

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

The American Dream is something questionable, because there are no written proofs or theories about it. Some people think that the American Dream is the fulfillment of their dream of gaining a better life and happiness; yet, for others, it is a simple dream of becoming rich. People often debate whether the American Dream is a reality or it is only a myth, a man-made story.

The present writer analyzes the concept of the American Dream through the characters in F.S. Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby and E.L. Doctorow's Ragtime. Both of the novels are set in the 1920s, when America was in its greatest period of prosperity because of industrialization. Industrialization and prosperity made America become a multicultural country, because lots of people of different races, languages and religions came to America to search for a better life. The present writer also uses these differences in analyzing the concept of the American Dream.

In F.S. Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, the present writer sees the concept of the American Dream from the white people's point of view. The concept of the American Dream in the novel is concerned with materialism, which is shown through Daisy Buchanan and Myrtle Wilson, who think that they can gain

happiness through wealth. But there is also another form of American Dream shown in the novel, which is love. This form of romanticized American Dream is presented through Jay Gatsby, but even though the American Dream is not about materialism, it still has some connection with wealth, for the character thinks that he will gain his love if he is wealthy.

In E.L. Doctorow's Ragtime, the present writer sees various concept of the American Dream, some of which relate to materialism and equality. Like in F.S. Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, in Ragtime, the same concept of the American Dream, which relates to materialism, is shown through Tateh and Coalhouse Walker Jr., who dream of gaining a better life and happiness through wealth. The novel also discusses the issue of the American Dream, which relates to race. The white people in America, who are in the majority, think that they are the rulers, and because of that they regard all people who do not conform to their standards as inferior to them. This creates the racial discrimination against colored people in America. This differentiation of classes and racial discrimination makes colored people in America have an American Dream of gaining equality, as shown by Tateh and Coalhouse Walker Jr.. Both of them are colored people and their second-class status in the society makes them search for equality with the white people. As for Mother, she represents another form of the American Dream, which relates to gender. Unlike Daisy Buchanan and Myrtle Wilson in The Great Gatsby, who are searching for materialism through materialism or love affair, Mother's American Dream is to be regarded as the equal of a man. She also represents the American Dream, specifically of the upper class of white people in America, which is to become members of the nobility.

From the novels, the present writer gets the knowledge that people in America have different concepts of the American Dream, depending on the race, gender, and class. The novels also shows that people can do anything in order to fulfill or to maintain the American Dream, this is what Daisy Buchanan and Myrtle Wilson do in The Great Gatsby, and Tateh, and Coalhouse Walker Jr. do in Ragtime do. Daisy Buchanan sacrifices her love for Jay Gatsby in order to fulfill her American Dream. Myrtle Wilson sacrifices her self-esteem, her value as a woman and her own life in order not to fail to fulfill her American Dream. Tateh sacrifices his identity in order to fulfill his dream of gaining equality. Coalhouse Walker Jr. sacrifices his wealth; he loses Sarah's life and he ends his own life, in order to gain equality.

Despite the enormous sacrifices, there is no guarantee that everyone can fulfill his or her American Dream. Fulfilling the American Dream does not always lead people to happiness; it can also make people suffer and experience a catastrophe, which happens to Jay Gatsby in The Great Gatsby, and to Coalhouse Walker Jr. in Ragtime. Jay Gatsby fails to fulfill his American Dream and has to pay for it with his life. Coalhouse Walker Jr., even though he succeeds in fulfilling his American Dream in gaining equality, he loses his wealth, he also loses Sarah, his future wife, and his own life.

Having read the two novels, the present writer finds out that the American Dream can be a myth-a man made story, but it can also become a reality. In both of the novels The Great Gatsby and Ragtime, the American Dream becomes a reality, for it motivates the characters in the two novels to do something in order

to fulfill their American Dream. Even though some of the characters in the two novels succeed in fulfilling their American Dream, some fail to do it.