea that any worker had a natural right to earn as much portion of his final product as possible. The real evil of the southern slaver system dwelled in the fact that slave owners were denying their slaves the right to enjoy the fruits of their labour (Garfinkle 28). This deprivation of one ethnic group was challenging Lincoln's notion of the American Dream. When viewed in the context of the ongoing conquest of the American west slavery threatened to destroy the free economy model. The essential question was whether the newly formed states would follow the northern model when developing their economy or rather prefer the one based on slavery. If the latter proved true the American Dream represented by liberty and equality of conditions and opportunities would slowly become merely a historical relict (Garfinkle 43). Lincoln's

greatest contribution to the notion of the American Dream dwelled in his ability to perceive the connection between economic, material reality of the American life and the highest ethical and moral principles and values expressed in the Declaration of Independence (Garfinkle 28). The Civil War was not only the struggle to dispose of the inhuman slaver practice. Its main purpose was to preserve the principles on which the American Union was built. As Norton Garfinkle states in his book *American Dream vs. the Gospel of Wealth*, Lincoln did not fight the Civil War in order to end slavery thought it was its most apparent result. The foremost reason that led Lincoln to start a war that separated the whole nation was to preserve the American Dream.

2.4 From Rags to Riches: a Dream of an Exceptional Individual

During the decades after the Civil War a new threats arose that endangered the existence of the American Union as a middle-class society. The Gilded Age represented a period of progressive economic development and structural growth. The United States were facing rapid industrialization of the country's economy as well as the vast masses of immigrants from Europe providing cheap working force. In a relatively short time the United States were transformed from a majorly agrarian economy into an industrial superpower (Garfinkle 47). Along with these came a change in the society that prepared the grounds for a new concept of the American Dream. As the economic life started to be organized in higher structures the importance of large companies was on a rise. It was no longer the time of Robber Barons standing as separate and powerful entities. The individualist nature of the American economy changed into a model that started to be organized cooperatively. Many corporations were created and gradually joined together in large trusts. Due to these changes the old artisan/manufacture economy on which Lincoln's Dream proposing social mobility was based on slowly disappeared. The growth of industry and urbanization were supported by an almost unlimited source of cheap work force provided by masses of immigrants coming to northern American states from Europe. This fact had also a negative effect as it resulted in the decreased price of labour while higher competition between the labourers led to an increasing degree of poverty and social

disorders in large cities (Garfinkle 48). Lincoln's idealized middle-class society was on its decline as an unbelievable amount of wealth started to concentrate in a very few hands and the number of Americans living in poor conditions was rapidly growing (Ibid).

Two new ideologies were implemented in order to provide the new social structure with moral justification: Social Darwinism and Laissez-Faire economics. Social Darwinism represented a sociological ideology founded by Herbert Spencer that implemented Darwin's Survival of the Fittest evolutionary ideas and adapted them for social purposes. According to this new ideology the rule of natural selection was applied even in the human social groups. This selection was manifested by means of economic prosperity. Those who prospered economically were the fit while those who did not and were poor were demonstrably the unfit (Garfinkle 53). The second ideology, Laissez-Faire economics, was characterized by the no state intrusion into economy policy. This economic ideology cherished the idea of free market with as little interventions from the government as possible. Under the impact of these two ideologies Lincoln's notion of the American Dream represented by the opportunity available equally to anyone slowly disappeared. It was replaced by the model that redefined the Declaration of Independence in a way that held the economic freedom of the individual as the highest priority (Garfinkle 64). The newly created millionaires were celebrated as the champions of progress and results of a natural selection process taking place within the economy (Garfinkle 61). Whereas in Lincoln's conception of America both political and economic equality were the symptoms of any healthy democracy the Social Darwinists viewed inequality as only a natural symptom of every society wholly in accordance with the Survival of the Fittest idea. Inequality between people became to represent a visible sign of democracy (Garfinkle 60). The new era needed new American heroes worth following and therefore spawned yet another American Dream: the dream of an exceptional individual. The story of an industrial magnate Andrew Carnegie would serve a perfect example of this Dream coming true. At the peak of his career Carnegie accumulated 300 million dollars and ruled a vast industrial empire. In 1889 Carnegie published a book called *Gospel of Wealth* defining a moral code every hero of capitalism should follow. He

proposes the idea that millionaires should spend their riches in order for the good of society by means of indirect charity (investing in public buildings etc) (Garfinkle 64).

What Lincoln proclaimed was the idea of the government actively creating an environment that would enable people to succeed and fulfil their American Dreams. The reality of Carnegie's America, however, was a government that stood aside in the affairs of the country's economy and thus acting for the benefit of the large companies. The honest labour no longer represented a safe device by which one could be assured to reach higher social status. For the large number of immigrant workers in the factories almost any kind of social mobility was simply out of their reach. It was during this period of the American history that the nature of the American Dream changed. Personal success in economic sense started to be regarded as the most prominent aspect of the American Dream in general. The philosophy of the Gilded Age and the following decades of the early twentieth century represented crucial moments for the increasing materialistic character of the American Dream as witnessed during the 20th century. It was success at all cost, success which indirectly implies the failure of other contestants (Garfinkle). The ideal models of this form of success were the individual heroes of capitalism: the exceptional individuals. Whereas Lincoln proposed the form of the American Dream available if not to anyone then at least to the majority of the American population, its new form was taking the notion of success to previously unimaginable levels. This new form of the Dream was devoted solely to an extraordinary individual or a man of unusual talents (Garfinkle 66). The living testimonies to this kind of the American Dream were the stories of such men as John D. Rockefeller coming from a humble beginning and creating a huge industrial monopoly later. Both the dream of an exceptional Individual and the dream of social mobility represent the two different poles of the American Dream.

2.5 The American Dream as the Political and Economic Idea in the 20th Century

Despite its originally abstract form representing a belief in idealistic principles based on the value system connected with the foundation of the United States (Hornung 545), the dominant notion of the American Dream in the 20th century United States has a materialistic nature. This notion specifies the American Dream solely in a sense of one's economic condition and can be regarded as reflecting Benjamin Franklin's *Way to Wealth* philosophy. The increased materialistic character of the American Dream is a direct result of certain tendencies within the American society dating themselves to the days of the Founding Fathers (Hornung 546). The beginning of the 20th century was an important turning point for the development of the American Dream as an idea. The importance of this national American symbol increased in political and economic life of the Americans. The pace of industrialization and urbanization created a wide public awareness of economic interdependency reinforcing the sense of national identity and shared values (Zangrando 143). In politics, the American dream became a strong unifying symbol. In economics, the American Dream symbolized the everlasting spirit standing behind the American industrial production.

Yet, at the same time, certain aspects of the American Dream were slowly dying. The American Dream in its individual sense was getting into conflict with the existing economic and industrial realities of the developed American economy. As Alfred Hornung states in his essay *The Un-American Dream*, "The development of American politics and economics reached the point where the individualistic realizations of private goals met with limitations in terms of competition and corporations" (Hornung 545). The American economy was no longer a simple economy where an individual could rise as the captain of industry. The times of the individual economic predators, the so called Robber Barons were gone as the economy started to be organized cooperatively on a basis of larger corporations and trusts (Hornung 546). It is apparent that in such an environment success of any individual would sooner or later found its limits represented by the corporate competition or monopoly. For the large waves of immigrants, though, coming to America from Europe the idea of the American Dream as a story of individual success was still alive

in its genuine form. Moreover, the myth of America represented a powerful motif for their immigration. Being mesmerized by Horatio Alger's Jr. stories the immigrants believed that riches are still easy to gain in America¹. At the same time the American Dream symbolized the large part of their newly found national identities (Hornung 545).

After the immense economic growth of the Gilded Age and the Roaring Twenties America experienced the economic crisis during which the Dream served as a powerful national symbol. It stood for the enduring optimism of the people faced up with adversity and their endless effort to improve their condition (Hanson, White 3). Later after the Second World War and during the cold war period the need for national identity reinforced even more. Suddenly, the vision of America representing a haven for democracy experienced a new and even more powerful revival (Zangrando 143). The nature of the Dream changed though. The idea which spread originally from a strong sense of individualism was transformed into the form suitable for the purposes of the newly created mass society. Unfortunately, along with the Dream's increasing significance for the national identity of the Americans came also the gradual commercialization of the idea. As a matter of fact, the majority of people would always describe personal success as getting highly paid jobs providing them with maximum economic security (Hochschild 15). On the other hand, the original idea of the American Dream, as expressed by Henry James Truslow in his 1931 *Epic of America*, was not devoted solely to the notion of material well being. According to Truslow, the American Dream is predominantly a belief in the social order in which every man or woman is given the opportunity to realize its full potential regardless of their birth (Hanson, White). Despite Truslow's vision, the American Dream started to be compared to the generic pack of ideas and material values representing the supposed happiness of the American majority. The advertising companies took hold of this concept and redefined the American Dream in a wide variety of ways presenting products ranging from cars to washing machines. It can be said that the 20th century advertising campaigns were the loudest voice promoting the American Dream in the whole American history (Samuel 11). On the other hand, they made the

¹ Horatio Alger Jr. was a 19th century American writer who popularized the rags-to-riches narrative in America (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horatio_Alger,_Jr., accessed 25th May 2013)

concept rather hollow proclaiming it to represent the typically middle-class values such as success in work, well paid job and house ownership (Ibid). The family middle-class environment embedded within a family oriented lifestyle provided a perfect background for advertising purposes selling the idea of consumerism to as many people as possible (Samuel 3).

The use of the American Dream in politics and the advertising campaigns demonstrates the manipulative potential of the whole idea. Rather than a device proposing freedom and equality the notion of the American Dream in its material conception provided guidelines for an individual to achieve the socially accepted normality. The exploitation of the American Dream led to several protests realized by the American counterculture. These movements opposing the generally accepted idea of the American way of living provided their members not only the different versions of the American Dream but also the completely different lifestyles. The following pages would comment on a few of these cultural protests, namely on the Beat Generation and the Afro-American activists, in order to illustrate their different approaches and contributions to the idea of the American Dream.

2.6 Revival of the American Dream in the Beat Generation

As mentioned earlier, every American Dream has the notion of personal success embedded within its structure. It is a matter of fact that when the different notions of success clash they may, though not inevitably, spawn a conflict (Hochschild 16). During the first half of the 20th century the idealistic part of the American Dream became hollow. The notion of one's success got into conflict with the existing realities of the developed market economy (Hornung 546). The American Dream became a symbol representing solely material and economic values of the socially conform middle-classes. Although this concept of the American Dream had a wide support among the Americans, there was a movement in the years following the end of the Second World War whose members showed no interest in identifying themselves with the materialistic concerns of the American society at all. It was the Beat Generation that not only denied the prevailing

materialism within the concept of the American Dream, but also provided a new point of view on the whole idea. From the historical perspective the Beat Generation coincided with the rise of the Angry Young Men literary movement in Britain in the 1950. Yet, more rather than to represent a wholly generational protest as it was in the case of their successors the Hippies, the Beat Generation consisted of people loosely attached to each other by means of their common ethos (Musana). The works of several writing individuals such as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs and Gregory Corso started to be recognized as representing the life style of the whole generation (Musana 13).

As John Clellon Holmes stated in his 1948 *The Times* article referring to the words of Jack Kerouac, the word beat implies weariness, the sort of “having been used, of being raw” and broke. It implies one’s feeling of being pushed up against the wall of oneself, “a feeling of being reduced to the bedrock of consciousness” (Tamony 274). This feeling of an individual being used or wronged by the society supported the Beatnik’s idea that there was no place for them within the officially proclaimed idea of the American Dream (Musana 3). Although most of the original Beatnik writers were of a middle-class origin they had a personal problem with their attitudes towards the American establishment and the materialistic tendencies within the society (Musana 14). Craving for freedom, self-reliance and independence, the Beatniks challenged the materialistic shape of the American Dream. The Beat writers took hold of the philosophical principles of the Dream while abandoning the notion of it representing merely economic success. The Beat’s challenge of the dominant middle-class notion of the American Dream does not mean the denial of the American Dream’s concept in general. More rather, it symbolizes the revival of the American Dream in its original and spiritual form.

Dharma Bums and *On the Road*, the two novels of the most prominent Beatnik writer Jack Kerouac, serve as ideal examples of the American Dream revival as witnessed within the rise of the Beat Generation. *On the Road*, first published in 1957 and based on Jack Kerouac’s travels across America, depicts a journey of Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty. It is the story rebelling to almost every middle-class value. The figures of the two main characters are supposedly based on Kerouac and his real friend Neil Cassady.

The latter represents an adventurous man violating the social conventions of that age. They are the characters possessing an ultimate sense for freedom, the same kind of freedom pioneered by Herman Melville in *Moby Dick*. Similarly to Melville's Ishmael, the state of mind of Kerouac's characters represents the freedom of a pilgrim going into the unknown with seemingly no liabilities left behind. The sensual pleasures and excitement as well as intellectual endeavours are playing a crucial role in their journey to nowhere. From this arises a new vision as portrayed in the Moriarty's wish for a world full of excitement without the traditionally Christian based values and conventions. This spawns a brand new idea on how the American Dream could look like (Musana 14). Instead of praising the material values the story idealizes the life on the road as a perfect kind of one's existence. It is a daydreaming journey of the existentialist sort in which the spiritual growth of the main characters is of the same concern as the individual's desire for freedom. The ultimate place for where their journey is heading is represented by the American West. The West symbolizes the virgin territory, the place where America is still untamed and raw reflecting the internal freedom of both characters (Musana 16). It symbolizes the connection towards nature, self-reliance and ancient pre-Christian values. It was only in the west where their freedom could be fully realized and their American Dream come its fulfilment. Yet, the American West is not the ending destination of their journey as their endless pursuit of the American Dream continues witnessing them on their way back home. The only reason of their journey dwells in enjoying the never ending series of intellectual and sensual excitements (Musana 17).

In *Dharm Bums*, published a year after *On the Road*, Kerouac introduces a certain kind of Beatnik's spirituality represented by the Zen religious practise. In relation to the Zen the whole hedonistic concept of the Beat culture in their attitudes towards sex and drugs reaches previously unbelievable levels. Whereas *On the Road* can be understood as a raw manifesto of Beatnik way of living, *Dharma Bums* is focused more towards spiritual mysticism. Moreover, it expresses the gradual inclination of the Beat Generation towards the eastern philosophy (Musana 26). Similarly to the first novel discussed, the main character of *Dharma Bums*, Kerouac's alter ego named Ray Smith, is making a journey through America on which he experiences parties, drugs and sex. The spiritual aspect

added to the journey is presented in the strong relation to the sensual pleasures he encounters. In some cases they even provide the moral justification for their sexual activities (Musana 28). In introducing the Zen spirituality into his book Kerouac is not bestowing his heroes with the Buddhist religiosity. More rather, he is creating a new form of mysticism and Beatnik philosophy which are standing in the exact opposition towards such traditional American values as the monogamous family. A similar attempt to grant the Beat movement some kind of its own spirituality can be found in the works of William S. Burroughs, namely in his 1959 novel: *The Naked Lunch*. In this novel, Burroughs presents insane visions of bizarre sexual practices accompanied by the distorted perception that at some cases even aim at reaching transcendent extent. He creates a new religion of both obscenity and insanity forming itself in radical opposition against not only the dominant Judeo-Christian values, but even against the values of simple rationality and logic. From this departure of the traditional values and conventions arises a new kind of the American Dream in which the pleasure of senses and hedonism play an essential role (Musana 29).

The rise of the Beat Generation meant a revival of the American Dream in a sense of individual independence and freedom. In the new, alternative version of the American Dream the individual satisfaction with life would no longer be a direct result of one's material prosperity. The Beatnik's attitude towards the meaning of freedom, sexual life and drugs can be understood as representing a great value shift in American history that heralded the forthcoming era of unusual social and literary freedom (Theado 748). For the first time in American history the notion of the American Dream was no longer connected with the idea of honest work and continual professional career. In other words, for the Beat Generation as well as for their literary heroes work is no longer understood as a means of self-realization.

2.7 The Afro-American Rejection of the Dream

Every definition of the American Dream contains the right of every individual to pursue the goals in life both beneficial to oneself as to the society. Despite this, the African-Americans remained marginalized and excluded from this concept hundred years after the Slavery Abolishing act (Zangrando 144). In the northern states at least the discrimination was not expressed publicly in the form of legal actions. In the South, however, the situation was different as the Jim Crow Laws enacted between years 1876 and 1965 legalized the official racial segregation in all the public facilities of the former Confederacy states². The African-Americans living in these southern states were assigned the status of the second class citizens. Separate but equal, the official legal doctrine justifying the racial segregation claimed that although the races should be held equally, they should also be kept separated at all time. The outcome was the establishment of separate institutions in the former Confederacy states intended to be used solely by either the white majority or the African-Americans.

The African-Americans also demanded the access to the American Dream to fully participate in the melting pot as other ethnicities already did (Zangrando 146). Although the 1954 Supreme Court Decision in Brown vs. Board case declared the laws separating the African-American students from the majority as unconstitutional, the actual reality was still far from that (Ibid). The African-Americans expressed two different ways of how to deal with this injustice. The broadminded one proposed by an African-American educator Booker T. Washington recognized the American Dream in its officially proclaimed values such as good will, hard work and persistence. This way demanded the whole acceptance of the American Dream on the side of the African-Americans while the expected result of this process should be the granted racial equality (Zangrando 145). This conception proposed by the Civil Rights Movement and Martin Luther King emphasized equality as the crucial principle of the American Dream and celebrated success in 1964 by the Civil Rights Act publicly declaring all kinds of discrimination in employment and public accommodation illegal.

² see <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/303897/Jim-Crow-law>

There existed a totally opposite view on the American Dream provided by the African-American radical wing activists. Their opinions stemmed from the serious doubts of certain Afro-American spokesmen, such as William Monroe Trotter or Ida Wells Barnett, that the American majority would overlook the different racial origin of the Afro-Americans to let them integrate fully to the society as equals. These doubts spawned a whole generation of African-American dissenters for whom the American Dream was no longer fit to pursuit. Instead they decided to challenge it and undermine its self-evidence. Their common aim was to emphasize the harsh evidence of racism still present in America and the value system incompatible with their living conditions (Zangrando 150). In the mid 1960s the two prominent civil rights organizations, Congress of Racial Equality and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, came largely to an agreement with Malcolm X's³ opinion that everything connected with the dominant American culture was meaningless and destructive in nature to their ethnical minority (Zangrando 146). They claimed the American culture decadent and the whole idea of the American Dream corrupted in its manipulative use on behalf of the oppressing WASP majority (Zangrando 147). These radical thoughts created a new sense of an African-American identity based on the heritage shared by all Afro-Americans (Zangrando 146). It was to be derived from their common experiences in America. Being the descendants of the slaves the African-Americans came to America on radically different terms than the members of the other ethnicities. They were not the active makers of the American Dream but rather the tools deliberately used by the white oppressors. Viewed from this position the African-Americans could either embrace fully their true identities, or accept the American Dream and thus be deprived of their real roots (Zangrando 150). The Afro-American protest was rejecting everything that could be regarded as American including Christianity, surnames derived from the European model and even the conception of the United States as the legitimate source of the national identity (Zangrando 147). This rejection of the American Dream represented an important challenge to the notion of the American Dream's general applicability. Compared to the Beatnik's revival of the Dream's genuine form, the Afro-American radicals rejected the whole idea which represented more than anything

³ Malcom X was an African American leader in the early 1960 who proposed the idea of black nationalism (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/359906/Malcolm-X>, accessed 6th June 2013)

else, a burden manipulating them into forgetting the perils their ancestors experienced in America.

2.8 The American Dream in Literature

From the very beginnings the American writers recognized themselves as the spokesmen of the new civilization which in practical terms was much different from the civilization of the old Europe (Allen, "The Urgent West" 98). They represented writers of the country being built upon the American Dream and as writers of every other nation they reflected their cultural origin in their works. Thus it is only logical that there actually exists a wide variety of American literature reflecting the different aspects of the American Dream's idea. The most notorious examples representing the uncritical reflection of the Dream's problematic in literature are the works of Horatio Alger. Alger's stories focus on a simple theme of a young boy escaping the poor conditions by means of hard work and a certain portion of luck and are generally regarded as having popularized the from-rags-to-riches narrative in America. What is more essential for the purposes of this thesis, though, are the numerous literary reflections of the American Dream revealing the Dream in various problematic situations while challenging either its legitimacy or general applicability. The following paragraphs shall comment on the concept of the American Dream in certain literary works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Jack London and Sinclair Lewis to demonstrate the scope of the potential the American Dream possesses within the American literary tradition.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, a novel published in 1843, Hawthorne challenges the concept of the American Dream in its Puritanical form. His assault on the Puritan's Dream is focused on the contradiction between what the Puritans proclaimed to have represented and the actual realities of the Puritan communities. Moreover, the story of Hester Prynne, an adultery convict forced to live her life in shame, demonstrates the fact that although the Puritans pretended to be pure in religious terms their communities were corrupted even in their early forms. The hypocritical nature of the Puritan society is reflected within the figure of the reverend Dimmesdale who although being the natural father of Hester

Pryne's illegitimate child is unable to confess his sin publicly (Podhorská 66). Despite the Puritan's wish to establish an ideal society as a sort of kingdom of heaven on earth, Dimmesdale's moral weakness points to the fact that hypocrisy used to have an essential role in their societies. In other words, although the Puritans pretended to be more pure and innocent than other people in fact they were not.

The American Dream in the sense of one's personal success is an important theme of Jack London's 1909 novel *Martin Eden*. In this novel London elaborates a story of a young man of working class origin who is genuinely striving to become a successful writer. Through hard work, while using his experiences as a former sailor, Martin Eden realizes his vision and transforms himself into a respected author popular even among the members of the higher social classes. However, the fulfilment of his dream takes its toll. It results in Eden's loss of illusions about his beloved Ruth Morse and members of the higher society. Throughout the large portion of the novel the marriage with Ruth Morse represents the essential part of Eden's American Dream. To earn her parents' consent, though, Martin Eden must first obtain a certain degree of economic security and reach a higher social status. In this sense, the internal nature of his Dream comes to a conflict with its materialistic version acknowledged by the American middle-classes. Although, marrying Ruth and obtaining a higher social status Eden realizes in the final part of the book that he has forsaken his real roots and ends his life drowned in the ocean. Martin Eden is a story of personal success as well as an internal conflict of an individual. It is a conflict of one's idealistic dreams and the general expectations and constraints imposed on the individual from the side of the materialistic society.

Babbitt, a Nobel Prize awarded 1922 novel by Sinclair Lewis, provides a critical reflection of the increasing influence of the socially conform middle classes within the frame of the American Dream. The story takes its place during the Roaring Twenties and concerns the main character, Babbitt, making his way up the social ladder in a city called Zenith. The city of Zenith represents a satirical hyperbole of the idealized utopian shape of the American Dream in its materialistic form. What Lewis critically reflects in his novel is the image of a new self-made man arising from the middle-classes best represented by

a word babbitt⁴. Yet, Babbitt as a protagonist of the book is much more than merely a stereotypical image of an American small businessman (Allen, "Tradition and Dream" 91). His real individuality is hidden beneath the shallow materialistic surface of his demonstratively conformist appearance. In Babbitt's case the materialistic symbols he cherishes are just substitutes for his real self. From time to time Babbitt's real individuality manifests itself by means of little rebellions against the pressure of the conformist society (Allen, "Tradition and Dream" 92). Rebellious against the dull nature of the middle-class version of the Dream, Babbitt escapes into the world of liberal politics and bohemian counter culture. In Lewis's novel the American Dream is shown as a potentially dangerous idea that is possibly able to suppress one's individuality. Both social conformity and the generic pack of values proclaimed to represent the very core of the proper "Americanness" are in fact barriers keeping the individual from realizing himself and achieving inner freedom.

Literary works mentioned above demonstrate the potential the American Dream possesses within the American literary tradition. *The Scarlet Letter*, *Martin Eden* and *Babbitt* are all novels reflecting the various historical stages of the American society, yet the idea of the American Dream is somehow present in all of them. The stable nature of this idea in the pieces of literature throughout the different periods of American history foreshadows its essential importance for the United States as a nation. The analysis in the second part of the thesis is focused on a study of the American Dream phenomenon within the two novels: Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*. Fitzgerald and Mailer represent the authors of different historical eras. However, in one topic their literary works coincide although each of them approaches it differently. This topic is the American Dream or, more specifically, its failure. *The Great Gatsby* published in 1925 is generally considered to represent the perfect model for the American Dream's story reflecting the Jazz Age in America with all its splendour and vanity. On the other hand, *An American Dream*, published forty years

⁴ The word babbitt entered the English lexicon and is defined as conventional, complacent, materialistic American businessman (<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=Babbitt>, accessed 10th June 2013)

later, expresses the theme more radically while turning the generally recognized form of the American Dream upside down.

In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald elaborates the idea of the failure of the American Dream faced with the circumstances of the actual reality of the American society. The story of Jay Gatsby allegorically reflects the idealistic shape of the American dream as being overwhelmed by the dominant materialistic character of the society. This conflict is expressed as a struggle between Jay Gatsby's idealistic love for Daisy and the nature of the society she represents. It reflects the American Dream in its tragic aspect expressing the inability of the individual to find peace and fulfilment in life while being guided by a false social idea (Podhorská 95). In *An American Dream*, the American Dream is shown in much darker connotations. In the personality of the main protagonist, Stephen Rojack, a decorated war hero and a former congressman, Mailer presents a strong contrast between the generally recognized form of success and its notion in an individual sense. The collective notion of the American Dream in its corruptive sense of wealth and power that Mailer presents in his novel is in fact a repressive factor enslaving the individual and preventing him from living a life in accordance with his own authenticity. In this respect both *The Great Gatsby* and *An American Dream* allegorically represent the death of the American Dream in its traditional sense. In the case of Fitzgerald's masterpiece, Gatsby's story depicts the end of the Dream facing the materialistic constraints within the society. In Mailer's novel the degenerated values of which the developed modern form of the American Dream consists are put into strong opposition with Rojack's criminal actions and pathologic mindset. The following part of the thesis would discuss the differences between these two literary works in their relation to the problematic of the American Dream in more detail.

3. Analytical Part

3.1 The Concept of the American Dream in *The Great Gatsby*

3.1.1 The Aspects of the American Dream in *The Great Gatsby*

There is obvious evidence that *The Great Gatsby* is a story about the American Dream and its position within the context of the progressive social changes during the Jazz Age in America. The most visible expression of this idea reflected in this Fitzgerald's novel is Gatsby's endless pursuit of the woman he loves. This pursuit is marked by a conflict between the idealistic vision of romantic love and the sheer practicality of the actual reality. This conflict is expressed by a clash of apparently contradicting ideas and values. Therefore, *The Great Gatsby* does not involve merely a conflict between idealism and pragmatism but also between the old world and the new, between the American West representing the moral purity and boredom and the decadent East depicted in its frivolous and modern image of moral freedom and hypocrisy (Bigsby 132). More than anything else, however, *The Great Gatsby* expresses a conflict between the two competing notions of the American Dream: its idealistic shape in a traditional form and the harsh pragmatism of the materialistic society. It not only stresses the ambivalent relationship between the individual freedom and the moral wickedness, but also reveals the concept of the American Dream in its tragic sense as the idealism embedded within Gatsby's Dream is inevitably defeated in the end of the novel. The conflicts between the moral consistency and wickedness, between the dream and the reality are all in some form present in Fitzgerald's novel, thus reflecting the ambiguities of a human life stuck between tradition and modernity during the Roaring Twenties.

The concept of the American Dream in *The Great Gatsby* is linked to the concept of the pursuit of happiness defined in the Declaration of Independence as one of the three unalienable rights of the Americans (Callahan, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Evolving American Dream" 379). Fitzgerald once said that "[t]he American story is history of aspiration-not just the American Dream but the human dream" (Callahan, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Evolving American Dream" 378). On the other hand, human dreams can differ and also the notions of the pursuit of happiness and personal success can both be defined differently by

different people. Although Gatsby with his riches might appear as a perfect example of success, in this literary figure Fitzgerald expresses the idea that in some cases to live the American Dream can be as difficult as to achieve one. That is because success always comes at a price and as a result of one's choice. Such is the nature of the American Dream itself.

Jay Gatsby is both a criminal as well as a self-made man. According to the literary critic Lionel Trilling, Gatsby is divided between the power and the dream thus representing the ambivalent nature of America itself (Fraser 556). In Gatsby's material success based on his illegal activities Fitzgerald destroys the illusion of the American Dream presenting it as merely a fruit of one's honest labour. Gatsby's case reveals the fact that success is more often a result of various factors such as one's unscrupulous motivation and opportunity rather than just a product of honest work and virtue. Concerning Gatsby's dream, however, the most dominant relationship is the one between the material property and the pursuit of happiness in its abstract sense. The pursuit of happiness symbolizes the abstract possibility open to human personality for an individual choice for things that are worth pursuing. On the other hand, the material property represents the pursuit of happiness in its materialized shape acknowledged by the majority (Callahan, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Evolving American Dream" 380). The dualism between the property and the pursuit of happiness in its individualistic sense is one of the essential themes of *The Great Gatsby*. *The Great Gatsby* is a story in which these two poles of the American Dream sometimes struggle and sometimes cooperate (Ibid). Happiness is expected here to be reached by means of property though property is not the main motive for Gatsby to follow his Dream. In his case, material success represents merely a means by which he believes to win the favour of the woman he loves. The abstract ideal, the perfection embodied in Gatsby's beloved, represents the primary motive for his urge to succeed. Without at least the minimal probability of reaching his aim Gatsby's riches would be accumulated all in vain. Gatsby's love is idealistic yet, at the same time, it is directly connected to his material success. In other words, love is argued on the grounds of property (Callahan, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Evolving American Dream" 382).

This dichotomy in fact represents the two sides of the American Dream competing with each other.

3.1.2 The Power of Imagination in *The Great Gatsby*

Dreams have always been the products of human imagination in a social sense as well as in a psychological. On the other hand, they definitely play an important role in human society. It is actually true that an idea is potentially able to become a society driving mechanism capable of not only influencing the people's behaviour but even of taking a certain degree of control over the individual lives. The creative human ability of fantasizing the most idealized images of object that are in fact rather ordinary is very important in the context of *The Great Gatsby*. That is because many of the characters in the story seem to be pursuing fragile illusions rather than the real things. The illusions such as Gatsby's alleged greatness or the idealized romantic image of Daisy are all products of the protagonists' imagination, and in the context of Fitzgerald's novel they seem to be more powerful than the actual reality. They have a similar nature as the American Dream which is merely a social illusion drawing its power only from human beliefs and imagination (Weinstein 26). To some degree, this feature of following an illusion or an idealized image involves all of the central characters of *The Great Gatsby*. This fragile tension between the imagined expectations and the actual reality can be traced both in the personalities of Daisy and Tom Buchanans as well as in Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway. Concerning Nick Carraway, the story depicts a gradual deconstruction of the carefully elaborated image of the idealized upper society that he admires in the beginning. Gatsby, on the other hand, is driven forward by an idealized and unrealistic image of Daisy. The most visible phenomenon, however, on which the manipulative power of illusions in Fitzgerald's novel is most apparent, is the mysterious identity of the Great Gatsby. At the end of the novel following the revelation of Gatsby's real background comes also a destruction of his alleged greatness being revealed as merely an illusion he created to sustain his greatness (Weinstein 25).

The fact that Gatsby is actually trying to hide something about his past and background is apparent even from the early pages of the novel. When Nick Carraway inquires about Gatsby's past he surprisingly realizes that every piece of information about Gatsby he succeeds to obtain is merely a speculation. These speculations have a fascinating aura around them that is fuelling Gatsby's heroic image. For example, during a small party at which Carraway becomes acquainted to Tom Buchanan's supposed mistress Myrtle her sister Catherine tells him that Gatsby is allegedly "a nephew or a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm's" and that is supposedly "where all his money comes from" (Fitzgerald 38). A similar gossip is heard by Carraway during one of the notorious parties held at Gatsby's mansion when Lucille, one of the girls he meets at the party, says that "[h]e was a German spy during the war" (Fitzgerald 50). It is not surprising that Carraway feels confused about the myths surrounding his neighbour.

The true function of these speculations is not to provide information about Gatsby. It is exactly the opposite, to sustain and strengthen the mythical aura surrounding his person. Gatsby is in fact an illusory figure. His traits and image are merely the projections of Jay Gatsby's wishes and ideas by which he hopes to accustom himself to the stereotype of an American self-made man. At first, Gatsby might seem to be following the traditional middle-class model of success (Decker 52). Despite that, the mask of a self-made man is just a disguise for Gatsby as he is in fact something else. In abandoning his origins along with his real name and family background, James Gatz pushes the whole notion of a self-made-man further to previously unimaginable levels. He creates a new identity and becomes Jay Gatsby fully in accordance with his internal wishes and imagination.

Gatsby is doing everything he thinks that is expected to reach a higher social status, but the essential motive for this kind of success is not solely the material property but love for a woman. The true nature of Gatsby's masquerade is foreshadowed in his first longer conversation with Carraway. "I'll tell you god's truth", says Gatsby (Fitzgerald 71). "I'm the son of wealthy people in the Middle West—all dead now. I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford, because all my ancestors have been educated there

for years. It is a family tradition” (Ibid). “He looked at me sideways and I knew why Jordan Baker believed he was lying” (Ibid), says Carraway later and his assumption is right. Yet, lying is not a proper word for what Gatsby is actually doing. More rather he is just playing a role he chose to satisfy the expectations of others they could possibly have of the Great Gatsby. The exaggeration of his attempts to mask him is further revealed in the following passage of the conversation. When describing to Carraway what he has been doing after he inherited the money Gatsby claimed to have lived like “a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe-Paris, Venice, Rome-collecting jewels, chiefly rubies and hunting big game” (Fitzgerald 71). In presenting the image of his greatness Gatsby makes a mistake of setting himself into a role of a nobleman spending recklessly the family heritage which is naturally far away from the expected ideal of the American middle-classes. As Carraway himself is a member of the social class Gatsby aspires to attune with he immediately recognizes the exaggerated and possibly unrealistic nature of his words.

Yet, Gatsby is no ordinary American bourgeois. His identity is a construct. The image Gatsby creates of himself is as fascinating as it is unrealistic. Carraway refers to the story he heard of him as having a feeling of “skimming hastily through a dozen magazines” (Fitzgerald 72). Not only does Gatsby pursue a dream, but he also lives in an illusion he created. The actual hollowness of his mask is exposed during his funeral at the end of the novel. The fact that there are actually only a few people for whom he was worth to attend at his funeral demonstrates not only the hypocrisy of the people he wanted to impress, but also the superficial nature of Gatsby’s public identity. For the people who were frequently visiting his parties Gatsby was no more than an illusion. No matter how splendid and fabulous image he made they never knew him personally. In a similar sense, his death means for them merely the death of an illusion about which no one really knew anything neither felt any real connection with. Therefore, the image of the Great Gatsby serves as a parallel to the illusionary nature of the American Dream he pursues.

Gatsby is not the only character in the story is driven forward by his or her imagination. A similar tendency is realized in the character of Nick Carraway, the narrator

of the story. Carraway does not merely mediate Gatsby's tragic story to the reader. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that the novel is about Carraway to the same extent as it is about Gatsby (Fraser 555). Yet Carraway's background is absolutely different. Contrary to Gatsby, Carraway is not a self-made man neither he pretends to be a one. His economic conditions are not the results of his own effort. They are rather granted on the grounds of him being a descendant of a prominent mid-West family who have been, according to his own words, "a well- to-do people" (Fitzgerald 8) for generations. Despite the difference, Carraway is also, at least in the beginning, a man seduced or driven by an illusion. His reasons, though, compared to Gatsby's idealistic love for Daisy, are rather materialistic. "I decided to go East and learn the bond business" (Fitzgerald 9), he states in the opening passages of the novel. "Everybody I knew was in the bond business, so I supposed it could support one more single man" (Ibid). Carraway leaves the West in order to pursue the vision of a successful career. This is the American Dream in its generic and vague form typically characteristic for the American middle classes. It defines the pursuit of happiness by means of material property or objectively measurable achievements, and therefore is opposing to Gatsby's Dream. Compared to Gatsby's efforts to adjust himself to the stereotypical image of a wealthy gentleman, Carraway represents this stereotype on his own (Fraser 556), and so while Gatsby pretends to belong among the rich society Carraway is merely situated into his natural environment. There is one factor, though, that connects these two characters together and which is important within the frame of the novel. At certain point of *The Great Gatsby* the illusions they were keen on to follow are shattered and both Carraway and Gatsby experience a sudden realization of reality. The essential difference between them dwells in the way how they cope with it. Carraway's loss of illusions results in his developing of a moral consciousness when fully realizing the rotten nature of the previously adored higher society. This sudden realization is visible in his rejection of Jordan Baker representing the hypocritical rich he condemns for moral wickedness (Northman 50). In contrast to Carraway, Gatsby becomes a victim of his Dream. Having lived up to the Dream for so long and so devoted, he is unable to recognize that he is in fact pursuing an elusive yet dangerous illusion.

3.1.3 Gatsby's Struggle between the Dream and the Reality

As discussed in the previous chapter, the power of human imagination is playing a very important role in *The Great Gatsby* as the characters seem to be following stereotypes and culturally acknowledged symbols rather than the actual reality. The world of *The Great Gatsby* represents a hypocritical atmosphere of the established American rich. Those are the people who inherited their money being the descendants of old and successful American families. In this respect they are more similar to the old European nobility than to a self-made man as the American symbol of honest success. In this social environment people tend to admire objects and even one another for what they symbolize more than for what they really are. It is a social climate where conventions are used in order to conceal the moral corruption hidden beneath. In such a world manipulative power of human mind is definitely playing an essential role. In the framework of Fitzgerald's novel this power is most visible in the central theme that involves Gatsby's tragic love for Daisy.

Although Gatsby makes an American Dream in its materialistic form a reality of his life the ultimate goal of his pursuit of happiness is still evading him. In the case of his Dream, riches and wealth along with the social status are merely the means by which he hopes he would be able to finally fulfil the idealistic dream created by his imagination. His Dream is a dream of regaining the love of a woman he wed his idealistic mind to. In the pursuit of her Gatsby is driven forward by a romanticised image of Daisy based on their one month relationship that happened in the past. Gatsby carries an internal conflict within himself. It is a conflict between the actual reality and the reality he would like it to be, the reality created by his imagination. It is a matter of fact that this urge of changing the objective reality and matching it to the idealistic image in one's mind is present in every individual realization of the American Dream. As if this dominance of the human mind over the materialistic reality was embedded within the very protestant notion that the nature on its own is sinful and has to be changed and recreated in order to comply the purity of the Puritan mind (Callahan, "The Illusions of a Nation" 21). In this sense, Daisy can be regarded as a mythical symbol in which the bodily meets the ideal created

by Gatsby's mind. To Gatsby she symbolizes the same prospect of hope and a new beginning as America as a new continent did symbolize to the first Puritan settlers. There is one difference, though, which makes Gatsby's Dream somewhat special. In his Dream Gatsby desperately clings to the past. What he means when he tells Carraway: "[i]'m going to fix everything just the way it was before" (Fitzgerald 117), is that he actually hopes to repeat and restore his former relationship with Daisy to the point before she married another man. From a rational point of view in a sense that history can never be repeated, Gatsby's Dream is exposed as a potentially self-consuming obsession assigning him a role of a would-be romantic hero in a struggle against the destiny. Viewed from this perspective, Gatsby's idyllic Dream appears rather as a nightmare or an obsession obstructing the freedom of an individual in his further personal growth.

Gatsby's opinion that he can actually regain Daisy's love simply by accumulating enough money is at least to some extent a product of their relationship being marked by social and economic inequality since the very start of their romance. As Carraway points out, "[s]he was the first nice girl he had ever known" (Fitzgerald 154). He refers to the fact that although Gatsby had previous experience with women he had never met one of Daisy's social background. Daisy's family represents a social environment of well established wealthy people whereas Gatsby at that time was in Carraway's words "a penniless young man without a past" (Ibid). Thus, it is this inequality that forms a barrier to their relationship which in the beginning seems almost impenetrable. The atmosphere of wealth surrounding Daisy creates in Gatsby's mind the romanticised image of beauty and leisure and of those "radiant activities taking place through the corridors of her house" (Fitzgerald 154), and it seems as if the very image of Daisy was reflected in the glamorous luxury surrounding her. This gap between them in terms of class and property leads Gatsby to a correct assumption that his presence in Daisy's life is merely an accident. This presence was allowed to him solely because he was wearing the Army uniform concealing his true origin and social class. Gatsby knows that this fragile disguise would not last for long and therefore he decides to seduce Daisy under the false pretences knowing that in reality he does not stand any chance to gain her publicly. Gatsby starts to court Daisy and at the same time he is lying about his background as

Carraway reveals in “he had deliberately given Daisy a sense of security, he let her believe that he was a person from much the same strata as herself, that he was fully able to take care of her” (Fitzgerald 155). Surprisingly and despite his very intentions, Gatsby becomes a victim of his own pretending too. He does not only fall in love with Daisy but her apparent unavailability due to the class differences turns his love into an obsession or, as Carraway states, to “following of a grail” (Ibid). Daisy becomes a kind of a sacred icon while her romanticised image is from a large part only a product of Gatsby’s mind.

It is because of Gatsby’ knowledge of Daisy’s happiness being closely linked to her well being and material comfort (Callahan, “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Evolving American Dream” 380) that his love can never be separated from the image of her living in a rich and artificial world, of her “gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor” (Fitzgerald 156). The thing Gatsby seems to forget, though, is that Daisy started to love him not for what he tries so hard to make out of himself but exactly for things he is trying to hide (Callahan, “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Evolving American Dream” 381). In the end, the barrier of the class is much too strong and Daisy is inevitably made to choose between the things that would determine the future course of her life. She chooses to conform to the social conventions of her family and decides, though not without doubts, to give up the prospect of the sincere relationship with Gatsby to the promise of economic security represented by the union with Tom Buchanan (Callahan, “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Evolving American Dream” 382). This is the moment when she abandons or betrays the ideal in order to comply with the standards of the pragmatic middle classes.

From this very moment Daisy starts turning into a beautiful illusion, a highest prize Gatsby devotes all his life to recalling a medieval knight fighting for the favour of a lady. Yet, in modern America everything of value has its price and this price is most often measured in money or some other material commodity. Therefore, the only means by which Gatsby can actually pursue his Dream are those allowed to him by the conventions of the materialistic society. He accepts those rules and realizes, while gaining a lesson from Daisy’s actions, that in order to win her love he first has to obtain enough property as to grant him a higher social status (Callahan, “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Evolving American

Dream” 382). To succeed in a fully developed market economy is not easy, and because Gatsby needs his wealth fast enough he starts to engage himself in quick and illegal ways turning his idealistic dream into a nightmare. It is this nightmare that inevitably represents his end at the end of the novel, as Gatsby realizes that all his criminal deals in alcohol and forged bonds were done for nothing more than for an illusion that for him was lost long before he even started his pursuit (Callahan, “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Evolving American Dream” 383).

3.1.4 Jay Gatsby as an American Dream Idealist

Gatsby is by no means a typical American self-made-man although he possesses certain qualities that could easily assign him into the role of one. One of these personality traits is the desire for self-improvement clearly visible in his possession of a book *Hopalong Cassidy* which is a literary allusion to Benjamin Franklin’s *Poor Richard’s Almanac*, a manual for every aspiring self-made man. Another such feature is the vision of a good life, an image of what he would create of himself. As his father mentions in the closing chapters of *The Great Gatsby*, “Jimmy was bound to get ahead. He always had some resolves like this or something” (Fitzgerald 180). In this sense Gatsby seems as a kind of a person making his imagined life real and as this passage of the novel reveals the urge to improve his conditions had been present in Gatsby’s mind even before he met Daisy. Yet, this abstract vision, this ability to project himself into someone better was fully realized only in him falling in love with her. His Dream was fulfilled in her person and when the romance ended Gatsby was destined to follow her despite all circumstances. In a simple and naive way typical for all dreamers, Gatsby set out to accumulate wealth and imitate the ways of rich people like the Buchanans without any awareness of the corruption possibly lying under the surface (Mizener 4).

Yet, Gatsby is different than the East Egg society he is trying to merge with. He is an idealist, a discoverer of the American Dream for himself whereas the society the Buchanans are part of represents the materialistic face of America in all its harsh cruelty. They are the established rich, exploiters plundering the resources while disregarding the

damage involved in their profit. In this sense Jay Gatsby and Tom Buchanan represent the two contradictory sides of the American identity with Carraway standing somewhere in the middle. The polarity between Gatsby and Buchanan is most overtly exposed in their relation to Daisy. For Tom Daisy represents merely a prized property. His relation to Daisy is based on ownership and all the wealth and luxury he provides her with tends to further support the possessive grasp he imposes upon her. This is the only kind of relationship Tom Buchanan understands (Mizener 3). Gatsby originally started to date Daisy also in order to exploit her and take from her “what he could get ravenously and unscrupulously”, but the deep impact of emotions changed him (Callahan “The Illusions of a Nation” 20). Their one month relationship was long enough for Gatsby to discover the American Dream in his newly found passionate tenderness towards her (Callahan “The Illusions of a Nation” 19).

Gatsby’s affection for Daisy is not only an emotional outburst. The real scope of this emotional relation is foreshadowed by Carraway saying that when Gatsby kissed Daisy he forever wed his “unutterable visions to her perishable breath” (Fitzgerald 118). By this allegorical statement the narrator means that the inner potential of Gatsby’s vision, a product of his powerful imagination and desire, became connected with her body and personality. What is clearly visible from the expressions of unutterable visions and a perishable breath is the strong polarity between the ideal world of human imagination and the bodily world of the actual reality (Callahan “The Illusions of a Nation” 19). Mesmerized by the idealized image he assigned to her, Gatsby requires Daisy to devote to his Dream in the same way as he did. Daisy, though, is merely a human and with all the faults and imperfections this fact associates with she can never be able to fulfil his requirements. Therefore, the real scope of the tragedy of their relationship dwells in Gatsby’s inability to unite Daisy’s perfect erotic image with the practical reality of a material and temporal world (Callahan “The Illusions of a Nation” 23). He admires and follows a Dream, a celebrated image of her spawned by the moment they kissed each other. In this sense Daisy was incarnated into his vision. Yet, Daisy is already far away as she accepted the economic security of the material world. She is authentic in her materialism in the same way as Gatsby is in his idealistic pursuit. It is this pursuit and a

struggle against the impossible odds that stands for an expression of a typically American will to wring a new life from destiny (Berman 57). Although Gatsby's Dream derives its power from the past in its nature it is progressive as it clings towards a promise of starting a new life with Daisy once again. On the one hand, it may seem perplexing that Gatsby endeavours to regain his love by accumulating money and reaching material success. Yet, on the other one, as his splendid house and lifestyle full of consumption clearly show Gatsby is not an idealist in a pure sense. He can be rather regarded as a living embodiment of the American Dream connecting within his personality both its materialistic and idealistic features. It is a matter of fact that in the life of the American society based on the pragmatic principles of Protestantism materialism and idealism not only do not necessarily have to cancel each other (Ibid) but materialistic devices can be in fact used in order to express one's idealistic visions (Berman 58). This is exactly what Gatsby is doing. Although he is by no means a pure idealistic soul as his notion of a good American life dwells merely in economic prosperity, the real purpose, the dream of his life is an idealistic love without which all the wealth of the world is simply worthless (Ibid). Therefore, materialistic tendencies present in his lifestyle standing for a perfect example of consumerism are merely the means by which he hopes to express his ideal and regain the Dream he once lost.

Whereas Jay Gatsby's pursuit of wealth and success remains subordinated to his idealistic aims, the characters of Daisy and Tom Buchanan represent an embodiment of the harsh American pragmatism and an opportunistic character of the materialistic society. The clash between idealism and pragmatism is not the only one within the framework of *The Great Gatsby*. As Fitzgerald's novel shows, there possibly exists a difference between these two world views which is related to the concept of morality. Within the moral issues presented in the novel idealism is associated with the morality in a traditional sense while the immoral character of the modern era is directly associated with materialism. Therefore, it is fully recognizable that whereas Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway both stand on the side of traditional morality and fair play, Daisy and Tom Buchanans represent the moral wickedness of the upcoming era of American materialism.

It is not merely a conflict in terms of morality but also a conflict between the two American myths, the myth of the modern and morally rotten East and the old and conservative West. This contrast between the two sides of the American life is expressed by the West Egg and East Egg dichotomy. East Egg represents the progressive yet at the same time decadent and immoral character of the upcoming modern era, while West Egg stands for the old America stuck in its traditions and protestant morality. This conflict is also expressed in the personalities of the characters as they can be considered as standing not only for the sum of their experiences but also for America itself “as it moves into the Jazz Age” (Berman 54). To be more specific, the traditions of the old America and its values are expressed in Gatsby’s and Carraway’s moral consistency while the lack of moral values and hypocrisy are embedded within the characters of Daisy and Tom Buchanans. It is because although Carraway and Gatsby both have an ambition to adopt the East Egg way of life in the issues of morality they are having the mid-west origin, which in the context of Fitzgerald’s novel represent the consistency of the traditional values (Mizener 3).

On the contrary to Buchanan, Gatsby is loyal to his friends and absolutely devoted to the woman he loves. These personality traits along with a sense of honour and a peculiar inability to get over his emotional loss set him as a kind of a modern romantic hero. Although he enjoys the life spent in luxury and consumption he is more than ready to throw it away when he loses Daisy as the incarnation of his Dream. Therefore, beneath the surface of a criminal mastermind is found a man of a pure heart and a noble character (Mizener 7). The traditional morality is something which is seemingly in a conflict with a social reality of *The Great Gatsby* representing the “world of broken and false relationships, a world of money and success” (Berman 54) rather than that of mutual responsibility and social awareness. This is the social atmosphere of the Roaring Twenties that witnessed the increase in people’s individual freedoms at the cost of a slow diminishment of the traditional values such as morality and honour. The contrast between these two worlds is visible in the tragic relationship between Gatsby and Daisy. As mentioned earlier, Gatsby represents an example of an idealist being devoted to his Dream with all his life. Daisy, though, belongs to a modern and a materialistic world. Hers

is the society lacking in moral responsibility and ethics (Bigsby 135). Daisy describes such world in one of her first dialogues with Carraway as “everything is terrible now. I’ve been everywhere and seen everything and done everything” (Fitzgerald 24). It is the power of wealth derived from the world of money and corruption that provides her with an unusual variety of opportunities and possibilities in a sense that she can act however she likes despite all the principles of morality and good manners (Bigsby 54). This materialistic world stripped of all the values except money is not the one where an idealistic Dream may ever come true. Daisy represents a character liberated from the traditional conception of values. The difference between them is most overtly expressed when Gatsby loyally decides to cover up the fact that it was actually Daisy driving the car that killed Myrtle Wilson. On the contrary, Daisy and her husband do absolutely nothing to reveal the truth and help Gatsby to get rid of his false accusation. They both symbolize the immoral character of a new rising era of American materialism.

In his critical review on *The Great Gatsby*, Arthur Mizener, a respected 20th century American literary critic, states that Fitzgerald was convinced that the most important moral choice a man could ever face is in fully developed form present only among the very rich people (Mizener 1). What Mizener aims at is that although Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby* does not detest wealth in general he criticizes the lack of imagination and virtue in life of those exceedingly rich without the developed moral consciousness. And so while Gatsby’s life has a deeper purpose in a sense of an idealistic principle determining his achievements, in the material world the lives of Buchanans are empty as they are taking place only on the surface of the materialistic existence. For Gatsby wealth is a luxury he likes to enjoy by holding amazing parties yet, in itself, merely as power of possession, it means nothing to him (Mizener 7). Wealth is a powerful tool by which he is able to realize his life in accordance with the image he conceived. It is an image totally autonomous on the external reality and is fed from within the depths of his imagination (Weinstein 26). Daisy’s values and aims in life are different as she seems to admire the marvellous things in Gatsby’s possession rather than Gatsby himself. In the chapter where Gatsby invites Daisy to his mansion in order to impress her she seems to be emotionally moved by the beauty of the expensive imported shirts that Gatsby throws at her. “They

are such beautiful shirts”, she sobs. “It makes me sad because I’ve never seen such-such beautiful shirts before” (Fitzgerald 99). This is a perfect example of her materialistic nature and a superficial character of her emotions, because in saying so Daisy demonstrates her inability to distinguish between the real values in life and the material products. Thus it is obvious that Daisy has changed. She is no longer a woman that Gatsby “humanized” (Callahan “The Illusions of a Nation” 20) by the depth of his emotions during their one month relationship. Her temporal affection that Gatsby succeeds to awaken in her during their short meeting in Carraway’s house is merely an echo of the deep emotions she felt for him in the past. Gatsby lived a life of a vision. The vision that turned the woman he loved into a treasure a sacred object immortal and incorruptible in its very nature (Callahan “The Illusions of a Nation” 20). Gatsby’s great mistake dwells in that he forgets that despite his vision Daisy is more than anything a human being and in this way she is as perishable and vulnerable to moral failures and human weaknesses as anyone. In his pursuit of Daisy, Gatsby remains authentic until the bitter end and this is what assigns him into a role of a great American individualist, a man both breathing and dying for his Dream, a man in which both the materialistic and idealistic aspects of the American Dream connect together under the one common name, the Great Gatsby.

3.1.5 The Death of the American Dream in *The Great Gatsby*

Despite all his efforts and material achievements Gatsby’s idealistic pursuit of happiness remains unfulfilled. Not only his internal conflict between the Dream and the reality remains unresolved but it also becomes a very cause of his tragic end. Therefore, Gatsby’s unhappy fate gives a rise to the question whether it is even possible to fulfil one’s dreams when facing the constraints of the materialistic society. This question, however, remains unanswered. Gatsby is not only a victim of the moral wickedness of others, but he is also betrayed by the vision he is pursuing. The whole construct of the Great Gatsby was a product of the vision he was devoted too. When the vision shatters while facing the reality his life along with all the material property he surrounded himself too loses its purpose. Without the governing idea Gatsby’s life turns into material without being real

(Mizener) and thus unworthy of fighting for. Gatsby's defeat can be regarded as symbolizing the impossibility of pursuing romantic dreams in the unromantic world of the materialistic society (Bigsby 137). Yet, this defeat is not only caused by the prevailing materialistic tendencies within the society but also by Gatsby's false assumption that an idealistic aim can be pursued by means of money and property. In this sense Gatsby resembles a man trying to regain a love of a woman by demonstratively showing his material success. When he accepts the rules and the social conventions of the established rich society assuming that the innocence of his Dream can withstand the corruptive influence of wealth Gatsby unknowingly betrays his ideal. Therefore Gatsby's greatest failure dwells in his inability to recognize that an idealistic value is not able to withstand the pragmatic logic of the market place (Bigsby 137).

His worldly materialistic ambitions were once set aside when he discovered his tenderness towards Daisy. Yet, in order to regain her he summons the cruel and materialistic face of the American Dream once again. Therefore the emotions start to be argued on the grounds of property which is intrinsically implying the notion of ownership (Callahan, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Evolving American Dream" 382). In this respect Gatsby betrays love in its idealistic sense. In doing so Gatsby approaches closer to Buchanan's point of view. It is because for Buchanan Daisy represents a valuable trophy while for Gatsby she is an ideal. Yet, similarly for both of them, she symbolizes a kind of a possession they intend to own. This similarity is clearly exposed as they are fighting over her during a scene taking place at Plaza hotel (Ibid). This time Gatsby wants a visible proof from Daisy, a sign that the Dream he follows is somehow based on an actual reality. This is revealed when Gatsby says "Just tell him the truth-that you never loved him-and it's all wiped out forever" (Fitzgerald 138). In the short verbal conflict between the two rivals Daisy is transformed into a prized trophy they fight over on the ground of social and economic conventions (Callahan, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Evolving American Dream" 382). The struggle between Gatsby and Buchanan is fought by means of self-presentation and because in this scene Gatsby intends to defeat Buchanan on his own grounds, he possesses no power here and immediately loses. By accepting the rules of engagement that are typical for Buchanan Gatsby fails in his effort to show Daisy the authenticity of his emotions in the

same way as he did five years before. Once again Daisy chooses the material protection and economic certainty before the emotions (Ibid). In the end, Gatsby is both betrayed by his Dream as well as he is a traitor to it himself. Stuck within his romantic visions he is unable to comprehend Daisy's real world attachment to Tom Buchanan embodied in her daughter. As the scene at Plaza Hotel clearly reveals Daisy suffers the same mistreatment from Gatsby as she does from Buchanan. Both men do not allow her to exist as an equal and independent human being. For Gatsby she exists only as a romantic vision from his past. This vision does not tolerate the fact that she may have an ambition to exist as a woman on her own with all the personality imperfections and human failures (Callahan, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Evolving American Dream" 382). This is a result of Gatsby's naive acceptance of the conventions of the corrupted materialistic society in which a woman represents a property or a trophy. This acceptance, though, is not something which could be avoided. More rather it is a logical toll of Gatsby's material success and false opinion that an ideal can be preserved by power of wealth and money.

The essential theme of *The Great Gatsby* is the withering of the American Dream in an industrial society (Decker 55). Yet, it is not only the story of the American Dream facing the actual constraints of the society of the established American elites. It is also a story of a failure or a death of the American Dream in its traditional sense that comes along with the revelation of its incompatibility with the pragmatic character of the real world. Under the corruptive influence of wealth and hypocrisy the American Dream turns into a nightmare that inevitably results into a destruction of a human individual. Gatsby's Dream is a product coming from the past as a result of a creative imagination of a typically American mind believing to be capable of determining one's destiny (Ibid). In this respect Gatsby's determined will and choices he makes set him into a role of the existentialist Sartrean character acting freely in accordance with his own will and inner moral responsibility. In his pursuit of a Dream Gatsby is authentic and despite the illegal nature of his actions his intrinsic motives are pure. As Fitzgerald clearly elaborates in *The Great Gatsby*, wealth can be used as a powerful instrument by an individual to realize his life fully in accordance with his personal wishes. In other words, it is money that in most cases makes possible for people to live the life their imagination conceives (Mizener 1).

Jay Gatsby is a perfect example of this self-creative imagination as well as he is its result. On the contrary, Daisy and Tom Buchanans both represent Fitzgerald's critique for a life lacking a vision as well as moral virtue and consistency (Mizener 7). They stand for the world of progress and modernity which will gradually reduce the impact of morality and tradition upon people's lives. Gatsby clearly represents a visionary or an American hero. He is a product of a different century as the new modern period of American history requires new heroes: the immoral and barbaric, accumulating money for the sake of wealth itself. The concept of the American Dream exposed in *The Great Gatsby* is being overwhelmed and altered by the corruptive influence of solely materialistic people. As Fitzgerald clearly demonstrates on the examples of the Buchanans, the ideal based on materialism alone is actually rather a corruption than a fulfilment of the American Dream (Northman 51). Therefore, the failure of Jay Gatsby's idealistic vision can be regarded as not only symbolizing the death of the American Dream in its traditional form, but also its death in the general sense, because stripped of all of its essential values the idea is not to be regarded as the American Dream anymore.

3.2 The Concept of the American Dream in *An American Dream*

3.2.1 The Aspects of the American Dream in Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*

An American Dream, Norman Mailer's 1965 fourth novel, depicts a story of Stephen Rojack who at the beginning of the novel seems to represent the very embodiment of Horatio Alger's American success story (Scott 63). As Rojack situated into the role of a narrator introduces himself in the opening chapter of the book he is a decorated war hero, a former politician and also a renowned university professor who succeeded to transform his academic knowledge into a commercially successful television show. Rojack is also married to a beautiful woman from a wealthy and unimaginably influential family that sets him into a position of a prominent socialite. All these features together create an image of a man standing on his own for every kind of personal success generally regarded as worthy in America. Therefore, it can be claimed that Rojack's public image as presented at the beginning of Mailer's book is a kind of incredibly successful Horatio Alger

altered to the new social and economic environment. Rojack's worldly achievements and success are results of his efforts and luck as well as an opportunistic marriage granting him enough social prestige to run for the presidential office. In other words, Stephen Rojack is an American opportunist who accepted the social conventions and succeeded to exploit them to their very limits. Mailer's novel, though, is not about the adoration of Rojack's success. It is rather a careful evaluation of its concept exposing the 20th century version of the American Dream as a threatening and enslaving force. *An American Dream* is a literary reflection discussing the "individual roots of American aspiration and ideals" (Kaufman 195). It is because for Mailer the collective ideal represents a "civilized composite of everyone's primitive desires" (Ibid). Yet, these individual fantasies become a nightmare when interpreted by the cultural norm "[t]he American Dream becomes another cultural mode of regimenting the individual, of rarefying and stultifying his true nature" (Ibid). Mailer's novel invites the readers into such an individual nightmare in which the reality of the modern America blends together with the hallucinatory, dream like realm of Stephen Rojack (Ibid).

The central idea of *An American Dream* expresses the notion that the material prosperity and social success that are both representing the ideal of the American Dream in its collectively acknowledged form has brought Rojack literally nothing (Ibid). Rather than personal satisfaction or a sense of fulfilment in life they brought him "to the end of a very long street" (Scott 63). Surprisingly, despite all his social achievements, Rojack realizes that he found neither personal happiness nor self-realization in making this kind of the American Dream into the reality. In fact, he was rather imprisoned by this idea while submitting his individuality to its fulfilment. In *An American Dream* the materialistic concept of the Dream is discussed in its relation to power and money. Mailer uses the fall of the main protagonist in order to expose the American Dream as a kind of corruptive and malevolent force representing the decay of the American society. Not only does this socially constructed idea represent the manipulative power impeding the individual's self-realization but it also stands for America itself. It symbolizes the "plague" (Scott 62), a corruption that entered the "bloodstream of American life" (Ibid), a kind of the American Dream that betrayed its idealistic origins.

The story of Stephen Rojack can be regarded as an allegorical revolt against the oppression of this idea dominating within the modern American society. In a relatively short time span consisting of thirty two hours Rojack throws away his former life and sets off for his “psychical rebirth” (Bufithis 65). By murdering his wife, throwing away his past career and family Rojack rejects typically American values and descends into the underworld of his own primitive desires. His liberation is insane in the same way as the society that spawned it, because from the very beginning it is marked by crime and violence. America in the scope of Mailer’s novel becomes a battlefield between the creative and destructive elements of human existence. It is a conflict expressed by means of opposing polarities between life and death, subconscious and rationality, society and instincts, violence and love (Bufithis 67). This conflict also symbolically represents a struggle between the original form of the American Dream in its pure sense and its altered version it became due to the increasing industrialization and materialistic tendencies within the society. In the context of *An American Dream* this struggle is viewed even from a moral perspective reflecting the fragile tension between the good and evil engaged in an enduring battle for the soul of America. Stephen Rojack is by no means a character whose position is clearly defined in terms of these abstract principles. In fact, he is standing somewhere in the middle. He is “operating between life and death” (Bufithis 66). Rojack’s mind is a battlefield on which the forces of creation and destruction freely execute their powers as Rojack occasionally acts for the benefit of one or another. Despite that, Rojack is not to be mistaken for a character pushed forward by the external events and uncontrollable passions of his subconscious mind. He is actually quite the opposite, a kind of a person who is apparent to be fully capable of determining his destiny. This ability of creating himself by means of his actions (Kaufman 195), establishes Rojack as a sort of an existentialist character who is, at the same time, an ideological heretic towards the American society. It is because in his rebellion Rojack steps aside from the “collectivists drift of the American way of life” and “assumes the burden of his own humanity” (Scott 65). This burden, though, is conflicting and violating the social conventions and law of the American society. In an existentialist sense the thing Rojack is after is the authenticity of being (Scott 64), the authenticity which is of the same intensity

in good as it is in evil. Recalling in his strong individualism and self-destructive zeal another great individualist of the American literature Melville's Ahab, Rojacks is a modern American "Prometheus" (Adams 87). He is potentially able to renew the idealistic version of the American Dream for himself and create his identity anew in a full accordance with his irrational being. This ability to reject his past and define himself once again by means of his actions in order to create a new kind of existence makes Rojack a new kind of an American self-made man, an American existentialist.

3.2.2 Stephen Rojack as an American Existentialist

During the story of *An American Dream* Stephen Rojack undergoes a process during which his identity is continuously "destroyed and reborn in response to his extreme experiences" (Laist 325). The essential feature that makes Rojack unique in comparison to other characters involved in Mailer's novel is his specific awareness of the mysterious nature of human existence. In some of its aspects, Rojack's specific mindset can be recognized as following the teachings of such philosophers as Søren Kierkegaard and Jean Paul Sartre. In a Sartrean sense, an individual is inevitably condemned to freedom and responsibility for his actions while according to Kierkegaard the element underlying each one's existence is the existential anxiety and fear. To put it briefly, Stephen Rojack's personality contains, at least to some extent, a synthesis of both these conceptions altered to the modern American environment. The key experience that changed Rojack's personality in an existentialist sense is his wartime experience in which he in his own words "looked down the abyss" (Mailer 2). The night on which Rojack kills the four German soldiers does not only make him a decorated war hero, but also implants a seed of existential uncertainty into his mind. The impact of this violent experience separates Rojack from "the conventional heroes of his culture" (Radford 34). It is exactly this awareness of the existential void that creates an impenetrable barrier between Rojack and the "daylight world of war heroes, professors, congressmen and television celebrities" (Laist 329). Therefore, although Rojack introduces himself in the first sentence of the novel as a fellow companion and a friend of the successful presidential

candidate John Fitzgerald Kennedy the radical scope of the difference between them is expressed in Rojack's description in:

I looked down the abyss on the first night I killed: four men, four very separate Germans, dead under a full moon- whereas Jack, for all I know, never saw the abyss (Mailer 2).

It is this existential experience that makes Rojack a rebel to the American way of thinking. This constant awareness of an endless void lurking in the shadow of human existence shatters the self-evident nature of the pragmatic American way of living based on materialism alone. Therefore, whereas Jack Kennedy represents the perfect "public image" of the American success (Laist 329), Rojack is a character who, in his own words, "lost in a private kaleidoscope of death" (Mailer 7). When Rojack says "I could have had a career in politics if only I had been able to think that death was zero, death was everyone's emptiness" (Ibid), he reflects on the fact that this experience shattered his chances of pursuing a political career. The emptiness he once saw in the dead German's eyes leads Rojack to a realization that death is a "creation more dangerous than life" (Ibid). This irrational notion totally opposing the general rationality prevalent within the American way of thinking makes Rojack believe that his personality is built on a "void" (Ibid). Thus, he recognizes his identity as marked by a possibility of death lying ominously at the bottom of one's very existence. At the same time, this existential dread becomes the primary motive of Rojack's worldly achievements (Bufithis 74), and also the main subject of his academic research.

Despite being existentialist, Rojack is not an atheistic existentialist in a Sartrean sense. In fact, he is a reflection of Mailer's opinion that to be a real existentialist one must be religious or have a sense of "purpose" in life (Laist 327). The notion controlling Rojack's mind is an idea that the universe in fact represents a battlefield between the two irreconcilable antagonists, between the creative and destructive forces, between the good and evil represented by the god and the devil. This conflict is what dwells "at the dramatic heart of the novel" (Bufithis 66) requiring the attention of the main protagonist. Because of his crime Rojack is forced to defend his newly gained spiritual freedom against

the extremely hostile environment. Yet, his anxiety is not merely an anxiety of a criminal on the run. There is also a sense of an existentialist anxiety and limitless responsibility resembling almost a religious belief. It is because Rojack is convinced as a true existentialist that every action he takes determines not only the future course of his life but also the course of the humanity and the universe in general (Laist 327). Therefore, it is only logical that a sense of anxiety is embedded within nearly every decision Rojack makes (Laist 328). Therefore, as Jean Radford states:

every incident of the narrative, the killing of the Germans, the murder of Deborah, the sexual encounters with Ruta and Cherry, the fights with Shaggo and Kelly, is a stage in Rojack's battle with Good and Evil, courage and cowardice, creative and decreative impulses (Radford 101).

Rojack is somewhere in the middle of this conflict between the great polarities. Yet, he is not alone in his struggle as there is another entity overseeing his actions. It is represented by the moon which is not only the personified voice of Rojack's mind but also an almost supernatural entity transcending the "antimonies" (Bufithis 67) conflicting in the novel. The moon represents the "truth of being" (Ibid) sending her messages to Rojack whenever he is up to make some important decision (Adams 76). Regarding the polarity between the destructive and the creative forces, the moon remains neutral. In fact, Rojack's words "I looked into my Being" (Mailer 12), by which he refers to this entity during a short incident on his friend's balcony, clearly imply that the moon is a projection of his own subconscious self. From the connection with the moon Rojack draws his power as it is her voice that encourages him in his rebellion against the American values and social conformity. This relationship, however, is potentially harmful or even self-destructive. The fragile tension of Rojack's existence balancing between life and death (Bufithis 66) is clearly apparent during the balcony scene when he almost subordinates himself to the moon's will persuading him to commit suicide. That is because for Rojack the irrationality of death is tempting as in death he would finally unite with the moon and thus become one with the transcendent character of his subconscious self.

Despite his academic background Rojack is balancing on the verge of insanity. This is a result of his acceptance of the existential burden he refers to as “that shimmer of past death and new madness” (Mailer 12). The way Rojack communicates with his subconscious represented by the moon resembles a way of an archaic primitive. To Rojack the world of his subconscious fantasies is as real as the objective reality. In his perception the world of magic and supernatural is not only evident but is also in power to affect the events taking place in the material world. This superstitious belief establishes Rojack as an intellectual who is “attuned to his non-rational being” (Bufithis 69). Although having the academic background would imply a strong sense of one’s rationality Rojack is in his development going back to his primal nature. He is invoking the power of subconscious that represents an “energy” and an “intelligence, existing outside time and civilization”(Ibid). In the main protagonist of *An American Dream* Mailer reveals the powers of a human mind, those powers that are capable of both enriching an individual in his personal growth as well as potentially harm his or her existence. Rojack’s inclination towards the mystical sphere of human existence so ostentatiously ignored by the materialistic ideology dominating the American society sets Rojack into a role of an individual opposing the ideological tendencies dominating the modern American society. The final liberation of these tendencies embedded within the corruptive influence of money and power, is what Stephen Rojack seeks at the end of his thirty-two hours long journey.

3.2.3 Stephen Rojack as an American Dream Dissenter

Stephen Rojack is more than merely a rebel against the American Dream. He is also a heretic or a desecrator of this idea because he already exploited all the opportunities America could possibly have to offer. As Rojack “exhausted all the possibilities of growth provided by his culture” (Radford 33), he in fact reached the very bottom of a collective notion of the American Dream and realized that there is absolutely nothing that could possibly satisfy his existential needs. For Rojack, though, this heresy is not enough as he continues his struggle by means of violating almost every institution or symbol considered

valuable in the American society. He not merely rejects material success represented by his professional career as unworthy but also successfully manages to evade the law by means of his unclear links to the higher levels of the American social structure. Such a success in avoiding legal punishment is a terrible damage to the American sense of justice, because Rojack defeats the system by means of the established corruption thus exposing the power of wealth and influence within the American society. In this sense, he reveals the democratic ideal of mutual equality as merely a myth that is unable to withstand the corruption taking over the American system. Moreover, Rojack's American Dream represented in his upward social mobility is in fact playing an important role in this corruption. The most significant violation Rojack commits is murdering of his wife, Deborah Caughlin Mangaravidi Kelly. This crime represents a rejection of every single aspect of the Judeo-Christian morality on which the very foundations of the western civilization are based. On the other hand, it serves as a starting point for the journey that takes Rojack into the very heart of the American Dream, because on the symbolic level of the novel Deborah symbolizes the vision of the American Dream Rojack is against.

From the opening chapters of Mailer's novel it is apparent that Rojack's relationship with Deborah is complicated. Rojack describes his marriage as a "losing war" (Mailer 9) from which he is trying to evacuate his "expeditionary army" (Ibid). His negative attitudes towards Deborah are expressed at the moments he refers to her as to the "Great Bitch" or a "Lioness of the species" (Ibid). This relationship is ambivalent as despite all the negative emotions towards his wife Rojack clearly acknowledges that without Deborah's social prestige and connections he would never be able to successfully pursue a career in the public life. As Rojack states without Deborah he is just "another name for the bars and gossip columns of New York (Mailer 18). Her presence beside him provides him a necessary "leverage" that makes him "one of the more active figures of the city" (Ibid). Marriage with Deborah is actually a significant part of the concept of the American Dream he intends to reject. Only the marriage with a woman such as her coming from an enormously rich and influential family granted Rojack an access to the upper parts of the American social structure. She is an essential element of Rojack's previous success and he is well aware of that. To him Deborah appears exquisitely as "a

girl who would have been bored by a diamond big as Ritz" (Mailer 1), and, as he admits, in the first chapter of the novel, "the road to President might begin at the entrance to her Irish heart" (Mailer 2). There is one problem, though. Deborah is corrupted in the same way as the nature of the American Dream she represents in the accumulation of wealth and power. In her negativity and malevolence Deborah is a powerful adversary (Adams 77) while everything related to her represents a corruption spreading its influence throughout the American society. This corruption is symbolized by Deborah's hereditary riches and European Catholic upbringing, two symbols that are alien to the traditionally American environment. The worst thing concerning Deborah is a presumably incestuous child fathered on her by her own father Barney Oswald Kelly, who in *An American Dream* serves as the very personification of the devil himself. Marrying Deborah Rojack does not only marry her money and power but also all the wickedness of her family and the corruption associated with it. In this sense the murder of Deborah symbolically liberates him from her grasp and thus marks the beginning of a journey on which end will be the complete dissolution of Rojack's old self (Bufithis 71). In other words, a "newborn soul" is created by murdering another human being (Adams 78).

In his crime Rojack rejects the traditional conception of conventional morality (Laist 327). By taking someone else's life and symbolically giving it to another he situates himself into a role of a god (Kaufman 196) becoming "neither good nor evil" (Laist 327) (in a conventional sense). Since Rojack usurps this divine right for himself, he makes an invasion into a world of the supernatural. This action, however, takes its toll and Rojack's mind starts to be filled with anxiety and terror. His inner self becomes a field of battle between the raging forces of destruction and creation as well as sanity and madness. Yet, even Rojack alone is not able to decide clearly on which side of the conflict he actually stands at the given moment (Laist 328). A clear example of this moral uncertainty is present in his internal monologue immediately following the murder in which Rojack asks himself: "Am I now good?", Or Am I evil forever?" (Mailer 38). To put it simply, after the murder of his wife representing a symbolic liberation from her oppressive grasp, Rojack becomes a man who is sincerely convinced that by usurping the power of the supernatural forces he drew their attention to himself.

The mystical world of magical thinking and superstition integrates into Rojack's personality and leads him to seemingly absurd assumptions that some of his actions directly determine the course of events taking place somewhere entirely else. The superstitious nature of Rojack's way of thinking is most emphasized in the final scene of the novel involving his meeting with Deborah's father. During this meeting Rojack undertakes a psychological redemption by taking a dangerous walk around the parapet of the building. This action might seem absurd enough, viewed from a rationalist perspective. Yet, to Rojack one way trip around the parapet is not sufficient in order for him to be redeemed. "Now earn your release. Go around the parapet once again" (Mailer 259) says Rojack's inner voice and urges him to take the walk once again. This time, though, Rojack refuses the obsessive voice of the moon and takes hold on to sanity by returning back to the balcony. "Damn you. I've lain with madness long enough" (Mailer 260), he says to his inner voice on his desperate run from the top of Waldorf towers back to the relatively safety of the streets. Although at this moment Rojack clings back to the rational world, in the corner of his mind he still feels that this is not over. In this sense Rojack feels he had a final chance to get rid of Deborah and he wasted it. Therefore, he still has to pay the prize as the moon says "[t]he first trip was done for you, but the second was for Cherry" (Mailer 261).

Rojack's dark mindset balancing on the brink of insanity contributes to the overall atmosphere of the novel which is very distant to the realistic fiction of the American 1950s (Laist 325). Although the story in its references to existing people (John Fitzgerald Kennedy) and places (New York) seems to be based on the actual reality, the literary setting of Mailer's novel is much more mysterious. It recalls a version of modern and industrial America in which the occult and mysticism represent the dominant powers releasing their impact upon the life of an individual. For characters such as Rojack and Barney Oswald Kelly, the supernatural forces are real and they have to be taken in consideration whether one likes it or not. In this world the relationship between wealth and power remains closely tied to the concepts of good and evil (Kaufman 199). On the contrary to the Christian tradition, though, the essential position of these eternal antimonies is reversed. Whereas in Christian cosmology the seat of the Devil is always

associated with the notion of hell located deep under the earth surface, the absolute evil in Mailer's fictional universe resides close to heaven, at the top of the Waldorf Towers (Ibid). Another thing opposing the Christian perception of the God as an omnipotent entity is the fact that the forces of evil embedded in the figure of an American self-made man Barney Oswald Kelly possesses almost an unlimited power while the good represented by Cherry, detective Roberts and Deborah's daughter Deirdre seems to be relatively powerless (Kaufman 199).

In his relation to this conflict Rojack is relatively neutral. He can be regarded as a spiritual explorer whose soul represents a microcosm reflecting the conflict taking place in the external reality. To Rojack as an existentialist every single decision he makes possesses a "metaphysical dimension" (Laist 327). This dimension bears no significance to the worldly consequences of Rojack's decision at all but stands in one way or another for "a victory or defeat on a universal and hence invisible plane" (Ibid). Rather than a real world literary reflection Rojack's perception of America resembles a hallucinatory vision in which the reality and the dream interfere. In this vision the two opposing forces are struggling for a soul of America, the American Dream. In this sense Rojack's dramatic struggle can be regarded as reflecting a conflict between the two versions of the Dream, between its genuinely idealistic innocence and the developed experience within its current materialistic form. The experienced version of the American Dream is what is in Mailer's novel presented as the source of corruption that took over the genuinely innocent idea. In *An American Dream* this corruption is symbolized by Barney Oswald Kelly's riches and moral wickedness. In his critical study of Norman Mailer Jean Radford comments on this issue:

[t]he American Dream has turned into a nightmare of material success, but Rojack's dream of ecstasy and violence underlines the "sedation" of American life and therefore is authentic and potentially liberating for the American nation (Radford 33).

Radford presents the notion of the contemporary shape of the American Dream being a direct outcome of the American experience. This statement also describes Rojack

as an American hero who is possibly able to save the once idealistic vision of America. Rojack has to descend into the very depths of the American nightmare in order to find and retrieve the ideal and restore the innocence in the heart of the American Dream. This Innocence in *An American Dream* is represented by the characters of Cherry and Deirdre, Rojack's stepdaughter (Kaufman 197). The dichotomy between good and evil in Mailer's novel, though, is not to be confused with a simple black and white polarity. Rather, it is presented from the grey perspective of moral relativity (Kaufman 199). In fact, even the character of Deirdre who is a very embodiment of innocence is actually tainted as she was born from an incestuous relationship between Barney Oswald Kelly and his daughter. Despite that Deirdre remains strangely unaffected by the corruptive influence of Kelly's wealth (Kaufman 197). Compared to her mother Deirdre appears as an angel. She seems to have a kind of a "spiritual aura" surrounding her (Kaufman 197) as if "something disembodied in her voice", invoked the "precise breathless tone" (Mailer 212) of the nuns that educated her. To Rojack the meeting with Deirdre represents "an idyllic pause in his nightmare", "a glimpse of paradise" (Kaufman 197) he has to encounter in order to understand his forthcoming "descent to hell" (Ibid). This kind of naive innocence is expressed in her affection for Rojack, her stepfather (Kaufman 198). When meeting Deirdre Rojack is suddenly deeply moved by the sincerity of her grief and loneliness. Her presence is a powerful positive force that does not merely connect him to Cherry once again but also provokes an emotional reaction for the loss of the wife he murdered (Ibid). Deirdre represents a powerful emotional channel by which Rojack gets once again emotionally attached to Cherry:

A cloud of sorrow concentrated itself into a tear, one pure tear which passed on the mood from her narrow chest into mine. I was in love with Cherry again. "Bless you, pet", I said, and then to my surprise I began to cry. I cried for Deborah for a little while and Deirdre cried with me (Mailer 215).

In the allegorical world of *An American Dream*, Deirdre represents a force of vitality. She stands in the opposition to the forces of destruction and decay representing the American Dream in its nightmarish version. In her adolescence being stuck between the

childhood and maturity, Deirdre is standing somewhere between the worlds of experience and innocence (Kaufman 198). Her position “enables Rojack to sense all the nuances between the joyful innocence and the sorrowful experience” (Ibid). Yet, Deirdre’s innocence is inevitably destined to be spoiled by the experience of the nearing adulthood. In this sense she symbolizes America itself, the originally uninhabited and empty continent gradually plundered and exploited by the mankind into its current modern version. Rojack refuses this modern and experienced version of the American Dream by murdering his wife and decides to seek its idealistic form in Cherry. Cherry is Deborah’s exact opposite. She is an allegoric reflection of the last remaining American innocence that can be potentially saved by Rojack’s actions (Adams 84). Whereas Deborah and Barney Oswald Kelly are related to the American Dream in its decadent and rotten form, Cherry can be regarded as the very personification of the idealistic dreams and hopes of the first colonist and American pioneers. She represents these symbols in a sense of their possible survival (Ibid).

Similarly to Deirdre, Cherry is also marked by the incestuous experience. As Cherry says the sexual abuse of her older sister is the “one tiny flaw” (Mailer 168) of her family. This, however, is not the only stain Cherry has on her innocence. Her morality is also compromised by the opportunistic affair with a rich man she refers to as Daddy Warbucks, who in fact is no one else than the notorious Barney Lee Oswald. In one of their conversational exchanges Cherry confesses to Rojack that she even might be responsible for a murder of a person. In her own words, she was “the one who pulled the string” (Mailer 173) due to which “two men in Vegas are probably dead” (Ibid). These pieces of information presented in the novel clearly denote that Cherry’s innocence is already lost or tainted by the corruptive influence of the environment she lives in. On a symbolic level, though, Cherry still remains a powerful symbol in its significance comparable with that of Rojack’s murdered wife. If Deborah fills Rojack with dread and terror the feelings and imageries associated with Cherry are definitely of pleasant nature. She represents a pure innocence of idealistic and naive love. It is this pursuit of renewing the American innocence within the heart of the American Dream represented by Cherry

what makes Rojack a dissenter to its current modern version defining the term solely by means of individual success, wealth and power.

3.2.4 The American Nightmare Exposed in Barney Oswald Kelly

In Mailer's novel the American way of life is exposed in its "perversions" and "violence" (Radford 34). These are the two defining characteristics of the novel's main antagonists Barney Oswald Kelly and his daughter Deborah. Whereas Deborah in her sadistic tendencies represents the moral wickedness, Kelly is in fact a character whose evil is having even more significance. He is the very embodiment of the corruption dominating the American society (Adams 94), the destructive force of negativity that compromised the genuinely innocent ideal. In other words, Kelly is Rojack's most powerful and sinister adversary. Rojack's position as the champion of innocence in this conflict is definitely arguable as the fact that he is a murderer directly implies that he has an evil within himself as well. Yet, Rojack needs "the evil within himself in order to combat the evil besieging him in the world" (Adams 80). Rojack does not only have to "handle" (Ibid) this evil in order to survive in the extremely hostile environment, but also to "become good and to create goodness around him" (Ibid). His individual criminal act of violence liberates him from the grasp of the institutionalized violence established by the society. In this sense "goodness cannot be preserved without a knowledge of evil" (Ibid).

Like Deborah, Kelly is not only Rojack's opponent but he is also a representative part of the Dream Rojack intends to dispense of. Rojack's past is in fact a mirror image of Kelly's own success, at least in the principles it is based upon. In other words, Kelly is the essential figure that made Rojack's success possible. Similarly to Kelly Rojack pursues success by means of an opportunistic marriage by which he hopes to get a powerful advantage in a presidential campaign. This inclination towards the social acclaim and power brings Rojack, in terms of his ambitions and personality, close to Kelly. As Rojack mentions in the opening chapter of the novel, there was a warning, "a vision of treasure, far-off blood and fear" (Mailer 1), suggesting the potentially negative aspects of this marriage. Yet Rojack decided to ignore his intuition and to marry Deborah who is in fact a

product of Kelly's decision to compromise the American Dream with typically un-American features.

Kelly is an American self made man endowed with an unusual talent for gaining profit. Rojack describes him as a man who "had made a million two hundred times" (Ibid). At the same time Kelly is the man who aligned his American Dream with symbols that are typically un-American, with social influence and prestige of Mangaravidi-Caughlins family. "I managed to take the child and slip it into the mouth of the Mangaravidi's serpent" (Mailer 238), states Kelly when describing the story of his astonishing success to Rojack. The real meaning of his words allegorically transferred onto the symbolic level points to the fact that Kelly actually compromised the innocence of the American Dream by this marriage linking it to the old world of European experience. It has to be stated that Kelly's Dream was never entirely innocent as its accomplishment was marked by a crime from the very beginning. To put it briefly, Kelly stole the capital of three thousand dollars and the savings of his entire family in order to start his own business. He simply "got hold of that package"(Mailer 238), flee to Philadelphia and after a year of investments, during which he multiplied the money, he gave his family "five thousand back since they'd been nice enough not to scream for the sheriff" (Mailer 238). Still, the enormous economic success on the market is not enough to fulfil Kelly's notion of success. It is because Kelly recognizes that "[t]here are dollars which buy a million's worth of groceries, and dollars which have influence" (Mailer 239). The opportunity to rise among the ranks of those powerful and influential is granted to him in marrying Leonora Caughlin because her family is the one in the possession of power he refers to as the "second kind of grabbings" (Ibid). Therefore, it is obvious that money alone does not represent the main motive of Kelly's pursuit. That is because in his opinion "[m]oney which cannot buy into the most amusing world" (Mailer 240) is quite worthless. In fact, it was the connection to the Caughlin Mangaravidi family that opened to him the possibility to live the life he could adore (Ibid). Without Leonora, though, he would be in his own words just an "upstart" (Ibid).

Due to the anxiety that Leonora's inability to conceive could result in the annulment of the marriage literally stripping him of his unusual social status and prestige Kelly makes a symbolic bargain with the devil during their sexual intercourse:

I said in my mind, 'Satan, if it takes your pitchfork up my gut, let me blast a child into this bitch!' And something happened, no sulphur, no brimstone, but Leonora and I met way down there in some bog, some place awful, and I felt something take hold in her. Some sick breath came right back out of her pious little mouth (Mailer 240).

The deal with the devil is successful as shortly after it takes place Deborah is conceived and the allegorical marriage of Kelly's American Dream and the forces of darkness comes to its realization. Thus, the image of Kelly portrayed in the allegorical world of *An American Dream* as "the Devil with a face" (Adams 91) is complete.

Similarly to Cherry and Deborah, Barney Oswald Kelly is also very important in a sense of Rojack's symbolic struggle between the principles of destruction and creation. On the surface Kelly represents a corrupt version of the American Dream, a "Horatio Alger who has ruthlessly and cleverly worked his way from poverty to incalculable wealth and power" (Ibid). On a symbolic and allegorical level of meaning Kelly represents a principle that is carelessly corrupting everything and everyone. Not only did Kelly mark Deirdre and Deborah by incest but he also tainted Cherry's innocence having an affair with her. This corruptive potential is what makes Kelly Rojack's great adversary, the great enemy whom he has to defeat in order to make his ideal survive (Adams 93). Kelly represents the modern and decadent version of the American Dream. In order to accomplish his idea of success, Kelly "marries wealth" (Adams 94). Yet, it is "European wealth" (Ibid) based on hereditary riches so alien to the American Protestant tradition. Having devoted his life solely to power Kelly is situated into a role of the literary embodiment of all the evil possibly corrupting the innocence and idealism in America.

Kelly's role within the moral frame of *An American Dream* is further emphasized by means of symbolic elements Rojack encounters on his way to the top of the Waldorf Towers. The upcoming encounter with Deborah's father stands for Rojack a formidable

representation of all the existential dread and terror he had to suffer through the whole story. Just a gaze upon the lobby of the Waldorf gives him an impression of being in “the antechamber of hell” (Mailer 206). This vision of hell Rojack obtains shortly after entering the building involves not only “red flock on the walls, red carpet” (Ibid) and “granite pillars”, (Ibid) but also the 19th century clock with a gallery of the several representative faces of the American history including the pioneers of the American Dream such as Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln. There is also a year 1881 that symbolically “marks the end of the frontier and the beginning of the machine age” (Adams 91). Lincoln and Franklin clearly stand for the ideological fathers of the American Dream whose concepts of the idea were compromised and “turned to nightmares by the machine, as the real flowers were confused with machine made imitations” (Adams 92). In this sense this date allegorically refers to a beginning of the era during which the genuinely idealistic principles of the American Dream started to be replaced by solely materialistic values. Thus, the end of the frontier era symbolizes the death of the American idealism in a sense of a hope of a new life and more fortunate future. It also foreshadows the upcoming era of destruction and corruption during which the idealistic version of the American Dream was turned into its notion based solely on power and economic prosperity.

Although Kelly stands in the opposition to Rojack, he shares with him the opinion about God being “engaged in a war with the Devil” (Mailer 236). Similarly to Rojack, Kelly is also convinced that “God may lose” (Ibid) and believes that there may be a possible chance that “God might be having a very bad war with troops defecting everywhere” (Ibid). Even though Rojack and Kelly both share this unique awareness concerning the enduring conflict between God and the forces of Darkness their roles in this struggle are radically different. Whereas Rojack is balancing between these two principles as his actions contribute from time to time to either of them, Kelly is definitely standing on the side of evil and destruction. He refers to himself during his meeting with Rojack as being “a solicitor for the devil” (Ibid). In his superstitious tendencies, though, Kelly is closer to Rojack’s views. It is because he is sincerely convinced that along with one’s rising power and influence increase also the chances of drawing the attention of the supernatural forces. In other words, Kelly’s confession to Rojack expresses his opinion that the most

important moral dilemmas are placed in front of those people who are positioned at the very top of the hierarchy of power. It is because “God and the Devil are very attentive to the people at the summit” (Mailer 246) and sooner or later a person in power has to be ready to deal with them, which is in Kelly’s opinion “too much for the average good man on his way” (Ibid). That is the reason why most people abandon their ascent towards power and satisfy themselves with a lesser position. Kelly is by no means an “average good man” (Ibid) as he possesses almost an infinite ambition and thinks of himself as being ready to challenge the supernatural forces controlling the universe. The gate for him was opened years ago by his sexual abuse of his own daughter as in his opinion “[i]ncest is the gate to the worst sort of forces”, and he had his “belly-full early”(Ibid). By the commitment of this crime Kelly thinks to possess a similar role as Rojack. This is a role of an individual who perceives himself elevated from the solely materialistic world into a spiritual realm of existence. The crucial difference between Rojack and Kelly dwells in the distinct nature of the purposes for which they commit their crimes. Whereas Rojack in murdering his wife symbolically liberates himself from the restrictive grasp she represents, Kelly abuses Deborah pursuing the exactly opposite motive: to become a living embodiment of evil and corruption.

Compared to Rojack who is drawing his energy from his love for Cherry, Kelly is gaining power directly from his wicked deeds. Not only does he seem to be strengthened by an incestuous relationship with his daughter but he also acquires something resembling an almost supernatural ability during his infidelity affair with Bess, his first mistress. Kelly describes his former lover as almost a magical creature, as a “queen of the spooks” who is “in communion with something” (Mailer 242). It is a matter of fact that in certain aspects Kelly’s affair with Bess can be regarded as mirroring Rojack’s relationship with Deborah. Similarly to Rojack’s murdered wife, Bess can also be considered as an allegorical representation of some sinister and ominous power. Yet, this relationship had also its merits as Kelly’s talent for investments and financial speculations radically improved. In fact, it turned “infallible” (Ibid):

Lying in bed I could feel the potential of a given stock as much as if I were bathing in the thoughts of a thousand key investors. I could almost hear the sound of the mother factory. It was like soaking up a view. Then I would be left with the final impression, 'Artichokes is going up tomorrow, Beethoven is going down (Mailer 242).

This relationship, however, is dangerous for Kelly because despite all the benefits, Bess is the person whom he is afraid of more than "of anybody" (Mailer 243). As he confesses to Rojack, Bess was in the control of his mind and passion. In the end Kelly symbolically liberates from her mental domination but the prize he has to pay is high and leaves his marriage with Leonora in ruins. On the other hand, it opens a way to his further voluntary growth into the role of an American Devil, because like Rojack Barney Oswald Kelly is also making himself into the fantastic image he conceived. He is authentic in his evil in the same way as Rojack is in his pursuing.

3.2.5 Rojack's Challenge of the American Nightmare

In the literary universe of *An American Dream*, Barney Oswald Kelly and Stephen Rojack represent the two conflicting versions of the American Dream. Whereas Rojack seeks to renew the original innocence of this ideal, Kelly stands for its corrupted version, the American Nightmare. More than a piece of realistic literature Mailer's novel recalls an allegoric battlefield on which the battle for the soul of America is being fought. The atmosphere of the novel recalls a setting in which the mystical features such as magic and superstition are prevailing rather than logic and rationality typical for the modern American society. The story of Stephen Rojack taking place in this magical world therefore consists of two essential layers of meaning.

At the level of meaning that can be measured objectively, Rojack is clearly a violent and immoral fugitive because he murders his wife and successfully evades the legal authorities. In addition to this, he is also opportunistic as he seems to be chasing every single opportunity in order to satisfy his passions. On the other hand, there is also a

symbolic meaning within *An American Dream* represented by a dream like realm of symbols and allegories. In this realm Rojack is not merely a criminal and a violator of the law, but he is in fact waging a war against a corrupted and decadent version of the American Dream that imprisoned his existence and individuality. By murdering his wife Rojack symbolically destroys his old identity and starts to define a new one by means of his extreme experiences and “living moments” (Laist 330). Due to the fact that these acts are not able to survive within the temporal framework of the reality for long Rojack is forced to continuously “renew these self-defining gestures” (Ibid). The extreme nature of these acts fills Rojack with either terror or a feeling of sanctity (Laist 328). To Rojack, as the civilized savage who is directly in the connection with his subconscious self, dread comes as a natural result of his “invasion of the supernatural” (Kaufman 196), the invasion he performs while murdering Deborah. This act throws him into the realm of dread and magic where Deborah is recognized as possessing a mystical power. Despite being dead in a material sense she still remains a symbol, an evil spirit capable of intervening with the objective reality. During their short interaction at Waldorf Towers Deirdre confirms Rojack’s worries when describing her mother as a “beast” of a “species which stay alive three days after they die” (Mailer 215).

Deborah is a part of a magic, the same magic that Kelly describes as residing at the very peak of the hierarchy of power (“There is nothing but magic at the top”) (Mailer 246). This magic is the large part of the American Nightmare from which Rojack intends to escape. The sense of magic, dread and insanity is strongest at the moments when Rojack fully devotes himself to the world of his subconscious (Kaufman 197). The symbolic concept of the black magic, though, is not the only one present within *An American Dream*. There is also a kind of a “magic without dread” (Ibid) implicitly present during Rojack’s encounters with Cherry. This kind of magic is reflected in the “mutual spontaneity and empathy” (Ibid) between the two lovers.

In order to save the innocence and fulfill a prospect of a new life with Cherry Rojack first has to confront the evil embodied within Barney Oswald Kelly. That is the only way by which he can finally defeat Deborah’s curse laying over him and rebirth himself as

an authentic person. However, when making the crucial decision to go to the Waldorf Towers Rojack betrays his instincts telling him to stay with Cherry and ensure her safety (Adams 90). Although his intuition tells him that there is something “very wrong” (Mailer 202), Rojack decides to make a final test of his courage to see Kelly and make Cherry vulnerable. He confronts Deborah’s father in his residence at the top of the Waldorf and challenges him as the symbolic figure of his “mythic father” (Adams 93). Without Kelly’s defeat Rojack “can neither move forward, grow out of his past into the future, nor become a hero without waging psychic war against all that Kelly represents” (Ibid). Yet, Rojack fails in this challenge deciding the course of the future events. This failure is allegorically expressed in his seemingly absurd parapet walk during which an inner voice urges Rojack to take the dangerous trial once again. In this crucial and climactic moment of the novel Rojack loses the courage and thus symbolically betrays his love (Adams 88). In this sense the parapet walk is the “ultimate existential battle with life and death” (Adams 95), an allegory representing the victory of the creative or destructive force in America as its outcome (Ibid).

For Rojack, the affair with Cherry is symbolically connected with the notion of courage. In other words, Rojack accepts the love as a challenge from his subconscious self and decides to take a trial in order to preserve it. Rojack makes this acceptance during the moments in Cherry’s Harlem apartment and it is his inner voice warning him that doing so is making him vulnerable. In his last and final trial during the parapet walk Rojack is stuck between courage and cowardice. Courage is what abandons him in this essential moment and thus the good is inevitably defeated. In this respect Rojack momentarily rejects the existential uncertainty of one’s existence and disregards the irrational power of faith that led him so far. Clinging back to the material world of rationality and logic he fails to perform a final leap of faith in which he could finally become one with his desired ideal. He also fails in the retrieval of the idealistic version of the American Dream symbolically embedded within his love of Cherry. That is because in the moment when he is finally able to confirm himself as a true existentialist and a new kind of a self-made man Rojack’s cowardice and lack of determination retreats him back to the self-evident nature of the rational reality. In this sense and despite his heroic ambitions, Rojack proves that he is not

able to entirely free himself from the negativity that imprisoned his soul. In the end, love is revealed as a motive which is simply not “strong enough” (Adams 95) for Rojack’s growth as an existential character.

The failure of Rojack’s intentions to act out a new American Dream out of the prevailing nightmare can be regarded as an expression of the inability of an individual to realize his life in spite of the collective tendencies of the society. What Mailer demonstrates is a rather dismal opinion that money and power will always be victorious over the sincerity of human feelings and innocent ideals. In *An American Dream*, money and power are exposed as sinister forces that are in their very nature capable of corrupting almost anything including even the most honest of ideals. What Mailer presents in his novel is the universe in which “a heroic but limited God” is “locked in a struggle with a powerful wily Devil” (Meloy 350). The apparent imbalance of good and evil is the main and also the most reasonable cause why the good is defeated in the end. Viewed from the perspective offered by Mailer’s novel, America is a decadent and corrupted place as the American experience inevitably kills innocence in its very nature (Adams 70). Rojack represents a man who explored all the opportunities his civilization could offer to him. He is the man who speaks of himself as of somebody who at certain point stopped to believe in the self-evident nature of reality as presented by the media and American majority (Scott 61). This personality trait makes Rojack an explorer, seeker for a version of the American Dream that would be able to satisfy his existential needs. *An American Dream* provides a dismal reflection of America with its apparent inability to realize one’s American Dream in accordance with the internal wishes and desires of an individual. In Mailer’s novel the concept that originally started as an idea of one’s hope of better and more satisfactory future in its 20th century version resembles rather a manipulative and potentially enslaving force that determines people towards the accumulation of money and power. The right of an individual to choose freely from a list of opportunities, priorities and values that originally stood at the very beginning of the American Dream is something which is radically lacking in its degenerated materialistic form. Therefore, the epilogue of *An American Dream* during which Rojack successfully manages to earn enough money needed for his escape from America suggests that

“America’s remaining opportunity is the good fortune” you can earn there to be able to leave (Adams 96).

4. Conclusion

Although Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Norman Mailer's *An American Dream* each has a different historical and social background they both bear an essential significance in their relation to the concept of the American Dream. They do not reflect the American Dream merely as a collective idea dominating the American society but also as a phenomenon which has a direct impact on a life of an individual. The central theme of Jay Gatsby's and Stephen Rojack's story is the literary evaluation of one's own success and the moral price involved in it. Another thing seemingly present in *An American Dream* as well as in *The Great Gatsby* is the evident discrepancy between one's individual wishes and desires and the actual social reality. Both novels seem to involve a kind of a struggle. It is a struggle of the main protagonists against the environment which is in its very nature extremely hostile towards the accomplishment of their idealistic aims. This environment is what represents an oppressive factor preventing the main protagonists from realizing their lives in accordance with the notion their imagination conceives. In this sense the actual materialistic environment creates a barrier towards the accomplishment of one's individual American Dream. Gatsby's and Rojack's struggle for self-realization appears as a conflict between the American Dream in its individualistic version and the American Dream as the collective idea acknowledged by the American majority. It is the juxtaposition of these two opposite parts of the American Dream that creates a contrast between its genuinely idealistic form and its developed 20th century materialistic version. This developed collective idea is the crucial factor that in the context of Mailer's and Fitzgerald's novels prevents the American Dream in its individual form from successful realization.

Both Gatsby and Rojack can be regarded as literary reflections of the American notion of a self-made man. They represent characters who intend to create their real identities in accordance with the image coined by their imagination. In Gatsby's case the new identity he creates by means of material and social success is to serve him as a device by which he hopes to regain Daisy's love. Rojack, on the other hand, is the man who intends to destroy his own past and create his identity once again, this time in a

compliance with his specific sense of existential authenticity. In both novels the social and economic success of the main protagonists possesses an essential significance. Whereas for Gatsby wealth and prestige represent the instruments enabling him to infiltrate among the ranks of the East Egg society and pursue his love, for Rojack they symbolize the negative power that enslaved his true authenticity. Although in the eyes of the public Rojack might seem as a perfect American, his life too is based on a false ideal as Gatsby's whose riches are direct outcomes of his criminal activities. To Rojack the false and illusionary nature of the materialistic sense of life is revealed during the existential experience that shattered the self-evident reality of the American way of life based on materialism alone. Compared to Gatsby whose primary motive is idealistic love, Rojack is driven forward by a sense of existential dread and anxiety. Instead of following Gatsby's way and accepting the materialistic notion of the American Dream in order to reach higher, idealistic aims, Rojack challenges its generally acknowledged version that in his opinion symbolizes the corruption and negativity that took over the once innocent ideal. Contrastively to Gatsby's adaptation to the social conventions and norms, Rojack decides to violate them in order to bring the American Dream forth to the previously unexplored area of human subconsciousness. In this respect he resembles a spiritual explorer potentially able to renew the original form of the American Dream within his newly created identity. Similarly to Gatsby, who is forced by the circumstances to prevent his true criminal identity from its disclosure, Rojack too is set before a serious challenge during which he has to defend this identity.

The Great Gatsby and *An American Dream* both put its main characters to an important trial. In this trial they have to retrieve the ideal and protect it against the hostilities of the environment. Viewed from this perspective, Rojack represents a logical continuation of Gatsby's case. His reaction, though, is much more aggressive. Whereas Gatsby's pursuit of his beloved Daisy is in its very nature based on the positivity of his emotions, Rojack's challenge of the American Dream in a sense of wealth and power is expressed as a continual battle between the negative and positive forces of human existence. Unlike Gatsby, Rojack is first expected to handle the evil in order to seek for the good and the innocence embedded within his romantic love for Cherry. A woman in

An American Dream as well as in *The Great Gatsby* represents an essential symbol. For Gatsby the figure of Daisy Buchanan stands as the ultimate motive of all his worldly efforts. She is an ideal he discovered, an ideal he intends to protect and retrieve despite all the impossible odds of the actual reality. A strong discrepancy between this ideal and the reality is found within Daisy's superficial personality and materialistic nature. It is because in his novel Fitzgerald uses Daisy as a literary reflection of the East Egg moral wickedness and hypocrisy. In *An American Dream* the polarity between the innocence and the experiences as well as between the good and the evil tends to be expressed by the implementation of two different female characters. In their personal traits these characters can be considered as being literary representations of the two different versions of the American Dream. On the one side of this polarity stands Cherry as the innocence of the genuinely idealistic idea, while on the other side there is Deborah as the very embodiment of the corruption that took over the ideal. Yet, the conflict between the materialism and idealism is not the only one related to the American Dream in Mailer's novel. There is also an allegorical conflict between good and evil in which both Deborah and Cherry seem to be playing essential roles. Regarding this conflict, the literary setting of *An American Dream* resembles an allegorical realm in which the battle for the American Dream is being fought. It is a losing battle, though, and both Gatsby's and Rojack's defeat in this struggle is one of the most defining aspects connecting the two novels together. In both cases the scope of their failure is tragic and bears serious consequences.

These failures are not to be confused with mere natural results of one's unfortunate position facing the impossible odds of the actual circumstances. In fact, they are rather to be considered as direct outcomes of Rojack's and Gatsby's transgression of the idealistic principles on which their Dreams are based. In Fitzgerald's novel, Gatsby compromises his ideal by making a naive presupposition that love can actually be regained by the means of material and social success. In his decision to pursue Daisy by impressing her with luxury and wealth Gatsby unconsciously accepts the conventions and morals of people such as Tom Buchanan. Therefore, the innocent nature of his Dream becomes altered by the corruptive influence of the materialistic way of thinking. Rojack's

failure, on the contrary, dwells in his inability to devote entirely to the existential uncertainty that gave rise to his rebellion. This is implicitly expressed in Rojack's decision to choose the final confrontation with Kelly on behalf of Cherry's safety. Within Rojack's internal conflict this essential choice symbolizes the victory of the destructive negativity and finally the defeat of the American Dream which is even more emphasized in the struggle he loses during his parapet walk.

Therefore, it can be said that in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Norman Mailer's *An American Dream* the American Dream is revealed as an idea which in its consequences indirectly leads to the end of the novel's main protagonist. With regard to this, Gatsby's romantic love of Daisy is in fact a dangerous and manipulative obsession that took over the control of his mind and predestined his tragic future. *An American Dream* presents an even more sinister vision of the American Dream illustrating this idea in its nightmarish version of power and money. Rojack's story does not only demonstrate the manipulative potential of the Dream but also exposes the ominous ability of this notion to corrupt the individual in the issues of morality. Both Rojack and Gatsby are characters who are desperately striving to pursue the individualistic version of the American Dream based on their personal wishes and desires. Their pursuing, however, is in the end overwhelmed and destroyed by the dominant and materialistic perception of the Dream, representing it as primarily a collective and society controlling mechanism. In this sense *An American Dream* and *The Great Gatsby* implicitly convey a message that one's idealistic Dream is not able to survive the corrupted reality of the developed modern American society. Therefore, the idealistic American Dream which in its aspects contradicts the collective notion of this idea is inevitably predestined to its failure.

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