

The Transformation of American Dream: From Vision to Illusion: American Consumer Culture in The Great Gatsby, The Devil Wears Prada, Confessions of a Shopaholic, and The Joneses

By Massy Naimi Zaker

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This book presents criteria for expanding our understanding and enjoyment of Hollywood films by discussing The Great Gatsby (2013), The Devil Wears Prada (2006), The Joneses (2009) and Confessions of a Shopaholic (2009). Calling our attention to the seductive and subliminal appeals of advertising, these films invite audiences to look more critically at capitalism and American consumer culture, which claim to offer social status but in fact make commodities out of people. All four films suggest that consumption leads to the corrosion of American life. However, there is an ironic contradiction between this moral message and the films' simultaneous aim to entertain the audience, and the fact that throughout the films a variety of brands of commodities, wealth, and luxury are promoted and advertised as a glamorous lifestyle. This lifestyle represents living the American dream of which the pursuit of it clashes with the pursuit of happiness. The moral messages indicate that excessive materialism is just a distraction from finding "true" happiness. This book points out the harmful effects the American dream can have when the distinction between a vision and an illusion fades.

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Editorial Review

About the Author
Massy Naimi Zaker was born in Iran but grew up in The Netherlands. She is an all-round journalist, specialized in film and American studies. She has developed her critical thinking and enthusiasm for films during her study periods in Montreal and Berkeley. She is also a private English and Dutch teacher, translator, screenwriter and film critic.

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Betty Bobbitt:

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