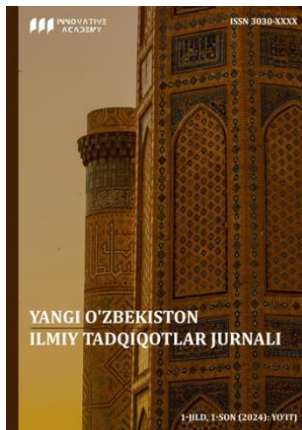




PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE AMERICAN DREAM IN THE WORKS OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD AND ARTHUR MILLER

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ABSTRACT

*This article explores the psychological dimensions of the American Dream as represented in the literary works of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Arthur Miller. While the American Dream is commonly associated with economic success, social mobility, and personal achievement, its psychological implications have received considerable attention in literary studies. Through an analysis of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, the study investigates how the pursuit of idealized success influences individual identity, self-perception, emotional stability, and interpersonal relationships. The findings reveal that both authors portray the American Dream not merely as a social aspiration but as a psychological force that shapes human consciousness and behavior. The protagonists, Jay Gatsby and Willy Loman, become trapped by unrealistic expectations and self-created illusions, leading to frustration, alienation, and emotional collapse. The article argues that Fitzgerald and Miller use their characters to expose the psychological costs of pursuing unattainable ideals within a competitive society.*

Introduction. The American Dream has traditionally been regarded as one of the most influential cultural ideals in the history of the United States. It promotes the belief that individuals can achieve prosperity, happiness, and social recognition through hard work and determination. For many people, this dream functions as a source of motivation and hope. However, literature often reveals the hidden psychological pressures associated with the pursuit of such ambitions. Throughout the twentieth century, American writers increasingly questioned the emotional and psychological consequences of success-oriented values. Rather than presenting the American Dream as a pathway to fulfillment, many literary works depict it as a source of anxiety, dissatisfaction, and internal conflict. Among the authors who critically examine these issues, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Arthur Miller occupy a prominent place in American literary history. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Miller's *Death of a Salesman*

offer compelling portrayals of individuals whose identities become deeply connected to idealized visions of success. Both Jay Gatsby and Willy Loman construct personal realities based on dreams that ultimately prove unattainable. Their experiences reveal how excessive attachment to social ideals can distort self-perception and damage psychological well-being. The purpose of this article is to investigate the psychological dimensions of the American Dream in the selected works and to analyze how Fitzgerald and Miller portray the relationship between ambition, identity, and emotional stability.

Methods. The study employs qualitative literary analysis as its primary methodological approach. Close textual reading is used to examine character psychology, symbolic representations, narrative structure, and thematic development in the selected literary texts. A comparative approach is applied to identify common psychological patterns in the experiences of Gatsby and Willy Loman. The research also incorporates psychological literary criticism, which focuses on the inner motivations, desires, fears, and emotional conflicts of fictional characters. Historical-contextual analysis provides insight into the social conditions that shaped the authors' perspectives on success and personal identity. Secondary academic sources and literary criticism are used to support the interpretation and discussion of psychological themes.

Results. The analysis demonstrates that both Fitzgerald and Miller portray the American Dream as a psychological construct that significantly influences individual identity and behavior. In *The Great Gatsby*, Jay Gatsby develops an idealized self-image centered on wealth, social prestige, and romantic fulfillment. His entire existence becomes organized around a vision of future happiness that depends on winning Daisy Buchanan's love. As the analysis reveals, Gatsby's psychological world is dominated by nostalgia and illusion. Rather than accepting reality, he continuously reconstructs the past and attempts to transform it into an achievable future. This inability to distinguish between reality and fantasy ultimately contributes to his emotional vulnerability and tragic downfall. Similarly, Arthur Miller presents Willy Loman as a character whose self-worth is entirely dependent upon external recognition and professional success. Willy believes that popularity and personal attractiveness guarantee achievement. His psychological struggle emerges from the growing gap between his expectations and actual circumstances. The findings indicate that Willy experiences chronic feelings of inadequacy, disappointment, and anxiety. His inability to reconcile reality with his idealized self-image results in emotional instability and psychological deterioration. The American Dream becomes a source of internal conflict rather than personal fulfillment.

Discussion. The psychological dimensions of the American Dream become particularly evident through the protagonists' distorted perceptions of themselves and the world around them. Both Gatsby and Willy construct identities based on socially approved definitions of success. Their psychological well-being depends upon achieving goals that remain largely beyond their control. In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald explores the role of illusion in human consciousness. Gatsby's dream is not merely a desire for wealth; it is an attempt to create a perfect version of reality. His psychological attachment to an idealized past prevents him from adapting to present circumstances. Consequently, he invests emotional energy in a vision that cannot be realized. Fitzgerald suggests that when individuals become excessively attached to unrealistic aspirations, they risk losing contact with reality itself. Arthur Miller examines a similar phenomenon from a different social perspective. Willy Loman represents the ordinary individual who internalizes cultural expectations without questioning their validity. Throughout the play, Willy measures his value according to societal standards of success. His repeated failures generate feelings of shame, frustration, and self-doubt. An important psychological similarity between Gatsby and Willy is their dependence on external validation. Both characters seek approval from others as confirmation of their personal worth. Gatsby desires acceptance from Daisy and elite society, while Willy seeks recognition from employers,

colleagues, and family members. Their inability to obtain lasting validation intensifies their emotional suffering. Another significant aspect is the conflict between reality and self-deception. Both authors demonstrate that psychological distress often emerges when individuals maintain unrealistic beliefs about themselves or their circumstances. Gatsby's romantic idealism and Willy's professional illusions function as coping mechanisms that temporarily protect them from disappointment but ultimately contribute to their destruction. Through these portrayals, Fitzgerald and Miller challenge the assumption that success automatically produces happiness. Instead, they reveal the psychological burdens associated with unrealistic ambition and excessive dependence on social approval.

Conclusion. The study demonstrates that the American Dream functions not only as a cultural and economic ideal but also as a powerful psychological force in the works of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Arthur Miller. Through the characters of Jay Gatsby and Willy Loman, both authors explore the emotional consequences of pursuing idealized visions of success. The analysis reveals that the protagonists' identities become closely connected to unrealistic aspirations, resulting in psychological conflict, emotional instability, and personal tragedy. Their experiences illustrate how dreams that appear motivating on the surface may generate profound dissatisfaction when they are disconnected from reality. Fitzgerald and Miller ultimately present the American Dream as a complex psychological phenomenon that influences self-perception, behavior, and interpersonal relationships. Their works remain relevant because they encourage readers to reflect critically on the relationship between ambition, identity, and mental well-being in modern society.

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