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## AN ARCHETYPAL APPROACH TOWARDS *THE GREAT GATSBY*: THE TRANSFORMATIONAL AMERICAN DREAM THROUGH META-MEME IN *THE GREAT GATSBY*

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### Abstract

The American dream is one of the most studied subjects, especially in modern American literature. Remarkably when it comes to modern American literature, F. Scott Fitzgerald and *The Great Gatsby* is the unmissable masterpiece to be criticized. Although there are thousands of studies and debates on *The Great Gatsby*, and there will be more, what makes this study somewhat unique is that Gatsby's American dream can be reckoned as a meta-meme inspired by the ancient Greek heroes in a post-postmodernist way. The article will mainly show that Gatsby is a timeless hero whose one foot is in the past and the other in the future. Some may find Gatsby under the name of Hercules, some evaluate him with Odysseus, and some find him under the name Bruce Wayne. Gatsby cannot be limited to a liminal period since the connotations that his existence stands for are creating an everlasting effect on any human society. That is to say, the meta-meme—which Gatsby 'radiates' or reflects—is the matter humankind has craved for since they existed: a power issue. Some may call it the American dream or the multimillionaire's dream; others call it a solipsist's dream, which is, in one way or another, a dream that Morpheus, the Dream God, will continue to bring to us. Although it can sometimes be a nightmare, the silhouette of the dream will always remain the same. Therefore, through a comparative study of history, mythology, and literature, this article intends to show that the American Dream persists even stronger through meta-memes at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

**Keywords:** Meta-meme, *The Great Gatsby*, American Dream, Post-postmodernism, Mythology.

## MUHTEŞEM GATSBY'YE ARKETİP YAKLAŞIM: META-MEME İLE MUHTEŞEM GATSBY'DE DÖNÜŞÜMSSEL AMERİKAN RÜYASI

### Öz

Amerikan rüyası özellikle modern Amerikan edebiyatında en çok çalışılmış konulardan biridir. Özellikle modern Amerikan edebiyatı söz konusu olduğunda, F. Scott Fitzgerald ve *Muhteşem Gatsby* eleştirel açıdan kaçırılmayacak bir başyapıttır. Elbette *Muhteşem Gatsby* üzerine pek çok makale ve tartışmalar mevcuttur ve daha fazlası da olacaktır. Fakat, bu çalışmayı diğerlerinden farklı kılan şey, Gatsby'nin Amerikan rüyasının, antik Yunan kahramanlarından ilham alınan bir meta-meme olarak, post-postmodernist açıdan ele alınmasıdır. Bu makale, özellikle Gatsby'nin, bir ayağı geçmişte diğer ayağı gelecekte

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olan, zamanlar ötesi bir kahraman oluşunu göstermeye çalışacaktır. Kimisi Herakles adıyla, kimisi Odiseus adıyla, kimileri de Bruce Wayne adıyla Gatsby'yi keşfedecektir. Gatsby'nin varlığının temsil ettiği anlam herhangi bir toplum üzerinde sonsuz bir etki yarattığı için, Gatsby belirli bir zamanla sınırlanmaz. Bir başka deyişle, Gatsby'nin 'yaydığı' veya yansıttığı meta-meme, insanın varoluşundan beri arzuladığı şeydir: bir güç meselesidir. Kimisi bunu bir Amerikan rüyası veya multimilyonerin rüyası olarak adlandırabilir; kimisi de bir solipsistin rüyası olarak görebilir. Fakat bu, bir şekilde Rüya Tanrısı Morpheus'un bize ulaştırmayı sürdüreceği bir rüyadır. Bazen bir kâbus olabilmesine rağmen, rüya imgesi her zaman aynı kalacaktır. Bu nedenle bu çalışma, Amerikan rüyasının, 21. yüzyılın şafağında meta-memeler ile varlığını daha da güçlü sürdürmekte olduğunu, karşılaştırmalı tarih, mitoloji ve edebiyat aracılığı ile ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Meta-meme, Muhteşem Gatsby, Amerikan rüyası, Post-postmodernizm, Mitoloji.*

## INTRODUCTION

***It is a saddening thought but we cannot change our nature—we are all alike, we human beings; and in our blood and bone, and ineradicably, we carry the seeds out of which monarchies and aristocracies are grown: worship of gauds, titles, distinctions, power.***

Mark Twain<sup>1</sup>

In *The Great Gatsby*, written by F. Scott Fitzgerald, the protagonist transcends all heroic figures over time and reemerges as a ubiquitous, ironical form of the American dream, not only through the content it represents but also through its form. Long after the Great Depression, the 1929 crash of the stock market in America, history has witnessed many more economic setbacks. The 1970's energy crises, 1980's and early 1990's recessions, along with 2000's worldwide stagnation, are good examples of contemporary crises. These are not the first crises, nor the last ones. In each economic oscillation, while some companies become more powerful by turning danger into an advantage, others go bankrupt and drag the others down with them. Above all the mentioned crises lies the dream, the lure of being better and more extensive. It is not just a hallucination of companies, but a dream for everyone who pursues a bright future with a gorgeous life under the spotlights. By different means, sometimes by any means, they aim to reach their dreams. Meanwhile, they have to survive and meet their needs. The pursued dreams become subject in the song "Rhinestone Cowboy" by Glen Campbell, which later inspires the American film *Rhinestone* (1984) with a subject in similar lines.

Naturally, people have different desires and priorities that shape who they are in society. Human beings are complex, and mythology has played a significant role in the way life is practiced. What we cannot understand or reach becomes either a social phenomenon or social myths, evolved from the ancients in a parallel development into those people we have today on the stage. Sometimes consciously or unconsciously, people have to choose one that could alter their fate in line with Hannibal's motto of 'either find a way or make one'.

Thus, this study will highlight the American dream's different definitions and meanings in *The Great Gatsby* through a comparative study of history, mythology, and literature. Thereby, the interpretation of a collective unconscious that transcends individual unconsciousness through mythical archetypes that stimulate accumulated experience in human generations, which is the meta-meme that Gatsby typifies, is obliged. Through the angle of post-postmodernism, the meta-meme that Gatsby epitomizes is explicated as the hero myth whose self-sacrificing is on the way to capture the power and fulfill the ultimate task—which is a series of innate thoughts, feelings, instinct, and memories that are found in humans' minds communally. Myths of Heracles, Odysseus, Achilles, and Jason will be studied comparatively to reveal them as meta-memes and archetypal myths, whose accumulated personifications are developed in Gatsby.

## Post-postmodernism, Archetypes, and Meta-memes

Northrop Frye contributes to the theory of archetypal images with his construals. According to Frye (1957), the genres in literature are the recreations of old and reinterpretations and metamorphose of the myths and archetypes. Frye expounds myths as 'recurring' and 'cyclical elements' in history, in other quarters, the 'reincarnation' of history:

<sup>1</sup> Inspired by Cantor (2019), who quoted Mark Twain in his article as the opening lines.

...there are cyclical elements in history, that is, recurring patterns that exist in events themselves and are not simply fictions in the mind of the historian, seems inescapable... A very frequent primitive view of history is that it consists of a series of re-enactments in time of certain archetypal myths that happened before human life as we know it began. In some societies, this dominance of repetition over history is so powerful that in a sense nothing ever happens. In the Egyptian Old Kingdom a Pharaoh may set up a stele recording his defeat of his enemies, with the enemies, even their leaders, carefully named. It seems like a genuine historical record - until scholars discover that it has been copied verbatim from another monument two centuries older. (1925: 90)

Jung has the same interpretation and states that archetypal images sight in fairytales, dreams, fantasies, and myths. Men observe the mythological images, which are human personifications, and reproduce them consciously or unconsciously through their lifetime in a cyclical resurrection. Jung proposes the theory of 'archetypal images' as "forms or images of a collective nature which occur practically all over the earth as constituents of myths and at the same time as autochthonous, individual products of unconscious origin" (cited in Campbell, 1949: 16). Mythical archetypes are "the symbols that represent, activate, and originate from archetypes" (Jung cited in Grice 2016: 27), and "all the most powerful ideas in history go back to the archetypes" (Jung, 1975: 153). The origin of myths and mythical images are the same and sole. Each entity in cultures and society is reawakening the original and core myths (Campbell, 1990: 127). Campbell explains social and cultural re-emergence through mythological metamorphose, Frye explains the re-creations in literature as the evolutions of myths and archetypes, and Jung enlightens human psychology, identity, and existence through his Depth Psychology, which proposes humans' 'self,' psychology, and identity as the re-emergence of myths (Grice, 2016). They study human psychology, culture, society, and literature through personal interpretations of re-emerging mythical images.

This study traces back the meta-memes of consumption, wealth, and power through a post-postmodernist perspective, comparing the meta-memes with mythological and archetypal heroes to reveal how post-postmodern philosophy may reconstruct never-ending and never-changing meta-memes through ages which are realities of humankind. Post-postmodernism nominates a dynamic and compelling approach and philosophy for the twenty-first-century phenomena and is a newly emerged era after the dysfunctional structure of postmodernism in the contemporary technology and information age that presents people with fast and easy access to information and the real. For the new generation born into technology and the cyber world as Digital Natives named by Marc Prensky in 2001, it becomes a waste of time and useless to reach any signal through discursive literature or language of postmodernism, which leaves the reader in ambiguity without any concrete reality. The reader of the post-postmodern era expects to reach the meaning or the real concisely and directly without the distraction of a mob of words or signals. In today's cyber world, "meaning seldom hides from us; it is often unabashedly out in the open" (Wilson and Wolford, 2017: 5). Advances and culture in the late-twentieth-century period constrain contemporary literature and philosophy to seek social relevance and social reality to mediate in the contemporary social world (McLaughlin, 2004). It is a requirement for the age's language, literature, and philosophy to reconnect the social sphere, social reality, the truthful and sincere. In this manner, post-postmodernism reenergizes "literature's social mission, its ability to intervene in the social world, to have an impact on actual people and the actual social institutions in which they live their lives" (McLaughlin, 2004: 55).

According to Nealon, in postmodernism, "rampant commodification remains, strictly speaking, a "problem" for your analysis," or namely "commodification functions as a conclusion or end point of your analysis" in postmodernism (Nealon, 2012: 63). Inversely, in post-postmodernism, "rampant commodification functions as a more or less neutral beginning premise for your analysis of popular culture. ...It shows young people staring down the reality of their times, marked by 'commodification without illusions'" (Nealon, 2012: 63). McLaughlin also refers to the post-postmodern era like Nealon. According to McLaughlin, the "culture of consumer technology" created "a society of style without substance, of language without meaning, of cynicism without belief, of virtual communities without human connection, of rebellion without change"; so, it is "[t]he better we understand them and how they operate, the better we can disengage them from the institutions that encourage the cynical despair that perpetuates the status quo and claim them for our own purposes" (2004: 66-67). For this purpose, post-postmodernism catalyzes analysis of the situation and solutions for contemporary people:

Post-postmodernism seeks not to reify the cynicism, the disconnect, the atomized privacy of our society nor to escape or mask it (as much art, serious and pop, does), but, by engaging the language-based nature of its operations, to make us newly aware of the reality that has been made for us and to remind us - because we live in a culture where we're encouraged to forget-that other realities are possible. That, it seems to me, is the social purpose the writers I've been calling post-postmodern have claimed for themselves. (McLaughlin 2004: 67).

Contrary to the philosophy of deconstruction in postmodernism, post-postmodernism proposes reconstruction, a self-conscious state, and conscious cultivation (see Salma, 2009; Skandalis et al., 2016; Dubey, 2011). Nealon quotes Recall Hardt and Negri's estimation on the post-postmodern state to figure out the non-functionality of postmodern and 'postcolonialist' theories in the rapidly changing technological advancements through capitalist power:

When we begin to consider the ideologies of corporate capitalism and the world market, it certainly appears that the postmodern and postcolonialist theorists who advocate a politics of difference, fluidity, and hybridity in order to challenge the binaries and essentialism of modern sovereignty have been outflanked by the strategies of power. Power has evacuated the bastion they are attacking and has circled around to their rear to join them in the assault in the name of difference. These theorists thus find themselves pushing against an open door. (2012: 115)

Nealon also disputes postmodernists such as Derrida, Jameson, and Foucault, who adduce an escape from capitalist power with the slogan "the only way out is through," and, as a reaction to the postmodernists, Nealon elucidates, "there is no outside . . . there is no 'place' outside power, capitalism, metaphysics, the social" (2012: 174). Nealon explains it is because "driving a Prius or eating local foods is not actually to resist capitalism in any meaningful way (insofar as it's just more consumption capitalism, all the way down)... As *amor fati* teaches us, judgment and condemnation are weak tools indeed: condemning capitalism, like condemning thinking, will get you nowhere, and only catch you up in a kind of Habermasian 'performative contradiction'" (2012: 97).

### **The American Dream in *The Great Gatsby***

*The Great Gatsby* exemplifies people's understanding of the American dream in the 1920s. F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel breaks the unequal wealth and excess materials that people did not need but loved having around. *The Great Gatsby* portrays the 1920s as the age of social decadence, vain pursuits, and greed. Fitzgerald implies the American Dream, and the characters hope to accomplish everything they desire by living that dream. To achieve that dream, one needs to believe in something and have a goal in mind. The subject of religion is revealed in Gatsby, who thinks that destiny has a role in finding his first love. Therefore, he refuses to be poor as much as any other American.

Beuka points out that "Nick's fascination and frustration with the existing social system indicate Fitzgerald's own struggle to come to terms with the significance of a musical form that was not only popular, but symbolically reflective of the fractures, discontinuities, and improvisations of modern culture," and he goes on with his lines; "the novel provides any number of angles through which a reader of today can bridge the gap to an era that saw transitions, on several levels, into modernity" (Beuka, 2011: 121, 133). In *Approaches to Teaching*, "All That Jazz," Curnutt discusses that the novel responds to the "shifting values of the modern age" (2009: 40-49, 40). Beuka articulates "that it reflects the rise of a mass culture with a noticeable emphasis on youth, leisure, and consumption" which brings about their contrived identity (2011: 134). The secret to the novel's success is its form, especially the narrative form. It criticizes the corruption and moral disorder of that period. It is America that measures life only by purely material criteria. The American community has made the American dream a successful story and made all American literary work more or less related to it. Gatsby is just an example of the corruption process in which an American should not be blamed. His perception of the ideal is more or less related to whatever his community gives him. If Gatsby is personally saved, it is only harmonized by the dream that he grasps because an ideal is essential to cushion reality. However, if we return reality to its nature, it is nothing more than a terrifying creature. Only the dream or the ideal—even illusory—can reverse or transform reality. The art of Fitzgerald's novel allows his protagonist to conquer life and bring eternity, though minor. *The*

*Great Gatsby* interprets America, its existential philosophy, and an assessment of its failure. Thus, the defeat of Fitzgerald's heroes should not be studied independently; social and political figures in a morally distressed, fundamentally violent, and aimless society have to be noticed.

The American Dream was a statement in *Epic of America* by James Truslow Adams, which led the theory, be promoted first in 1931. Adams divulges The American Dream in his book:

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 not a dream of 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. (quoted in Robinson, 2018: 175)

However, The American Dream dates back to centuries in America, which starts with people dreaming of a new life that is "so precious they were willing to risk everything to make it come true" and was revealed in the Mayflower manifest (Sirak, 2017: 7). The risk, the commitment, and the dedication of 'self' to realize The American Dream became a concrete step by the signers of the Declaration of Independence through the lines "... life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness ... mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor" (Sirak, 2017: 7), and realized by Lincoln, who put his life on the line and called the whole America to do so with his famous speech during the Civil War. Moreover, according to Thomas Wolfe, the American Dream is "to every man, regardless of his birth, his shining, golden opportunity... the right to live, to work, to be himself, and to become whatever thing his manhood and his vision can combine to make him" (Quoted in Robinson, 2018: 173).

The flight from the Old World to the New World engendered a shift, fundamentally in politics, society, culture, law, education, and religion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Jillson, 2016: 3). The first document expressing the American Dream and America's self-image was by Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and their revolutionary colleagues in the Congress of 1776. It declared "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" (Jillson, 2016: 3). They could not realize the pursued American Dream, but they did inspire the American nation to realize it.

First, the American dream was revealed as the excellent country of good poor men, a land of oppressed, lower-class people pursuing a better life away from the upper-class world of oppressors. The expression of the American Dream dates back to statements like "[a]t the dawning of the eighteenth century, decades before American independence, Virginia planter Robert Beverly (1673–1722), building on William Penn's description of America as 'a good poor man's country,' described America as 'the best poor man's Country in the World'" (Jillson, 2016, p. 4). Benjamin Franklin promised a heavenly new world for 'good poor people' to be 'the masters' and "establish themselves in Business, marry, raise families, and become respectable Citizens" (Jillson, 2016: 5). Referring to Benjamin Franklin's promise of America for the good poor, John Schwarz explained how poor good and virtuous people could raise their poor statuses into a heavenly life in America:

'everyone who steadfastly practices certain practical virtues will find a place at the table. . . . These virtues—self-control, discipline, effort, perseverance, and responsibility—stand at the core of our . . . idea of good character. . . . The notion that people do have a capacity to control their own destinies is an enormously strong, almost insistent feature of our American culture.' (cited in Jillson, 2016: 5)

Inappropriately, contrary to the notion of the proposed description and promises of the American Dream that inspires ideal and inclusive of hope for the oppressed inferiors, there occur opposing perspectives:

it can be argued that the American Dream was only achievable for those who fit the description: white, middle class property owners who likely utilized their voting privileges. ... while the American Dream is meant to apply to everyone, has it ever really been accessible to everyone, racial minorities included?'. (Wong cited in Robinson, 2018: 175)



In the doctrine of the American dream, the promised 'pursuit of happiness' and 'unalienable rights' for 'all men' as they 'created equal' turned into a war of survival after World War I in America, and "[t]he horrors of World War I (1914–1917) shut down upon the progressivism of Roosevelt and Wilson and left Americans thirsting for domestic security and prosperity" (Jillson, 2016: 55, 166). The horrors of World War I endangered the pursued American Dream, which F. Scott Fitzgerald illustrates in his character's collapse and end. Contrary to the illustrated America's self-image or the American Dream, many scholars, like F. Scott Fitzgerald, reveal a conflicting scene in American history.

### **Mythological Meta-memes in *The Great Gatsby***

*The Great Gatsby* is a typical reflection of neither American history nor the American Dream; the American Dream and American history Fitzgerald incarnated in *The Great Gatsby* alter into meta-memes like transboundary and timeless mythological personifications. To regard *The Great Gatsby* only through American history or the American Dream would devalue the novel. *The Great Gatsby* exceeds the borders of time, history and geography, and wraps itself up in the universal meta-memes and post-postmodern era. As the gods in Greek mythology, Gatsby becomes prominent as a meta-meme, a mythological persona.

An example of a universal meta-meme of human instincts that Fitzgerald personifies in the novel is Nietzschean-like 'will to power' (1968). The meta-meme in the novel may be interpreted as the frustration in the myth of Prometheus, who promises power to earthly people serving out the stolen light. The god of fire, Prometheus, resists against Olympian gods stealing fire from Olympus to propose the power of Olympian gods to earthly people. At first sight, Prometheus's revolt seems chivalrous. However, the mortals on earth would reach the power of immortal gods on Olympus. Thus, the light brings chaos and downfall not only for Prometheus but also for the earthly people.

In American history, the democracy that the American Dream promises is expected to abolish hierarchies through social mobility, and "Americans are taught as their birthright that they are free to rise in the world by their own efforts... Democracy's motto is, 'You can always do better; you can always make a fresh start'" (Cantor, 2019: 19). However, Fitzgerald portrays the meta-meme of human instincts and validates how the heavenly motto of the American Dream may reveal human instinctive of 'will to power' as in Nietzsche's theory. In the 1920s of America, the poor people were promised to shift the hierarchies and gain power, as Prometheus does by stealing the light in the Olympus from gods for the benefit of earthly people. Prometheus promises a heavenly life and equality with gods receiving them the fire. Instead, it endows chaos and downfall.

Likewise, on the contrary to the illustrated America's self-image illustrated by the pioneer of the American dreams such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and Abraham Lincoln, the 'pursuit of happiness' and the prosperity promised for 'good men' were gained by crooks through illegal crimes, which Fitzgerald presents in his novel. People who desire power commit outrages as if the end they pursue justifies any means. In the same manner, Beuka states, "[o]ne could argue, conversely, that it is the very lack of an objective moral stance in the novel, the use of a subjective and at times compromised narrator as moral center, that gives the novel its modern feel" (2011: 72). In his *The Will to Power*, Friedrich Nietzsche reveals men's outrageous instincts that come out through their urge to gain power and sovereignty: "One would make a little boy stare if one asked him: 'Would you like to become virtuous?'—but he will open his eyes wide if asked: 'Would you like to become stronger than your friends?'" (Quoted in Cantor, 2019: 88). Another quote from *Jerusalem* by William Blake promotes the similar vision that silhouettes Gatsby, who pursues his love and happiness through many speculative and hazardous ways: "I care not whether a man is Good or Evil; all that I care is whether he is a Wise Man or a Fool" (quoted in Cantor, 2019: 8). Rowe clarifies the same issue:

Daisy and Jordan, with their cool, impersonal 'absence of desire,' buoyed by privilege and wealth, serve as the vanguard of a process symbolized in the drift from West to East that includes all characters in the book. More than malaise, it is a creeping spiritual paralysis that shows itself in chronic anxiety and dread before it reaches the acute stage of anomie that Nick finds at the pinnacle of American social power. Ironically, it is the restless rich, with their greater freedom to experience life's possibilities, to seek fulfillment in action and experimentation, who most

clearly reveal the aridity at the heart of the American faith that the way to wealth is the way to a new status, a new essence, that through wealth one may rise 'to a loftier place in the mysterious hierarchy of human worth.' They have moved farther and faster from the old America that Nick recognizes in the dreams of Gatsby [...]. (1988: 111)

According to Daier and Ibrahim, "[t]he American dream not only causes corruption but has caused destruction. Myrtle, Gatsby, and Daisy have all been corrupted and destroyed by the dream. American culture is defined and determined, though often 'involuntarily', by its characteristic, not seldom even dogmatic and charismatic symbols that have always placed it in a rather distant and unapproachable notch of one's world of perception" (2017: 345). The power of the light that Prometheus brought from Olympus results in corruption and decadence in human nature, and the power Gatsby possesses fetches his decadence. The power in the novel evolves into decadence for each nouveau-riche who gained the wealth later. Besides, the downfall comes under the image of power, as the stolen fire brings chaos into the earth in the Greek myth.

When American history glanced, most of the first settlers in America were land-poor nobility from Europe. They brought their innate instinctive urge for power, prosperity, and the heritage of the hierarchical structure of their European ancestors like the Olympian gods. The New World they created was 'ascriptive Americanism' that migrated from the Old World without metamorphosing. The newcomers or the first settlers in America, who illustrated the American Dream, contradictorily created the symbiosis of their ancestors. They proposed the dream of equality and freedom yet created a world of poor workers and wealthy owners, in which a shift may occur, but the structure or the hierarchy never changes. Such people sought more power and an opportunity to reside, godlike, at the top of the hierarchy. All the opportunities and blessings were designed for the blessed wealthy, and the rest of the society was domiciled below the hierarchy to produce more to serve these gods. The elaborate parties in which excessive consumption takes place in *The Great Gatsby* depicted the actual parties and the fundamental hierarchical structures of America in the 1920s. They were the final transformation of the American Dream to a contradictory end and reincarnation of the past in Europe they once fled. It turns into a cyclical resurrection that ends at the starting point. Just like the hierarchy in Olympus, which never breaks down, in *The Great Gatsby*, the degree of power or hierarchy never dissolves. As Prometheus, Gatsby and his counterparts who stole power and wealth can never be a member of Olympians nor equal to Zeus. Neither the shine of his parties nor the glamorous and glittery lights of his house can rise Gatsby to Olympus. Gatsby can never be equal to Olympian gods. All the lights of his house, his wealth, and his life fade away.

As a meta-meme and as the symbiosis of gods and goddesses of Olympus—at the beginning of the novel—Nick informs the readers that his ancestors were the first settlers in America. They were "from the Dukes of Buccleuch, but the actual founder of [Nick's] line was [his] grandfather's brother who came here in fifty-one, sent a substitute to the Civil War and started the wholesale hardware business that [his] father carries on today" (Fitzgerald, 1993: 4). His ancestors were from the upper class of the old world and became the new superiors in the new world in America, who turned the crisis into an opportunity. Tom also posits himself and his ancestors as the creators of the new world and the owners of it: "'we've produced all the things that go to make civilization—oh, science and art and all that. Do you see?'" (Fitzgerald, 1993: 12). Tom's civilization in America is the symbiosis and meta-meme of the fire of Olympus Prometheus stole, which technology, science, knowledge, and civilization that Prometheus promises for humankind in Greek mythology.

According to Tom, it is impossible and unfair for the lower class, the poor, or late comers to elevate their statuses and be one of them, the owners of America. On the contrary to Tom, for Gatsby, whose roots do not date back to the upper class, the only way to create opportunity is false pretenses, lies, or false images. Fitzgerald portrays Gatsby as a man lying to veil his past in the west in a poor and lower class. Gatsby steals his new 'self' and creates a new 'self' which is a dream vision portraying his origin as an upper class: "I am the son of some wealthy people in the middle-west—all dead now. I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition" (Fitzgerald, 1993: 42).

Fitzgerald posits his protagonist Gatsby seeking to reach his love, Daisy, through spectacular offers that belong to the East Egg, the world of the upper classes, and the superiors. That is why Gatsby situates his new

'self' in a spectacular mansion with spectacular parties before inviting her for the first meeting as Tom did to propose marriage to her: "In June she married Tom Buchanan of Chicago with more pomp and circumstance than Louisville ever knew before. He came down with a hundred people in four private cars and hired a whole floor of the Seelbach Hotel, and the day before the wedding he gave her a string of pearls valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars" (Fitzgerald, 1993: 49). Gatsby created the same image to reach her: "'Why didn't [Gatsby] ask you to arrange a meeting?' '[Gatsby] wants [Daisy] to see his house,' [Jordan Baker] explained. 'And your house is right next door'" (Fitzgerald, 1993: 51).

In a Zeus-like manner, Gatsby holds the stolen power and wealth of the East Egg. The meta-meme of the power is reflected through the delusion of 'real,' which is a lie or illusion. The delusion of 'real' brings chaos. In the novel, Fitzgerald depicts characters as falsifiers and imposters. Each character and status and entity in the novel is a consciously created illusion. As each entity becomes knowable compared to its opposite, like day and night or hot and cold, Fitzgerald exposes the imagery and real as juxtaposition in the library with an actual book:

'...They're real.'

'The books?'

He nodded.

'Absolutely real—have pages and everything. I thought they'd be a nice durable cardboard. Matter of fact, they're absolutely real. Pages and—Here! Lemme show you.' Taking our skepticism for granted, he rushed to the bookcases and returned with Volume One of the 'Stoddard Lectures.' 'See!' he cried triumphantly. 'It's a bona fide piece of printed matter. It fooled me. This fella's a regular Belasco. It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop too—didn't cut the pages. But what do you want? What do you expect?'. (Fitzgerald, 1993: 30)

No one expects the real in Gatsby's world of illusion: Tom betrays Daisy with Myrtle Wilson, and Daisy betrays her husband. Daisy was also one of the deluders to gain more power and wealth: "'It's really [Tom's] wife that's keeping them apart. [Daisy]'s a Catholic and they don't believe in divorce.' Daisy was not a Catholic and I was a little shocked at the elaborateness of the lie" (Fitzgerald, 1993: 23). Not to lose the power she gained, she pretends not to know anything about Tom and Myrtle. Myrtle also is one of the imposters in the illusion world. She betrays her husband because he is a poor man. Every relation and the image people created was illusion and false, which were to gain more power and higher status in that world. Although people are aware of the illusions and the created false images, they do not care as they do not expect any 'real' or 'reality,' unlike the man in the library, who expects the 'real.' For that reason, Fitzgerald hyperbolically portrays the man's astonishment about the 'real' books that positioned in the illusion, in Gatsby's mansion hosting parties, which are all false images. Moreover, despite the rumors about Gatsby's origin and past, people keep attending Gatsby's parties and keep uttering the same rumors without expecting something 'real' or a justification: "'Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once'... 'it's more that he was a German spy during the war' ...'I just don't think he went [to Oxford]'" (Fitzgerald, 1993: 29, 32).

The man in the library, Gatsby's father, and Nick were the sole ones who expected the 'real': "I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known" (Fitzgerald 1993: 39), and thereafter, the readers see Nick, Gatsby's father and the man in the library as the sole ones who attend Gatsby's funeral. The rest in the novel were the representations of illusion and false images in a dream world. The world Gatsby created seems as real at night, but they are neither natural nor delusive in the daytime. They are like ghosts as Nick gives a picture of their tour with Daisy in Gatsby's mansion: "And inside as we wandered through Marie Antoinette music rooms and Restoration salons I felt that there were guests concealed behind every couch and table, under orders to be breathlessly silent until we had passed through. As Gatsby closed the door of 'the Merton College Library' I could have sworn I heard the owl-eyed man break into ghostly laughter" (Fitzgerald, 1993: 58). Nick summarizes the illusion Gatsby created: "For a while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's



wing" (Fitzgerald, 1993: 63). Gatsby was a liar even in the past when he was in the West Egg with Daisy. He pretended as a man to gain Daisy's love: "eventually he took Daisy one still October night, took her because he had no real right to touch her hand. He might have despised himself, for he had certainly taken her under false pretenses. "I don't mean that he had traded on his phantom millions, but he had deliberately given Daisy a sense of security" which was not real but just 'a sense', and "he let her believe that he was a person from much the same stratum as herself—that he was fully able to take care of her. As a matter of fact, he had no such facilities—he had no comfortable family standing behind him, and he was liable at the whim of an impersonal government to be blown anywhere about the world" (Fitzgerald, 1993: 95).

The happiness Gatsby pursues, the power he seeks, and the statues at which he gazes are all illusions about the green light, which seems authentic and reachable yet an illusion and imagery that is impossible to realize or gain. Gatsby created "A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about ... like that ashen, fantastic figure gliding toward him through the amorphous trees" (Fitzgerald, 1993: 103). Gatsby's pursuit is vain as in the lines that Fitzgerald finishes his novel: "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic 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— So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (Fitzgerald, 1993: 115). The past Gatsby runs away from becomes the final destination he drops into. Each endeavor he makes is a cyclical resurrection that brings him to the beginning.

Similar to Prometheus, Helen of Troy and Paris in Greek mythology may also be interpreted as meta-memes in the novel. In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald posits his protagonist in a state where it is impracticable for him to escape from the superior or power or change the state of being an underdog. Gatsby left behind the farming lifestyle to pursue richness and fame. Fitzgerald depicts that although the 'rags to riches' dream may seem unbelievable, it is not far-fetched from reality. When Gatsby tries to win Daisy's heart with money and fame, he starts to have some parties at his big cozy house every night. Parties were intended to attract Daisy by Gatsby's fame and money. He dreams about the perfect American life, and that dream came true just for his love, Daisy. In the beginning, she was impressed by Gatsby's plan. They started to hang out together, and she began to betray her husband. She was happy and found himself immediately in a different world like Helen, who betrayed her husband and became the 'Helen of Troy'. When Gatsby offered Daisy to leave Tom and run away with him, she accepted his proposal. However, later, for some particular reason, she was scared and gave up. Now, confident, sensitive, and self-assured, Gatsby turned out to be a lonely man who succumbed to his true love. He was also the one who acquired money through organized crime and introduced himself with a fake past. He wanted to regain his pure love employing power. This strategy was the foundation of his dream. The rest would be taken care of by his sentimental love. Gatsby was able to communicate with Daisy via lavish and flashy objects. Money became a kind of elixir that he utilized on Daisy to create a powerful but ephemeral hallucination whereby Gatsby, more or less like Paris, prepared his end.

Moreover, as a meta-meme, in *The Great Gatsby*, Gatsby is considered both the hero and the martyr. This is because he was blamed for a crime he did not commit, and he took the blame out of love and loyalty that made him a hero in his way. Nick is Gatsby's sidekick because he stands by him—no matter what, Gatsby manages to confide in him. Although he did not contest for what he believes, Gatsby is considered a Byronic hero who is willing to blame the woman he loves, even if the cost of the blame was death. Anyone can be a hero, and novels do not have to stick to the typical archetypal approach of characters, which is evident from what Fitzgerald accomplished through his characters. The novel is far from a fairy tale because the facts are ruthlessly bumped into the reader's face. The book focuses on Jay Gatsby, who has spent many years trying to gain his lost love because of being poor—later by making an incredible fortune.

Therefore, Fitzgerald writes about this frustration and the tragic end and underlines the profound diversity of the classes. An example of Gatsby's symbols in the novel is when he sees Daisy for the first time in his room, and he drops the clock breaking it. Time stops when Gatsby sees Daisy, he can neither forget the past nor let go of her. The author also has the same meaning as Shakespeare. For example, it rains when he sees his love again after many years, and sadness and grief dominate the room. When the Sun rises, their love is born again. When

Gatsby confronts Daisy's husband, the weather is exceptionally unhealthy, giving a clue about the incoming course of the situation. The colors in the novel have an expression of power. Gatsby hires a house to see only Daisy on the other side of the water and watches the green light from the pier for days as it symbolizes prosperity as well as the American dream.

Additionally, the charm that mesmerized Gatsby was not only the *femme fatale* but rather power. The charm of power embodied in possession of Daisy led Gatsby to debauch himself. He sacrificed himself and his origin to gain what he pursued. The notion of Gatsby's self-sacrifice became prominent when Daisy rejected him and chose to keep her status as Tom's wife. Before then, he devoted himself to his self-esteem, which was a kind of depersonalization, but later, when he was rejected, he went forward and dedicated his bodily existence and his life. First, Gatsby proposed to Daisy to possess her as the queen, the King's wife in a castle-like residence and wealth. However, the things he offered were ineffectual or insufficient for Daisy. This situation inclined him to feel incompetent compared to Nick; he came to an anti-climax and dedicated his own life and existence, which was self-destruction and an attempt to suicide. When he failed at being Daisy's King, he sought to be her savior. Gatsby attempted to be Daisy's self-sacrificing hero, gave his own life to grant Daisy a second life, and became her savior, god, and life-giver. Unfortunately, Daisy had never been a grateful or a servile one. She was always acted as a perverter. When she was living in her hometown, she tempted the other officers in the town in the west, the land of the lower class, and finally married to one of the most powerful ones in the east, from the land of heavenly life, an Olympus of the Gods. Even though Tom was not loyal to Daisy and had a mistress, Daisy was such a tempting woman that Tom got Gatsby killed for her.

The only ones who accepted Gatsby's self-existence and self-esteem were Nick, Gatsby's father, and the library man. Eventually, the only ones who participated in his funeral were those ones. The rest never believed his self-existence, but they were charmed by Gatsby's illusions. It was not Gatsby's authentic self that appealed the others to his mansion and lavish parties; yet, it was the illusion he created and the hallucination he composed. Ultimately, when the illusion dissolved with his death, nobody was at his funeral as there had been no real Gatsby.

## CONCLUSION

*The Great Gatsby* finds fault with the American dream in society's social and moral deterioration. Gatsby is incredibly obsessed with this love behind the scenes of the great American dream of the 1920s, and readers witness the collapse. The author describes this breakdown in a very fluent and literary way, which is one element that makes this work a classic. The best part of the message he wants to give is the part that explains Gatsby's disappointment after he meets with Daisy years later. Gatsby is puzzled; it is the moment he is dreamed of all these years, but not what he expected. Fitzgerald uses symbols, colors, and motifs to reflect life in the 1920s. Symbols like a green light and the American Dream in the novel make the structure. Readers may comment about situations by seeing the world in the way they want to see it. That helps readers to learn from their experiences and find who they are. Jay Gatsby fought for his life; he became rich, fell in love, and this love became his death.

In the 1920s, people were obsessed with the upper class, money, fame, and popularity. The American Dream as a term explains how people were dreaming about the perfect life in the 1920s. Writers and poets mostly use this term to explain to us the failure of humanity's dreams. Because if you expect more than what you have in your hands, it is counted as greedy. Gatsby dreamed about that perfect American life. However, finally, they do not go the way he wants to. His dreams fail and fade away. He loses everything while he wants more of it. He loses his house, money, and his lover until he dies. It symbolizes the failure and fading of the American Dream.

At the beginning of the novel, anything is possible for Jay Gatsby; he becomes too rich, regardless of his class. He got everything, an expensive mansion and a car, and he got close to Daisy; but later, readers realize that Gatsby did not earn his wealth through hard work, but he gained all his money through crime. At the funeral of Gatsby, no one except Nick shows up. Nick called everybody, but nobody attended. Even though he earned all his money, he did not equal the people who belonged to affluent families: "I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come, and perhaps he no longer scared. If that was true that he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world..." (Fitzgerald, 1993: 103). At the end of the novel, readers see that the American Dream that

everyone wants to realize is the reason for his death. He “paid a high price for living too long with a single dream” (Fitzgerald, 1993, 103). Daisy was his main hope, and the dream became his death. Everything that he did in life was just for Daisy. Finally, everything collapsed, and his dream stole his life.

Life repeats itself in time from different perspectives. Heracles, green light, and the American dream ideology in this novel indicate that humans fight for their ambitions, hopes, and desires in their lives, but sometimes they create unhappiness. In the novel, Jay Gatsby fights against his fate, which is a vain strain for him, and he finalizes his fate at the beginning, where he starts to fight. As in human psychology and human nature, humans have common instincts rooted in myths, which are also personifications of human nature. Namely, they are all the cycle of human destiny and the journey that ends at the beginning.

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