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"The American Dream" in Norman Mailer's novel and travelogue "O'key, an American Novel" by B. Pilnyak: Shattered Illusions and Rethought Dreams / "Американская мечта" в романе Нормана Мейлера и травелоге «О'кей. Американский роман» Б. Пильняка: разрушенные иллюзии и переосмысленные мечты

Альбулани Альван Хассан

ORCID: 0000-0003-0997-5472

доктор филологических наук

аспирант, кафедра русской и зарубежной литературы, Российский университет дружбы народов

117198, Россия, г. Москва, ул. Миклухо-Маклая, 6

✉ 1042218123@pfur.ru



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Аннотация: Концепт «мечты» как стержня американской литературы признается большинством литературоведов. Утверждение и апологетика «американской мечты», которая связана с традициями критического реализма, остается предметом дискуссии как зарубежных, так и российских исследователей. Литературоведческие исследования концепта «американской мечты», побуждают нас к критическому анализу убеждений, опыта и чаяний, лежащих в ее основе, а также ее более широких последствий для

общества. Предметом настоящей статьи является концепт «американской мечты», анализируемый на базе романа Нормана Мейлера «Американская мечта» (1946) и модернистского травелога «О'кей. Американский роман» Бориса Пильняка (1933). Представлены различные подходы к определению «американской мечты», представленные в российской и зарубежной литературе. Проанализированы источники и предпосылки возникновения феномена «американской мечты» в американской литературе. Используя описательный, герменевтический, сопоставительный, историко-литературный и историко-культурный методы, автор рассматривает незатронутые в ранее опубликованных научных работах детали данного концепта. Результаты исследования. Исследование показало, что провал проекта «американской мечты» приводит к ее реструктуризации, что подтверждает ее самостабилизирующий характер и основополагающую роль в процессе личностного самоопределения персонажа. Мейлер, глубоко укоренившийся в американской культуре, критикует американскую мечту изнутри, подчеркивая индивидуализм, социальное давление и стремление к успеху. Напротив, Пильняк предлагает нам иной взгляд на «американскую мечту». Это взгляд советского писателя, подчеркивающего взаимосвязь американской мечты с капитализмом, демократией и общественными преобразованиями. Выводы. Несмотря на выявленные различия во взглядах, оба автора побуждают читателей критически отнестись к обещаниям и ловушкам американской мечты, обогащая наше понимание ее универсальной привлекательности и непреходящей актуальности. Полученные автором результаты могут быть использованы как в практике литературной критики, так и в практике сравнительных исследований.

Ключевые слова:

сравнительное исследование, русская литература, американская литература, индивидуализм, коллективизм, культурная перспектива, концепт, американская мечта, Норман Мейлер, Борис Пильняк

1. Introduction

The study of the nature of the concept in linguistics at the present stage is of paramount importance. Objective reality and, in particular, culture are reflected in language, which, in turn, participates in the formation of concepts in the form of which "culture enters the mental world of man". The structure of the concept is multi-layered, it is formed under the influence of linguistic, socio-cultural, and cognitive factors.

The concept of the "American Dream" is one of the main components of the mentality, culture, history, social and political life of the United States; a myth that is deeply rooted in the mass consciousness, predetermined the perception of the world by Americans. The American Dream played a crucial role in the formation of the American state and nation, had a decisive influence on the formation of the American national character, and determined the relationship of the United States with the outside world.

The question on the "American dream"'s emergence remains open and causes a number of disagreements. The phrase "American Dream" was first used by Henry Adams in The History of the United States back in 1884. In his prologue to "The American Adam," R. W. B. Lewis offers a thought-provoking perspective on the American experience: "There may be no such thing as 'American experience'; it is probably better not to insist that there is. But there has been experience in America, and the account of it has had its own specific form." [\[2, p.](#)

[8\]](#). He suggests that rather than viewing the American experience as a singular entity, it may be more productive to recognize the diversity of experiences unfolding within the American landscape. Lewis implies that attempting to homogenize the American experience may oversimplify its complexities and overlook the rich tapestry of narratives contributing to its collective identity. However, he acknowledges that there have indeed been distinct experiences within America, each with its unique form and expression. By emphasizing the specificity of these accounts, Lewis invites readers to appreciate the multiplicity of voices and perspectives that have shaped the American narrative over time. His commentary encourages us to embrace the diversity of experiences within America while recognizing the importance of exploring and understanding the various forms through which these experiences are articulated.

Adams's portrayal of the American Dream as a beacon of hope and aspiration resonates deeply throughout history, symbolizing the promise of upward mobility and success through hard work and determination [\[1\]](#). However, as we reflect on Adams's words, we must also acknowledge the dissonance between the idealized vision of the American Dream and the harsh realities of American society. Systemic inequalities, economic disparities, and social barriers often impede the realization of equal opportunity for all citizens, challenging the fulfillment of the American Dream for specific individuals or marginalized groups.

Despite these challenges, the concept of the American Dream continues to evolve, adapting to societal changes, culture, and politics. Contemporary discussions surrounding social justice, economic equality, and the role of government in ensuring equal opportunity highlight the ongoing relevance and significance of Adams's vision. Ultimately, engaging with Adams's words prompts us to reflect on our beliefs, experiences, and aspirations about the American Dream while encouraging critical examination of its broader implications for society.

Russian scholar R. Ia. Batalov provides an insightful perspective on the driving force behind the American Dream, highlighting freedom as its central theme. He elucidates how America, perceived as a land of opportunity, attracted individuals worldwide seeking liberation from historical burdens, social constraints, and class hierarchies prevalent in Europe. Batalov emphasizes that this freedom encompasses independence from past constraints and the freedom of self-creation and self-realization. This concept represents a significant shift in individuals' ability to shape their destinies, transcending mere geographic and historical contexts. Batalov's analysis underscores the transformative potential of the American Dream, offering a nuanced understanding of its allure to immigrants and dreamers across generations. Through his commentary, Batalov prompts reflection on the multifaceted nature of freedom within the American Dream, highlighting its intrinsic connection to human autonomy and self-expression. Batalov underlines the interconnectedness of the "myth-Dream" and the "myth-Idea," underscoring their thematic closeness despite inherent distinctions. The American Dream not only portrays an idealized nation but also embodies "the American Dream is [...] a myth about a great people who boldly pushes the boundaries [...] of the existing world, opens up new horizons for humanity in all areas of activity, inspires other peoples by his own example and is ready to assist them in the struggle for freedom" [\[3, p. 35\]](#).

In a recent examination and contemporary reinterpretation of the nuanced meanings attributed to the "Russian idea" and the "American Dream," Russian author Elena Golovina reflects on their shared origins and subsequent divergence: "The Russian idea and the American dream have much in common; both of these utopias were progressive for their

time and their people, both are now in decline" [4, p. 1]. Both utopias had common features at the beginning: labor, a collective principle, thanks to which both the American colonists and the Russian village survived. Then they diverged in their ideas about life – when the American dream adopted individualism and the desire to get rich through work, and the Russian idea followed the path of a further collective principle, which from the village turned into a national one, replacing itself with the Soviet idea."

The image of the "American dream" is invisibly present in all American literature of the 20th century. This is one of the traditional themes of the American novel, which has received different interpretations and assessments at different stages of the development of literature. Norman Mailer is a novelist, publicist, screenwriter, film director — a landmark phenomenon for American literature of the second half of the twentieth century. Mailer is the author of over 40 books, including both novels and nonfiction works. In his work, Mailer explores the phenomenon of the embodied myth of the "American dream", realizing various figurative concepts of "dreams" in the life path of the characters in his works - American existentialist rebels. "The American Dream" is one of the notable novels by Norman Mailer, a writer who "sought in his works to revive the American dream of limitless opportunities for all Americans." Boris Pilnyak, an eyewitness, a caring observer, an active participant in the life of the early twentieth century, is today perceived as a chronicler of the era. He lived in an era of global change. The scale of events associated with the fascination with the philosophy of F. Nietzsche, A. Bergson, A. Schopenhauer, together with his personal characteristics and admiration for the work of Andrei Bely, determined the paradoxical nature of artistic thinking and the experimental nature of his prose. "O'key, an American Novel" was published in 1933. Direct impressions of what he saw, from numerous meetings and events were included in B. Pilnyak's travelogue. In our opinion, this work is unfairly ignored by numerous researchers both in Russia and in the West, since this particular book by the writer is more relevant than ever today. Pilniak visited the United States in the midst of the worst economic crisis in American history. At that time, industrial construction was on the rise in the USSR. Naturally, there is a parallel between these countries throughout the book [5]. Pilniak opens and closes his "American novel" with such comparisons. The purpose of this article is a comparative analysis of the concept of the "American dream", presented in the novels "The American Dream" (1965) by Norman Mailer and "O'key, an American Novel" (1933) by Boris Pilnyak. To achieve this goal, the work uses descriptive, hermeneutical, comparative, historical-literary and historical-cultural methods for analyzing texts.

2. Discussion of the results

2.1. Unravelling "An American Dream": Norman Mailer's Insight

The postwar era, specifically the late 1940s and the 1950s, witnessed significant changes in American society. The war had ended, leading to a period of economic growth and stability. The American Dream meant believing in progress, pursuing material success, and the ideal of a stable and prosperous family life. It often involved owning a home, a car, and other symbols of affluence. The prevailing cultural narrative emphasized conformity, suburban living, and the nuclear family as the epitome of success. Norman Mailer's exploration of the postwar tenets of the Dream in his novel likely engages with these complex socio-cultural dynamics, offering a critical perspective on the American Dream's promises and the realities of the American experience during this period, the collective aspirations and challenges faced by Americans in the aftermath of World War II, as well as the evolving nature of the concept in a changing social landscape.

Examining the perspectives and challenges of the characters in each novel becomes an essential facet in unraveling the intricacies of the American Dream. The protagonists, conduits for the authors' thematic exploration, navigate a complex terrain that reflects and challenges societal aspirations. Each character becomes a lens through which the American Dream is filtered, offering unique insights into how individuals engage with this elusive concept.

Norman Mailer's thematic consistency throughout his novels, despite shifts in writing style and responses from critics, revolves around the disturbance experienced by individuals oppressed by the state. This overarching theme manifests in various contexts, whether through the crucible of war or the perpetuation of government ideologies. Mailer's characters are often products of the absurdities he witnessed during wartime, serving as vessels to explore the traumas and disparities inherent in the American way of life and its maintenance.

The lens through which Mailer examines oppression, particularly by the state, reflects a keen awareness of the power dynamics and societal structures. War, as a brutal manifestation of State power, becomes a crucible for the formation of characters who grapple with the traumatic consequences of conflict. Mailer delves into the psychological and emotional toll inflicted upon individuals caught in the machinations of war, shedding light on the dissonance between the ideals and the harsh realities faced by those directly affected.

The critique extends beyond the battlefield to encompass the broader scope of government ideologies. Mailer's exploration of how these ideologies perpetuate oppression underscores his commitment to unearthing the complexities of societal power dynamics. His characters navigate not only the external threats posed by war but also the internal conflicts stemming from the tension between individual identity and the demands of a system that may not prioritize their well-being [\[8\]](#).

Norman Mailer was an eyewitness to the post-war period, with its anguish and developments – a society undergoing a profound re-evaluation of values before and after these events. For many thinkers, the beginning of the 20th century represented the peak of humanist thought. Science was consolidating itself as a great producer of human knowledge; that is, the emergence and consolidation of the scientific method generated its fruits, which were not always positive, such as the willingness to go to war. It meant a breakthrough for humanity.

Almost everything could be answered through the scientific method, even the most profound subjective questions. Even though the method applied to science has promoted advances, a dynamic of objectivity, of deep-rooted and overwhelming positivism in human relations, has also been consolidated. The human being, his ideas, history, and struggles suffered from an erasure encouraged by the idea of progress, of unification of states and nations, by sacrifice for the benefit of the collective.

Mailer's choice of title for his novel "An American Dream" signals the writer's intention to examine the intricate layers of the "subterranean river" that flows beneath the surface of the American experience. It becomes a literary invitation to explore the dichotomies, complexities, ecstasy, and violence embedded in the postwar hopes of a better life, often characterized by socio-economic and cultural ideals that shaped the aspirations of many Americans. The American Dream itself revolves around the idea that anyone, regardless of their background, can achieve success, prosperity, and upward mobility in the United States

through hard work and determination.

The title is a great provocation, as it proposes precisely the opposite, a deconstruction of the notion of harmony and social symmetry of the American state, showing how government agendas, aspirations, and games of the rich and powerful transform the lives of others into mere illusions, reducing them to invisibility or disguised oppression. There is no dream if we can understand Norman Mailer's final message that way. We only call dreams what we do not experience, which does not mean something is necessarily good. Thus, we can only believe in the American Dream of the promised land, of all opportunities through separation or alienation.

The novel stands distinctively apart from conventional classifications, straddling the realms between a thriller and a more intricate form of fiction. It defies easy categorization and is not confined to simple fantasy or mimetic fiction constraints. Instead, Mailer crafts a narrative that pulsates with a thriller's energy while offering a profound commentary on the multifaceted nature of the myth.

Mailer witnessed the transition of "worlds" from the modern world, rooted in scientific tradition, method, and collective aspiration for homogeneity, to the postmodern world, full of confusion, options, and disorientations. In a very particular way, he chose to defend humans when science was suffocating and human values when the chaos of a society without parameters, the postmodern, was lost in demagoguery, hypocrisy, and false freedom.

"An American Dream" thrusts readers into the psyche of its protagonist, Stephen Rojack. Rojack's perspective becomes a vehicle for Mailer to dissect the promises and perils of the Dream. Rojack's challenges and decisions unravel the complexities of the pursuit of success and happiness, allowing readers to grapple with the moral ambiguities accompanying the quest for the myth.

By eschewing the traditional heroic archetype and embracing the anti-heroic, Mailer challenges readers to grapple with the moral ambiguities inherent in the human condition. The novel becomes a mirror reflecting the multifaceted nature of individuals, encouraging a deeper exploration of the motivations, contradictions, and consequences that accompany the choices people make. Rojack, as the anti-hero, embodies the complexities and contradictions within each person, acting as a catalyst for introspection and a lens through which readers can scrutinize their own lives.

Norman Mailer, deeply rooted in his American cultural milieu, provides readers with insider perspectives on the Dream. Grounding his exploration of the intricate nuances and historical experiences of his native culture, Mailer navigates the terrain of the Dream with an intimate understanding, capturing its essence through the lens of his insider status.

In "An American Dream," we identify a thesis postulated in this sense: to reveal the oppressed and liberate them from the almost atavistic erasure that accompanied almost half a century of our history until the sexual and civil rights revolution of the 1960s. Mailer creates a strange, rejected, unhappy character, portraying the consequences of the erasing state. This criticism was not readily embraced, as Mailer faced significant rejection when making complaints against a system already widely accepted. Execration and false accusations were constant in the lives of writers who tried to denounce abuses considered lawful at that time. Also, confessing anguish in a time of such progress, when science was solidifying and man's transformative power gained gigantic proportions, was considered highly anti-nationalist and reactionary. It was as if Mailer occupied two spaces in recent

history: conservative when criticizing a state that promoted advances and modern, from the current perspective, when repudiating such abuses. He understood the state's support for science as a possibility of control and manipulation. However, at the same time, he believed in the questioning power of thinking man that this exact science could produce.

It was only after the outbreak of social movements that marked the historical changes of the 1960s that writers from the past began to be heard as precursors of a new and controversial debate, postmodernity. Going beyond some debates about the existence or not of postmodernity and accepting this fact, especially for the American reality, writers contemporary to Mailer used the constant feeling of disorientation to question traditional social structures: the government, moral deviations, the condition of (dis)privileged, sex, politics.

Exploring Mailer's ideas within "An American Dream" paradoxically becomes a profound endeavor to unravel the intricate tapestry of the reality that shapes our contemporary existence. The thematic elements embedded in Mailer's narrative resonate with the persistent challenges surrounding violence and state relations, issues initially believed to be harmonized by the nascent concept of democracy. Today, these enduring dilemmas continue to perplex historians, writers, and governments grappling with the complexities of governance.

In the evolving landscape of nations, the rise and fall of states become manifestations of intricate processes where erasures, alienation, and shifts in consciousness intertwine. What was once seen as a utopian vision of democracy now stands juxtaposed against the stark realities of power struggles, societal fractures, and geopolitical tensions. Mailer's exploration of these themes in "An American Dream" serves as a poignant commentary on the enduring challenges faced by societies attempting to navigate the delicate balance between individual freedoms and the responsibilities of the state.

In the contemporary era, the quintessential man is an amalgamation of diverse processes, characterized by an array of emotions and possessing an identity as dynamic and changeable as his life choices. Mailer's narrative invites us to contemplate the intricate interplay between individual agency and societal forces, prompting us to question the nature of identity in a world where values, ideologies, and personal convictions are in constant flux.

2.2. Beyond Borders: Boris Pilnyak's Outsider Perspective on the American Dream

According to Sheila Fitzpatrick, the intertwining of power and culture was inevitable during the initial two decades following the Bolshevik Revolution. This interpretation pertains explicitly to 1920s Russia, where power was synonymous with state authority. For the Bolsheviks, this authority manifested as the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, many members of the intelligentsia viewed it more narrowly as the dictatorship of the Bolshevik Party and later the Communist Party. In this milieu, culture encompassed literature and various arts, spanning both Russian and Western traditions, past and present, with Russian intellectuals widely acknowledged as custodians of cultural values.

Despite this, the Bolsheviks often contended that the intelligentsia protected high culture because it was perceived as "bourgeois," in contrast to the supposedly "proletarian" culture. Nevertheless, culture served as a contested arena where the power struggle could be won or lost [\[6, p. 1-2\]](#). Post-war Europe provided ideological material but did not represent a particularly novel theme in and of itself for the imagination of the Soviet reader. The borders had closed a few years ago, and the ties with European nations remained

consistent. Europe was a primarily known continent. The approach towards some emerging nations was different, especially in Asia (primarily Japan), and above all towards the other great nation that embodied an exciting, mythopoetic idea of the New World: the United States of America. This explains why, between the twenties and thirties, the most significant (and influential in terms of editorial circulation) reportages by Soviet writers were dedicated to the "discovery" of America and its comparison with the USSR.

In his volume *Red Virgin Soil* (1987), Robert A. Maguire contends that the conflict, often subtly hinted at in other early stories, is explicitly articulated: "instinct versus intellect, nature versus civilization, chaos versus logic." This dichotomy remained a characteristic theme for Pilnyak, regardless of how intricately he embellished it. However, he rarely grants his protagonists the luxury of "blissful repose in the arms of their discovery." Pilnyak tends to capture them precisely at the moment when they become conscious of "the conflict within themselves," observing as it mercilessly tears them apart. In this exploration, Pilnyak delves into the profound duality of human existence: "man is both agent and victim, pulled by the competing claims of intellect, which wills toward consciousness and seeks it in a self-definition through system and order, and instinct, which is formless and timeless, and constitutes the ground of all being." [7, p. 102-103].

Boris Pilnyak offers a unique outsider's viewpoint. Shaped by the distinctive lens of Russian literature and cultural backgrounds, Pilnyak's interpretation provides a nuanced and external examination. His status as a Soviet citizen adds complexity, reflecting the influence of his outsider position in dissecting the concept and placing it in a broader global context. In Boris Pilnyak's "O'key, an American Novel" (1933), the protagonist is the narrator, and Soviet sensibilities mold his worldview [5]. His perception of the American Dream is inherently that of an outsider, strictly adhering to the requirements and expectations set forth by Soviet authorities. Pilnyak's interactions with representatives from all strata of America's cultural and societal fabric illuminate the clash of ideologies and shed light on the challenges inherent in adapting to a new and foreign environment. The writer's accounts of these encounters with diverse characters function to juxtapose the American Dream against the backdrop of Russian literature, thereby adding layers to the exploration of this thematic concept.

Pilnyak's role as the head of the "ornamental prose" movement in Soviet literature in the 1920s is noteworthy. This trend, often associated with "sweepers," highlights the ornate and experimental nature of the prose employed by Pilnyak and his contemporaries [9]. The poetics of Pilnyak's sketchy prose, a vast area within his artistic system, still needs to be studied more. Shklovsky's insights into Pilnyak's journalistic creativity emphasize the need for "significant" facts, depicting Pilnyak's literary texts as a cohabitation of several short stories that can be disassembled and reassembled into new works Shklovsky [10, p. 74].

The focus on the factual basis and documentary nature of Pilnyak's works, as noted by A. Katsev (1987), aligns with the writer's commitment to capturing the era's essence. This approach to collecting and arranging materials contributes to the plotlessness evident in Pilnyak's novels. The structural arrangement resembles a "round dance," lacking a defined core. Instead, the novels feature an idea framed by the fusion of literary and artistic text with journalism, essays, sketches, and poetic syllables, creating a cause-and-effect relationship between introduced and critical episodes. This intricate style reflects Pilnyak's innovative approach to narrative, bridging the realms of literature and journalism [11].

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Pilnyak himself explicitly declared his intention in writing "O'kei, An American Novel" – to elucidate, once again, for his American counterparts the capitalist shackles encasing their lives. This proclamation serves as the writer's credo, defining his creative stance. Grounded in this perspective, he unleashes a torrent of irony, sarcasm, and accusatory grotesque throughout the narrative.

Why this interest for America? Fedorova explains that America emerged as an unintended consequence of the envisioned project the USSR aimed to undertake. This project held the promise of "efficiency, convenience of everyday life, scientific and technological progress," and the realization of social aspirations embodied in the American dream. It was anticipated to be accessible to all, fostering a society "without exploitation, without turning a person into an automaton, without the disunity of people and their absorption in material things." Consequently, traveling to America during this era, particularly for Russians, transforms into a quest for self-discovery more than an exploration of the unfamiliar. For Soviet travelers, America primarily serves as a "space of projections" [\[12, p. 311\]](#).

Lytkina compares texts written by several Soviet writers, among them Yesenin, Mayakovsky, Ilf and Petrov, Pilnyak, "to determine those cultural concepts that formed the structure of the "American Text" in Soviet literature of the 20th century: "technical progress, electricity, freedom, democracy, dollar, capitalism and at the same time the pursuit of sensation, subordination of life to advertising, lack of spirituality of American culture" [\[13, p. 168\]](#). The researcher identifies seven key aspects contributing to what she calls the "American text," shaping the Russian perspective of America and Americans: technical progress, comparison with the Soviet Union, admiration and critique of American thinking, religiosity and the dollar as God, peculiarities of American culture, debunking the myth of democracy, and exposing democratic principles. She concludes that "the twentieth century was largely created by writers under the influence of political guidelines, principles and ideas of the new socialist state, the ideological enemy of which was capitalism. It is no coincidence that in almost every work the refrain sounds: to expect immediate revolutionary uprisings in America is naivety" [\[13, p. 172\]](#).

According to Lazar Fleischman, Pilnyak's trip to the USA was of great importance for Pilnyak himself, "in light of the perception held of him in the West as a "special envoy" of Soviet culture. There was opening up before him the possibility of restoring to himself the official status within Soviet literature that had been lost as a result of the campaign of 1929" [\[14, p. 15\]](#).

Pilnyak establishes a connection between the historical narratives of America and the Union of Socialist Republics (USSR). Emphasizing the relative youthfulness of American history, traced back to its European colonization, and juxtaposing it with the specific date of origin for the USSR in 1917, he implies a similarity between the two historical trajectories. This comparison serves to stress the dynamic and evolving nature of historical processes in both

contexts, suggesting that despite their differences, both America and the USSR share a commonality in the ongoing construction and development of their respective histories:

"...at that hour when in the East the antiquity of the night is lording it over the romantics [...], it is morning in the Union of Socialist Republics, whose history has a date of origin: October 25, 1917 (old style), and whose history is not simply taking place, but rather is being *constructed*, is being *made*, is being *engineered*." [5, p. 71].

In the context of the ongoing transition from capitalism to socialism, Pilnyak characterizes America as persisting in "a culture of capitalism in its pure form", essentially functioning as a "laboratory flask for the hundred and twenty million free-capitalistic American citizens" [5, p. 8]. Despite this depiction, he perceives potential opportunities for survival, encapsulated in the slogans fervently shouted and proudly displayed on banners during party rallies. These rallying cries reflect the optimism and resilience Pilnyak envisions within the American socio-political landscape, hinting at possibilities for adaptation or transformation amid the prevailing capitalist ethos:

"America lies on the high road of the development of humankind. This high road paves new routes – to socialism. These routes to socialism are being constructed in the Union of Socialist Republics. Nowadays the USSR. and the USA are playing the chess match of today's humankind." [5].

In interviews, Pilnyak shared impressions gleaned during his five-month stay in America, later incorporating them into his extensive travelogue-novel, "O'kei: An American Novel" (1933), written upon his return to Moscow. His overarching theme was a prediction of capitalism's imminent collapse in the U.S., foretelling its replacement by socialism. Pilnyak critiqued Hollywood, asserting a stagnation or absence of true artistic expression, and condemned widespread gangsterism as a distorted manifestation of American individualism. His portrayal of America is notably negative, aligning with his role as a Soviet advocate of socialism obligated to denounce capitalism.

Embarking on his unique American odyssey, Pilnyak adhered to a fundamental principle that guided his exploration: "I am a writer, and my concerns are writerly ones." [5, p. 71]. This unwavering commitment extended across a spectrum of inquiries, encompassing the intricacies of capitalist economy, the underlying nature of American democracy, the plight of immigrants, the nuanced social stratification, the challenges faced by fellow writers, the illusory allure of Hollywood, and the relentless pursuit of the American Dream. Pilnyak's approach to his once-in-a-lifetime adventure was marked by a dedicated focus on extracting literary inspiration and understanding from every facet of the multifaceted American experience. Through the lens of a writer's perspective, he delved into the diverse layers of American society, capturing the essence of his observations in a literary tapestry that would later unfold in "O'kei: An American Novel."

The divergence in paths between two concepts – the American Dream and the Russian idea – becomes more evident as each ideological framework develops distinct values and societal trajectories. In the case of the Dream, there is a notable embrace of individualism, accentuating the pursuit of personal success and wealth through diligent work. This emphasis on individual achievement becomes a cornerstone of the concept, influencing society's cultural and economic fabric. Boris Pilnyak's "O'key, an American Novel" introduces a non-American viewpoint, providing a unique perspective from Russian literature. Pilnyak's exploration allows for a cross-cultural examination of the concept, echoing the questioning

and critique in Mailer's and Abu-Jaber's works.

In "O'key, an American Novel," Pilnyak's narrator assumes the role of an exemplary Soviet citizen, positioning himself as a representative of his country. During his six-month stay in America, he deftly employs Soviet propaganda clichés, crafting a portrayal that might seem exaggerated and almost grotesque to contemporary readers. The narrative takes a fascinating turn when the narrator transitions from the first-person perspective to the third-person, intermittently referring to himself as "a Soviet citizen." In doing so, he lavishly praises this envisioned Soviet citizen for their purported political awareness and unwavering commitment to the ideals propagated by the Soviet regime. This narrative technique not only introduces a layer of intricacy to the storytelling but also functions as a satirical device, encouraging readers to critically assess the constructed image of the ideal Soviet citizen presented by the narrator.

Contemplating the distinctive features of American culture, Pilnyak perceives it as an additional component of the American conveyor belt of life. Another prevalent theme in the portrayal of America, though not exclusive to the literature of this period, involves dismantling the prevailing myth of America as a democratic and free country. Virtually every author endeavors to persuade the reader of the illusory nature he finds inherent in the concepts of freedom and democracy. This pervasive trend reflects a critical examination of the societal constructs surrounding the American ideal, challenging conventional notions and prompting a reassessment of the foundational principles associated with the nation.

One significant feature of Pilnyak's approach to this extraordinary sojourn is a singular dedication to extracting literary inspiration and profound insights from every dimension of the multifaceted American experience. Embracing the role of a keen observer and cultural interpreter, he embarked on an exploration that went beyond mere geographical boundaries, seeking to unravel the intricacies of the American psyche. As a Soviet citizen and writer, Pilnyak's unique position was to scrutinize the intricacies of American life and culture with a discerning eye, providing him with a distinctive perspective that would shape the narrative fabric of his unusual novel.

Soviet writers traveling to the USA with Stalin's approval could not have done it without a shared Marxist perspective on the American Dream. Viaceslav P. Shestakov comments that this perspective explained through Lenin's theory of "two cultures within each national culture," suggests that class interests shape the American Dream: "In a capitalist society, each national culture consists of a dominating bourgeois culture with elements of a democratic and even socialist culture opposing it" [\[15, p. 6\]](#). According to this viewpoint, the American Dream encompasses two distinct dreams within American history and culture: the bourgeois apologetic dream aligned with the capitalist class and the democratic dream carrying elements of democracy and socialism, providing a counterforce to the prevailing bourgeois culture. This framework offers a nuanced understanding of the American Dream, acknowledging its dual nature shaped by competing class interests and cultural forces.

It is Pilnyak's dream about the American Dream that reflects a romanticized longing for the ideals associated with the American Dream. In his recurring dream, he envisions scenes reminiscent of pioneers sailing to America, gathered around tables illuminated by smoky oil lamps. The dream captures the essence of those seeking a better life in America, individuals who had grown beards as a testament to their shared desire:

"...because they were coming to America with one desire: to live well, to live well in every possible way, each according to his own understanding of what 'well' means. And they were

coming to America from all corners of the world, fleeing from persecution at the hands of the European authorities at the time, from starvation: sectarians, bandits, adventurers, dreamers..." [\[5, p. 143\]](#).

Pilnyak's portrayal exudes a sense of hope and idealism associated with the American Dream, emphasizing the diversity and shared pursuit of a better life by those who sought refuge and opportunity in the New World. There is a note of sadness and understanding in the writer's conclusion:

"I didn't get to see this dream. Time has incarnated the good life into dollars. Time had established the rules of the pioneers: do what you want, do it how you want to do it, just as long as you succeeded and prospered. But time had also done what I have written above." [\[5, p. 143\]](#).

He acknowledges a transformation in the dream he once envisioned. The idyllic dream of pioneers seeking a good life has evolved, becoming synonymous with material success measured in dollars. The changing times have brought about a shift in the rules: the imperative is not just to pursue one's desires but to do so in a way that leads to success and prosperity. Pilnyak recognizes the dual nature of time's impact – it has shaped the dream into a pursuit of material wealth. However, it has also given rise to the complex realities he has detailed earlier. The concluding sentiment mirrors the ambivalence and multifaceted nature of the American Dream, now intricately woven with the pursuit of financial success, illustrating this societal ideal's nuanced and evolving character.

3. Conclusion: Norman Mailer and Boris Pilnyak (the overlapping points of view)

Exploring the American Dream through the lenses of Norman Mailer and Boris Pilnyak offers a compelling juxtaposition of perspectives that enriches our understanding of this quintessential American concept. Mailer's examination, characterized by a fervent critique of societal norms and a call for individual rebellion, challenges the conventional notions of the American Dream. Through his literary endeavors, Mailer confronts the illusion of freedom within American society, exposing the underlying tensions and contradictions inherent in pursuing this ideal. Pilnyak, on the other hand, presents a contrasting viewpoint rooted in the collective struggle for societal transformation. His portrayal of the American Dream reflects a broader narrative of communal aspirations and the quest for social justice, emphasizing the interconnectedness of individual destinies within a larger societal framework.

Despite their differing approaches, Mailer and Pilnyak converge on the notion that the American Dream is intrinsically linked to pursuing freedom and self-realization. However, they diverge in their interpretations of how these ideals manifest within American society. While Mailer emphasizes the individual's struggle against societal constraints, Pilnyak underscores the communal endeavor to redefine societal structures and norms. Through their distinct perspectives, Mailer and Pilnyak offer nuanced insights into the complexities of the American Dream, prompting readers to engage with its underlying values and implications critically.

The examination of the American Dream by Norman Mailer and Boris Pilnyak underscores the multifaceted nature of this enduring concept. Their divergent perspectives highlight the tensions between individual autonomy and collective solidarity within the American narrative. As we reflect on their insights, we are compelled to reconsider our understanding of the American Dream, recognizing its evolving nature and its profound impact on the

collective consciousness. Ultimately, Mailer and Pilnyak invite us to interrogate the promises and pitfalls of the American Dream, challenging us to envision a more inclusive and equitable society that embraces the full spectrum of human aspirations and experiences.

Mailer's exploration is a profound meditation on the complexities of individual agency and societal forces. Through the lens of his protagonist, Stephen Rojack, Mailer dissects the promises and perils of the Dream, exposing the moral ambiguities inherent in pursuing success and happiness. Rojack's journey becomes a microcosm of the larger American narrative, reflecting the tension between personal aspirations and societal constraints. As readers grapple with Rojack's decisions and consequences, they are compelled to confront the intricacies of their own lives, navigating the blurred lines between ambition and morality.

At the heart of Mailer's critique lies a profound questioning of the erasures and oppressions accompanying progress and modernity. By portraying Rojack as a character rejected and marginalized by society, Mailer highlights the human cost of societal advancement and the inherent injustices the state perpetuates. In doing so, he challenges the prevailing narratives of progress and nationalism, offering a counterpoint to the dominant ethos of his time. Mailer's insistence on confronting the uncomfortable truths of American society positions him as a prescient voice, anticipating the social movements of the 1960s that would ultimately challenge the status quo and pave the way for a new era of debate and dissent.

As we navigate the complexities of contemporary existence, Mailer's insights remain as relevant as ever, prompting us to interrogate the dynamics of power, identity, and freedom in an ever-changing world. His narrative serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring struggles faced by individuals and societies alike as they grapple with the complexities of governance and the delicate balance between individual autonomy and collective responsibility. Ultimately, Mailer's exploration of the American Dream transcends its historical context, offering timeless reflections on the human condition and the eternal quest for meaning and fulfillment.

Boris Pilnyak's outsider perspective on the American Dream offers a unique lens through which to examine this quintessential concept. Shaped by his Russian literary and cultural background, Pilnyak provides a nuanced and critical examination of the American Dream from a standpoint outside the American experience. His exploration, particularly evident in "O'key, an American Novel," offers a cross-cultural analysis that adds depth and complexity to our understanding of this thematic concept. Pilnyak's interactions with various facets of American society illuminate the clash of ideologies and the challenges inherent in adapting to a new and foreign environment, presenting a narrative that juxtaposes the American Dream against the backdrop of Russian literature.

In Pilnyak's portrayal, the American Dream is not merely a pursuit of personal success and wealth but a broader societal construct deeply intertwined with capitalism and democracy. Through his exploration, Pilnyak critiques the prevailing myth of America as a democratic and free country, challenging conventional notions and prompting a reassessment of the foundational principles associated with the nation. His narrative, marked by irony, sarcasm, and accusatory grotesque, serves as a platform for denouncing capitalism and advocating for socialism, aligning with his role as a Soviet advocate obligated to critique capitalism. Pilnyak's Dream about the American Dream reflects a romanticized longing for the ideals associated with it, juxtaposing the hope and idealism of pioneers seeking a better life with

the harsh realities of materialism and societal transformation.

Ultimately, Pilnyak's exploration of the American Dream transcends geographical and cultural boundaries, offering profound insights into the evolving nature of this concept and its impact on society. His outsider perspective enriches our understanding of the American Dream, inviting readers to contemplate its complexities and contradictions through the lens of Russian literature and cultural critique. As Pilnyak navigates the intricacies of American society, he challenges us to question our assumptions and perceptions, prompting a deeper reflection on the enduring allure and elusive nature of the American Dream.

In conclusion, we note that comparison of Norman Mailer's and Boris Pilnyak's views on the American Dream reveals a fascinating juxtaposition of perspectives. While both writers offer critical examinations of this concept, they do so through distinct cultural lenses and ideological frameworks. Mailer, deeply rooted in American culture, explores the American Dream from within, dissecting its promises and perils with an insider's understanding. His portrayal reflects a complex interplay of individualism, societal pressures, and the pursuit of success within the American context. In contrast, Pilnyak's outsider perspective, shaped by his Russian literary and cultural background, provides a nuanced critique of the American Dream, highlighting its entanglement with capitalism, democracy, and societal transformation. Pilnyak's exploration challenges conventional notions of American exceptionalism, presenting a narrative revealing the contradictions and complexities inherent in pursuing the American Dream. These contrasting viewpoints enrich our understanding of this quintessential concept, prompting a deeper reflection on its universal appeal and enduring relevance across cultural boundaries.

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Результаты процедуры рецензирования статьи

В связи с политикой двойного слепого рецензирования личность рецензента не раскрывается.

Со списком рецензентов издательства можно ознакомиться [здесь](#).

Рецензируемая статья «"Американская мечта" в романе Нормана Мейлера и травелоге «О'кей. Американский роман» Б. Пильняка: разрушенные иллюзии и переосмысленные мечты», предлагаемая к публикации в журнале «Litera» на английском языке, несомненно, является актуальной ввиду того, что интерес к изучению концепта и его реализации в художественном произведении не угасает.

Исследования концепта и его реализации в языковой картине мира в рамках Российской школы когнитологов являются ценными, так как данные концепты претерпевали некоторые изменения в плане содержания или системе ассоциативных связей, мотивируемых различными экстралингвистическими факторами.

В исследовании автор обращается к "американской мечте", которая является одной из главных составляющих менталитета, культуры, истории, социальной и политической жизни Соединенных Штатов; миф, глубоко укоренившийся в массовом сознании, предопределивший восприятие мира американцами.

Целью данной статьи является сравнительный анализ понятия "американская мечта", представленного в романах Нормана Мейлера "Американская мечта" (1965) и Бориса Пильняка "О'кей, американский роман" (1933).

Практическим материалом исследования послужили текст романа Нормана Мейлера — романиста, публициста, сценариста, кинорежиссера и модернистский травелог Бориса Пильняка.

Представленная статья выполнена в русле современных научных подходов, работа состоит из введения, содержащего постановку проблемы, основной части, а также исследовательскую с приведением эмпирической базы.

В статье представлена методология исследования, выбор которой вполне адекватен целям и задачам работы.

Основными методами явились описательный, герменевтический, сравнительный, историко-литературный и историко-культурный методы анализа текстов. Подобные работы с применением различных методологий являются актуальными и, с учетом фактического материала, позволяют тиражировать предложенный автором принцип исследования на иной языковой материал.

Отметим, что автор обоснованно подошел к теоретической базе исследования и представил убедительные данные. Все теоретические постулаты подтверждены ссылками на авторитетные источники и нашли свое отражение в выводах исследования. Выводы обоснованы и отображают проблематику, заявленную в статье.

Библиография статьи насчитывает 15 источников на русском языке и иностранных языках, к которым относятся научные статьи, кандидатские диссертации, тезисы докладов на конференциях.

Апелляция к иностранным трудам позволяет включить настоящую работу в общемировую научную парадигму.

Статья, несомненно, будет полезна широкому кругу лиц: филологам, литературоведам, магистрантам и аспирантам профильных вузов. В общем и целом, следует отметить, что статья написана простым понятным читателю языком, хорошо структурирована, опечатки, орфографические и синтаксические ошибки, неточности не обнаружены. Общее впечатление от знакомства с работой положительное, статья «"Американская мечта" в романе Нормана Мейлера и травелоге «О'кей. Американский роман» Б. Пильняка: разрушенные иллюзии и переосмысленные мечты» может быть рекомендована к публикации в научном журнале из перечня ВАК.