



AMERICAN DREAMS AMERICAN NIGHTMARES



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I have absolutely loved our time working together and I look forward to seeing what the future holds for each of you.

Love,
Esther





TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Acknowledgments	2
2. Preface	5
3. Power Abuse In Hollywood: When the Dream Became a Nightmare	7
4. Del Sueño Americano a La Pesadilla Mundial	15
5. Broken Dreams: Art, Myth and Reality In America	29
6. Afterword	38





PREFACE

As older teens students, we have always been interested in matters of politics, society, culture, and the way we work as humans in a group. A group where money, status, gender, skin colour and appearance are key to survive and enjoy a favorable position in the pyramid. However, we are told a tale where the pyramid does not exist and it is replaced by a ladder, easy to climb. This tale goes back to the Enlightenment days: bright philosophers announced the beginning of natural rights, such as freedom or equality for all. Since we were all free and equal, we all had the same opportunities. Whether we believe the statement or not, it set the grounds for the foundation of modern states, and we can see it brought to life in the USA's Declaration of Independence: "All men are created equal". But, we ask, are we all really created equal?

Not everyone wants to write an article while studying everyday, however, our teacher gave us this opportunity and we decided to take it. This academic year has been the most difficult so far, but we wanted to create something to be remembered. Nowadays, we are living a historic moment full of hate and abuse, and we felt that we had to report that. The way we see it, our generation lacks critical thinking and this is crucial in our dog eat dog world. Furthermore, we love cooperating as peers and friends, so making this project was also a good way of having a very nice time and feeling over the moon.

Despite the fact that we were snowed under with work, we tried every day to save half an hour to write before going to sleep. Our essays were written slowly but with perseverance. As a result, these papers started to be in full swing and we didn't even realise that we were writing so much. Obviously, some days we felt lazy and we preferred to rest instead of typing more, but the next day we would encourage ourselves to keep on with the work.

We find in art a powerful tool, since it can reveal what is not usually shown. Art in all its forms, (music,

films, paintings and even the creation process), is a mirror of reality. It reaches the emotions, makes us think and raises awareness. We wanted to dismantle the American Dream through art, but not only treating it as a way of expression but as a way of critique and resistance.

Moreover, we live and breathe art and culture, so choosing different aspects of it for our parts of the project was very fun and simple. Pablo asked a lot of people about music in order not to pick the same songs that he always listens to, so making this essay was also good for his Spotify's playlist, which is full of new songs that he has discovered while making this. Luz was able to do plenty of research about the industry of cinema, a process she enjoyed very much since she dreams of becoming an investigative journalist. It has given Beatriz a reason to immerse herself in paintings and authors of her liking, to truly understand them. They have made her see how the same concept can have such opposite perceptions, and the power of art to represent them.

As we have said before, our actual world is changing and, as far as we are concerned, it is taking a turn for the worse. The increase of the extreme right wing is making us take steps back. In our opinion, history has to be known and taught in order not to repeat the same mistakes our ancestors did. For example, both world wars showed us a horrible face of humanity, where all human rights were denied and pain and suffering were the kings of the Earth. We can't allow this to happen again but it looks like powerful people are leading our generation to fight and repeat it. It can be portrayed in Donald Trump, the actual president of the United States of America, whose policies and laws are full of hate.

So, for what it's worth, we wanted to write this as a warning for every reader. We need to become conscious about the lie that the American Dream sells us, and free ourselves from its influence, that makes us so competitive and materialistic. We have to be capable of seeing all its faces, both the dreamy and the nightmarish.

Thank you for reading.

Carmona,
10th May 2025





POWER ABUSE IN HOLLYWOOD: WHEN THE DREAM BECAME A NIGHTMARE

LUZ MADINA MUÑOZ

Can we affirm that the monopoly of all entertainment is in the hands of just a few? Could we ever acknowledge, from an objective and realistic perspective, that the world of cinema is controlled by hetero, cisgendered, white men?

The following analysis will focus on how such entertainment spaces create a favorable environment for men to abuse their power, in order to take advantage of their fellow female workers –and in some cases vulnerable men too, such as Kevin Spacey’s–. Throughout the History of arts –in this case, audiovisual arts– men’s power abuse has materialized as sexual abuse.¹

This article will delve into the possible causes, the surprisingly –or not so surprisingly– generalized immunity of the sexual offenders, the industry’s silence surrounding the well-known secrets, and many particular examples of sexual abuse² in the filmmaking and television world. Furthermore, the conclusions brought from the pertinent analysis will connect the cases of power abuse in the movies business to other public fields in the present day, like in American politics, nowadays led by Donald Trump.

For the sake of context, it is necessary to address the personification of the so-called American Dream in movies since the beginnings of the industry. From its very start, movies have been a perfect canvas on which filmmakers and producers have splattered values such as the traditional family prototype, gender roles, or nationalist values. In the case of the United States, Hollywood

quickly became the hub of movie and television. Moreover, since the beginning of the 20th century, it represented fame, luxury, great opportunities and a lifestyle led by success. Hollywood represented everything that young artists wished for in the film industry (and other fields of arts), and it set the grounds for an astounding economical growth within the world of cinema, founded on the values of the American Dream.

This American Dream, the protagonist of so many lives and stories, is exactly what its name reveals: no more than a dream, after all. Its roots go back centuries ago, when thirteen colonies in the east of the country became independent from the United Kingdom and pursued their own colonization of the rest of the land, which they called the Westward Expansion. The constant hopes for opportunities, freedom and social success were mainly established during these times, and they became core values in this young country’s morals.

Because of the establishment of the movie industry as the visual and cultural portrayal of the American Dream, it happened as it usually has throughout the History of humankind. Men took the most important roles in a business where women (let it be artists behind the camera or female actors) were relegated to an inferior place. Movies like *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), *Singin’ in the rain* (1952), *My Fair Lady* (1964)... are just a few examples of how Hollywood in its beginnings presented a sexist and objectifying point of view on women, giving them roles often underdeveloped and hyper-sexualised. These actresses played decorative, naïve and empty parts next to strong and charismatic male actors. It is undeniable that men were using their power to enable their female coworkers’. High ranks were a male driven monopoly.

If we take a closer look into today’s Hollywood, we can see the panorama has hardly changed when it comes to power

1. *Along with other destructive workplace behaviors such as sex-based harassment and sex/gender discrimination, sexual harassment is widely argued to be associated with broader problems of gender inequality and “cultural misogyny”.* (Gailey & Prohaska, 2006, p.31).

2. *I shall keep the right to address sexual abuse as its synonym, power abuse, throughout the writing. The reason for its synonymy will be explained further ahead.*



abuse. Thanks to the tireless effort of the feminist movement, women today have a voice in the business, and they are starting to demand more representation and recognition. However, they are still very far from being equal to their male coworkers. This essay focuses on the sexual variety of power abuse, but this injustice is presented in various kinds. For instance, the glass ceiling. According to the Economic Policy Institute: “[...] Women are paid less than men as a result of occupational segregation [...] Black women are paid only 69.5% of white men’s wages [...] Hispanic women are paid only 64.1% of white men’s wages” (www.epi.org).

It is clear, having seen data such as this, that women in the vast majority of sectors are discriminated against and taken advantage of economically. This translates to the films and series business, where not only women have to endure rougher conditions than their male colleagues (hipersexualization, for instance), but they also need to work twice as hard to make money similarly. Furthermore, there is a very simple and visual way of understanding the way power works in this industry. In 1985, Alison Bechdel introduced in her comic strip *Dykes To Watch Out For* a set of rules to determine if a movie represents women –especially queer women– in a realistic and equal way. This test has been widely discussed since the decade of the 2000s, when people realised this simple set of three rules is harder to follow than it might initially seem. The rules proposed by Bechdel are as follows:³

1. The movie must have at least two women in it.
2. These women must talk to each other.
3. The talk must be about something other than a man.

Blockbusters such as *Deadpool & Wolverine* (2024), *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny* (2023), *The Avengers* (2012)... Movies with international recognition like *Conclave* (2024), *The Wild Robot* (2024), *The Brutalist* (2024), *Oppenheimer* (2023), and countless others... None of them pass the test. What does this suggest to us viewers? Women are still,

3. <https://bechdeltest.com/>

a century after the start of cinema, secondary in an industry that abuses its power, which is still concentrated in the hands of the same privileged men.

This essay shall now delve into specific cases of sexual abuse in the film and series industry. More specifically, this study will focus on how some counter movements such as the MeToo have spoken out against this situation inside the business, uncovering flagrant cases like Harvey Weinstein’s and plenty more which will be addressed further on. “Sexual harassment is one of the many insulting workplace behaviours that may emerge out of hierarchical power relations and in most cases lead to sexual violence that results in the exclusion, humiliation and oppression of victims” (*Women’s Studies International Forum*, 2021). This quote helps us realise that sexually abusive conducts are only the final step in a long and disguised staircase of power abuse from man (boss) to woman (subordinate).

It is March the 30th, 2015. *The New York Times* releases an article in which it is revealed that mogul Harvey Weinstein is being accused of “inappropriate touching” by model Ambra Gutierrez. The New York Police Department questions Weinstein, however they find the evidence “insufficient”.⁴ From then on, the case went public, and Gutierrez suffered from online hatred and accusations of being opportunistic. Nonetheless, the fact someone dared to come out with their truth against such a powerful person in the business paved the way for many more women. On October the 5th, 2017, journalists Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey released an article on the New York Times called *Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accusers for Decades*.⁵ Said article was the definitive trigger for over 100 women to stand out and accuse the producer of having sexually assaulted them. The cases go as far back as 1980.⁶ There were actresses, models, producer assistants... Weinstein was accused of

4. The evidence against the producer was a taped audio. In said recording, he admits having “touched her breast” and he vows “I won’t do it again.” (NBC News, 2017)

5. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 2021.

6. *The Guardian*, 2017.



many different kinds of sexual abuse, from forced oral sex to rape. Two days after the article's release, Weinstein was dismissed from his position in The Weinstein Company. He had been bribing his victims of harassment, and among those victims who were forced to stay silent were actresses like Rose McGowan, abused in 1997. These women were conditioned by fear, for if they spoke out, they knew they would be easily crushed by the Hollywood mogul. And yet, once these first brave testimonies appeared, a door opened for many others. "This way of treating women ends now,"⁷ actress Gwyneth Paltrow, who suffered his power abuse after her breakout role in *Emma* (1996), told The New York Times. Furthermore, star Angelina Jolie alleged a similar kind of abuse from Weinstein, which had occurred in 1998 when starring in *Playing by Heart*.⁸

The brilliant words of renowned British actress Emma Thompson have resonated deeply with these matters of power abuse since her interview in 2017.

I didn't know about these things, but they don't surprise me at all and they're endemic to the system anyway. And what I find sort of extraordinary is that this man is at the top of a very particular iceberg. [...] A system of harassment, and belittling, and bullying and interference, [...] what my mother would have referred to in the olden days as "pestering". Emma Thompson: Harvey Weinstein 'top of harassment ladder' - BBC Newsnight

Following the media scandal came two main reactions: the rebirth of the MeToo movement on the one hand, and on the other, what the media has baptized as the "Weinstein Effect". Starting with the latter, it is important to acknowledge how this world-wide whirlwind of events caused a chain of reactions regarding power abuse from bosses to female subordinates. Thanks to the public discussion of these kinds

of abuse, and also given the fact that this power abuse was also reported by Fox News host Gretchen Carlson against sex offender Roger Ailes –highly related with Weinstein– in 2016, the spreading of voices against sexual abuse was quick and vast. Many men in the filmmaking industry –and also in television, journalism and music– started to lose their positions of power. The examples are numerous: director James Toback, Amazon Studios chief Roy Price, Fashion photographer Terry Richardson, MSNBC and NBC political analyst Mark Halperin, actor Danny Masterson... More famous names are those of musician R. Kelly, comedian Bill Cosby or actors Kevin Spacey and Dustin Hoffman; all of the aforementioned being cases from the year 2017. As eloquently stated by reporters Jessica Gynn and Marco della Cava:

In years past, powerful men busted for preying on women could pay out large sums in legal settlements or issue public apologies [...] and then keep right on doing what they were doing. No longer. Women breaking the culture of silence are putting unprecedented pressure on companies and whole industries to crack down on sexual misconduct in the workplace. (*USA Today*, 2017)

For the sake of understanding the scale of these systematic abuses and getting a bigger perspective on the subject, I shall now look into other significant cases of sexual abuse with different dynamics, such as Danny Masterson and Cuba Gooding Jr.

Firstly, we have the New Yorker star of *That 70s Show* (1998–2006), Danny Masterson. This case is highly interesting for understanding how religion plays a crucial role in these kinds of power abuse. A doctrine –in this case the Scientology Church's doctrine– works as an element of domination, based on fear, loyalty and coercion. This way, women and men are given strict roles to fit into, and with said roles comes a power dynamic that adds up to the general existing social and cultural power relations.

7. *The New York Times*, 2017.

8. *People Magazine*, 2021.



In 2020, Masterson was charged by Los Angeles prosecutors of three counts of rape: three women in their twenties between the years of 2001 and 2003.⁹ These three women, between the ages of 23 and 28 years old at the time of the rapes, filed the allegations to the LA Police Department in 2017, and Masterson pleaded not guilty before County Superior Court judge Charlaine F. Olmedo. One of the victims declared she drifted in and out of consciousness the night of the incident in April 2003 after Masterson gave her a drink mixed with drugs and vodka.¹⁰ The situation was similar in the other two cases, and the evidence sustained all three charges. In addition, the Church of Scientology, –of which Masterson is an ironclad member and so were the victims that pledged against him– was accused on several occasions of harassment towards the plaintiffs. This is considering that it is strictly forbidden for members of this cult to report fellow members to the police under any circumstance. Hence, after they had spoken out, they were immediately ejected from the Church, and became subjects to a harassing campaign called the “Fair Game”.

[...] When those women came forward to report Masterson’s crime, the Defendants conspired to and systemically stalked, harassed, invaded their family’s privacy, and intentionally caused them emotional distress to silence and intimidate them [...] (*Los Angeles Times*, 2019)

In September 2023, Masterson was found guilty of two counts of rape, and to this day, the actor is in the state prison of California Men’s Colony. He is currently facing an indefinite sentence of 30 years in prison.

It is key to comprehend that sexual harassment is not only rape, but also all the “invisible” manners that these powerful men are used to have. From insulting words, to forced touching or

kissing, these actions are all in the frame of power abuse. Since they believe that they cannot be contradicted or called out on, these bosses and famous men behave like predators towards their prey.

New Yorker Cuba Gooding Jr., known for his breakthrough in *Boyz n the Hood* (1991) and his Academy Award for best supporting actor in *Jerry Maguire* (1996), was arrested for several accusations of sexual abuse that happened during the 2000s and 2010s. Gooding, in 2022, pleaded guilty to “forcibly touching a woman”.¹¹ He admitted to the New York State Supreme Court judge he had “kissed the waitress on the lips” without her consent in a nightclub in 2018. However, there were many other testimonies against the actor that weren’t taken in consideration, more precisely, more than 19 women. According to the Associated Press, Gooding’s lawyers put their allegations down by arguing that “overzealous prosecutors, caught up in the fervor of the MeToo movement, [were] trying to turn ‘commonplace gestures’ or misunderstandings into crimes” (*NPR*, 2022). In addition to this criminal prosecution, in 2022 he was also accused of the raping of a woman in 2013. Since he didn’t respond to the civil lawsuit, a default judgment was issued.

Additionally, the actor has recently been involved in a suit against musician and public figure Sean Combs, more known as P. Diddy. In 2024, Diddy’s name flooded the news for the revelation of his abusive sexual conducts, sex trafficking and other illicit activities¹² that were kept a secret for many years. According to *The Cut*, producer Rodney “Lil Rod” Jones Jr. accused Diddy in 2024 of “grooming him to pass him off to his friends”. Gooding was one of these friends who allegedly harassed the producer at Combs’ yacht in the Virgin Islands. To this day, the actor has categorically denied Jones’ allegations, claiming that the situation is “crazy”.

Having revised these specific cases,

9. Prosecutors declined to file charges in two other Masterson cases that police had investigated, one because of insufficient evidence and the other because the statute of limitations had expired. (*AP News*, 2020)

10. *Los Angeles Daily News*, 2021.

11. *NPR*, 2022.

12. Jones, in his testimony included the statement that Combs provided “laced alcoholic beverages to minors and sex workers at his home.” [sic]



and knowing that they are only a few among an ocean of abuses with endless dynamics, this paper will take a closer look at the backlash in Hollywood. On how women organized themselves in order to create a movement that would recoil at the fake promises of the film industry and its power abuses.

On 2006, when a girl approached activist Tarana Burke to share her story of a sexual abuse, Burke's only answer at the moment was: me too. Two words, powerful enough to support a person going through a trauma and a difficult disclosure. That was the onset of a movement called 'Me Too', destined to bring support to those women, especially black and brown at the beginning. Burke worked with her team to bring visibility to the younger generations and shed light on a systemic form of power abuse across the world. Thanks to the rapid evolution of the movement on social media such as MySpace,¹³

13. *Business Insider*, 2018.

more women and men joined forces and created a community that, with just two words, let those countless survivors of sexual violence know that they weren't alone. In a world where "more than one in three women experiences intimate partner violence and/or sexual violence in her lifetime",¹⁴ Burke's words aimed to ease the alienation these women go through after experiencing trauma.

But, how did these two words become an international call to action against rape culture? On October 15th, 2017 –days after the uncovering of Harvey Weinstein's abuses– New Yorker actress Alyssa Milano shared a tweet on the social network Twitter.

In less than 24 hours, the tweet went completely viral and it was also translated to other languages (like "Yo También" or "Moi Aussi"). Over 200.000 people joined the movement in a day, sharing

14. *'Me Too' Global Movement - What is the 'Me Too' Movement*



their experiences and condemning sex assault in power situations like those actresses who suffered this power abuse by their boss, Harvey Weinstein. Very famous voices called out for action too, such as Lady Gaga, America Ferrera, Reese Witherspoon, Martha Stewart, Emma Watson and countless others (*El País*, 2017).¹⁵ In fact, world-renowned actress Meryl Streep shared on the Huffington Post a letter of support for the MeToo movement: “The behavior is inexcusable, but the abuse of power familiar. Each brave voice that is raised, heard and credited by our watchdog media will ultimately change the game” (*Huffington Post*, 2017).

The importance of this movement, based on those two simple words that Tarana Burke had spoken, resides in how it managed to give a voice to so many women –and men– who had been silent because of fear. Sophie Gilbert, nominated in 2022 for the Pulitzer Prize in Criticism, wrote for *The Atlantic* a very insightful article:

The power of #MeToo, though, is that it takes something that women had long kept quiet about and transforms it into a movement. [...] It’s simply an attempt to get people to understand the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault in society. To get women, and men, to raise their hands. (*The Atlantic*, 2017)

In spite of the systemic impediments, survivors were reaching out for justice. Even when it meant risking their jobs, for they were vulnerable as for *economic status*. Like Isabelle Shaw, wrote for Empoword Journalism: “Those who hold the power necessary to abuse others are often the same people who hold the power to decide who gets fired and who doesn’t”. However, the MeToo movement has given hope to all those abused that –if united– they can put a stop to the rape culture that lets powerful men use their female subordinates as objects and not as respectable people. It also has achieved many great things inside the industry itself, for instance,

15. *El País*, 2017.

the increase in the hiring of intimacy coordinators. Their role is to create a safe place on-set for actors who face intimate scenes, something that didn’t happen often before 2017, year in which Weinstein’s scandal came to light.



Considering all the above, what conclusions could be drawn after we have seen the facts? Power abuse from man to woman has taken place systematically since its beginning. It is a situation endemic to the patriarchal world we’ve all been raised in. Men have always been granted privileges: they could aspire to be bosses, leaders, pillars in society. On the contrary, women in history have been brought up as complements to their husbands, their fathers, their brothers. Once they gained access to the work market, they were not entitled to an equal position. Outside of the filmmaking industry, the only “decent” jobs for women were nurse –never doctor– and secretary –never boss–. Inside the industry, becoming an actress was a hazardous task: these actresses dealt with male superiors who could treat them as animals or attrezzo with complete impunity.

With time, the world evolves, and so does gender. However, power relations are quite similar. Hollywood still represents the foggy American Dream in which everyone can shape themselves from scratch. Hollywood is still run by the same white, cisgender, heterosexual rich men who ran it decades ago. Women are



still constantly working twice as hard and suffering sexual harassment in the workplace. But not only in Hollywood, but everywhere. We live in an era where a convicted sex offender is the president of the most important country of the world. In fact, Donald J. Trump has been accused of harassing, raping and groping women since the 1970s. The Republican has proven himself to be a sexual predator with absolute contempt for women thanks to the dozens of sexual misconduct allegations and his own public behaviour. On November the 5th, 2024, 77 302 580 Americans voted for a man found guilty on 34 felony counts and the rape of writer E. Jean Carroll. A man who said of women that, if in power, he could “grab them by the pussy”.¹⁶ Everybody wonders, how? How could this happen? It happened for the same reasons a multi-millionaire like Elon Musk did a fascist salute in front of the whole world in January of 2025. It feels like we are moving backwards, like we are erasing achievements our parents and grandparents fought for.

The United States of America, the so-called land of the freedom, the cradle of the MeToo movement in the 2000s and 2010s, the country where women sparked hopes against rape culture; that same country is now led by a convicted rapist and his neo-fascist clique. Not only does this setback affect Americans and their rights, but the rest of the world too, where the system has mimicked America's for decades. Phenomena like the Internet “manosphere”, which legitimates hegemonic masculinity across the Internet, have arisen in a collective attempt to go back in time. Moreover, these symptoms of regression have resulted in male victimization, making boys and young men to believe feminism is a dangerous ideology that seeks revenge against them. However, it is important to remember the words of Judge Olmedo, who carried out Danny Masterson's case: “Mr. Masterson, I know that you're sitting here steadfast in your claims of innocence and thus no doubt feeling victimized by a justice system that has failed you, [...] but Mr. Masterson, you are not the victim here”.¹⁷

We are living a time in which some people row forwards, and others row backwards. A quite unique blending of events, where both the American Dream and the American Nightmare thrive. And yet, could we really point out any real achievements of the American Dream? Only a promise, a belief. Behind the fundamentals of this belief of equal opportunities and rights, lies a reality much darker and painful: equality never existed, power abuse always found its way. Even though this is the world we have molded, there are still chances for us to fight it. Following in the steps of those revolutionary women who defied the entire filmmaking industry, we must stand strong against the tide of the ones who demand a regression in society, and in doing so, educate future generations according to the values of respect and dignity –rather than the ideals of the false and corrupt American Dream.

16. *BBC News*, 2016.

17. *NBC News*, 2023.



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DEL SUEÑO AMERICANO A LA PESADILLA MUNDIAL

PABLO GORDILLO RODRÍGUEZ

¿Alguna vez has deseado tener la familia perfecta, el coche perfecto y el aspecto perfecto? No eres el único que lo quiere, es más, tras uno de los conflictos más mortales y destructores de la historia, la Segunda Guerra Mundial, la gran mayoría de la población lo quería. Imaginemos que estamos en el año 1945 en uno de los países afectados por este conflicto, Francia por ejemplo, y llega a nuestras manos un folleto acerca de la vida en EE.UU. En este folleto podemos ver un hombre alto, guapo y sonriente, rodeado de su familia (también muy sonriente), con un coche nuevo y una mascota bonita y saludable, ¿no es verdad que la envidia se apodera de nosotros? Pues esto mismo lleva ocurriendo desde el fin de esta gran guerra, pues muchísima gente trata de tener esta perfección como se aprecia en la imagen, e incluso mucha gente abandona todo lo que tiene para mudarse a EE.UU., donde se supone que todo es posible, el país de la felicidad, la riqueza y el éxito.

El gran problema de esto es que, como su mismo nombre indica, no es más que una falsa ilusión, ya que actúa como un opio en nosotros que nos duerme para que olvidemos lo que ocurre en el exterior. Además, si exploramos lo que se busca, comprenderemos que es imposible, la perfección no existe.

Por suerte para nosotros, existe un arma en este mundo que puede hacer mucho más daño y puede mover a más gente que cualquier pistola o cuchillo: el arte.

El arte es capaz de movilizar a millones de personas a luchar contra un tipo de estilo de vida y de propaganda falso y engañoso. Por ello, si nos centramos solo en la música podemos ver cómo se busca acabar con el sueño americano, aunque no siempre. También podemos encontrar canciones con letras a favor. Esto principalmente se va a dar en artistas estadounidenses exitosos, como es el caso de Frank Sinatra o Elvis Presley, principales exponentes de este sueño americano.

Por ejemplo, en la canción de Elvis Presley *Look out Broadway* (1965), el



autor glorifica tanto la sociedad como la economía de EE.UU. de su momento mediante estos versos:

*"Lots of fun, lots of laughs,
Signing cheques and contracts
and autographs,
We're up for N-E-W Y-O-R-K"
(Elvis 0:39-0:50).*

Aquí, el famoso cantante habla del centro del sueño americano, Nueva York, ensalzando la ciudad y hablando de la fama y el dinero que esta ciudad te proporciona. ¿Es esta gran ciudad la cuna del éxito para los americanos? La respuesta es sí. Cual meta en una carrera, Nueva York se le presenta a los ciudadanos americanos como el objetivo final, donde todo nuestro esfuerzo será gratificado y nuestros deseos cumplidos. Es un lugar perfecto para adentrarnos en la monotonía absoluta, para algunos aburrida, y para otros cómoda y segura. Un ejemplo de este segundo tipo de personas sería el gran cantante Frank Sinatra, quien no dudó en dedicar unos bellos versos a la ciudad de los rascacielos cuando estaba en su mejor momento. La canción *New York, New York* (1980) dice así:

*"I wanna wake up in that city,
that doesn't sleep.
And find I'm king of the hill, top
of the list (you bet)
A number one, king of the hill"
(Sinatra 0:52-1:07).*

Como podemos claramente leer aquí, este lugar lleno de competitividad nos ofrece una oportunidad única, la posibilidad de ser el rey, de controlarlo y poseerlo todo. Aparentemente, Frank Sinatra no quería ser el rey del amor, sino del dinero, con el objetivo de tener más y más y poder poner a todos a sus pies.

Sin embargo ahora toca hablar del cambio de mentalidad mundial acerca del sueño americano, cómo el pensamiento glorioso que se tenía de América del Norte comienza a derrumbarse a causa de que la gente probó Nueva York y abrió los ojos al comprender que habían dejado que la esperanza estadounidense entrase en sus corazones como si fuera el caballo de Troya. En parte, la decadencia de

este sentimiento se debió a los propios soportes de esta pesadilla, pues grandes famosos y artistas (como los mencionados anteriormente) fallecieron como consecuencia de la atracción a la codicia que el dinero americano les había causado. Ambos cantantes murieron a causa de las drogas, pues al verse tan famosos y poderosos se creían indestructibles. Lo que se les olvidó es el tener humanidad y se creyeron infinitos e intocables, aunque la muerte nos llega a todos, y mucho antes si te dejas llevar por la autodestrucción americana.

Afortunadamente, las nuevas generaciones que nacieron mientras este grupo de artistas norteamericanos terminaban sus carreras, conocían acerca del engaño, y no se dejaron engatusar por las bonitas palabras ni por los llamativos anuncios que te invitan a adentrarte en esta pesadilla. Muchos artistas comenzaron a ver la negatividad de este sistema y, por suerte, buscaron denunciarlo públicamente.

Entonces, ¿ya ha acabado el sueño americano? Desgraciadamente no. A pesar de todas las críticas que veremos a continuación hacia este sistema de personas tanto de fuera de EE.UU. como de personas de dentro de estos mismos estados, los ricos no se cansan de jugar con nosotros y de empujarnos constantemente hacia los acantilados. El día 20 de enero de 2025, Donald Trump venció en El Capitolio, en Washington, y se convirtió en el presidente número 47 de la lista. A continuación veremos como parece surrealista el hecho de que este hombre haya podido llegar hasta donde está y veremos por qué necesitamos desesperadamente despertar de esta pesadilla para evitar volver 50 años atrás. La constante guerra mantenida por miles de luchadores por los derechos humanos no puede verse inutilizada y menos con la supuesta generación más tolerante de la historia.

*"Welcome to the city of lies,
Where everything's got a price"
(Måneskin 0:14-0:17).*

Con estas palabras introduce el grupo Måneskin su canción llamada *Gossip* (2023). ¿Mentiras? ¿Codicia? Eso no parece un sueño precisamente.



*"This place is a circus, you just see the surface,
They cover shit under the rug,
You can't see they're faking,
they'll never be naked,
Just fill your drink with tonic gin,
this is the American dream, so"
(Måneskin 0:27-0:41).*

Aquí este grupo italiano ya nos da un toque de atención muy claro y reconocible. Leyendo estos versos observaremos que ya nos hablan directamente del sueño americano y nos advierten de que no es lo que parece. Efectivamente, todo el engaño y la gran trampa tejida por la aristocracia estadounidense está oculta, escondida bajo un montón de mensajes bonitos y carteles brillantes.

Finalmente, la canción acaba con un mensaje que se nos tiene que quedar grabado en la mente:

*"You're not iconic, you are just like them all,
Don't act like you don't know"
(Måneskin 2:38-2:45).*

Todos somos inconscientemente parte de todo esto y las cosas no van a cambiar solas. Como hemos podido contemplar, desde Italia se conoce la gran farsa del sueño americano, ya no son sólo los americanos los que buscan dismantelar este gran problema, sino que en Europa ya se empieza a escuchar un rugido de rabia contra esto. Este rugido se expandirá por todo el continente hasta llegar al norte de este, aquí, una banda procedente del Reino Unido, Muse, destrozará todo lo que promete el sueño americano.

Bien llamamos sueño americano a algo que no parece para nada un dulce sueño. En esta idea se adentra Muse para mostrarnos que la verdad es escondida por los grandes líderes políticos estadounidenses y por las grandes empresas que sacan un considerable beneficio del sufrimiento de los demás. La canción *Uprising* (2009), es la luz perfecta que alumbra la mentira americana.

*"Another promise, another scene,
Another packaged lie to keep us,
trapped in greed,
And all the green belts wrapped*

*around our minds,
And endless red tape
to keep the truth confined"
(Muse 1:02-1:16).*

Aquí se nos repiten palabras que ya nos suenan. La codicia, la verdad oculta, las mentiras, etc; todas palabras que se ajustan a la perfección a lo que es este gran circo que nos tiene viviendo como auténticos payasos.

¿Existe solución a todo esto? Muse dice que sí, la lucha del pueblo. Es con estos versos que nos lo recuerda:

*"Come let the revolution take its toll,
If you could flick the switch and open your third eye,
You'd see that we should never be afraid to die"
(2:06-2:17),
"Rise up and take the power back,
It's time the fat cats had a heart attack,
You know that their time's coming to an end,
We have to unify and watch our flag ascend"
(2:18-2:32).*

Aunque sean muy poderosos, nosotros tenemos (o al menos deberíamos) el verdadero poder de la democracia. Este sistema de gobierno que actualmente predomina en los países desarrollados es la salida para tener algo de conciencia y vencer a los que no buscan el bien de su ciudadanía. Finalmente, esta canción nos recuerda lo importante que es luchar con este contundente estribillo:

*"They will not force us,
They will stop degrading us,
They will not control us,
We will be victorious"
(1:24-1:55).*

Acercándonos un poco a Estados Unidos, el lugar de donde nace lo que nos interesa conocer en este escrito, tenemos que dirigirnos hacia Canadá. Este país fronterizo con EE.UU. ha dado a luz y ha visto evolucionar muy buena música. El grupo canadiense Billy Talent es una muy buena muestra de ello. No hay mejor descripción de Nueva York y su destructivo sueño americano que la que hace este gran grupo en su canción *Reckless Paradise* (2022). Aquí



Los versos:

*"There's no more heroes,
Left to believe in,
They've pushed our backs against
the wall"
(Billy Talent 0:22-0:28)*

describen sin pelos en la lengua lo que acaba provocando la propagación y aceptación mundial del dilema americano. Como podemos escuchar a medida que avanza la canción, la crítica de este grupo va también dirigida hacia todos los países que no luchan por cancelarlo, simplemente lo aceptan y fomentan. En efecto, no es tan solo un deseo de la población americana, sino que el sueño americano se ha asentado sobre todas las civilizaciones del mundo como un virus indestructible.

Cuando el cantante dice:

*"Your thoughts and plans can't
fix the pain,
'Cause we're falling down again"
(Billy Talent 0:43-0:45)*

apela directamente a EE.UU. y le dice lo que no quiere oír. Estas palabras están vacías, pues a medida que las leemos notamos un desesperado intento de la gente que sufre gravemente a causa de la pesadilla americana por respirar aire fresco, un aire positivo que les ayude a ser lo que quieren ser sin imponerles un estilo de vida. El sentimiento de estar en un submarino en el que entra agua es el que tiene quien sufre de primera mano el sueño americano, solo quiere salir y coger aire, pero su mundo ya se ha convertido en un mar lleno de agua, da igual donde vaya, el sueño americano va a ahogarlo.

Como dijo Mark Twain "La falta de dinero es la raíz de todo mal" (*Psicología y mente*, 2017). Este escritor estadounidense acertó a la perfección. En el sistema capitalista impuesto por Estados Unidos, el dinero es lo que lo mueve todo. Con esta frase, Mark nos quería recordar que el no tener dinero supone perder nuestros derechos y nuestro poder, cosa que no debería ocurrir nunca. Esta afirmación también nos la recuerda The Warning, banda mexicana de rock que denuncia la dependencia del dinero que se tiene en EE.UU. con su tema *Money* (2022). En los versos:

*"Are you worth your weight in
gold?
Going once, going twice, sold
It's all about that cold hard cash
hon"
(The Warning 0:39-0:49)*

la cantante Daniela Villarreal se pone en la piel de un rico excéntrico para señalarte directamente y preguntarte acerca de cuánto vales. Es decir, te pone un precio para hacerte ver que cualquier multimillonario puede comprarte en cualquier momento. Otro verso en el que se acentúa esta idea es el siguiente:

*"Happiness has its price,
Less isn't more in this business"
(The Warning 0:26-0:32)*

Incluso la felicidad, algo puramente humano y psicológico, depende casi al completo del dinero, el cual ya ha superado límites físicos para adentrarse en nuestras mentes.

Todas estas canciones que hemos visto hasta ahora, muestran la visión que se tiene del dañino sueño americano en el exterior, desde fuera de este país. A continuación vamos a adentrarnos de lleno en EE.UU. comprobando si es realmente perjudicial para la ciudadanía de los propios Estados Unidos. ¿Ocultarán la verdad las canciones antes mostradas o también será el sueño americano una pesadilla para los propios habitantes?

En primer lugar, vamos a leer las letras de Green Day, uno de los grupos de pop punk más famosos de toda la historia de este género. En el año 2024, esta famosa banda publicó un álbum llamado *Saviors* (2024). En él, el grupo recuperaba su pasión por la música y por crear letras que critican duramente a su propio país, EE.UU. Una de las canciones de este último álbum ha sido *The American Dream is Killing Me* (2024). No hace falta más que el título para conocer la opinión de los componentes acerca del engaño americano. También aprovechan esta canción para hablar acerca de la última gran tendencia mundial, Tik Tok, en los siguientes versos:

*"Don't want no huddled masses,
TikTok and taxes,
Under the overpass,
Sleeping in broken glass"
(Green Day 1:16-1:29)*



Como podemos leer aquí, realizan una crítica mordaz acerca de la popular red social, la cual acaba siendo un emisor del sueño americano para influenciar a los jóvenes principalmente. Como podemos ver con este primer grupo, el arte de la música se manifiesta como los propios estadounidenses como una forma de atacar al sistema que les está atacando a ellos mismos.

Otro grupo que ve que efectivamente las cosas no van bien, es The Offspring. Este grupo lleva tratando de avisar del problema del sueño americano desde hace muchos años, desde 1984 concretamente. Aún así, la solución no ha llegado y en pleno 2021 siguen creando música acerca del mismo tema, uno de los grandes problemas estadounidenses. Con la canción *This is not Utopia* (2021) podemos observar detenidamente esto, uno de los mayores problemas del sueño americano es que este está podrido desde el inicio. Si las propias bases y raíces de esta idea ya están mal, lo que trae después es aún peor. Sobre estas raíces habla The Offspring en esta canción anteriormente mencionada cuando dice:

*"The roots, the roots, the roots of
America
The roots, the roots, the roots of
hysteria
The roots, the roots, the rules
don't matter anymore
This is not utopia"
(The Offspring 0:35-0:49)*

Si has llegado hasta aquí te habrás dado cuenta de que el sueño americano tiene serios defectos y este grupo pide a gritos una solución, pues en la canción antes mencionada habla hasta de una sociedad muerta, llena de odio y violencia. Esta canción retrata la mayor distopía del universo. Esto es fácilmente visible en:

*"It's humanity denied
A violent race
Punch in the face
With all this hate how can we all
survive?"
(The Offspring 1:14-1:25)*

El propio cantante de la banda se pregunta a sí mismo y a todos sus vecinos cómo es posible que sigan allí

después de todo, ya que el odio parece reinar sobre todos los estadounidenses. La verdadera pregunta aquí es: ¿de dónde nacen esas espinosas raíces del sueño y en qué momento se corrompen? Desde el primer momento en el que comienzan a crearse los estados, ya hay pruebas de que estas esperanzas reinan sobre todos. Los primeros colonizadores europeos trajeron consigo estas ideas en el siglo XVII. Más tarde será cuando alcance su verdadero auge pues no será hasta el siglo XX, con la industria ya desarrollada, cuando todos anhelaban la riqueza, la belleza y el éxito absoluto. Además, fue el auge de la publicidad y del *marketing* de las grandes empresas lo que propagó esta idea por toda la nación y por el resto del mundo. Como podemos leer en un artículo de OK Diario, este sueño está basado en dos características principales y muy perjudiciales: el materialismo y el consumismo, como expone el diario: "Algunos argumentan que el acceso igualitario a las oportunidades es solo una ilusión y que el sistema está sesgado a favor de aquellos que ya tienen privilegios y recursos. Otros señalan que el sueño americano ha llevado a una sociedad cada vez más materialista y consumista" (Francisco María, "¿Cuándo comenzó el llamado sueño americano?", *OK Diario*, 2023). Estas palabras muestran una clara verdad, la descripción perfecta del tema en cuestión.

El comienzo de toda esta farsa es causa de otros países también, pues como bien señala un artículo de la revista *UNAM global*, los franceses también optaron por aprovecharse de esto, participando en la creación de los Estados Unidos de América, como se ilustra aquí:

"El sueño americano, esa idea de llegar a una tierra prometida para obtener mejores oportunidades de vida, se gestó en Europa, cuando a finales del Siglo XV y principios del XVI, los protestantes franceses vieron en el nuevo continente un lugar dónde refugiarse de las disputas religiosas de la época" (Ignacio Díaz, "¿Cómo empezó el sueño americano?", *UNAM global*, 2018).

Si continuamos leyendo el artículo, comprenderemos que la culpa de que se



haya creado el sueño estadounidense no es puramente de los americanos, pues Europa contribuye en esto en gran medida del siguiente modo: “Así pues, contrario a lo que actualmente conocemos, el sueño americano históricamente tiene sus inicios entre los europeos. Sin embargo, esa misma necesidad de “refugio” se concibió entre los mismos americanos.” (Michel Olguín Lacunza y Diana Rojas García, “¿Cómo empezó el sueño americano?”, UNAM global, 2018).

El comienzo de la decadencia de esto comienza al haber la necesidad de tener que crear una clase social inferior a otras, a la cual se puede humillar y rechazar. Varios ejemplos de esto son expuestos de la siguiente forma en un artículo de *El Tiempo*:

“[...]el sueño americano ha implicado la exclusión de otros. [...] ha validado la inferioridad de algunos grupos sociales como: los descendientes de los esclavos, [...] los chicanos mestizos y descendientes de españoles que habían habitado los territorios conquistados en la guerra mexicano-americana (1846-1948), los chinos (amarillos) [...] cuya inmigración fue prohibida posteriormente por el Acta de Exclusión China de 1882.” (Juan Carlos Rojas, “*El sueño americano: inalcanzable para algunos estadounidenses*”, *El Tiempo*, 2018).

Es en estos principios de exclusión donde la mugre comienza a teñir al sueño americano de negro completamente. Como ya vimos en la canción de The Offspring, un proyecto que tiene una base mala no va a mejorar de la noche a la mañana.

Todas las canciones aquí mencionadas tienen algo en común: todas pertenecen a un género que suele ser crítico con las desgracias de la sociedad, es decir, el rock es un muy buen modelo de música reivindicativa. Sin embargo, también podemos acercarnos a otros estilos musicales como el pop de Madonna, donde Estados Unidos se asemeja a un infierno. Antes de adentrarnos en este género, vamos a usar al grupo de Ohio, Twenty One Pilots, pues al componer

música rock-pop (o rock alternativo) funcionan como un puente perfecto entre estos dos estilos. En este caso, el famoso grupo opta por la ironía y el humor para reírse del problema que venimos tratando en este artículo. ¿Son la comedia y el arte la mejor forma de denuncia? En mi opinión sí, y este grupo logra a la perfección esta crítica maestra a las altas clases de nuestra sociedad.

La canción *Lavish* (2024) es al completo una auténtica joya de la industria musical, sin embargo, voy a seleccionar las mejores partes que retratan el tema central de la obra. En primer lugar, el siguiente verso nos habla sobre el creerse ser algo que no eres. Aquí habla de la población que trata desesperadamente de verse como un rico, ya que piensan que si ellos mismos se lo creen, las altas esferas también lo harán. Estos versos son los que nos lo muestran:

*“You try your best to look like this
is not your first time,
You're fightin' for the front row,
that's a nice try,
You're lookin' real nice, smellin'
like worth,
Walk in like you deserve it”
(Twenty One Pilots 0:35-0:44).*

A medida que continuamos analizando, encontramos estos versos:

*“Big flex, complex, Napoleon
I say whatever and whatever that
I want
Sip a Capri-Sun like it's Dom
Pérignon
I'm talkin' tough happily with
someone in front of me”
(Twenty One Pilots 1:40-1:49)*

Como podemos ver, el humor brilla a la perfección en estas increíbles líneas. Lo primero que realiza Tyler, cantante del grupo, es una comparación con Napoleón, atacando a los ricos egocéntricos diciendo que se sienten como el mismísimo Napoleón Bonaparte. Es decir, aquí les llama narcisistas sin pensarlo dos veces. Luego, realiza otra absurda comparación, pues comenta que ese narcisismo les lleva a beber zumo como si de un vino valioso se tratase. Mediante estas comparaciones tan cómicas y satíricas, podemos contrastar



a la perfección lo que famosos como Elon Musk sienten cuando realizan cosas estúpidas como comprar Twitter para llamarle X. Ya hacia el final de la obra podemos seguir encontrándonos ataques y críticas directas hacia la clase alta de la pirámide social. Por ejemplo en *"I'm comin' in hot, hot shot hypocrisy; NDAs for the folks that talk to me"*. Con estas dos líneas nos queda claro cuál es el papel de los peces gordos en EE.UU: llenar las calles de hipocresía, de odio y de corrupción.

Una vez visto una crítica mucho más cómica del asunto, ya tenemos la transición perfecta para hacer un cambio drástico de género: del duro y analítico al generalmente comercial, el cual se decanta más por contentar al oyente y a los altos cargos de la industria. Sin embargo, Madonna (la reina del pop estadounidense) vino a demostrarnos que incluso el pop puede denunciar, pues todo el arte sirve para esto, para señalar los problemas con la idea de resolverlos.

En este caso vamos a analizar varias canciones extraídas de uno de sus álbumes más aclamados de su carrera, *American Life* (2003), y como podemos deducir del título, se adentra en la cruda realidad de EE.UU.

Esta compleja obra comienza con la canción que da nombre al álbum, puesto que sirve como introducción a un viaje a través de la crítica a este dudoso estilo de vida americano. En primer lugar, podemos escuchar los siguientes versos:

*Do I have to change my name?
Will it get me far?
Should I lose some weight?
Am I gonna be a star?"*
(Madonna 0:02-0:12)

Aquí, se pregunta hasta dónde se es capaz de llegar por fama y gloria. El sueño americano pretende que todo el que quiera pueda vivir una vida de ensueño, pero, ¿a qué precio?

Tras el primer estribillo podemos escuchar estos versos:

*"This type of modern life,
is it for me?
This type of modern life, is it for
free?"*
(Madonna 0:37-0:46)

Madonna vuelve a reflexionar mediante preguntas a las que pretende dar respuesta. En este caso, la artista busca que veamos la generalización realizada por los magnates del mundo, quienes intentan de vendernos que todos queremos vivir este estilo de vida. Además, se adentra en lo económico, al preguntar si todo esto es gratis. Esta es fácilmente reconocible como una pregunta retórica, pues conociendo la carrera de la propia cantante podemos ver que no, que hay que pagar mucho a cambio. Como dijo uno de los escritores estadounidenses más famosos de la historia, F. Scott Fitzgerald, *"God had his price, of course. God was made in man's image, so it has been said: He must have His price"* (F. Scott Fitzgerald, *"The diamond as Big as The Ritz, Tales of the Jazz Age, 1922"*).

Siguiendo la misma canción, los versos finales dicen así:

*"I got a lawyer and a manager
An agent and a chef
Three nannies, an assistant
And a driver and a jet
A trainer and a butler
And a bodyguard or five
A gardener and a stylist
Do you think I'm satisfied?"*
(Madonna 3:32-3:41)

Mientras añade una parte rapeada a esta canción, Madonna muestra lo que acabas consiguiendo siendo rico, tener a mucha gente trabajando para ti, ¿realmente eso te da la felicidad? Por último, vamos a ver dos versos muy importantes en la canción, con los que sentencia de forma tajante:

*"I'm just living out the American
dream
And I just realized that nothing is
what it seems"*
(Madonna 3:46-3:51)

Madonna es parte de ese codiciado y vacío *American Dream*, y es por ello que conoce mejor que nadie la pesadilla que este es.

Continuando con el álbum de Madonna, la canción número dos se llama *Hollywood* (2003) y expone a la perfección uno de los lugares más emblemáticos pero más problemáticos a su vez de todo EE.UU. Al principio, la canción comienza mostrando la cara bonita, al



hablar de lo que el sueño americano quiere que veamos: coches caros y lujosos, amistad, belleza, dinero, etc. En uno de los versos dice lo siguiente:

*"Everybody comes to Hollywood
They wanna make it in the
neighborhood
They like the smell of it in
Hollywood
How could it hurt you when it
looks so good?"
(Madonna 0:59-1:13)*

¿Cómo puede dañarte algo tan atractivo como el sueño americano? Pues sí puede, como podemos leer a continuación:

[...]la industria del entretenimiento en Estados Unidos ha permanecido en un estado de profunda incertidumbre, debido al inicio de una huelga liderada por el sindicato de guionistas y, posteriormente, otra liderada por el sindicato de actores, lo que condujo a la paralización de la producción de cine y televisión. (Rodrigo Falcón Zugasti, *"Hollywood en transformación: Las huelgas que redefinieron la industria del entretenimiento"*, Seen Ferro, 2024).

Para terminar tanto con la reina del pop norteamericano, como con el análisis de las canciones, vamos a detenernos en la canción *Love Profusion* (2003), cuyo videoclip también nos hace un interesante guiño sobre el tema en cuestión. Aunque parezca que esta es una simple canción de amor, está escondida en la letra y en su video una crítica mordaz del sueño americano, el titiritero que trata de mover al mundo a placer. En primer lugar, mientras que el video comienza con la cantante caminando por una avenida vacía de lo que parece ser Nueva York, la letra arranca con los problemas que esta ciudad tiene. La autora dice lo siguiente:

*"There are too many questions
There is not one solution
There is no resurrection
There is so much confusion"
(Madonna 0:04-0:19)*

Efectivamente, Madonna ha perdido toda la esperanza en el sueño americano, ni

se puede salvar, ni se puede resucitar. Esto es lo que dice la cantante acerca de este tema, pero ¿tiene realmente una solución esto? Un artículo de *ElDiario.es* deja claro que no.

Varios estudios demuestran que la posibilidad de que los estadounidenses pobres crean que trabajando duro van a prosperar es 20 veces inferior a la de sus semejantes latinoamericanos. El hecho de que el sueño americano se base en el esfuerzo individual ha hecho que las redes de apoyo público sean más débiles que en otros países. Los estadounidenses blancos son especialmente pesimistas [...] (Carol Graham, *"¿Ha muerto definitivamente el 'sueño americano'?"*, *ElDiario.es*, 2017)

Aquí está clara la cuestión, el famoso y deseado *American Dream* ya no tiene ni pies ni cabeza, es insostenible. Continuando el artículo antes mencionado, podemos encontrar la sentencia final al paraíso ficticio de los estadounidenses: "solo el 40% de los que nacieron en los ochenta lograron subir en la escala social. [...] solo el 38% de los estadounidenses pensaban que sus hijos vivirían mejor que ellos." (2017).

A pesar de todos los argumentos expuestos en este artículo, aún hay más de 800.000 personas que confían en la vuelta del sueño americano, debido a que aún lo persiguen. Estas personas son los conocidos como 'dreamers'. En este grupo de personas, ni siquiera hay locales del país, la gran mayoría son inmigrantes que han entrado en EE.UU. con la esperanza de prosperar, tal y cómo se prometía. Lo que estas personas no logran ver es que el propio presidente del país, Donald Trump, los rechaza. Por así decirlo, Estados Unidos tampoco quiere revivir el sueño americano, pues para hacer esto se debería de progresar y tomar medidas nuevas que acogiesen a estos inmigrantes mayoritariamente indocumentados. Ante esto, el presidente del país tomó las siguientes medidas:

La llegada de Donald Trump a la presidencia, con un discurso de criminalización de la inmigración, ha redibujado claramente este delicado, y discutible, equilibrio



entre la compasión y la mano dura. De hecho, la opción de Trump ha sido prestar solo atención a instrumentos que endurecen las opciones de acceder de modo regular a EEUU (Gemma Pinyol-Jiménez, “*Cómo acabar con el sueño americano*”, El Periódico, 2017)

Las consecuencias de esta opresión contra aquellos inmigrantes que buscar reanimar uno de los mayores engaños del país puede ser leída en la conclusión de este mismo artículo, cuando la escritora concluye de la siguiente forma:

No se conoce todavía qué respuesta dará la Administración Trump [...] a estos jóvenes que se sienten parte de la sociedad en la que han crecido. Pero si parece constatable la voluntad presidencial de dificultar la vida de buena parte de la población migrante en Estados Unidos, amargando un poco más esa idea del sueño americano. (2017)

Volviendo a la canción, tras pronunciar estos versos la letra comienza a hablar de amor y, es por esto, que la escena del video cambia a una isla paradisíaca donde florecen muchas flores preciosas. Regresando a los versos de crítica, Madonna dice esto:

*“There are too many options
There is no consolation
I have lost my illusions
What I want is an explanation”
(Madonna 0:36-0:51)*

Si tuviéramos que resumir en una simple y directa oración el sentimiento actual del gran porcentaje de la población que busca el sueño de EE.UU. sería la siguiente: “La ilusión del sueño americano se desmoronó para miles de personas migrantes tras la llegada al poder de Donald Trump” (*Facebook, Telenoticias*, 2025). Parece ser que poco a poco, más gente va perdiendo la ilusión y la esperanza en conseguir algún beneficio, cada vez son mayores las pérdidas y, como refleja Madonna en esta canción, cada vez la destrucción es mayor.

La realidad es que perfectamente podría estar hablando de un fuerte desamor, sin embargo, la cantante simplemente está mostrando su corazón roto por

haber alcanzado el magnífico sueño americano, el cual parece ser ya un obstáculo para ser feliz en lugar de un objetivo ambicioso. Además, esta idea se acentúa con el videoclip, pues al pronunciar los anteriores versos, el escenario vuelve a ser la ciudad, en este caso con un revuelo de papeles y hojas que nos adelantan una catástrofe.

Siguiendo la estructura cíclica del video, este vuelve a la hermosa isla en el instante en el que la cantante vuelve a hablar acerca del amor. Unos versos más adelante, Madonna vuelve con su crítica a la bulliciosa ciudad de Nueva York cuando dice:

*“There is no comprehension
There is real isolation
There is so much destruction
What I want is a celebration”
(Madonna 1:27-1:43)*

Aquí, la parte cinematográfica nos deja ver como ya hay una tormenta terrible en la gran ciudad, por lo que ya la destrucción masiva y el daño comienza a llegar. ¿Cómo puede la fama mundial hacerte sentir solo? Aunque parezca que estar rodeado de fanáticos y de cámaras llene tu corazón al máximo, este hace lo contrario. Es muy fácil estar junto a mucha gente y sentirte abandonado al mismo tiempo. También hay que tener en cuenta que tener admiradores no significa conocerlos, es decir, estos fanáticos que Madonna tiene son simples desconocidos que pueden mostrarle su apoyo, pero este es superficial y espontáneo. “Una persona puede sentirse sola, aunque la quiera mucha gente” (Ana Frank, “*¿Te has sentido solo a pesar de estar rodeado de gente?*”, El principio de un comienzo, 2021). Igualmente, el sueño americano te pone en esta situación sin que tú te des cuenta, ya que este te enajena. En el verso de Madonna antes mencionado, la cantante comenta que se siente aislada, como fuera de sí misma y del mundo en el que vive. Esto no es difícil si prestamos atención a cómo se pone en el mercado a una persona como ella. Una día estás componiendo una canción por pura diversión junto a tus amigos y al otro estás grabando un álbum o dando un concierto pensando en qué te hará ganar más dinero. El éxito y la fortuna tienen sus beneficios, pero hay que pagarlos. El precio de todo eso es



tu personalidad, el dejar de ser tú para convertirte en una máquina de hacer dinero. ¿Cómo puedes saber quién eres cuando hay millones de personas esperando que te pongas una máscara?

En el siguiente verso de la canción, tal y como realiza anteriormente, vuelve con las escenas bellas, pero ahora se encuentra caminando sobre flores en el cielo. El resto de la canción es la repetición de versos ya dichos anteriormente sobre el amor, sin embargo, el videoclip sí va cambiando repentinamente desde el océano azul y el cielo hasta la gran ciudad, la cual está siendo azotada por una terrible tempestad que está acabando con todo. Una vez analizada esta obra, podemos sacar dos posibles conclusiones: La primera es que esta puede tratar sobre el desamor (esta pierde sentido viendo el video de la cantante) y la segunda es que Madonna trata el tópico del *Beatus Ille*, “El *Beatus ille* [...] es un elogio de la vida campestre, apartada de las molestias e inconvenientes de la ciudad.” (Anastasio Serrano, “*EL TÓPICO DEL BEATUS ILLE EN LA LITERATURA ESPAÑOLA*”, Blogger, 2018).

Para terminar de hablar de Madonna, vamos a revisar cual es la principal consecuencia que esta cantante critica en su álbum *American Life* (2003). Lo más desastroso que le ha ocurrido a la humanidad en todo lo que llevamos de historia han sido las guerras mundiales, momentos en el cual los cinco continentes han abandonado su empatía y humanidad con la idea de ganar, aplastando brutalmente a sus oponentes. Estos dos hechos nos demuestran cómo el poder es capaz de hacer que una simple persona con una vida normal asesine y destruya, arrasando con todo lo que encuentra. Estas guerras no nacieron porque sí, sino que fueron producto de muchos factores, entre ellos el ansia por controlar que el sueño americano se esparza por todo el globo terráqueo. De esto se dio cuenta la cantante, enfocando todo su álbum a la idea más bélica de EE.UU. De hecho, la portada es una foto de Madonna vestida de soldado y en los conciertos realiza una performance en esa línea.

En la guerra nunca hay ganadores, pero



sí perdedores. Todos los involucrados acaban perdiendo algo y, sobre todo, es la población llana la que acaba sufriendo más y más mientras los políticos se enriquecen y juegan a las “batallitas”. Mucho ha perdido ya nuestra sociedad a causa de estos horribles y desastrosos actos cuyas consecuencias solo pagan los que no eligen si luchar o no. Un ejemplo perfecto de esto es la “Generación Perdida” americana. Esta generación está formada por aquellos que cumplieron la mayoría de edad durante el desarrollo de la Primera Guerra



Mundial, generándoles un trauma para siempre por la terrible época en las que les tocó pasar la supuesta mejor parte de nuestra vida. Principalmente se destaca a los escritores de esta generación, cuya obra ha dejado una gran huella en la literatura universal, donde aprovecharon para realizar un profundo análisis de la destrucción definitiva del sueño americano. Los principales exponentes de esta generación fueron: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, John

Dos Passos, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Jean Rhys y Sylvia Beach.

El primero de estos fue el escritor de *The Great Gatsby*, novela en la que el rechazo hacia el sueño americano es evidente. Esta obra tan magnífica termina con la siguiente frase: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 1925). Con esta contundente conclusión, el autor nos recuerda que su generación ha luchado con fuerza por alcanzar un



ideal, un sueño imposible. Esto es muy impactante, especialmente cuando ves que lo que te han prometido era una ilusión falsa.

Si tuviéramos que resumir el pensamiento de estos artistas sobre el tema en cuestión, estas líneas lo describen a la perfección:

Lo que permite reunir a este grupo de escritores bajo el mismo paraguas terminológico es su desilusión respecto al camino que estaba tomando el país tras la Primera Guerra Mundial [...] Tras haber presenciado los horrores del conflicto bélico, empezaron a considerar el «sueño americano» un engaño y comenzaron a rechazar los valores más tradicionales asociados a la conducta apropiada, la moralidad y los roles de género. (*“Generación perdida”*, Wikipedia, 2025)

Como hemos podido comprobar gracias a la música estudiada en este artículo, el sueño americano tiene muy poco de sueño y demasiado de fraude. Si buscamos su definición, podemos ver lo siguiente: “El concepto de “sueño americano” [...] se puede definir como la creencia de que cualquier persona, independientemente de su origen, puede alcanzar el éxito en los Estados Unidos si trabaja duro y persevera.” (Demian Magallan, *“¿Por qué se le llama ‘sueño americano’ a vivir en Estados Unidos? Se revela el secreto”*, El Tiempo, 2023). Sin dificultad podemos percatarnos de la gran mentira que se nos ofrece. En primer lugar, hemos visto que no cualquier persona puede alcanzarlo, dado que cada vez esto se pone más difícil para todos los inmigrantes que van en busca de los Estados Unidos, esperando saborear un poco de éxito. Además, el actual presidente, Donald Trump, obstaculiza aún más la llegada de los únicos hombres y mujeres que aún creen en este sueño. Uno de los ejemplos de lo aquí comentado es el de Yorvis Castillo, hombre venezolano que huye desesperado ante el miedo al nuevo presidente estadounidense:

Yorvis Castillo es un ciudadano venezolano que estuvo dos años viviendo de manera irregular en la ciudad de Houston, en Texas.

Dice que, debido a las medidas de Trump, decidió salir del país voluntariamente el 8 de febrero, por temor a ser detenido en cualquier momento por agentes de inmigración. (Elvin Sandoval, *“Las medidas de Donald Trump llevan a cientos de migrantes a regresar voluntariamente a sus países de origen”*, CNN en español, 2025).

De todos modos, hay una minoría que sí consigue agarrar el American Dream y, ¿qué pasa con ellos?

A un lado de la sociedad tenemos a los que han vivido por y para el sueño americano, egoístas y corruptos a los que no les importa perder su humanidad por ganar unas monedas más. En este saco casi vacío de gente podemos encontrar al actual mano derecha de Donald Trump, Elon Musk. Quien representa una contradicción constante, al estar él mismo creando su propio engaño y, de esa forma, contribuye a estafar a los demás.

Elon Musk [...] hizo posible “su sueño americano” tras migrar inicialmente de Sudáfrica a Canadá y posteriormente en Estados Unidos, donde además de convertirse en un exitoso empresario tecnológico, ahora ha decidido inmiscuirse con la administración de Trump, una que, irónicamente, es antiinmigrante abiertamente. (Mario Grimaldo, *“Elon Musk: el inmigrante africano que se convirtió en uno de los hombres más ricos del mundo”*, El Sol de México, 2025).

Efectivamente, Musk representa a la perfección la hipocresía, dado que es un inmigrante que quiere eliminar la inmigración. Con esto asoma la mentira del *American Dream*, puesto que su mayor problema es que está siendo reconstruido por corruptos que solo saben hacer las cosas como lo que son. Cargado de contradicciones está el nuevo sueño americano, dirigido por personas sin alma, que solo quieren ver sus bolsillos crecer. Trump ha sido el primer beneficiado a costa de las desgracias de los demás, ya que en el mismo instante en el que ganó las elecciones, su riqueza se disparó por las nubes. Aquí podemos contrastar esto con datos reales:



[...] las acciones de la empresa se han disparado, aumentando la riqueza del presidente electo. [...] justo antes de las elecciones, y su activo más valioso, su participación en la empresa matriz de Truth Social, valía 3.500 millones de dólares (3.250 millones de euros) el 4 de noviembre. [...] el repunte de las acciones de TMTG ha hecho subir el valor de su participación del 57% en la empresa. Los 114,75 millones de acciones que posee valen ahora 4.100 millones de dólares (3.800 millones de euros). (Doloresz Katanich, “*La fortuna de Donald Trump se dispara tras ganar las elecciones presidenciales*”, euronews, 2024)

Sin ser una sorpresa para nadie, el sueño americano existe, pero sólo existe para algunos pocos, tal y como ya dijo George Orwell en una de sus obras más famosas: “All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others” (George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, 1945). Por así decirlo, existe pero no es real. Existe por lo dicho anteriormente y porque está presente en nuestras vidas constantemente, pero no es real: es inalcanzable. Cuando me pongo a reflexionar sobre esto, siento gran tristeza por los *dreamers*; viven completamente cegados por un sueño que les rechaza, ellos son los fieles representantes de las últimas líneas de *The Great Gatsby*. Incluso podríamos compararlos con el mismísimo Sísifo, condenado a cargar un peso eternamente.

Ya es más que evidente que Estados Unidos está tratando de regresar como país de lujo al que todo el mundo aspira a llegar. El deseo de convertirse en Las Vegas de los años cincuenta (lugar supuestamente lleno de oportunidades y libertad) está siendo liderado por locos que quieren poder y dinero. EE.UU. debe darse cuenta de que hemos evolucionado, de que nuestra sociedad contemporánea no está dispuesta a dar ni un paso atrás. A pesar de que Donald Trump haya ganado las elecciones por tener más votos que sus contrincantes, sus medidas sin sentido demuestran quien es realmente y esto ha llevado a la mayoría de la ciudadanía americana a tomar cartas en el asunto mediante la

protesta:

50 estados protagonizaron protestas contra Donald Trump y el jefe de Tesla, Elon Musk, en Estados Unidos y más allá de sus fronteras para expresar su descontento con las políticas y acciones del actual Gobierno. [...] El movimiento de protesta, denominado ‘¡Manos fuera!’, fue organizado en más de 1.200 localidades de los 50 estados por más de 150 grupos, entre ellos organizaciones de derechos civiles, sindicatos, defensores del colectivo LGBTQ+, veteranos y activistas electorales. (Malek Fouda, “*Miles de personas protestan contra Trump y Musk en todo EE.UU. y en el extranjero*”, euronews, 2025)

Muchas de las personas que le han apoyado se están dando cuenta de las acciones tan perjudiciales que está llevando a cabo y se han unido para luchar contra la tiranía de él y sus amigos millonarios.

La intención con la que he realizado este artículo es la de advertir a mi generación, la cual suele encontrarse perdida en su mundo, que aunque parezca que el sueño americano es algo muy lejano a nosotros, esto no es verdad. Están intentando reanimarlo para volver a como estábamos hace setenta años y en nombre de nuestros padres, madres y abuelos debemos de combatir contra esos nuevos poderosos que se alzan en contra de los derechos humanos. El saber, como dijo Kant, es nuestra arma y debemos de usarla: “La única defensa contra el mundo es un conocimiento perfecto de él”.

Es importante que ahora más que nunca permanezcamos unidos contra la plutocracia. Mucha gente ha dado su vida porque ahora disfrutemos de la democracia, y por ello, debemos defenderla a toda costa.

Ellos tendrán más dinero, pero nosotros tenemos el verdadero poder. “el poder volverá a manos de aquéllos que lo concedieron, los cuales podrán disponer de él como les parezca más conveniente para su protección y seguridad” (*Locke, Segundo tratado del gobierno civil, 1689*)



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BROKEN DREAMS: ART, MYTH AND REALITY IN AMERICA

BEATRIZ PÉREZ GUTIÉRREZ

For years, the American Dream has been the driving force of American society. This is the belief that anyone, regardless of their initial position, can achieve success if they work hard and have a great determination, and it has had a great impact on the way of thinking and culture of this country.

The concept was coined in 1931 by the historian James Truslow Adams, who defined it as “the dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement”. Before 1931, in the 20s, North America was in all its splendor, thanks to the economic growth and the social changes, hence this decade is known as the Roaring Twenties. However, this period of general happiness ended with the stock market crash, which submerged American society into depression.

The American Dream is the light between the darkness of those terrible years. This optimistic belief serves as a hope for those who feel everything lost and encourages them to keep going. It comforted people to think that there was a chance to change, to become better, to gain more and to climb the social ladder. America was thought to be the land of opportunities, the only place where chances were higher than anywhere else. The concept was used to unify the nation after the disaster, to keep the hope together, and also to strengthen the American spirit and culture in all its forms.

Although the American Dream can be perceived as a useful idea to inspire the search for change, improvement and success, it also has a terrible impact on the mindset of the population. The concept of the American Dream makes success the only objective in life, so that all the actions and choices have to be taken in order to succeed. It cultivates a land filled with capitalism, meritocracy and social inequalities, where there

is a constant competition over social positions, power and money.

It is not surprising that this dualism of the American Dream soon became a recurrent topic in art. Art has been a key tool for expressing the ideals of prosperity, success and freedom that define the American identity. Through their works, artists have represented the idealized vision of a better life as well as the difficulties to achieve it, while mirroring the social and economic inequalities that exist in society. By addressing this topic, art is capable of connecting emotionally with the viewers and makes them reflect on their own dreams and fights.

New Realism stands out as the artistic style representative of the American Dream. This movement has its roots in the Realism from the previous century, although it adjusts to the 20th century, with its new and varied forms of art, new cities, new landscapes and new society. The United States had experienced big changes and through the artistic expression, an attempt was made to portray the tiredness and great aesthetic richness of the American figurative landscape. This realism seeks to highlight and expose the American society and its technological and industrial progress. The New Realism shows the American landscape, rural or urban, in a real way, trying to display the deep America, ignored by art history until then.

Although the main topic in the New Realism is America, this is portrayed in different ways, depending on the author's own ideas, revealing the different faces of the American Dream. Thus, artists like Norman Rockwell offer us an idealized and joyful vision of America, filled with optimism and virtue.

Norman Rockwell is known for being an illustrator for the covers of *The Saturday Evening Post*. Through his nostalgic and sometimes humorous works about the



everyday life in America he captured the essence of American culture. With these covers he achieved a significant fame, which it is not surprising if we consider the whopping impact he had on his viewers, how he could easily move them. This ability led him to be considered a national hero when, during World War II, he helped to exalt the national feeling, as well as raising the hurt morale of the Americans with his illustrations.

Among his work, the Four Freedoms series stands out. These four illustrations, painted in 1943, emerge from the also called "Four Freedoms" speech by the American President F. D. Roosevelt:

We look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms. The first is freedom of speech and expression. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way — everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want ... everywhere in the world. The fourth is freedom from fear ... anywhere in the world. (*President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Message to Congress, January 6, 1941*)

This speech, given in 1941, before the USA entered World War II, had as its aim to revive national ideals to unify the country.

Norman Rockwell decided to illustrate each one of these freedoms as a way to help Americans, reminding them about their ideals, about what they have and what they can lose. To make it closer to the citizens Rockwell transformed the four freedoms into daily life scenes, portraying his own neighbors from Vermont.

The first illustration, *Freedom of Speech*, depicts the ideal North American democracy, based on popular participation, in which everyone, regardless of their social class, has the right to speak and be heard. The freedom of speech is embodied in the man standing up. By his clothes and his tanned face from working in the sun he can be identified as working class. All the attention is focused on him, thanks to the contrast with the background

and the pyramidal organization of the composition. He is surrounded by people dressed in a more formal way, from another social class. However, they seem interested in what the man standing up is saying, they even seem to approve his speech.

In *Freedom of Worship* several faces and hands take control of the scene, representing different religions, which include Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism. Moreover, the scene transmits a certain feeling of unity, thanks to the monochromatic palette and the fact that they are all looking in the same direction. This illustration, unlike the others, includes the statement "Each according to the dictates of his own conscience", which emphasizes the idea that no person should be discriminated because of their religious beliefs.

Freedom from Want portrays an idealized America through a typical Thanksgiving scene. A happy and traditional family is represented, showing more their enjoyment for being together than their want for food. They are not hungry; they do not pay attention to the holiday turkey painted right in the center. This offers a sharp contrast with the reality faced by the world at the moment, World War II. Facing the famine that Europe was suffering, the viewers find abundance of food in this illustration, in which they feel included, they can feel another family member sitting at the table.

Lastly, *Freedom from Fear* shows two parents putting their children carefully into bed. It is a serene scene. The parents know that their children will rest without any danger, that they will wake up safe and sound the following morning. The illustration aims to transmit security, a false security if the viewer notices the newspaper held by the father, which announces a bombing in London.

These four freedoms represented by Norman Rockwell fit very well with the ideals of the American Dream. The author transforms abstract ideas into everyday scenes filled with utopianism, starring his close circle, with which Americans can feel identified. He made the freedoms not only seen as fundamental values for American society but as needs



OURS...to fight for



Freedom of Speech



Freedom of Worship



Freedom from Want



Freedom from Fear

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Paintings from the War Relocation Authority
OWI Poster No. 41. Additional copies may be obtained upon request from the Division of Public Inquiries, Office of War Information, Washington, D. C.
U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1943-O-511000



that every citizen should have covered. These needs are essential conditions for the American Dream. The freedom of speech and worship makes everybody equal, regardless of their social class or religion. Everyone has a voice that has to be heard, as well as everyone participates in public discussions. This allows social mobility and the rise promised by the American Dream. The other two freedoms, from want and fear, besides being conditions they also seem as goals or as a reward. People follow and believe in the American Dream because they think that their situation will improve, that they will live a more comfortable life with all their material needs covered and without fear that their life might fall.

Needless to say, these four illustrations had a major impact on American society. Right after their publishing in *The Saturday Evening Post* the magazine received 25,000 requests to purchase copies. The paintings became the images for 4 million war posters sold as part of the War Bonds effort, raising \$132,992,539. "They were received by the public with more enthusiasm, perhaps, than any other paintings in the history of American art", *The New Yorker* reported in 1945.

The illustrations definitely raised the hopes of the Americans after the Great Depression and prepared the nation for its entrance to World War II. But if they had such great success was because of the idealized vision of the American life given by Rockwell. As he recognized in his memoir: "Maybe as I grew up and found the world wasn't the perfectly pleasant place I had thought it to be, I unconsciously decided that, even if it wasn't an ideal world, it should be and painted only the ideal aspects of it". Norman Rockwell only portrayed a part of America, only shed light on the part with which Americans wanted to feel identified as well as emphasize. As Blake Gopnik said in 2010 in *The Washington Post* "He [Rockwell] doesn't challenge any of us, or himself, to think new thoughts or try new acts or look with fresh eyes. From the docile realism of his style to the received ideas of his subjects, Rockwell reliably keeps us right in the middle of our comfort zone".

Although Rockwell was successful in the USA, his work was not that well considered outside America. It happened that although the values described by Roosevelt in his speech were supposed to be applied to every nation, Rockwell depicted them as American values. The joyful scenes painted by Rockwell, where there were abundance of food and respect for other religions, collided with the reality that places like Europe were dealing with at the time.

Facing Rockwell's idealized vision of the American nation stand renowned authors from the New Realism who highlight the negative aspects of the country, authors who portray America as a land of solitude, such as Edward Hopper.

Edward Hopper is known for describing a North American society corrupted from its foundations, showing loneliness through a few characters on situations and atmospheres characteristics of the country. He, like Norman Rockwell, performs a genre representation of both urban and rural life, resorting to American culture. His paintings are set in public spaces, bars, hotels, gas stations, trains, all of them empty, to emphasize the characters' solitude.

To understand his vision, it must be taken into account that Hopper was raised in a mix of languages and traditions, since his mother was English and his father French, reaching fluency in 3 or 4 languages while still a child. Moreover, between 1906 and 1910, he visited Europe multiple times, he even lived in Paris during some months. These trips made him collect influences from the Impressionists, especially Edgar Degas and Édouard Manet, and Spanish classics like Velázquez or Goya. When he returned to his country he applied these influences on his vision and work about America, marking his particular aesthetic, so different from the artists of his time.

If there is one painting to highlight from all his work that is *Nighthawks*, painted in 1942. This painting captures the urban night experience through the window of an American restaurant, illuminated and isolated from outside's wrapping night.



The title of the painting *Nighthawks* is a metaphor that refers to the night owls, to the people who stay up all night wandering through the street. The term is emphasized by the way Hopper painted the characters, especially the couple, giving them aquiline noses.

The scene takes place late at night, with no one on the streets, making it a disturbing scene. Breaking with the gloomy atmosphere that dominates the painting is a diner, a typical American bar popular after the Great Depression, with large windows that let the light escape to the outside and allows the passengers to see what is happening inside. The viewer is just a passenger in the street, not invited to enter the restaurant, as there is no visible entrance, only windows, creating a feeling of isolation.

The interior of the diner is filled with light and warm colors, contrasting with the dim outside, painted in blues and greens. The characters seem to have dragged the melancholy from outside into the restaurant. Although they are together the characters seem alone. They are not interacting with one another, not even looking at each other, lost in their own thoughts. The couple, who seem to have come together, is not enjoying each other's company, but rather the silence

and tranquility. The waiter, despite doing some manual work, is distracted looking outside. The central figure is the most disquieting one. He turns his back on the viewer and disappears as he blends with the background colors. The distance between the figures and the fact that the waiter appears to be locked behind the bar counter increase the sense of solitude.

However, despite the loneliness represented in it, the diner appears as a refuge for all those night hawks. It is worth knowing that this piece was painted in 1942, when the country was still recovering from the Great Depression, right after the attack on Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941), which led to the entry of the United States into World War II. It is said that Hopper painted *Nighthawks* as a reaction to this fact, to capture the feeling of walking through a half-empty city product of all the people who had left, revealing some survivors inside the restaurant. The painting explores a country that has recently known danger, risk, fear, showing the need of connection and the humanity that unifies them.

The topic of loneliness in the big city is quite recurrent in Hopper's work. For example, in *Automat* (1927) a similar scene is represented. The painting is



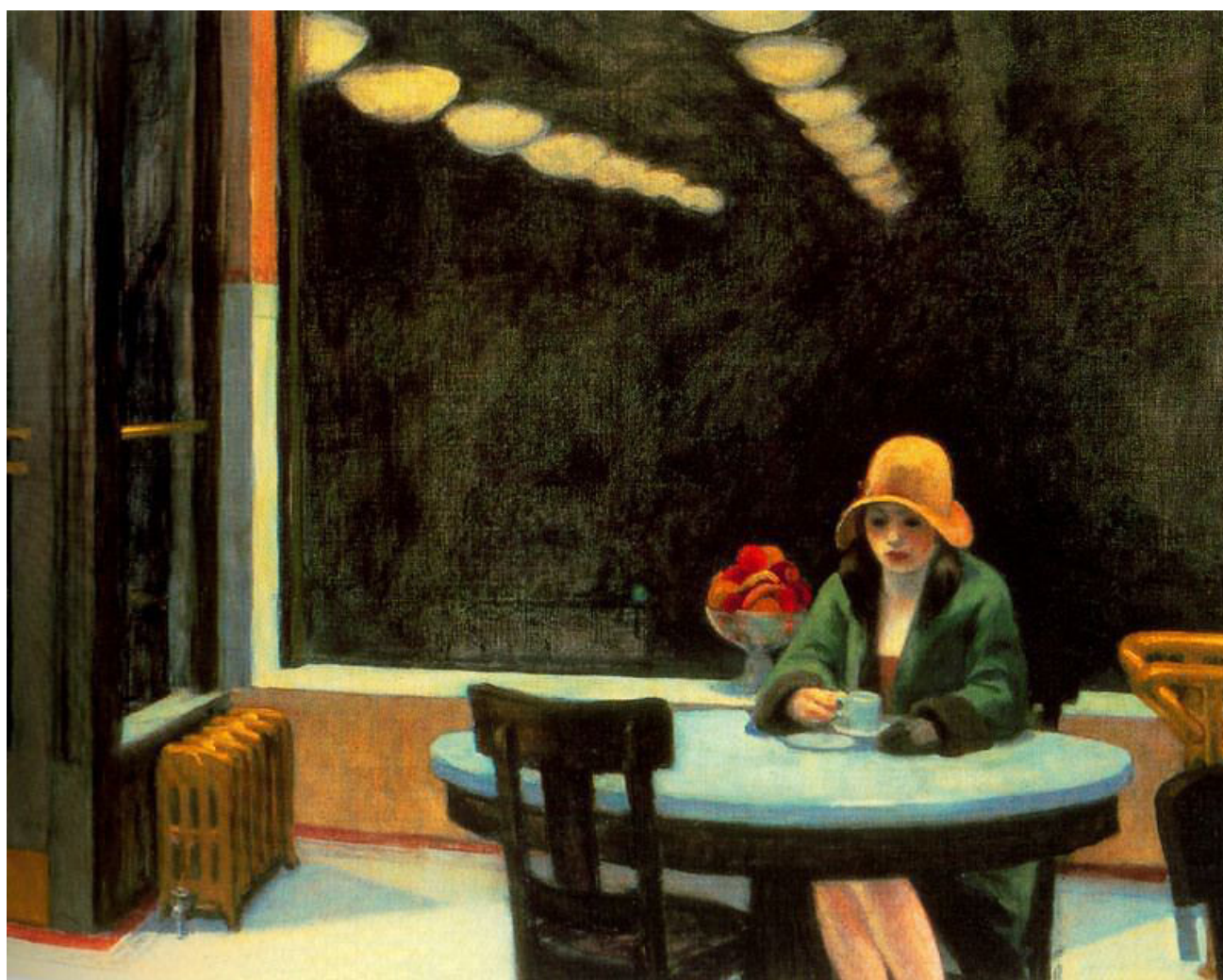
also set at night, but this time in an automat, again a contrast with a dark outside. In this establishment, typical of the time, clients could order and pay to a machine, while the cooks worked on the other side of the machine, without the need for interaction between client and worker. This place was perfect for what Hopper wanted to transmit: solitude and silence.

This painting depicts a woman, well dressed, drinking a cup of coffee. She is alone (emphasized with the empty chair in front of her) and seems sad, looking with melancholy to the cup. The viewer does not know her situation. Maybe she has a date, or maybe she goes or comes from work. Perhaps she is just a regular customer, hence the title of the painting, which probably refers more to the nature of the woman than the place

itself. She is the automat. It seems like the artificiality of the establishment has spread to the woman, visible in her tense body and lost look.

Although most of Hopper's works are set in dim closed places, he has an incredible ability to transfer solitude to open and illuminated spaces, which despite seeming more welcoming, turn out to be just as lonely. Paintings such as *Sunlight in a Cafeteria* or *Office in a Small City* embrace the sense of solitude and melancholy in broad daylight, while representing day to day situations. They throw light on the fact that, no matter how you look at it, the American city is gloomy and monotonous in every aspect.

This vision of the country collides with the principles of the American Dream. While this promises community,





prosperity and fulfillment in a vibrant and energetic atmosphere, Hopper displays the opposite in his paintings, with feelings of alienation and empty routine in an urban landscape that does not welcome but rather isolates. The happiness and success promised by the American Dream do not appear anywhere. It is like the constant search for the American Dream would have left them trapped in routine, without a real purpose.

Despite Hopper's melancholic perception of America, his paintings were a huge success, especially after the 30s. By the 40s he was considered a major American artist. Even in the 50s, when realism was losing importance, he continued to grow and strengthen his artistic reputation. The journalist Gérard Guégan said about him: "Edward Hopper is the real America, the America of brown, tawny and electric blue in the night that worries. Hopper is the painter of a century that is drifting. One day in the future, we will read America through him". According to critic Lloyd Goodrich, he was "an eminently native painter, who more than any other was getting more of the quality of America into his canvases".

In fact, *Nighthawks* is one of the few masterpieces recognized worldwide that has only known one transaction. Some months after its creation it was acquired by the Art Institute of Chicago for only \$3000. Since then, the painting has always been kept for exhibition, except for exceptional loans abroad for large scale exhibitions.

Rockwell and Hopper are often presented as polar opposites. But, what makes them so different? The two of them are from the same period of time. In fact, *Nighthawks* was painted in 1942, and the *Four Freedoms* series in 1943. These works seem to reflect the same historical situation: the entrance of the USA in World War II. Besides, both authors were born and raised in New York. The topic of their paintings is the same, the everyday life in America. However, despite developing in such similar circumstances, they have completely different perceptions of American life.

Rockwell's paintings are joy; they are

happiness put into painting. He knew America was not the perfect place, but he didn't want his viewers to be conscious about it. His paintings are what the public demanded, something they were used to, to comfort them, to keep up their hopes. Maybe this intention is because of his work in *The Saturday Evening Post*, where he illustrated for the public. In Rockwell's paintings the American Dream comes true, and that inspires his viewers. Those looking at the paintings can feel part of it, that is the author's goal. For example, in *Freedom from Want*, the man in the lower right corner, representing Rockwell, stares right at us, including us in the scene. But, although this intention of wanting the viewer to feel included is perceived, the viewer does not feel fully included, probably because of the lack of credibility of the paintings, due to its excessive perfection, which makes them seem unreal to the audience.

That does not happen in Hopper's paintings. He does not paint to fulfill the public's demands or to give them hope, he paints what he really sees. Colliding with the completely idealized vision of the American life given by Rockwell is the objective conception of Hopper. His paintings are full of his perception of sadness and solitude, but it happens that he didn't paint so that viewers could feel included. In fact, he often included horizontal linear elements that broke with the invitation to be part of the painting. However, the public could identify themselves more in Hopper's paintings than in Rockwell's. Probably because they perceived them more realistic, more similar to what their real life looked like. They felt their feelings represented in what Hopper painted, helping viewers to feel understood.

Besides, looking at the works of both artists from a current point of view, Hopper's paintings would be better valued, as they portray topics that have gained even more importance in the present. Rockwell's work has remained in their time, being perceived nowadays as a fictional past. These days people are more aware about the solitude and melancholy that comes with American society, and they find in Hopper's work a good reflection of it, that somehow makes people feel appreciated. In fact,





BROKEN DREAMS: ART, MYTH AND REALITY IN AMERICA.

back in 2020, when the entire society was isolated in their homes because of coronavirus, many people stated that they felt part of a Hopper painting.

In conclusion, art is a proof that the American Dream has two sides. Some artists offer an idealized vision, with a friendly and nostalgic aesthetic, which serves as a refuge from the crisis, but also as a way of hiding inconvenient realities of society, to boost our dreaming and hope. However, there are other artists who are conscious of the truth, making an art that mirrors the modern solitude, a critique against the national myth that celebrates individual success without attending the emotional and social cost that implies. Instead of dreaming, these artists force us to awake.





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AFTERWORD

2025 marks the centenary of *The Great Gatsby*, originally published on the 10th April 1925. Upon its publication, Fitzgerald expressed his uneasiness about the book's title, which was, in fact, suggested by his editor, Maxwell Perkins. Yet, a hundred years have passed and *The Great Gatsby* still captivates readers worldwide, and, despite the author's doubts, its now iconic title serves as a testament to its enduring legacy.

Gatsby, its enigmatic and alluring protagonist, encapsulated the core values of the already decaying American Dream, that is, the never-ending pursuit of happiness. But, as Fitzgerald so brilliantly depicted in his masterpiece, such an ambitious goal had its consequences, then and now. America is, to this day, the melting pot of cultures it once was, back when this term was first coined in the 1780s. Indeed, the American society came to be a hybridised one, proud of its diverse origins. The same America that is now ruthlessly expelling thousands of its own people without batting an eye. The *dream* has turned into a *nightmare*.

In *The Great Gatsby* Fitzgerald warned us about the corruption of the American Dream: those who had deeply admired *Gatsby* (or was it just his money?) were the ones who would later turn their backs on him. Similarly, Fitzgerald was shunned by the country that had, just a few years earlier, deemed him a promising writer. Apparently, the fun was over. Just as the 1920s were fading away, so was Fitzgerald and his *dream*, and the last years of his short-lived life became pure hell for the romantic dreamer.

In these 100 years artists from all walks of life have portrayed, explored, and navigated the multiple layers of the American Dream, its lights and shadows. By delving into how the arts -such as music, cinema and painting- have illustrated the dichotomy of *dream/nightmare* over the years we can gain insights into its complexity. The essays here collected are perfect proof of how American artists have been,

and still are, highly critical of the much-coveted American Dream, and are prone to pointing out the nightmarish side of it.

Given the turbulent political, cultural, and social climate in America today, it is clearer than ever that this gilded *dream* must be confronted and reinterpreted, and maybe, by making their voices heard, Americans can finally reach the long-promised green light -unless, of course, it is just an unreachable *dream*.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter -tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther... And one fine morning---.
(*The Great Gatsby*)

Esther Segura



