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GRASPING THE GIST ABOUT THE AMERICAN DREAM FULFILMENT AND SOCIAL CLASS ASSIMILATION THROUGH "RAGGED DICK" OF HORATIO ALGER

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Résumé

Le rêve Américain est généralement défini comme la destination sur une terre de liberté où la vie serait de bonne facture, plus agréable et plus remplie pour tous. Une terre qui offre des opportunités à tout le monde selon son habileté ou son sens d'accomplissement. Un rêve selon lequel n'importe qui peut réussir par le biais de dur labeur parce que possédant le potentiel de vivre une vie accomplie

*La présente étude de recherche se propose d'élucider le concept du rêve Américain tel démontré par Horatio Alger Jr dans son œuvre de fiction intitulée *Ragged Dick*. Au moyen d'une passerelle entre classes sociales et sous l'égide du postmodernisme, cet article explore quelques contours de la transformation du héros Dick du statut de pauvre orphelin à une personne respectable dans la même société.*

Mots Clés : *Terre, rêve Américain, travail acharné, confiance en soi, prospérité.*

Abstract

The American Dream is commonly known as the destination of a land for freedom where life should be better, richer and fuller for everyone. That land which offers opportunities to everyone according to his ability or sense of achievement. A dream according to which, all people can succeed through hard work, and that all people have the potential to live in happiness and prosperity.

*This paper intends to thrash out the concept of the American Dream as depicted by Horatio Alger Jr's fiction *Ragged Dick* or, *Street Life in New York with the Boot Blacks*. This article explores, through the lens of a social class interconnectedness in a post-modernism approach, some contours of the hero's transformation from a ragged homeless boy of the streets to a respectable person in the same society.*

Key Words: *Land, American dream, hard work, self-reliance, prosperity.*

INTRODUCTION

The ‘New World’ or the ‘Promised Land’ stood at a given time in the history of Americans and to people of the whole world as a precious magnet. As a direct consequence, they had willingly or unwillingly drawn to its shores from anywhere and everywhere, from far and near, from hot places to cold places, from mountain and plain, and obviously from desert and quite fertile fields. America, that land of everybody did successfully attract every type and variety of human beings alive, whether their interests in moving and settling in the land meet or not. Furthermore, the magnet caught together farmers, soldiers, wealthy people, poor people, sailors, adventures, beggars, manufactures, musicians, miners, singers, actors, engineers, butchers, shoemakers - -the list is far from being exhaustive. Thus, all of them discovered parts of the ‘New World’, explored them at length, raised their country’s flags, claimed the lands, developed activities on each one’s capacities, whether economic, social or religious. They were all meant to reach a target, making their personal dream come true one day.

Yet, traditionally speaking the term American Dream publicly used for the first time by the historian James Truslow Adams in 1931 in view to shedding light on what had specifically attracted millions of people from all nations throughout the whole world to get settled in America. The very first immigrants in America strongly banked on their inner and well-manifested hope for a life better than the one they had left behind, mainly in Europe. The real motivations which geared them to leave Europe were in short term religious persecution, political oppression and poverty. They hopefully dreamt:

- the personal dream of freedom, self-fulfillment, dignity and happiness,
- the economic dream of prosperity and success, the dream of rising from poverty to fame and fortune (i.e. the case of the hero of the novel who moves from rags to riches),
- the social dream of equality of opportunity and a classless society (i.e. as it is illustrated as a class-assimilation with Ragged Dick who cooperates with everyone of different social class in order to fulfill his dream),
- the manifestation of a religious freedom in a “promised land” in which they safely appeared as God’s chosen people,
- the political dream of an efficient democracy.

Making or building America as a home, all the different immigrants were then bound to cooperate, interact and install society-based principles upon which they all have to work on for the well-being of everyone since they differently aim high in succeeding in their life. The dream to live a pleasant life requires from them a minimum of personal will, determination and a tangible focus to work

out. This could not be effective without permanent interactions with people of different social classes, fortunes, life experience and know-how. Fulfilling the American Dream stands for everybody as a common sense to know, adopt and implement no matter what may be circumstances whether social, economic or religious.

Horatio Alger Jr., a prolific American author of boy's adventure stories, designed reference but literary works in which heroes lead exemplary lives to strive and succeed in the face of adversity and poverty, good and evil. His fiction plot in the novel under study is framed out referring to the American history and realities. Even though its implementation suffers a lot of misunderstandings and lack of an inflexible will from some Americans ; the identification , indication , expression and political manifestation of the idea of American Dream were imbibed in The Declaration of Independence where it is clearly expressed: “ We hold these truths to be self-evident , that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”(Kloppenber 147). Enlarging the scope of understanding of the concept of American Dream, Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur stipulates the following in his *Letters from an American Farmer*:

«The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions.....Here, individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and prosperity will one day cause great changes in the world.....An [immigrant] when he first arrives.....no sooner breathes our air than he forms new schemes, and embarks in designs he never would have thought of in his own country....He begins to feel the effects of a sort of resurrection ; hitherto he had lived, but simply vegetated; he now feels himself a man.....Judge what an alternation there must arise in the mind and thoughts of this man;....His heart involuntarily swells and glows; this swell inspires him with those new thoughts which constitute an American » (M.G.J de Crèvecoeur).

While addressing the issue of national character, the same author pinpointed a special focus on the classic question of American nationality in these terms:

«What the is the American , this new man? He is either an European , or the descendent of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, and whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. He is an American, who leaving behind him all his

ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here, individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and prosperity will one day cause great changes in the world » (M.G.J de Crèvecoeur)

Under such a shelter of word-and- action perspective , Horatio Alger persuaded by the trueness of the American Dream, framed out characters who overcame hardships through industry, perseverance , self-reliance, self-discipline and class assimilation. Framed to appropriately fit in the ubiquitous “rags to riches” legend in that land of everyone, coming from everywhere where everyone could make a life with success and achievement of material prosperity through hard work, regardless to origins but by the help of social ties among people of different standards of living , Americans count among themselves many such cases of marvelous successes. The example of President Abraham Lincoln stands as an illustrative case of the American Dream fulfilment. He, having no opportunity to seize and no real chance to go to school, became lawyer and the 16th President of the USA. Advocating the inevitable need to preserve the union from all ill-wind liable to create even an unsuspected damage, he said in 1864 in a speech, this:

« I happen temporarily to occupy the big White House. I am a living witness that anyone of your children may look to come as my father’s child has. It is in order that each of you may have through this free government which we have enjoyed, an open field and affair chance for your industry, enterprise, and intelligence ; that you may all have privileges in the race of life, with all its desirable human aspirations. It is for this the struggle should be maintained, that we may not lose our birthright.....The nation is worth fighting for, to secure such an inestimable jewel » (Cullen 74).

The “New World” or the “Promised Land” , that free land which welcomed millions of thousands of immigrants represents with no doubt a home for them. They mince no ways and means to reach the objective , each one with his/her ability to fight for betterment. In fact , success in the USA depends not on family ties , backgrounds or any other specific opportunity or privilege. Such a state of things meet the adherence of many as it is abundantly expressed in the coming excerpt:

«This is a free ground. All the way from here to the Pacific Ocean. No man has to bow. No man born to royalty. Here we judge you by what you do, not by what your father was. Here you can be something. Here's a place to build a home...It's the idea that we all have value, you and me...» (Pillai ,Rajnandini & Susan Stites-Doe 36)

The concept of the American Dream represents many facets to be explored when one intends to understand it at depth. Having decided to look into them , through Horatio Alger Jr's novel entitled *Ragged Dick or, Street Life in New York with the Boot Black*, an adequate theoretical framework will come up to shed light on the concept as the author himself designs it. It can surely help me identify and explain in details, the authentic technique used by Horatio Alger to frame out poor and homeless characters to move from fringes to become respected members in the American society: searching for identity , determining life's goals , thinking about their responsibility to others.

1-THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: Significance of the use of fiction and postmodernism approach within the American context.

Postmodernism tackles or discusses the question of social change in contemporary societies while referring to a distinct shift in the way that humanistic intellectuals view the relation of their cultural work to society at large. Since it lays emphasis on what impact intellectuals have on a world that appears increasingly inimical to the values promoted in the arts and in intellectual work, this fictional production leans on a particular facet in the building-up of the American nation. The American dream fulfilment dates far back in the history of Americans themselves. A feedback to the past by the means of fiction deserves being gathered evidence about so as to apprehend the very insights of a contemporary work like the intent Horatio Alger Jr places behind this option of this literary work.

In fact, the historical fiction novel straddles the factual and the fictive recreation of past motivations that animate historical events. In such a vein, the American context fits well a literary endeavor in reckoning past events into a frame which can help understand the manifestation of the consciousness of Americans within the tangle of the "American Dream". This return to the past renders available a fictional account about the past, a story or stories told about an event perhaps fictional or real, and about people also fictional or real (Mathew J. Phillpot,2009). As a matter of fact, fictional literary productions benefit from a wide range of comments from a variety of eminent intellectuals, well-known in the domain. The one after the other, they do illustrate interesting inputs in what should be drawn as fuller comprehension of the concept of the American Dream

implementation via historical fiction. In the eyes of David D. McGarry and Sarah Harriman White in their 1963 guide to historical fiction, the historical novel contributes in providing additional carrion to the bare bones that historians are able to uncover and acting in such a direction , arranges for a precious account that whilst not necessarily true provides a clear indication of past events, circumstances and cultures. And, in field of cultural background, The “New World” enshrines a wide and rich range of cultural diversities melted in an estimable cluster. This means that without a steady reference to past events and circumstances which provoke them, a historical fiction can’t first, stand on a solid hold and endeavors to convey an intelligible message may suffer a hit to be clearly comprehended. In the shoes of Collingwood, historical events constitute the outer dimension of historical work. Furthermore, since circumstances mostly determine social consciousness in people and that their manifestation always stems from their own initiatives , the Marxist literary theorist Georg Lukàcs is generally considered as the most influential critic of historical fiction and his work is the basis from which later theories begin their theoretical paradigms. As a matter of fact , his thesis entitled *The Historical Novel* (1955) met undoubtedly the development of historical novels in the nineteenth century as a product of social forces. Lukàcs puts forward that Sir Walter Scott (1771-1823) was the very first to bring forth the especially historical fiction to the novel format and is therefore to be considered as the founder of the historical novel. Rooting down to this state of reference , Lukàcs is referring to Scott’s use of history (defined in the American Heritage Dictionary , in the second college edition as a chronological record of events , as of the life or explanation of or commentary on those events or , the branch of knowledge that records and analyses past events) as a means to understand individuals historically:

«The so-called historical novels of the nineteenth century (Scudéry, Calpranède, etc...) are historical only as regards their purely external choice of theme and costume. Not only the psychology of the characters, but the manners depicted are entirely those of the writer’s own day. And in the most famous “historical novel” of the eighteenth century, walpole’s Castle of Otranto, history is likewise treated as mere costumery: it is only the curiosities and oddities of the milieu that matter, not an artistically faithful image of a concrete historical epoch » . (Lukàcs, p.15)

In limelight , it is widely felt out of the above instructive affirmation that Scott’s novel lensed as tangible findings of a new historical consciousness which emerged in the nineteenth century as stands as an efficient guide in the domain of historical fiction. It is as much an endeavor to get connected with the past as it is forcibly an account of it. An account which, in no literary technique can escape

from such a conduct. In view to illuminating more about this, the prolific specialist Lukàcs advocates the following:

*«What matters therefore in the theoretical novel is not the retelling of great historical events, but the poetic awakening of the people who figured in those events. What matters is that we should re-experience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality»
Lukàcs,p.42)*

Since it has commonly been admitted that there is no present time without the past one, the American society as a whole represents a living example of this socio-cultural consideration. With regards to the above standpoint of Lukàcs , it would be fair enough to sum up that historical fiction is to, in part , educate ; help readers better grasp not only the gist about past events , societies and customs but the real circumstances and consciousness that awake determination towards them. This new literary ingredient of the nineteenth century historical fiction may be most welcomed today in the works of Charles Dickens since it best fits his own perspective in literary productions. Dicken's proper style as a prolific writer goes in line with the historical fiction prerogatives since the author's collection which is made up with far-fetched, often disgusting and violent stories represent a testament to his work to reveal and make known the social abuses and prejudices of his own times and, at the same time, act as a serious advance notice of how government should not act. He could be judged as right in his shoes when he openly voiced that humankind cannot bear too much reality. Yet, people generally create or imagine stories to come terms with what is in one way or the other, humanly unbearable, unspeakable, or unimaginable. Far from an exaggeration, it would be nice to state that fiction is not fact, but pure imagination which curiously bears a part of the fact. Nevertheless, this high point in the field of historical fiction doesn't appear so easy to be grasped in its intrinsic substances but standpoints do differ and recorded 'divergences' are rather complementary. Definitely, historical fiction emanates in essence from imagination which holds its own restrictions and bounds. Under this prerogative, A.N. Whitehead says in 1933 that imagination is not to be 'divorced from the facts' because it is just a way of illuminating the facts. (Whitehead , 193). This means that historical fiction helps to encourage and widen up consideration of the inner life of historical fact that informs the search for similarities and differences that exist in human motivation, action, and cohabitation. As pictured and actively animated in Hegi's novel, historical fiction offers a concise account between empirical events and human explorations of beauty, goodness, nobility, and their right opposites. In further details, a range of different components or constituents...-- lyric (personal voice), drama (presentation of drama), epic

(depiction of heroes and antiheroes often in the same person, and chronicle (depiction of empirical detail) – meet for the purpose of putting students wise about how to learn and explore through Hegi's example on how to weave, melt or bridge up "they" and "then" and "we" and "now" into cohabitation. In view to restricting the theory as the use of fact and fiction is regarded, it wouldn't be unfair to state that fictional helps to inform consideration of the inner life of historical fact in terms of offering a richer perspective on the meaning of past lives as well as the lives of those in the present, and indeed by illuminating patterns that exist in human motivation, action, and cohabitation. This deliberate attempt to scrutinize life in a past-and-present perspective, surely nourishes interests with both individuals and social groups, targeting at locating themselves in time between an imagined past a prospected future so as to inform motivate or innate actions with task-based intention or purpose.

While looking at Ragged Dick through the lenses of 1860's New York and his own life there too, Horatio Alger Jr has decidedly opted to drive the hero of the novel back to history in order to reawaken or revive the dream that was at the very start, the fundamental objective echoed by European immigrants once in the "New World", mainly in the 17th century. Drawing up to this facet on the significance of the use of fiction to basically refer to actual past acts, it would be nice to address in details, the concept of the American Dream before developing any further interest regarding the fiction work in question in this research paper.

2- FROM APPROPRIATION TO IMPLEMENTATION: American Dream in colonial time and early after.

Genuinely called "the Daughter of all Europe" because of those many European immigrants who moved and get settled in the "New World" which in fact was just new to new-comers but already a home to others, Thomas Paine had just anticipated about the inestimable and mosaic clusters of cultures that were meant to come together in a melting-pot framework. The tangible objective for almost everyone to enjoy a pleasant life full of joy was the main drive that guided Americans to develop qualities appropriate to win the case. The whole American history made of cultures of diverse kinds is a rich one with a set of events which didn't prevent the nation from building his proper history in the hands of his own peoples with less regards to origins and personal interests to satisfy. The United States of America has from the very beginning been identified as a land of equal opportunity, where hard work and skill can reliably result in personal success and fulfilment, regardless of one's station life. It is commonly assumed that humanly, the specifics of each dream vary from one person to another, it has undoubtedly been recognized that the overall dynamism of the American Dream has always been fundamental to the nation's identity whether cultural, economic

and political. This consciousness brought Americans to the knowledge that instant wealth has not always been a primordial component or cornerstone of the Dream, Americans have originally based their efforts on thrift and hard work. At the hey of the colonial time, Benjamin Franklin highly advised people on the “The Way to wealth”. On page 12 of the book *Poor Richard's Almanac* and in the same vein, it has been voiced out that “Early to Bed, and early to rise, makes a Man healthy, wealthy, and wise”. In other words, the key to wealth was industry and hard work. In nutshell, Americans had early on widen up or expanded Franklin's notion of industry into a labor ideology which indicates that the goal was not extravagant wealth but rather, economic independence and the opportunity for social advancement through financial gain. Yet, whatever may be the economic development or the kind of opportunity to seize, Americans of any rank need to meet, interact and cooperate.

Traditionally, the concept of American Dream takes roots in the past even before the formation of the United States of America in 1600's, when early on the huge migration from various European countries and elsewhere was geared up with their burning desire to meet their hopes and aspirations. On the issue, a renowned historian has genuinely pinpointed in his book *Epic of America*, all the encompassing idea on the American Dream. With a special know-how in relating or presenting the gist about the concept, he illustrates the case as follows:

«The American Dream is that 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. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, also too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream for motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position....The American Dream that has lured tens of millions of all nations to our shores in the past century has not been a dream of material plenty, though that has doubtlessly counted heavily. It has been a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as a man and woman, unhampered by barriers which had slowly been erected civilizations, unrepressed by social orders which had developed for the benefit of classes rather than for the simple human being of any and every class. » (Adam, 214-215)

The American Dream has been insightfully rooted in the concept of a journey to a new country , the journey across generations; and with no doubt a marvelous journey within one's life. In a clear perspective, it is in fact about motion and progress. It is elsewhere about optimism and being able to find success and fulfilment along the way. Explicitly, the American Dream is mainly to achieve economic independence, have a vocation and own a home in order to be happy.

From migration to the appropriation and implementation of the American Dream, the history of the United States of America offers fields of thoughts and many facets which help grasp a fuller understanding of the concept under study in this research paper. To apprehend in nutshell, not only opportunity is necessary but privilege is also added to grasp interpretations of the same concept because they openly display realities of each epoch of the history of America. Since literature is any oral or written expression of human thoughts, ideals, and beliefs in an aesthetic way, Horatio Alger Jr handles the matter the same way with a tangible focus on historical roots which regularly appear in his work under study: *Ragged Dick or, Street Life in New York with the Boot Blacks*. The original meaning of the American Dream goes beyond the economic or religious considerations. The materialistic ground doesn't stand negligible if one intends to explore the different contours of the concept in order to thrash out from the book itself the slightest possible links as related to the hero who, in his undertakings happened to demonstrate more than we could merely expect from a child of his age.

3- KNOWING MORE ABOUT THE DREAM UNDER SOCIO-ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES.

From one epoch to another in the history of the United States of America, circumstances whether expected or not appear to add new ingredients to the definition that one have to attribute to the American Dream concept. The later one changes with time as long as people judge worth turning it another way because of the occurrence of social , economic or religious matters which directly or indirectly impact the whole society in which they are living. The concept definition that was highly influenced by economic and religious motivations at the beginning of the building-up of the nation , didn't stop or limit itself to those determining scopes. A case of socio-economic event happened to influence or add a new color to the general knowledge about the genesis of the concept of the American Dream which is being widely known , explained and demonstrated though the study if the novel *Ragged Dick or, Street Life in New York with the Boot Blacks* written by Horatio Alger Jr.

As a matter of fact , the Great Depression which came out in October 1929 offered in a new vision , definition or interpretation to the American Dream

because it embodies a new range of considerations which , socially and at the same time economically dictate authorities to Americans themselves , regardless to their ranks or standards of living. In fact, the economic recession occurred when the New York stock market fell down, resulting in the collapse of United States banks and many other financial institutions including their huge amount in number of depositors. The direct consequences of such an economic strain could be named as industrial production bump, employment falling, lower wages and poverty. In the eyes of Americans themselves, they have never witnesses so far such a precedent economic shake in the whole American history of industrial societies. The intensity it displayed and unbearable fallouts it imposed on the nation led hopelessly to believe that the Great Depression was quite more than an economic matter as it also left indelible prints on human psychology. The recession impacted dangerously on lives as it led to hardships and immense apprehensions which lasted even more than the crisis itself. With regards to the way it turned down tables or expected well-beings in the American nation, it has come to go against the wind of change and hope framed in all citizen mind. Contradicting the optimism placed in the implementation of the American Dream and which was said to offer better life to everyone by the means of industry , perseverance, self-reliance and self-discipline , the depression opened up new avenues within the framework of interpreting the American Dream.

Because the Great Depression encumbers the on-going trend of thoughts about the prosperity announced for Americans of every little corner of the American nation, conflicting interpretations of the definition of the American Dream hit the block with an increasing number of criticisms form both non-Americans and Americans as well. Some fiercely believe that the structure of American society besieged by social classification, discrimination based on race, ethnicity and unequal distribution of wealth contrary to what was said to be taken for granted in the “Promised Land”. Others felt discouraged, armless and thought that things fall apart and no hope could be met under such an unprecedented crisis. In their understanding, the American society was doomed to collapse because the economic plague that was ravaging had no way out. In fact, the dream switched from land cultivation, freedom of religion and industry development to the ability to collect material goods and services. The materialistic aspect of the American Dream came to vogue, responding or going along with the prevailing economic obligations. The twentieth century served as a source and a lead to economic prosperity which drove Americans to the spreading of consumerism. This new drive to such a state of economic up-and-down gave birth to the materialistic side of the American Dream. While many were complaining about the deplorable situation, others seized the opportunity to make use if it for a precise purpose. The Republican candidate, Herbert Hoover and the 31st President of the United

States of America advanced as a motto or slogan in his presidential campaign of 1928: “A chicken in every pot, and a car in every garage” (Ribble, 111). His assertion rang the bell of the fundamental material consideration of the American Dream and fortunately, it served as a tangible gear to his election.

This new trend of thought about the definition of the American Dream which invites itself in the debate, animates possibility of interpretations of that dream of Americans that rests on materialistic motivation or rooting. Miraculously, it happened to dominate issues related to happiness and achievement as one could imagine the later ones being fulfilled in among Americans and in America: a specific land of opportunities, the one of its kind. Material wealth topped the bill to everything else that may help understand or interpret the American Dream anyhow. Those who in one way or the other accumulated or topped over materially by the means of reliance, and other opportunities are referred to as key figures of inevitable success. Some examples were plain to be noticed or remarked within the American society at the time. John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie were mostly the living examples of such a confirmed achievement. Considered to be the richest self-made men in America at the time, each one of the two heroes of materialistic wealth accumulation had a proper case of success which stems from a kind of conceptual institution and motivation. Rockefeller whose father was a confidence man, a peddler of elixirs strongly believed in the fact that every man has a natural power or talent within himself which could lead him to the acquisition of material success, through possibilities being offered by the later one. According to Carnegie, there exists plenty of room at the top, and the best way to get there is definitely to start at the bottom. Carnegie seized at random an opportunity being offered to him by a farmer-looking man. In fact, the American Dream witnessed a metamorphosis or a series of evolution about its own definition. Throughout culture and history, the perceptions upon the American Dream have impacted the nation’s identity itself. In many ways and a diverse kinds of people, this has plainly been expressed, proving the overall vitality of that ideal. It definitely lies at the heart of young people, living in conditions just acceptable socially but fighting every day with the hope that he or she will one day meet and enjoy to the fullest , fortune and fame. Because the American Dream revolves with time, depending on each period of the American consciousness about happiness meaning, Richard Florida a prominent American historian ,author of many books including *The rise of the Creative Class* , *The urban Crisis*, *Who’s Your city ?* , Professor of urban North-American studies, proffered an appreciation of the American Dream in his article “The New American Dream” published in Washington Monthly:

«The American Dream is no longer just about money. Better pay, a nice house, and a rising standard of living will always be

attractive. But my research and others' show another factor emerging: The new American Dream is to maintain a reasonable living standard while doing work that we enjoy doing. In fact, many people are willing to trade income for work they enjoy» (source:w.w.w.washingtonmonthly.com)

From the above position about the American Dream, the philosophy which lies behind it reveals specificities conditioned by economic realities , linked to time and epoch. Social circumstances determine new trends and new or update interpretations come up with will and motivation from American themselves. The American Dream witnessed an evolution while discussing its different aspects. To seize the right end of the stick about its implementations via class assimilation (that possibility of street boys, homeless, rags to cooperate with high standard people , for a good purpose to be fulfilled for the well- being of the same society where both are living) , those varied elucidations could help provide details about some circumstances , facts, actions, ideas and deeds in the novel under study which is principally dedicated to boy's adventure stories whose heroes lead exemplary lives to strive and succeed in face of adversity and poverty, good and evil and social interactions about people of the same of different living standards.

4-RAGGED DICK AND HIS STRIVE TO MEET THE AMERICAN DREAM.

Purposely entitled *Ragged Dick or, Street Life in New York with the Boot Blacks* , Horatio Alger, Jr. the author of the novel has already projected in anticipation in the mind of a remove observer , an image of what life could look like in that place referred to in the title and the hero itself as physically portrayed on the cover page. Succeeding in leading or directing a needy, orphan and homeless boy turn the tables from rags to riches in such an environment of New York where reigned the rule of the survival of the fittest and where opportunities were many but only witty , experienced and read-to-learn people could identify and rightly use them to fulfill a goal , Horatio Alger, Jr let know a personal writing style of his own which reveals itself readers along with the story. Entitled , 'Ragged Dick was Introduced to the Reader' , the very first chapter of the novel labelled out the character of the hero under the motivation of anticipating or getting readers prepared to not only frame out the context but also understand characters in their different correlations, mostly Dick in his undertakings . Referring to Dick's rag habit ,the author puts this:

«While the conversation has been going on, Dick had got up. His bedchamber had been a wooden box half full of straw,

on which the young boot-black had reposed his weary limbs, and slept as soundly as if it had been a bed of down. He jumped down into the straw without taking the trouble of undressing. Getting up too was an equally short process. He jumped out of the box, shook himself, picked out one or two straws that had found their way into rents in his clothes, and, drawing a well-worn cap over his uncombed locks, he was ready for the business of the day» (Alger,4)

Portrayed as such, Dick could really be seen as a rag and , he is indeed. The passage projects the deplorable street life he is living and the subsequent consequences on him, showing the inappropriate physical appearance of Dick to be accepted in society where he could easily be treated like a vagabond or a lost boy with no life-objective to fulfill. His own looking is introduced to the reader as follows:

«Dick's appearance as he stood beside the box was rather peculiar. His pants were torn in several places, and had apparently belonged in the first instance to a boy to sizes larger than himself. He wore a vest, all the buttons of which were gone except two, out of which peeped a shirt which looked as if it had been worn a month. To complete his costume he wore a coat too long for him, dating back, if one might judge from its general appearance, to a remote antiquity» (Alger,4)

For a boy of his age, growing up in a family with parents present to take care and educate him properly, such deplorable remarks couldn't be noticed. He was really admitted in a street, meant to fight to save a life for his own, meet models and anti-models in streets, submit himself to disastrous hardship or face it as he can. From the very start, the homeless boy was presented as an orphan who early on lost his parents. In a friendly conversation with Franck, he said:

«I aint got no mother. She died when I wasn't but three years old. My father went to sea; but he went off before mother died, and nothing' was ever heard of him. I expect he got wrecked, or died at sea". "And what became of you when your mother died?" "The folks she boarded with took care of me, but they were poor, and they couldn't do much. When I was seven the woman died, and her husband went out West, and then I had to search for myself».(Alger,51).

The titular hero who became the example to follow and the prototype for others of his age and even more, starts off as a homeless fourteen-year-old bootblack and has been on his own since he was seven. Even though he puts on filthy torn clothes and the streaks of dirt covering his face and hands, there are early on some very interesting points mentioned about his own character. This is expressed in a daily practice as this excerpt from the book can prove :

«Washing the face and hands is usually considered proper in commencing the day, but Dick was above such refinement. He had no particular dislike to dirt, and, did not think it necessary to remove several dark streaks on his face and hands. But in spite of his dirt and rags there was something about Dick that was attractive. It was easy to see that if he had been clean and well-dressed he would have been decidedly good-looking. Some of his companions were sly, and their faces inspired distrust; but Dick had a frank, straight-forward manner that made him a favorite» (Alger,5).

Shining shoes for a living and lending a helping hand to others in need let discover some other aspects of the hero's character. In fact, the novel covers Dick's metamorphosis from a poor, homeless boy to a hero, a respectable person. Conscious of his difficult living conditions and meant to turn to better life, he regularly and tirelessly works hard for his living, follow pieces of advice proffered to him by others and take advantage of every opportunity best to achieve a goal. Basing on these qualities of good-will, it would be nice to affirm that he has the basic necessities leading to success. The hero he has finally become was essentially possible owing to the good qualities he developed in process of time despite his living conditions and the environment where things could turn upside down at anytime in case you are not used to dealing appropriately with people and circumstances around. The storyteller Horatio Alger Jr pointed out the following about Dick:

«But there were some good points about him nevertheless. He was above all doing anything mean or dishonorable. He would not steal, or cheat, or impose upon younger boys, but was frank and straight-forward, manly and self-reliant. His nature was a noble one and had saved him from all mean faults» (Alger,8).

Helpful, modest and very enterprising, Dick proves to people around him and his fellow folks his ability to cope with situations of any kind to help meet a challenge. Quick on the uptake, Dick has never proved reluctant in entertaining a

good relationship with others regardless to their social class, everything depends on the need to satisfy. With other homeless boys such as Johnny Nolan, Henry Fosdick and Tom Wilkins, Ragged Dick lends a diverse kind of helps to each one of them. He helps with food Johnny Nolan who can't afford some food to eat even though he was in harsh need ; Henry Fosdick with lodging and clothing and at last Tom Wilkins and his mother for having being dislodged. His sense of good manners helps him win trust and opportunities to seize like finding shoe shining, guiding people all around the city. A sense of humor toward himself in front of people gives another facet of the same person that may appear quite overwhelming and interesting. In a very genuine way , he responds says this to one of his customers , “ I have to pay such a big rent for my manshun up on Fifth Avenue, that I can't afford to take less than ten cents a shine” (Alger, 5). When he was quizzically asked by the gentleman about his dirty clothes, he responds:

«This coat once belonged to General Washingtonhe wore it all through the Revolution, and it got torn some, cause he fit so hard. When he died he told his wider to give it to some smart young feller that hadn't got none of his own ; so she gave it to me. But if you'd like it, sir, to remember General Washington by, I'll let you have it reasonable. » (Alger , 5-6).

In Frank and Dick relationship as both homeless and ragged boys, the enterprising ideas and motivations noticed through their discussions represent in one word , evidence of the genuine manifestation of that inner talent with Dick which needs just a blink of opportunity to reveal itself. Poor young boys of the same social standing, they exchange motivating proposals as adequate to move from rags to riches. He surprisingly says to Frank Whitney, a patron's nephew who later on became a friend that he sincerely wants not to be a shoe-shine boy, “ I'd like to be a office boy, and learn business, and grow up spectacle”. (Alger, 40). His street folk Franck wittily puts the following to Dick, “A good many distinguished men have once been poor boys. There's hope for you Dick, if you'll try.” (Alger 42). While approaching the issue of education mainly about it usefulness for boys like them to succeed ,Frank advices his friend that he no choice else than working the right way. He wisely says:

« You began in the right way when you determined never to steal, or to do anything mean or dishonorable, however strongly tempted to do so. That will make people have confidence in you when they come to know you. But, in order to succeed well, you must manage to get as good an education as you can» (Alger, 55).

Within the framework of a social class assimilation where the less privileged can easily cooperate with the high standard one for a good purpose of both, Dick regularly impresses many in a varied ways. Dick riskily tried to save a child who has fallen in a river but curiously dislikes when the victim's father praises him for his unexpected availability toward others. About this sublime quality, the author Horatio Alger depicts, "our hero was ready enough to speak on most occasions, but always felt awkward when he was praised" (Alger, 180). His permanent strive to assist others and simplicity allow Dick to seize the offer of young Frank and his uncle to set out in course of self-improvement. About his education and his own interest in it, he arranges a deal with Henry Fosdick, another orphan to become his tutor. In the perspective, Dick affirms, "I can't read much more'n a pig ; and my writin' looks like hens' tracks. I don't want to grow up knowin' no more'n a four-year-boy. If you'll teach me readin' and writin' evenin's, you shall sleep in my room every night". (Alger, 105). Dick's daily living was made of enthusiasm, good mood and ingenuity ; everything necessary to acquire in one feels ready to achieve some goodness in New York city as a rag like Dick. The author himself, the story-teller present said that Dick "had perseverance , and was not easily discouraged. He had made up his mind he must know more, and was not disposed to complain of the difficulty of the task". (Alger, 109). In light of his inflexible determination, his dream has one day comes true when a grateful father hires him as a clerk since he thought for himself to acquire the ability to write and calculate figures. He was then offered the chance to earn for financial sufficiency.

5- RAGGED DICK: THE SELF-TAUGHT AND THE SELF-MADE.

Early on in the history of Americans, apart from the real will to get settled and make of the New World a home to live in, the related implementation reveals to the whole nation some talented men with intellectual capacities but who came from modest families. Adapting themselves to circumstances and making use of their own sense of intuition , organization and ability, they prove industrious in their undertakings to fulfill their dreams. An illustrative example is the case of Benjamin Franklin, being the tenth son of a candle maker, he did succeed in meeting challenges in many fields of competence: a renowned scientist, authoritative founding-father, a writer and a rich man in business. The concept of industry is not then new to Americans whatever may be their social rank. The following excerpt drawn from the book entitled *The Autobiography*, exhibits an interesting point about the lead to success in the American context made of serious ups and downs :

« I hence considered industry as a means of obtaining wealth and distinction which encouraged me – though I did

not think that I should ever literally stand before kings, which, however, has since happened ; for I have stood before five, and even had the honor of sitting down with one, the king of Denmark, to dinner. » (Franklin, 100).

Furthermore and in support to the above demonstration, he enshrined on pages 104 and 105 the complete lists of competences or models to follow so as to reach the target of success and prosperity. Named virtues in number of thirteen, he presented them as follows: Temperance, Silence, Order, Resolution, Frugality, Industry, Sincerity, Justice, Moderation, Cleanliness, Tranquility, Chastity, and Humility. Ragged Dick, the hero of the novel, the main character who is fully aware of those values which have been genuinely practiced and exercised in the his tireless fight to implement his dream of well-being or prosperity no matter how hard living conditions prove. Homeless, orphan and street boy in New York city where opportunity offers itself to hard worker and straight-forward people in business, Dick sticks to the definition Benjamin Franklin has given to industry, stating that it means: "Lose no time, be always employed in something useful ; cut off all unnecessary actions".(Franklin, 104). In the fame of action as his own consciousness, Dick transcends every hardship to rebuild a new life opposed to the one he was desperately living. Quick on the uptake and mince no word to address his customers, he actively people he comes across with, "Shine yer shoes, sir". (Alger,5). With hard work and perseverance, the exhilarating character Ragged Dick believes and acts accordingly, because aiming high to turn better, his economic and social conditions through education and a job. The orphan life he is living to take care of himself, the street way of life he undergoes to learn from models and anti-models and the personal will to succeed, lead him to know how to be at the right place at the right time. Not all black boots or vagabonds like him could be as intuitive and rightly determined the way he proves to everyone and mostly for his own friend :

«Now, in the boot-blackening business, as well as in higher avocations, the same rule prevails, that energy and industry are rewarded, and indolent suffers. Dick was energetic and on the alert for business, but Johnny the reverse. The consequence was that Dick earned probably three times as much as the other» (Alger,10)

In a friendly talk around a breakfast paid by Dick, Johnny stared speechless, amazed and impressed by Dick's vivid ability in educating himself despite his proper misbehaviors. Nevertheless, Dick forwarded this: "I keep my eyes open – that's the way I get jobs. You're lazy, that's what's the matter".(Alger,11). Getting trained by no one but excellent at his job, the self-taught Boot Black

persuaded everyone :“ Dick always had an eye to business, and this remark was addressed to a young man, dressed in a stylist manner, who was swinging a jaunty cane. ‘I’ve had my boots blacked once already this morning, but this confounded mud has spoiled the shine’, ‘I’ll make ’em all right, sir, in a minute’, ‘Go ahead then’. The boots were soon polished in Dick’s best style, which proved very satisfactory, our hero being a proficient in the art” (Alger, 14). Acquainted with the environment which imposes a kind of class assimilation because anyone can cooperate with anyone in any field of business , but used to prove street life ability in undertakings , the hero of the novel has always showed up fit for success: from rags to riches through class assimilation profits or chances. Curiously, he doesn’t mix up his street vagabond behaviors with his intrinsic will to achieve his dream:” I’m in luck, thought our hero complacently. I guess I’ll go to the Barnum’s to-night, and see the bearded lady, the eight-foot giant, the two-foot dwarf, and the other curiosities, too numerous to mention ;...Dick shouldered his box and walked up as far as the Aston House. He took his station on the sidewalk, and began to look about him”(Alger,19). All ears to the conversation between Franck and his uncle, Dick promptly proposes to show Franck around the whole city of New York. The author presents the offer this way:

«Now Dick had listened to all this conversation. Being an enterprising young man, he thought he saw a chance or a speculation, and determined to avail himself of it. Accordingly, he stepped up to the two just as Franck’s uncle was about leaving, and said, ‘I know all about the city, sir; I’ll show him around, if you want me too» (Alger, 20).

The hero of the novel, serving as a tour guide to Franck has successfully demonstrated his being well acquainted with the city of New York in a whole : its splendid architecture going along with his economic opportunities as well as its ups and downs which prove inherent to every city of the kind. On the one hand, one could wonder about how a poor homeless boy happens to be a master of such an area to the detriment of wealthy boys of his age whose parents could afford any little needs of their tastes. On the other , while banking on the author’s focus in demonstrating the unbelievable ubiquitous ‘rags to riches’ , one could understand that even though Dick was dangerously exposed to city hardships and non-models , he genuinely ranks up with what couples with the fulfillment of his ambition. That ability of his in identifying and seizing out of the many opportunities being offered, the one appropriate to help better his living conditions remains an extraordinary character of Dick in his undertakings.

Like any other city in the world, meant to impose metropolitan attitudes on its inhabitants, New York city doesn't fail in impacting on both poor and rich people striving for a living in the area. Yet, in the frame of action, while meeting people, exchanging with them, undertaking some endeavors or businesses, one could turn whether beggar, thief, aimless street-boys or right a hard-worker with an objective to achieve. His personal ability in focusing on his ragged life-style and developing skillful capacities in rendering service to others with full commitment and honor help him pave the way to a social ascendance strongly willed by many boot blacks of his age and even boys born in wealthy families. A vivid example which illustrates this social inter-connectedness is the case of Mr Whitney and Dick. After Dick agreed to render him a service, serving a guide to his nephew Franck because of high tight schedules, he takes Ragged Dick to the Astor House hotel where he gets some second hand clothes. He spontaneously gets clean with an acceptable physical appearance which changes in the good-look of a wealthy city boy, challenging his being unable to read and write. In a contrasting but evocating description which presents Dick both as a gentleman and a street boy with some inherent ragged traits, the author portrays the hero of the novel as follows:

«When Dick was dressed in his new attire, with his face and hands clean, and his hair brushed, it was difficult to imagine that he was the same boy. He now looked quite handsome, and might readily have been taken for a young gentleman, except that his hands were red and grimy. "Look at yourself," leading him before the mirror. "By gracious" said Dick, starting back in astonishment, "that isn't me, is it? » (Alger, 24)

Proud and overjoyed by his new appearance, Dick couldn't resist his splendid makeover. Amazed because he couldn't believe his own eyes, the physical reflection of himself casted by the mirror inspires him more than a blissful life. On the spot, after Frank asked him looking at the mirror if he doesn't know himself, Dick the newly handsome boot black utters:

«It reminds me of Cinderella", said Dick, "When she was changed into a fairy princess. I see it one night at Barnum's. What'll Johnny Nolan say when he sees me? He won't dare to speak to such a young swell as I be now. Ain't it rich? » (Alger, 24)

From "Rag to riches" as the case reveals itself to Dick, out of his own self-taught life experiences and self-made person he happens to demonstrate, his living standard reflects another face of himself. In chapter twelve entitled 'Dick Hires a

Room at Mott Street', the author minces no word to depict or describe the fancy life Dick starts living, already in the shoes of a boy from a wealthy family. Able to rent a room, eat his fill and drink his taste the gentleman Dick wastes no time in enjoying to the fullest possible his new social standard. This excerpt illustrates best, the case:

«Going out into the fresh air Dick felt the pangs of hunger. He accordingly went to a restaurant and got a substantial supper. Perhaps it was the new clothes ... At the events, instead of patronizing the ..., he went into the refectory attached to Lovejoy's Hotel, where the princes were higher and the company more select. In his ordinary His orders were therefore received with attent.... "It seems kind o' nice and 'spectable', side of the other place. There's a gent at the other table that I've shined boots for more's once. He don't know me in my new clothes. Guess I don't know his boot-black patronizes the same establishment» (Alger,81)

Yet, his rapid jump to higher social ladder diminishes or subtracts nothing from his inner determination for better living conditions. His being unable to read and write still holds a place of great importance. Even though he happens to high-rank himself, he courageously sticks to that will to be literate. His sense of generosity coupled with the need of helping others by helping himself bring him to hire Henry Fosdick, another boot-black and friend of his to train him to read and write. The two boot-blacks come to an agreement about the issue:

«Then I'll tell you what,"said Dick; "I'll make a bargain with you; I can't read much more's a pig; and my writin' looks like hens' tracks. I don't want to grow up knowin' no more'n a four-year-old boy. If you'll teach me readin' and writin' evenin's,you shall sleep in my room every night. That'll be better'n door-steps or old boxes where I've slept many a time» (Alger, 105)

The bargain once settled, places the two boys before their responsibilities for each one of them to play his part. Henry Fosdick, a twelve years old who knows as much as many boys of fourteen. Studious and very ambitious, he has always proved glad to read. On his on side, Dick doesn't show any reluctance in being available to be instructed by his friend. The bargain met full success in such a way that within a scope of ten months, Dick has reached an acceptable level in reading and writing. This joyful accomplishment is proudly presented by the author in these words:

«But Dick had gained something more valuable than money. He had studied regularly every evening, and his improvement had been marvelous. He could now read well, write a fair hand, and had studied arithmetic as far as interest. Besides this he had obtain..... in less than a year, and studying evenings only, should have accomplished it, they must remember that our hero was very much in earnest in his desire to improve. He knew that, in order to grow up respectable, he must be well advanced, and he was willing to work. » (Alger, 137)

Ragged Dick the boot-black and hero of the novel could have benefited from more successes or achievements if one basically focuses on his undertakings and related advantages to reap. Industrious and quick to seize opportunities in order to fulfill an objective, he demonstrates many a time his supreme ability in cooperating easily with others, lending a helping-hand and ready to offer services. He constantly jumps on the slightest possible chance indicated to offer him a case of appropriate lead to a social betterment. With boys, boot-blacks of his age or elderly persons, he heartedly cooperates with intelligence so as to maintain a solid relationship and likewise , pave the way to success : a happy achievement through social class assimilation.

CONCLUSION

Dating back to early on in the history of America , the dream that made build the ‘New World’ was more than an exhilarating motivation which geared up people from different origins to get settled and strove for a living in a land which renders itself available for exploitation and exploration. From generations to generations, this dream has been deeply instilled in Americans’ psychology and just needs to be experienced by whoever feels worth acting in the way to make it a reality. Because things change with time, the need for adaptation brings about diverse sorts of interpretations but the gist about the fact that ‘anyone can succeed against all odds’ remain intact and is practiced by anyone who judges comfortable to take the risk and face challenges related to that endeavor. Horatio Alger, author of the novel animates a character in the name of Dick, to highlight with actions what the American Dream is substantially made of , the hard and possible way and means to succeed with flying colors.

Orphan at the age of seven and doomed to make his own life a success, Dick the hero of the novel makes use of his intelligence , hard work, sense of fertile imagination, humility , self-reliance and mostly his far-fetched ability in taking profit from opportunities to move from the status of ‘boot-blacks’ to a

respectable person in his living society. Self-taught and self-made owing to class assimilation interactions, he skillfully seizes any little chance within hand to prove his capacity in meeting a challenge until been nicknamed “ Dick Hunter”. Positively framed by the author with men and women of the same society to interact regardless to their social positions (poor or wealthy) , the American Dream projects that anyone can achieve more with social status in case he/she sticks to adequate qualities to be practiced , promoted and duly valued. From thought to action for implementation, though the American dream appears open to everybody ; industry ,determination , perseverance , self-discipline and constant search for opportunities make win a case of social improvement as Dich happens to demonstrate in the novel *Ragged Dick or, Street Life in New York with the Boot Blacks*. The self-taught and self-made character developed by Dick serves the American society and helps the whole humanity understand that hard work always pays off.

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