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**From Page to Screen, the Immigrants'
American Dream: *Yekl. A Tale of the New York
Ghetto* (1896) and *The Godfather Part II*
(1974)**

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ABSTRACT

This Bachelor's Thesis studies the foundational myth of the American Dream from the perspective of immigrants. As a cultural narrative constructed by immigrant experiences, the main objective has been to establish the evolution of these experiences in the 19th century through Abraham Cahan's novel, *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto* (1896) and the 20th century through Francis Coppola's film, *The Godfather Part II* (1974). The elements that demonstrate how both narrative works offer a critical vision of the American Dream will be analyzed, thus being able to frame each one respectively in different stages of its representation, enabling to trace its evolution.

Keywords: American Dream, Myth, Evolution, Immigrants, *Yekl*, *The Godfather Part II*.

RESUMEN

Este Trabajo de Fin de Grado estudia el mito fundacional del Sueño Americano desde la perspectiva de los inmigrantes. Como narrativa cultural que ha sido perpetuada por las experiencias en los inmigrantes, el objetivo principal ha sido establecer la evolución observable de estas en los siglos XIX y XX, a través de la novela de Abraham Cahan, *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto* (1896) y la película de Francis Coppola, *The Godfather Part II* (1974). Se analizarán los elementos que evidencian como ambas obras narrativas ofrecen una visión crítica del Sueño Americano, pudiendo así encuadrar cada una respectivamente en diferentes etapas de su representación, lo que permite trazar así su evolución.

Palabras clave: Sueño Americano, Mito, Evolución, Inmigrantes, *Yelk*, *El Padrino: Parte II*

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*To my family, my father, my mother and my brother,
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Introduction

Since its inception in the 20th century, American Studies has sought to delve into the historical and cultural aspects of a nation like the United States, which has persistently remained the center of global interest and attention since its origins. As Bradbury and Temperley observe, “Since Sir Thomas More and before, America has been both Utopia and Dystopia for those in other lands” (1989, p. 1). Among the cultural narratives explored by the American Studies, the myth of the American Dream is one of the most enduring and significant. It is a fundamental ideal that has forged the American identity and perfectly symbolizes the dystopia previously suggested by Bradbury and Temperley. While presented as a positive premise of prosperity in terms of freedom and economic or social ascent, it reveals profound contradictions, especially from the immigrant’s perspective.

Considering the relevance and complexity of the term, this academic paper focuses on the analysis of the American Dream as a cultural myth to comprehend its evolution particularly through its portrayals in literature and cinema. Consequently, the aims of this dissertation are: a) provide a precise and historically grounded definition of the American Dream; b) study the immigrant experiences of the American Dream, such as, “stories of immigrants who do not speak or act toward the United States in terms of love or loyalty but rather in terms of hatred and destruction” (Cullen, 2003, p. 188); and finally c) indicate the concrete appreciable evolution of the American Dream in the 19th and 20th centuries, emphasizing the shifts in depiction.

In order to accomplish the objectives aforementioned, my field of study consists of a novel and a film portraying the American Dream from the perspective of immigrants pursuing prosperity and a better life in America, offering a faithful reflection of their experiences. Hence, the following novel of the 19th century, *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto* (1896) by Abraham Cahan; and the following film of the 20th century, *The Godfather Part II* (1974) directed by Francis Coppola will be analyzed. Moreover, numerous relevant books and articles dealing with the topic have been consulted for the research process of this academic work.

The structure of this writing will follow a logical progression from theoretical to analytical sections, ensuring a sound basis for final conclusion. Therefore, the first 2 chapters of this work comprise the theoretical framework. Chapter 1 offers an exploration of the American Dream, detailing its notion and definition as mythic construct and establishing its characteristic elements by placing them in a historical context. Chapter 2 addresses the general characteristics of literature and cinema as main cultural means of representation and diffusion of the American Dream, broadly establishing the similar features and appreciable differences between the two. Chapters 3 and 4 constitute the comparative body of analysis. Chapter 3 examines the ambivalent depiction of the American Dream in the 19th century through the novel *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto*, when the idealized premise already showed elements of questioning and criticism. Whereas Chapter 4 and the film *The Godfather Part II* involve the study of the dark portrayal in the 20th century. The conclusion summarizes the findings of the comparative analysis of the American Dream in both centuries and means of dissemination: the commonalities and distinctions in the representation that make it possible to establish an evolution of the American Dream between centuries mirrored in immigrants.

As mentioned at the beginning of the introduction, the focus of this paper on the American Dream is justified by its relevance as a cultural narrative of America, and therefore, as one of the main terms underpinning the study of America. Whether understood as an American dream or as an American nightmare, the prevalent interpretation today, the term has larger implications that make it of interest to examine (Știuliuc, 2011, p. 364). The choice to center the analysis on literature and cinema is supported by their cultural prominence, especially in light of the major literary genres that emerged in 19th-century America, such as Romanticism, Transcendentalism or Realism, and the birth of Hollywood and establishment of the Golden Age of cinema in the 20th century. Examples of literature and cinema such as these further underscore their function as vehicles of cultural transmission.

1. Defining the American Dream: Theory and Historical Context

As a matter of course the expression “American Dream” is commonly use in public speech or academic context to refer to diverse and often weakly define and clarified aspects of the American culture and identity. However, this lack of clarification implied in the term appears not to reduce its predominance. As Cullen (2003, p. 5) points, the term is widely employed with assumed meanings, without further reflection on its definition, implications or usages. It is a term, therefore, deeply rooted in American culture and vocabulary, shaping identity and lives of those living in America. When attempting to understand American cultural identity and its different aspects, it is important to do so from a national point of view (internal variations and divisions within the nation), an international point of view (the global perception of the nation) and from a comparative point of view with other countries and cultures. However, the tendency has often been to explain the American identity from an exceptionalist viewpoint by emphasizing the unique experiences of certain groups. This means limiting the national question without taking into account other communities, often rejected and marginalized, and their traditions that also define the essential historical experiences of the nation (Campbell & Kean, 2012, pp. 3-5).

Considering the term American Dream, it was first formally coined in the 1931 book by James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America*: “It is a dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement” (Adams, 1932, p. 404). James Truslow Adams wrote the book in the years of the Great Depression when he felt that the foundational aspirations of the ordinary man “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” had been lost, becoming something challenging to recover and reaffirm. Yet Adams does not clarify in his definition either the intended recipients of the American Dream or the precise achievements that must be attained. It stands to reason, therefore, that the American Dream is a much wider and more complex issue than it initially appears.

As Riggio (2021, p. 3) rightly expresses, throughout the 21st century numerous scholars have examined the American Dream and its applicability and achievability. One significant example is Jim Cullen who in his book *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*, states that there is not only one American Dream, but rather that it is composed of different, varied and specific achievements. Although Cullen provides the detailed account of the dreams, he does not elaborate the exact answer of who the dreamer is. This general omission is vague and can lead to confusion, because in most cases the answer is presumed: immigrants. When asked about the United States, knowing hardly anything about the country, they are able to give a picture as a place of opportunity and abundance. They carry a persistent idealized vision of a country where dreams can be fulfilled. “Only the immigrants themselves imagined the statue as speaking specifically” (Schudson, 2004, p. 569). Hence, immigrants help to perpetuate and establish these aspirations on American soil.

Precisely, it is the ambiguity with the identity of the dreamer and the common forgetfulness of the close and deep relationship between the American Dream and immigrants that explains why this term is better understood as a myth and not as a concept. It is defined as a myth, because on the one hand it implies the explanation of something complex giving it a real and true nature, but on the other hand, it embodies and conveys an ideological character. In culture, myths attempt to explain in a simpler way historical and cultural complexities and problems, so that they can be understood and be credible, avoiding contradictions and, therefore, endowing them with a realistic character. However, as Roland Barthes (cited in Campbell & Kean, 2012, p. 11) warns, myths being stories need to be carefully read, to avoid what is falsely regarded as obvious. In other words, myths are tools for divulging and perpetuating political and economic power, favouring the discourses of certain groups over those of others. Consequently, immigrants entering America were faced with harsh realities when trying to fulfil the American Dream because they were often marginalized and excluded and their options for social or economic improvement were often impossible to attain. Overall, the American Dream is an essential myth of American culture based on the vagueness of the hopeful belief that the myth has no obvious falsehood and the misrepresentation and transformation of harsh realities into something poetic, possible and

achievable (Su, 2015, pp. 838-839). Eventually, the American Dream becomes with its hopeful nature a foundation that sustains America as a nation when unity begins to weaken and blur.

Once the term American Dream has been contextualized, defined, and the idea that it is impossible to understand this myth without immigrants introduced, it is necessary to return to Jim Cullen's notion of different American Dreams. Merely stating that it is people who have aspirations and dreams, it is logical that there is not only a single, established version of the American Dream, but that there are as many interpretations as there are individuals who embody the term. Nonetheless, considering again the fact that when the term is used its meanings are presupposed, there must be certain recurring elements that make it comprehensible. Like Cullen (2003) reflects from Truslow Adams' definition:

The answers vary. Sometimes "better and richer and fuller" is defined in terms of money in the contemporary United States, one could almost believe this is the *only* definition but there are others. Religious transformation, political reform, educational attainment, sexual expression: the list is endless. These answers have not only been available at any given time; they have also changed over time and competed for the status of common sense. (p. 7)

This reflection suggests that the different American Dreams have been varying over time, being interpreted in different ways, depending on factors such as the prevailing worldview of each age. For instance, Bradbury and Temperley (1989) remark the 19th-century conflict: "There were other points of tension which complicated the 'rags to riches' myth. In the 19th century, traditional religious cultures came into open conflict with the materialism and secular spirit of the modern world" (p. 172). The major factor of change in the interpretation, therefore, was the conception of America as a place that embodied modernity in the world. Prior to the 19th century, the myth of the American Dream was deeply connected to religiosity, Puritanism, and the idea of Independence and freedom. Afterward, the American Dream came to be envisioned through the capacity for class mobility, modern urbanism, consumerism and materialism, and technological advances.

Following Cullen's classification of the different types of American Dreams, the first dream he identifies is the one pursued by those Puritan settlers who arrive in to America in

the 17th century. In an attempt to compress their American Dream into a single quote it can be stated as, the hope of being masters of their own destiny in “The Promised Land”. They had confidence in their ambition: the predestined mission to shape a future in a new land where they would create a model superior community for their children and the future generations, better and more just than the previous one and always directed and guided by God. The Puritans' vision of the American Dream established foundational elements such as confidence in a new beginning and a vision of America as a model community where it was possible pursue a better life. The second evolution of the American Dream is promoted by the American Revolution of 1766, the Declaration of Independence and the discourses of Founding Fathers like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson or John Adams. From “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” they created a framework of possibilities where man in a democratized America could become free and self-reliant. This was further reinforced by the Frontier West and its expansion by the belief that every man could obtain land for self-sufficiency. (Bradbury & Temperley, 1989, pp. 141-142). The new vocabulary that had been included in America of the self-made man resulted in one of the most familiar and enduring aspects of the American Dream: class mobility, understood as economic and/or social advancement. However, this dream was based on meritocracy and the assumption that only by hard working could you prosper, no matter your origins. “Hard work was one of the most cited qualities associated with the American Dream” (Riggio, 2021, p. 9). By the end of the 19th century, United States presented and reinforced itself as a country where anyone could prosper with effort and perseverance, attracting numerous immigrants. However, this aspect of the American Dream, as will be discussed in this academic dissertation, has both a theoretical and a practical reading. As Bradbury and Temperley (1989) rightly assert:

If by the later nineteenth century, America was a nation of immigrants, there was a gap between the reality of the immigrant life and the myths of the society which promised far-reaching opportunities and rewards for innovation and hard work. (p. 166)

In an industrialized and emerging capitalist America, the real possibilities for immigrants to access education and social equity were distant. Frequently, only labor mattered. The ultimate American Dream that Cullen identifies is the idea of the city, particularly the possession of a house, and the opportunities of a good life in it. The concept

of the city or the house encompasses a much broader meaning than the first apparent one: the American Dream of consumption and material goods. American cities were modern places with urban development, technological advances and intense commercial activity, which encouraged consumerism and materialism. Material goods became a symbol of the success of people in America. Moreover, after World War II, the most widespread image was that of the suburban class, with a house in the suburbs, a car, a television or other goods that represented refinement, success and economic status (Campbell & Kean, 2012, pp. 188-212). It is necessary to emphasize a major aspect of this American Dream of consumerism: the final aim of the dream, using the money and wealth obtained for personal fulfillment and happiness.

Upon analysis of the different elements that have been constituting the American dream, the connection between all of them lies in the aforementioned exceptionalist thinking. All the elements that form the different American Dreams of Jim Cullen reflect a positive linkage with their achievement. However, the positive vision is not self-sufficient and the elements that define the immigrants' American Dream are excluded. The actual experiences of immigrants reflect a much more distant reality, with a conception of the American Dream with unfavourable elements. These experiences will therefore be analysed in this paper, following the contextualization of the American Dream in this chapter.

2. Literature and Cinema: Theoretical Framework

The following chapter aims to provide a theoretical basis for the study of literature and cinema. It seeks to outline the similarities and differences between literary theory and cinematographic theory for further analysis of the selected works related to the American Dream. Moreover, it first introduces both media elements as disseminators of the previously contextualised myth. This chapter will be concluded by introducing the intended manner in which the novel and film will be analysed.

The focus is then placed on the following two statements: “by the various voices and multitude of perspectives within American Literature, without specifically referring to the American dream, inherently all have elements of the values that define the ‘dream’” (Izaguirre, 2014, p. 5), and “the Dream has always been shown in American television and movies, with a particular emphasis on the rags- to-riches path” (Khan et al., 2024, p. 1549). Both assertions illustrate the profound significance between the American Dream as an embedded cultural element and literature and cinema as main media where it has been represented and flourished. In the early days of American Literature lies its foundation, becoming both essentially complimentary, rendering impossible to understand the American Dream without literature. Correspondingly, the film industry did not hesitate to embrace a belief already rooted in American society endowed with global resonance. For instance, an extension of the social constructs disseminated by Hollywood is the high audience in cinemas during the 1930s Great Depression, with 5,000 films projected in 22,000 cinemas and a weekly average audience of 70 million people. Hence the film industry used its great mass power to broadcast the American Dream, among other national myths that forged American culture. (Sánchez-Escalonilla, 2022, p. 243)

Once literature and cinema have been introduced, the comparison of both theories follows Perez Bowie's book, *Leer el cine: La teoría literaria en la teoría cinematográfica* (2008). Accordingly, the theoretical similarities and differences are classified into three main different sections subdivided in levels: the section of literature and cinema as created elements, including the vehicle (transmitter) level, the artistic level, the aesthetic

level, the discursive level and the reception level; the section of narration in literature and cinema, including the story level and the discourse level; and finally, the classification section of literature and cinema, including the genre level, the hybridisms of genre level, and the intertextuality level. It is worth mentioning that beyond the sections, the main factor that motivates the different aspects between the two theories is the primary transmission vehicle of cinema, the camera, and its major implications and possibilities.

On the one hand, in terms of the section of elements of creation, literature and cinema belong to the artistic level, as forms of artistic creation. They share their condition of created elements, of elements of aesthetic condition that have entailed a process of expression by an author (Bowie, 2008, p. 24). As products that are rather created not produced, they not merely have a communicative intentionality, but also a social intentionality: to transmit a relevant cultural meaning and provoke a sensorial and sensitive effect. Namely, literature and cinema resemble each other at the discursive level: “sustained and coherent productions of meaning within the overall symbolic functioning of a society” (Bowie, 2008, p. 27). Regardless of how they are conveyed, the process of reception of each media today is essentially identical. The video viewing of films compares to the reading of a written text, due to possibility to pause or skip forwards or backwards the video (Bowie, 2008, pp.182-183). Regarding the section of narration in literature and cinema, among the categories comprising the level of the story, both theories feature similarities in the categories of action and character. On the former, in many literary or filmic creations, such as 19th century short novels and classic films, the plot is based on the elementary principle of causality: a stable situation at the beginning that is altered and needs to be restored. This causality leads to the standardised organised temporal division into scenes or sequences (Bowie, 2008, p. 33). On the latter, film characters are a mere exemplification of literary characters with volition to decide or choose, displaying character traits (Bowie, 2008, p. 36). In narrative discourse, the only category without discrepancy between literature and cinema, is the dimension of time. The complex temporal concepts such as duration find a resolution within the division between the time of the story and the time of the account (Bowie, 2008, pp. 47-48). Finally, in the classification section of literature and cinema, the system of genre is used by both elements. Although not

without controversy, established ideas for considering literary and cinematographic genres is the criteria of repetition and conventionalism in themes, elements or standards, and the criteria of innovation and modification according to periods, cultures or type of recipient (Bowie, 2008, p. 94). In line with the modern notion of genre based on innovations, the level of genre hybridisms is also shared between literature and film, exemplify in the convergence of facts and fiction, for instance, in autobiographies or biographies (Bowie, 2008, pp. 140-145). Furthermore, intertextuality is a practice undertaken by both literature and film, benefiting from other examples of their own art as well as other art forms. Notably, adaptations belong to the intertextuality level.

On the other hand, considering the section of created elements, literature and cinema differ in the vehicle of transmission. While literature uses only words sometimes accompanied by illustrations (more citable character) to convey its message, cinema relies on up to five simultaneous vehicles to convey its message: images, dialogues, noise, music, and written texts (Bowie, 2008, p.12). Consequently, the poetic visuality of cinema with the plasticity and information that images possess, exemplify in the physicality of film characters, endow it with a greater aesthetic property distinct from literature (Bowie, 2008, p. 26). As for the narrative section, differences between the two media elements emerge at the level of the story in the category of space. In literature, the account of the plot and its temporality result in the literary space, whereas in cinema, space is simultaneous to the narration of the plot and the consequence is the temporality (Bowie, 2008, p.34). At the level of discourse, the category of narration remains controversial for both theories. The literary narrator is well defined: if he is within the diegesis, depending on whether or not he appears in the story, homodiegetic or heterodiegetic, and if he is outside the diegesis, extradiegetic. This latter type of narrator occasionally overlaps as in autobiographies with the diegetic narrator due to the vehicle of transmission or is likely to be identify with the implied author. Nonetheless, in cinema, recognizing the enunciating figure of a film is more complex, and the cinematographic narration is usually focused on the recipient as a set of organized indications for his or her comprehension of the story. (Bowie, 2008, p.38-44). Similarly, the figure of the narratee, which in literature would be the receiver of the narration within the

diegesis, is not very much developed in cinema either. Finally, although it is not included in any section, the film is an instrument with a greater capacity to bring reality closer to the audience. Not only through the perception of involvement in the images, but also through its faculty of involuntary reflection on narrative issues, implying a further social assessment of the worldview.

Having theoretically contextualised the American Dream and literature and film as areas of interest, the subsequent two chapters will analyse the novel and the film considering the elements that constitute both areas presented. The historical, cultural and social elements that the myth of the American Dream throughout time, as well as the creative, narrative and genre criteria of literature and film.

3. The American Dream in 19th-century American Literature: *Yekl* by Abraham Cahan

“America for a country and ‘*dod’ll do*’ [that’ll do] for a language!”

Abraham Cahan, *Yekl*

“I am an *American feller*, a *Yankee* — that’s what I am”

Abraham Cahan, *Yekl*

3.1. Brief introduction to Jewish immigration, Jewish American literature and Abraham’s Cahan literature

Published in 1896 at the end of the 19th century, the selected novel for analysis in this chapter that exemplifies this bachelor’s thesis is *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto*. The author of the novel, Abraham Cahan, emigrated from Lithuania to the United States in 1882, fourteen years before writing the book. Being a Jewish immigrant, he belonged to one of the largest immigrant groups arriving in America between 1880 and 1910 seeking stability mostly for political and religious reasons¹ and the impossibility of returning to Europe. America was widely envisioned by Jews as a new “Promised Land”, a refuge from persecution where they could start a new free life in the imaginary new Jerusalem. Within this context, many Jews joined the discourse of assimilation demanded by American culture in order to fulfill their dreams. As rightly Hedhili (2016) expresses “the American dream,

¹ Jews were fleeing the Russian pogroms beginning in 1882, political persecution, military conscription, and ingrained anti-Semitism. (Motley, 2011, p. 12)

mainly at the turn on the century, has excluded immigrants on racial grounds, and demanded cultural assimilation in exchange for opportunity” (p. 19).

Considering this background, by late 19th century, mythic notions of America became a constantly addressed theme in American Jewish literature. Generally, early accounts of Jewish immigrant writing by authors such as Elias Tobenkin, Ezra Brudno, Edward Steiner or Mary Antin² were autobiographical in form and constituted examples of success stories that positively celebrated America and the blending of cultures and identities (Brinker, 1993, p. 4). However, as opposed to his contemporaries, Abraham Cahan was among the first not to praise “The Promised Land”. He became one of first articulators of the emerging literary immigrant voice that developed as the metropolis and the urban world became enshrined and new immigration increased. “He is one of the few writers of the immigrant generation to look beneath the superficial signs of acculturation and probe the complex issues of cultural, generational, and economic conflict” (Brinker, 1993, p. 4). As a member of the social realist literary movement, he expressed a critical view of the aspirations of upward mobility and assimilation into mainstream America society, emphasizing the real dilemma of dichotomy that immigrants, especially Jews, faced between the New World and the Old (their present in America and their past in Europe) and the realization of a new self-consciousness of divided identity.

Largely regarded as one of the earliest examples of American immigrant literature, in *Yekl* Abraham Cahan presents the ghetto and cloak-shop environment of the Lower East Side of New York. He reflects the not very favorable conditions of ordinary characters of questionable morality, far removed from commonly accepted representations by popular romantic fiction. The novel follows the Russian-Jewish protagonist Jake and his new life in New York working in a cloak-shop. He emigrated due to financial reasons leaving behind his wife and their little son in his hometown of Povodye. In United States, Jake seeks to forge

² Namely, Mary Antin in her novel *The Promised Land* (1912) envisioned an immigrant experience in America as a source of opportunities “a second birth” through Americanization and education. She believed in the possibilities of changing the general anti-Semitic social perception or experiencing personal self- fulfillment (Campbell & Kean, 2012, p. 66)(Gümüş, 2021, p. 570).

a new identity as an American man. Among the actions he takes to assimilate he frequents a dance academy and meets various women, especially Mamie. Having embrace a new persona, the arrival in America of his wife and son represents a source of conflict between his new life with his lover Mamie and his detachment from Old World and Jewish past.

As a fundamental and recurring motif of the novel, this chapter first examine the elements that reflect the Americanization of immigrants in their quest to achieve the American Dream. Secondly, it analyzes the expectations and realities of the American Dream version of the book as a reflection of the widespread vision in 19th century.

3.2. Yekl and the Americanization

In spite of being a short novel, it neatly presents the main theme: the protagonist Jake's fierce desire to assimilate a new American identity, that enables him to live a successful life in America and thereby complete the American Dream. Assimilation, as a crucial element, is defined as the integral capacity of personal inclusion in the functioning and intimate forms of association of the host society. This integration is accomplished by means of commitment to the cultural ideals of the community in major areas such as language, religion and manners (Bradbury & Temperley, 1989, p.163) (Campbell & Kean, 2012, p. 61). Numerous elements throughout the novel symbolize and underscore Jake's process of acculturation. Nevertheless, in order for Jake to fulfil the American Dream, he must eventually break with everything that ties him to his past life, and he no longer considers relevant in America. Namely, his family, his wife Gitl and his son (Verschaeve, 1999, p. 5). The process of assimilation that Jake experiences unfolds during the three years he has been living in the United States, and is expressed as:

He had lived so much longer than three years – so much longer, in fact, than in all the twenty-two years of his previous life – that his Russian past seemed to him like a dream and his wife and child, along with his former self, castmates in an enchanting tale, which he was neither willing to banish from his memory nor able to reconcile with the realities of his American present (Cahan, 2024, p. 21).

The first and most significant element of his intention to be identified with an American identity is the change of his name from Yekl to Jake upon his arrival in America. The name is an essential indicator of an individual's identity, being the form a person can be remembered and recognized. "A name is a label for public consumption, and a clearly Jewish name like Yekl, affixes Jake's identity in his new American surroundings as a Jew" (Motley, 2011, p. 7). By deciding to change his name to a more American one, he avoided being associated with his Jewish origins and cultural implications, which was evident in his Jewish name. Besides, the American personality he was trying to develop and the actions he was undertaking in the process would have had less credibility and would have been diminished by introducing himself as Yekl.

Another relevant aspect that recurs throughout the novel is language. It also illustrates what it meant for Jake to acquire an American identity, and the reality of the people surrounding him, which was substantially different. Situating the question of language in the context of the late 19th century, most areas of the country continued providing education in languages other than English. But as the 20th century progressed, the requirement for English as public culture was intensified with campaigns and policies such as night school attendance for foreign and non-native speakers' workers as a condition for employment (Campbell & Kean, 2012, pp. 61-62).

Remarkable over the course of the story are Jake's mentions of his conception of immigrants' well-spoken English as a sign of Americanness and status in the United States. Several references are made by Jake to Mamie's good English, such as, "she speaks English like one American born" (Cahan, 2024, p. 44), whereas he also ridicules the English of his boarder Bernstein and the English learning process of his wife "other *greenhornsh* learn to speak American *shtyle* very fast; and she — one might tell her the same word eighty thousand times, and it is *nu used*" (Cahan, 2024, p. 34). Although his English is limited and he frequently uses Yiddish, like the majority of Jewish immigrants of the East Side, Jake does not hesitate to take pride of his distinctiveness dialect as part of his American persona he is pursuing. For instance, he makes use of it to prevent Gitl from understanding his conversation with Mamie in Chapter 5 (Johnson, 2020, p. 539).

Outward appearance figures prominently within the novel as well reflecting American assimilation and identity. As Schreier (1994) aptly states “turn-of-the century immigrants reported that American clothing and appearance were among the first symbols they adopted as a sign of cultural intermingling” (p. 25). However, the strong emphasis on clothing of Jewish immigrants was a result from their continuous contact with new trends due to their predominance in the garment industry and trades, combined with the religious symbolism it held in their culture. Once again, from Jake's perspective, Mamie epitomizes the model of American appearance and fashion. The depiction of her attire during her visit to Jake and Gitl's apartment, described as wearing a vivid red dress, an ostrich feather headdress, gloves, and a parasol, reinforces Jake's Americanized impression of Mamie (Cahan, 2024, p. 51). In contrast, Gitl's appearance is distinctively framed as un-American on her arrival: she wears traditional Eastern European clothes, a wig to cover her hair and smells strongly due to the long journey. Furthermore, Gitl does not discard the wig and kerchief and leaves her hair uncovered until Chapter 7. Mrs. Kavarsky explains to her that in America it is acceptable for women to show their natural hair and helps Gitl change her external image (Cahan, 2024, p. 57). Much of the reason for the perception of Gitl's appearance as not American is due to the contrast with Jake's poorly considered aspect for the reunion, dressed in his best Yankee clothes and shaved beard (Cahan, 2024, p. 29).

Lastly, equally important as name, language and clothing in Jake's desire to be identified as an American man are his behavior and interests. He must display a character clearly distinguishable from his immigrant environment and adopt manners commonly considered American. In the first chapter, in an attempt to differentiate himself from the rest of the cloak-shop workers (whom he considers ‘*greenhornsh*’³) and to assert his superiority in American affairs, he demonstrates his knowledge of boxing and baseball (Cahan, 2024, pp. 4-5) (Motley, 2011, p. 8). Similarly, the use of the horse car service in Chapter 4, especially on a Sabbath, deeply confuses Gitl, whereas for Jake it is a common habit. Jake, accustomed to behaving as American as possible, considers its use normal, while Gitl, who has barely ever seen a carriage, believes it violates the holy day. Eventually, Jake's interest

³ ‘greenhorns’ is a pejorative term used by Jake to refer to them as inexperienced in American ways.

in the most popular songs in America reflects his intention to be associated with the culture (Cahan, 2024, p. 36).

3.3.Realizing the American Dream in *Yekl*?: Expectations and reality

Having examined the elements that illustrate Jake's assimilation into American culture and identity in the previous section of the chapter, this section analyses whether or not that assimilation ultimately allows him to achieve the American Dream.

As an initial point, it is evident from the previous analysis that Jake's assimilation process is rather based on conceptions and elements that are forced, unnatural, and strongly influenced by the external perception of others. "Jake believes an identity can be substituted or switched with relative ease by mastering a few simple performances: shave off a beard, adopt an American name, and talk about boxing and baseball" (Motley, 2011, p. 8). This erroneous and incomplete idea of American identity and its assimilation is determined by several reasons. Firstly, Jake had first settled in Boston on his arrival in the United States, where he was in contact with the 'Gentile⁴ world', interacted regularly with the English-speaking population, and was more exposed to issues of interest of Americans, such as sports. Therefore, in this context the transition between the two cultures occurred in an organic manner: he was exposed to new American customs, without failing to remember his Russian Jewish past and identity (Gümüş, 2021, p. 567) (Johnson, 2020, p. 525). This is proven in Jake's frequent and enthusiastic allusions to his wife and son during his time in Boston, "that some wags among the Hanover Street tailors would sing 'Yekl and wife and baby' to the tune of Molly and I and the Baby" (Cahan, 2024, p. 20). The second reason is the shift in this dynamic by moving to New York into a deeply Jewish quarter. The natural integration is disrupted, but all the facets of American life that Jake has already experienced in Boston are meaningful. Moreover, since his Jewish faith and beliefs are neither precise upon emigration, his Jewish identity and past are narrowed to a single clear purpose: to earn money to send it

⁴ Non-Jewish person

later to his family in Russia (Johnson, 2020, p. 525). Both previous factors resulted, after the conflict between his previous exposure to American culture and his growing detachment from his Jewish heritage in a restricted neighbor, in Jake identification with the American identity.

Within the setting of the New York ghetto, Jake is increasingly enticed by the world of gallantry, women, and dancing. His ultimate aspiration becomes to be distinguishing himself as an American man, particularly within his Jewish community context, a performance that he believes will bring him closer to achieving the American Dream: to be an independent American man, socially mobile and successful, enjoying the full privileges of American life.

Nevertheless, over the course of the story, Jake becomes more and more desperate to assert this persona, and his conception of it becomes increasingly distorted (Motley, 2011, p. 8). His despair is especially evident with the arrival of Gitl, whose presence signifies, for Jake, a threat to his newfound independence, his new American social life, and his status as an American. In other words, her arrival represents a regression in his pursuit of the American Dream: “All his achievements seemed wiped out by a sudden stroke of ill fate” and he “equally missed the company of Mamie and of all the other dancing school girls, whose society and attentions now more than ever seemed to him necessities of his life” (Cahan, 2024, p. 37) (Verschaeve, 1999, p. 17). Without money, the eventual solution Jake finds possible is to divorce Gitl and marry Mamie, in order to separate from her and maintain his label and identity of “Yankee feller” and thus fully attain the American Dream (Motley, 2011, p. 12).

Paradoxically, in the final chapter, when Jake has already divorced Gitl, and is able to begin a new life with Mamie, he feels rejection towards her and feels that she no longer embodies his happy future of the American Dream: “Still worse than this for a taste of liberty was a feeling which was now gaining upon him, that instead of a conqueror, he had emerged from the rabbi’s house the victim of an ignominious defeat” (Cahan, 2024, p. 37). Precisely, Jake realizes the factors that have resulted in the failure of his American Dream of his

American identity. The complete denial of his Russian-Jewish past, the patrimony he will never be able to get rid of and is preventing him from achieving his dream of American manhood and becoming Americanized as he wished. This is obvious in the novel in the figure of Gitl, who, surprisingly, while remaining true to his inner Jewish identity, ends up experiencing an American natural assimilation. Furthermore, Jake understands that his future with Mamie (due to his notion and model of American identity) will only entail the continuation of an Americanness rooted in most vague and incomplete practices, rather than an ideological American viewpoint (Motley, 2011, p. 12). Indeed, the American identity they both understand comes from what they interpret as American from observing the other Jewish-Americans of the Lower East Side of New York, where there were few opportunities to mingle with the gentiles (Gümüş, 2021, p. 569).

Ultimately, Cahan's narrative portrays the assimilation of American identity in critical manner, offering a questionable example where it does not stand as a gateway for realizing the American Dream. His questioning arises from his adherence to ill-conceived thoughts and customs, often formulated from an outsider's perspective. Likewise, the resulting clash between Jake's experiences of American life in Boston and the constricted environment of the Lower East Side condition his accomplishment. However, Abraham Cahan also presents the ambivalence of assimilation, particularly of the Jewish immigrants and suggests the possibilities of signifying the American Dream, if a natural and organic process is followed.

4. The American Dream in 20th-century American Cinema: *The Godfather Part II*

The preceding chapter, the analysis of Abraham Cahan's *Yekl : A Tale of the New York Ghetto*, offers an evaluative overview of how 19th century American literature becomes recurrently engaged with the questioning of the viability of the American Dream for immigrants. Embracing a realist aesthetic, Abraham Cahan's narrative challenges the expectations of prosperity in America, especially for Jewish immigrants. He presents through the protagonist of the novel Jake, the inner and cultural clash arising from the blending of cultures, caught between assimilation and attachment to the past, with the promise of a fulfilling future in America compromised by personal loss, fragmented identity and moral decay (Brinker, 1993).

This early and emergent more critical view in 19th century literature of the American Dream of immigrants, as exemplified by Cahan's work, finds a 20th century continuation in the film industry. As a new mass media, disseminator from its beginnings of the American Dream, continued to represent it, to explore similar limitations and reformulating it. A paradigmatic example of the depiction of the American Dream of immigrants in cinema is the film selected for analysis in this chapter , *The Godfather Part II* (1974).

The Godfather Part II (1974), directed by Francis Ford Coppola and partly based on the novel *The Godfather* (1969) by Mario Puzo, co-writer of the films' screenplays as well, surpassed its predecessor by winning six Oscars (Frybort, 2019, p. 5). Serving as both prequel and sequel, the movie features two interrelated and juxtaposed plotlines: the rise of Vito Corleone from a young Sicilian immigrant to a feared American mob boss, and the rise of his son Michael Corleone as Don. The film begins abruptly at the funeral of Vito's father, Antonio Andolini, in the village of Corleone, with the murder of Vito's elder brother. Hence, Vito emigrates to New York, where he establishes himself as a mafia leader in the 1920s. Simultaneously, Michael struggles to maintain the authority and legitimacy of the family empire in the late 1950s (Chouana, 2024, p. 713).

Prior to an in-depth cinematographic analysis of the film, it is fundamental to frame it in the context of Italian immigration and its representation in American cinema.

4.1. Brief history of Italian immigration and the portrayal of Italian Americans in films

The Godfather Part II is included within the gangster movies of American cinema, a genre that has frequently portrayed a stereotypical Italian American related to organized crime, giving rise to a screen persona seeking the pervasive myth of the American Dream from the most corrupt and outlawed position (Maranzana, 2017, p. 2).

Notably, from the 1880s until the Quota Acts of 1921 and 1924, there was a massive immigration of nearly 5 million Italians to the United States. This movement was mainly prompted by the economic crisis that the country faced at the end of the century and the reunification that happened between 1815 and 1871 (Frybort, 2019, p. 9). The majority of the immigrants came from southern regions of Italy and were illiterate peasants. They were accommodated by the *padrones*⁵, providing them with lodging, employment and basic services such as translation. Nevertheless, certain cultural structures of the Sicilian Mafia migrated to the United States as well, and many gangs established in the impoverished neighborhoods such as East Harlem, the Lower East Side, and Brooklyn (Chouana, 2024, p. 709).

During the early decades of the 20th century, known as the Silent Era of cinema (1900-1928 approximately), Italian immigrants, along with other ethnic groups in America, became a recurring topic of the screen. Italian immigrants with traditional clothing and intriguing foreign surnames were depicted in a gently humorous archetypal manner in films such as, *Tony America* (1918), *My Cousin* (1918) and *Lombardi, Ltd.* (1919). They became a representative example of ‘white’ European immigrants, and although occasionally their experience in America was seriously portrayed as in *The Italian* (1914), it was not

⁵ The *padrones* were also immigrants who had already settled in America and even ascended socially in the country (Frybort, 2019, p. 12).

comparable to the harsh and unsalvageable through Americanization depiction of the 'colored' ethnic groups: "Italian-Americans seldom participated in such silent film social deviance; their days of widespread screen gangsterism would not arrive until the 1930s" (Cortés, 1987, p. 109). Within the context of the Great Depression (1929-1939) Hollywood became interested in immigrant crime largely because conflict generated audiences and ethnic gangsterism served as a barometer to illustrate the nation's social and economic changes, issues and failures⁶. Hollywood focused primarily on the gangsterism of three immigrant groups: the Chinese-Americans, *Chinatown Nights* (1930) and *The Mysterious Mr. Wong* (1935); the Irish-Americans, *Public Enemy* (1931) and *The Roaring Twenties* (1939); and thoroughly the Italian-Americans. The movies that first introduced the figure of the Italian gangster were *Little Caesar* (1930) and *Scarface* (1939), both based on the life of Al Capone. (Cortés, 1987, p. 110).

4.2.Vito's American Dream: Arrival in America, adaptation and ascent



Figure 1:

Screenshot from the scene of Vito Corleone and the rest of the immigrants admiring the Statue of Liberty upon their arrival by boat in New York (0:07:54).

Source: Coppola, F. F. (Director). (1974). *The Godfather Part II* [Film]. Paramount Pictures.

⁶ In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the criminal activities of figures such as Al Capone, John Dillinger, and Bonnie and Clyde were seen as a form of national heroism in the context of the Great Depression, when many Americans were ruined (Chouana, 2024, pp. 710-711).

Since *The Godfather Part II* features a dual timeline, it allows the distinction of two different versions of the American Dream embodied by Vito Corleone and Michael Corleone respectively. Yet, as disillusioning and divergent as these versions may seem separately, the linear continuity resulting from the temporal narrative structure enables the unified understanding as ultimate tragic expression of the American Dream for immigrants. Building on the previous distinction, this section of the chapter addresses Vito's American Dream, his arrival in United States, his adaptation and his ascent.

Vito's confinement for 3 months at Ellis Island on suspicion of smallpox is the first indicators for Vito that America is not the land of freedom, prosperity and opportunity he is fleeing to (Coppola, 1974, 0:10:19).

Vito Corleone's American Dream is profoundly rooted in providing a better life for his growing family in the United States. Nonetheless, the journey towards attaining this dream is complex and blends the reality of the limited opportunities for immigrants in America and the dependence on his Italian background in the New World. Despite now living in the United States, he remains relegated to a small quarter of Italian community that closely resembles his Old World. Little Italy, similarly to the Sicilian village, is marked by the absence of legal order and it is exemplified by Don Fanucci's dominance of the neighborhood, just as Don Ciccio ruled in Corleone. Furthermore, throughout the film Vito speaks exclusively in Italian with his family, his partners and the community, reinforcing the traditional and cultural feeling and the bittersweet assimilation process (Cantor, 2019, p. 49).

Although the possibilities of upgrading to America were limited, Vito initially follows the traditional ethic of hard work and sacrifice to achieve the American Dream and begins working in a grocery store. However, when Don Fanucci forces the store owner to dismiss him (Coppola, 1974, 0:51:05), Vito understands that his American Dream, his job and his family's future and economic security, are under menace. He realizes that hard work alone is not enough to prosper and achieve the Dream in a community in the United States, which instead of freeing people from the shackles of the Old World subjects them to the constructs of the modern New World, where success is reduced to crime through figures absent from moral or justice system consequences. It is at this point that he decides to start committing

robberies with Clemenza and Tessio, ultimately culminating in the murder of Don Fanucci (Coppola, 1974, 02:03:05).

As a result of these actions, Vito manages to fulfill his American Dream, even though his path to success is built upon violence and illegal means, illustrating the realistic experience of many immigrants like him: “The immigrant, precisely because he is not fully accepted into mainstream America, is forced to survive on its margins and thus is tempted by and drawn into a life of crime.” (Cantor, 2019, p. 49). He becomes a successful entrepreneur with Genco Olive Oil Company, a provider for his family and a respected man in the community.

By presenting Vito's transformation from a vulnerable young Sicilian immigrant to a powerful mafia figure shaped by his environment and external circumstances who acts for the good of his family and community, the film leaves the viewer to decide whether to consider him a ruthless criminal or a sympathetic antihero. As Cantor (2019, p. 58) observes, “How can we not sympathize with the emergent godfather when the first thing that we see Vito do with his newfound power is to take the side of a poor widow against a money-grubbing landlord?” (Coppola, 1974, 02:15:15).

4.3. Michael's American Dream: Assimilation, disillusionment and decay

As previously analyzed, Vito Coleone's American Dream is centered on family, but it is morally ambiguous. Conversely, the film presents Michael Corleone in his most adopted expression of the American Dream. At the beginning of the movie, Michael is introduced as having successfully assimilated into mainstream America, as evidence by the Lake Tahoe party (Coppola, 1974, 0:11:43).

There are, however, two specific moments from the party that perfectly illustrate the significant cost Michael has already paid for being in this position. The first is when his son, Anthony Corleone summarizes his celebration saying: “I got lots of presents; I didn't know the people who gave them to me”. (Coppola, 1974, 0:42:13). This comment remarks the superficial and void nature of Michael's social American environment, characterized by near

absence of Italian presence or Italian heritage. Moreover, it underscores his minor concern to his son not knowing virtually any of his guests on his celebration day, revealing how far removed he is from authentic familiar values. The second moment is when his wife Kay reminds him that five years ago he made the promise to legitimize the family, and seven years have passed, and still nothing has changed (Coppola, 1974, 0:33:51). This reflects how Michael Corleone's American Dream (and hence that of the Corleone family, which was already compromised by Vito Corleone's) continues to be based on illegal activities, far from the true ethics of the American Dream. As Cantor so rightly asserts (2019, pp. 52-53): "Struggling to liberate and legitimate his family, he ends up subjecting it to the impersonal forces of a modern corporate America, which drain the life out of it". Both examples from the party reflect the utter failure of the version of the American Dream embodied by Michael Corleone.

Throughout the film, he is driven to dehumanizing mafia cruelty by the idea of maintaining his power by any means, claiming that everything he does is for the benefit and protection of his family. Moving one step further than his father Vito, he allies himself with the Rosato brothers and with Heyman Roth to expand his empire abroad. In the same way, he manages to defeat all of his enemies. "Paradoxically, for Michael to Americanize and modernize the mob is to make it more unfeeling, ruthless, and brutal" (Cantor, 2019, p. 75).

The tragedy of Michael's American Dream begins to become apparent when he discovers, in the middle of his trial process, that his wife Kay has intentionally aborted the child they were expecting together. She didn't want to bring a child into a marriage surrounded by criminality where she no longer feels love (Coppola, 1974, 02:37:41). His desire to maintain his success and power at all costs is causing him to lose the family that he has declared to have fought so hard for. The culmination of his decadence and his complete blindness is evident when at the end of the film he manages to seize custody of Kay and keep the children for himself. He further kills his own brother Fredo for being a mole in his own organization and conspiring with Heyman Roth against him. As can be observed in the final scene of the movie (Coppola, 1974, 03:16:06), Michael has become a victim of the American Dream. Having achieved all that America had to offer him, and being late to attend the moral

components, his success has ended with his loneliness, emptiness and isolation (Cantor, 2019, p. 83).

4.4. Aesthetics of the film reinforcing the portraying the American Dream

Previously mentioned, the dual timeline of the film's cinematic narrative plays a crucial role in the perception of the characters Vito and Michael, and their respective American Dreams. Moreover, the aesthetic choices and visual storytelling help to reinforce the movie's exploration of the Dream.

One of the most illustrative scenes is the arrival by boat of a multitude of Italian immigrants in New York (Coppola, 1974, 0:07:12). Additionally, this scene is accompanied by the music “The Immigrant” by Nino Rota, which, in a non-diegetic way, expresses with the crescendos the aspirations of the immigrants and with the melancholic tone that characterizes the theme, the nostalgia of leaving their country (Chouana, 2024, p. 719-720).

The movie also features visual distinctions in the scenes of the two protagonists' temporal frameworks. Vito's timeline, structured in the classic order of a narrative of immigrant success in the United States and showing his process of adaptation to America, contains scenes with sepia color and reduced spaces with little light. Examples of this include the dark scenes in his small apartment in New York with his family, evoking a homely feeling that supports the importance of the family in his quest for prosperity in America. In contrast, Michael's scenes in Nevada are brighter, but are often centered on interior spaces and shots that center only on his figure, even when he is surrounded by people, which emphasizes his alienation (Lamberti, 2005, p. 63).

In essence, *The Godfather Part II* is an insightful cinematic masterpiece that articulates not merely a questionable, but a 20th century disjointed vision of the American Dream. The film chronicles through the stories of Vito and Michael Corleone how a new beginning in the alluring and welcoming United States, whether intentional or unintentional as a result of the context and environment, ends up turning into a nightmarish experience of

the American Dream. It presents the tragic and dark but frequently general side of immigration to the United States, exploring the impossibility of separating the more illegitimate activities and the nature of the pursuit of the American Dream (Cantor, 2019, p. 50).

Conclusion

This academic paper conducts an immersive study of the cultural myth of the American Dream to establish the evolution as it has been experienced and represented in the figure of immigrants in the 19th and 20th centuries by means of two quintessential cultural works of different media: the novel *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto* (1896) and film *The Godfather Part II* (1974). The immigrant stories that have been instrumental in constructing and perpetuating this mythic narrative, while not reducible to a single signifier, generally present a profound sense of placeness and social and economic discrepancy. Immigrants commonly undergo an individual deep feeling of confusion with their identity and belonging, as they find themselves socially and culturally alienated from the place they are trying to assimilate into and their homeland. Equally, the social and economic barriers of the environment they faced intensify the sense of disparity and discomfort, as they observe their own insufficient realities alongside the abundance of opportunities and fortune just beyond their reach. In line with these, the immigrant experiences analyzed in *Yekl* and *The Godfather Part II* offer an example of criticism on the optimistic premise of the attainment of the American Dream. Through the protagonists of both works, it is narrated how an originally promising and optimistic ideal of a future in America, gradually turns into a moral, identity and power corruption, even to its obscurest and distorted versions.

The comparative analysis of both works, while aiming to show the historical transformations for immigrants through its differences in depictions of the American Dream, reveals shared expected critical concerns associated with fractured identity and morality. For all three central characters studied, Abraham Cahan's Jake and Francis Coppola's Vito and Michael Corleone, the achievement of the American Dream requires the renunciation of identity or morality, entailed in one degree or another by external cultural, economic or social forces. In *Yekl*, Jake's desperate attachment to his American integration leads him to detach himself from his Jewish personality and past and acquire superficial values and coarse qualities, which further disrupt and fragilize his identity and compromise his happiness. As for *The Godfather Part II*, a world outside the control of political institutions drags Vito and

Michael into a corruption of their identity and morality, diminishing communal, familial and Italian heritage values for the survival of materialism and power in America.

The two works share this main critique of the American Dream, but upon analysis, *Yekl's* novel can be situated in a different period the lived evolution of immigrant's American Dream than *The Godfather Part II*, when growing skepticism co-occurs with the persistent illusion of the attainment of the Dream, especially under the premise of assimilation. On the one hand, Abraham Cahan presents a realistic picture of an unfavorable labor and social environment for immigrants at the end of the 19th century. He presents their agglutination in the common ghettos, where there were few possibilities to mingle with the native English or in this particular instance with non-Jewish population, evident in the area of language, for example. It also illustrates how immigrants, in this case Jews in the cloak industry, were mostly only required for exploitative labor, without many opportunities of better employment. However, on the other hand, by focusing on Jake's assimilation into American society from the more inaccurate perspective of the misconceived American values and actions, he evinces the path not to be followed by immigrants. Abraham Cahan establishes the prospects of Americanization for a successful life in America and realization of the American Dream by a natural process of acculturation, without denying the identity of the past and having a progressive and organic exposure to the American culture. The viability of assimilation is underscore in the figure of Gitl at the end of the novel and in the mention of Jake's past experiences in Boston.

Regarding *The Godfather Part II*, the expression of the American Dream reaches its most cynical and darkest side, providing an evolved nightmare representation included in the 20th. Coppola decides to treat the American Dream in a very serious way by showing the tragedy of the immigrant experience in America and dismissing all remaining illusions of its attainment.. Through Micheal Corleone, who embodies material and power maintenance at all costs, is presented the loss of ethical grounding and the fine line between criminality and the nature of the pursuit of the Dream.

Ultimately, this essay has traced the evolution of the American Dream as experienced by immigrants and thus represented, from the beginnings of its questioning in the 19th

century to its disarticulation in the 20th century, and has been supported by literature and film over these centuries. As a globally recognized myth that has articulated the American identity, it has given coherence and substance to the migratory experience. Understood as a nightmare, it allows to highlight discriminatory attitudes and awareness and to remind Americans of what they should do better to embody such a significant ideal. Finally, as a dream, it allows the coexistence of ethnic diversity with a number of different traditions and cultural expressions.

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