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Post-war/ Modern society and Crisis of Identity in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925)

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Dedication

To all the members of our family, especially to our beloved parents who devoted their lives to meet our needs, without them nothing would be possible. We would like also to thank all our dear friends for their support.

Ouiza-Kali

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Abstract

The present dissertation aims at analyzing the way F.Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) represent their respective societies, the American and the English, in the aftermath of the Great War and illustrate the lack of identification. To reach our aim, we have compared the two works using the New Historicist Approach, Freud's concept of "repression" and Roy Baumeister's Escape Theory. The study underscores the fact that the two literary works are the product of their time. It also demonstrates the traumatic effect of war including loss, disillusionment and psychological unrest in the two novels. Finally, it explains the way individuals sought to escape the social oppression and the norms imposed by the Post-War Modern American and English societies. People escape from their true selves, adopt new behaviour and different personalities to fit the social standards.

I-INTRODUCTION

This dissertation falls within the trend of comparative literature. It attempts to analyze the way in which F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) reflect the crisis of identity in Post-war Modern American and English societies. We aim to study the novels in terms of affinities. The crisis of identity can be defined as “a feeling of unhappiness and confusion caused by not being sure about what type of person you really are or what the true purpose of your life is”¹. In other words, it represents a conflict between what a person is and what this same person is supposed to be. This state causes the questioning of the aim of existence itself.

In the context of our study, crisis of identity is linked to, and resulted from WWI. The turning point of the world's history was the First World War which is considered by Paul Fussell as a terrible world conflict that “modern history” has known². Indeed, the conflict inflicted the entire world, among the countries that endured the cruelties of the warfare, we have America and England. However, the war experience seems to be very beneficial for literature, especially the American and British ones. As a matter of fact, the Post-war years mainly the Twentieth century saw the emergence of a new literary movement called modernism. This movement stands against the Victorian writings. But it also appeared as a response to the complexity of modern life, especially after the Great War³.

Moreover, the modernist writers were strongly influenced by the new ideas that appeared at that time, especially Freud's theories that urged people to give more interest to the human inner side⁴. Indeed, modernist works focused on the individual rather than the society⁵. Besides, they tried to be innovative and dared to treat new themes such as sexual duality⁶.

Among the authors who marked the modernist literature in America and Britain, we

have F.Scott Fitzgerald and Virginia Woolf. We have chosen these two authors because they both lived the circumstances of the Post-war Era. Through their works *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), these two authors depict the state of the Post-war modern American and English societies of the twenties that suffered from a lack of identification due to the aftermath of the Great War and modernity.

THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Fitzgerald's and Woolf's novels have received a great amount of criticism. In fact, the two novels have been studied from different perspectives. Afina Cojocaru has dealt with the two novels from a socio-cultural perspective. She exposes the cross cultural similarities between the two literary works. She also points out the parallels between them in terms of "innovation", "psychological explorations" and their emphasis on connections between the "urban microcosm" and the "modern subject"⁷.

Moreover, Max Weber has studied Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* from a Marxist perspective. He suggests that the social class of a given person is not static. It changes depending on different factors such as work, wealth, and property. In fact, the characters belong to different social classes. Each one with his proper class definition. Weber states that Fitzgerald's characters Gatsby, Tom and Daisy Buchanan are those who belong to the upper and educated class, while Nick Carraway is considered as the "property less intelligentsia". On the other hand, the Wilsons are described as belonging to the working class or the lower class⁸.

In addition, Lovisa Lindberg has studied Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* from a social perspective and intended to show that the American Dream serves as a tool to criticize the American society of the 1920's. Indeed, Lovisa Lindberg uses the American Dream's failure

and corruption to give a concrete evidence of the novel's critique of societal values. This is done through historicizing and reviewing the American Dream in relation to the characters. Lindberg asserts that Fitzgerald's use of different characters Tom, Daisy, Gatsby and Myrtle in relation to the corruption of the American Dream, is a way to criticize the state of the American society at that time⁹.

Similarly, Criticism on Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* has been carried under numerous perspectives. Elane Showalter, a feminist revisionist, has dealt with the novel from a feminist perspective. She claims that *Mrs Dalloway* cannot be considered as a sort of "feminist heroine", since Woolf draw more attention to the married status of Clarissa whom Showalter considers as neither a "priestess" nor a "goddess", for she is just an ordinary woman who cannot be admirable. Moreover, Showalter claims that the interesting thing about the novel is the way in which Woolf can see what is hidden behind "the social masks" or the inner side of the humans¹⁰.

Another critic that enlarges Woolf's scope of criticism is the American critic Perry Meisel. The latter has dealt with the novel from a psychological perspective. Meisel argues that the novel's central character has two different and distinct identities. On the one hand, there is "Clarissa" who represents the "true" or "own" self that she tries to hide from the society, on the other hand we have "Mrs Dalloway" that Clarissa created in order to mask her "proper" self.

Meisel says:

In the mirror, she gains in her reflection what she does not possess organically a whole version of herself...but this mirror image is only that an image. Clarissa's identity is composed of different elements which she had to learn to blend together. The two primary ones of course, are "Clarissa" and "Mrs Dalloway", with each proper name¹¹.

In other words, her identity shatters into two distinct parts the true self which is represented by Clarissa and her social mask, represented by Mrs Dalloway. The two are completely different, but this woman manages herself so that she can be a coherent person.

Another eminent critic on Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* is Alex Zwerlding who examines the novel from a social perspective. He maintains that Virginia Woolf wants to criticize the social system; However, he thinks that she puts emphasis on the individuals rather than on the values of a distinct class at a specific time. Moreover, Zwerlding asserts that Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway* depicts the harshness of the ruling class. He also describes the extent to which this governing class oppresses its individuals who are in need of change, but still "worship traditions". He says:

The dominant faith in the value of self-control creates an atmosphere of emotional austerity that in one way or another affects the behavior of all the characters in the novel. It inhibits the natural expression of feeling in those who live by governing-class code and turns the more rebellious members of society into unstable exhibitionists¹².

The quotation above demonstrates that the Post-war ruling class oppresses individuals and influences their behaviors and makes of them disturbed people.

Issue and working hypothesis:

From the previous review of the literature that concerns Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, one can notice that some critics have already put the two novels together under study, and other critics have studied them separately. Yet according to the best of our knowledge the previous studies did not approach the two works from both historicist/ psychological perspective. This is why we have undertaken the task of dealing with the Issue of Modernity and crisis of identity in the two works. Our aim is to examine the representation of the Post-war/ modern society in the two novels and to demonstrate how the characters in both novels escape from their true identities and adopt new behaviors in order to fit the norms of the society to which they belong. Through this dissertation, we attempt to shed light on the themes that reflect the crisis of identity which are loss, disillusionment and psychological unrest.

In order to conduct our research effectively, we rely on the New historicist approach in dealing with the study of the modern American and British societies in the two novels to provide the evidence that the two authors were influenced by the socio-historical conditions of the twenties. In addition we will borrow the concept of repression from Freud's book *Studies on Hysteria* and Escape from Roy Baumeister's *Escape Theory*. Our dissertation will follow the IMRAD method. The study is divided into an introduction in which we introduce the topic and state the purpose of our study. Then, we review some of the literature written on F.Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). After this, we have the methods section in which we present New Historicism and Roy Baumeister's *Escape Theory*. We have also supported our study by making reference to New Historicism Approach and Freud's concept of "repression". Finally, we have the results section in which we focus on the findings of our research. This discussion will be divided into three chapters. The first one will analyse how the two authors Fitzgerald and Woolf portrayed the American and English societies of the 1920s in their novels *The Great Gatsby* and *Mrs Dalloway*, relying on the New Historicist claim that there is a close relationship between literature and history. The second chapter will deal with the crisis of identity in the two novels, that is manifested through a sense of loss, disillusionment and psychological unrest. We will refer to Freud's concept of "repression". In the last chapter, we will try to show how the characters in the two novels try to escape their true selves and adopt new behaviours in order to fit the norms of the upper class of the Post- war modern American and English societies. This will be supported by Roy Baumeister's *Escape Theory* (1990).

Endnotes:

¹ Merriam Webster, Identity Crisis, accessed in:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity%20crisis> on: 08-12-2016 at: 11h10

² Paul Fussel, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11.

³ Peter Childs, *Modernism*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 21.

⁴ Ibid., 56.

⁵ Ibid., 18.

⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁷ Alina Cojocaru, "Post-World War I American And British Microcosms In F.Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* And Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (Master Thesis, Ovidus University Constanta, 2014) available in:

<http://litere.univ-ovidius.ro/Anale/documente-z/articole-2014-2/Cojocaru%202-2014.pdf>
on: 18-04-2016 at: 7:20

⁸ Max Weber, Social Class and Status in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Accessed in :
<https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:667768/FULLTEXT01.pdf> on: 12_01_2016 at: 9:55

⁹ Lovisa Lindberg, "The American Dream as a Means of Social Criticism in *The Great Gatsby*", (Thesis,2014) ,7. Available in :
https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/38269/1/gupea_2077_38269_1.pdf accessed in: 18_02-2016.

¹⁰ John Sutherland and Susanna Hilshop, *The Connell Guide to Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway*, (London: Connell guides, 2014), 36.

¹¹ Ibid., 36-37.

¹² Steve Ellis, *Virginia Woolf and The Victorians*, (UK: University Press Cambridge, 2007), 68.

II- METHODS AND MATERIALS:

1-Methods:

In order to achieve our aim, we will rely on the New Historicist approach. In addition, we will refer briefly to Freud's concept of repression and, we will borrow some concepts from Roy Baumeister's Escape Theory.

To begin with, New Historicism represents a school of literary theory that came into being in the 1980s. Its major proponent is Stephen Greenblatt. This school seeks to understand a literary work through its historical context. The appropriateness of the New Historicism to our research is explained by the fact that New historicists claim that literature cannot be isolated from history and that a literary work should be studied or analysed within its historical context¹³.

Moreover, we will also rely on Freud's concept of "repression" to show how the characters in the two novels repress and hide all their past memories of the war and their past life desires because the Post-war modern societies to which they belong do not accept them as they are, so they are somehow obliged to repress all what they feel in order to be accepted. However, all this repression results in a crisis of identity and unstable personality¹⁴.

At last but not least, we will rely on some aspects of Escape theory that was elaborated in the 1990s by Roy Baumeister. It suggests that a person chooses to escape from his self when the latter does not correspond to the norms of the society to which he belongs. So, when people become aware that parts of their identity do not fit the expected standards, they try their best in

order to change them so that they can avoid bad judgements. According to this theory, people evaluate their identities as being well if they meet the norms. However, they judge their personalities as inadequate if they do not fit the social ideals imposed by the society. However, escape theory focuses mainly on the behaviours that follow when the people become aware that their identity is not appropriate to the standards¹⁵.

Escape Theory passes through many stages. A person lives a bad experience or endures external forces and the results do not fit the expected standards since his or her personality does not match with the social norms. After that, this person judges himself as pitiful, guilty or insufficient. This engenders negative feelings, so the person tries to escape this undesirable reaction and the consequences of this escape and avoidance can be very harmful and can result in a psychological unbalance, and can even lead to suicide¹⁶. Concerning our novels, escape results in changing behaviours and adopting new personalities but it also results in suicide.

The relevance of Escape Theory on Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* can also be arguable since the characters of the novel endure the tyranny and corruption of the materialistic Post-war American society. The characters try their best so as to flee their destiny by adopting social masks in order to hide who they really are. We shall demonstrate this by referring to the characters of Jay Gatsby, Nick Carraway, Daisy and Tom Buchanan. Moreover, Escape Theory can be appropriate to Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway* since the characters in the novel try to escape the social oppression of Post-war modern English society which is subject to the upper classes. We shall refer to the characters Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith who both escape their reality in two different ways. While the first adopts new behaviours to fit the norms imposed by her society, the latter chooses to commit suicide to escape from the authority and oppression of this same society.

2-Materials:

Summary of Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925):

The Great Gatsby (1925) is a modernist novel written by F.Scott Fitzgerald. It depicts the great changes that occurred after the First World War, and the deep impact this war had left on the American society as well. Indeed, Nick Carraway the first narrator, his cousin Daisy Buchanan, his neighbour Jay Gatsby whose only goal is to regain the heart of Daisy, are all characters who suffer from an identity crisis, though it appears differently in each one of them. In fact, Jay Gatsby is a rich self-made man whose fortune remains a mystery.

Gatsby loves Daisy but cannot marry her, and Daisy ends up with Tom Buchanan a rich man from old money. Even if Gatsby gives enormous parties, no one really knows him and people speculate about him. His parties are considered as social gathering where people are invited from all New York, drinking and dancing are the principal entertainments. When Nick Carraway becomes close to Gatsby he ends up by discovering the sad reality of Jay Gatsby and why he entered the world of bootlegging. He also finishes by knowing the love story that has existed between both his cousin and his friend. Tom Buchanan, Daisy's husband does not approve the wealth of Gatsby and suspects him of practicing illegal ways to make his wealth. Tom Buchanan cheats on Daisy with Myrtle a garage man's wife. In her turn when Daisy finds out how Gatsby made his fortune by using illegal ways to get money, she regrets having an affair with him and returns with Tom. Finally, Tom convinced Myrtle's husband that it is Gatsby who killed his wife. Thus, Gatsby is accused of a murder he never committed and he is killed in his house. No one attends his funeral except his father and Nick. Both Daisy and Tom left their

house to move to Chicago and Nick returns back home.

Summary of Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925):

Mrs Dalloway, is a novel written by the British author Virginia Woolf. Published in 1925, the story is set in London on a single day in June. Throughout this novel, Woolf stresses on the traumatic effects of The First World on the English society. The novel describes one day in the life of the female protagonist Clarissa Dalloway who prepares to give a party in that evening. Though this woman seems to be a perfect wife who fulfills her household's duties, she is in fact shattered between her true self and her social role. She has flashbacks from her younger years when she was in love with Peter Walsh with whom she broke up to marry Richard Dalloway.

Clarissa also remembers her lesbian experience with a girl Sally Seton, to whom she was sexually attracted and with whom she shared a kiss with. Clarissa questions her marriage and life decisions and her state reflects the one of all the Post-war modern English society which became lost, disillusioned, and unstable.

We are also introduced to Septimus Warren Smith, a veteran during the Great War who got mad. He seems to be hallucinating all day, he even hears the voice of his dead friend Evans who was killed in the battlefield. At the end of the day, Septimus kills himself by jumping from a window. In her novel *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf depicts what is in her characters' minds using the "stream of consciousness" technique.

Endnotes:

¹³ Thomas Brook, *The New Historicism and Other Old-Fashioned Topics*, (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1991), 25.

¹⁴ Pamela Thurschwell, *Sigmund Freud* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 21.

¹⁵ Roy F. Baumeister, *Escape Theory*, 1990, unpaginated. Accessed in: <http://psychology.iresearchnet.com/social-psychology/social-psychology-theories/escape-theory/>. on: 12-02-2016 at: 7:45.

¹⁶ Roy F. Baumeister, *Suicide As Escape From Self*, (Case Western Reserve University: The American Psychological Association, 1990).

III-Results and Discussion:

A- Results:

Throughout this dissertation, we tried to compare two modernist works that are F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). We have relied on New Historicism in order to demonstrate how the historical circumstances of the twenties are reflected in the novels. We have also used Freud's concept of "repression" to show how the people of the American and English societies repress their feelings and memories and this results in a psychological unrest. Finally, we have appropriated some aspects of Roy Baumeister's Escape Theory in order to show how the characters flee their reality and adopt new behaviours to be adequate to the imposed norms.

We have come to the findings that both works depict the Post-war modern societies as materialistic, superficial and valueless, and that all this is a product of the social circumstances that the two authors Fitzgerald and Woolf lived and later they wrote their experiences in their literary works *The Great Gatsby* and *Mrs Dalloway* since the two works are autobiographical.

In addition, both novels show characters that suffer from loss, disillusionment and psychological unrest due to the tyranny of the Post-war modern American and English societies. In fact, the characters repress all their past memories especially that of the war and also hide their true feelings and desires.

Finally, in both novels *The Great Gatsby* and *Mrs Dalloway*, the characters seek strategies to escape loss, disillusionment and oppression by hiding their true identities and adopting new behaviours in order to fit the norms of the Post-war modern American and English societies.

B-Discussion:

Chapter one: Depiction of the Modern American and English societies of the twenties in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925)

The following chapter is devoted to shed light on the way F. Scott Fitzgerald and Virginia Woolf portray the 1920s' American and English societies in *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). We intend to analyse the way in which the two modernist authors Fitzgerald and Woolf reflect the circumstances of their societies in their literary works. We will base our study on the New Historicist approach which asserts that "Literary history cannot be seen in isolation from other historical forces"¹

In this sense, one can understand that the core of the New Historicism is that a literary work is strongly influenced by the political but also the social circumstances of its time. So, the aim of the New Historicist is to demonstrate that a literary work cannot be detached from its historical context, so literature is closely related to history and that a literary work is strongly influenced by the time of its production.

First, in *The Great Gatsby*, the American writer Fitzgerald demonstrates the different changes that occurred in the American society during the twenties. In fact, at that time, the Post-war modern American society has known several changes. In the 1920s, America was swept by a wave of the mass production, especially the 'boom' of car industry. This is shown in the novel through Gatsby's Rolls-Royce, "On weekends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains"².

Additionally, America at that time became a society of consumerism, especially of alcohol. As a result of the excess in drinking, the government decided to take harsh measures and passed the 18th Amendment which prohibited the sale, consuming and manufacturing of liquors. Yet, instead of stabilizing the society, this prohibition engendered the apparition of crimes and illegal business called bootlegging, which is represented in the novel by the bootlegger called Wolfsheim with whom Gatsby made illegal affairs. The Prohibition Act also led to the apparition of ‘speakeasies’ that are places where people meet to drink and exchange liquors³. Fitzgerald himself asserts that drinking was seen as an escape from pain⁴. Furthermore, consumerism was seen as a way to show that a person has achieved something in his life. In this sense, Bret E. Carroll suggests that consumerism was a kind of means to show the accomplishment of a person⁵.

Besides, Post-war modern America has known a change in morals. Indeed, people lost all their values. There was the loss of the family principles. In the novel we came to notice that everyone lives for his own sake, no one cares about the other. Americans adopted an extravagant way of life. Their main concern was having fun and wasting money. To highlight the loss of morals in the 1920s’ America, Fitzgerald also depicts in his novel women’s changing behaviours since the 19th Amendment gave them the right to vote. In addition to the apparition of the Freudian Theories that were against reticence⁶. Women decided to adopt a new way of life. At that time, they were known under the name of “Flappers”⁷. They were more free and extravagant. There was a change in their clothing, their attitudes, and their behaviours. In fact, they dressed short and cut their hair. Women attended lavish parties, they smoked and drunk. This is depicted in the novel through the female characters, mainly Daisy Buchanan who is a selfish woman who just cared about herself and neglected even her own daughter. She and Jordan Baker, the other woman who attend Gatsby’s parties, are the typical woman of the twenties.

Moreover, the loss of values is depicted in the novel through the corruption. This is exemplified in the novel by the illegal affairs made by Gatsby. It is also apparent in the unfaithfulness in marriage, illustrated by Tom and Daisy that cheats on each other.

Furthermore, the 1920s' American society was depressed, its people suffered from the aftermath of the Great War. In fact, the individuals felt lost and disillusioned because of the aftermath of the First World War. Really, the war affected the whole American society which tried to forget about the horrors of the conflict by having fun, organizing parties and dancing on the rhythm of the jazz music which was the popular music at that Era. This is portrayed in the novel by the big parties given by Gatsby. In this context, Vladimir Tostoff asserts that jazz is a kind of "modern art" in history that represents an original voice proper to America⁸.

Besides, the Post-war modern American society of the 1920s believed that America was a land of miracles, where everything is possible. Americans wanted to be rich and possess a wealth and live like royals. Americans at that time chased what was called as the "American Dream"⁹. This is depicted in the novel with Gatsby's quest to reconquer Daisy. However, he ended by being killed, and by this, Fitzgerald wanted to denounce the corruption of this dream.

Moreover, America in the twenties was seen as a materialistic society that just cared about the material things. This is shown in the novel through Gatsby's big mansion and the Buchanan's huge house. However, this created a gap between the rich and the poor. In this sense, F. Scott Fitzgerald himself says:

I'm restless. My whole generation is restless. I'm sick of a system where the richest man gets the most beautiful girl he wants her, where the artist without an income has to sell his talents to a button manufacture¹⁰.

That is to say, Fitzgerald denounces a corrupted and unjust social system in which the rich have whatever they want even the girls they desire; contrary to the poor artists that gain little money, and sell their art for nothing in return.

All in all, we come to notice that the American society of the twenties has been affected by the aftermath of the Great War which changed people's lives forever. In this sense, Gertrude Stein described the Post-war American society "a lost generation of men and women adrift in a chaotic hell of their own solipsism"¹¹. We can also deduce that the American writer F. Scott Fitzgerald through his novel *The Great Gatsby* reflects the conditions of the American society of the twenties, a society that new an economic growth and a sense of freedom to an extent that people did all they ever wanted, a point that Alfred Kazin has spoken about. He argues that "The Twenties were in fact a time of great prosperity and liberty [...]"¹².

Similarly, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* clearly gives a picture of the mood that covered Post-war modern England of the twenties. As a matter of fact, the society totally changed during that era. Peter Walsh, one of the male characters in the novel who has been out of London and who came back after the war says that "Those five years - 1918 to 1923- had been, he suspected, somehow very important. People looked different. Newspaper seemed different [...]"¹³.

During that period, the difference between the social classes became more noticeable in England. The class that suffered the most after the war was the working class represented in the novel by Miss Kilman. In addition, there was the rise of the labor party¹⁴ which is shown through Miss Kilman who seems to be in competition against Clarissa for the love of Elizabeth. "If only she could make her weep; could ruin her; humiliate her to her knees crying, you are right! But this was God's will, not Miss Kilman's. It was to be a religious

victory. So she glared; so she glowered”¹⁵. This quote demonstrates how Miss Kilman dislikes Clarissa. She always provokes her in order to have a response. She is jealous and wants to have all what Clarissa has. She has desire to destroy her and the two women fight over Elizabeth.

Besides, after the war, people became nervous and disturbed by the war events. Soldiers who returned home were “shell-shocked”¹⁶. The character that reflects the psychological aftermath of the Great War, is Septimus Warren Smith. This war veteran is mad because of all the horrors he has experienced during The Great War. He feels oppressed and betrayed by the government. This was the feeling of all the English people that blamed their government for involving them in a devastating war that left them lost. In this sense, T.S Eliot who spent his life in England depicted the Post-war world as a hopeless “wasteland”, without faith¹⁷.

In addition, the Post-war modern English society can be recognized by the domination of the upper class who pretended to care about the people and the social values. This is represented in the novel by the two doctors Bradshaw and Holmes who try to exterminate Septimus with the agreement of the English upper class¹⁸. In fact, after the Great War, the government tried hard to maintain their high rank and their dominant image of the British Empire. People were obliged somehow to defend their international reputation. In this sense, Woolf asserts: “First in all the that shops and tailors’ shops strangers looked at each other and thought of the dead; of the flag; of Empire [...]”¹⁹. This demonstrates that people followed the instructions of the government which forces them to honor an empire whose pride collapsed because of the horrors left by the Great War.

To add, the 1920s in England knew the Emancipation of women in 1928²⁰. This is demonstrated in the novel through Elizabeth’s will to enter the world of business. However, the English society was still dominated by men, and women remained subordinate to them,

mainly the married women who lived in the shadow of their husbands. As a matter of fact, the Post-war modern English society was a patriarchal one. In this sense, the typical English woman has to be a dedicated wife to her husband. This is what Woolf depicts in her novel through the character of Clarissa who is subject to her husband and who has to see things in life in the way Richard does. In fact, Clarissa has to be the woman that her husband wants her to be, otherwise she will be seen as a bad woman who does not obey to the social standards of the English upper class.

Finally, the novel exposes implicitly the British Imperialism in India. The right to imperialism is questioned in the novel by the character of Peter Walsh who served the British cause in India. However, he is against the "British foreign policy".

Coming as he did from a respectable Anglo-Indian family which for at least three generations had administered the affairs for a continent (it is strange he thought, what a sentiment I have about that, disliking India, and empire, even of this sort, and army as he did)²¹.

This shows that even if Peter is from England and went to live in India, he does not agree with the British Foreign policy. He is against British imperialism. He does not wish to administer the affairs of the British empire in India.

To sum up, one can notice that the two authors F.Scott Fitzgerald and Virginia Woolf reflect the contradictions of the American and English societies of the 1920s that both knew several changes especially after one significant event that is the First World War and also modernity. We have demonstrated that both *The Great Gatsby* and *Mrs Dalloway* reflect the Era of their production.

Endnotes

¹ Thomas Brook, *The New Historicism and Other Old-Fashioned Topics*, (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1991), 25.

² F.Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (Béjaia: Editions Talantikit, 2008), 45.

³ Françoise Grellet, *An Introduction to American Literature*, (Paris : Hachette), 159.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Kimberly Pumphery, “God Bless America, Land of The Consumer” (Bridgewater University,2011),5 accessed in: http://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1197&context=undergrad_rev.on: 22-05-2016 at: 13:00.

⁶Françoise Grellet, *An Introduction to American literature*, 159.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Kathleen Parkinson, *F. Scott Fitzgerald The Great Gatsby*, (England: Penguin Books, 1987), 14

⁹Ibid, 13.

¹⁰Kazunori Kenjo, *A Study of Fitzgerald – The Social Background In His Literature -*, 5 accessed in: <http://crf.flib.u-fukui.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10461/4297/1/KJ00000147249.pdf> on 18- 07-2016 at: 01:35

¹¹John Sutherland and Joylon Connell, *The Connell’s guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby*, (London: Connell Guides, 2010), 8

¹² Kazunori Kenjo, *A Study of Fitzgerald – The Social Background In His Literature -*, 2 accessed in: <http://crf.flib.u-fukui.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10461/4297/1/KJ00000147249.pdf> on 18- 07-2016

¹³Merry M Palowski, *Mrs Dalloway Virginia Woolf*, (London, Wordsworth Classics, 2003), 54.

¹⁴ David McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain*, (China, Longman, 1989), 161.

¹⁵ Merry M Palowski, *Mrs Dalloway Virginia Woolf*, 91.

¹⁶ Shelby Livengood, "Psychological Trauma: Shell Shock during WWI (Marian University, 2012), 3. Available on: <https://hssjournal.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/shelby-shell-shock.pdf> . Accessed in: 15-08-2016 at 9:14

¹⁷ E.H Carr, *Postwar Uncertainty*, p.2 accessed on: http://www.sps186.org/downloads/basic/588633/ch31in02_04_2016 at: 4:50

¹⁸ Julian Pattinson, *Mrs Dalloway by Virginia Woolf*, (London: MacMillan Press, 1987), 65.

¹⁹ Alan, Polozov, "Mrs Dalloway: A Society Brooding in the Aftermath" the-artifice.com. available in: <http://the-artifice.com/mrs-dalloway-a-society-brooding-in-the-aftermath/> accessed on: 06-04-2016 at: 8:05

²⁰ Julian Pattinson, *Mrs Dalloway by Virginia Woolf*, 66.

²¹ Merry M Palowski, *Mrs Dalloway Virginia Woolf*, 40

Chapter Two: The Post War Crisis of Identity in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925)

This chapter will be devoted to analyze the crisis of identity from which suffered the Post-war modern American and British societies. We intend to analyze the characters who reflect loss, disillusionment and psychological unrest as the result of the repression of the sufferings from the past memories of the Great War and the modern changes. In order to achieve our aim, we will rely on Freud's concept of "repression" developed in his book *Studies on Hysteria* (1893-1895).

The First World War known under the name of the Great War was a universal conflict. It affected both the American and English societies. The latter endured the atrocities of the war. In this context, Paul Fussler wrote a book named *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) in which he recollected the literary critics about those who experienced the war; he argues: "there seems to be one dominating form of modern understanding, that it is essentially ironic; and that it originates largely in the application of mind and memory to the events of the Great War"²². The events of the war and the social changes brought by modernity affected the modern American and English societies, and because of the harshness and cruelty of this traumatic event people suffered from an identity crisis. Some became mad and wanted to forget about their past, so they lost the sense of an authentic self. This loss is sometimes the result of social causes²³. This is the case with both the Post-war modern American and English societies which have lost their sense of identity because of the war and the social changes of the new age like the 'boom' industry, emancipation of women and prohibition. People refused to accept who they used to be, lost in their quest for self-identification. Thus, identity crisis is caused by the war and modernity. It is reflected through psychological unrests, disillusionment and

loss of self awareness. Though, the two novels are from two different countries, the way the authors portray these aspects is the same. In fact, Fitzgerald is American while Woolf is British. Besides, the first is a man and the second is a woman. Finally the two American and English societies lived the after war era in two distinct ways. Yet, the two authors portray the same crisis of identity in their two works *The Great Gatsby* and *Mrs Dalloway*.

In F.Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), identity crisis is manifested through loss, disillusionment and psychological dysfunctions which appear differently in the main characters, Jay Gatsby, Daisy Buchanan and Nick Carraway. These psychological troubles are the result of repression which is a key concept in Psychoanalysis²⁴. It is defined by Sigmund Freud, the founding father of psychoanalysis, as an operation whereby the subject repels, or confines to the unconscious a desire that cannot be satisfied because of the requirements of reality or of the conscience²⁵. Thus, individuals drive back their feelings and desires, being aware that their impulses can not be realized. So, they hide them in the unconscious to forget about them. However, this results most of the time in mental diseases.

As far as F.Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is concerned "repression" is the key factor that leads to strange behaviours. It is strongly noticed in Jay Gatsby who can be regarded as the character who represses his desires more than any other character in the novel. He and his life are depicted through the voice of Nick Carraway. In fact, Gatsby was a veteran in the Great war. In his depiction of the war he says :

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 Aragonne 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 advance²⁶.

In other words, Gatsby is traumatized by his experience in the battlefield. It is obvious since he tries hard to forget about his lost love Daisy who rejected him and this resulted in a loss of 'authentic self'. He creates a new identity as a way to recover from the fact of being rejected. This is what pushes him to rebel to his "unconscious" the desire to be reunited with Daisy because he knew that he could not gain her without becoming rich. Gatsby is disillusioned by the war because like all the American soldiers he thought that he fought for a just cause, but the war was unjust and appeared to be worse than expected. In his famous book *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussler writes that "Every war is ironic because every war is worse than expected. Every war constitutes an irony of situation because its means are so melodramatically disproportionate to its presumed ends"²⁷. The American Patriotism pushed people to go to the battlefield to fight for an unjustified cause which at the end made them go back home mad and restless.

Gatsby's disillusionment is related to his will to win back his beloved Daisy

The fear to be rejected again is obvious since he asked Nick to call Daisy and invite her for a tea. "I'm going to call up Daisy to-morrow and invite her over for tea" but he does not do it himself²⁸. This demonstrates that Gatsby tries to relive the same experience with Daisy, but he is afraid to be disappointed. He knows that in reality Daisy is the wife of another man and that nothing will be the same.

Gatsby also stands for the disillusionment of the American Dream since the desire of Gatsby to regain love makes him think that money can buy happiness and love at the same time. Similarly to the failure of the American Dream as well as the corrupted values of the twenties; Gatsby's dream was a failure. Lovisa Lindberg asserts that happiness depended on the amount of financial success a person could achieve²⁹.

However, Gatsby has a crisis of conceptualizing his self. In this sense, Stephen M. Myles attempts to show that what results from a crisis of conceptualized self is the loss of sense of self³⁰. Hence, Gatsby loses his sense of self and is no longer the same.

Similarly to Gatsby, Nick Carraway suffers from a crisis of identity. He experienced the war as a veteran just as Gatsby. Consequently, The Great War affected him deeply "I participated in that delayed Teutonic migration known as the Great War. I enjoyed the counter-raid so thoroughly that I came back restless"³¹. This portrays the repression of fear, anxiety and restlessness caused by war. In his *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), Freud and Breuer came to the point that the traumatic recollections haunt the memory of their patients. Thus, the undesired memories are driven back to the conscious of the patients so he will recover³². This proves that it is the memory of war that haunts Nick, that pushes him to repress his unpleasant and traumatic past to his unconscious. Thus, the repression of the horror and memory of the war resulted in a crisis of identity.

Moreover, Nick appears as a round character who is still naive at the beginning and then turned mad about the reality of the human being. However, the theme of loss of innocence plays an important role in the depiction of Nick's identity crisis. In literature, loss of innocence is reflected when a person has ended his childhood to move to the stage of adult³³. It is clear that Nick Carraway stands for the death of innocence³⁴. In fact, at the beginning, Nick reserved himself from judging others as his father advised him "whenever you feel like criticising anyone, he told me, 'just remember that all the people in the world haven't had the advantages you've had'"³⁵. We can say that Nick who was a naive person started to lose his innocence after he had moved to the West. Indeed, he did not use to judge people. However, the behaviours within this 'New city' changed his vision. Moreover, he regarded Jay Gatsby as the only person who deserves respect as well

as honest even if it was not the case since at the beginning, he doubts about him and suspected him of making illegal business to get money.

Another fact that reflects Nick's crisis of identity is his disillusionment or disenchantment³⁶ toward people who surrounded him, he asserts: "They're a rotten crowd," I shouted across the lawn. "You're worth the whole damn bunch put together"³⁷. From this line, we can understand that Nick's reaction to Tom, Daisy, and Jordan when Myrtle died is nothing else than dissatisfaction towards them all except Gatsby. He is so disillusioned by Tom and Daisy that he describes them as careless people.

In addition to Nick, Daisy is another important character who suffers from an identity crisis. In fact, Daisy who is Tom Buchanan's wife and Nick's cousin suffers from a 'loss of sense of the self' in the sense that she existed only through her marital status in society. Kathleen Parkinson asserts that "Fitzgerald allows Daisy to exist only in the images men create of her"³⁸. This means that the objectification of Daisy proves that she lacks identity and struggles with her ownself. Again, loss of sense of self is obvious when she tells Nick of her cynicism about everything, but especially about being a woman. Few years earlier, when she learned that her baby was a girl, she has thought "I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool-that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool"³⁹. By saying that she demonstrates a loss of sense and logic. That is to say, instead of wishing an intelligent daughter like a caring mother she desires a fool one.

Daisy is also a victim of repression, she represses her feelings towards Gatsby her lost love, and this appears when she declares: "Oh, you want too much!" she cried to Gatsby. "I love you now – isn't that enough? I can't help what's past." She began to sob helplessly. "I did love him once – but I loved you too"⁴⁰. This is related to Freud's concept of repression⁴¹. In fact, Daisy confines her desires for Gatsby and her feelings to her

unconscious because she is aware that a new reunification with Gatsby is impossible. She refuses to admit the fact that she still loves him because she is a married woman. Hence, Daisy's love for Gatsby is repressed because it is prevented by her social conditions. Her materialist nature may be seen as a superficial aspect, which disturbed what she naturally could be.

Like Fitzgerald, the British author Virginia Woolf depicts the suffering of her characters who live in an oppressive Post-war modern English society which is characterized by the domination of the upper class. The Great War has changed the lives of the English people forever. As a matter of fact, the society suffered from a crisis of identity. People felt lost and lacked self-identification. In addition, The British Empire was no longer the same. Indeed, after the war Britain's superior image vanished. However, the upper class of the Post-war modern English society tried to maintain its image as a high power⁴².

After the war, people repressed all their feelings of disgust, fear, and all their memories of the Great War, so this resulted in people's suffering from a sense of loss, disillusionment and psychological unrest which resulted in a lack of identification. In this context, Ellen Showalter says that the personality of the human being is not a "fixed" but it is rather "a changing process", a kind of mixture of thoughts and feelings. Showalter also stresses on the importance of memories and hidden desires⁴³This is reflected in *Mrs Dalloway* with the characters that are shattered between two personalities. These characters keep all what they feel inside and never tell about their true desires.

Just like *The Great Gatsby*, *Mrs Dalloway* presents a set of characters who suffer greatly. Woolf depicts what is in her characters' minds through the use of the modernist technique "stream of consciousness" or "free indirect speech"⁴⁴. The characters that we will focus on are Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith.

First, the female protagonist of the novel who is Clarissa belongs to the English upper class. This woman lives an inner conflict; she is lost between her past memories and her present life. Clarissa is oppressed by the norms of the Post-war/ modern English society and she is dominated by the social class to which she belongs. In fact, her social class does not allow her to be what she really is; the reason why she hides all her past memories at Bourton. In her youth she used to be a different woman. Just like Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*, Clarissa represses her feelings for her old beloved. Clarissa hides her love for Peter Walsh, the man she left for Richard Dalloway whom she married in order to have a high rank in society. In the Post-war/modern English society, marriage was very important since it was a kind of refuge from the war memories. In this sense, Susan Kent argues that marriage was seen as a solution to hide all the fear, horrors and conflicts caused by the warfare⁴⁵.

Clarissa also represses her feelings and sexual desire towards Sally Seton, a friend of her past with whom she remembers sharing a kiss.

She and Sally fell a little behind. Then came the most exquisite moment of her life passing a stone urn with flower in it. Sally stopped; picked flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole might have turned upside down! The others disappeared here she was alone with Sally⁴⁶.

The quote above demonstrates how Clarissa was connected to Sally. She even remembers kissing her and feeling so good about it to an extent that she did not pay attention to all the people that surrounded her. However, despite having strong feeling for Sally, Clarissa hides all her memories and represses all her desires towards this woman because lesbianism is not accepted by the social norms imposed by the society to which she belongs. This engenders the fact that Clarissa does not want to show her true self to the others since she fears to be judged and rejected by the society.

Moreover, Clarissa is known through her marriage with Richard Dalloway; she is not appreciated for what she really is but for her marital status

She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen; unknown [...] with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs Richards Dalloway⁴⁷.

In other words, Clarissa belongs to a patriarchal society where men are the dominants. As a woman, she feels useless and aimless. She is recognized as being Richard Dalloway's wife, so she is subject to her husband and her society that favors men over women. This denounces the patriarchy of the Post-war modern English society.

Furthermore, one can notice that Clarissa tries to be just like her social upper class wants her to be. From this, one can deduce that Clarissa is a representative of her social class since she conforms to all the imposed norms. A point that Elizabeth Abel has not missed to speak about. Indeed, she argues that Woolf represents Clarissa as a "binary opposition" between her past life and her present reality. She manages herself in order to be a kind of subject to her society⁴⁸.

In addition to Clarissa Dalloway, we have also a character that suffers from a crisis of identity due to his war experience. Just like Gatsby, Septimus was a veteran in the First World War. However, unlike Gatsby, the war left devastating damages on him. In fact, he suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, better known as 'shell shock'. The conflict left him broken and mad. Septimus is not the man he used to be. "[...] but Septimus has fought, he was brave, he was not Septimus now"⁴⁹. As a matter of fact, Septimus represses all his memories of the war and all the horrors he has seen in the battlefield. Now, he is psychologically unstable; he is terrified by all what surrounds him.

And there the motor car stood, with drawn blinds, and upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus thought, and this gradual drawing together of everything to one center before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames, terrified him⁵⁰.

This shows that Septimus is so terrified by the atrocities of the war. Every time he goes outside, he is frightened by the sounds he hears to the extent that he cannot even handle the sound of a motor car. This depicts how his war experience left him psychologically unstable. In addition, Septimus also represses the death of his friend Evans during the war. In fact, it is the main thing that left him insane.

He sang. Evans answered from behind the tree. The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids. There they waited till the war was over, and now the dead, now Evans himself⁵¹.

This demonstrates Septimus' psychological instability. He is so disturbed psychologically that he hears the voice of his friend Evans who was killed in the battlefield. These voices that Septimus hears clearly show that this man is really affected by the war.

Moreover, Septimus feels so alone and isolated from others because he is seen as a reminder of the war that everybody is trying to forget. This man feels abandoned and betrayed by his society and his government which tries to give a good image of the British Empire, an empire that in reality turned into dust. Septimus' doctor Sir William Bradshaw, stands for the oppression of the empire and its domination on the subjects who are represented by Septimus. In this sense, Withworth asserts that all people are alone and live their lives isolated. She also says that all social systems are oppressive and that this oppression is inevitable⁵². Additionally, Alex Zwerlding denounces the hypocrisy of the people of the upper class represented by people like Sir Bradshaw who stands for the "British imperialism" and oppression. Zwerlding argues that upper class people gather in parties and pretend to care about their empire while their only wish is to oppress the

middle class citizens and be above them ⁵³. Finally, Lucrezia, Septimus' wife, has left him. She does not want to take care of a mad unstable man anymore. Their marriage is meaningless.

The rope was cut, he mounted; he was free, as it was decreed that he, Septimus, the lord of men, should be free; alone (since his wife had thrown away her wedding ring; since she had left him), he, Septimus, was alone [...]⁵⁴.

This demonstrates that the relationship between Septimus and his wife is inexistent. Septimus was left alone; he feels isolated by the society, but also by his wife Lucrezia who took off her wedding ring that symbolizes devotion, engagement, and love. Septimus is aware of this and it makes him feel more alone since even his wife rejects him. However, Septimus felt a kind of freedom in this loneliness because he was not obliged to be there for her and she expected nothing from him, so he had a feeling of deliverance.

All in all, we come to notice that the characters Gatsby, Nick and Daisy in *The Great Gatsby* and the characters of Clarissa and Septimus in *Mrs Dalloway* suffer from a sense of loss, disillusionment and psychological unrest and these are due to the repression of their past memories, their feelings and desires.

Endnotes:

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²⁴ Psychological_repression accessed in : http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_repression on : 04-07-2016 at: 09:30.

²⁵Pamela Thurschwell, *Sigmund Freud* (London and New York: RoutledgeCritical Thinkers essential guides for literary studies, 2000), 21.

²⁶F.Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (Béjaia: Editions Talantik, 2008), 72.

²⁷Paul Fussel, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2013),8.

²⁸Mr Morlang, *The Great Gatsby Disillusionment* (Jesse Hettich :2012)<https://sites.google.com/site/jessehettich/gatsby-disillusionment> accessed in: May.

²⁹Lovisa Lindberg, *The American Dream as a Means of Social Criticism in The Great Gatsby* (2014), 13. Accessed in https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/38269/1/gupea_2077_38269_1.pdf on : 09-04-2016 at 10 :00.

³⁰Stephen M.Miles, *Understanding and Treating Loss of sense of Self Following Brain Injury: A Behavior Analytic Approach* (U.K: North Wales Brain Injury service, 2004), 494.

³¹F.Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 9.

³²Pamela Thurschwell, *Sigmund Freud*, 21.

³³ Loss of innocence in Literature accessed in :<https://www.reference.com/art-literature/loss-of-innocence-mean-literature-4888a51cb17ab721> on: April 2016 at : 11 :20.

³⁴ <http://www.bookrags.com/essay-2004/11/14/204346/02/#gsc.tab=0> on: April 2016 at: 15:10.

³⁵F.Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*,7.

³⁶Ibid., 160.

³⁷ Halle Edward, Best Characters Analysis : Nick Carraway-The Great Gatsby (Book Guides, 2016) accessed in:<http://blog.prepscholar.com/nick-carraway-great-gatsby-character-analysis-quotes> on: 21-05-2016 at: 14:15.

³⁸Kathleen Parkinson, *Critical Studies: The Great Gatsby* (England: Penguin Books,1987),

³⁹F.Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (Béjaia: Editions Talantikit, 2008), 24.

⁴⁰Ibid., 39 .

⁴¹Pamela Thurschwell, *Sigmund Freud*, 21.

⁴²Leslie Conner, " Post war Trauma in Mrs Dalloway ", (Master thesis, University of Tennessee, 2013), 6.

⁴³John Sutherland and Susanna Hilshop, *The Connell Guide to Virginia Woolf's Mrs.Dalloway*(London: Connell Guides, 2014), 26.

⁴⁴Ibid.,28.

⁴⁵Ibid., 51.

⁴⁶Merry M Palowski, *Mrs Dalloway Virginia Woolf*, (London, Wordsworth Classics, 2003),26.

⁴⁷Ibid., 8.

⁴⁸John Sutherland and Susanna Hilshop, *The Connell Guide to Virginia Woolf's MRS Dalloway*, 57.

⁴⁹Merry M Palowski, *Mrs Dalloway Virginia Woolf*, 17.

⁵⁰Ibid., 11-12.

⁵¹Ibid., 52.

⁵²John Sutherland and Susanna Hilshop, *The Connell Guide to Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway*, 105.

⁵³Ibid., 92.

⁵⁴Merry M Palowski, *Mrs Dalloway*, 51.

Chapter Three: Escape in the Two Novels

This chapter is devoted to examine the way in which the main characters escape loss, dissatisfaction, disillusionment and oppression in the two novels Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*(1925) and F.Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*(1925), relying on Roy Baumeister's *Escape Theory*. In fact, we will concentrate on some aspects developed in *Escape Theory* to demonstrate how the main characters of both novels escape the crisis of identity from which they suffer. Concerning *The Great Gatsby*, the characters that we will analyze are Jay Gatsby, Nick Carraway and Daisy Buchanan. Beside, in *Mrs Dalloway*, we will examine the characters of Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith. Indeed, *Escape Theory* which was elaborated by Roy Baumeister suggests that when individuals are aware that parts of their identity do not fit the norms or the standards of society, they chose to escape reality by adopting new behaviours⁵⁵.

Concerning our selected novels, the characters suffer from loss, disillusionment and psychological unrest. That resulted in a crisis of identity. This is what happened so far to the American individuals of the twenties because of the great changes that occurred after The Great War. The latter affected people deeply and left them lost, trying to hide their traumatic past by completely adopting new ways of living, a fact which is clearly affirmed by *Escape Theory*. Thereby, when an individual is struggling with his personal identity and tries to hide parts of it, he engages in adopting behaviours to escape and to be adequate to the social norms of the society in which he lives.

Gatsby, the main character escapes his past that he regarded as being unpleasant. He refuses to face the reality of being a man without an important status within society which pushes him to become another man by adopting a new way of life. In fact, it is

Gatsby's poverty which pushes him to flee his past. Nick portrays Gatsby's origins as follows :

His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people — his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God . . . and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen year old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end⁵⁶.

This demonstrates that Gatsby refuses to remember the past when he possessed nothing, when Daisy left him for another man who is rich. This highlights escape from the self. It means that in order to flee his unpleasant memory of the past, Gatsby did his best to flee the negative perception of his self by adopting new behaviours⁵⁷. As a consequence, by changing his behaviour, Gatsby loses his real identity. He adopts several strategies; one of them is pretending to be an "Oxford man". He asserts: " 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"⁵⁸. This shows that Gatsby uses education and University as a means of belonging to the upper class. Indeed, Gatsby pretends to be an Oxford man only to show that he is an educated man with a high rank in society. Thus, he hides what he really is a poor man from humble origins and 'a veteran in the war'. Roy Baumeister asserts that to flee unpleasant parts of one's personal identity, one engages in new behaviours to escape bad psychological reactions and to be in adequacy with the norms and standards of a given society⁵⁹. Thus, this is what Gatsby did by trying to conform his identity to the norms imposed by the American Post-war modern society.

In addition, Gatsby escapes his reality by the means of sacrifice. The sense of sacrifice is obvious for him since love was the only goal he wanted to reach above all. Unfortunately, the wealth he has made was the result of a series of crimes and illegal businesses. In fact, he works hard to attain his own dream to create the man he is and to

gain wealth that would give him back Daisy's love. In this sense, Qin Li and LiliZheng state that "His greatness lies in his struggle against fate, spirit of self-discipline and spirit of self-sacrifice"⁶⁰. We can understand by this statement that Gatsby fights his destiny in order to become rich by adopting self-sacrifice in order to get a higher place in society. This reflects what Escape Theory asserts, that when someone wants to flee an unpleasant situation in his life and forget about his reality, he did his best to avoid this unwanted situation and adopts new behaviours, both to flee negative judgements and to attain a specific purpose. Nonetheless, this tendency of escaping reality and trying to make a normal sense of identity is impossible.

Mercer argues that "identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty"⁶¹. This shows that feelings of doubt and uncertainty about the self shake and disturb the acquired feeling of stability and safety. This is the case with Jay Gatsby, since when he returns from war and loses his Daisy he adopts abnormal behaviours to run away from unwanted psychological reactions. Indeed, he engages in abnormal behaviours among them bootlegging and illegal activities in order to be rich.

Moreover, Fitzgerald's depiction of the crisis of identity in Gatsby goes deeper since he demonstrates how Gatsby uses a strategy of escaping which is reflected in the enormous parties he used to organise in his mansion. Nick says, "There was music from my neighbour's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars"⁶². This passage enhances the idea that parties are just elaborated strategies made by Gatsby to escape his reality without Daisy and at the same time they are a way to attract her and to meet her again.

Nick in his turn, adopts some strategies to get rid of his restlessness. In fact, The Great War affected him because he was a war veteran; he came back home restless. He declares, "I participated in that delayed Teutonic migration known as the Great War. I enjoyed the counter-raid so thoroughly that I came back restless"⁶³. Fitzgerald's use of the theme of restlessness is to show the negative effect that the war left on soldiers. In addition, the author highlights the point that Nick's agitation resulted from the horror experienced during the war. However, to flee this unpleasant situation that haunted him, Nick chooses to escape his reality by moving West to learn the bond business "Instead of being the warm center of the world, the Middle West now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe—so I decided to go East and learn the bond business"⁶⁴. This proves Nick's will to change and to flee his unpleasant state. His strategy of escape is his decision to live a new life experience and to flee a bad psychological reaction. Moreover, his crisis of identity reflects the influence of society on him and on the American people of the twenties as a whole.

The active role of Nick changes throughout the novel, Mrs Tolley argues:

He started out the novel chasing a dream, the dream to escape the dreary life of a Midwest town and seek new experiences, and at the end of the novel he feels that dreams are nothing but reflections of feelings brought on by past experiences that we can never relive, no matter how hard we strive⁶⁵.

This passage enlightens us about the way Nick changes from the beginning till the end of the novel. He wanted to escape his traumatic past at home, dreaming of a better place where his nightmares will no longer haunt him. This echoes what *Escape Theory* maintains; when parts of a person's identity do not suit the norms of the society, he tries to flee by adopting new behaviours in order to feel safe.

Daisy Buchanan, another important character who suffers from an identity crisis, is depicted by Fitzgerald as a woman who suffers from the oppression of society. In fact,

Daisy struggles psychologically since she rejects her love for Gatsby as a way to secure and maintain her social position. In the description of Daisy's brief dissatisfaction about her marriage with Tom Jordan says :

But she didn't say another word. We gave her spirits of ammonia and put ice on her forehead and hooked her back into her dress, and half an hour later, when we walked out of the room, the pearls were around her neck and the incident was over. Next day at five o'clock she married Tom Buchanan without so much as a shiver, and started off on a three months' trip to the South Seas⁶⁶.

This demonstrates that Daisy is not satisfied by her marriage with Tom after she has received Gatsby's letter. She seems sad and cries a lot, but few moments after she tries to escape this suffering by wearing the pearls around her neck, as a way to put an end to her sadness and the incident as well. Thus, she flees her love for Gatsby whom she still loves by marrying Tom who can afford her a social status and wealth.

Moreover, it is worthy to mention that Daisy escapes disgust of her social situation and marriage by adopting materialistic behaviours to suit the standards imposed by the American consumerist society of the twenties. In fact, according to Roy Baumeister: "disgust is almost always considered a basic emotion, often along with anger, fear, sadness, happiness, and surprise"⁶⁷. This means that disgust is a set of emotions joined together which reflect the stance of an individual towards a situation or something. This is best shown through the will of Daisy to flee all these bad emotions because she is aware that her life is the result of familial and social oppression. Chiefly, Daisy adopts new behaviours and this is noticeable in her clothes as well as in her manners. She resembles the typical "flapper" girl of the twenties who wears short skirts, cuts her hair, and embodying the emancipation of women⁶⁸. Therefore, Daisy stands in opposition to the typical American conservative woman, and also stands for the fool girl who is aware of her husband's extramarital relationship but remains indifferent. However, to avoid

suffuring, Daisy shifts her level of awareness to a low level in order to escape an unpleasant psychological reaction due to her lost love as Escape Theory explains it⁶⁹.

Additionally, Daisy's anxiety may be seen in her desire to escape reality. In this sense, in his book *Encyclopedia of Social Psychology* (2007), Roy Baumeister defines Anxiety as "an unpleasant emotional state, characterized by tension, apprehension, and worry. It occurs in response to a perceived threat, which in the case of fear is fairly specific and identifiable"⁷⁰. In other words, Daisy's lifestyle is full of unpleasant emotions due to her love for Gatsby, her husband who entertains an extramarital relationship and the oppression of the social norms. Therefore, she adopts abnormal behaviours to escape this painful situation. She behaves as if she ignores that Tom betrays her. Instead of destroying her supposedly normal family, she decides to remain silent. This is how she makes money a priority since she regards it as a means to forget love and feelings. She worships and adores money, "Her voice is full of money"⁷¹. Accordingly, Daisy cannot face her reality with Tom and her love for Gatsby which is still alive, so she uses material as a loophole to flee a harsh reality and as a means to hide her repressed desires.

Just like Daisy, Clarissa Dalloway also belongs to the upper class of the English society. She has a high rank in the society thanks to her marriage with Richard Dalloway, a rich and powerful man of the upper class. Nevertheless, Clarissa is not happy and she suffers deeply. In fact, she keeps all her feelings and her past memories hidden. Clarissa, is aware that the woman she really is does not conform to the norms imposed by the Post-war modern English society. Moreover, Clarissa feels so alone because she cannot be the person she wants. She is always afraid to die, and this is due to the horrors left by the Great War and from which the English society suffers. "She had a perpetual sense, as she watched the taxi cabs, of being out, out, far out to sea and alone, she always had the feeling that it

was very, very, dangerous to live even one day”⁷². The quotation clearly describes Clarissa’s loneliness and bad feeling as she always thinks about dying. She feels threatened in every place. This shows how the Post-war English society was still affected by the horrors of the world conflict.

Clarissa also hides her past and all her memories including kissing another woman. She is aware that this desire she has towards Sally is not accepted by the society. She decides to escape from her real self and adopt new behaviors. This is what Roy Baumeister asserts when he explains that when a person is aware that his personality does not fit the social standards, this person starts behaving in a new way in order to be accepted in his society⁷³. Woolf depicts her female protagonist as a woman who always acts like a lady who follows the traditions of her society; Even if, she knows that all the norms imposed by the Post-war modern English society are meaningless. To support our idea, one can make reference to Elizabeth Abel who asserts that Clarissa’s past and present shows “Woolf’s view of the way women develop, grow up and adjust to a patriarchal society”⁷⁴.

In addition, it appears that Clarissa has experienced the “death of soul” since she gave up on her freedom, her sexuality and true love and this is to gain wealth and social power⁷⁵. Yet, Clarissa is unhappy, she is oppressed by the social standards that she has to follow. She always gives parties where people of the high classes gather. Peter Walsh calls her “the perfect hostess”⁷⁶. In fact, every time Clarissa gives a party, she assures that everything will be perfect. She makes so much efforts so that her parties will be a success and she can make a good impression. Besides, the parties she gives, make her feel free because it is the only chance for her to express her creative thoughts⁷⁷. Similarly, just like in *The Great Gatsby*, the parties are just a social mask behind which Clarissa hides to escape all the oppression and the negative judgments of the English society.

Unlike the other characters in the novels, Septimus Warren Smith adopts a radical strategy which is suicide in order to flee the tyranny of the Post-war modern society. Septimus was a veteran in The Great War. However, he has lived the after war suffering from psychological unrest. Indeed, Septimus is mad. The war experience turned him into a completely different man. Nevertheless, he recognizes the hypocrisy of the upper class who tries hard to hide their disguise from the war by trying to maintain the high image of the British Empire⁷⁸.

Septimus is conscious that he represents a burden to society since he is a constant reminder of the war that people try to forget. He feels the oppression of the upper class in society which drives individuals into despair. Additionally, Septimus is aware that the man he became does no longer fit the standards of society; he feels as if everybody wants to kill him because he is a reminder of the war horrors.

So he was deserted. The whole world was clamoring: Kill yourself, kill yourself, for our sakes [...] now that he was quite alone, condemned, deserted, as those who are about to die alone [...] ⁷⁹.

The quote shows that Septimus feels so isolated. He just hears voices telling him to die so that everybody can be fine, as if he is a threat for the stability of society and the well-being of the people.

Besides, Septimus is aware that he is not a normal person. The war turned him into a mad man. He tries so hard to escape authority that he believes that when he dies, each person will learn a lesson from his death.

Septimus, lately taken from life to death, the Lord who had come to renew society, who lay like a coverlet, a snow blanket smitten only by the sun, forever unwasted, suffering forever, the scapegoat, the eternal sufferer, but he did not want it, he moaned, putting from him with a wave of his hand that eternal suffering, that eternal loneliness ⁸⁰.

That is to say, Septimus Warren Smith thinks that he has to transmit a message through his death. For him killing himself is a duty and his death will teach the ones who will remain alive a lesson.

At the end, Septimus chooses to put an end to his life by committing suicide. This was the only way for him to escape his reality. In this context, Roy Baumeister argues that when a person feels that his personality is inadequate with the social imposed standards, this person judges himself as incomplete and this can result in suicide⁸¹. In addition, Julian Pattison argues that Septimus preferred to commit suicide than having his soul imprisoned by the hypocrisy of the society, represented by the doctor Bradshaw. Unlike Clarissa whose soul is imprisoned, Septimus remains free because he did not surrender to the society⁸².

In general, we came to notice that the individuals of the Post-war modern American and English societies suffered deeply from the horrors of the great war and the modern changes that occurred after it. So, people decide to adopt new behaviours in order to flee the harsh reality of life. The most common way to do that in the novels is to hide their true selves and adopt new behaviours so that they can avoid the unpleasant judgements of the society to which they belong .

Endnotes:

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⁵⁶F.Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (Béjaia: Editions Talantikit, 2008), 105.

⁵⁷www.psychology.iresearchnet.com, Social Psychology Theories. <http://psychology.iresearchnet.com/social-psychology/social-psychology-theories/escape-theory/>accessed in: May 2016.

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⁶⁰Qin LI, LiliZheng, "The Greatness of Gatsby in The Great Gatsby", (Thesis, BoadingUnivrsty, 2015), 1.

⁶¹Saman Abdulqadir Hussein Dizayi, "The Crisis Of Identity In Post colonial Novel" (Phd, Istanbul Aydin University, 2015), 2.

⁶²F.Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* , 45.

⁶³Ibid., 9.

⁶⁴Ibid.

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⁶⁶F.Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 83.

⁶⁷Roy F. Baumeister, Kathleen D.Vohs, *Encyclopedia of social psychology 1*(London :Sage Publications), 255.

⁶⁸Françoise Grellet, *An Introduction to American Literature* (Paris: Hachette), 159.

⁶⁹Roy F. Baumeister, *Escape Theory*, 1990, unpaginated.
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⁷¹F.Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 126.

⁷²Merry M Palowski, *Mrs Dalloway Virginia Woolf*, (London, Wordsworth Classics, 2003),6.

⁷³Roy F. Baumeister, *Escape Theory*, 1990, unpaginated. Accessed on:
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⁷⁴John Sutherland and Susanna Hilshop, *The Connell Guide to Virginia Woolf's Mrs.Dalloway*(London: Connell Guides, 2014), 57.

⁷⁵Julian Pattinson, *Mrs Dalloway by Virginia Woolf*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), 47.

⁷⁶Merry M Palowski, *Mrs Dalloway Virginia Woolf*, 46.

⁷⁷Julian Pattinson, *Mrs Dalloway by Virginia Woolf*, 34.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 32.

⁷⁹Merry M Palowski, *Mrs Dalloway Virginia Woolf*, 68-69.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 19.

⁸¹ Roy F. Baumeister, *Suicide As Escape From Self*, (Case Western Reserve University, The American Psychological Association, 1990).

⁸²Julian Pattinson, *Mrs Dalloway by Virginia Woolf*, 52.

IV-Conclusion :

This dissertation aimed to study the depiction of modern society and crisis of identity in F.ScottFitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway*. We relied on the New Historicism, Freud's concept of repression and Roy Baumeister's Escape Theory.

Initially, we see that the two novels were published in the same year and both deal with the 1920's. The two societies the American and the English have endured the aftermath of the first World War and all the changes that occurred in the Post-war period marked the domination of the upper classes that oppressed the individuals and imposed on them a set of social norms. People have been obliged to escape from their reality by adopting new behaviours and a new personality in order to conform to the norms of their social class.

In addition, we can also deduce the parallels between the characters of the two novels. We have the two female characters Daisy and Clarissa who both married two rich and powerful men and who both hide their true 'self ' and escape from their real personalities in order to fit the standards of the upper class. We have also the two veterans Gatsby and Septimus who both were traumatized by the war events and who repress all the memories of the conflict. Even if the two men have lived the post war years in two distinct ways, they have been both affected by the war.

Finally, the two works are two modernist novels. Both focus on the individual. *The Great Gatsby* depicts the psychological damages that the war has left on the American society. *Mrs Dalloway* clearly enters the characters' minds using the "stream of consciousness" technique in order to depict the people's inner feelings after the Great War.

The scope of our dissertation did not allow us to study more issues related to the two novels. Therefore, we suggest to other students to study the novels from a feminist point of view. That is to compare Woolf's portrayal of English women in the 1920's and Fitzgerald's

depiction of the American ones in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *The Great Gatsby* (1925). We assume that the comparison will be fruitful since the two novels were published in the Post Era, more particularly in 1925.

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