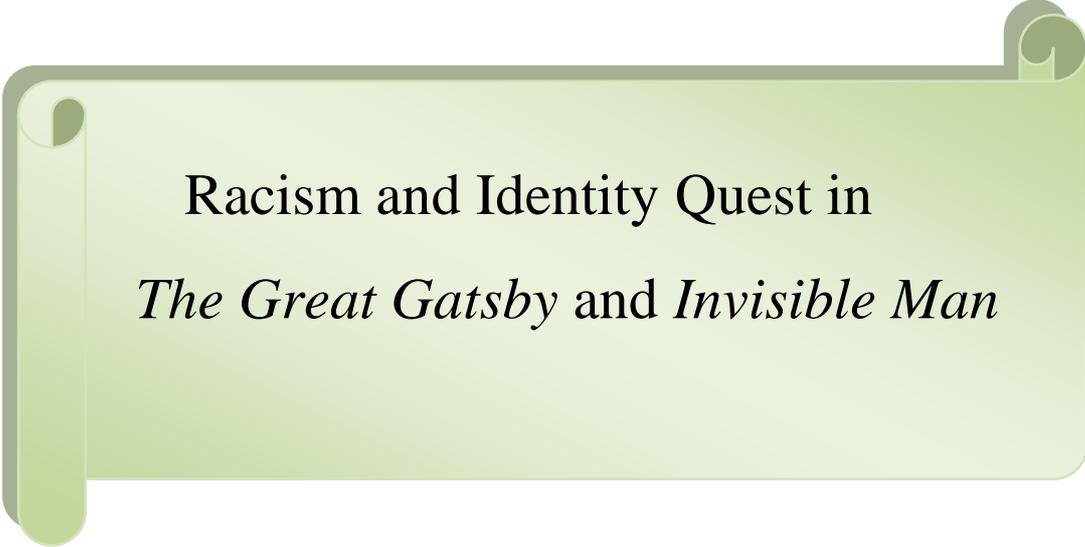


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Racism and Identity Quest in
The Great Gatsby and Invisible Man

A dissertation submitted to the department of English in candidacy for
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Abstract

This research work studies Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. These novels trace the issue of identity quest in American society. *The Great Gatsby* reflects the greediness of the middle class American people to adopt an aristocratic life. *Invisible Man* explores the dreams of the African Americans to be assimilated into the dominant white community. Through the lens of New Historicism, I have demonstrated that the two literary works mirrored the world of their authors. Furthermore, following Michel Foucault's theory of discourse and power, I have endeavored to disclose the prevailing discourses that power produces and show how language can be used as an instrument to reinforce, promote and contest power. In fact, both novels advance the discourse of racism to regulate and suppress other discourses. Social evils, as social class disparities and racism that subdued American people, were the major reasons behind the emergence of identity issues. This work demonstrates that Americans' quest for identity in the 1920s culminated in demise.

Dedication

To my parents, sister and brothers.

Acknowledgments

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General Introduction

In the course of history, America received a huge wave of immigrants from distinct countries and for different reasons. America was considered as the melting pot of races and the land of dreams. This started when the puritans left England in search of religious freedom, and the protection of the tradition, culture, and beliefs of Puritanism; “They persuaded the Virginia Company to allow them to settle in the northern part of its American lands. On September 16, 1620, the Pilgrims left the English” (O’Callaghan 17). Owing to the hard harassments of the dominant Catholic Church, these English puritans went on establishing their own church and were determined to wipe out “all ceremonies reminiscent of Catholicism” (Findling and Thackeray 102). They crossed the ocean hoping to achieve their ultimate dream of religious freedom in the New World, they tended to build a society based on puritan philosophy and therefore to be “an ideal community for the rest of mankind to learn from” (O’Callaghan 17).

During the colonial period, many northern Europeans settled in America, and adopted America as their new nation, “During the fifty years of 1733 settlers moved deeper into the continent. They travelled west... cutting down forests of oak trees to make hilly farms” (22-23).

America also received many black Africans. However, their presence in the New World was a compelled presence. Black Africans were transported by force by European colonists. These European colonists traded their luxury goods and guns for black Africans in order to provide the labor force in the plantation. This was known as the Atlantic Slave Trade.

After the civil war period, a huge number of immigrants were outpouring into the New World. The bulk of them came from Europe; they were escaping their farms and villages because of their great population. They travelled in hope of finding economic opportunities in America. By the 19th century, America received Eastern Europeans, Irish, Italian...as well as other races from other parts of the world, Chinese, Indians... The latter differed from the northern Anglo-Saxon race physically and culturally.

The melting pot of races caused a great dilemma in America. Racism and unfairness were rampant among the Anglo-Saxons. They considered the southern assimilation as a threat to their race which they viewed as the most educated, enlightened, and civilized in the world with a superior culture. They were afraid that their culture would die out throughout the

melting of races. Thus, they dominated the whole political, economic, and social systems of America, while chasing Native Americans, enslaving Black Africans and casting out the other races. They banned them from being equal, and put them on the fringe of their society. Accordingly, the oppressed races revolted against injustice, infringements and racism, and sought to assert an identity. They wanted equality, independence, and full rights as Americans.

American history was recorded through literature, from the early settlements, colonialism, slavery, revolution, independence to nowadays America, since literature is the mirror of reality, and the echo of human beliefs. In this dissertation, I have chosen to deal with the literature that explores the major race issue and identity quest in American society. Many writers explored this serious issue in America, but in separate social and cultural communities. This race issue had chiefly affected African Americans who were accustomed to enslavement. Therefore, many writers dealing with the aforesaid theme were Black American writers.

In the following dissertation, I intend to handle a comparative study between these famous American oeuvres of the twenties: Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Both novels were chefs- d'oeuvre and constructed around American modern times, the Roaring Twenties.

Francis Scott Fitzgerald (1896_1940) is among the greatest and famous American writers of the Jazz Age. His masterpiece, *The Great Gatsby*, according to Richard Shephard, was classified as the second major work written in the 1920s.

In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald yields the romantic story between the protagonist Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan. Jay Gatsby who rose from an impoverished childhood became a millionaire through bootlegging and gambling. He is obsessed with the idea of reviving his lost love with Daisy who married a powerful, old wealthy man called Tom Buchanan. Throughout the novel, Gatsby dreamed of having an identity among the well-off in order to convince Daisy to love him again and repeat their past. Fitzgerald also explores the American Dream through Jay Gatsby. According to Harold Bloom, Jay Gatsby is widely seen as the embodiment of the American Dream. Yet, in the Roaring twenties there was no place for the American Dream. The pursuit of happiness, love, liberty and wealth through one's hard work was then submitted by the greediness for wealth, worldly vanities and excitement. Thus Gatsby was a victim of his obsession with both love and the American Dream.

Ralph Ellison (1914_1994) is a great Afro-American writer. His novel *Invisible Man*, regarded as a classic, won the US National Award for Fiction in 1953. It made Ellison the first Afro-American to win this award.

Invisible Man explores black identity quest during the Harlem renaissance. It portrays the life of a black boy, the Narrator, searching for his identity and a place in the white society. He went through different stages trying to fulfill his dream; first, as a student in a college, then as a worker in the Liberty Paints and finally an activist member in the Brotherhood. However, neither of these positions was fruitful in promoting his identity. At last, the Narrator came to a better way to appropriate an identity; it is through admitting and being proud of his past, race and culture.

Despite the fact that both authors were entirely from distinct ethnic groups, their novels, *The Great Gatsby* and *Invisible Man*, yield the same theme of identity quest but from different social and cultural perspectives. In fact, both novels' protagonists struggle to adopt an identity. The ample treating of the theme of identity by both writers can be interpreted as the fact that identity is an American dilemma which proved the existence of a dominant social class and highlighted the spread of social inequalities and racism in American society. This can also reveal that identity quest is really one major, prevailing American literary subject.

Throughout this research work, I intend to establish both the similarities and differences between the aforesaid novels. Yet, both affinities and differences lie partly in the theme of identity quest itself. Indeed, both protagonists experienced the same fate through their search of identity, but the major power behind their dreams and the way they pursuit it remain divergent. This can be illustrated through the authors' separate communities. Equally important, American novels dealing with identity quest were always associated with loss. The big dream of embracing an identity leads to disaster.

The Great Gatsby represents the greediness and covetousness of the middle class American people, who acquired their fortune through bootlegging to be assimilated into the sophisticated, moneyed world of the old aristocracy. Jay Gatsby, who built his fortune through bootlegging and gambling, hoped to embody the ideologies of the better off to be accepted by the aristocratic girl he loved (Daisy). His love for Daisy, whom he met while in poverty, was widely seen as Gatsby's great motivation for his dream of material success.

As for Ralph Ellison, his novel, *Invisible Man*, reflects the black struggle for identity during the Harlem Renaissance. In this period, blacks were still bereft of their identity, denied their individuality and subdued to white racism, discrimination and humiliation. Accordingly, their fight for equality and independence kept thriving among blacks especially in the southern states.

Another existing similarity is that both novels' protagonists were facing the same racism from the white society that they wanted to belong to. The white society, which dominated the whole American system, cared about its race. They did everything beneficial to keep their power and control over other races.

Both novels were nourished by their historical, cultural and social movements as well as their authors' experiences. This affinity will be studied in reference to the literary theory of New Historicism, as both Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Ellison's *Invisible Man* reflected their periods.

In the 1920s, American people were embedded into a world of huge prosperity. They were eager to gather more and more money in order to be assimilated into the gentry. It was a time of hedonism when the primary concern of Americans, besides the pursuit of wealth, was to enjoy themselves and exhibit their wealth in order to show that they were rich.

This decade also witnessed the decadence of the American Dream. Self individuality, happiness, and wealth that were supposedly achieved from one's hard work were corrupted. *The Great Gatsby* was highly considered as a social document that examines mostly all aspects of the Jazz Age.

Invisible Man was influenced by the Harlem Renaissance, though it was published in 1952. As a black American, Ellison was profoundly affected by this rebirth. During the period of the Harlem Renaissance, black identity gained some values as Black Americans made considerable accomplishments, chiefly in literature and music. Of more importance, the Afro-American became known as the New Negro. Unlike the African American who searched to assert his "whiteness", the New Negro became proud and conscious about his race and culture. Harlem literary achievements were widely characterized with their high artistic values. The central concern of these literary products was to yield this New Negro movement and urge the Black Americans to stick to this new mentality of race and culture, consciousness and pride.

Throughout this analysis, I intend to rely on the literary theory of New Historicism, especially on Michel Foucault's notion of discourse. This theory consists of analyzing fictional writings in their historical backgrounds. Both *Invisible Man* and *The Great Gatsby* are built out of the prevailing discourses that shaped and were shaped by the real world. In this regard, one can assume that the literary writings constructed both the historical, cultural and social movements of the 1920s and their authors' lives and experiences; at the same time, these authors' experiences and history constructed literature.

These novels are the target of wide criticism, as they can be interpreted from different angles and perspectives. Harold Bloom, in his collection of critical views, *Bloom's Guide: F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*, examines *The Great Gatsby's* text and context. In this book, we are provided with Fitzgerald's biography. Bloom stated that Fitzgerald longed for being a famous writer; "during his grade school in ST Paul, he wrote plays, songs, poems and the likes gaining him local popularity" (11). Fitzgerald's life and experiences were highly featured in his fictional work *The Great Gatsby*, "the roots of the story go back deep in Fitzgerald early life" (15). Such correspondences can be revealed through such accounts as the early romantic fiction between Gatsby and Daisy and the romantic life between Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda. Fitzgerald took a commission as an officer in the army service as did Gatsby in the novel. Like Gatsby, Fitzgerald wrote lists in his journals to follow in order to achieve self improvement; "he puts day dreams on papers about being a famous novelist and influential man" (15). As for his female character Daisy, she was highly regarded as the model of Fitzgerald's wife Zelda.

In his work, Bloom referred to many critical essays related to *The Great Gatsby* as: Mathew J. Broccoli's essay entitled "*Fitzgerald's maturation as reflected in the novel*". Broccoli declares that *The Great Gatsby* "marked an advance in every way over Fitzgerald's previous works" (78). This novel, *The Great Gatsby*, is highly rich with artistic values due to the use of imagery and symbolism. This symbolic abundance gradually extended the meaning of the novel. In comparison to his previous writings, Fitzgerald mainly brings about some improvements to the structure of his writings. Broccoli states that Fitzgerald greatly imitated Joseph Conrad's method of writing. This is achieved through Fitzgerald's use of Nick Caraway as both the character and the narrator. The story of Jay Gatsby is told through Nick's perspective. Nick is "reluctantly compelled to judgment" (81).

Dan Seiters, on the other hand, in his article “*Images and Symbolism in The Great Gatsby*” is interested in studying the different, prevailing images and symbols in the book. He mainly centered on the major symbol dominating the novel: the car. The car was highly symbolical in the 1920s. All of *The Great Gatsby*’s characters were associated with cars; Nick has a conservative old Dodge, the Buchanans have an easy blue coupé and Gatsby a rich cream color car. He asserts that Gatsby’s car was fashionable, and most teenagers desired to own it during this age; this can illustrate Fitzgerald’s influence by this age. Gatsby’s cream color car, the mixture of both white and yellow, stands for Gatsby’s dream of money. However, this dominant symbol referred mainly to death and decadence. The fatal accident that killed Myrtle strengthened this assumption of death. After the accident, Gatsby’s car was depicted as merely yellow by the witnesses. This came to highlight that Gatsby acquired money through corruption. Yet this mortal accident was also foreshadowed by the car. Eventually, this developed car also refers to carelessness and infidelity. This is epitomized through the characters of Tom Buchanan and Jordan Baker. Dan Seiters noted that the automobile is associated as well with the symbol that “[has] the more normal function of carrying people to excitement” as it was the case of America in the Roaring Twenties (84).

Joyce A. Rowe deals with a comparative study between four American novels; *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Ambassadors* and *The Great Gatsby*. In this work, Rowe stated that all of these novels were only depicting American culture. His work, *Equivocal ending in Classic American novels* analyses the common end in the aforesaid novels. All of their protagonists “refuse either to consider or to surrender a visionary hope” even in a moment of despair (11). What is also common in the protagonists’ life is that “all their longings separate [them] from direct engagement with common social experience” (11).

Tanfer Emin Tunc, in his article “*The Great Gatsby: the Tragedy of the American Dream on the Long Island’s Gold Coast*” investigates the theme of the American Dream in the novel. Tunc states that although the old aristocracy “possess sophistication, refinement, and breeding, they don’t embody the American Dream”; instead, they feature in its decay (70). In *The Great Gatsby*, the old aristocracy were represented through the Buchanans family whose immoral behaviors and corrupted manners illustrate their contribution to the decadence of the American Dream. They were depicted as racist, violent, careless and arrogant. In the other hand, Jay Gatsby, a member of the nouveau riche, embodied the American Dream. Gatsby is the epitome of the American Dream, as he is a self made man and possesses a library full of

books. In the same measure, his bootlegging and extravagant parties stand for the corruption of the American Dream. Eventually, Gatsby's allusion to and obsession with the American Dream made him only a victim. Thus, Gatsby represents the rise and the fall of the American Dream.

Alberto Lena wrote "*Deceitful Traces of Power: an Analysis of the Decadence of Tom Buchanan in the Great Gatsby*". As the title suggests, Lena examines the decadence of the old aristocratic character Tom Buchanan. Through this character, one can understand Fitzgerald's disapproval with the upper classes, as Lena asserts it: "Fitzgerald had launched one of his sharpest and most devastating attacks on the upper classes, in the form of his character Tom Buchanan, in the Long Island's millionaire in *The Great Gatsby*" (40). Lena also explores the defects and imperfections that lie behind the inheritance of huge wealth; "The heredity millionaire had become simply a consumer who had laid aside his role as a producer" (42). Thus, it constitutes an obstacle to the progress of society. Besides his violence, cruelty, lack of maturity, and arrogance, Tom is a member of the leisure society which also, as Lena states it, represents a hindrance to the development of the society.

Invisible Man is also the target of much criticism. In his *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Ralph Ellison*, Harold Bloom commented on Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Bloom stated that *Invisible Man* is an American novel which has importance and value as such greatest American novels of writers as Hemingway, Faulkner, Fitzgerald...*Invisible Man's* major artistic values are due to its "highly rich texture, overtones and under songs" (1). In this work, Bloom analyzed the major prevailing themes and the novel's characters.

Alan Nadal's work entitled "*Clifton in spiritual and Carnal*" examined the character Tod Clifton. Tod is a member of the brotherhood, a Harlem director of youth and a close friend to the Narrator. The narrator's and Clifton's main concern was to denounce, through organized campaigns and street corner speeches, and prevent evictions to which blacks were subjected. But, Tod's life in the brotherhood ended as he left to sell Sambo Dolls in the street that led to his death. Most critics failed to understand what led him to behave that way. There can be "no meaning which would be revealed through interpretation" (11). Many critics attempted to decode the meaning of Tod's decision; some of them suggested that "Clifton has come to accept the inevitable dehumanization and exploitation of blacks" (16). But, the bulk of them "view Tod as a victim of his own conscious and / or the white manipulation" (16).

Andrew Hoberek's "*Race Man, Organization Man, Invisible Man*" questions whether *Invisible Man* is an artistic work or merely corresponds to the racial and political black movement. Robert Penn Warren asserted that Ellison is "more concerned with the way a man confronts his doom than with the deviation of that doom" (38). Houston A. Baker commented that Ellison's highest modernism "is merely a mask behind which the author conceals his real devotion to an inevitably politicized African American vernacular culture" (39). It is the same assumption shared by Philip Brian Hamper who viewed Ellison's modernist eloquence as a "metaphysical quest of individual identity" (39).

Although there are many critics who ventured to interpret different aspects of both novels, there are few critical essays that handle a comparative study between *The Great Gatsby* and *Invisible Man* concerning the theme of identity quest. Thus, I intend my study of both novels will shed light on this common theme. In this dissertation, I will try to give answers to these questions: what are the events present in both texts, *The Great Gatsby* and *Invisible Man*, which reflect the real situations of both authors' days? What are the motivations of both protagonists behind their identity quest? How did the authors of both novels portray the societies to which both protagonists wanted to adapt?

What motivated me to study these two American novels, *The Great Gatsby* and *Invisible Man*, is their common handling of the theme of identity quest, and especially how Francis Scott Fitzgerald and Ralph Ellison, who belong to separate ethnic groups and distinct communities, dealt with the same theme. It is also important to note how these fictional novels reflected their social and historical background and are considered as social documents.

This work will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter will be devoted to the analysis of both novels contextually and textually, that is to say, examining the Roaring Twenties as a historical and social background for *The Great Gatsby* and *Invisible Man*. In the textual analysis, I will refer to the authors' biographies, the plot overview of the novels as well as their narrative techniques.

The second chapter, which is the rudiment of my research work, it will deal with the theme of identity quest. This will be realized through analyzing the different characters of both novels. In this chapter, I will also analyze the American Dream theme in the novels. This will be accomplished throughout the analysis of both novels' protagonists; Jay Gatsby's embodiment of the American dream and the Narrator's. Eventually, this chapter will also

examine the outcome of both protagonists' hope to adopt a new identity, show Jay Gatsby as a victim of his dream and the Narrator remaining true to his own identity.

The third chapter will provide an introduction to New Historicism, chiefly the New Historicist theory of Michel Foucault about discourse. Then it will explore the prevailing discourses relevant to both novels: racism, racial violence, corruption and their relation to power.

Chapter one:

The Great Gatsby and Invisible Man:

Texts in Context

Introduction

Each piece of writing echoes its society, culture and history. Indeed, these two modern American novels, *The Great Gatsby* and *Invisible Man*, are considered as social documents of their eras. In order to shed light on this fact, in this first chapter, I will explore the historical, social and cultural movements that these two fictions reflect.

In *The Great Gatsby*, all the characters' ideologies as well as the events discussed in this work correspond to the real values and beliefs of the Roaring twenties. During this era, America witnessed a radical shift from convention to modernity in basically all sectors: economic, cultural, historical, and social ones. Thus, in my analysis of the Roaring twenties, I will refer, even briefly, to all these aspects.

Though published in 1952, *Invisible Man* is generally viewed as the reflection of the Harlem Renaissance movement. *Invisible Man* presents the social change which affected the Afro-American people during the twenties. It yields this shift which the black society had endured as it was the focal inauguration, or the turning point that changed Afro-American life.

Through examining the context of both fictions, I will highlight the common ideas, events and features that are shared by both novels. This first chapter will also deal with the textual study of both works. This textual analysis will include the authors' biographies and the settings and plot of their fictions. The following section will explore the novels' structures, specifically highlighting the affinities between these structures. In this regard, I will show that both Fitzgerald and Ellison are modernist writers through their embodiment of modernist techniques and themes.

1-The novels' social background

1-1 America in the Roaring twenties

America in the twenties had experienced a great movement in its lifestyle. It was a new America with a new culture. It deviated from the old standards of Puritanism, and adopted a new way of life. The Roaring twenties or the Jazz Age was a wonderful, peculiar, outlandish, and noisy period. This movement had affected most sectors of American life; economy, politics, and society. It was a period of great economic expansion, which embedded the American people into a world of wealth and prosperity. Nevertheless, it was also that time when corruption, confusion, and moral decadence were excessively developing.

Economically, the Stock Market boom was the major catalyst for American shift. This process entailed huge wealth and achievements, and shot American people into a world of prosperity. In this era, “American industrial output nearly doubled between 1922 and 1929, and the gross national product rose by 40 percent... The national per capita income increased by 30 percent during the decade” (Reeves 90). Thus, everybody could afford a comfortable life.

The twenties was also the epoch of great innovation. Many new technological devices were invented. With all that wealth, people started to buy such devices as radios, refrigerators, sewing machines, washing machines... Above all, there was the burst of vast number of automobiles that were, at that time, the emblem for wealth and glamour as well as the major reason behind the emergence of overloaded cities.

The economic development had affected a lot the American society. Americans reflected this huge prosperity in their way of life and habits. Therefore, Americans in the twenties had adopted a new life and a new culture. It departed from the old accustomed standards that the antecedent society had chased for a long time. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are substituted for the pursuit of wealth, luxury materials, and pleasure. American people were eager to step into the flow of prosperity, and forget about their conventional taboos. Even their faith in God and religion, which was the backbone of American society, was shaken. Fitzgerald notes in his novel *This Side of Paradise*, “a new generation... grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken...” (265).

What also characterized this era was the excessive and fast growing of urbanized areas. Many families left their small towns, and rural villages to contribute to the modern life in metropolitan areas. “More than 19 million people moved to cities during this era” (85).

The 1920's also saw the emergence of the nouveau riche. These new wealthy people hungered only for gaining more wealth, and being assimilated into the Old Money.

The advanced technological inventions and wealth had altered the past living pattern of the American people. Thanks to household appliances, Americans were granted spare time for enjoying other hobbies; pleasure became the primary concern of American people, it led up to a new fashion, a life of leisure and Hedonism. They spent their free time listening to music, chiefly Jazz music which was introduced by African Americans, and practicing sport. They were also interested in throwing and participating in lavish parties in order to exhibit their wealth.

In the twenties a new woman was born. She was a modern woman with a new mode of life. Women, before the twenties, were deprived of their liberty, and depended upon their husbands. They were leading a simple and dull life, which the conventional, religious society had instructed. They were housewives, breeding their children and completing housework chores. For those working women, their jobs centered only on cleaning and dress making. In wartime, women did men's jobs as the latter left to fight in the First World War. But, during the twenties, women had reached their full independence. They were made economically and politically independent. They cut off from the dictated laws of society and the accustomed lifestyle. Household appliances had replaced part of their works, and granted them time to enjoy other activities. They reflected this freedom through their look and way of dressing. They got dressed in flamboyant and flashy clothes. They were called: "youthful "flappers" who led the way, shortened their skirts above the knees, abandoned their corsets, and petticoats, flattened their hair to achieve the new boyish look, wore rouge and lipstick, smoke cigarettes, drank cocktails, read racy novels, and danced the fox trod and Charleston" (87) . They also sunk into a world of entertainment. They were listening to music, going to the movies and theatre, and practicing sport. However, this freedom was disadvantageous. Women enjoyed their freedom to the extent of degrading their reputation, as they were associated with bars and got addicted to liquor and smoked cigarettes. They "were seen scandalous to people still accustomed to typical Victorian and romantic portrayals of women" (Bloom 22). As for their romantic life, women chose their husbands by virtue of their social status, and love was no longer the basis for their relationships; "the high-bouncing and wearing a gold hat might impress a young woman of the time, she was likely to leave a young man on his own at the end of the evening, or kiss another in the very next dance" (22).

The flowing wealth impinged on the American people. This affluence prodded the American people into loving worldly pleasures. In the light of this disarray, many Americans were alarmed about the future of America with all that incessant spread of alcoholic beverages. Therefore, they revolted against alcoholism. These groups, who were mainly rural Christians, managed to stir up the local government to censor these intoxicated drinks. Afterwards, the American Congress established the 18th Amendment that appealed for the strict prohibition of the sale and transportation of these liquors; "this bill represented a final attempt by the old established puritan function to legislate public morality on the issue of drinking" (Parkinson 13). The American government believed that "it would stop alcoholism and drunkenness and make the United States a healthier, happier country" (O'Callaghan 96).

However, this led into a worse, disastrous situation. American people soon transgressed this law. Prohibition reduced the number of alcohol drinks, which the Americans held dear. Bootleggers sold these drinks secretly in speakeasies. Many Americans achieved huge fortunes through secret games. It “was a highly populated business that quickly became entangled with organized crime”, as American people could not afford the high prices of these illegal drinks (Reeves 92). Consequently, corruption was increasing during this era. Bootleggers “even used their weak to bribe police and other public officials to do nothing about their law breaking” (O’Callaghan 95).

Corruption was incessantly spreading in American society. Americans forgot about their traditional taboos, and got entangled into immoral activities. Wealth dazzled them to the extent that they did not maintain their morality and old values; it drove them into dishonest affairs. Accordingly, the twenties was the first period when American society had witnessed a departure from its conventional laws and its cultural inheritance.

America, the world of dreams where the first pilgrims founded their hopes for religious freedom, liberty, and happiness, was replaced by a world of corruption, disorder, emptiness, and moral decadence. Americans corrupted the American dream that pertains to self-responsibility, happiness, and richness through one’s labor. They believed that they were realizing this dream, but instead, they were only violating it.

As for the literary movements in the Roaring twenties, it centered only on criticizing this period of emptiness, wealth, and moral decadence. Most writers of the twenties had been engaged into the battle of the First World War. Upon their return to America, they were appalled at the unexpected results of that war. They resented the greediness of the American people for wealth, and loathed the immoral, dishonest acts among that corrupted, empty society, and they were thirsty for being assimilated into the Better-offs. Therefore, their writings focused on this turmoil. Most of these writers gathered in Bohemian regions in New York. While others moved to settle in Paris, London, Berlin; “Scores of often extremely talented intellectuals, disillusioned by the war and alienated by the materialism, greed, conformity, and general silliness of the decade, retreated to arty enclaves such as New York’s Greenwich Village or fled to Europe to find fulfillment” (Reeves 88).

They were hailed as the writers of the lost generation. This generation was lost due to the loss of morality and old ideals among the American society. Those New York writers searched to bring some newness into their writings. Thus, they founded their style of writing

on modernism. They used modernist techniques of stream of consciousness and interior monologue. On the other hand, those who moved into Paris sought to achieve simple life far from innovation and modernity. As literature is a mirror of reality, many writers went on depicting real social and historical facts of their period.

The literature of the period either deal with flappers salaciously, as temptresses whose loose morality would be the undoing of the society; or- as did Fitzgerald and a few others- as women whose exposure to modern wealth, disillusionment, achievement, art, and other aspects of worldly culture inspired them to break with conventions, to varying results. (22)

Those living in New York stressed on depicting and criticizing these historical and social movements. Among the writers of the lost generation, we can find Francis Scott Fitzgerald. His novel *The Great Gatsby* is considered as a social diary of the twenties. All of his works “form kinds of spiritual history of the lost generation” (High 143). Peter High also added that *the Great Gatsby* is “the most penetrating description of the American life” (65). Fitzgerald was highly influenced by this social shift in America and his novel *The Great Gatsby* “examines the results of the Jazz Age generation adherence to false values” (64).

1-2 Black Americans during The Harlem Renaissance

Since their settlements in America, blacks were subdued to slavery, discrimination, and injustice. They were inhumanly treated by the whites. They had been made only properties and slaves to serve the whites. First, during the late 17th century, blacks had been overworking on southern plantations, Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia. They manufactured raw materials, mainly cotton and tobacco for Europe. Afterwards, in the late 18th century, when America broke off from its mother country, blacks still lived under whites’ infringements and austerity; they were working on many dirty, exhaustive and low paid jobs. Accordingly, black life was a long journey of revolt and protest to put an end to slavery and white racism. They wanted an integrated, recognizable culture, and a society full of liberty and rights, equal to the white one. This long journey of revolt and protest was marked by developments that paved the way to the achievement of an identity, integrity and independence.

Of primary importance, the Civil war (1863, 1865), which ended by abolishing slavery, was a major inauguration and a significant achievement for the black quest for identity.

However, blacks were still condemned to endure discrimination, injustice, and white racism. Thus, their quest for full integration and independence was the objective of many movements and black leaders. One can cite the different organizations and movements led by black political activists that yielded a single voice for abolishing discrimination and that headed for independence, identity, and integrity. Among these were the Du Bois' NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People) founded in 1909, the National Urban League in 1910, Marcus Garvey's UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association in 1914, and Martin Luther King's SCLC (the Southern Christian Leadership Conference) in 1960.

Living along with that undue discrimination, racism, and the lack of economic opportunity, African Americans, during the twenties, made considerable accomplishments in their cultural and social life, chiefly in literature and music. Many Black Americans emerged into the literary scene to become great figures in American literature; during a creative period that became known as the Harlem Renaissance. It was labeled in reference to Harlem city, where "blacks left the south in record numbers to escape oppression and to take advantage of the urban economic opportunities" (Nash 153).

The Harlem Renaissance blossomed in the 1920s, when America was entangled in huge prosperity. It renovated the image of the African American to become a New Negro, and transferred "the social disillusion into social pride" (Locke 4). This New Negro became proud of his race and culture, and sought to achieve an identity and move beyond the old, unjust stereotypes that the white oppressors had adhered to him: "the black slaves were happy shiftless ...lazy irresponsible and ignorant" (qtd. in Carroll and Noble 159). The New Negro fought for strengthening others' psychology about their race and culture, and reshaping other social negative perspectives of blacks (Locke 3). Thus, the Negro of Harlem embodied "a new mentality" (4).

The literary movement of black Americans was a great mechanism for fostering their cultural identity in white America. Through literature, art, and music, blacks could defy white racism and therefore achieve social, political, and economic equality. Many White Americans, mainly middle class, started to discover and enjoy the literary productions of these Black writers and became acquainted with an African American culture, which they viewed as exotic and alien. Black writings were also the objects of fascination by many white writers and publishers, who provided a considerable support to black literature.

The Harlem renaissance witnessed also the great booming of jazz music and blues, though some critics stated that it developed earlier. Music was revered by African Americans. It was part of their daily life and they considered it sacred as their religion. Ted Joans shares this assumption in his poem, “Jazz is my Religion”:

Jazz is my religion... the jazz clubs are
my house of worship
Harlem USA Used to be a jazz heaven where most of the jazz
sermons were preached... (Gilyard and Wardi 506)

Breathing in a world of discrimination, racism, and injustice, Black Americans expressed their sorrow and pains through music. It was a kind of relief and light in the midst of their darkness. James Baldwin highlighted this concept in his short story, *Sonny Blues*; “while the tale of how we suffer, how were we delighted, and how we may triumph or is never new, it always must be heard, there isn’t any other tale to tell; it’s the only light we’ve in all this darkness” (476).

Listening to this type of music, one can “experience the black life” (Nash 153). Black culture, griefs, and dreams were outpouring from their literary and musical essays. Thus, it was “a key marker of African American identity” (Gilyard and Wardi 452). It was very popular among both Whites and Blacks. Black writers were inspired by this music and embodied it in their writings.

Depicting blacks’ life in Harlem, and frowning on the upshots of racism on Blacks, prevailed many of Harlem writings. However, most of Harlem’s writers centered mainly on treating the same theme of Black quest for identity, through fostering and urging Afro-Americans to be proud of their race and culture. This was considered as a single powerful voice about a single dream for racial pride and consciousness. These writers thought that they have the potency to lead their race’s fight and fulfill their dream of equality. Harlem literary writings could uproot white racism; “Inequities due to race might best be removed when reasonable men saw that black men were thinkers, strivers, doers, and were cultured, like themselves. Harlem intellectuals, with their progressive assumptions, saw themselves as the ones most likely to make this demonstration” (Huggins 11).

These literary developments defied and blotted out the whites' prejudgments that blacks were made by nature slaves with an inferior culture, and "seem[ed] to be totally incapable of development" (qtd. in Carroll and Noble 159). This can be elucidated through Whites' alarm and fear to face their guilt and biggest error against humanity. Blacks revealed their sufferings and pains in their writings, which the whites considered as a threat to their reputation and culture that is above all the most superior. Claude McKay's poem, *Enslavement*, is one of these blacks' writings about the doom of Black Americans, caused by whites' racism:

Oh when I think of my long-suffering race,
For weary centuries despised, oppressed,
Enslaved and lynched, denied of a human place. (Gilyard and Wardi 1259)

In comparison with "Negro writings [which] had been confined to humble novels, poems, and plays", the new Negro writings effected considerable achievements in literature not only in stimulating their cultural upheaval, but also in terms of literature for its own sake (Robert 10). Such writers as Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neal Huston became international literary figures and great American writers, with high artistic qualities. They featured in the development of Afro-American literature, and in the development of American literature as a whole. Moreover, the new Negro achievements influenced and promoted the later literary works of such writers as Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. One can assume that the Harlem Renaissance laid the foundation, and was the major power behind blacks' integrity, identity, and independence. Thanks to the previously mentioned writers and others, who supported their racial fight, the dream of African Americans was brought to fruition.

2- Textual Analysis of the Novels

2-1 Fitzgerald's Biography

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born on September 24, 1896 in ST Paul, Minnesota, and was raised there. He received his early education at ST Paul Academy. Though intelligent, Fitzgerald failed to achieve success in his studies. Then, he was sent to a New Jersey boarding school in 1911, to finally attend Princeton University, but without graduation.

On the verge of World War One, Fitzgerald enlisted in the army service as a lieutenant, but never joined the battlefield. Like Gatsby, Fitzgerald fell in love with Zelda Sayre who lived near Montgomery, Alabama; “Zelda taunted Scott with her bevy of suitors, which included several other Camp Sheridan officers” (Curnutt 17). Zelda was a model for his female character Daisy Fay, in his novel *The Great Gatsby*. She did not accept Fitzgerald’s love as the latter was on the breadline. So, he concentrated on making his fortune through endorsing a literary career in order to gain Zelda’s love.

Before becoming a famous novelist, Fitzgerald wrote original plays for amateur productions in ST Paul and later at the New Academy in New Jersey. He also composed lyrics for Princeton University’s famous Triangle Club production where he too played as an actor.

Fitzgerald was also the writer of the short stories among them; *Flappers and Philosophers* (1920). Then, in 1922, he wrote *Tales of the Jazz Age*. He, as well, wrote his great autobiographical novel under the title: *This Side of Paradise*. This led to Fitzgerald’s celebrity and financial success. Accordingly, Zelda accepted Fitzgerald’s love and married him. They soon adopted the lifestyle of the Jazz Age generation, despite the fact that “Fitzgerald wanted to be a serious critic of the society in which he lived” (Parkinson 11). Both of them were dissipated to alcohol, and wasting their wealth only to entertain themselves including parties and luxury materials. In addition, Zelda adopted the new women style of the Jazz Age; “she obligingly bobbed her hair, adopted prevailing New York fashions” (Curnutt18). His literary success “provided him the money for many of Fitzgerald’s own spree: all-night parties and wild trips to Europe” (Trask 143). Nevertheless, the Fitzgeralds “were often in debt, despite the income from film rights of several stories”, on the accounts that they excessively indulged in worldly vanities (Parkinson 12).

In order to be bestowed with money to please his wife, Fitzgerald kept writing and publishing. In 1923, he published his second novel entitled *The Beautiful and the Damned*. In 1925, Fitzgerald achieved notoriety and success with the publication of *The Great Gatsby*. This novel is the most impressive, persuasive depiction of the Jazz Age and the greatest literary document of this era. It identified Fitzgerald as the greatest and best American writer of the twenties.

“The Fitzgeralds’ own lifestyle provided a wealth of material for the novel he was working on, [The Great Gatsby]”, many events and characters’ behavior in his fiction correspond to his real life and experiences (Stein 12). Harold Bloom, in his book *Bloom’s Guide: F. Scott*

Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, emphasized this notion in that "the roots of the story go back deep in Fitzgerald early life" (15). Fitzgerald, like Gatsby, was commissioned as a lieutenant while in the army service. The fictional romantic relationship between Gatsby and Daisy echoes the real one between Fitzgerald and Zelda. In addition, as Gatsby, Fitzgerald longed for luxury and wealth; "Fitzgerald kept lists in his own journals, lists of steps to take for self-improvement. He put day dreams on papers about being a famous novelist and influential man" (15). Nick Caraway, the narrator of *The Great Gatsby*, moves to New York on account of business bond, Fitzgerald also travelled to New York where he worked on advertising in the hope of earning some money. Ultimately, both Gatsby and Fitzgerald went far afield.

Besides his own experiences and life, Fitzgerald appended the surrounding social and cultural movements of the twenties into his literature. Gertrude Stein asserted that Fitzgerald "was creating the contemporary world" (qtd. in Bloom 77). *The Great Gatsby* is generally viewed as a social diary of the 1920s. It yields the American society's adherence to false, immoral values and its forsaking the old moral ideals and the American dream. Gatsby's bootlegging, extravagant parties, and the Buchanans' corruption, moral decadence, and exorbitant alcoholism epitomized this reflection.

The 1930s was the aftermath of the affluent years of the twenties and the onset of the great depression in America. The prosperous years came to no goods. It was also the years of turmoil and grief to Fitzgerald. His wife, Zelda became as a schizophrenic and was hospitalized in Switzerland and then Maryland, where she died in a fire.

Though in depression, Fitzgerald did not discard his authorship. In 1934, he brought out his most psychological complex and aesthetically ambitious novel *Tender is the Night*.

During his last years, Fitzgerald penned but did not finish his last novel entitled *The Last Tycoon*. He died suddenly of a heart attack owing to his long addiction to alcohol on September 11, 1940.

2-2 *The Great Gatsby*: Plot Overview

As a modernist writer, Fitzgerald constructed the story of *The Great Gatsby* through memories and flashbacks. As readers, we are not directly introduced to Gatsby's life; however, it is gradually revealed through recollections including those of Jay Gatsby, Jordan Baker and his father. It emerged in the form of fragments.

“Fitzgerald creates uncertainty for the reader about how to judge Gatsby by means of the narrative organization” (Parkinson 23). In fact, our judgment of Gatsby changes, as his true identity is kept unrevealed till the end of the novel. First of all, we discover Gatsby from the spreading rumors by his guests in one of his parties. With these false accounts, the reader may construct a bad image of Gatsby: “somebody told me they thought he killed a man once... he was a German spy during the war” (Fitzgerald 29).

Yet, the whole novel is a memorial story. Indeed, this novel is narrated from Nick Caraway’s point of view, two years after the discussed events. Fitzgerald uses Nick both as a character and a narrator in the novel. Broccoli states that Fitzgerald highly imitated Joseph Conrad’s technique of narration. The narrative technique in *The Great Gatsby* “marked an advance in every way over Fitzgerald’s previous works” (Bloom 78). Nick narrates the story life of the mysterious protagonist Jay Gatsby who rose from an impoverished childhood in rural Minnesota, and became latterly a millionaire.

Nick recollects the events described in *The Great Gatsby* from the summer of 1922 to the autumn of 1922. This period constitutes the present time of the storyline of *The Great Gatsby*. Yet, “Fitzgerald frequently fractures time in the novel by drawing upon recollections by Gatsby, Daisy, Jordan, Myrtle, Wolfsheim or Mr Gatz” (Parkinson 23).

As for the setting of the events, it centers in two districts; West Egg, the residence of the nouveau riche, where Jay Gatsby lives, and East Egg where the wealthy Buchanans along with other fashioned, sophisticated old aristocratic families were based. The novel also shifts its setting to include the Valley of Ashes where Myrtle and George Wilson live. This Valley of Ashes is situated between New York City and Long Island. The two fictional districts of West Egg and East Egg were inspired mainly from real settings. West Egg corresponds to Great Neck, a region in Long Island, where Fitzgerald settled in 1922 after his comeback from France. As in the novel, Great Neck was the home of the nouveau riche who made their fortune as a result of the economic boom. East Egg, on the other hand, refers to Manhasset, where the old aristocratic families lived. Yet, one can divide the events of the story into three parts.

In the first part, including the two first chapters, Nick Carraway tells us, after fighting in the First World War, that he was willing to move from his Midwestern district to New York in order to work in the business band. He rented a house in West Egg near Gatsby’s mansion. After this little reference to Gatsby, this part centers mainly on introducing the old wealthy

family of the Buchanans. Nick knew nobody in West Egg except his distant cousin Daisy, he was invited to dinner in her luxury and sophisticated mansion at East Egg,

Their house was even more elaborate than I expected, a cheerful red-and- white Georgian colonial mansion, overlooking the bay. The lawn started at the beach and ran towards the front door for a quarter of a mile, jumping over sundials and brick walks and burning gardens- finally when it reached the house drifting up the side in bright vines as though from the momentum of its ran. The front was broken by line of French windows, glowing now with reflected gold and wide open to the warm windy afternoon. (Fitzgerald 6)

After this description, Nick went on presenting the Buchanans. He met Tom in the front door, and describes him as a sturdy man; “you could see a great pack of muscle shifting when his shoulder moved under his thin coat” (7). Nick was pulled by Tom with one hand into the house where he met his cousin Daisy and a sportive girl named Jordan Baker. While dining, Tom, followed by Daisy, left the room to answer the phone. A dispute between Daisy and Tom was heard. Jordan, then, informed Nick of Tom’s romantic relationship with Myrtle who lived in the Valley of Ashes along with her husband George Wilson.

Few days later, Nick on his way to New York met Tom who compelled him to accompany him to call on George Wilson in his garage in the Valley of Ashes; however, Tom’s true motive was to see his mistress Myrtle. All of them, except George, made for New York, where Tom and Myrtle met. Tom rented a flat for their romantic affair. Myrtle urged Nick to join them there where she intended to arrange a small party. This party of drinking and smoking ended when Myrtle uttered the name of Daisy. Tom, exasperated, broke her nose with a swift and sharp blow.

The second part extends from chapter III to chapter VI, and introduces the protagonist Jay Gatsby. Nick was invited to one of Gatsby’s lavish parties, which he attended along with Jordan. Nick stated that many of the guests were not invited, or did not even know their host, Jay Gatsby: “sometimes they came and went without having met Gatsby at all, came for the party with a simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission” (47). While in the party, Nick was very anxious for he attended a party without even meeting the host. He heard many gossiping about the host among the guests. After his acquaintance with Gatsby, Nick revealed

that Gatsby is a man with a rare smile; “it was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life” (32). Nick also noticed that Gatsby was neither joining the party, nor drinking. Jordan was invited to Gatsby’s library for a private conversation which she kept secret from Nick; she said that she has “just heard the most amazing thing” (35).

Driving to New York in Gatsby’s car, Gatsby revealed to Nick false accounts about his relatives,

My family all died and I came into a good deal of money...After that I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe -Paris, Venice, Rome - collecting jewels, chiefly rubies, hunting big game, painting a little, things for myself only, and trying to forget something very sad that had happened to me long ago... Then came the war, old sport. It was a great relief, and I tried very hard to die, but I seemed to bear an enchanted life. I accepted a commission as first lieutenant when it began. In the Argonne Forest I took the remains of my machine-gun battalion so far forward that there was a half-mile gap on either side of us where the infantry couldn't advance. We stayed there two days and two nights, a hundred and thirty men with sixteen Lewis gun guns, and when the infantry came up at last they found the in sitting of three German divisions among the piles of dead. I was promoted to be a major, and every Allied government gave me a decoration - even Montenegro, little Montenegro down on the Adriatic Sea! (42-43)

Gatsby proved these accounts with a medal for gallantry from the war and a photo of himself at Oxford. Nick was also introduced to a great bootlegger Meyer Wolfsheim who “fixed the world series back in 1919”, and who mistook Nick for a new business associate. (47).

In this section, Jay Gatsby’s true past was revealed partly to Nick by Jordan. She told Nick about the past romantic life of Gatsby with Daisy. This love was the impulse for Gatsby’s yearn for wealth. As a penniless officer, Gatsby fell in love with the aristocratic girl Daisy Fay:

I came opposite her house that morning her white roadster was beside the curb, and she was sitting in it with a lieutenant I had never seen before. They were so engrossed in each other that she didn't see me until I was five feet away... The

officer looked at Daisy while she was speaking, in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at sometime, and because it seemed romantic to me I have remembered the incident ever since. His name was Jay Gatsby, and I didn't lay eyes on him again for over four years - even after I'd met him on Long Island I didn't realise it was the same man. (48)

Jordan also recollected the early marriage of Tom Buchanan with Daisy. Daisy who promised to Gatsby to wait for his return from war, married the powerful aristocratic Tom. Gatsby hoped for material success in order to be assimilated into the old aristocracy, and to repeat his past love. He also bought his mansion “so that Daisy would be just across the bay” (51). Moreover, Gatsby threw his gorgeous parties hoping that Daisy would attend them.

Following Gatsby's request, Nick invited, in a rainy day, Daisy for tea in his house. Gatsby met Daisy again after nearly five years. Gatsby was first of all startled and embarrassed then at last released himself. He showed his mansion to Daisy as well as his clothes in order to impress her. As a materialistic woman, Daisy was deeply impressed by Gatsby's possessions. Then, a new romantic relationship was born between Daisy and Gatsby.

Part of Gatsby's true identity is revealed to Nick in this passage:

James Gatz - that was really, or at least legally, his name. He had changed it at the age of seventeen and at the specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his career - when he saw Dan Cody's yacht drop anchor over the most insidious flat on Lake Superior. It was James Gatz who had been loafing along the beach that afternoon in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants, but it was already Jay Gatsby who borrowed a rowboat, pulled out to the Tuolomee and informed Cody that a wind might catch him and break him up in half an hour. (63)

The first chapters of the novel center on revealing a part of Gatsby's early life, but the remaining part is unveiled in the last three chapters. From chapter VII to IX, the tragic end of Jay Gatsby is disclosed after failing to achieve his dream of recreating the past.

As Gatsby and Nick go for dinner at the Buchanans' house, “the tension rises as Tom guesses the truth” about the illegal activities of Gatsby (Parkinson 31). Heavily outraged when hearing Daisy's accounts that she loved Gatsby, Tom urges the group to move to New

York. While in the Plaza hotel, Gatsby endeavored to confront Tom; he claimed that Daisy did not love Tom and urged her to leave him. Yet, Gatsby could not defeat Tom's arrogance and powerful world. While driving back in Gatsby's Rolls Royce, Daisy along with Gatsby caused an accident and killed Myrtle Wilson. Back to the Buchanans' Mansion, Nick met Gatsby waiting for a sign from Daisy. He was afraid that she would be subdued to Tom's violence. Nevertheless, Nick realized that Gatsby was waiting in vain.

After his wife's death, George Wilson grew more and more violent, and determined to investigate whose yellow car killed Myrtle. Wilson's inquiry led him directly to Gatsby's mansion, where he found Gatsby in his swimming pool, and shot him dead then committed suicide. Nick struggled to gather people for Gatsby's funeral; however, it was attended only by few people.

After his death, Gatsby's whole identity was revealed. His father, Henry Gatz, stated that his son was bound to success from his early age, for he established a schedule that he followed for his improvement:

On the last fly-leaf was printed the word schedule and the date September 12, 1906. And underneath:
Rise from bed 6.00 A.M.
Dumbbell exercise and wall-scaling 6.15 – 6.30
Study electricity, etc. 7.15-8.15
Work 8.30 - 4.30 P.M.
Baseball and sports 4.30-5.00... (110)

In the last chapter, Nick comments on the death scene:

After two years I remember the rest of that day, and that night and the next day, only as an endless drill of police and photographers and newspaper men in and out of Gatsby's front door. A rope stretched across the main gate and a policeman by it kept out the curious, but little boys soon discovered that they could enter through my yard, and there were always a few of them clustered open-mouthed about the pool. (103)

Nick made a last visit to Gatsby's mansion, and stated that "Gatsby's house was still empty when [he] left - the grass on his lawn had grown as long as [his]" (186). Nick finally decides to go back to his Mid Western homeland, far away from the chaotic immoral world of the East.

2-3 Ralph Ellison's biography

Ralph Ellison was born in 1914 in Oklahoma City, and raised there. His father was a worker who died when Ellison reached three years, and his mother a domestic servant.

Before becoming one of America's greatest writers, Ellison was a gifted musician. He was an accomplished trumpeter, and a student of musical composition at Booker T Washington's Tuskegee Institute in the southern United States. Aware of other genres, Ellison was fond of jazz music. Jazz music was an integral part in the culture of Black Americans. For him, Jazz is the most powerful form, or at least the most enjoyable. In all his musical essays, Ellison refers to his own childhood in Oklahoma. Ellison loved the clarity and directness of the emotions, and the rawness of the blues as expressed by Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington.

Later on, Ellison went on writing, but did not give up music. While studying primarily music, Ellison spent increasingly amounts of time in the library, reading modernist classics. He was attached to literature mainly because of his incessant readings. He discovered Elliot's *The Waste Land* in 1935, which impressed him a lot, and evoked his two greatest passions: music and literature, for it was the first time that Ellison had seen Jazz set to words. He read, as well, the poems of Richard Wright, who advised him to edit the work of E. Water Turpin's *These Low Grounds* and fostered him to embrace a literary career. In 1938, Ellison integrated at the Federal Writer's Project. Then, in 1946, he joined the United State Merchant Marine.

During the 1930s, Ellison worked multiple jobs. He worked in factories, shined people's shoes...etc. The lack of money was an important reason for him to become a writer. Furthermore, it was more difficult for him to write fictional works than to compose essays and book reviews.

Ellison was lunged at a literary stardom on the basis of one book: *Invisible Man*. On a farm in Vermont, where he was reading *The Hero* by Lord Ragland, and speculating on the nature of Negro leadership in the US, then he wrote the first chapter of *Invisible Man*. This first chapter, known for its famous Battle Royal scene, was published in Horizon magazine. The prologue section of the book was published in Partisan Review in 1952, prior to the book's

full publication. However, *Invisible Man* was fully published in 1952. This novel won the US National Award for fiction in 1953, and is regarded as a classic of modern American literature. It made Ellison the first black writer to win this prestigious award. In 1955, Ellison won the Prix De Rome, a fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and spent two years in Rome. In this novel, Ellison portrayed a black boy's search for an identity and a place among the whites. Ellison asserted that the search for identity is an American theme. His society was a minority group. The Black Americans were still bereft of their identity in white America. For him, the search for identity as a theme could foster the development of his society.

Ellison lacked experience in writing novels, and had found it difficult to formulate a coherent plot. His editing of other writers' works helped him a lot to learn about art and techniques of writing. He read Hemingway to learn the sentence structure, and how to organize a story. He rejected the idea of social protest and intended that his novel is a literary work of art. He followed the styles based heavily upon modern symbolism, which Ellison firstly encountered in the poem *The Waste Land* of T. S. Eliot.

Ellison was also a writer of essays. In 1964, he published *Shadow and Act*, then *Going to the Territory* in 1986. As for *Flying Home* and the other Short stories, it was collected and published after his death by Penguin group in 1996.

Ellison was associated with the communist party, publishing and editing for communist publications, and impressed by Marxism. Nevertheless, Ellison lost his faith in the communist party during the Second World War, when he felt that the party's leaders had betrayed African Americans. *Invisible Man* was partly a response to this party's leaders' betrayal.

Ellison died on April 16th 1994. He is listed among the great writers of the 20th century. His only novel *Invisible Man* is the most important novel and a treasure of American literature because of its artistic originality and its romantic richness. It has been printed into 14 languages.

2-4 *Invisible Man*: Plot Overview

The story of *Invisible Man* opens with a prologue section, in which the narrator introduces himself as an invisible man; "I am an invisible man", he affirms, "People refuse to see me... When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination, indeed, everything and anything except me". He is invisible by virtue of the denial of the outside world of his identity and individuality (Ellison 3). He is living in a very

illuminated subterranean world. This illumination issued from connecting illegally numerous electrified wires to many bulbs that are stuck in his hole. The narrator is fond of jazz music, especially of Louis Armstrong.

The prologue presents the aftermath of the incidents described as the story progresses, “the end is only the beginning that lies far ahead” (6). The narrator relates his past life and experiences, and the main reasons behind his present way of life. He states that “it goes a long way back, some twenty years” (15).

The narrator’s long journey, seeking to assert an identity, settles as he realizes that he is invisible in the American society. This invisibility, however, is the power that leads the narrator to realize his true identity. As for the novel’s framework, Ellison divides his novel into three parts: the prologue, the story, and the epilogue. The narrator, an oppressed Afro-American, chronicles his life’s horror and turmoil as he endeavors to assert his individual humanity in American racist society. He keeps running from one situation to another. He passes through distinct passages trying to adopt an identity, from a southern student at the Tuskegee Institute, then a worker at the Liberty paint company, to finally an activist member of the Brotherhood. Accordingly, the plot of the story shifts from one district to another according to the narrator’s movement. From the plot of the storyline, *Invisible Man* can be divided into three parts. Each part “represents the narrator movement from... purpose to passion to perception. These three major sections are built up of smaller units of three which mark the course of the action” (qtd. in Bloom 18).

The first part explores the narrator’s life as a student at the Tuskegee institute in his mother south. Initially, the narrator states that he is tormented with the memory of his dying grandfather’s last words: “Live with your head in the lion’s mouth. I want you to overcome’ em with yeses, undermine’ em with grins, agree’ em to death and destruction, let’ em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open”(Ellison 16). Yet, the story of this black boy starts when he participates in the famous battle. On his graduation day, the narrator is appraised for his oration and honored to deliver it at a ballroom among the town’s important, illustrious white men. But before giving this speech, he is compelled to cooperate in a fight called the battle royal against many of his rude schoolmates. They are congregated into a large uproarious room full of cigar smoke, and in which all the white attendants, including influential white men, are very drunk. At last, only the narrator and the largest boy come out victorious from that fierce, blindfolded battle. The battle’s aim is to humiliate the black boys and entertain the

white hosts. At last, the narrator is allowed to deliver his speech and got “a gleaming calf skin briefcase” which contains a scholarship to study at the Tuskegee Institute (32). Nevertheless, it is in this college that troubles turn out the narrator’s life into ordeal.

While in the college, the narrator is trusted to drive an old white trustee, Mr. Norton, around the campus. The drive goes fine and well until the narrator takes Norton into the wrong side of the tracks, where the black sharecropper lives. Mr. Norton is deeply traumatized by the spreading hearsay that one member of this black community, Trueblood, impregnated both his wife and daughter. After listening to Trueblood’s yarn of his incestuous act, Norton grows shaky and feels dizzy. On the plea to secure Norton’s physical fitness, the narrator, accordingly, takes him into the near infamous Golden Day Brothel where he can easily find whiskey. The ride into this disgraceful district embedded the narrator into troublous and horrified circumstances. In the Golden Day, the narrator and Norton are fooled by its visitors. In the midst of a noisy fight, Norton’s health gets worse and falls unconscious. He is recovered by a former doctor whom the narrator thinks insane. Upon their return to the college, the narrator is expelled by the president of this college, Dr Bledsoe, for his ill treatment of this important white man, Mr. Norton. Bledsoe gives the narrator seven letters, intended to be delivered to the mentioned factories in New York and enable him to acquire some money for his enrolment once again in the college. However, Bledsoe gives the narrator the runaround, as his true motive was to wipe out the narrator.

The second section shifts its plot to explore the narrator’s life in New York as a worker at the Liberty paint company. Young and naïve, the narrator makes a journey to New York. Excited and dazzled with the new metropolitan landscape and the black mood of life, he rents a room in Men’s House in the black district of Harlem. The next morning, the narrator begins dealing his six letters to different secretaries of the employers, and waits for their reply. Waiting in vain, the narrator grows dubious toward these secretaries, and decides to handle the last letter personally to the employer, Mr. Emerson. Even though the narrator manages to meet the son of the last employer, Mr. Emerson, he is not hired in the factory. Emerson’s son is honest toward the narrator, as he informs the narrator that he was hoodwinked by Dr. Bledsoe. The letters are intended only to damage the narrator’s reputation, and dissuade him from coming back into the college:

My dear Mr. Emerson:

The bearer of this letter is a former student of ours (I say former because he shall never, under any circumstances, be enrolled as a student here again) who has been expelled for a most serious defection from our strictest rules of deportment. Due, however, to circumstances the nature of which I shall explain to you in person on the occasion of the next meeting of the board, it is to the best interests of the college that this young man has no knowledge of the finality of his expulsion. For it is indeed his hope to return here to his classes in the fall. However, it is to the best interests of the great work which we are dedicated to perform, that he continue undisturbed in these vain hopes while remaining as far as possible from our midst...(190- 191)

In addition, Emerson's son helps the narrator to find another job in the Liberty Paint Company. The narrator feels ashamed and very humiliated towards Emerson's son, and goes berserk. Consequently, he decides to take revenge on Dr Bledsoe. Due to the lack of money and hoping to indulge the necessary power and implements to stimulate his vindictiveness, the narrator takes in the Liberty paint.

The narrator engages in this labor with little instruction from his chief Mr. Kimbro. His task consists of "opening each bucket and put in ten drops of this stuff [black liquid]... Then you stir it' til it disappears. After it's mixed you to take this brush and paint out a sample on one of these" (199- 200). The narrator is fired from this business since he confusedly fuses the wrong ingredient into the paint. He is removed to work in "a deep basement. Three levels underground [he] pushed upon a heavy metal door marked "Danger" and descended into a noisy, dimly lit room. There was something familiar about the fumes that filled the air and [he] had just thought pine, when a high-pitched Negro voice rang out above the machine sounds" (207).

This section also depicts the narrator's inclusion into the Brotherhood. Dragging himself to New York, the narrator stumbles upon an unfair eviction of a black couple who implored the police to let them pray for the last time in their house. In the light of this injustice, the narrator grows indignant, and moves to action. He delivers a speech which stirs quite a few people, who help the old couple to pray all together in their house. As a result, an uprising takes place between them and the police; the narrator manages to run away and meets Brother Jack. The

latter acclaims the narrator's smart speech, and demands that the narrator join him in the Brotherhood. In a state of confusion whether to accept or deny the offer, the narrator, ultimately, gives his acquiescence to Brother Jack. The narrator fits the position of a leader of Harlem community.

Brother Hambro trains the narrator for his new task. The narrator is also given an office by the brothers. In conjunction with brothers Clifton and Tarp, the narrator becomes comfortable in his new world. As the Brotherhood evolves, its principles are disseminated to cover every part of Harlem. In a campaign in Harlem, Clifton and the narrator meet Ras the Exhorter and fight each other. Ras condemns both the narrator and Clifton as traitors to their mother Africa.

The narrator receives an enigmatic letter from an unknown figure. It petrified and dismayed much the narrator. However, brother Tarp reassures and relieves him, by relating his past griefs and sorrows. Trap also gives the narrator a chain link he secured nineteen years ago when escaping the chain gang. Brother Wrestrum also makes a visit to the narrator when the latter receives the enigmatic letter. Wrestrum, however, grows suspicious toward the narrator, as he confounds that Trap's chain link offer opposes the Brotherhood principles, for this chain symbolizes using force to prop up the black cause. Refusing to be interviewed, the narrator is, however, constrained to do so, even with his efforts to send Clifton for this interview instead. Later on, the Brotherhood urgently assembles for discussing the narrator's issue with the Brotherhood. The narrator is charged by brother Wrestrum for dominating the Brotherhood and resenting from its principles. Even though he is released from these accusations, he is given a new task which centers on women issues. Entangled by this new job, the narrator is seduced by a married woman. Despite the fact that the affair does not reach the Brotherhood, the narrator is still frustrated and anxious. The narrator is also called for another imperative meeting that is held for questioning Clifton's immediate disappearance. The narrator is, finally, permitted to return to his old job. He notices that, since he left it, the Brotherhood has changed; bothers Trap and Macco have been dismissed from their business too. In addition, the Brotherhood ideology begins to lose its power among the Harlem community. As a result, the narrator decides to leave the Brotherhood, but Clifton's attitude amazes the narrator, as the former goes on selling dancing Sambo Dolls in the street. Clifton is ultimately murdered by the police force and the narrator strives successfully to arrange Clifton's funeral and considers him as a hero. The Brotherhood community, nonetheless, becomes heavily outraged and condemns the narrator's act. Accordingly, a meeting is held, where Brother Jack pours out his wrath on the narrator, and bans him from acting on his own

way. Profoundly angry, the narrator drags himself in the neighboring districts, and meets Ras the Exhorter. In the light of the Brotherhood's disarray, Ras takes the opportunity to promote his ideals among Harlem and offends the Brotherhood's limited action succeeding Clifton's death. In order to escape Ras the Exhorter, the narrator chooses to disguise himself by buying dark glasses and a white hat. This successful new guise makes the narrator correspond to the town's famous figure Rinehart. The narrator is helped in vain to suit the Brotherhood scientific program. He comes to realize that the Brotherhood is created only to defraud and control its members. Thus, the narrator is determined to attack the Brotherhood internally and secretly. To achieve this, the narrator embraces his dying grandfather's advice of overcoming the whites with yeses and seduces Sybil, the wife of an important white brother to get more information about the Brotherhood. Eventually, the narrator is called for a serious riot in Harlem. Upon his arrival, he is soon implicated in that riot. Running away from Ras the Exhorter, the narrator falls in a hole and decides to hibernate there, preparing for a better successful action to achieve his dream.

3- The novels' narrative techniques

The events in *The Great Gatsby* and *Invisible Man* are related by different types of narrators, but both of them are characters in the storyline. In *The Great Gatsby*, the narrator Nick Carraway is a character in the novel. He narrates the life story of the Jay Gatsby through his own perspective. Young and honest, Nick "is compelled to judgment" of the distinct surrounding events. Even though Nick appends some details about his own life, he is more focusing on reporting the life and experiences of the mysterious protagonist Jay Gatsby. He relates Gatsby's dream, as well as the dreams of other characters; "Nick is acutely observant and accurate in chronicling the dreams and desires of the people around him" (Bolton 195). Nick did not know Jay Gatsby until he moved to West Egg, where they became neighbors. In this respect, Nick has missed a part of the early life of Jay Gatsby. Thus, Nick turns to the other characters' account for more information about Jay Gatsby. Additionally, Nick also reports some accounts related to Jay Gatsby from people's gossip. Wayne Booth calls Nick Carraway "an unreliable narrator"; he is involved in the narrative, and participates in Gatsby's life story (qtd. in Bolton 193). Fitzgerald uses Nick as both the narrator and a mediator between Gatsby and Daisy. With the help of Nick, who invited Daisy for tea, Gatsby meets again Daisy after five years.

In *Invisible Man*, the narrator narrates his own life and experiences as he searches to uplift his individuality in American society; “in writing down his autobiography, the invisible man is himself an artist, one who orders the events of his experience as a coherent whole, subverting his enemies through irony and parody” (qtd. in Neimneh et al 62). He is the protagonist of the novel. He recollects his misadventures as a boy at the Tuskegee Institute, then a worker at the Liberty Paint company, and finally a member of the Brotherhood. His misadventure settles when a riot erupted in New York that leads to his fall in a hole. His narration emerges only from his memories. Moreover, this narration releases the narrator from “his present dilemma by reliving his past, giving it new form” (qtd. in Neimneh et al 62).

Comparing the novels’ narrative technique, *Invisible Man*’s narrator is more objective and more reliable, as the narrator relates his own story. In *The Great Gatsby*, however, Jay Gatsby is portrayed by Nick Carraway, and his story is told by Nick’s perspective which includes witnessed events, gossiping, and the memories of the other characters.

Both Ralph Ellison and Francis Scott Fitzgerald are considered as modernist writers. Both of them used Modernist techniques to pen a world of despair and disarray. Their fictional society which was embedded in immorality, corruption, and injustice, reflected the real world in both authors’ times.

Fitzgerald finds out modernism as the best technique to portray the Jazz Age. *The Great Gatsby* explores the American society’s modern life in the twenties, which drifted away from its conventional moral values, and Victorian way of life. During this age, America witnessed an economic expansion. Yet, above all, corruption, immorality, racism and crime reigned during this age. This chaotic world was only the aftermath of the First World War. *Invisible Man*, in the other way, reflects the injustice and discrimination that prevailed in the twenties, and the black Americans’ search for an identity and individuality. During this era, Afro-Americans are “treated as a humble flock of people, subdued by the established norms of the society”, they were exploited by the whites (MazLaveckiené 43). Ralph Ellison also features in his novel *Invisible Man* the surfeit of rampant ideologies among the black community at his time; he shows above all how African Americans were influenced and divided by these political ideologies advanced to foster the black rights.

Both novels present characters that contributed to the creation of a chaotic world, and trace other characters striving to survive among this confusion. Of more importance, these works present a world in which all of the characters’ dreams are illusory and unattainable.

Fitzgerald and Ellison employ modernist techniques in the building of their story. Such techniques can be revealed through the use of flashbacks.

After Gatsby's death, Nick Carraway left Long Island and returned to his Mid Western homeland, where he recollects the past life story of Gatsby that occurred two years ago. Within the story, there are also flashbacks which tell the early life of Jay Gatsby including his early love affair with Daisy and his early encounter with Dan Cody. These flashbacks represent the memories of other characters which Nick uses to extend his narration.

In *Invisible Man*, the invisible narrator lives in an underground world. He relates his life story and experiences of searching for his identity that led him to this new state of invisibility and subterranean hole.

The novels' narrative techniques involve also the abundant use of interior monologue, the interior voices of the characters are revealed. In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Carraway is introduced through the interior monologue in which he states "I graduated from New Heaven in 1915... I participated in that Teutonic migration known as the Great War... I came back restless... I decided to go East and learn the bond business" (Fitzgerald 9). Nick is self conscious. Through his inner voice, he presents his judgments and opinions on the events and characters surrounding him. When Gatsby reveals false accounts about his background, Nick remarks that "with an effort [he] managed to restrain [his] incredulous laughter" (72). Of most importance, through Nick Carraway's voice, the early life of Jay Gatsby is exposed to the reader.

Nick Carraway reveals Jay Gatsby's early life when his dream of opulence was about to be realized. At the age of the seventeenth, Jay Gatsby altered his legal name James Gatz to Jay Gatsby when he saw the opportunity for a new and sophisticated career that he had long dreamed of emerging. It was the millionaire Dan Cody who had first made Gatsby's youthful dreams attainable, and pulled him out of his hatred poverty-stricken world. Jay Gatsby was loafing on his borrowed rowboat alongside Lake Superior where he met the millionaire Dan Cody (104-105). Nick Carraway suggests that Jay Gatsby had already got the name ready, since "Jay Gatsby" developed out of his conception of a wealthy and sophisticated world. He was the son of poor unsuccessful farmers; yet, Gatsby's sophisticated conception of himself had completely neglected them as parents. Jay Gatsby maintained his conception till the end of his life.

Nick Carraway also reveals the early love story of Jay Gatsby with Daisy. He states that

she was the first 'nice girl' he had ever known ... He found her excitingly desirable. He went to her house, at first with other officers from Camp Taylor, then alone. It amazed, him - he had never been in such a beautiful house before. But what gave it an air of breathless intensity was that Daisy lived there... It excited him, too, that many men had already loved Daisy - it increased her value in his eyes. He felt their presence all about the house, pervading the air with the shades and echoes of still vibrant emotions. (154)

Through interior monologue in *Invisible Man*, the narrator narrates his past misadventures. He introduces himself as “an invisible man” (Ellison 3). The narrator’s inner thoughts and voice can be, for example, revealed through the events surrounding his participation in the Battle Royal. The narrator’s feeling and thoughts are revealed to the reader:

My saliva became like hot bitter glue. A glove connected with my head, filling my mouth with warm blood ... A blow landed hard against the nape of my neck. I felt myself going over, my head hitting the floor ... I lay prone, pretending that I was knocked out, but felt myself seized by hands and yanked to my feet ... My arms were like lead, my head smarting from blows. I managed to feel my way to the ropes and held on, trying to catch my breath. (18)

Succeeding the explosion of the machines in the Liberty Paint Company, the narrator is transported to the factory’s hospital, where the doctors try a Lobotomy, a surgical incision into the narrator’s brain. His inner feelings are exposed to the reader in order to emphasize the narrator’s pains; “I was pounded between crushing electrical pressures; pumped between live electrodes like an accordion between a player's hands. My lungs were compressed like a bellows and each time my breath returned I yelled” (180). Ultimately, the narrator’s thoughts are also revealed when he unveils his feelings in his first speech while in the Brotherhood. He says,

I feel, I feel suddenly that I have become more human. Do you understand? More human. Not that I have become a man, for I was born a man. But that I am more human. I feel strong, I feel able to get things done! I feel that I can see sharp and clear and far down the dim corridor of history and in it I can hear the footsteps of

militant fraternity! No, wait, let me confess . . . I feel the urge to affirm my feelings . . . I feel that here, after a long and desperate and uncommonly blind journey, I have come home . . . Home! With your eyes upon me I feel that I've found my true family! My true people! My true country! I am a new citizen of the country of your vision, a native of your fraternal land. I feel that here tonight, in this old arena, the new is being born and the vital old revived. (346)

Embodying modernist themes and techniques, *The Great Gatsby* is considered as one of the most important modernist works of the twenties. And through modernism, Ellison manages to transmit his message of black Americans' sufferings in racist America.

As a conclusion, the Harlem Renaissance, the African American literary and artistic movement that flourished in the roaring twenties, marked the history of America as well as its literature. Mostly, both writers' ideologies and values are featured in *The Great Gatsby* and *Invisible Man*, and the 1920s can be considered as the primary source of inspiration to both authors. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* examines, but above all criticizes the immoral shift which the American society was entangled. Brucolli states that this novel "became a supplementary or even substitute form of history" (6). Ellison, on the other hand, in his masterpiece *Invisible Man*, boosts the Harlem renaissance period; this rebirth was the major ground behind the successful advance of the Afro-Americans' rights. Ellison explores the ideology of the Harlem Renaissance, Afro- Americans' pride in race and culture, which was a major weapon for the triumph of the American dream.

Chapter Two:

**Identity quest in *The Great Gatsby* and
*Invisible Man***

Introduction

The second chapter is the rudiment of my dissertation since it examines the main affinities and differences between both novels. In fact, I will explore the theme of identity relevant to both literary pieces. To achieve this aim, I will analyze the different novels' characters who are struggling to adopt an identity. The characters' analysis will include mainly the protagonists of these novels, Jay Gatsby and the invisible narrator, and other minor characters. In *The Great Gatsby*, the characters Jay Gatsby and Myrtle Wilson look for an identity among the old aristocracy. In *Invisible Man*, the black quest for identity centers in the dominant white society.

This study will highlight that the American society is shaped by a diversity of ethnic groups. But, in the light of identity issue in both novels, this study will reveal the rampant inequalities and infringements among these diverse groups. Furthermore, this study will also shed light on the difference between the white American quest for identity and the Afro-American one.

This chapter will also examine the American Dream, since both protagonists embrace the American Dream for the sake of reaching an identity. I will highlight how Jay Gatsby believes in the American Dream, as he is a self made man who acquired wealth despite his poor background; whereas the narrator of *Invisible Man* achieves the American Dream through education and migration. The analysis of *The Great Gatsby* and *Invisible Man* will reveal different concepts of the American Dream.

1- *The Great Gatsby*

1-1 Jay Gatsby's quest for identity

The Great Gatsby yields the fictional life story of Jay Gatsby. Jay Gatsby grows up from an ill-provided childhood in rural North Dakota. Yet, since his early youth, Gatsby loathes his poverty-stricken world and low social rank, and sets about building fortune.

Throughout the novel, Gatsby's identity is mysterious; we are not introduced to his true identity till the end of the novel. He is striving both spiritually and physically to invent his character and new identity as one of "the established rich whose fortune was made in an earlier generation" (Parkinson 15). Accordingly, Gatsby's identity is unfixed.

Gatsby is primarily introduced into the sophisticated, opulent world when he meets the millionaire Dan Cody in his luxurious yacht. “in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants”, Gatsby drags himself along the beach, and meets the millionaire Dan Cody who made his fortune from the “rush for metal” (Fitzgerald 104-105). A fortuneless teenager, Gatsby is overwhelmingly entranced by this glamour, and shortly developed a fervent interest in involving himself in this refined world. Gatsby notifies Dan Cody of a possible storm that might destroy him. Dan Cody in return admits Gatsby into his yacht. From this respect, Gatsby’s dream begins to be realized. Dan Cody bestows Jay Gatsby with an aristocratic life for which he longed for. In addition to that, Jay Gatsby “was quick and extravagantly ambitious” (107). Jay Gatsby primarily discards his legitimate name James Gatz, and adopts Jay Gatsby “to suit his entry into the world of the debauched millionaire Dan Cody” (Parkinson 97). Nick states that Gatsby “had the name ready for a long time”; since from the early age, it developed “from his Platonic conception of himself” (Fitzgerald 105). Gatsby breaks away from his underprivileged, rural ancestors, and “borrowed a new personality in achieving his dream” (Parkinson 22).

A heavy drunken man, Dan Cody trusts Jay Gatsby, and points to him as “steward, mate, skipper, secretary and even jailor”. Dan Cody removes Jay Gatsby from his poverty, and introduces him into the wealthy world by “buy[ing] him a blue coat, six pairs of white duck trousers, and a yachting cap” (Fitzgerald 107). He enjoys sophistication on Dan Cody’s boat for five years. Moreover, Jay Gatsby is about to accomplish his big dream of opulence that would give him an aristocratic identity, when he “inherited money - a legacy of twenty five thousand dollars” from Dan Cody (107). Despite Gatsby’s lust after prosperity, his love for the aristocratic Daisy, whom he met while being a penniless officer in the military service, is widely recognized as his major and foremost impulse for his big dream of amount of money. Jay Gatsby is in love with Daisy and her wealthy rank. This love stimulates Gatsby’s greediness to be assimilated into the better-offs: “During the war, Daisy and her luxurious lifestyle extended his conception of the protective power of wealth and provided him with an emotional focus for his need to endow that world with beauty and grace” (Parkinson 97). Gatsby is consumed with the hope to endorse the beliefs and values of the aristocracy in order to be its powerful member and latterly to be accepted by his beloved Daisy. Jay Gatsby is aware that his identity could not win Daisy, especially that the latter is materialistic; “her voice is full of money” (Fitzgerald 126).

Gatsby devotes his career to acquiring fortune. He “believe[s] that the possession of wealth enable[s] him to vault over the middle class into the position of social [aristocracy]”

(Parkinson 11). However, Gatsby's dream of affluence is fulfilled through illicit ways. Gatsby launches a criminal organization. In conjunction with the great bootlegger Myer Wolfsheim, Gatsby sells illegal alcohol and stolen securities; "He and this Wolfsheim bought up a lot of side-street drugstores here and in Chicago and sold grain alcohol over the counter" (Fitzgerald 140).

In a plea for achieving an identity among the well-off, Gatsby settles among the wealthy families in West Egg, where he purchases an enormous gothic palace; "it was a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden" (11).

Gatsby also appropriates the traditions of the old aristocracy through the value of literacy. In contrast to other classes, the upper classes usually afford the means, and develop a family tradition in acquiring a good education. Gatsby always claims that he is from oxford, though he attended oxford only for five months as a reward for his successful work while he was in the army service. In addition, Gatsby possesses a library full of books. To prove the account that he is an oxford man, Gatsby emulates the speech of the old aristocratic English gentlemen. Nick Carraway states that Gatsby "was picking his words with care". Gatsby also adopts their style, he wears "a caramel-coloured suit" or a "white flannel suit, silver shirt and gold-coloured tie" (70-81).

To fit with old aristocratic ideals, Gatsby keeps contending that his wealthy family bequeaths him huge money; "I am the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West – all dead now", he claims, "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 ... My family all died and I came into a good deal of money" (71).

Nevertheless, Jay Gatsby failed in achieving his dream of both opulence and love. Even along with his huge wealth, Gatsby does not manage to enter the world of "the arrogant, inherited old-wealth of Tom and Daisy Buchanan" (Bloom 67). Instead, he is merely made a victim of this dream.

1-2 Myrtle Wilson's quest for Identity

During the Jazz Age, women were accorded a new status. They departed from the conventions of the Victorian society in which they were oppressed and dominated by men.

During the twenties, women were granted both economic and political freedom, and became known as New Women. Generally, this freedom was echoed in their mood of life and dressing fashion. These new women brought out “the desire for good time and for material possession” (Parkinson 64). At the same time, their primary target was to belong to the upper class.

In *The Great Gatsby*, the female character, Myrtle Wilson, mirrors the new woman of the 1920s. Myrtle Wilson lives in the Valley of Ashes along with her husband George Wilson who owns a garage in this district. Yet, their marriage seems unhappy. Myrtle states that “[she] married him because [she] thought he was a gentleman... [she] thought he knew something about breeding, but he wasn’t fit to lick [her] shoe” (Fitzgerald 41). She despises her husband on the grounds of his working class status. Myrtle’s true identity is first referred to in the novel through Jordan Baker’s account, when the former calls up Tom Buchanan. Jordan reports that Myrtle is Tom’s mistress, and has not “the decency” and privilege to interrupt an aristocratic family dinner because of her low social rank (22).

Myrtle greedily dreamed of a life among the gentry. Thus, she starts a romantic relationship with the powerful aristocratic Tom Buchanan. She “desired above all Tom’s opulence when she first saw him on the train in his dress suit and patent leather shoes” (Bloom 72). For Myrtle, Tom can grant her the wealth and the power which she covetously desires.

Myrtle imitates the dressing fashion as well as the manners of the aristocracy. She “let four taxicabs drive away before she selected a new one, lavender-coloured with gray upholstery” (Fitzgerald 35). Myrtle wears “brown figured muslin”, and an “elaborate afternoon dress of cream-coloured chiffon” (32-35). She thinks that putting on garments which are in harmony with those “of the old wealthy elite will grant her instant admission into the exclusive world” (Bloom 76). She embodies “the consumer mentality that refined identity as a matter of having rather being” (Kurnutt 104). She behaves in a way to show refinement, “Throwing a regal homecoming glance around the neighbourhood (sic), Mrs Wilson gathered up her dog and her other purchases, and went haughtily in” (Fitzgerald 34).

Myrtle also throws parties in her New York apartment to exhibit her distinct garments that show aristocracy. Myrtle “is conscious of the way in which clothing serves as a class marker” (Bloom 76). She is predominantly interested in physical appearance. Myrtle behaves as if she is already an aristocratic member. While in the party, she shows off her superiority,

Mrs Wilson had changed her costume some time ago, and now was attired in an elaborate afternoon dress of cream-coloured chiffon, which gave out a continual rustle as she swept about the room. With the influence of her dress her personality had also undergone a change. The intense vitality that had been so remarkable in the garage was converted into impressive hauteur. Her laughter, her gestures, her assertion became more violently affected moment by moment... (Fitzgerald 36-37)

Ultimately, Myrtle's hope to embody an aristocratic way of life failed. Tom Buchanan, whom she relies on for achieving her dream, is only mistreating and dominating her to satisfy his own desire and power over her. Tom Buchanan is not determined at all to give up Daisy and accept her in his society. Thus, both Myrtle's life and dream die out, when she is crushed by Daisy on Gatsby's car. Myrtle, like Gatsby, is the victim of the dream for opulence and the world which she longed for. Tom does not satisfy her desire of material success; instead, she is only treated as the object of Tom's desire. Despite Myrtle's undue imitation of the upper class, she does not manage to enter the world of aristocracy; her garments do not correspond to "Daisy's roadster and spotless flowing gowns, gleaming with silver, safe and prod above the hot struggles of the poor" (Bloom 70). Both Gatsby and Myrtle "cannot comprehend that attaining [their dreams] is far from complicated that slipping a disguise... therefore doomed into a life of disillusionment". (76).

2- Invisible Man

2-1 The narrator's quest for identity

Albeit the American Institution, succeeding the Civil War, had abolished slavery and called for equality, white Americans flouted the laws and followed their accustomed racism, infringements, and discrimination, chiefly in the southern states. Accordingly, Afro-Americans did not give up fighting and were hoping to achieve their victory. Equally important, the Afro-American writers propped up the black struggle by using their pens. They explored distinct black experiences and afflictions that issued from whites' racism to make the Whites conscious of their monstrous guilt. At the same time, they urged the blacks to keep resistance, and advancing appropriate and better ways for the accomplishment of their dreams. One of these Afro-American writers is Ralph Waldo Ellison. His masterpiece

Invisible Man explores the blacks' plight in America, and the way Afro-Americans searched for their identity. It portrays the young nameless black boy's, the narrator's, journey seeking to adopt an identity in America. During this long journey, the narrator is influenced by a surfeit of political ideologies advanced by black leaders for the achievement of identity and social justice. The narrator is nameless; he is barred from having an identity, and denied individuality in American society. His journey of identity quest takes root when he was a graduate student in the south, where racism and segregation were excessively rampant among the Whites.

At the onset, the narrator begins to assert an identity as a black man in America. Through the narrator's journey, Ellison ironically explores the distinct black ideologies prevailing in the twenties that are thought to foster Afro-American identity and independence. Yet, the primary target of Ellison is to reprimand these multiple ideologies, and demonstrate that they are unworthy and only restraining Afro-American independence. The narrator is greatly impressed by the founder of the college, where he is awarded for his speech to pursuit his studies. The Founder is modeled after the great Booker T Washington. The narrator is deeply entranced by the greatness and celebrity of the Founder, or the nobility of Booker T Washington; chiefly, how he came to this status after those harsh and black years of slavery. The narrator ironically approves of Washington's ideologies, and grows hankering for reaching greatness and influence as Washington. The narrator confirms in the prologue that "[he] visualized [himself] as a potential Booker T Washington" (Ellison 14). In this respect, to adopt an identity in America, the narrator embraces Washington's recommendations for self-improvement to elevate his status as an American individual.

Booker T Washington's philosophy of black identity promotion lies in the ideology of "appeasement" and obedience (Cuneo 24). The Afro-Americans, Washington advocates, have to break away from the old conventional ways of using force and violence to achieve their rights. Besides, they have to free themselves from the traditional rural living patterns. Washington rather urges the blacks to acquiesce to humiliation, inferiority, resign themselves to the White authority, and embody "a tolerance of segregation, and a submissive attitude" toward the white Americans (24). Booker T Washington stated in his famous speech the *Atlanta Exposition Address of 1895*:

As we have proved our loyalty to you in the past, nursing your children, watching by the sick-bed of your mothers and fathers, and often following them with tear-dimmed eyes to their graves, so in the future, in our humble way, we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if need be, in defence of yours, interlacing our industrial, commercial, civil, and religious life with yours in a way that shall make the interests of both races one.

(153)

He impressed the blacks on the importance of hard work and literacy for achieving their goals of racial equality. Through hard work and literacy, Washington believed, African Americans would achieve self-progress and supremacy. Accordingly, white Americans will recognize the black progress, and ultimately, they will promote the black values and position by awarding them admission into their nation. Washington focused on the economic development of the Afro-Americans, and not their social rank: “In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress” (153-154). Yet, for him, the blacks’ social equality would be accomplished only through intellectual development and hard work to bring forth financial success. The blacks’ intellectual and economic development would serve American society as a whole; it would pave the way for Black Americans’ full integration.

Following Washington’s ideology, the narrator devotes his life to succeed in his education. He accepts humiliation and pains only to achieve self-improvement through his studies. He reflects Washington’s ideology of compliance when he is invited to deliver a speech at the ballroom of a refined hotel. He obeys the whites’ orders when the latter compel him to participate in the fierce blindfolded Battle Royal. The narrator fights successfully in order to be rewarded by the white influential attendants; he says: “I wanted to deliver my speech more than anything else in the world, felt that only these men could judge truly my ability” (Ellison 25).

However, the white hosts inflicted on him more humiliation and degradation, the narrator highlights saying “The harder we fought the more threatening the [white] men became” (14). The narrator along with his schoolmates was humbled and lowered to please only the white guests who maintain their superiority and power over them. After that pain, oppression, and humiliation, the narrator is finally allowed to give his speech; he stresses that “humility was the secret, indeed, the very essence of progress” (14). This speech echoes Washington’s belief that Black Americans’ betterment can be attained only through humiliation and obedience:

To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man, who is their next-door neighbour, I would say: "Cast down your bucket where you are" — cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded.

Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions. And in this connection it is well to bear in mind that whatever other sins the South may be called to bear, when it comes to business, pure and simple, it is in the South that the Negro is given a man's chance in the commercial world, and in nothing is this Exposition more eloquent than in emphasizing this chance. (Washington 152)

Equally important, the white attendants jeer merely at the narrator's speech and disregard its significance. In that respect, Ellison shows his discontent with Washington's philosophy; the white attendants did not appraise the narrator's graduation, they only humbled and degraded his humanity. The whites, according to Ellison, will never give up their racist ideologies. Ellison exposes his dissatisfaction with Washington's views mainly when the narrator replaces "social equality" by "social responsibility". The white men utter racist names, as the narrator mistakenly says "social equality". They warn the narrator that "[they] mean to do right by [him], but [he's] got to know [his] place at all times" (Ellison 25). Furthermore, Ellison reproves Washington's ideology through the narrator's grandfather. The grandfather believed in Washington's claims; however, he ultimately recognized that it was unworthy.

Through the narrator's dismissal from college, Ellison expressed his disagreement with Washington's concept of social equality. Ellison criticized Washington's ideology as serving only the white people. In the college, black students were treated as machines; the narrator contends, "we drilled four-abreast down the smooth asphalt and pivoted and entered the chapel on Sundays, our uniforms pressed, shoes shined, minds laced up, eyes blind like those of robots to visitors and officials on the low, whitewashed reviewing stand" (28). Ellison affirms that the Tuskegee Institute is not created for the promotion of the blacks' education, but is rather "more advantageous to the whites who would benefit from the labor of the technically trained blacks it graduated than to the blacks themselves, who would be kept running for the whites' benefit" (Cuneo 25).

Failing to achieve his dream of self-progress, the narrator moves to New York where he is determined to work hard for his economic development to acquire power that will allow him come back to the institute. After facing difficulties to find a work in New York, the narrator embarks to work in the Liberty Paint Company. While working, the narrator thinks that he is responsible for that job. At the same time, he expects admiration and appraisals from his patron Mr. Kimbro. Even though the narrator worked hard, he is not awarded by the white American. The whites exploit only Black Americans for their advantage; Brockway states "we are the machines inside the machine" (Ellison 168). To some extent, the whites deny even the black contribution to their work. Mr. Brockway claims: "Without what I do they couldn't do nothing, they be making bricks without straw. An' not only do I make up the base, I fix the varnishes and lots of the oils too . . ." (166). Succeeding the explosion which injured the narrator, he is compelled to leave his work. Once again, the narrator failed to rise. Despite the fact that American society believed that hard work would enable man to ascend to a good social position, black Americans' hard work always ended up in loss. In the light of his loss, the narrator leaves away Washington's ideology of black promotion through hard work and education.

Being free for a while, the narrator is soon influenced by another ideology. With the advice from Brother Jack, the narrator embarks actively to work for the black cause. He reflects the policy of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois who called Black Americans to endorse military principles for the assertion of their civil rights. While in the Brotherhood, the narrator is compelled to assume a new identity and a new name,

This is your new identity," Brother Jack said. "Open it."

Inside I found a name written on a slip of paper.

"That is your new name," Brother Jack said. "Start thinking of yourself by that name from this moment. Get it down so that even if you are called in the middle of the night you will respond. Very soon you shall be known by it all over the country. You are to answer to no other, understand? (240)

Moreover, he is forced to give up his origin and all what is related to his past, even his family:

Our discipline demands therefore that we talk to no one and that we avoid situations in which information might be given away unwittingly. So you must put aside your past. Do you have a family?"

"Yes."

"Are you in touch with them?"

"Of course. I write home now and then," I said, beginning to resent his method of questioning. His voice had become cold, searching. "Then it's best that you cease for a while," he said". (239)

Of more importance, the narrator has to follow the Brotherhood's scientific program. This echoes Du Bois' belief in *The Talented Tenth*. Du Bois advocates the formulation of a group of black educators who would better guide the black community into racial justice. The narrator is named as a Harlem political leader. Du Bois' belief is reflected much more by brother Wrestrum; "This business of being a brother is a full-time job. You have to be pure in heart, and you have to be disciplined in body and mind" (394). He urges the narrator to act according to the Brotherhood scientific principles. Through the Brotherhood's principles, they can guide the black people to achieve easily independence. "The Brotherhood is against violence and terror and provocation of any kind – aggressive", instead they have to "strive to reach the people through their intelligence" (365-350).

In time, the narrator discovers only that the Brotherhood is not actually helping the blacks to achieve equality and justice; however, the narrator is used under the false pretense that the Brotherhood acts for the black question, but it was to keep their authority and power. Eventually, the direct engagement for the support of the black cause leads only into violence. In fact, a riot erupted in New York between the Brotherhood members and Ras the Exhorter's men. The narrator ends up falling into a hole. Ellison criticized the idea of using violence for the acquisition of the black rights; violence leads only to more disastrous situations, rather than stimulating Afro-Americans' independence.

2-2 Ras the Exhorter's quest for identity

Besides the narrator, Ras the Exhorter is another character searching for an identity in America. He is from the West Indies and a leader of the Harlem black community. In contrast to the narrator who admits the social integration of whites and blacks, Ras the Exhorter discharges this racial unity. He despises the whites, and he does not believe in their determination to integrate the black Americans into their community. For him, the whites will never give away their accustomed racism and infringements; they use the blacks only for their advantages. Ras the Exhorter thinks that Black Americans will never acquire independence if

they still remain under the whites' authority and oppressions. He rather thinks that African Americans' independence will be achieved only with a complete separation from the whites. Ras the Exhorter is proud of his race and culture of African heritage. Thus, in *Invisible Man*, Ras the Exhorter opposes the Brotherhood's principles. He condemns both the narrator and brother Clifton as traitors of Africa and their ancestors; "AFRICAN! Why you with them?... They sell you out... They enslave us -- you forget that? How can they mean a black mahn (sic) any good? How they going to be your brother?" (Ellison 287). He "goes wild when he sees Black and white people together" (283). He even ventures to kill Clifton, but ultimately begs him to leave the Brotherhood and join him, he figures out Clifton as "a chief, a black King!... but something tell [him] , 'No, no! You might be killing your black King!'" (288).

Ras is self-reliant, brave, strong, and not afraid of the whites, "Nowhere! Ras is not ignorant, nor is Ras afraid. No! Ras, he be here black and fighting for the liberty of the black people" (373). Holding campaigns in Harlem city, Ras the Exhorter calls Black Americans to be proud of their African identity and come back to their homeland Africa.

Ras the Exhorter may represent the ideology of the famous black leader Marcus Garvey; though in an interview, Ellison denies these accounts by asserting that; "No conscious reference to Garvey is intended" (Chester and Howard 11).

Marcus Garvey is the great leader of one of the broadest black movements in America, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, UNIA. He is known for his philosophy of Black Nationalism and "back to Africa" motto (Dagnini 199). Garvey calls Afro-Americans to separate themselves from the whites as the latter will never recognize their humanity in America. Black Americans, Garvey argues, should free themselves from the conventional longing for being as whites in American society; they should instead recognize and be proud of their ethnical legacy; "So many of us find excuses to get out of the Negro race", he argues, "because we are led to believe that the race is unworthy, and that it has not accomplished anything. ...It is we who are unworthy, because we are not contributing to the uplift and up-building of this noble race" (Garvey 7). He also advocates that Black Americans should be independent, "no race, no nation, no man has any divine right to take advantage of others. Why allow the other fellow to bluff you?" (8). Garvey rather urges them to turn back to their African cultural inheritance. His ideology stresses the unity of all Afro-Americans as one family, and incites them to come back to their mother Africa to build an autonomous independent black nation; "Let Africa be our guiding star: our star of destiny" (7).

Garvey is also influenced by the philosophy of Booker T Washington, that education and economic development will stimulate Afro-Americans' independence. Whereas, Booker T Washington urges the Afro-Americans to work hard for the progress and benefit of the whole American nation, Garvey urges them to be educated and work hard to attain success only for themselves, and that will pave the way for their economic, political and cultural independence. "He wanted Black people to stop thinking they were inferior beings and that they could acquire knowledge, technical and financial means to free themselves from the yoke of White people" (Dagnini 200). Like Ras the Exhorter, Garvey holds campaigns in Harlem city where he spreads his idea of Black Nationalism. In addition to the common ideology, Ras the Exhorter's physical appearance corresponds to Garvey's, "his arm bearing a shield, a cape made of the skin of some wild animal around his shoulders. A figure more out of a dream than out of Harlem, than out of even this Harlem night" (Ellison 431).

Though Ellison denies this correspondence, according to Steven C. Tracy, Ras the Exhorter's ideas reflected those of Marcus Garvey; "it is hard to believe that Ras's description and Caribbean accent were not supposed to evoke Garvey and various neo-Garveyite nationalist leaders in Harlem during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s" (140).

Ellison embodies the violent Ras the Exhorter in his novel for the purpose of criticizing the use of violence as a means of getting Afro-Americans' rights. Violence leads only to more dangerous situations. In addition, if Afro-Americans, Ellison advocates, are still outraged against the whites for their mistreatment in the past, they will not achieve equality and independence.

3- Jay Gatsby's and the narrator's quest for identity

From a comparative study between *Invisible Man* and *The Great Gatsby*, one can distinguish that both novels' protagonists, Jay Gatsby and the black narrator, share the same experience of identity quest. Both of them denied their true identities and longed for a new one. Yet, the major reasons behind their actions are different.

As aforementioned, Jay Gatsby desires only to revive his past love with the aristocratic Daisy. Jay Gatsby is unable to marry her as he cannot afford her a comfortable and secured life. So, he embarks in acquiring wealth to be granted admittance into the aristocratic world.

Invisible Man's narrator is oppressed by the racist whites, and is denied humanity in their dominant society. He is bereft of his rights in American society and benefiting from social services. He obeys only the whites' orders. Thus, the narrator makes a long journey seeking to tear down whites' racism, and define his humanity as an American individual with the same rights.

Throughout his quest for an identity, Jay Gatsby imitates only aristocratic principles. Jay Gatsby embodies their mood of life. He lives in an extravagant mansion in West Egg among wealthy people. He thinks that identity is merely achieved through appearance. Thus, throughout his search, Jay Gatsby exhibits his wealth through different expensive materials he purchases to be bestowed with an aristocratic appearance. He earns an extravagant Rolls Royce and wears British shirts which correspond to those of the rich. Jay Gatsby addresses the others as "old sport" "in order to earn the appearances that would permit [him] to win the dream girl" (Stern 105). In short, Gatsby's identity quest consists only in the imitation of the values of the old money and the exhibition of his wealth through the possession of expensive materials. His purpose was only to acquire great amounts of money through bootlegging and gambling.

While for Gatsby imitating and exhibiting the values of the aristocracy means achieving identity, *Invisible Man*'s narrator engages actively in acquiring an identity. The narrator embraces different philosophies and methods to have an identity. He passes from compliance and humiliation in the bigoted south, to hard work for prosperity in the apparent fake land in the north, and finally embarks actively in an organization that would help asserting African Americans' humanity and rights in American society.

Additionally, the black narrator is determined to define his identity with liberty and full rights of which he is denied. Jay Gatsby runs merely after a new identity through acquiring wealth; he is not bereft of his rights and independence, he struggles only to earn money. Similar to Jay Gatsby, the narrator gives importance to physical appearance in the hope to be accepted by the white men. He believes his clothing should be respectful. In the episode when the narrator gives his letters to different companies' employers, the narrator thinks that he should be decent, courteous, well-mannered, and should speak eloquently to get a job:

I would make the best of my contacts. When I met the big men to whom my letters were addressed I would put on my best manner. I would speak softly, in my most

polished tones, smile agreeably and be most polite; and I would remember that if he ("he" meant any of the important gentlemen) should begin a topic of conversation (I would never begin a subject of my own) which I found unfamiliar, I would smile and agree. My shoes would be polished, my suit pressed, my hair dressed (not too much grease) and parted on the right side; my nails would be clean and my armpits well deodorized -- you had to watch the last item. (Ellison 122)

Ultimately, Jay Gatsby leads a comfortable life without being assimilated into the aristocracy, he is independent and wealthy. He wants to hide his true identity as he is from a poverty-stricken background. Moreover, Gatsby provides false accounts that he is wealthy by inheritance. He struggles both physically and mentally to adopt an identity as a well-off. He also develops an identity out of his idealization of the past love and true American Dream. Thus, Jay Gatsby does not achieve an aristocratic identity but embraces a mysterious one. In contrast to Jay Gatsby, the narrator is oppressed by the white men, set apart from the whole society. He yearns for a place among the whites. Yet, both Jay Gatsby and the narrator fail to adopt a new identity. Jay Gatsby's attainment of money and imitation of the old refined aristocracy have not accorded him a place among the old money. Gatsby could not attain the powerful and wealthy aristocracy. It seemed that only those who inherited huge money from their families can join this special class. Gatsby's rejection of his true identity leads him to demise. As for the narrator, even though his search for a place among the whites fails, he becomes at last mindful of his true identity. His nightmarish journey ends up underground "[he] took to the cellar; [he] hibernated" (573).

America is made of diversity of ethnic groups; the narrator contends: "America is woven of many strands; I would recognize them and let it so remain. It's "winner take nothing" that is the great truth of our country or of any country. Life is to be lived, not controlled; and humanity is won by continuing to play in face of certain defeat" (577). At last, he is determined to emerge out of the hole to live his life, but without conforming to the real environment, "an attitude...against the trend of the time" (576). He would behave as an American individual with full responsibility, "even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play", he claims (581). He would live for love and social equality along with other races.

4- Gatsby's American Dream

The concept of the American Dream stemmed from the past, when the first Pilgrims left their mother England, and settled in the New World. Upon their settlements, these Pilgrims established several values upon which their ideal society was founded. Though unwarily, these Founding Fathers' doctrines constituted the underlying principles of the American Dream. These Pilgrims crossed the ocean to free themselves from the tyranny and the harshness of the dominant Catholic Church, and set up freedom, liberty, and equality as the fundamental values upon which their moral society would be based. They wanted to build a nation in which each individual, regardless of his origins, would be granted rights, freedom, liberty and equality, at the same time, each would be able to achieve happiness and self-prosperity through his own hard work.

Throughout history, Americans chased the American Dream in order to attain a better life. Equally important, many American writers featured the American Dream as an important subject of their literature. Yet, during the twenties, the American Dream was altered to be a new concept, "the cultural shift... led to a particularly literal interpretation of the American Dream' theme" (Heather Beth Johnson 2). In fact, Americans believed that the essence of the American Dream was based on the acquirement of money. The pursuit of happiness, wealth and love through one's hard work was then substituted by the greediness for wealth and worldly vanities with every means including fraudulent, illicit ones. Such a dream is revealed by Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. In this novel, all the characters are running after the American Dream. Jay Gatsby is one of them. Jay Gatsby is "developed out of an idealization of the American Dream" (Trask 64). Yet, Gatsby's Dream is effective in Daisy's world. He embraces the American Dream principles in order to be accorded wealth and power with which he would impress his beloved Daisy, and therefore relive their past love.

4-1 Gatsby as a Self-Made Man

The notion of the self made man stressed that each individual, no matter what his ethnic group is, can accomplish wealth and power through his own hard work. In the American Dream, it is not through the conventional inheritance that one can acquire richness; it is through strong determination for self-improvement, and hard work that one can reach success for an ideal life. The hard worker will be endowed with opulence and power and society will

benefit from his work, in contrast to the wealthy people by heredity who are merely consumers who hinder the progress of the society.

Fitzgerald in his fiction *The Great Gatsby* highlights the American Dream tenet of a self made man. Jay Gatsby is the epitome of the self made man. He belonged to the underprivileged, whose “parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people” (Fitzgerald 105). Yet, this young poor boy became latterly a millionaire through his own efforts and pains. As a penniless teenager, Gatsby gives up his impoverished environment, and becomes determined to reach prosperity. For this purpose, Gatsby set forth daily schedules to follow for his self-improvement;

No wasting time at Shafters...

No more smoking or chewing.

Bath every other day

Read one improving book or magazine per week

Save 5.00[crossed out] 3.00 per week

Be better to parents. (180)

Afterwards, Gatsby breaks away from his poor family; “his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all”, and makes for New York where he endeavors to find a work to earn money (105). Nevertheless, Gatsby resorts to illegal ways. He becomes a millionaire out of bootlegging and gambling; “He and Wolfsheim brought up a lot of side-street drug-stores here and in Chicago and sold grain alcohol over the counter” (140). Albeit Gatsby obtains illegally his wealth, he embodies the concept of the self made man and achieves the American Dream.

4-2 Material Success

In the 1920s, along with the abundant affluence that sprang up from the outburst of the economy, as well as the spread of the idea of exhibiting one’s wealth, the concept of self-improvement turned out to emphasize only the notion of gaining money, “in America there had been an enormous displacement of the possibility of self by the possibility of wealth” (Stern 104). At the same time, Americans believed that their wealth was merely reflected

“through appearance” (105). All of them went on boasting their wealth through the ownership of distinct expensive materials.

In *The Great Gatsby*, Jay Gatsby mirrors this American Dream notion of material possession. After the accomplishment of wealth, Gatsby exhibits his affluence through earning various materials. Gatsby purchased an enormous mansion in West Egg, where the nouveau riche center. He also buys a rich-color cream Rolls-Royce, which was highly notable during these 1920s. Gatsby’s wealth is also expressed through his distinct shirts; “shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel... shirts of stripes and strolls and plaids in coral and apple-green and lavender and faint orange, with monograms of Indian blue” (Fitzgerald 99).

In order to show off his wealth, Jay Gatsby throws parties each Saturday night. He spends lot of money in order to show his hospitality and supply his guests with comfort ; “Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York - every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by t butler's thumb” (45). However, his guests damage his reputation though gossip.

Gatsby also exposes his wealth through the various dishes and liquors:

On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors d'oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another. (45-46)

He cares much about his guests. When, for instance, one of his guests, Lucile, “tore [her] gown on a chair”, Gatsby then sent her “a package from Courier’s with a new evening gown in it” (49).

In the Roaring twenties, the possessions of materials as well as physical appearance were important to mark one’s social status. For Gatsby, these possessions are the emblem of wealth.

5- The narrator's American Dream

As White Americans “supported a brutal chattel slave system for over two hundred years”, most Afro-Americans were disillusioned with the American Dream (Yarborough 33). Nevertheless, the bulk of them “have generally been among the most fervent believers in the American Dream” to achieve victory (33). Black Americans thought that the “endorsement of capitalist individualism... [is] a sure means to rise in America” (34).

During the twenties, many Afro-American writers advocated that the black pursuit of the American Dream led only to failure. Afro-Americans could not achieve success through embodying the American Dream ideals because of that crushing white racism; “African Americans increasingly believe that racial discrimination is worsening and that it inhibits their race’s ability to participate in the American dream” (Hoshschild 55). Most of these writers stated that “the rules of the game have never been fairly applied to blacks” (Yarborough 34). One of these writers is Ralph Ellison. In his masterpiece, *Invisible Man*, the young black protagonist, the narrator, is bereft of his identity in the American society. In the hope of elevating his individuality, the narrator endorses the American Dream values. His long journey of identity quest was partly based on the American Dream myth.

5-1 Education

While in Africa, the African people lacked education and their way of living centered only on farming. During the middle passage, the African people were transported into the New World, where they still kept their accustomed way of life; they were “married to the plantation system” (Williamson 12). The Whites deprived the Blacks from education. In 1740, South Carolina was the first state that passed a law banning the African slaves’ education. They illegalized the process of “teach[ing] the slaves to read and write for fear that they would use those skills to foment insurrection” (18). If the whites broke the law, they would pay heavy taxes. Moreover, if the blacks dared to learn, they would receive the harshest banishments. The whites instead “educate[d] the blacks to the plantation living” (13).

As time passed, black Americans struggled to get education. They viewed education as the “stepping-stone for higher attainment” (Woodson 7). Literacy is rather another weapon the Afro-Americans used to curb racism. Through their writing, Afro-Americans could make the whites aware of the aftermath of their horrendous guilt.

In *Invisible Man*, the young narrator naively searched for his identity in American society. In order to elevate his individuality, the narrator believes, one should run for his self-improvement and prosperity. He reflects Washington's ideology that calls for self-promotion through hard work and literacy. First of all, the narrator relies on his education to acquire prosperity and greatness. He sees education as a major resolution for the black dilemma. The narrator follows Washington's instructions that education and hard work are the basis of economic success.

After the deliverance of his oration at a ballroom of a fine hotel among the important influential white men, the narrator is appraised with a scholarship to study at the black college, the Tuskegee Institute. He accepts humiliation, and resigns himself to the white men orders only to remain at the college and achieve his dream. Nevertheless, his compliance leads him only to a nightmare, which destroys his dream of prosperity through knowledge. In fact, the narrator is fired from the campus by Dr. Bledsoe because he has mistreated an important white man, Mr. Norton. After the narrator is expelled from college, he travels North to achieve prosperity. Embracing the American Dream of success ended up only in failure for the black narrator.

The narrator's failure to uplift his value through education stresses Ellison's view that even Afro-Americans got education, they did not escape whites' racism and were still treated as inhumanely as other uneducated black people. "The overall achievement of Ellison is a critique of the accommodationist education of Southern blacks and their naïve faith in education as a means of achieving a better life for blacks or better race relations" (Neimneh, et al 61).

5-2 Migration

In the light of discrimination and racism, the Afro-Americans struggled with every means to achieve full rights and identity. They embodied distinct political movements advanced by many black leaders to realize the Afro-American dream of racial equality. Most importantly, black Americans kept great faith in self-prosperity to define their individuality. From this angle, black Americans relied heavily on the American Dream to attain success.

"Physical mobility has always been the important facet of the American Dream" (Yarborough 35). The black Americans' mobility is shown through their flight into the northern states. Like the first Pilgrims who broke away from the Catholic tyranny, Southern black Americans also escaped the whites' segregation and injustice. After the Civil War and

its promise of slaves' emancipation, the north has always been considered as a "place of both refuge and promise", where the Afro-Americans expected many opportunities for their economic development and sophistication. "As the source of the emancipators during the Civil War and of those who taught the freedmen of their rights and then safeguarded them in the heady early days of freedom, the North seemed to embody the forces most sympathetic to blacks and their struggle to catch up in the race for the American Dream" (49-50).

In the course of his pursuit of the American Dream, the narrator migrates to settle in Harlem and sets on working hard for his self prosperity. After facing difficulties to find a job, the narrator finally embarks on a job at the Liberty Paint company. His assignment is to mix ten drops of a black liquid into a tank full of white liquid to paint several boards. While working, the narrator is overcome with the feeling of duty and responsibility to accomplish that work. However, the narrator is finally fired from that task and transferred to work in the basement under Brockway's charge. In the midst of a strife between the narrator and Brockway, the company's tanks explode and the narrator is dismissed. Once again, the narrator's hard work brings no benefits. Even though, "all citizens should have political equality and that everyone in America warrants equal educational opportunities and equal opportunities in general", Black Americans are denied these opportunities (Hochschild 55).

Embodying the American Dream is worthless for the black narrator. Ellison deplors the idea that blacks' affluence would limit whites' racism and infringements. Through the narrator, Ellison expressed his disapproval of the American Dream as a way for the blacks' triumph. The Afro-American Dream ended only in demise. Afro-Americans "could not succeed if they embraced the idea of success espoused by whites" (Szmanko 193).

6- The Illusion of the American Dream

Besides the theme of identity quest, there is another affinity between both novels. In fact, both protagonists, the narrator and Jay Gatsby, endorse the American Dream principles in hopes of achieving their dreams of success. Both of them see economic success as a means of integration into the societies they long for. As aforementioned, Jay Gatsby wants to be a member of the aristocracy to regain his past love with Daisy, and the narrator yearns for an identity among the white society. For Gatsby, the acquisition of wealth is the means to make his way in the aristocratic world. Whereas, the narrator yearns for wealth in order to impress the whites, and be integrated into their society.

Both the narrator and Jay Gatsby embrace literacy, yet, for distinct motives. Even though Jay Gatsby does not acquire education, he shows that he has one. Through lack of money, Gatsby is compelled to give up his studies. However, he boasts that he is an Oxford man, and holds a library full of books. For Gatsby, what matters most is faking his American Dream. The narrator, on the other hand, endeavors to make his education successful. Through education, the narrator thinks, he will be bestowed with prosperity and power that will help him head for integration into the white society. In short, the poor Jay Gatsby leaves his college to work hard for his future success, and the poor narrator strives to remain at his college in hopes of being endowed with intellectual powers that would bring him success and celebrity. With the intention of having an identity among the aristocracy, Jay Gatsby embodies the principles of the aristocratic people through acquiring education in the finest colleges and universities. He wants to show Daisy that he is from the same social rank as hers. In contrast, the narrator thinks that education would enable him uplift his humanity in the American society. Moreover, he wants to free himself from the stereotyped image of blacks as inferior and illiterate. Of most importance, the narrator thinks that if he succeeds in his studies, he will be awarded power and prosperity.

In the course of the pursuit of the American Dream, Gatsby left his mother land to New York to work hard for his future success. In the same vein, the narrator goes afield, and settles in Harlem city where he sets on finding a work, “[he] would work hard and serve [his] employer so well that he would shower Dr. Bledsoe with favorable reports” (Ellison 122). Both protagonists are impressed by wealth and its power to achieve their dreams. Gatsby is primarily excited by opulence and sophistication when he meets Dan Cody in his luxurious yacht: “that yacht represented all the beauty and glamour in the world” (Fitzgerald 106). Gatsby is blinded by the power of wealth; he accomplishes prosperity through his engagement into an illegal and dishonest organization. While, Gatsby uses unlawful means to attain his dream, the narrator searches innocently and naively to claim his individuality in America. He relies mainly on hard work to achieve success: “I had only to work and learn and survive in order to go to the top” (Ellison 275). In contrast to the narrator whose efforts and pains end up in vain, Gatsby reaches success.

Both the narrator and Jay Gatsby have not given up their dreams even in moments of despair, depression and difficulties. Flowing over disastrous situations, the narrator does not cease trying to assert his identity. He still kept some hopes for achieving social equality “Hope can combat any number of different societal inequalities and brutalities”. Similarly,

Jay Gatsby is still attached to his dream even when his dream seemed impossible. Nick tells Gatsby that “[he] can't repeat the past”; however, Gatsby urged “Why of course you can” (Fitzgerald 70). He believes greatly in the American Dream that could bring him success and get Daisy back.

Ultimately, the pursuit of the American Dream culminates in the protagonists' downfall. The prosperity they longed for did not make them earn membership into the American society. Gatsby's corruption is majorly the focal reason for his demise. As for the narrator, the whites' racism and bigotry led to his loss. His efforts and pains for his future success are denied and curbed by the racist white Americans. Gatsby is even made the victim of the American Dream. His dream fades away when he is shot by George Wilson. Despite the narrator's misfortune, he is not destroyed by the American Dream. He becomes aware that the American Dream is no longer a successful way to gain social justice in America. Equally important, the narrator is endowed with self-awareness. This self-consciousness is the great mechanism that defines his humanity and identity in American society.

Gatsby's dream is represented by Daisy and her world, Daisy is viewed as the emblem of all what Gatsby hankers after. He is not only in love with her beauty and charm, but also with her sophistication and wealth. From their early encounter, Gatsby is entranced by her mansion,

he had never been in such a beautiful house before ... There was a ripe mystery about it, a hint of bedrooms upstairs more beautiful and cool than other bedrooms, of gay and radiant activities taking place through its corridors, and of romances that were not musty and laid away already in lavender but fresh and breathing and redolent of this year's shining motor cars and of dances whose flowers were scarcely. (154)

Jay Gatsby is first introduced in the novel, as he reached for the Green light,

I didn't call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone - he stretched out his arms towards the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward - and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock. When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness. (28)

This green light stands for Gatsby's dream, the idealization of the past and future. The fact that it is situated at Daisy's house means that Daisy is part of Gatsby's dream. Thus, Gatsby struggles to revive his past with Daisy; he wants "to go back to Louisville and be married from her house - just as if it were five years ago" (117).

Gatsby knew that Daisy would never accept him by reason of his low social status. Daisy is materialistic, "[h]er voice is full of money" (126). Accordingly, Gatsby strives to achieve his dream of fortune and love. However, Gatsby's environment does not afford him the opportunity to achieve the dream, but only destroys it.

Albeit Gatsby realizes his dream of opulence, he does not reach his dream of love. Yet, the dream turns out only to tragedy. Along with the Jewish Meyer Wolfsheim, Gatsby sells alcoholic drinks in Chicago and New York. In the twenties, Americans drifted away from the true American Dream the pilgrims believed in, the American Dream that James Truslow Adam describes in his book *Epic of America*:

It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position. (qtd. in Changizi and, Ghasemi 63)

In addition to his illicit wealth, Gatsby's superficial environment distorts the traditional American Dream. Gatsby's true motive is to impress Daisy; he buys a huge mansion in West Egg, an extravagant Roll Royce, and wears expensive British shirts.

Gatsby's corrupted American Dream is the major reason behind his demise. Gatsby's rich cream-color car stands for this corruption. Gatsby's dreams "are naïve dreams based on the fallacious assumption that material possessions are synonymous with happiness, harmony and beauty" (qtd. in Changizi and Ghasemi 63). He is dazzled by wealth and its power to achieve happiness and love. Obviously, class status was important; instead of love, wealth was the reason that united man and woman. Low social rank and poor background were the main reasons of the interruption of Gatsby and Daisy's love relationship. Gatsby's "too ornate-color

cream car circus wagon... pink suits and pride in number and variety of his shirts" cannot provide him access into the fine and glamorous world of aristocracy (Donaldson 116).

While in the Plaza Hotel, Gatsby endeavors to confront the aristocratic Tom Buchanan by urging Daisy to leave him. However, realizing his "ill-gotten wealth", Daisy rejects Gatsby and remains with Tom despite his infidelity (Trask 64). Gatsby cannot bring down Tom and his powerful aristocratic world. As a "nouveau riche", Gatsby's brittle wealth and cheap materialistic imitation cannot be compared to Tom's power and ascendancy ; "the relative ease of Tom's victory reveals the fragility of the identity Gatsby has fashioned out of the illusions and build on substantial hopes" (Bevilacqua 121).

Even in moments of despair and with his dreams dying out, Gatsby still maintains his dream: "despite the absurd distance of this dream from reality, Gatsby never yield up his hope, that refusal to surrender the reality kills him" (Bloom08). Gatsby's tragic quest of American dream of success and love leads him only to death. Gatsby could not achieve success without embodying morality and idealism, "virtue leads to success, success makes a person virtuous, success indicates virtue, or apparent success is not real success unless one is also virtuous" (Hochschild 23).

Eventually, Gatsby's death foreshadows Fitzgerald's breakdown, but above all it "foretells the collapse of the era and the onset of disillusionment with the American Dream" (Trask 64).

In *Invisible Man*, The narrator's long and laborious journey from the segregated south into the north, trying to claim his identity also ends with disillusion. During this harsh journey, the narrator does not act in his own right. He does not endorse his own thoughts, judgments and conception of how to achieve an identity. Nevertheless, he is only following what the others, whites and blacks, impose on him. The narrator's life is molded according to the others' rules and willingness. Accordingly, the narrator is constantly embedded into thorny situations, causing him both spiritual and physical turmoil. Ellison states that "the major flaw in the hero's character is his unquestioning willingness to do what is required of him by others as a way to success." (qtd. in Yarborough 47). The narrator believes that the others' instructions will help him define an identity. Yet, they are only debasing him. Thus, his compliance leads him only to loss. The narrator finally falls in an underground world, where he hibernates and waits for an opportunity to emerge and find a way to achieve his dream.

At the onset of his misadventures, the narrator is tormented by the last words of his dying grandfather; “Live with your head in the lion's mouth. I want you to overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open” (Ellison 13). As he obeys the others’ commands, “the Invisible Man’s experience confirms the wisdom of the grandfather’s advice” (Rosengarten 8).

The narrator finds himself gradually running from one disastrous circumstance to another; this gradual move reflects the narrator’s nightmare about his dying grandfather urging him to read “an engraved document containing a short message in letters of gold” saying: “Keep This Nigger-Boy Running” (Ellison 27). Even though the narrator always confronts harshness and oppression he bears in mind that “The new assignment was a challenge ... and proof of the committee's goodwill” (316).

The narrator realizes that he is invisible in the eyes of the outside world. The outside world sees him only as a black man; “When they approach me”, he states “they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination -- indeed, everything and anything except me” (3). Even if he succeeds in his studies and works hard, the whites do not acknowledge his efforts and achievements, they stereotype him as an inferior creature. The narrator asserts that his invisibility is not “a matter of a bio-chemical accident to [his] epidermis”, he claims: “I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids -- and I might even be said to possess a mind” (3). He explains that his invisibility is due to “a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom [he] comes in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality” (3).

Throughout this arduous journey, the narrator is driven away from his origins and culture. In the beginning, the narrator wants to adopt an identity which would be acquired from his education and hard work. However, throughout his removal to the north, he wants to reinvent himself as a white individual and ignores his own culture and values. While in the north, the narrator admires the northern culture and wants to become “full of New York culture”, “here in the North [he] would slough off [his] southern ways of speech. Indeed, [he] would have one way of speaking in the North and another in the South” (122-127). Accordingly, the multiple rules the narrator embraces prevent him from expressing his individuality, and strengthen the concept that blacks are merely machines obeying whites’ orders. The narrator reflects the black Americans who departed from their innate culture and values, and struggled to adopt an identity like the whites, “as the generations passed, black

Americans probably drifted rather vaguely toward whiteness” (Williamson 13). Black Americans were stereotyped as uncivilized with an inferior culture, thus: “the blacks [were] striving toward whiteness... None of [them] seems to know who he is or where he's going” (Ellison 447). The yams the narrator eat arouse in him a certain feeling of nostalgia, reminding him about his past and origin. He then asserts that “I am what I am!” and becomes conscious of his own identity as an Afro-American individual (205). While in the brotherhood, the narrator thinks that he has found the true way to define his humanity, he asserts that “I have come home...Home!... I feel I have found my true family! My true people! My true country”, this organization, however, reinforces merely the narrator’s deviation from his origins and compels him to let down his race and culture (268).

When the narrator’s life ends up in the subterranean world, he becomes aware that he has erred while endeavoring to assert his humanity, and acknowledges his true identity. Though the narrator fails to achieve an identity in American society, he becomes self-conscious of his race, culture and past,

all past humiliations became precious parts of my experience, and for the first time... I began to accept my past. Images of past humiliations flickered through my head and I saw that they were more than separate experiences. They were me; they defined me. I was my experiences and they were me, and no blind men, no matter how powerful they became... could take that, or change one single itch, taunt, laugh, cry, scar, ache, rage or pain of it. (393)

In fact, the narrator admits that being proud of his race and past is the weapon to achieve his dream of freedom; “he has ceased attempting to construct his life according to a long obsolete plan which restrains rather than liberates, which frustrates rather than fulfills” (Yarborough 51). The narrator is now hibernating in an underground world waiting for an opportunity to emerge with this weapon. Thus, the “long and desperate and uncommonly blind journey” turns out to lightness and his invisibility changes to visibility through his self-awareness (Ellison 268).

Ellison’s philosophy echoes much that of the Harlem renaissance. In this rebirth in which the New Negro approved and became proud of his race and culture, Ellison stresses that through admitting their origins, inherited values and culture, Afro-Americans can adopt an identity.

As a conclusion, exploring Jay Gatsby's and the narrator's identity quest demonstrates that racism and injustice were prominent in American society. The quest for identity in both novels is futile since both protagonists' dreams failed. This comparative study has emphasized the idea of how cultural shift affected the American Dream. In the 1920s, the American Dream turned out to represent only the possession of wealth.

Chapter Three:

The Discourse of Racism in *The Great Gatsby* and *Invisible Man*

Introduction

This chapter centers on the application of a literary approach to *The Great Gatsby* and *Invisible Man* so as to unveil the prevailing discourses in them. These novels are widely viewed as social documents of their authors' time. In order to reflect the social codes and cultural norms the novels echo, I will refer to New Historicism. This approach stresses the omnipresence and hegemony of history in any literary work. I will more specifically allude to Michel Foucault theory on Discourse and its relation to Power. Following a New Historicist perspective, and through Foucault's theory, I intend to disclose the prevailing discourses that shaped these fictions and both authors' eras. Power regulates and dictates to society what to establish as accepted, normal and true beliefs and behaviors. All the individuals of a given society are compelled to follow those social and cultural standards.

Following Foucault's assumption, through discourse and the medium of language social and cultural conventions pervade throughout society. From this perspective, I will demonstrate how the characters' speeches reflect the real social voices that stress the pervasive social immorality of racism.

As Foucault asserted it, discourses are often contradictory and competing. In effect, the issue of racism leads to other social predicaments. Thus, this study will enhance how the specific discourse of racism engenders other discourses of violence and corruption. Yet, before starting this analysis, I will first provide an introduction to New Historicism and elucidate what is Discourse according to Michel Foucault.

1-New Historicism

Early in the 1980s, a new literary movement, termed New Historicism, emerged and dominated the realm of literary criticism. In light of a close connection between fiction and reality, New Historicism illuminates and strengthens this network by advancing that literary texts should be interpreted and evaluated in their historical, cultural and social contexts, as these texts trace only their distinct histories; "history cannot be divorced from textuality" (Chung-Hsiung Lai 2). While writing, the author is influenced by his social surrounding. The social and cultural body is the major impetus for the author to pen his literature. Moreover, New Historicism emerged to impede the hegemony of New Criticism which viewed literature as merely a work of art.

New Historicism is primarily fathered and developed by Stephen Greenblatt. His essays, chiefly *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, is the reason behind the premise and the spread of New Historicism as a literary theory and its penetration into the universal scene of literary studies. Yet, New Historicism draws much of its assumptions from the French philosopher Michel Foucault, notably the relation of power and discourse.

From a New Historicist perspective, a literary text casts only insights into the history of its author's time. Thus, "history is an essential element in the interpretive process" (Bressler 223). Yet, history, for new historicists, is "cultural"; texts treat only the cultural features of a given society (Doğan 79). The circulating political, economic, social and religious factors created the history of a given era.

Moreover, According to new historicists, everything is shaped by social institutions. Society dictates its unwritten laws for its members. In other words, each individual is subjected to and manipulated by the prevailing social codes which represent the general and cultural truths of a certain era, and thus, mark its history. The individual's concepts and behavior should conform to these unwritten laws of society; "Man himself is a social construct" (81). Thus, while writing, the author expresses his thoughts which are modeled by the surrounding social values in his fiction; "no one of us can escape public and private cultural influences" (Bressler 219). Even though a writer appends some biographical elements into his writing, he still reproduces social influences; his life, experiences and ideas are shaped by cultural forms. Literature is not a personal creation; "any form of art is performed in cultural environment and producing literature is not a private matter but a social act with its contexts" (Doğan 86). Accordingly, literature is the product of these social conventions. In other words, literature is one discourse that is produced by cultural conventions. At the same time, literature is actively shaping these social conventions. Jerome J. Mc Gann states that "...the governing context of all literary investigations must ultimately be an historical one. Literature is a human product, a humane art. It cannot be carried on (created), understood (studied), or appreciated (experienced) outside of its definitive human context. The general science governing that human context is socio-historical" (qtd. in Doğan 78).

One may assume that literary texts are "social documents, that reflect, but also, most importantly, respond to their historical situation" (Tyson 221). Hence, literature "becomes the means to represent the ideology of a culture through resonant texts" (Doğan 77). Since the social institution and values create the history of any given period, one can produce the

meaning of the written materials through relating them to history, culture and other social factors. Yet, to uncover this meaning, the task lies only in looking for the hidden, “inconsistent, irregular, and often contradictory discourses” that construct this meaning (Bressler 221). These discourses are shaped by their social, cultural and historical epochs. Hence, literature creates history, and in return history creates literature. Moreover, in order to comprehend the meaning of a literary text, new historicists declare, one should look for the social and historical values surrounding the author’s time, as well as the author’s interests and biography.

New historicists emphasize the authority of history in literary texts. However, they are much more concerned with the way social influences lead to the creation of the text, or how a common ideology in a given period contributes to the fiction building process; “[The] new historicist does not try to retrieve the original meaning of a text but locate the original ideology that gave rise to the text, which the text disseminates, within the boundaries of culture and sometimes beyond it” (Williams 118).

Albeit one can discover history through a literary text, it is always subjective. One cannot construct effectual history of any given period, since history is “constructed by a literary imagination” (Chung-Hsiung Lai 02). According to new historicists, “literary interpretation cannot fully reconstruct the culture... nor can the critic reenter the world”, since the author always embodies his judgments, conception and assumption on the surrounding events of his society (Doğan 84). At the same time, the critic always embraces his present beliefs and biases while interpreting the literary work; “the understanding of the past is always constructed by our present consciousness (79).

2 -Michel Foucault’s theory of Discourse

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) is a French philosopher, archeologist, and historian. He states “Do not ask me who I am and do not ask me to remain the same”, this demonstrates that Foucault is a universal man who works on a myriad of subjects. Besides, his theories were majorly applied to many fields, including cultural and literary studies (qtd. in Downing 01).

The term discourse is largely advanced by Michel Foucault. Foucault asserts that: “Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word ‘discourse’, I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice

that accounts for a number of statements” (qtd. in Mills, *Michel Foucault* 06). Foucault demonstrates that the term discourse is contradictory; it involves a myriad of meanings. Sara Mills puts out that “treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements”, Foucault refers to the simple meaningful expressions and statements of a person; whereas, the second pre-supposition means that discourse is the same and the common utterance of a large group, in other words, discourse is a widespread belief of a group of people in the same community. This type of discourse, as Foucault states, can be referred to as “discursive formation”; “Discourses, or discursive formations, are groups of statements which deal with the same topic and which seem to produce a similar effect; for example, they may be groups of statements which are grouped together because of some institutional pressure or association, because of a similarity of origin, or because they have a similar function” (64). Finally, Foucault’s term discourse refers to the unwritten rules within society that effect a series of statements and events, and how common statements come into existence. Foucault is less concerned with discourses as utterances and statements, than with discourses as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (qtd. in mills 15). In this regard, Foucault is concerned with how specific structures and regulations spread within a given society, and led to the emergence of utterances and statements; and how this society respects, even unwarily, these rules that shape and control its beliefs and behavior. He repudiates the fact that statements “simply exist self-evidently” (Mills, *Michel Foucault* 65). These discourses are produced by social values, and circulate through particular practices and events it affects. Hence, according to Foucault, discourse is “regulated by a set of rules which led to the distribution and circulation of certain utterances and statements” (54). Discourses shape social environment.

Moreover, Foucault often associates discourse with power and truth. Because of these elements discourses are brought into existence, and govern the social milieu. From Foucault’s perspective, power is not centered on the concept of oppression and the usurpation of one’s rights, or the struggle for high social rank, but it is concerned with the notion of “preventing someone from carrying out their wishes and limiting people’s freedom” (17). In this respect, Foucault refers to the unwritten social rules and conventions which confine the individual to behave freely within society, without developing a behavior which conforms to these dominant discourses. These discourses are produced by power, and at the same time, they shape this power and promote it.

Power reveals itself and is performed through cultural conventions and rules; “power operates within everyday relations between people and institutions” (33). The cultural forms give rise to power, and constitute the main body of the society. Man does not create it; “Power was a substance that could neither be acquired nor tamed by man”; however, it is a cultural invention, which rather controls man (Gavin 17). Power is propagated throughout society by giving birth to dominating discourses which keep it in circulation, and govern that society. Foucault states; “The logic [of power] is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them, and few can be said to have formulated them: an implicit characteristic of the great anonymous...” (qtd. in Gavin 18- 19). Each individual is caught by power, he is not allowed to live in his own right, since his thoughts and behaviors should correspond to the dominating circulating discourses. Power supports certain ideologies and behaviors while it also controls other ones. Hence, some discourses dominate the social setting, while others are neglected.

Foucault states that “where there is power there is resistance” (Mills, *Discourse* 55). Power gives rise to prevailing discourses that may oppress and restrict completely some people’s freedom. In return, the oppressed people will develop other discourses to contest and resist the oppressing and powerful discourses. Accordingly, discourse is “both the means of oppressing and the means of resistance” (55). Thus, power not only produces discourses which support it, but also discourses that can prevent and destroy this power. Foucault states it: “Discourse [not only] transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (qtd. in Mills, *Discourse* 55). Accordingly, discourses are often contradictory. Foucault terms the mutual and the contradictory process of discourses “power relations” (8). The powerful and dominant discourses are often confronted by other resisting discourses. If there is no resistance to this dominant power, there will be no “power relations”.

Foucault holds that discourse often brings certain practices and events “conceived as a collective—rather than an individual—reality”, or the history of a given era. This reality operates as the universal truth of a given society, and its body (Bührmann 1). He asserts that

Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is the types of discourse it harbours and causes to function as true: the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true from false statements, the way in which each is sanctioned; the techniques and

procedures which are valorised for obtaining truth: the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (qtd. in Mills, *Discourse* 16)

Furthermore, Foucault calls the reality of a given period “the episteme”: “each period of history develops its own perception concerning the nature of reality... sets up its own acceptable and unacceptable standards of behavior, established its own criteria for judging what it deems good or bad” (Bressler 220). The prevailing social statements and behaviors (discourses) constitute the truth of a given period, thus its episteme. This truth is shaped by society. It is referred to by Foucault as “common-sense knowledge” in a specific society (Mills, *Michel Foucault* 74). Yet, mostly all the dominant discourses are viewed as truth. Thus, truth manifests itself through these dominant discourses.

New Historicism owed much to Michel Foucault, since many of his theories constitute the main body of this literary approach. Foucault sees history “the complex interrelation of a variety of discourse” (Bressler 220). Moreover, Foucault’s conception of discovering the episteme of a given period corresponds to the methods of archeology. In order to discover the episteme of any given era, Foucault advocates, one should “expose each layer of discourse... [, and then] ...piece together the various discourses and their interconnections among them and with nondiscursive practices” (220). In the same vein, from a new historicist’s perspective, one should unearth the different and interrelated discourses that frame the literary text in order to capture the meaning of that text.

Power pervades the social environment and gives rise to repressive discourses. Literary texts often feature speeches that would reinforce power, resist or contest it, making language as a powerful mechanism in affirming and contesting power. Thus the main inherent research questions are stated as follows: what are the diverse discourses that are shaped by *The Great Gatsby* and *Invisible Man* and that shape the real worlds of their authors? How does power shape the prevailing discourses in both works? And finally, how do the novels’ characters’ speeches support or contest the prevailing power?

3- The Discourse of Racism

Racism is one of the most outstanding and severest quandaries that struck the American society. Owing to the huge disparities between ethnic groups, mainly their multiple cultures, racism emerged to shift the American society, to promote its adherents and oppress, confine and crush its victims.

In the light of the discussion of racism in American society and its cruelties, African Americans are worthy to be mentioned. In fact, Afro-Americans were the primary target of this harrowing issue. From the early settlements in the New World, Afro-Americans were subdued to racism. Racism did not only usurp Afro-Americans' rights and independence, but also made their life bitter and harsh.

Many American writers, chiefly those who had endured the effects of racism, embody racism as the focal theme in their fiction. They mainly frown on the evils of racism, depict its severe upshots on its target, and urge to end this issue. What is also surprising is that white Americans did not escape racism as well. In this regard, I have chosen to explore racism in *The Great Gatsby*, and *Invisible Man*.

According to the New Historicist approach, fiction is influenced by its author's time. Many circulating discourses, prevailing the author's time, influenced literature. "All texts are really social documents that reflect but also, and more importantly, respond to their historical situation" (Bressler 221). In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald reflects the social class disparities between the old Anglo-Saxon aristocracy and the nouveau riche of the twenties in America. Ellison, however, explores the racial struggle between the white and black Americans. Both authors reflect the dominant and powerful discourse of racism in their times. Yet, both of them contest and decline this social illness. In both novels, the societies which the protagonists wish to join, the aristocracy for Jay Gatsby and the white society for the black narrator, support and practice racism. These societies want to save "order and discipline in historically specific ways" (Karlberg 2).

From Foucault's perspective, power manifests itself through social institutions, and this, "by producing discourses and truth" that constitute the body of a society (4). Both authors, Ralph Ellison and Francis Scott Fitzgerald, trace the prevailing discourses of power during their times. The dominant discourses in a given society can promote some people while they can also confine and oppress others.

The speeches of the novels' characters are used to expose the power that dominates the social environment. Moreover, these speeches can also be used to reject and contest this power, both as a "means of resistance" to power, and a means to strengthen this power. Furthermore, the characters are using their language in order to gain power, and therefore, to dominate the others, what Michael Karlberg calls to have "power over" the others (2). While the oppressed individuals are using their language as a potential means to curb the oppressive power exercised on them: "the ways power abuse of dominant groups and its resulting inequality are enacted, expressed, legitimated, or challenged in or by discourse" (Van Dijk 96). Thus, they create other "alternative discourses" or "discourse intervention" to confront the prevailing ones (1). Language, thus, can be considered as a vehicle to reinforce power and to confine that power.

In *The Great Gatsby*, power shapes the society of the twenties. In this era, power manifests itself through the prevailing discourse of racism among the aristocratic society.

Because of the economic prosperity that marked the 1920s, many Americans became rich, and of more importance, they became covetous to leap up the social ladder, and to ultimately enter into the aristocratic community. However, this aristocratic community did not open its doors to these nouveau riches. The aristocracy believes that they incarnate perfect and high cultural ideals, civilization and sophistication. The nouveau riches were viewed as a threat to their dominance and superiority. The aristocracy infringes and oppresses other races, who are viewed as inferior and uncivilized. Accordingly, they uphold a racist ideology in order to prevent other races from attaining dominance and power; "racism was only appropriated to maintain the class supremacy" (Crocker and Kush 29).

In the novel, *The Great Gatsby*, the discourse of racism is unveiled through the voice of the old millionaire Tom Buchanan. Tom Buchanan tolerates racist ideology. His speech reveals the truth of the 1920s. From Foucault's perspective, Tom Buchanan is a "parrhesiastes" who "opens his heart and mind completely to other people through his discourse" (Foucault 2). Tom Buchanan uses his speech to expose not only the truth, but also to reinforce power that manifests itself through the dominant discourse of racism. Thus, Tom's speech can be viewed "as a means of oppression" of other races and not a resistance to that power. Tom Buchanan sides with the aristocratic people who reject the integration of other races into their community. They hold their traditions and values dear to them.

While in a dinner in his mansion, Tom Buchanan advances racist remarks. He states that “Civilisation's going to pieces” (Fitzgerald 19). Tom cares about the breakdown of civilizations by virtue of the interrelations of races. He holds that everyone should stay in his social rank. He rejects the nouveau riche’s greediness to be assimilated into their sophisticated community. Tom adds that “It is all scientific stuff”, a reference to social Darwinism, advancing that afro-Americans are inferior biologically. He affirms that “If [they] don't look out the white race will be - will be utterly submerged” (19). Tom Buchanan is anxious about the decadence of the dominant old aristocratic race because of the greediness of the nouveau riche. He enjoys having “power over” the others, and preventing others from it. He states: “we're Nordics... And we've produced all the things that go to make civilisation - oh, science and art, and all that” (20). This speech reinforces and makes racism pervade the social setting.

While in New York with Jay Gatsby, Tom’s opinion about race is revealed through his speech with Daisy Buchanan; “Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions, and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white” (136). He disapproves of the intermarriage of races. Gatsby is “Mr Nobody from Nowhere”, and therefore, he constitutes a danger to the aristocracy (136). Even though Gatsby acquired wealth, he is still inferior to the old money because of his poor background.

According to Foucault, power is “preventing someone from carrying out the wishes and limiting people’s freedom” (Mills, *Discourse* 17). Indeed, Tom’s racism and power constitute a hindrance to Jay Gatsby’s dream of Daisy. Accordingly, power promotes some people’s desires like Tom Buchanan, and at the same time oppresses and confines others and their wishes like Jay Gatsby. The persistence of Jay Gatsby to break the social structure and his endeavor to confront and resist that power lead him to demise. This is when George Wilson acquiesces to Tom’s attest that Gatsby killed Myrtle Wilson. This proves that Tom’s support of power leads George Wilson to accept his assertion without question. Thus, truth, or Parrhesia, should be related to power to be accepted. Furthermore, Fitzgerald does not side with Tom Buchanan and his racist ideology; he argues against Tom Buchanan’s racism and criticizes his infidelity and arrogance.

As an Afro-American novel, *Invisible Man* widely questions racism that Afro-Americans underwent for a long time. Power reveals itself through white institutions. White Americans held racist beliefs toward African Americans. The latter were infringed and oppressed by the

whites' racism and discrimination. "The African Americans were viewed as inferior biologically and intellectually to whites" (Crock and Kush 29). However, like Fitzgerald, Ellison criticized this white attitude. The speeches of the different characters in the novel are employed to divulge the prevailing social discourse of racism. These characters reveal the truth that may resist the powerful discourses, or reinforce them.

In *Invisible Man*, the narrator, after the Battle Royal, delivers a speech in which he asserts:

We of the younger generation extol the wisdom of that great leader and educator...
"who first spoke these flaming words of wisdom: 'A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal: "Water, water; we die of thirst!" The answer from the friendly vessel came back: "Cast down your bucket where you are." The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River.' And like him I say, and in his words, 'To those of my race who depend upon bettering their condition in a foreign land, or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man, who is his next-door neighbor, I would say:
"Cast down your bucket where you are" -- cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded . . . (29-30)

The narrator answers racism through this speech, in which he reveals that African Americans had to surrender to white supremacy and racism. Therefore, the black narrator stressed the real social system in the twenties, when white Americans dominated the social setting. He rejects the idea of confronting the whites' power and dominance. Thus, instead of rising above and resisting the power exercised on them, the narrator's speech is merely reinforcing the "power over" African Americans, and therefore his speech is a "means of oppression" and a way to foster power. As aforementioned, this speech echoes that of Booker T Washington. Booker T Washington reinforces blacks' submissive attitude toward the whites.

Another speech in *Invisible Man* which reflects the dominant discourse of racism is that of the Reverend Homer A. Barbee. The latter narrates the life story of the Founder, and mainly his mission in carrying his message of Black Americans. Moreover, Barbee accentuates how Dr. Bledsoe carries out the founder's faith after his death:

But think of it not as a death, but as a birth. A great seed had been planted. A seed which has continued to put forth its fruit in its season as surely as if the great creator had been resurrected. For in a sense he was, if not in the flesh, in the spirit. And in a sense in the flesh too. For has not your present leader [Dr. Bledsoe] become his living agent, his physical presence? Look about you if you doubt it. My young friends, my dear young friends! How can I tell you what manner of man this is who leads you? How can I convey to you how well he has kept his pledge to the Founder, how conscientious has been his stewardship? (132)

According to this speech, Barbee urges to follow the Founder. The Founder's faith represents the ideology of Booker T Washington. Booker T Washington believes that the shift for economic progress as well as a genuine obedience and subservient attitude toward the whites, would suppress racism, and bring forth racial equality:

let this be constantly in mind, that, while from representations in these buildings of the product of field, of forest, of mine, of factory, letters, and art, much good will come, yet far above and beyond material benefits will be that higher good, that, let us pray God, will come, in a blotting out of sectional differences and racial animosities and suspicions, in a determination to administer absolute justice, in a willing obedience among all classes to the mandates of law. This, this, [sic] coupled with our material prosperity, will bring into our beloved South a new heaven and a new earth. (Washington 155)

This ideology can be considered as an "alternative discourse" to the power that oppresses them, and ultimately to the whites' racism. However, this ideology turned out only to foster this power, as the whites were not willing to recognize African American achievements. Accordingly, Homer Barbee's speech is only a means to reinforce the prevailing power, as he blindly embraces the Founder's ideology.

In short, these speeches are meant to confront the prevailing discourse of racism, and resist it. Actually, they are merely "means of oppression" that strengthen power.

Another speech which fosters the prevailing power is Tod Clifton's speech. Leaving the Brotherhood, Tod Clifton sells Sambo Dolls in the street:

Shake it up! Shake it up!
He's Sambo, the dancing doll, ladies and gentlemen.

Shake him, stretch him by the neck and set him down,

-- He'll do the rest. Yes!

He'll make you laugh, he'll make you sigh, si-igh.

He'll make you want to dance, and dance –

...

And all for twenty-five cents, the quarter part of a dollar . . .

Ladies and gentlemen, he'll bring you joy, step up and meet him... (Ellison 431-432)

The Sambo Dolls Clifton sells, are symbolical. The white enslaver stereotypes the obedient and cheerful slave as a Sambo. Tod Clifton's Sambo Dolls promote the stereotypical images of Afro-Americans. Equally important, Tod Clifton incarnates this stereotype through his performance to entertain the white audience. These Sambo Dolls also emphasize that African Americans are merely living to entertain the whites. Consequently, Tod Clifton's speech underlines merely power and the prevailing discourse of racism, though while in the Brotherhood, he fights racism and stresses racial equality. He started selling Sambo Dolls when he discovered that the Brotherhood betrayed him, and therefore betrayed his race. It is a kind of revenge to him.

Through *The Great Gatsby's* and *Invisible Man's* characters' voices, the discourse of racism is unveiled to reflect the real world of the authors. Furthermore, both authors employed racism as a major theme in their works as they were themselves subdued by it.

4 – The Discourse of violence

Michel Foucault stressed the interrelatedness and interaction of all social discourses that constitute the history of a given period; “power [is] a relational force that permeates the entering social body, connecting all social groups in a web of mutual influence” (Karlberg 5). Even power produces discourses that may repress some people, it results in the emergence of new social events; “power [is] ... productive, something which brings about forms of behaviour and events” (Mills, *Michel Foucault* 36). Accordingly, each discourse influences and engenders new discourses. The dilemma of racism resulted in the emergence of a new discourse, and therefore in a new social practice. If racism, discrimination and injustice excessively haunt and colonize a given society, violence undoubtedly emerges in this society.

In other words, racial discrimination is the precursor to racial violence. In the light of racism, violence is excessively common in both fictions.

In *The Great Gatsby*, violence is revealed mainly through Tom Buchanan. Tom's racist views are liable to cause violence in order to afflict and repress others, attain and maintain power and secure the dominion of aristocracy. At the same time, the oppressed are likely to use violence to challenge this oppressive power and also acquire it; "everything we do is interrelated to and within a network of practices embedded in our culture" (Bressler 222). Foucault asserts that the struggle and resistance to the prevailing power and the repressive discourses it creates is in fact the desire for power; "the main objective of these struggles is to attack not so much such and such an institution of power, or group, or elite, or class, but rather a technique, a form of power" (qtd. in Mills, *Michel Foucault* 38).

Violence erupted between the nouveau riche and the aristocracy. At the end of the novel, while in New York, a crush bursts between the racist Tom Buchanan and Jay Gatsby. Tom arguing against Jay Gatsby exposes and highlights the discourse of violence. Tom Buchanan divulged Gatsby's illicit activities and criticized him as "Mr Nobody from Nowhere" (Fitzgerald 136).

Who are you, anyhow?' broke out Tom. 'You're one of that bunch that hangs around with Meyer Wolfsheim - that much I happen to know. I've made a little investigation into your affairs - and I'll carry it further tomorrow.'

'You can suit yourself about that, old sport,' said Gatsby steadily.

'I [Tom] found out what your "drugstores" were.'... 'He and this Wolfsheim bought up a lot of side-street drugstores here and in Chicago and sold grain alcohol over the counter. That's one of his little stunts. I picked him for a bootlegger the first time I saw him, and I wasn't far wrong. (140)

Tom Buchanan is not irritated about Daisy's affair with Jay Gatsby, as he too is implicated in a romantic affair with Myrtle Wilson. As a racist, he rather wanted to degrade and humiliate Jay Gatsby. Jay Gatsby belongs to the new rich, and thus represents a danger to the superiority and authority of Tom Buchanan and to all his aristocratic community; "What kind of a row are you trying to cause in my house anyhow?" (136). Tom Buchanan despised and criticized Jay Gatsby's endeavor to embody the aristocratic values; "That's a great expression

of yours, isn't it?' said Tom sharply. 'What is?' All this "old sport" business. Where'd you pick that up?" (133). To Tom Buchanan, Jay Gatsby is from a humble background and cannot reach his sophistication and ascendancy.

The discourse of violence also manifests itself through 'the death car' of Jay Gatsby. Succeeding the violence that erupted in New York, car violence erupted in the Valley of Ashes. The speech of the witnesses of the wreck highlights the discourse of violence; "The other car, the one going towards New York, came to rest a hundred yards beyond, and its driver hurried back to where Myrtle Wilson, her life violently extinguished, knelt in the road and mingled her thick dark blood with the dust" (144). Daisy, in Gatsby's car, crushed Myrtle Wilson without caring about the consequences. The aristocratic world could save her from any trouble. Moreover, George Wilson straightforwardly accepted Tom Buchanan's accusation that it is Jay Gatsby who killed Myrtle, simply because of Tom's supremacy and "wealth, race and gender position as the voice of the dominant ideology" (Froehlich and Hazleton 81).

In *Invisible Man*, violence is reflected through the character Ras the Exhorter. He is a parrhesiastes, as his speech opposes and contradicts what constituted the real social understanding. He uses his language as a powerful tool to control the repressive power and the dominant discourse this power spawns (racism), and ultimately helps African Americans free themselves from the despotism and austerity of the whites. From this respect, power did not only effect the repressive discourse of racism, but also a new social behavior and the discourse of violence. Ras the Exhorter's speech reflects the real discourse of racial violence between whites and blacks that reigned during the twenties. African Americans answered whites' racism with violence. It is an alternative discourse against the prevailing discourse of racism.

At the outset, Ras the Exhorter was known for his speeches throughout Harlem city. These speeches are characterized as violent. He relentlessly urges the use of power and violence to limit whites' racism. Thus, throughout the novel, he threatens the Brotherhood and intimidates both its white and black adherents. Ras the Exhorter asserts that "[they] gine chase 'em out" (Ellison 124). He confronts the social power that manifests itself in social institutions through violence. He cries "I ought to kill you. Godahm, I ought to kill you and the world be better off. But you black, mahn. Why you be black, mahn? I swear I ought to kill you. No mahn strike the Exhorter, godahmit, no mahn!" (287). He menaces the narrator and Tod Clifton, as

they supported the Brotherhood, and wants to chase the whites from Harlem and gather Black Americans in one powerful union .“Goddam, mahn,” he said, leaping forward, "this is Harlem. This is my territory, the black mahn's (sic) territory. You think we let white folks come in and spread their poison? Let 'em come in like they come and take over the numbers racket? Like they have all the stores? Talk sense, mahn, if you talking to Ras, talk sense!” (290).

Ras the Exhorter also divulges the truth about the whites; “They hate you, mahn. You Afrian. AFRICAN! Why you with them? ... They sell you out. ... They enslave us -- you forget that? How can they mean a black mahn any good?” (287). His accounts oppose and shake the conventional whites’ image as a reputable and civilized community. Ras the Exhorter declares “Nowhere! Ras is not ignorant, nor is Ras afraid. No! Ras, he be here black and fighting for the liberty of the black people when the white folks have got what they wahnt (sic) and done gone off laughing in your face and you stinking and choked up with white maggots” (291). He is convinced that it is only through violence that the African Americans could destroy whites’ power, and therefore procure their rights.

The discourse of violence is more highlighted through the speech of Ras the Exhorter when he seeks to break down the Brotherhood’s power for not reacting to Clifton’s murder. He resists the power which manifests itself through the discourse of racism, especially after the suppressive power and discourse came into effect. Ras the exhorter thought that it was high time to destroy whites’ power and get revenge against them; “Ras said chase them! It is time Ras the Exhorter become Ras the DESTROYER!” ... "I repeat, black ladies and gentlemahn (sic), the time has come for ahction! (sic) I, Ras the Destroyer, repeat, the time has come!” (375). In fact, Ras the DESTROYER resorts to the use of violence to crush the prevailing power.

The discourse of violence which is affirmed by Ras the Exhorter’s speech has its effects in society; “discourses are not simple groupings of utterances or statements, but consist of utterances which have meaning, force and effect within a social context” (Mills, *Discourse* 11). Indeed, Ras the Exhorter’s support for violence takes effect in a riot that burst in Harlem.

According to Michel Foucault, literature is “the means whereby a sense of a national culture is established, [and] is also the means whereby those norms of a shared culture can be contested” (22). In fact, Ellison stressed the discourse of violence in his oeuvre in order to

contest violence and reject it for the sake of getting independence and rights. In the same vein, Francis Scott Fitzgerald criticized racial violence that emerged in the twenties owing to class disparities.

5- The Discourse of corruption

Another harrowing social American practice that power generated is corruption; “power is dispersed throughout social relations, that it produces possible forms of behaviour as well as restricting behavior” (Mills, *Discourse* 17). These behaviors are shaped through discourse. Corruption became one of the existing discourses that governed and dominated American society; “the effects of truth produced and transmitted by this form of power, which in their turn reproduce forms of power” (Smart 72). *The Great Gatsby* and *Invisible Man* reflect the discourse of corruption.

In the twenties, the discourse of corruption highly pervaded the social milieu, and was embodied by many American people. Americans endorsed every means, above all unlawful and criminal ways, for the acquisition of money. In *The Great Gatsby*, the discourse of corruption is revealed through the speech of the narrator Nick Carraway. His speech disclosed the truth about Jordan Baker; “At her first big golf tournament there was a row that nearly reached the newspapers - a suggestion that she had moved her ball from a bad lie in the semi-final round. The thing approached the proportions of a scandal - then died away. A caddy retracted his statement, and the only other witness admitted that he might have been mistaken” (Fitzgerald 64). In fact, Nick Carraway’s accounts suggest the dishonesty and corruptness of Jordan Baker. She corrupted the rules of the game in order to acquire victory and earn money and fame; “She wasn't able to endure being at a disadvantage and, given this unwillingness, I suppose she had begun dealing in subterfuges when she was very young in order to keep that cool, insolent smile turned to the world and yet satisfy the demands of her hard, jaunty body”. Nick’s speech highlights the power that gives rise to corruption, and Jordan Baker reinforces it through her depraved behavior. Nick Carraway states that “She was incurably dishonest” (64). She forgets the conventional values and morals, and resorts to corruption to satisfy her needs. Her behavior, in fact, accentuated the real world when corruption affected leisure times in American society.

The discourse of corruption is also revealed in the accounts of Tom Buchanan about Jay Gatsby. He unveiled the secrets of Jay Gatsby. Along with Meyer Wolfsheim, Jay Gatsby becomes a bootlegger. He acquires his huge wealth from corruption. Tom claims “He [Jay Gatsby] and this Wolfsheim bought up a lot of side-street drugstores here (New York) and in Chicago and sold grain alcohol over the counter. That's one of his little stunts. I picked him for a bootlegger the first time I saw him, and I wasn't far wrong” (140). Hoping to acquire money, Jay Gatsby resorts to obscure activities. Jay Gatsby emphasized the real social environment of Fitzgerald's era when American people strived to be wealthy in order to reach the aristocratic rank. Corruption reached its highest point during the twenties, moral and ideal values were put aside to let corruption dominate instead.

Corruption is also one discourse that pervades Ellison's period, and is reflected and shaped in *Invisible Man*. As discrimination, infringements and racism reigned, corruption certainly took place in the American society. White Americans endorsed corruption in order to keep African Americans humble, and therefore keep ‘power over’ them. Accordingly, to support racism, white Americans resorted to corruption. The latter discourse supports and reinforces the former.

In the novel, the discourse of corruption is reflected through the black character Dr. Bledsoe. He is the leader of the great black college in the south, modeled after the Tuskegee Institute. However, he uses the college and students only to promote his selfish interests, and become powerful. Succeeding Norton's episode, Dr. Bledsoe reveals to the narrator that his true motive is only to remain and direct the college for his own power. He betrays the founder's faith in the college. Dr. Bledsoe states that

Negroes don't control this school or much of anything else -- haven't you learned even that? No, sir, they don't control this school, nor white folk either. True they support it, but I control it. I's big and black and I say 'Yes, suh' as loudly as any burr-head when it's convenient, but I'm still the king down here. I don't care how much it appears otherwise. Power doesn't have to show off. Power is confident, self-assuring, self-starting and self-stopping, self-warming and self-justifying. When you have it, you know it. Let the Negroes snicker and the crackers laugh! Those are the facts, son. The only ones I even pretend to please are big white folk, and even those I control more than they control me. This is a power set-up, son, and I'm at the controls. (Ellison 111)

Dr. Bledsoe seeks to gain power to serve his own interests. He shows humiliation and subservient attitude toward the whites in order to gain acceptance, benefit from their opulence and remain as the leader of the college. He acknowledges that, if necessary, he will do everything to devastate the whole black community and remain at the college as a powerful leader; “Shocks you, doesn't it?” , he says, “Well, that's the way it is. It's a nasty deal and I don't always like it myself. But you listen to me: I didn't make it, and I know that I can't change it. But I've made my place in it and I'll have every Negro in the country hanging on tree limbs by morning if it means staying where I am” (112). From this respect, Dr. Bledsoe corrupted the principle of the college: uplifting the black race through education. He strives and corrupts both whites and black students to be endowed with the same power and influence of the whites. Thus, he conforms to the actual social structure.

Corruption is also revealed through the Brotherhood. This organization is supposed to support African Americans against evictions from racist whites. However, it “exposed as another example of whites patronizing blacks” (Dickstein 58). Brother Jack also embraces the Brotherhood for his own benefits. He urges the narrator to follow the principles of the Brotherhood so that it serves his own wishes. He exploits the blacks to be endowed with force, and strengthen the African Americans’ disability. The Brotherhood urges the narrator to forget his family and past. In return, he is given a new name and identity in order to serve Jack’s interests. When the narrator delivers his first speech while in the Brotherhood, majorly all its members criticized this speech for the lack of objectivity; “the speech was wild, hysterical, politically irresponsible and dangerous,” ... “And worse than that, it was incorrect!” (Ellison 270). The members despise the narrator’s speech for its effectiveness and success in raising huge numbers. Furthermore, the corruptness of the Brotherhood is revealed when Brother Wrestrum accuses the narrator of using the Brotherhood only for his selfish interests; “I brought charges, much as I hated to have to do it. But I been watching the way things have been going and I've decided that if they don't stop soon, this brother is going to make a fool out of the Brotherhood!” ... “Yes, I said it and I mean it! This here brother constitutes one of the greatest dangers ever confronted by our movement” (309). The narrator is rather accused because of his success in Harlem city. Thus, instead of illuminating African Americans, the Brotherhood enhances disarray and hostility in the African Americans’ community; the Brotherhood “Use a nigger to catch a nigger” (433).

6- Racism, violence and corruption in the Authors' worlds

From a New Historical perspective, the authors always depict their life story and biases that are shaped by the historical setting in their fictions. In fact, Fitzgerald created his novel by portraying part of his life in his fiction, chiefly through relating Jay Gatsby's story. Like Gatsby, Fitzgerald was from an underprivileged community, and also longed for sophistication and wealth. He employs the discourse of racism that dominated the social setting of the twenties as he was also subdued to it. Fitzgerald, like Gatsby, suffered from the hierarchical social structure that established the aristocracy as the dominant and powerful class. Fitzgerald was from a middle class. However, his father Edward Fitzgerald was "an unsuccessful wicker furniture business but he was a poor businessman and an ineffectual provider for his family", whose living was kept under the auspices of his Irish mother's family. Fitzgerald developed a desire to reach for success; "[the] chaotic and humbling travails of his home life, and his need to dissimulate and create a better, if not perfect, world for himself, were starting to simmer away in the crucible of his imagination (Shephard 20). Fitzgerald declares that his father was "an old man, a completely broken man, who was a failure the rest of his days" (qtd. in Shaphard 20).

Fitzgerald was highly misjudged for his poor status when he fell in love with a daughter of an aristocratic family: Zelda Sayre; "she embodied the glamorous life that Fitzgerald coveted" (Curnutt 16). However, while visiting Geneva's family, he heard a remark that perpetuated turmoil to his romantic life and stimulated his aspiration for a wealthy living. This experience that hurt his feeling was embodied in his fiction *The Great Gatsby*, in which its protagonist endured the same racism from the aristocracy. As Fitzgerald, Gatsby was prevented from his love of the aristocratic Daisy because of class disparities.

While in the prosperous city of St Paul, Fitzgerald was aware of the racial distinction that was based on the possession of wealth. He had to bear in mind that he did not belong to this social class, and felt inferior to them; "Although a playmate of wealthy scions, Scott was keenly aware that he was not a member of the *haut monde*. As a result, he suffered a lifelong inferiority complex that, consciously or not, he exacerbated by striking relationships with wealthy cliques" (14).

Furthermore, the middle class rank of Fitzgerald prevented him from enjoying the privileges that the old money afforded. While in Princeton, Fitzgerald's poor rank limited his

ambitions to become the leader of Princeton's student theater company, the Triangle Club. For this reason, he stated: "We're the damned middle-class" (qtd. in Curnutt 15).

Like other Afro-Americans, Ralph Ellison incontestably had undergone racial prejudgments. Racism had affected and made his life bitter. This could be seen after the death of his parents. Ellison needed a job to satisfy his living alongside his brother. However, as society was tarnished of the evils of racism, it was difficult for Ellison to find a job. He overworked in many tiring jobs. Thus, the whites' prejudice limited the African Americans' opportunities to emerge and make known their talents. Indeed, Ellison was widely viewed as a gifted musician, but he was not capable to find a job and realize his ambition as a musician. Escaping the southern segregation to the north, "Ellison had come to realize that the social limitations present in the South were also in the North" (Tracy 25).

Ellison also experienced racism when he was received at Grinnell College. Ellison confronted a student who criticized the narrator's end in *Invisible Man* for not confronting the oppressor (44). Ellison calmly elucidated the fact for the student; however the latter humiliated and degraded Ellison by calling him "Uncle Tom" (44). It terribly distressed and shocked him. "Ellison was visibly shaken and then began to weep, repeating as he stood with his head on his friend's shoulder, "I am not an Uncle Tom. Wingate, you tell him. I am not an Uncle Tom" (44). This illustrates that despite the hard work and achievements the African Americans made, they were still seen through stereotypical images. Ellison's flight to Rome was broadly viewed as an "escape [from] the violent barbarism of American racism" (Hockens 5).

Both authors embody the discourse of violence in their fictions as both of them underwent violence in their life. Because of his love and idealistic view of himself, Gatsby's life ended in a violent way. In the same vein, Fitzgerald witnessed violence. Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda embodied the Jazz Age life. They were addicted to alcoholism and were often in debt in spite of the high outcome from his writings and films.

Besides the confused life of the Fitzgeralds, their relationship also endured violence. After striving to gain Zelda's love, the girl of his dreams betrayed him; "the Fitzgeralds' marriage suffered a serious blow when Zelda became involved with a French aviator, Edouard Jozan" (Curnutt 20). However, the couple continued their relationship, even if Fitzgerald admitted that "something had happened that could never be repaired" (qtd. in Curnutt 21). Consequently, Fitzgerald became addicted to alcoholism.

The Fitzgeralds' excessive addiction to Alcoholic drinks affected their life, health, and writings. The late 1920s was an era of depression to both America and Francis Scott Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald's work *Tender is the Night* proved to be unsuccessful. Zelda became gradually mad and was constantly in and out mental institutions. This increased Fitzgerald's debts. "By mid-1937, Fitzgerald's debts topped \$22,000, and his earnings had dropped to \$3,500, roughly half of the annual cost of Zelda's treatment at Highland Hospital in Asheville, North Carolina" (Curnutt 26).

Fitzgerald's long addiction made him violent; "he frequently had drunken spells in which he became bitter and violent". Thus, alcoholic drinks ebbed his life, to ultimately die from a heart attack.

As an Afro-American, Ellison did not escape violence. His father's early death made Ellison's life violent and harsh. This loss was a severe shock to Ellison. Equally important, it was a disaster to the Ellisons, since the father's work was their life resource. His mother Ida worked as a house servant and struggled to afford food and shelter for her sons. They were also supported by other people who provided them with substandard clothing and food. The death of Ellison's father not only shook his family, but also was a harrowing blow to him. Ellison was highly terrified about the incident surrounding his father's death: "the difficulties with money and weather caused his [father's] body to be held from burial until it stunk in the dark back room of the funeral pastor" (Hockens 13).

Ellison's mother joined her husband leaving her two sons, Ralph Ellison and his brother Herbert, struggle to afford the means for their survival. As racist whites dominated the social setting, Ellison faced difficulties in finding a job; he and his brother went for hunting all the day. The effects of white racism compelled Ralph Ellison to leave the Tuskegee Institute. Thus, his literary talent was hindered. Ralph Ellison's and Francis Scott Fitzgerald's Life was violent and a struggle for survival.

Both novels' characters resorted to corruption for the sake of power and wealth. These discourses shape the real societies of both authors. Francis Scott Fitzgerald and Ralph Ellison implement the discourse of corruption that dominates their societies in order to contest and criticize this evil social form.

Fitzgerald did not escape corruption. With his wife Zelda, Fitzgerald was embedded in the corruption of the American society of the twenties. He supported the discourse of corruption

that shaped his fiction. The Fitzgeralds widely endorsed the Jazz Age life. Thus, they corrupted the old religious values and ideal principles of the Victorian society and were addicted to alcoholism. Fitzgerald openly stated: “Don’t you know I am one of the most notorious drinkers of the younger generation?” (qtd. in Curnutt 22). Furthermore, Fitzgerald witnessed the corruption of the upper class. Mathew Brucoli states: Fitzgerald’s “stories variously deal with the aspiration for and the corruption of wealth, the love of a poor boy for an unattainable girl, and the connection between love and money” (qtd. in Curnutt 20).

Ellison also reflected the discourse of corruption in *Invisible Man* in order to reflect the real corruption of the communist party that Ellison had taken part in. The communist party was the first political organization that stressed that all men are created equal and independent, and that black Americans had to share the same rights as whites. For this reason, Ellison engaged into the communist party to help foster more its principles. This organization is the model for the fictional Brotherhood. As the Brotherhood betrayed the narrator and all the black community, the communist party also deceived Ellison and its African American adherents. Barbara Foley states that “Ellison’s connections to the American Communist Party during the forties were much closer than most people have assumed” (Rice 120). As the Black narrator made speeches for the Brotherhood in Harlem City, Ellison wrote and published for the evolution of the communist party. Accordingly, *Invisible Man* expresses the concept Barbara Foley calls the “anticommunist Cold War rhetoric” (121). The communist party exploited African Americans to acquire power and ignored their racial plight in America; they looked at the black issue as insignificant and worthless.

Conclusion

To conclude, power pervades and dominates every social corner. Individuals cannot flee its regulations and dictates; they only obey it. Even if they protest against it, they are still under its hegemony, since it is power that dictates them what to do, and creates other discourses; “The individual is both an effect of power and the element of its articulation” (Smart 73). Power produced racism as one acknowledged and regular social phenomenon that shaped and regulated both authors’ societies. Yet, this social and cultural convention limited and repressed other individuals, excluding them from the body of the society. In fact, the major power behind the novels’ characters’ greedy quest to adopt a new identity is the omnipresence

of racism in their society. These characters escaped the evils of racism through shaking off their true identity.

In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate how language served as a powerful instrument in affirming and underpinning the established discourses, and how language is also used to develop other discourses.

General Conclusion

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In this dissertation, I have demonstrated that the decade of the 1920s was characterized by Americans' greedy quest to adopt a new identity. For this purpose, I have selected two American novels, *Invisible Man* and *The Great Gatsby* to highlight and study the issue of identity. These two fictions question the same subject. Indeed, both novels' protagonists' struggle to adopt a new identity in their community. I have attempted to show that the major social and economic developments that distinguished America during the twenties were the major impetus behind the white Americans' ambitions and oppression of Afro-Americans.

In the twenties, America had witnessed the greatest economic progress in its history. Americans were embedded into a vast prosperity. This economic development also stimulated technological progress. Consequently, technological and economic developments shaped American society at that time. Furthermore, the old morals and religious values the Victorian society instructed were set apart and corruption, racism and bootlegging spread. Women, who were marginalized in the past became independent, but above all, adopted the evils of immorality and corruption that pervaded the American society. Economic development stimulated Americans' longing for an aristocratic life.

Black Americans were also affected by the American nation's progress; they were still undergoing whites' authority and racism. They gradually and vehemently demanded their rights and integrity into the dominant white community. Yet, the major development the African Americans witnessed was psychological. Many African Americans, notably those of Harlem City, became self-conscious and proud of their culture. The literary and musical achievements of African Americans were the great mechanisms that challenged whites' racism and fostered their elusive dreams of full rights and integrity to the whole American system.

Accordingly, white Americans and the old aristocrats fostered their efforts to secure the social structure, their authority, and prevent race degeneracy. They resented the development of other races, as it constituted a menace for their influence. As a result, corruption, disarray, racism, infringements became the nightmares of Americans. White Americans resorted to scientific researches to prove their supremacy and superior culture over other races. This is by advancing the slanderous theory of social Darwinism that stressed the biological and natural inferiority of other races, chiefly African Americans. This highly affected the psychology of

General Conclusion

the oppressed and marginalized races, which resulted in their struggle to break away from their culture and identity to adopt the superior and dominant one.

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* reflected this issue of identity in America of the twenties. Through their protagonists, the narrator's and Jay Gatsby's quest for a new identity, the authors mirrored the social thoughts and cultural norms of their epochs, and the thorny and repressive instructions imposed on a specific group of people.

Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* emitted the white middle class' quest of assimilation into the well off. He explored the issue of class status in America, and how the disparity in class status divided the white Americans and fostered the dominance of the old aristocracy. Through Jay Gatsby, Fitzgerald advanced the evils of the class status discrepancies in American society. In fact, Jay Gatsby is prevented from his love for the aristocratic Daisy. Thus, to gain his love, Jay Gatsby strives to break the social structure be a member of the old money.

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, on the other hand, reflected the social traumas and quandaries that restricted African Americans' rights. He advances how the evils of whites' racism were the major thrust for black Americans' greedy search for an identity in America. Through the narrator, Ellison highlights the mental and physical traumas and anxieties the African Americans encountered during their fruitless and disastrous search for a new identity. Ellison advocates that black Americans are always invisible to the whites, since the former were often seen and judged through prejudgments and stereotypes. Moreover, Ellison immersed his protagonist's quest in the context of political ideologies advanced to promote the black integrity into the dominant community. Through the failure of the narrator's quest, Ellison satirizes the African Americans' quest for a new identity and the ideologies that helped their integrity.

In this work, I have also studied the Jazz Age's concept of the American Dream. Through Jay Gatsby's embodiment of the American Dream, Fitzgerald highlights the corruption and decadence of the American Dream during the Jazz Age. The superficial and materialistic world distorted Jay Gatsby's faith in the true American Dream. Thus, through his material possessions and illicit wealth, Jay Gatsby is featured in the downfall and decadence of the American Dream which leads to his death.

General Conclusion

In the light of racism and injustice, Ellison expresses his discontent and derides the whites' belief in the American Dream tenets of democracy and racial equality. Through the narrator, he explores the futility of the American Dream for African Americans because of whites' racism and despotism.

Through the lens of New Historicism, and Foucault's theory of discourse and power, I have demonstrated that the two literary works echo only their times. In regard to the theory's assumptions, I have unveiled the prevailing discourses common in both fictions. Of most importance, through Foucault's theory on discourse and power, I have endeavored to show how power pervades and manifests itself through social beliefs and cultural values. Moreover, I have attempted to demonstrate how the novels' characters employ language as a mechanism to affirm the power exercised on them, and this by revealing the discourses that power spawns. In the same vein, the oppressed and marginalized used language as a weapon to produce "alternative discourses" in order to curb the repressive power and challenge the dominant discourses.

During the twenties, power regulated the social scene, and constructed the discourse of racism that subjugated and confined its subjects. The white Americans embodied and advanced the discourse of racism out because they feared race degeneracy. The old aristocratic society developed the discourse of racism in order to prevent the nouveau riche from integrity into their dominion. The speeches of the novels' characters reinforce this power, and hence portray the real world. The authors reflected real discourses to criticize racism, violence and corruption. White Americans embodied the discourse of violence and corruption only to nourish and strengthen their racism, and keep the oppressed races under control. At the same time, the oppressed people endorsed the discourses of corruption and violence to thwart the discourse of racism and its cruel practices. Thus, as Foucault declares, social discourses are often paradoxical and incompatible.

In this dissertation, I have attempted to shed light on the issue of identity Quest. This is through the repressive social nightmare and turmoil of racism and injustice. Both the narrator and Jay Gatsby attempted to oppose and break the social structure that power imposed on them. Yet, both of their quests for a place in American society ended up in demise.

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