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**Reading the Jazz Age in F. Scott
Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and
Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were
Watching God* (1937)**

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of the requirements for a **Master's degree in Literature and
Civilization**

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Dedication

I dedicate this modest work to,

My father, my model of perseverance, for his continuous teaching to instil in me the true values of life and for his invaluable advice.

To my mother, for her affection, her patience, her understanding, her availability, her constant listening, and her unparalleled support during the most difficult moments of my life.

To my dear brothers "Redouane" and "Aris", and to my dear sister and best friend "Radia" who knew how to support me and be by my side in times of sadness and joy.

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Abstract

This research work undertakes a comparative study of two American modernist novels Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Based on the New Historicist theory, this work analyses the social and historical backgrounds of the two novels that belong to two different American ethnic groups, the American and African-American. Moreover, through the lens of New Historicism, we demonstrated how the two novels mirror their authors' backgrounds which is the Jazz Age. Furthermore, we compared the two novels using an important tenet of the New Historicist theory which is self-fashioning, and attempted to explore some fashioning aspects of the Jazz Age that are represented within the two novels. Finally, we explored the theme of racism that has always been an important quandary in American society and literature.

Key Words: *The Great Gatsby*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, New Historicism, Jazz Age

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General Introduction

The post-WWI period was that of change in the whole world and for the Americans. It witnessed a remarkable change in the political, social, and economic domain, and it came to be called the Roaring Twenties. In the early 1920s, the economy was at its peak, women took their emancipation, and Jazz music knew a big flourishing. In addition, people moved to live in urban areas and demanded new ways of entertainment. The radio, and the movies became indispensable for them.

Consequently, there was a rise in consumerism. However, the decade knew bitter years as well. The establishment of the 18th amendment which was a ban on production and consumption of alcoholic beverages led to the apparition of bootlegging, speakeasies, and gangs, as well as to an increase in crimes and drug dealings. Furthermore, America experienced a crash in the stock market in the late 1920s, and this marked the beginning of the Great Depression in the whole world.

The Jazz Age was also considered a golden age for African Americans since it was during that period that the Harlem Renaissance flourished. This movement was created by black people as a result of the Great Migration in 1900. The African Americans moved to Harlem and made it their home. Harlem knew a big boom in all the fields especially in the artistic one thanks to the African Americans. Jazz music became very popular among the Americans during that period and this is why they called it the Jazz Age. Poets such as Langston Hughes, Philosophers such as W.E.B DuBois, and writers such as Zora Neale Hurston shaped that period, argued issues of racism, and defended the black community within their works. The Harlem Renaissance had a very important impact on the whole world and because of it the African Americans were respected and their works were accepted and were internationally recognized.

Both American and African American writers started to innovate in their works during the post-War period. They began to search for new ways to express the disillusionment and

fragmentation that the war left on them, and this led to the emergence of modernism. Many novelists and writers all over the world were influenced by this movement and among them was the American F. Scott Fitzgerald who was one of the 1920's influential writers. He knew how to portray the American society during that period in his works, especially in his novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925), which captures the post-War period in America. It tells the story of Jay Gatsby who fought for the love that he lost, a fight that drove him from poverty to wealth and eventually to death.

A remarkable author in the African American community as well is Zora Neale Hurston who is an African American folklorist and anthropologist. She is a symbol in the African American literature and is associated with the Harlem Renaissance. She wrote notable modernist novels and among them, her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). It is a bildungsroman of Janie Crawford a black woman who spends her life trying to reach her American Dream.

The two works under study capture the same period but in two different societies. Both the American and the African American writers represented the post-War period and the Jazz Age in their societies. This research work undertakes a study and analysis of the mentioned novels and aims at reading the Jazz Age through the two works by using the theory of New Historicism.

The Review of Literature

Fitzgerald's and Hurston's novels are considered as classics in American and African-American literature. No doubt that they attracted the interest of numerous literary critics, scholars, and researchers of different generations, who tackled and analysed them from various perspectives, and attempted to review and interpret them from different points of view. In their article "On Booze: a Representation of The Roaring Twenties in *The Great Gatsby*" (2015), Dos Santos, Gomes and Nobrega tried to explore the representation of the Jazz Age through the

novel. They tackled the aspects that characterized that period such as the economic booming, the apparition of the Flapper and the corrupted American Dream.

Fitzgerald was one of the writers who were influenced by the period of the 1920s, since he witnessed the rise and fall of this period and was an active member of his society. Consequently, he was able to demonstrate through his novel that in the early 1920s America knew very prosper years known as the Roaring Twenties or the Jazz Age (153). The novel wasn't only about the joyful years of the Jazz Age, but also a period full of emptiness and moral desolation since Fitzgerald in his novel portrayed the pointless way of living of the Americans during the Jazz Age that led them to the Great Depression at the end of the decade.

The American Dream is another theme that was depicted in *The Great Gatsby*. Through the article entitled "*The Great Gatsby: The Tragedy of the American Dream on Long Island's Gold Coast*" (2009), Tunc Tanfer tries to explore the theme of the American Dream through this novel. He asserts that, Fitzgerald was the first novelist to mention and comment on the American Dream and this through his novel *The Great Gatsby* (1). Fitzgerald used his novel to portray the 1920s and the American Dream during that era.

By describing the Gold Coast mansions of Long Island, and using New York as the setting, he portrayed the characteristics and most important events of the excessive and extravagant decade known as the Roaring Twenties. Tunc adds that, the novelist illustrated through his depiction of the American society, the rise and fall of the decade and how the American Dream became a nightmare, in this regard, he says: "As Fitzgerald illustrates through this microcosm of American society, despite the optimism of the era, the dreams of status-seeking Long Islanders soon become nightmares" (1).

Similarly, Hurston's novel received many critiques as well. In the article "The Death of Janie Crawford: Tragedy and the American Dream in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*"

(1994), Darryl Hattenhauer claims that the novel had been analysed and mainly criticized by numerous scholars which argued that the novel and Hurston in person seem to be contradictory. On the one hand she explores feminism and women's quest for independence and on the other hand, she expresses her ethnical pride and her conservative side while these aspects don't go hand in hand (1).

In fact, this article explores the death of Janie Mae Crawford although in the novel Janie does not die at the end. But Hattenhauer attempts to depict the life of Janie Crawford after the end of the story, and tries to imagine her eventual fate. As it is expressed through the title of the article, Hattenhauer imagines the death of Janie Mae Crawford for several reasons, as he explains: "As the literally rabid Tea Cake dies, he bites Janie on the arm. And he does it so severely that she has to pry his teeth out of her flesh. Yet there is no explicit statement to indicate whether or not Janie gets anti-rabies shots" (3).

In addition, racism is another theme that was explored through Hurston's novel. In the article "Racism, Feminism and Language in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*" (2017), Sawsan Qashgari claims that the novel received many negative critiques from contemporary African American writers (32). They argued that although the book was written by a black woman, it did not tackle the African Americans' struggle for equality since, at that time, African American writers tended to write about racism and the clash between the American and African American societies. Her novel was criticized for being "an oversimplification of racial issues" (32).

Moreover, the novel received positive critiques from feminist writers as well. They claimed that the book gives a depiction of the struggles of black women in patriarchal societies. In this regard, Qashgari says that: "it was celebrated by feminist critics" (33). The author concludes by saying that addressing racism aggressively or neglecting the subject isn't the

important part of the novel. However, the fact that Hurston tried to portray the African American society through the use of her vernacular language is the important part (39).

Significance of the Study

From the previous review of the literature concerning Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, we can see that the two novels had already been studied by other scholars and critics. However, the previous studies did not analyse the two books together from a new historicist perspective. Therefore, we decided to put them together under study and analyse their representation of the post-War period, specifically the Jazz Age, and this by focusing on their historical backgrounds.

Aim of the Study

Our research work aims at analysing and comparing the two modernist novels *The Great Gatsby* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, more specifically to focus on studying the Jazz Age's impact on the characters of both novels.

Research Problem

Our research will hold for the main topic a New Historicist analysis of both novels *The Great Gatsby* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in order to highlight the effects of the Jazz Age on both the American and African American societies. We will conduct through this research a comparative study of the two mentioned novels to explore the similarities that they share.

Method and Material

In order to achieve this research's aim, an analysis of both novels *The Great Gatsby* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* will be conducted so as to determine the similarities found in both novels. Moreover, we will focus on shedding light to the post-War period that both novels portray, and this by using theory of New Historicism which argues that every literary work should interpret a specific social, cultural and historical background.

Structure of the Thesis

In terms of structure, our research paper will be divided into two chapters. In the first chapter, which will introduce our research, we will give an insight into the social and historical backgrounds of the novelists and their works. Firstly, we will provide a biographical sketch of both authors as well as their literary influences. Secondly, we will provide brief summaries of the two novels. Then we supply the novels' historical frame exploring their socio-historical background and discuss the post-War period in both American and African American societies. The second chapter, which will represent the core of our research, will be devoted to the New Historicist and comparative analysis of the novels. First, we will explore the theory of New Historicism by providing its definition, its origins as well as its major figures. Second we will move to our New Historicist analysis and start the comparison of the works by exploring the influence that the Jazz Age has on the character of both texts.

Chapter One: An Insight into Fitzgerald's and Hurston's Life, their Literary Influence, and the Social Background of their Novels

Introduction

This chapter introduces our research and is devoted to the historical and social background of both novelists Fitzgerald and Hurston and their novels *The Great Gatsby* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Within this first chapter, we will provide Fitzgerald's and Hurston's biographies as well as their literary influences, then we move to their novels and supply a summary of their plots. In the same part, we shall introduce the social and cultural backgrounds of the novels which are the Jazz Age and the Harlem Renaissance.

I-Texts in Context

I.1.Fitzgerald's and Hurston's Biographies

I.1.1. Fitzgerald

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born on September 24th, 1896, in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He was the child of a salesman Edward Fitzgerald who was born in Maryland, and a housewife Mary McQuillan who is the daughter of an Irish man who settled in St Paul where he made his wealth as a wholesale grocer. Fitzgerald was given the name of the author of the American anthem Francis Scott Key since they were distantly related; he was his second cousin three times removed.

From his early age, Fitzgerald had the desire to become a writer. When he was thirteen, he attended the St. Paul Academy where he wrote a detective story that was printed and put in his school's newspaper. During grade school, he started writing plays, songs, and poems which gave him popularity. From 1911 to 1913, Fitzgerald attended the Newman School, a Catholic prep school in New Jersey. Then, he entered the University of Princeton where he focused on

his literary apprenticeship and neglected his studies. He was not a good student; consequently, he didn't graduate.

In 1917 Fitzgerald joined the army and became the second lieutenant of the infantry. He never went to the battlefield but was assigned to a station in Alabama where he met and fell in love with Zelda Sayre, an eighteen-year-old "belle"; she was the daughter of a supreme court judge in Alabama. The two got engaged in 1918. However, things got complicated between the young couple when Scribner and Sons rejected the novel that Fitzgerald wrote when he joined the army. Consequently, Zelda broke the engagement.

When the war ended, Fitzgerald went to New York City and tried to find work in order to marry Zelda, but she was still unwilling to live under his small salary. In 1919 Fitzgerald decided to go back to St Paul where he started writing short stories which were printed and which brought him popularity and money. Furthermore, he continued and finished writing his first novel *This Side of Paradise*, which was accepted by Scribner and Sons and by the editor Maxwell Perkins, which was released on March 26th, 1920. A week later, Fitzgerald and Zelda got married. And thus, commenced Fitzgerald's career as a writer.

Fitzgerald became famous and earned a very important literary reputation. Consequently, the newly popular writer gained much money and enjoyed his new luxurious and extravagant life with his wife. In the same year, having a life full of spotlights, parties, and drinking, the Fitzgeralds adopted the Jazz Age lifestyle and drank a lot. They spend their time drinking and having fun. Consequently, they were always in debts. In this regard Harold Bloom, in his book entitled *Bloom's Guide: F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby* says that: "Fitzgerald was often in debt, asking his agent, Harold Ober, or his editor Max Perkins to advance his next paycheck to cover debts not covered by the last" (11). In 1921 the Fitzgeralds

toured Europe and settled in St Paul where Zelda gave birth to their only child, Frances Scott Fitzgerald (Scottie).

The years that followed were very productive for Fitzgerald. He kept writing and glowing up. In 1924, Fitzgerald moved to France with his family where he started writing his third novel *The Great Gatsby* which was released in April 1925. *The Great Gatsby* was an immediate bestseller since it captured perfectly the period of the 1920's that Fitzgerald called The Jazz Age, and portrayed the social, cultural, and even political issues of the American society of that era. It gave a depiction of the lifestyle of the Americans during that period, the extravagant parties that they attended, the corruption of the rich, the bootlegging and the speakeasies, their outrageousness, and finally their moral decay and the beginning of the Great Depression.

In addition, many events which were present in the book were also present in Fitzgerald's real life. As Bloom says, "The roots of the story go back deep in Fitzgerald's early life" (15). So Fitzgerald, as the majority of the Americans of that time, could recognize themselves and their lifestyle through this novel. Consequently, this allowed him to become one of the most famous and greatest authors of all time and allowed the novel to become a bestselling American classic.

The 1930's announced the Great Depression in the whole world as well as in Fitzgerald's life. The years became less prosperous for the famous writer since he was often drunk, in debt, and unable to write. Moreover, his wife Zelda suffered a relapse and spent her time in and out of hospitals. She ended up schizophrenic and died in a fire in a hospital. Consequently, their daughter spent her adolescence in boarding schools.

Despite everything, Fitzgerald kept trying until he managed to write another commercial *Tender is the Night* (1934) which allowed him to pay all his debts. Additionally,

he met Sheilah Graham with whom he fell in love. He made efforts and stopped drinking, and was happy with Sheilah. On December 21, 1940, Fitzgerald died of a heart attack in Graham's apartment leaving an unfinished novel *The Last Tycoon* (1941) which was published after his death.

I.1.2 Hurston

Zora Neale Lee Hurston was born on January 7th, 1891, in Notasulga, Alabama. When she was two, her parents moved to Eatonville, Florida, an all-black incorporated town in America. She was the child of a carpenter and a preacher, John Hurston who served several terms as a mayor of their town, and a former teacher Lucie Potts Hurston who left her work to raise her eight children. In 1904 Lucie died and John remarried, and this led Zora who was only thirteen to leave home and find work. She started working in an all-white traveling company.

In 1917, Hurston attended the Morgan Academy where she studied for two happy years. She liked to learn and was a very good student; "Hurston longed to be back in school. Not only had she lost her anchor and the stability of family life [her mother], she was without books, which had become a great comfort to her" (Plant 21). On August 10, 1917, while she was pursuing her studies, her father died in a traffic accident. Two years after, she graduated from Morgan Academy and got her high school diploma, and this allowed her to enrol in the University of Howard.

In 1920, Hurston moved to Washington where life was very expensive for her, and this pushed her several times to think of giving up her studies. As she said in her autobiography, "There was trouble for me and I was just about to give up and call it a day when I had a talk with Dwight Holmes. He encouraged me all he could, and so I stuck and made up all of those hours I needed" (Hurston 112). Consequently, she supported herself with a variety of jobs, she

worked as a waitress then as a manicurist and studied there a year and a half instead of two because of health problems.

After that, Hurston joined the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, an African American international sorority, where she participated in the literary activities and wrote a poem and a short story which were published in the sorority's journal, and this allowed her to participate in literary circles and meet many black scholars, writers, and philosophers who encouraged to start a career and convinced her to move to New York City.

In January 1925, Hurston moved to New York and became part of the New Negro Movement also known as the Harlem Renaissance, where she was surrounded by many black artists such as Langston Hughes. The growing crew often gathered in Hurston's apartment where they shared ideas, stories, and anecdotes. Shortly after her settlement in New York, Hurston found work as an assistant and was offered a scholarship in Bernard where she met Dr. Franz Boas and where she discovered her keen interest in anthropology.

Thanks to Dr. Boas' help, Hurston managed to make her research in the field of anthropology, which consisted of the study of the folklore families in the south. There she interviewed folklore storytellers and Hoodoo doctors, and this experience fed into her writings and pushed her to write even more about the black folks. In 1928 Hurston graduated from Bernard college with an anthropology diploma. After that, she enrolled in Columbia University where she studied for two years to pursue her studies in anthropology.

The 1930s were years of literary productivity and success for Hurston; she wrote *Mule Bone* in collaboration with Langston Hughes. The play created a conflict between the two writers and wasn't published until 1991. Furthermore, in 1934 Hurston wrote her first novel *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, which was the fruit of her research and which portrayed perfectly the African American life. She carried on with *Mules and Men* in 1935. In 1937 Hurston triumphed

with her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* which she wrote in seven weeks only, and which is considered as one of her greatest and most powerful novels.

Even though the novel was far from being autobiographical, it contained many events that the character Janie Crawford shared with Hurston, especially her romances. Hurston wrote seven books, among them her autobiography *Dust Tracks On a Road* (1942), which was regarded as her most enigmatic work. She also wrote dozens of essays, plays, and short stories. However, her works received many critiques and were mostly unappreciated either from the white or the black community. She was often accused of not portraying the real African American struggles and race problems. As Plant asserts: “Some critics continue to criticize Hurston for not directly or substantively addressing the racial issues of her day, claiming she ignored them or denied them” (2).

Moreover, the fact that her works were mostly produced during the Great Depression and at the fall out of the New Negro movement led to many complications in Hurston’s life. She had financial and health problems. Consequently, her writings were unaccepted by publishers. Hurston died on welfare in Florida on January 28th, 1960. Her grave remained unmarked until 1973 when Alice Walker, who was very influenced by Hurston, engraved it with “The Genius of the South” (Plant 70).

I.2. Their Literary Influence

In the course of his life, Fitzgerald encountered many situations and events that helped shape his life. Accordingly, he incorporated all these events within his writing. Starting with his childhood, being the child of a salesman, Fitzgerald was from the middle class and had a modest youth and this is very obvious through his writing since almost all the characters of his novels are yearning for wealth and belonging to the upper class.

A very powerful influence on Fitzgerald's writings is his wife Zelda. Their story is portrayed in almost all his novels. When he met Zelda, Fitzgerald was but a modest lieutenant from the middle class, whereas Zelda was the court Judge's daughter. The fact that they were from two different social classes led to difficulties and problems within their relationship, and this was a very influential point in his literary works. Almost all his works revolve around love stories between the upper class and lower class lovers, and about the old and the new rich.

Moreover, the period in which Fitzgerald lived was very eventful, especially with the wars' raging. The presence of the war is prominent within his works since that period changed his life in particular and the whole world in general. In addition to this, the period between the two Wars that he called The Jazz Age (Ismael Samardali 42), was Fitzgerald's era because he thrived during that period and wrote a lot about it. He portrayed in his works the positive aspects of that era such as the economic boom, the women's emancipation, and the rise in consumerism as well as the negative aspects such as bootlegging, the prohibition act, and the immorality of that era.

Furthermore, Fitzgerald was very influenced by literature starting from when he was young and especially when he attended Princeton where he focused on his literary knowledge and read a lot. There were mainly three writers, T S Eliot, Joseph Conrad, and John Keats, that influenced Fitzgerald and were that considered as sources of inspiration for him. In his novel *The Great Gatsby* the influence of Eliot's poem "The Waste Land" is very obvious especially in the symbolic use of "valley of ashes" which represents the lower class and the reality that is hidden behind the American Dream. In this context Bullón writes that, "Both authors [Fitzgerald and Eliot] skilfully depicted two opposite but very interrelated scenes to exemplify that materialism is actually a modern disease that affects all, both upper and lower classes" (7).

Besides, the influence of Joseph Conrad on Fitzgerald can be found in the themes, plot, symbols but especially in his utilization of the technique of the unreliable narrator. We can see it through Nick Carraway, whom we can compare to Marlow in Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*. Both Marlow and Nick are characters and narrators at the same time. Rude contends that, "Critics of F. Scott Fitzgerald have long postulated that the author was greatly influenced by works of Joseph Conrad and that Fitzgerald's use of a character as the narrator of *The Great Gatsby* reflects Joseph Conrad's use of Marlow as the narrator in such works as *Lord Jim*, *Heart of Darkness* and *Chance*" (1).

Finally, a very important literary figure that deeply influenced Fitzgerald's writing is John Keats. In a letter that he wrote to his daughter Scottie on August 3rd, 1940, Fitzgerald said about Keats' Poems that they are "unbearably beautiful, with every syllable as inevitable as the notes of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony... Likewise with the "Nightingale", which I can never read through without tears in my eyes" (Grube 1). In his novel *The Great Gatsby* Fitzgerald referred to Keats' style of writing in numerous ways and in many scenes. He also borrowed his way of choosing words such in "there was no light save what the gleaming floor bounced in from the hall" and in Keats' "The Nightingale" "there is no light, / save what with heaven is with the breezes blown..." (McCall 2).

In the same way, Hurston encountered many events that influenced her in her writings. Although she was born in Alabama, Hurston grew and lived in Eatonville, Florida, which was one of the first all-black incorporated towns in the United States. She was proud of being part of that community and said in her autobiography, "I was born in a Negro town. I do not mean by that the black back-side of an average town. Eatonville, Florida, is, and was at the time of my birth, a pure Negro town" (Hurston 10). Eatonville influenced Hurston deeply in her writings. As she put it as a setting in almost all her novels, "Throughout her life Zora Neale

Hurston always came back to Florida. It was more than home; it was her sanctuary. She became world-famous, but she drew her strength and inspiration from Florida” (Clark 129).

Another very powerful influential event in Hurston’s writing is the New Negro movement. Hurston was a very popular member of the Harlem Renaissance artists and writers and was considered a symbol of that movement. Hurston’s best-known literary works were shaped by that period. Additionally, she was surrounded by many African American personalities such as Langston Hughes and W.E.B DuBois who pushed her to write. Kelly Howes and Christine Slovey contend that: “A major figure in twentieth-century African American literature, Zora Neale Hurston had a sharp wit and a vibrant personality that made her seem a natural part of the Harlem Renaissance” (217).

Hurston’s novel (hereafter *TEWWG*) was influenced by her romances and her personal experience with love. She exposed her love experiences through her character Janie who had three marriages that taught her many things such as “marriage didn’t make love” (Hurston 30). Hurston fell in love with Percy Punter who was twenty years her junior. She portrayed her romance in her novel as Janie fell in love with the twenty-five-year-old Tea Cake. She claimed in her autobiography that she wrote *TEWWG* in order to “embalm all the tenderness of [her] passion for him [Punter]” (Hurston 179).

1.3. The Great Gatsby and Their Eyes Were Watching God: Plot Overview

Through his modernist novel *The Great Gatsby* written in 1925, Fitzgerald gave a depiction of the 1920s also known as the Roaring Twenties. TGG represents the lifestyle of the Americans during that period which was characterized by extravagance and outrageousness as well as corruption and immorality. Furthermore, the novel portrays perfectly the post-War Period, its fragmentation, and its effects on Jay Gatsby, Daisy Buchanan, Nick Carraway, and all the Americans in general as well as their loss of innocence and their quest for identity.

At the beginning of the story, we are introduced to Nick Carraway who is both the narrator and a character in the story. Nick moves to New York which is divided into West Egg that is inhabited by the new rich who made their fortunes through the economic boom of that period such as Jay Gatsby, and the East Egg which is inhabited by the old rich such as Tom Buchanan and his wife Daisy who is Nick's cousin. In addition, there is the valley of ashes a farm inhabited by low-class people that links East and West Egg. There, we are introduced to George Wilson, a garage man, and his wife Myrtle with whom Tom betrays Daisy.

Once in New York, Nick visits his cousin Daisy and meets Jordan Baker and Tom Buchanan who seemed to like him. He rents a house in West Egg which is near Jay Gatsby's mansion. When Nick receives an invitation to one of Gatsby's parties, he doesn't hesitate to go. He goes with Jordan Baker who tells him almost everything about Jay Gatsby, that he is a mysterious wealthy man who hosts huge and extravagant parties in his house, and whose guests don't even know who he is. At the end of the party, Nick finally meets Gatsby and gets to know him.

Nick and Gatsby become very close and spend a lot of time together. Gatsby trusts Nick and tells him everything about himself, his childhood, and his family. Consequently, Nick discovers that Gatsby made his fortune through bootlegging, and discovers also his romance with Daisy that took place before the War when Gatsby and Daisy were lovers. However, Daisy couldn't marry him because he was poor. Gatsby asks Nick to help him arrange a meeting with his ex-lover. Once Daisy discovers Gatsby's new wealth, she starts a love affair with him.

As Daisy and Gatsby's affair flourishes, Tom grows curious and suspicious about Gatsby and forces them to drive to New York where he has a long conversation with Gatsby. Tension rises between them when Tom accuses Gatsby of being a murderer and tells Daisy that he gained his money through bootlegging. Confused and panicked Daisy drove back home in

Gatsby's car. On her way back she accidentally kills Myrtle, George's wife, and Tom's secret lover. Finally, Tom persuades George that it is Gatsby that killed his wife, and in an attempt to take his revenge George shoots Gatsby. Gatsby dies lonely and no one attended his funerals except his father and Nick. Daisy goes back to her husband and they move to Chicago and Nick decides to go back home.

TEWWG is also a modernist novel written by Zora Neale Hurston in 1937. At the beginning of the novel, we are introduced to Janie Mae Crawford who comes back to Eatonville after a long absence. While she is walking towards her house, the town residents who sat on the porches of their houses begin to talk and gossip about her, about where she was hidden all that time, and why she decides to come back to her hometown. Among those residents, there is Phoebe Watson who is a very close friend to Janie. She defends her friend and refuses to believe all the rumours that are said about Janie, so she decides to visit her and ask her about what happened.

Phoebe takes a plate of mulatto rice and goes to see her best friend Janie. Once there, Janie starts telling her story to Phoebe, starting from when she was but a little infant. Janie was abandoned by her mother who gave birth to her after being raped by a white man. Consequently, Janie never knew her parents and was raised by her grandmother, a former slave, whom she calls Nanny. Nanny loves and cares a lot about Janie, she wants her to have a beautiful and happy life. When she was sixteen Janie fell in love with Johnny Taylor a white man, but Nanny didn't accept that relation. She was afraid that her granddaughter would have the same fate as hers and her daughter's, so she married her to an old black farmer Logan Killicks.

Janie marries Logan, who treats her well at the beginning of their marriage. However, as time passes, he starts comparing her to his first wife and to ask her to help him in farming. Janie has no feelings for Logan and realizes that marriage did not make love. One year after her

marriage, Janie goes out to sit under the oak tree, as she usually does after finishing her housework, when she hears whistling from the down road. It is Joseph Starks a good-looking man passing by the farm. He introduces himself to Janie, and then comes to see her every day. They like spending time with each other, and he asks her to run with him and marry him.

Janie leaves Logan and ran with Joe. They wed and moved to Eatonville. Once there, Joe rents a house for a month. His ambition and intelligence made him very popular among the residents, so they elect him mayor of Eatonville. Consequently, he becomes very rich and owns land and a store. During the first years of their marriage, the couple is quite happy, Joe thrives and lives his best life, and Janie is happy that life smiles to her. Nevertheless, this happiness does not last long; the couple's love starts to dissolve since Joe becomes distant and violent. He uses Janie as an object with which he shows his strength. After two decades, Joe and Janie's marriage ends after a huge dispute between the two. Janie left him, and months after, he becomes very ill and dies leaving all his fortune to his wife.

After months, Janie stops mourning and decides to start enjoying her new life as a landlord and store owner. One day, she was in her store as usual when a tall man comes in. It is Vergible Woods or as everyone calls him Tea Cake, a twenty-five-year-old man who attracts Janie's attention. Janie and Tea Cake become closer; they fell for each other. Despite all the gossiping of the neighbours and the fact that Tea Cake was younger than her, Janie sells the store and goes to Jacksonville where she marries Tea Cake. The couple have some difficulties at the beginning of their marriage, but always find a solution to their problems since they were both smitten.

They move to the Everglades where they live two happy years. However, a hurricane hits the Everglades and when the couple tries to flee, they were attacked by a rabid dog, and trying to save Janie, Tea Cake gets bitten by the dog. Almost four weeks later, Tea Cake starts

to feel sick and starts having nightmares. Tea Cake catches rabies and becomes mad. He starts accusing Janie of unfaithfulness, so he takes a pistol and tries to shoot Janie who tries to calm him down in vain, and as a self-defence, she had to shoot him. Janie kills Tea Cake and goes to jail, but is soon released because she only killed him to save her own life. Janie goes back to Eatonville where she finally lives freely and independently.

II. The Social Background of both Novels

II.1. The Jazz Age and The Harlem Renaissance

The 1920s also known as the Roaring Twenties were years of change in the whole world in general and in America in a specific way. During that era, America witnessed a paramount leapfrogging in its lifestyle and shifted from the old conservative society to a new and modern one. The early 1920s were very prosperous for the Americans since they experienced an important change in all the sectors: economy, culture, politics, and society. However, the era was also known to be made of contradictions since it was both prosperous and decadent.

During the Roaring Twenties, the stock market experienced a big boom and this marked an economic expansion. The social lifestyle of the Americans changed, and many of them left their small towns and moved to live in urban areas “For the first time, the majority of the population lived in places designated as urban, rather than in the agricultural areas and small towns that had traditionally been considered central to the nation’s identity” (Carlisle 63). In addition to this, there were new technological innovations such as the radio, automobiles, telephones, and household appliances which were now accessible to average people.

Accordingly, Americans were introduced to a new way of living. They started to demand new ways of entertainment. By the mid-'20s, over sixty percent of the Americans used the radio and listened to the Jazz music which was introduced by the African Americans and

which knew a big flourishing, thus came the phrase The Jazz Age by which Fitzgerald described the decade. Furthermore, they attended theatres and went to the movies since the film industry exploded at that time. The decade was also known for its hedonism, pursuit of pleasure and luxuriousness, and for its lavish and extravagant parties that the Americans organized in order to show their wealth.

Modern America gave birth to a new woman, a free and independent woman, by establishing the 19th amendment which gave them the right to vote. In 1920s, the woman was known as the Flapper. She was a new woman happy and independent, and showed her independence through her physical appearance. Flappers began to wear short skirts, and red lipstick. They changed their hairstyle and cut it short, flattened it, and made it look boyish. In addition to this, they started to go to pubs and parties where they danced, smoked, and drank alcohol (Reeves 86).

In addition to the right to vote, women in the 1920s had the right to choose their way of living. They were no longer forced to be housewives, to get married and have children. The flappers now could work and start a career although equality was not prevalent in the domain of work since women were paid less than men and it is still the case nowadays, unfortunately. They could choose not to get married because marriage became now more of a romantic issue and not an obligation anymore.

During the 1920s America experienced a big reform in the political field as well. On January 17th, 1919, the 18th amendment to the constitution was ratified by the state. It was a prohibition of production, consumption, and exportation of alcoholic beverages? “After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.”

(U.S. Constitution, Amend. XVIII, Sec. 1). In her novel *The Prohibition* (2009), Louise Slavicek writes that, “On Saturday, January 17, 1920, the United States of America became a dry nation.” (1). The Americans were prohibited from producing, selling, and consuming intoxicating liquors, and the fact entailed many consequences and trends such as bootlegging and speakeasies. In addition, it led to the spread of corruption, violence, and crimes within the American territory. This is affirmed by Carlisle who says that “Crime and the efforts to control it were changed by Prohibition in the 1920s” (170).

Being the mirror of society, Literature was affected by the giant social transformation, and witnessed some changes as well. Most 1920’s writers were participants in WWI and were affected by its turmoil and turbulence. In their return, they encountered the new and modern America and loathed its extravagance, immorality, and outrageousness. Consequently, they couldn’t fit in that new modern society; they felt empty and lost, and were called “The Lost Generation” (Nozen and Choubdar 3).

The modernist writers tried to find new ways to express the fragmentation, emptiness, and disillusionment that the war left on them, and this paved the way to the emergence of the modernist literature. So, “While seeking new methods and alternatives to the old beliefs and systems, modern writers strove to be true to the new scepticisms and hesitations” (Gillies and Mahood 9).

The writers of the Lost Generation embraced the new literary movement that they created to bring newness and originality to literature. They used new techniques and methods to tell their stories which portrayed the modern American society and its trends. One of the major members of the Lost Generation is F Scott Fitzgerald who was influenced by the 1920s and who wrote numerous literary works about that period such as *This Side of Paradise* (1920), *The Beautiful and the Damned* (1922), and especially *The Great Gatsby* (1925). In the article

On Booz: A Representation of the Roaring Twenties in *The Great Gatsby*, Dos Santos, Gomes and Nobrega claim that “Not only does *The Great Gatsby* (2001) embody the spirit of the Roaring Twenties, but it also offers the reader a sneak peek behind the curtains of a society moved by alcohol, good music, parties, and indulgence” (155).

All in all, as it was discussed previously, the era of the 1920s was made of contradictions. On the one hand, the Americans knew very prosperous years. They got rid of the fragmentations and fears that they lived during the war; many technologies facilitated their way of living, women took their emancipation; people threw and attended extravagant parties, and everyone was almost happy. On the other hand, the decade embodied many side effects as well. With the establishment of the 18th amendment, there was a rise in crimes, corruption, and bribery. In addition, people’s pursuit of pleasure, immorality, and decadence led to the end of the American Dream. The decade started with a boom and ended with a bust since its end was marked by the Wall Street crash and the Great depression.

Similarly, After the civil war (1861-1886) which paved the way to the abolishment of slavery in northern states of America, black southerners wanted to move to the north to get rid of all the unfair and inhuman labour that was imposed on them by the whites. Consequently, a few decades later came the Great Migration which witnessed the exodus of hundreds of thousands of blacks from the south to the northern states of America.

After their migration, the African Americans settled in northern cities: Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York where they continued to face racism and injustice but were also introduced to urban life enjoying new opportunities for work and education (Hutchinson7). Moreover, Harold Bloom in his book *The Harlem Renaissance* asserts that “The Great Black Migration from the rural South to the industrial North produced the metropolitan dynamism undergirding the Renaissance” (131).

Once there, many black scholars and philosophers started to share their ideas and thoughts among the African American communities. Consequently, there was the emergence of many black organizations that defended the African American community and sought to free the blacks from racial stereotypes. In addition, they aimed at reaching the independence and the social integration of the African Americans into the American main stream. Among these movements, there is the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (1909) and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (1914) (Hutchinson 34).

Indeed, these organizations were fruitful. During the 1920s the African Americans living in the north, especially in Harlem, New York, thrived. They started to incorporate their culture step by step into the American society. Accordingly, the black culture became an indispensable part of the American one. Harlem became a very popular city and was considered as the black mecca since many black philosophers, singers, writers, and poets from Harlem marked that period, and this marked the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance.

During the Harlem Renaissance, the African Americans introduced Jazz and Blues as Langston Hughes' wrote in his poem "The Weary Blues":

"I heard a Negro play.

Down on Lenox Avenue the other night

By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light

He did a lazy sway. . . .

He did a lazy sway. . . .

To the tune o' those Weary Blues" (Hughes 01).

These musical genres which are typically African American knew a big flourishment during that period. Many white Americans attended musicals and bought radios to listen to the jazz

bands that became very popular, “The Blues and Jazz took off as popular musical forms in the wake of the war” (Hutchinson 7). Jazz music became a key component of the 1920s in America and the period came to be called the Jazz Age.

African American literature also knew a blossom during the Harlem Renaissance since many black writers and poets became very popular. Moreover, they worked with many white writers and editors. African American Literature revolves around the impacts of slavery on the African American culture. Furthermore, it aims at denouncing racism and discrimination, “Literature culled folk sources in order to depict African American life with accuracy, with complexity, and above all sensitivity for its inherent humanity” (97).

Readers of the African American literary works read the story and the history at the same time, and become more sensible and aware of their background. Therefore, African American literature is internationally recognized and appreciated. Langston Hughes, Alain Lock, Jessie Fauset, and Zora Neale Hurston were literary figures that shaped the Harlem Renaissance and added newness to its literature. Hughes brought Jazz Poetry which is a new form of poetry. Besides, Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is known to be one of the masterpieces and best classics of that period.

Conclusion

In this first chapter, we gave an insight into Fitzgerald and Hurston’s life, then we moved to the literary influences that pushed them to write these novels. After that, we moved to provide the plot overviews of the novels *The Great Gatsby* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Finally, we examined the socio-cultural backgrounds of the novel which are “The Jazz Age” and “The Harlem Renaissance”. In the next chapter, we will introduce the theory of New Historicism, its origins, and principle. Then, we will move the new historicist analysis and the comparison of the two novels.

Chapter Two: A New Historicist and Comparative Analysis of *The Great Gatsby* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Introduction

Throughout this chapter which represents the rudiment of our research, we shall use the new historicist theory to analyse the two novels *TEWWG* and *TGG*. First of all, and as the first part of this chapter, we shall introduce the theory of New Historicism by giving its definition, origins, and principles. Then we will move the New Historicist and comparative analysis by studying the self-fashioning in the characters of both novels. After that, we shall study the Fashioning aspects of the Jazz Age by exploring the representation of the flapper in Hurston's protagonist Janie Crawford, and Fitzgerald's character Jordan Baker. Afterward, we provide the second Fashioning aspect which is the notion of the American Dream. Finally, we explore an important theme that both novels share in common which is racism and we are going to analyse it as a contextual impetus in both novels.

I- New Historicism: Its Origins, Assumptions, and Principles

In the early 1980s, literary criticism embraced a new movement termed New Historicism. It was introduced by the American theorist and literary critic Stephen Greenblatt through his essays such as *The Improvisation of Power* (1980) and *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980), and by other critics such as Louis Montrose and Catherine Gallagher (Bressler 129). New Historicism emerged as a reaction against the Traditional Historicism and New Criticism who claimed that literature ought to be separated from the author's cultural background, and from the historical background of the period in which the work was written. New Historicists, however, believe that all these factors go hand in hand, and cannot be separated or studied in isolation. They claim that every text should depict a specific historical, cultural or political event. In this context Evrim Doğan writes in his article entitled "New Historicism and

Renaissance Culture” (2005), that, “literature becomes the means to represent the ideology of a culture through resonant texts” (Doğan 77).

New Historicism is a revised version of Traditional Historicism and appears as a reaction against it since the difference between them is very important. Old Historicism appeared in the 15th century, and is it one of the oldest literary approaches. It sought to understand an event that occurred at any given time and place (Dobie 178). Additionally, it focused on the historical events, how they characterize a specific society and culture, and how they are portrayed in literary artefacts. Moreover, Old Historicism emphasized how the historical events influenced literature whereas New Historicism focuses on how the historical events influence and affect the literary work.

Besides, Traditional Historicists analysed historical events in only one perspective which is the author’s one. That is, they stick to the author’s interpretation and do not permit the event to have several and different truths or interpretations. New Historicists, however, focused on how a historical event can bear several interpretations, and how these interpretations can differ from the author to the readers or critics. Furthermore, while Old Historicists consider the author as a reporter and the only person being aware of the truth, New Historicists give the readers the chance to have their own opinions and interpretations.

New Criticism is another approach whose principles and assumptions diverge from the New Historicist’s ones. New Criticism appeared in the first half of the 20th century in America and dominated the realm of literary criticism. As an extended form of Formalism, New Criticism tended to analyse a text independently and autonomously, meaning that when reading a literary work using new criticism, the reader focuses on the structure, the patterns, and elements of the text and combines them in order to reach the meaning of that text. New critics claim that the text itself has the merit and the value to give a clear and large explanation of its

content. When reading a literary work, new criticism practitioners do not rely on external sources such as social, religious, or political ideas, but focus merely on the text itself (Dobie 55). They, however, paid attention to the form of the text and its interaction with the meaning that it evokes.

New Historicism is built on the basis that a text cannot be read and understood in isolation unless it is associated with its social and cultural background as well as the background and biographical profile of the author. New Historicists claim that external sources are compulsory in order to understand the deep meaning of the literary work, and above all, to permit the reader to portray the event using his own criticism. New Historicism, unlike the approaches mentioned above, seeks to link between fiction and reality by studying a literary artefact through its historical background. In addition, considered as “a new way of examining the human past” (177), the New Historicist theory focuses on the biographical side as well as the cultural and historical backgrounds of the author when analysing any given literary work.

Moreover, New Historicism enables a historical event to be accorded various interpretations. As Bressler claims in his book untitled, *An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (1994), “New Historicism asserts that all critics must acknowledge and openly declare their own biases when interpreting a work” (129). Indeed, when the author writes his literary work, he cannot transcend his own values, experience, and knowledge (Dobie 179). Therefore, it is the role of the reader to interpret the text in order to reach an understanding of the events.

I.1. Self-fashioning in both Novels

Self-fashioning is an important principle in the New Historicist theory. It is a term coined by Stephen Greenblatt in his book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980) in which he explains the process of creating one’s identity and selfhood in the 16th century, and how this process is shaped by the effects of social class and religion on

that person. He contends that, “there may well have been less autonomy in self-fashioning in the sixteenth century than before, that family, state, and religious institutions impose a more rigid and far-reaching discipline upon their middle-class and aristocratic subjects” (1). To put it in other words, Self-Fashioning is a term that describes that a person’s identity is shaped by the influence of his society.

I.1.1 Jay Gatsby’s and Joe Starks’ Self-fashioning

Many characters in both *TGG* and *TEWWG* went through the process of Self-Fashioning. For instance, there were the male characters as Jay Gatsby, the protagonist of the novel *TGG*. He is one of the characters that represent this New Historicist tenet through the development of his personality. At the beginning of the story, we are introduced to a thriving high-class Gatsby who had an expensive cream car whose colour represents gold and wealth, and a big mansion where he organizes extravagant parties, as it is expressed in this citation, “a wealthy, fun-loving local celebrity with a shady past who throws lavish weekly parties” (Thomas Deacon Academy 73). However, his real identity remains mysterious and isn’t revealed until the end of the story.

Jay Gatsby, born James Gatz, was a fortuneless and middle-class man from North Dakota who longed for wealth and being part of the upper class. Gatz fell in love with an aristocratic girl named Daisy when he was a penniless officer in the military service. One day as he was wandering at the seaside, he met a wealthy man named Dan Cody sailing on his yacht. Gatz informed Cody that there will soon be a storm that could destroy his yacht, and to thank him for keeping him informed, Cody invited Gatz on the yacht. The two got soon very close and Cody bestowed Gatz with the extravagant life that he always craved for. Being thus introduced to a new life, James Gatz changed his name to Jay Gatsby to suit his entry into the new millionaire life (Parkinson 97).

There was the birth of Jay Gatsby who inherited “a legacy of twenty-five thousand dollars from Dan Cody” (Fitzgerald 107) after Dan Cody’s death. However, Gatsby craved for more money to achieve the aristocracy of his beloved Daisy and to be finally able to marry her. Consequently, he followed illegal ways to gain money. He started a business with a Jewish bootlegger Myer Wolfsheim and sold alcoholic beverages illegally. By doing so, Gatsby reached his aim and bought a big mansion in West Egg among the new rich who made their fortunes after the first world War. Moreover, he succeeded to attract Daisy with all this fortune.

In fact, Gatsby tried to shape his own identity according to the environment that surrounded him. He managed to find his place among the wealthy people and to adopt their way of speaking as he “was picking his words with care” (39). Despite the fact that he enrolled in Oxford only for few months, Gatsby claims that he is an Oxford man since a good education was a very important tradition for the aristocrats. He says, “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” (70).

As a matter of fact, the period in which Gatsby lived, the Roaring Twenties, was known for the moral decadence of the Americans and their pursuit of wealth and luxuriousness. Moreover, wealth became an important criterion in one’s life, and people at that time tended to associate it with success. Consequently, this led Gatsby to try to adapt to that society by creating a new identity to suit the social and cultural aspects that surrounded him. Fitzgerald used the character of Jay Gatsby in order to portray the self-made Americans after the end of WWI.

Moreover, and as mentioned previously, Gatsby’s love was another important point that helped him refashion his selfhood. When Gatsby was but a poor rural boy, he met the beautiful and very rich Daisy. However, knowing that she wouldn’t share the same feelings, he created a false background and lied to her in order to gain her heart. This pushed him to make

a vow of becoming this rich and millionaire man that he pretended to be. Gatsby managed to join the upper-class even if he had to go through illicit ways.

We can see that his self-fashioning and the progress of the recreation of his own identity was very successful since he managed to achieve what he wanted, that is to win Daisy's heart. However, Jay Gatsby was always alone, even when he died. All the money that he made couldn't afford him, real friends or real love. At the end of the novel, Gatsby had a tragic end where he was killed and no one went to his funerals except his only friend Nick.

Similarly, in *TEWWG*, we can also depict this process of Self-Fashioning in Joe Starks which was the second husband of the protagonist Janie Crawford. The fact that the novel was written during the Harlem Renaissance, gave its characters some notions of the African-Americans of the 1920s. Joe Starks is one of these characters that represented the proud and self-determined black men of the Harlem Renaissance.

Joe Starks' character appeared during Janie's first marriage. He went by her house every day and started talking to her and complimenting her. Hurston gave a small depiction of Joe's personality from the beginning of the novel. His ambition is revealed as Hurston says in the novel "He had always wanted to be a big voice" (33). In addition to being ambitious, Joe is very controlling, and always gets what he wants, as it is shown when he said "You ain't never knowed what it was to be treated lak a lady" (Hurston35). He claimed that a beautiful young lady should be treated better. He continued, "Janie if you think Ah aims to tole you off and make a dog outa you, youse wrong. Ah wants to make a wife outa you" (35). Janie fell for his beautiful words and promises, so she ran off with him and married him.

When he first appeared, Joe Starks was a stranger, and his identity wasn't completely revealed neither to the readers nor to Janie. However, by the way that Hurston described him, the readers could understand that he gained much money, "Been workin' for white folks all his

life. Saved up some money—round three hundred dollars, yes indeed, right here in his pocket” (33). Nevertheless, Joe was willing to become very rich and popular. Janie ran off with Joe and they went to Eatonville.

While they were wandering in the woods of Eatonville, Joe and Janie noticed some random houses scattered. Then, they met two inhabitants who informed them that the town has no mayor and it has always been like that. Being a very ambitious and a control-loving man, the fact that the town has no mayor, Joe started to think of becoming the mayor of Eatonville since as Harold Bloom contains in his book entitled *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God*, “The name mayor connotes control over others to Joe” (62).

Indeed, short after he settled down in Eatonville, Joe opened a store and won the love of all the inhabitants of that town. Accordingly, they elected him mayor. However, as Bloom adds in another book *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Zora Neale Hurston* “Joe rises from store owner to landowner to mayor [while] Janie grows increasingly disillusioned with her social status, attained at the expense of her husband's absence from her” (29). Furthermore, his real personality started to be shown and his patronizing side begins to increase as he became now the mayor.

Joe Starks became now mayor who owns a store and a beautiful young wife that he uses as an object to prove his power and strength, but keeps her out of any interaction with the outside world, “Joe Starks sought to keep his wife separate from the common lot” (Plant 111). For instance, at the opening of the store, Joe forbids Janie to have a speech, and thinks that she is there to represent him only by her presence, saying: “[...] mah wife don't know nothin' 'bout no speech-makin'. Ah never married her for nothin' lak dat. She's uh woman and her place is in de home” (Hurston 51).

Through the passages mentioned above, Hurston tries to showcase the conservative and traditional black men of the 1920s. She demonstrates that though the period was that of total liberation for men and women, the traditional patriarchal ideas were still instilled in some black men, as it is expressed by Jacqueline Schnieber, “The patriarchal notion by which men have to subordinate women to receive the status of ‘man’ inevitably permeated Black movements” (3). As he grows older Joe’s personality continues to head south. He becomes very controlling and this pushes all the inhabitants including his wife to resent him.

Joe Starks went from being a man of the working class to a store owner and to the mayor of Eatonville. He succeeded to shape his identity in order to gain the power and control that he always wanted. In addition to this, his ambition didn’t fail him but drove him to become a successful man with a beautiful young wife. However, his love for power and his patronizing led him to become a distrustful person towards his wife and all the other citizens. Consequently, he had a terrible ending; he died of mental and physical illness and left everything behind him.

In fact, Hurston tries to denounce this characteristic of the conservative African-American man of the 1920s through the creation of the controlling and patronizing character of Joe Starks. As Jacqueline Schnieber claims in her article entitled “Negotiating Black Masculinity: The Black Freedom Struggle During the Harlem Renaissance in Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*” (2017), “The New Negro movement [...]reinforced patriarchy” (3). Accordingly, the character of Joe Starks emphasizes this New Historicist principle that focuses on the crucial role that society plays on one’s life.

I.1.2 Daisy Buchanan’s and Janie Mae Crawford’s Self-fashioning

Like male characters, the female characters of both novels succeeded to fashion their identity throughout the novel as well. Daisy Buchanan is among the important female characters of *TGG*. At the beginning of the novel, Daisy Buchanan’s character is seen by the audience

through Gatsby's eyes, and since he was in love with her and found her perfect, the audience as well could easily love her and appreciate her personality. However, little by little her real identity is shown to the reader.

Daisy was a very beautiful and popular woman from a wealthy family. She met Gatsby in Louisville when he was an officer in the army. Gatsby misled Daisy and lied to her about his financial state, telling her that he is the son of a wealthy aristocratic family. Daisy loved him back and promised him to wait for his return after the war. However, Daisy broke her promise and married a wealthy man Tom Buchanan with whom she had a daughter, and lived a wealthy life in their big mansion as she always wanted.

Daisy Buchanan is introduced to the readers as being the lost love of Jay Gatsby, but also the second cousin (once removed) of the narrator who was now Gatsby's neighbour Nick Carraway. Daisy's first apparition in the novel was when Nick visited the Buchanans for the first time since his arrival to New York, and it was marked by the colour white since she and her best friend Jordan were wearing white dresses and sat on couches surrounded by curtains. The colour white is used by Fitzgerald to give us a first impression of Daisy as being a pure and innocent character. But, as Kyle Yaffe claims in her article "Literary Analysis: Color Symbolism in *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald" (2013), that, "The innocence illustrated by the color white is deceiving; it hides the corruption behind it" (1).

Indeed, throughout the novel Daisy's personality starts to be shown to the readers. Treating her as an innocent person is a mistake since she only does things to get a benefit from them. However, her personality was the effect of the society in which she lived. Daisy managed to shape her own personality as being a materialistic and cold-hearted woman in order to fit in her society and to protect her social and economic state. During the Roaring Twenties, the upper-class people lived under pressure. They were very exposed to the outside world, thus they

were judged and lived under the anxiety of fitting into the society's codes. In this context, Johnathan Hart claims, "Just as self-fashioning creates anxiety, so too does social circulation" (94).

The citation mentioned above is proved through the character of Daisy who tries to fit in her upper-class society to avoid the judgments and gossiping of her friends and surroundings. Moreover, it highlights the strong impact that society can have on the psychological side of a person. When she met the new wealthy Gatsby after five years apart, she started a love affair with him after visiting his big mansion and after knowing that he became very rich and could provide her with all that she needs, that is "money, [and] unquestionable practicality" (Fitzgerald 161).

Although she was aware of her husband's unfaithfulness, Daisy didn't ask for a divorce because this would ruin her social status, "since marriage actually prevents her from the problems of having to seek an employment, and provides her with an unparalleled social and economic status" (Velasco 37). Consequently, she chooses to cheat on him as well and has a love affair with Gatsby, but as soon as she knew that her beloved Gatsby made his fortunes through bootlegging and illegal ways, she gave up on him and went back to her husband since for her, love doesn't exist, and the only thing that counts is money.

When they were in the Plaza Hotel, Tom and Gatsby had a violent fight. So Daisy went back home with Gatsby driving his car. She hits Myrtle Wilson, a working-class person, and killed her. Gatsby decides to take the blame but was killed by Myrtle's husband. After Gatsby's death, Daisy left everything behind and went back to her brutal and unfaithful husband. She didn't care of anyone else but herself. Daisy's carelessness is shown in Gatsby's death scene; as Nick says: "I called up Daisy half an hour after we found him, called her

instinctively and without hesitation. But she and Tom had gone away early that afternoon, and taken baggage with them” (Fitzgerald 175).

Daisy succeeded to shape her personality according to her social status even though this made her become hated and judged. However, her friends and all her environment still appreciate her, and this is the most important thing to her, which is to fit in her high-class environment and not to be judged by her friends and family. Daisy didn't care about what people from the lower class would think of her as long as she is surrounded by rich people that respect her, and as long as her high social statute isn't threatened and her future assured.

Likewise, in *TEWWG*, the female protagonist Janie Mae Crawford recreated her own selfhood throughout the novel. At the beginning, Janie was a young girl who lived with her grandmother, Nanny, who worked for the white folks. Due to the fact that she grew up with white people, Janie didn't know that she was a coloured child until she saw herself in a photograph. She exclaims: “Aw, aw! Ah'm colored!” (Hurston 11). When she grew up to be a teenager, Janie became a vigorous and strong young woman, but she was still young and lived under the commands of Nanny. Therefore, she was silently and in search of her real identity.

Throughout her adolescence, Janie longed to be a pear tree, “Oh to be a pear tree—any tree in bloom! With kissing bees singing of the beginning of the world!” (Hurston 14). Hurston used the pear tree as a symbol to represent Janie's roots, memories and dreams “under the pear tree in her grandmother Nanny's backyard, she [Janie] was entranced” (Plant 109). Janie experienced her first physical attraction to a white man Jonny Taylor, under the pear tree. This experience led her to cross the line of adulthood since this experience was the reason for which Nanny decided to have Janie married.

Janie married Logan Killicks, an old black farmer. She was a young ambitious woman full of dreams. She dreamed of having a happy love life with her husband. However, as time

passes, Janie realized that she couldn't reach her dreams. Logan was very old for Janie, he started to change his behaviour towards her, and asked her to help him with his farm as his ex-wife used to do, as shown in what follows:

Long before the year was up, Janie noticed that her husband had stopped talking in rhymes to her. He had ceased to wonder at her long black hair and finger it. Six months back he had told her, 'If Ah kin haul de wood heah and chop it fuh yuh, look lak you oughta be able tuh tote it inside. Mah fust wife never bothered me 'bout choppin' no wood nohow. She'd grab dat ax and sling chips lak uh man. You done been spoilt rotten' (31).

Janie knew that this wasn't the way she wanted to live. Her husband didn't afford her what she wanted, that is to be strong and independent. Therefore, she realized that her marriage will not bring her love and happiness, "She knew now that marriage did not make love. Janie's first dream was dead, so she became a woman" (Hurstons 30).

Janie was a very ambitious woman. She had dreams and didn't want to give up on them; she wanted to become happy and independent. Therefore, she ran off with Jody, to Eatonville where she started to reach her self-fulfilment. Albeit she knew that Joe Starks wasn't the perfect person for her, she took her chance and married him. Janie's second husband was very controlling and didn't treat her right as well, "Jody never conceived of Janie as an equal. He never conceived of women as equals. He never conceived of anything female as equal, sensible, or capable" (Plant 111). She lived two decades under his commands but ended up leaving him on his death bed.

Short after Joe's death, Janie became what she always wanted to be, an independent woman. She owned a store and lived an almost happy life. She met and fell in love with a young man Tea Cake. Sigrid King contends in his article "Naming and Power in Zora Neale Hurston's

Their Eyes Were Watching God” (1990) that, “Unlike her relationships with Logan and Joe, Janie's relationship with Tea Cake is based not upon power or domination but upon play... [w]ith Tea Cake, Janie is not forced to serve (as with Logan) or put on a pedestal (as with Joe), but she is allowed to participate in life-to play-as an equal” (3). Janie became happy and independent Although Tea Cake was very jealous and dominating. Nevertheless, she could reach her dream of having a real love life with her husband. Besides, this relation allowed Janie to liberate herself and to reach her self-fulfilment. She shifted from being an object to being the subject.

Janie had to kill Tea cake as self-defence for his violence after catching rabies. Actually, the fact that she killed him was a symbol of total freedom for Janie. As she killed him, Janie was fully free from the dominance of the others upon her, and this fact “allows [her] to obtain a momentary freedom, to lose her submission to the Other” (King 4). At the end of her relationship with Tea Cake, Janie found herself alone, and this helped her to know exactly what she wanted and who she was. Throughout her life, Janie went from marriage to another, that is from one form of domination to another. However, at the end of the novel, and as she separates from Tea Cake, we are introduced to a strong and indifferent Janie who didn't pay attention to the gossiping of the porch-sitters as she tells Phoebe “Let'em consolate theyselves wid talk” (Hurston 226).

Janie Crawford's rebellion is a representation of the black women during the 1920's. If truth be told, black women faced patriarchy during the Harlem Renaissance. Consequently, there was the women rebellion and struggle in the development of the black women's liberation. Through Janie, Hurston portrayed the role of women during the Harlem renaissance and the way they fought for their place within the African-American society. In addition, she expresses the empowerment of black women during that period ‘uh white man and uh nigger woman is de freest thing on earth.’ Dey do as dey please” (Hurston 222).

Through this New Historicist analysis, we can deduce that a literary work is actually the product of the events that occur within a specific society. In his article, “The New Historicism” (1992) Hoover contends that: “literature is part of the historical process and should participate ‘in the political management of reality’” (361). For instance, we can understand through the analysis of the characters mentioned above that they were all connected to their society. In addition, the influence of the time period on which the novelists lived, played a great role in creating and shaping their characters’ identities. Similarly, for the coming analysis, we will explore the influence of the American society of the 1920s on women, and the way they responded to the circumstances of the post-War period.

II. The Fashioning Aspects of the Jazz Age in *TGG* and *TEWWG*

II.1. The Flapper as Fashioned by the 1920s in the Novels

Besides the principle of self-fashioning, the novels *TGG* and *TEWWG* share many other affinities; for instance, the influencing aspects of the Jazz Age. Both novels were written after the first World War, so they both share some notions of the Jazz Age and the effects of the aftermaths of the wars. As a first aspect of the Jazz age, we are going to depict the representation of the flapper in both novels.

A flapper is a new woman who was born after the first world war. By the establishment of the 19th amendment, women took their emancipation. Consequently, they became stronger and more independent. Therefore, we are going to depict this new woman in the female characters of both novels, and try to compare them.

II.1.1 Jordan Baker and Janie Mae Crawford as Flappers

In his novel, Fitzgerald portrayed the Post-War America. He put emphasis on both the bright and immoral years of the Jazz Age in order to give a clear image of that period through his work. Therefore, he created the character of Jordan Baker in order to portray the new woman

of that period, that is the flapper. Jordan Baker is Daisy Buchanan's friend. She is a professional athlete from high social class. Jordan Baker is introduced to us through Nick's description of her, saying: "She was extended full length at her end of the divan, completely motionless and with her chin raised a little as if she were balancing something on it which was quite likely to fall" (Fitzgerald 11). Her way of sitting demonstrates her real personality and care-free attitude which was common for females in that era (Randall 2).

Fitzgerald imbued the character of Jordan Baker with the characteristics of the Flapper who appeared as a result of the American society's circumstances. In fact, during the WWI, while men were in the battlefields, women who were once under the subordination of men, became now the first responsible for their houses and children. Therefore, they became more active and dynamic in their society. They entered the professional world where they had to search for a work, as it is expressed in this citation: "It caused the women of needing practical appearances, as well as daring and dynamic attitudes" (Anindyaputeri & Suryaningsih 2).

Indeed, Jordan Baker represented this new 1920s woman through her psychological profile, and physical appearance. She was very dynamic since she appeared in many parties and gatherings, "her own movements between hotels and clubs and private houses made her hard to find" (Fitzgerald 165). Therefore, we conclude that she was a socializing person. When she first met Nick, she directly made his acquaintance, and when Gatsby organized another lavish party, she was there and accompanied Nick who was Gatsby's new guest. However, it was clear for the readers that it was not the first time Jordan attended one of Gatsby's parties since she knew his identity. In addition to this, Jordan was an extroverted person since she socialized with Nick and became very close to him, and this aspect of an extroverted woman was very famous among the flappers.

Moreover, Jordan had a behaviour that emphasized the reversed roles between men and women which was a characteristic of the 1920's women. Many scenes in the novel demonstrate this characteristic of gender reversal in Jordan Baker's character. As a first example, when she met Nick at Gatsby's party, she was the one that revealed Gatsby's identity to Nick and told him the rumours that have been going about Gatsby. Furthermore, it was her that showed Nick the pieces of the house, and she promised him to take care of him and not let go of him during the party. Another example of reverse gender in Jordan Baker is when she held Nick's hand since it is generally the role of the man to hold women's hands and make them promises. He astonishingly declares: "She held my hand impersonally, as a promise that she'd take care of me in a minute" (Fitzgerald 47). The fact that a woman takes a man's hand and makes him promises emphasizes the shift in gender roles and this was a characteristic of the flapper (Randall2).

In addition to the two examples mentioned above, there is another scene that portrays perfectly women's shifting role through the character of Jordan. The scene in which Jordan was shown driving the car while Nick was on the passenger side. It was an illustration of the new independent woman of the 1920s as she drives a car and takes a man with her. Though she was, as Nick suggested, "a rotten driver" (64), and almost hit a man, she carried on driving carelessly and claimed that since it takes two to make an accident, so it is up to the others to be careful (64). Jordan Baker's ruthless behaviour showed the carelessness, power, and control of the new woman of that period.

Moreover, like a 1920's woman, Jordan Baker paid attention to her physical appearance and feminine attitude, "Jordan Baker is always seen wearing a bold-coloured makeup, such as thick eyeliner and red lipstick. Her bold makeup shows that she wants to look flashy" (Anindyaputeri & Suryaningsih 8). Jordan Baker was a professional athlete and a golf player. Accordingly, she had a sporty body and took good care of it. The readers could notice

it from her refusal to drink alcohol: “No, thanks,’ said Miss Baker to the four cocktails just in from the pantry, ‘I’m absolutely in training” (Fitzgerald13). Besides, Jordan is an independent woman in her way of making her own choices. She puts her professional career as a priority above everything else, as Randall argues: “Jordan is serious about a career that was, for women, seen as untraditional yet captivating, allowing her to further exude the confidence women felt in their physical capabilities” (3).

Jordan Baker tried to shape herself according to her social environment. Through her character, the readers could easily capture the lifestyle of the flappers that Fitzgerald tried to transmit via his novel. In fact, this connectedness between this character’s identity and the real social milieu in which the author lived shows the interplay between text and context. In addition, Fitzgerald demonstrates the influence that the 1920s American society had on him by reflecting it in his characters.

Correspondingly, although her novel *TEWWG* was written during the Great Depression, Hurston gave her protagonist Janie Mae Crawford some notions and characteristics of the new woman that arose during the Jazz Age under the appellation of the flapper. Throughout the whole novel, we can see Janie’s quest for independence for she had always been strong and longed to reach her dreams. As Abbott says: “Through Janie, Hurston similarly rejects stereotypes of the tragic mulatta while offering a critique of the African American community’s investment in white standards of beauty” (19).

Janie’s character is seen as being different because she did not respond to the black women standards of that period. As Juned Ahmed claimed in his article “Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*: A Quest for Love and Independence” (2019), “[Janie] is able to accomplish things, having a dynamic personality, unlike the women characters of other

conservative authors in that particular era, who are seen to obey the orthodox Patriarchal roles and do not strive to find an independent life like men of that time” (145).

In fact, Janie was different from her friends and surroundings. She was different from what her grandmother wanted her to be. Within her first marriage, Janie started to feel the boredom and the lack of love and happiness. Therefore, she decided to have a second marriage, so she ran off with the ambitious Joe Starks. The fact that Janie left her husband and ran with another man demonstrates her rebellion against the social rules of the 1920s African-American society. Moreover, it shows the strength and empowerment of the Harlem Renaissance’s black women. Besides, Janie, like most of the black women during the Harlem Renaissance, aimed at reaching independence and self-satisfaction. While women of the pre-War period would have accepted their fate and stayed with their boring old husband, the 1920s women whom Janie represents cannot handle it. Therefore, she created her own way to happiness.

Through the character of Janie, Hurston portrayed the woman Flapper in a black woman. Janie has a certain way of thinking and behaving that corresponds to the Flapper’s one. She is able to make her own choices in her life and to put her own happiness and goals as a priority. Indeed, Janie’s first marriage couldn’t work since it didn’t fulfil her goals of reaching love and happiness. Thus, she ended it by running off with Joe Starks, a man who promised her a wealthier, happier and better life, as shown in the article “Zora Neale Hurston and the Survival of the Female” (1982), “As Mrs. Jody Starks, the wife of the mayor of an all-Black town in Florida, Janie experiences economic security and social prominence” (Lupton 46).

After almost two decades of marriage with Joe Starks, Janie decided to leave him for the only reason that she could not be an independent and free married woman. Throughout their marriage, Joe and Janie weren’t happy since Joe was very jealous and controlling. This fact didn’t please Janie who was a vigorous and strong woman. Janie, such as the flappers, cannot

live under the pressure or the commands of someone else. She longs for freedom and peace of mind. When Joe dies Janie felt free as she confesses to her friend “’Tain’t dat Ah worries over Joe’s death, Phoebe. Ah jus’ loves dis freedom” (Hurstun 111).

Flappers such as Janie are usually indifferent and do not pay attention to what other people can think of them, as it is mentioned above. Janie is seen sitting with her friends telling her that she loved the freedom that she found after her husband's death. Her friend tried to hush her by fear to be heard; however, Janie’s carelessly responds, “Let ’em say whut dey wants tuh, Pheoby. To my thinkin’, mourning oughtn’t tuh last no longer’n grief” (111). Furthermore, Janie’s indifference is portrayed in the first scene when she didn’t pay attention to all the gossiping about her. She just kept walking confidently and didn’t turn back to the porch sitters who “took the faded shirt and muddy overalls and laid them away for remembrance. It was a weapon against her strength and if it turned out of no significance, still it was a hope that she might fall to their level someday” (3).

After Joe’s death, Janie regained her freedom. She mourned for few months but then moved on. She met Tea Cake and fell in love with him. She lived with him for a couple of years and then ended up killing him in self-defence. The fact that Janie always puts herself first allowed her to save her life both from death and from the dominance and jealousy of Tea Cake. Most importantly, Janie realized now that she is happy alone, and that she doesn’t need anybody to fulfil her dreams. She knew now that she is strong and independent and happy without counting on anyone but herself.

Janie went through three marriages but did not bow to anyone. She carried on fighting for her own goals and dreams. In fact, although she had three marriages, Janie did not have children. This fact demonstrates the way Janie could decide to shape her life as she wants, and that she didn’t have to answer to the rules that society impose on her, as Abbott justifies:

“Janie’s childlessness also highlights Hurston’s refusal to confine her character to the stereotype of moral motherhood, implicitly asserting that a woman’s search for sexual and personal autonomy is an endeavour worthy in itself” (18).

Through these analyses, we tried to depict the influence and impact that the American and African-American societies and cultures had on Fitzgerald’s and Hurston’s literary works. The authors attempted to capture the 1920s notions through their novels which fosters the New Historicist line of thoughts. In fact, being a Flapper as we saw through Jordan Baker and Janie, is a form of revolt of the woman during the Jazz age to impose their role within the American society. Moreover, the emergence of the flapper resulted from the subordination of women. Therefore, after the WWI, women took their emancipation politically and socially. In this context, Greenblatt asserts that, “Self-fashioning is in effect the Renaissance version of [...]the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment” (3).

As a matter of fact, the characters of Jordan and Janie were shaped according to their social and political environment. Additionally, they developed theses notions of the independent and empowered woman in order to respond to the stereotypes that were imposed on women. While Janie shaped herself to represent the black women of the Harlem Renaissance and their revolt against patriarchal control, Jordan represented the new independent women through the notions of role-shifting and reverse gender that the American women adopted during the First World War.

II.1.2. The Fashioning Notion of the American Dream(s) and its Variations in the Novels

The American Dream is a concept coined by James Truslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America* (1931). He exhorts people to "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” (404). Both *TGG* and *TEWWG* share notions of the American Dream. Although the two novels were not written in the same period, they both represent the American Dream in their own way. In his book, Fitzgerald portrays the American Dream during the Jazz Age since that period was characterized by a big boom in economy. Therefore, people tended to dream big about wealth and success.

TGG is a concrete depiction of the American Dream during the Jazz Age. In his book *Bloom's Guides F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*, Bloom explains that, “[the novel] is the definitive romance of the American dream, a concept or vision that haunts our society” (7). Through his novel, Fitzgerald demonstrates that the meaning of the American Dream differs from one character to another. Indeed, the upper-class and working-class people have different lifestyles and aim; each one with her/his own American Dream.

For the working-class people such as the character of Wilson, who was a service station owner, his vision of the American Dream is to have a stable work and to live happily with his wife under a safe roof. For George Wilson, the American Dream “is nothing else but the act of settling down, having a family, being able to provide for them, and basically having a good life” (Smiljanić 2). In fact, the characters of George Wilson and his wife who live in the Valley of Ashes, the space consecrated to the non-rich people, are created by Fitzgerald to depict the lifestyle of the working-class people of that period. Through the novel, we can see that both George and his wife live to serve the rich Tom Buchanan. While Myrtle is having an affair with Tom in order to reach a wealthier and happier life, her husband works in his garage trying to fix Tom Buchanan’s car and trying to gain money from him in order to live a modest life with his wife, as Pérez states “the worker is at the mercy of the money-owners” (9).

However, for people who belong to the upper class such as Gatsby and Tom, the American Dream consists of reaching “wealth, prosperity and generally a high position in

society” (2). These characters portray the immorality of the Americans in that period of time, while they pursued extravagance and luxuriousness and neglected the real values of family, love, and life of ease. Through the novel, the characters demonstrated the side effects of the American Dream and how it came to be corrupted. As Habib and Al claim in their article “The American Dream in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*: A Boon or a Bane” (2020), “The idea of the American Dream becomes socially corrupt” (34).

Fitzgerald portrayed the rich and high-positioned Americans as well during the Jazz Age, and this by creating the characters of the Buchanans, Jordan Baker and Jay Gatsby. He tried to give a perfect depiction of the different categories of rich people of that period since after the War many people who were poor made their fortunes and joined the rich neighbourhoods. Unlike the Buchanans and Jordan Baker who were born into money, Jay Gatsby was one of those people who made their fortune after the end of the War. While the old-rich occupied the East Egg where “white palaces glitter along the water” (Fitzgerald 6), Gatsby and all the *nouveaux-riches* occupied West Egg which was described by Fitzgerald as “the less fashionable of the two” (5). This distinction in space proves that for Fitzgerald, not all the rich belong to the same group, “even if it would seem as if the rich would be unified by their money, Fitzgerald proves us they were not” (Pérez 15).

In fact, Fitzgerald linked the places that his characters inhabited to their vision of the American Dream. As Pérez states, “Fitzgerald offers a traceable path for the different approaches to the dream and their location in space” (14). For Gatsby, his neighbourhood is a way to realize his dream which is to achieve the wealth that will permit him to belong to the high class and to inhabit one of those big mansions that he always dreamed of. In addition, it is a way for him to obtain his unconditional love of Daisy.

In the same way, Hurston gave a depiction of the American Dream within her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in which dreams are a very important part and represent the ideals and goals of the Americans. Through the novel, we followed the story of the protagonist Janie Crawford and the development of her character. Janie's aim was to reach her American Dream, which was finding love and freedom. Since she was a teenager, Janie had a specific vision of her future life; she wanted to find love and to achieve happiness and independence.

Because of the fact that Janie descended from a family of slaves, and that both her mother and grandmother were raped, the latter was very protective towards Janie and was afraid that she will have the same fate as her. Consequently, she was very strict and tried to protect Janie from white folks. When Janie experienced her first kiss with a white young man, Nanny forced her to get married as soon as possible to an old man, for the fear that she might get raped. Despite the fact that he was old, Janie accepted to get married to Logan after a long hesitation because she was willing to reach her own American Dream.

However, as time passes, Janie knew that this old farmer will not realize her dreams. When she was a teenager, Janie was fascinated by the pollination of the bees on the trees. Every time she sees a bee pollinating, she thinks of marriage and how everything in it is reciprocated. However, within her marriage with Logan, she never felt this reciprocity "But Nanny, Ah wants to want him sometimes. Ah don't want him to do all de wantin'" (Hurston 27). Therefore, she left him and continued her quest for the American Dream in her own way.

When Joe Starks appeared in her life, Janie left everything behind her and ran off with him because through his words and promises, Janie saw herself realizing her dreams of being finally able to experience love, wealth, and freedom. Being now in love and married to Eatonville's mayor, Janie became "a privileged bourgeois" (Hattenhauer 46). Therefore, a part of her American Dream was reached. But her freedom wasn't yet reached because of the

patronizing of her husband. Consequently, her love for him started to fade, as does the image that she had of her future with him.

After two decades of an unhappy marriage, Joe died. Being now widowed, Janie finally felt free. She started to appreciate her new life as an independent single rich woman. However, this situation was interrupted by the appearance of Tea Cake, who changed once again Janie's visions and revived on her the desire to achieve her American Dream of living happily and freely her love story with her husband. Therefore, she married the young Tea Cake who loved her and to whom she returned the same feeling because he reminded her of the bees that pollinated the flowers. The newly married couple went through some problems but their love was solid.

Janie lived her best years with her husband. At this point, she reached the American Dream; she found independence, happiness and love, as expressed in this extract: "He drifted off into sleep and Janie looked down on him and felt a self-crushing love. So her soul crawled out from its hiding place" (Hurston151). However, after two years of happiness, Tea Cake caught rabies. He couldn't control himself anymore, so Janie killed him in self-defence. Eventually, Janie becomes aware of the fact that she can live happily alone. She was at one with herself and continued living her life as a happy and independent woman. Although her American Dream of finding love has a tragic end, she succeeded to find a way to have a peaceful life. In this context, Hurston contends: "Now, in her room, the place tasted fresh again. The wind through the open windows had broomed out all the fetid feeling of absence and nothingness" (227).

Both novels portray the importance of the social and environmental background, in the development of one's ideas and goals. Fitzgerald portrays the divergence of the meaning of the American Dream from the Wilsons to the Buchanans and Gatsby. In fact, though the working-

class people and upper-class people have different visions of the American Dream, they see financial success as a means to integrate the societies they aspire to live in. In the same way, Hurston gives a depiction of Janie's American Dream which is to find independence, a dream Harlem Renaissance's women longed and fought for.

III. Racism as a Contextual/ Fashioning Impetus in the Novels

Racism is a very important dilemma that hit American society due to its divergence in ethnic groups, cultures, and traditions. It became a great issue in America and appeared to persecute its victims. Starting from the period of slavery, racism began to be spread in the American territory. In fact, the African Americans were the most exposed and subdued to racism. Consequently, they attempted to act against it. Many black scholars, philosophers and writers started to write against racism. These black movements started to spread in the four corners of the American lands. Consequently, white supremacy was shaken.

According to New Historicism, literature is the mirror of society, it reflects the events and happenings of a specific society. Therefore, many literary works explored the theme of racism, either from white or coloured American authors. They attempted to portray the theme of racism in their works. F. Scott Fitzgerald whose works were the portrayal of American society during the 1920s, depicted racism through his novel, though implicitly. He used the theme of racism and denounced some of its notions. Similarly, within the African American community which thrived during the 1920s, there is the African American writer Zora Neale Hurston who was a symbol of the Harlem renaissance. She tried to showcase racism within her novel.

The story of the novel revolves around the phenomenon that occurred during the Jazz Age, that is the economy booming. This booming led to the appearance of the *nouveaux-riches* who, by their integration in the aristocratic community created a certain kind of racism in the

social classes. *The nouveaux-riches* were considered as a threat to the supremacy of the old rich, people who were believed to be the representatives of the upper-class and civilization. As it is expressed by John Crocker and Celena Kush, “racism was only appropriated to maintain the class supremacy” (29).

In fact, as it is mentioned above, the New Historicist thoughts are based on the connectedness between literature and the cultural and social context in which the literary work was penned. Indeed, during the Jazz Age, there was the appearance of the new rich who made their money after the first world War. This new category of rich people threatened the supremacy and power of the old rich people. Consequently, there was the beginning of a clash between the old and new rich people. Within the novel, these old and new rich were represented by Tom Buchanan and Gatsby. Tom has always been jealous of Gatsby throughout the whole novel. He despised him for two reasons; the first was the fact that he attracted his wife, and the second and most important is the fact that Gatsby is from the new rich community.

Moreover, as aforementioned, Fitzgerald attempted to capture faithfully the period of the Jazz Age in his novel. Consequently, he depicted notions of racial racism as well which, as mentioned above, was very spread during that period on the American lands. Early in the novel, during his conversation with Nick, Tom uttered one of his racist's sentences, “Civilization’s going to pieces” (Fitzgerald 15). He talked about a book that he read entitled *The Rise of the Colored Empires*. This book’s title and its content make reference to a book entitled *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (1920) written by Lothrop Stoddard. It is a racist book in which the author studies the geographical repartitions of the coloured and the white, and how these areas that are inhabited by coloured people exceed the geographic areas inhabited by whites. Consequently, the coloured people’s activism will end up by challenging the whites’ supremacy. We can notice the influence of this book on Tom when he says: “Well, it’s a fine

book, and everybody ought to read it. The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be—will be utterly submerged” (Fitzgerald 16).

In Tom's opinion, the only people that can be afforded supremacy and who represent power and sophistication are the white old aristocrats as he adds, “we've produced all the things that go to make civilization—oh, science and art and all that” (16). In fact, during the Jazz Age which was a period of gender, ethnic, and racial tensions, white supremacy was shaken by the emergence of the Harlem Renaissance and other movements of black and coloured people.

Likewise, throughout her novel *TEWWG*, Hurston emphasized the role of black people, especially women in African American Society. Though the story of the novel is set in the late 19th century, Hurston gave a depiction of the 1920s black women and their new way of living among the American people. Moreover, through her protagonist Janie, Hurston tried to erase racism and the stereotypes that are forced on black people.

Throughout the novel, Hurston created the character of Mrs. Turner, a mulatto but racist woman. Mrs. Turner is a mixed woman from black and white origins. However, she is obsessed with the colour white and is somehow racist towards the dark coloured people. As Parmis Tasharofi claimed in his article entitled “Mrs. Turner Cut in the Web of Internalized Racism: A Black Feminist Reading of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*” (2014), “She only accepts the white version of both the skin color and hair and defies her own skin and hair type” (2). Mrs. Turner's racism is shown in many of her conversations “You'se different from me. Ah can't stand black niggers. Ah don't blame de white folks from hatin' 'em 'cause Ah can't stand 'em mahself. 'Nother thing, Ah hates tuh see folks lak me and you mixed up wid 'em. Us oughta class off” (Hurston 165). Mrs. Turner confesses to Janie that she doesn't consider herself “coloured” since her colour is lighter and that the light-skinned people are not to be mingled with the dark-skinned ones.

Mrs. Turner believes that she and the mixed-race people ought to be separated from the dark-skinned people. Mrs. Turner is not ashamed of her skin colour but wished to be classified as a white person. She says: “De white folks would take us in wid dem. De black ones is holdin’ us back” (166). In fact, Hurston expresses her thoughts about the ways the light-skinned distinguished themselves from the dark-skinned, and how the African American society is divided into sub-communities, which feel superior and inferior to each other, “since whites show preference for lighter-skinned Blacks[...] Mrs. Turner [is] influenced by such categorization [...] she prides herself on looking white” (Tasharofi 2).

Conclusion

In this second and last chapter, we made a New Historicist and comparative study of both novels *TGG* and *TEWWG*. We started by introducing the method of our research paper which is New Historicism. After that, we started our analysis by studying one of the principles of the New Historicist theory, the Self-fashioning, in the characters of both novels. Then, we moved to the representation of the Fashioning aspects of the Jazz Age, starting with the Flapper that is represented in female characters of both novels. Afterwards, we moved to the second Fashioning aspect which is the American Dream. Finally, we introduced the theme of racism and explored its contextual impetus in both novels.

General Conclusion

Through this research paper, we studied two American Classics *TGG* and *TEWWG*. Being written by icons of the American literature, the two works under study depicted a specific time period which is the 1920s. Consequently, we explored this period, also called the Jazz Age, through these two modernist works, and demonstrated their representation of their authors' world and social background. Relying on the theory of New Historicism, we compared the two novels mentioned above to extract the similarities and affinities that they shared. In fact, the New Historicist theory was a very important and useful tool that allowed us to conduct this comparative study, and to depict the most important aspects of the Jazz Age within both novels.

Moreover, the fact that *TGG* and *TEWWG* belonged to different American communities, permitted us to explore some themes within this research. Through their works, Fitzgerald and Hurston portrayed the 1920s period. Therefore, it enabled us to tackle some aspects of that period in both the American and African American communities. On the one hand, we demonstrated the brighter sides of that period through the exploration of the establishment of the 19th amendment that led to the apparition of the woman flapper, and the self-made Americans that made their fortunes after the end of the war. On the other hand, we provided the less prosperous sides by exploring the greed and immorality of the Americans during that period, their racism, and the end of the American Dream.

We attempted to explore an important tenet of the New Historicist theory, which is Self-Fashioning through our analysis of characters from both novels. Moreover, we tried to tackle some Fashioning aspects of the Jazz age, considering two different points of view which are American and African American. Being a symbol of the Harlem Renaissance, Hurston permitted us to depict through her novel some notions of that period such as black manhood patriarchy as well as women struggle against it. Additionally, we attempted to explore the

woman flapper through the novel's protagonist Janie Crawford, her ethnic pride, and her pursuit for independence.

Furthermore, we showcased the fashioning notion of the American dream through the analysis of characters from both novels, and depicted the divergence of its meaning from a character to another. Finally, through the New Historicist lens we tried to explore the theme of racism which is an important theme in the American literature. We analysed it through *TGG*'s Tom Buchanan and *TEWWG*'s Mrs Turner.

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Abstract in French (Résumé)

Ce travail de recherche entreprend une étude comparative de deux romans modernistes Américains, *The Great Gatsby* de Francis Scott Fitzgerald et *Their Eyes Were Watching God* de Zora Neale Hurston. En s'appuyant sur la théorie du Néo-Historicisme, ce travail analyse les contextes sociaux et historiques de ces deux romans qui appartiennent à deux groupes ethniques différents, l'Américain et l'Afro-Américain. En outre, à travers le prisme du Néo-historicisme, j'ai tenté de démontrer comment les deux romans reflètent le contexte de leurs auteurs, à savoir l'ère du jazz. De plus, j'ai comparé les deux romans en utilisant un principe important de la théorie du Néo-Historicisme qui est Auto-Façonnage, et j'ai tenté d'explorer certains aspects de l'âge du jazz qui sont représentés dans les deux romans. Enfin, j'ai exploré le thème du racisme qui a toujours été un thème important dans la société et la littérature Américaine.

