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**Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance as Mechanisms of the
American Antihero in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of
Huckleberry Finn* (1884) and Scott F. Fitzgerald's *The Great
Gatsby* (1925)**

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Dedication

To all my family members who have encouraged me throughout my studies.

To the teachers and individuals who have taught me the value of seeking knowledge.

El Hocine.

Dedication

To my dear Ms. Safia Belhocine Zemirli.

To my beloved parents.

To my brothers and sisters.

To my dear friends.

Hayet.

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Abstract

The present dissertation aimed at analyzing the way Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance intervened as Mechanisms of the Antihero in American literature. In this context, we have analyzed Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) under the angle of the historical, political, economic and literary backgrounds. For this reason, we have shed light upon some historical events that characterized the nineteenth century America mainly the role of the Frontier. To reach our aim, we have relied on Fredrick Jackson Turner's thesis on the Frontier developed in his book entitled *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893). Then we have carried out a comparative study of the two novels as concern the antihero. This comparative study has helped us determine whether Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance are, indeed, mechanisms of the antihero in the two novels. Both works depict typical American anti-heroes, Huck and Gatsby, going away from the hypocrisy and corruption of society and seeking for ideals going the opposite direction of the standard notions of heroism.

Key words: The Frontier, Transcendentalism, Self-Reliance, Antihero.

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I- General Introduction

Needless to say, the United States has been impacted by major events, movements and concepts that made a great change in American life, literature, politics, philosophy, society, and culture. American history has experienced a variety of major factors that shaped it over centuries. For instance, in the mid-nineteen century, the USA witnessed the birth of its literary Renaissance. This period extended from roughly 1830 to 1865.¹ It is mainly associated with the American literary, philosophical and political movement known as Transcendentalism.² This movement was accompanied by the emergence of many writers namely, Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Edgar Allan Poe, and the list goes on.³

Transcendentalism is based on logic; it came to transform ideas into concrete actions by getting beyond the religious visions, as well as the educational, literary, philosophical, and social ones. Ralph Waldo Emerson is a prominent figure as he is regarded as the father of the transcendental movement. His essay entitled *Self-Reliance* (1841) helped to mould Transcendentalism. It introduces a number of important topics such as society versus individuality, right versus wrong, autonomy versus authority, and originality as opposed to conformity. All these aspects can be found in novels such as Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Although Transcendentalism was limited in time, its waves continued to spread over several decades. Indeed, Emerson's ideas had an imprint on people's minds and changed their way of thinking. Later on, in the 1920s, America witnessed another literary movement, which is the second American Renaissance. This era was remarkable for gathering well-known authors like Earnest Hemingway, T.S Eliot, and Scott F. Fitzgerald. The latter's novel, *The Great Gatsby*, is a story that shows the influence of Transcendentalism in the 1920s writings.

It is worth mentioning that the novels in both American Renaissances, which extend from roughly the mid-19th century up to the 20th century, orbited around outstanding heroes. Indeed, the concept of “heroism” has long been present in literary works. It goes back to as early as the Greek and Roman Mythologies and is found in Renaissance Literature going up to Modern Literature. However, during the first and second American Renaissance periods, authors created protagonists other than heroes in their novels. This type of character is known as Antihero. Unlike the traditional hero, the Antihero lacks certain qualities that are associated with a typical hero. They clearly do not fit the criteria of a hero but, on the contrary, they go the opposite way, they often incarnate Emerson’s aspects of individuality and authenticity.

Just like the hero, the Antihero has existed in literature from the time of Greek dramatists, particularly in the works of the legendary classical poet Homer, of whom we may cite: *Thersites* as well as in some works during the age of the Enlightenment, such as Diderot’s *Rameau’s Nephew* in the 18th century. In fact, the concept of Antihero probably existed long before the conventional hero. Yet the word “anti-hero”, itself, is quite recent. The 1940 edition of Merriam-Webster New International Dictionary printed the word Anti-hero but did not define it.⁴ Despite its long existence, it was not until the 1950s and 1960s that this word emerged in American literary criticism.

In our scope of study, the focus will be set on Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance as a mechanisms of the American Anti-hero in two literary works. The first novel is Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) published during the first American Literary Renaissance. The second one is Scott F. Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925), published years after the first one, and more precisely, during the second Renaissance.

Review of the Literature

Mark Twain and Scott Fitzgerald are widely known in the literary space, and considered to be among the most important literary figures in the American Literature. Their novels, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Great Gatsby*, have attracted the attention of significant numbers of critics for exploring various themes, from different angles.

John H. Wallace, a prominent critic of Mark Twain has written an essay entitled *The Case against Huck Finn*, in which he deals with racism in Twain's novel and argues that it is offensive to African American readers, the young ones in particular to read such a work. According to Wallace, "a book that feeds and gets fed on racism, a text that promotes racism, hate, pain, and the idea that black people are less intelligent than whites should not be relied upon."⁵ He even goes to great lengths to claim that the novel should not be studied in schools, because of the poor representation of the black race that Wallace describes as: "mental cruelty and harassment."⁶ Wallace condemns Twain's work as a book that promotes racism and hatred toward the black people who had long endured ill-treatment in the United States.

While many critics have focused on the controversial theme of racism in Twain's work, and how the character of Jim the slave was portrayed, others have shed light on different themes like sex and gender. In her book, *A Historical Guide to Mark Twain*, Shelley

F. Fishkin writes:

Twain's noted ambivalences about women's behavior and his fraught relationships with powerful men, his adulation of prepubescent girls and his cross-dressing characters, are signs of his engagement in a society that was disturbed about changing behaviors and looking for ways to talk about the differences between sex and gender.⁷

That is to say, Twain's dealing with the theme of gender in his works demonstrates that he is concerned with the flawed view of his society about men and women.

Professor Fishkin adds that *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is “but a critique against the hypocrisy of a society that ironically calls itself civilized.”⁸ She has mentioned a number of critics who studied Twain’s work, among them, the work of Robert R Weir. In his essay: *Mark Twain and Social Class*, he dealt with Twain’s attitude toward class privilege, labour and exploitation. Weir states: “Having risen from the ranks of the humble, Twain was envious of the rich but more sympathetic to the common folk.”⁹ This means that, Twain's awareness of the class struggle and the exploitation of the proletariat is evident in several of his works.

Similarly, criticism on the novel of *The Great Gatsby* focused on Fitzgerald’s disillusionment on the American Dream. Roger L. Pearson believed, in his essay *Gatsby: False Prophet of the American Dream* that Scott Fitzgerald has come to be associated with the concept of the American Dream more than any other writer of the 20th century. However, he argues: “Fitzgerald's unique expression of the American Dream lacks the optimism, the sense of fulfillment, so evident in the expressions of his predecessors.”¹⁰ Indeed, the American Dream lacks the traditional moral values of life since it is corrupted with materialism and greed.

Moreover, another criticism by Robert Ornstein in his essay *West* argues that *The Great Gatsby* is not merely a story of the jazz Age but rather a dramatization of the unfaithfulness of the American dream in a crooked society. He writes:

I would agree that in *Gatsby* Fitzgerald did create a myth with the imaginative sweep of America’s historical adventures across an untamed continent. But his fable of East and West is little concerned with twentieth century materialism and moral anarchy, for its theme is the unending quest of the romantic dream, which is forever betrayed in fact and yet redeemed in men’s mind.¹¹

That is to say, the novel is a representation of the society of that time where the American Dream had already been modified according to people’s personal interests and ambitions.

One more critical attention on Fitzgerald's novel is Dr. Lacey's thesis entitled *F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby: Variations on Forms and Themes*. For instance, in the first chapter, he discusses the characters in *The Great Gatsby* and archetypal western hero and claims: "It is a paradox that one speaks of the American Western hero; one has to start with that hero on the frontier of the Atlantic seaboard."¹² Dr. Lacey refers to the History of America that started on the Atlantic coast, this one representing the starting point of the moving frontier and therefore those eastern pioneers were once the frontier's heroes.

Last but not least, the author Joyce A. Rowe in her book entitled *Equivocal Endings in Classic American Novels: The Scarlet Letter; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn; The ambassadors; The Great Gatsby* studies the ambivalent ending that one may find in this classic American novels.

She writes,

Each one of these works is focused on a protagonist whose visionary longings separate him from direct engagement with common social experience. Regularly figured as a society à deux, a bond of ideal love or brotherhood which can only exist outside the given social order, the protagonist's vision challenges a morally inadequate reality which, nevertheless, consumes his or her attention as it stimulates his or her resistance.¹³

Joyce A. Rowe refers to the fact that the common traits among the protagonists of the above-mentioned novels have conflicting ideas with what is socially accepted.

Issue and Working Hypothesis

From the above review of the literature which concerns Twain's and Fitzgerald's novels, we may notice that they have received a considerable attention from a great number of critics all across the world since they are among the best known novels in classic literature. Several studies had previously dealt with the two selected works: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Great Gatsby* from various perspectives.

Hence, as far as our readings/ findings are concerned, no study on these two writers has been conducted so far from the perspective of Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance as a mechanism of American Anti-hero. Therefore, our main concern in this dissertation will be to focus on the way Twain and Fitzgerald have reflected Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance values in the American Anti-hero through their novels, in one sole comparative study. Our work will also try to shed light upon some historical events that took place in both authors' eras and how they influenced them for producing their novels.

To tackle this issue, we intend to rely on Turner's theory about the American Frontier or the Frontiersman. In his thesis entitled *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, Turner exposes his theory to demonstrate the importance of the Frontier in shaping the American character.

Methodological Outline

In this research paper, we have made use of the IMRAD method. Thus, our work is composed of five parts; the first part is devoted to general Introduction where we introduce the issue of Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance and mention the two literary works. We also review some previous criticisms that have been written on Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. We have then raised the issue and the working hypothesis, which is the study gap that we aim to fill and the methodological outline. The second part includes Methods and Materials; it consists of Frederick Turner's theory of the American Frontier on which our work is based, in addition to the summaries of the two primary sources. The third part consists of the Results and the findings of our research. The fourth part, divided into two chapters, is devoted to the discussion and the analysis of the two literary works. Therefore, the first

chapter revolved around Huckleberry Finn as an Antihero. The second chapter discussed Gatsby as an Antihero. Finally, in the last part, a general Conclusion took the form of a summary of the whole work and the restatement of our main findings.

Endnotes

¹The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, *American Renaissance*, August 04, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/art/American-Renaissance>

²Hawkins, D. Mark. *Reader's Guide to Literature in English*, UK: London: 1996, 666.

³Ibid, 666.

⁴Salma, Lulu Marzan. *Antiheroes in Modern Literature*. BRAC University, 2008, 2.

⁵Wallace, J. H, James S. Leonard, Thomas A. Tenney, Thadious M. Davis. *Satire or Evasion? Black Perspectives on Huckleberry Finn*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991, 16-24.

⁶Ibid, 17.

⁷ Shelley, F. Fishkin. *A Historical Guide to Mark Twain*, Mark Twain and Gender. University of Texas, 2002, 167.

⁸ Ibid, 167.

⁹Shelley, F. Fishkin. *A Historical Guide to Mark Twain*, Mark Twain and Social Class. Robert E. Weir. University of Texas, 2002, 195.

¹⁰Pearson, L. Roger. *Gatsby: False Prophet of the American Dream*. National Council of Teachers of English, 1970, 638.

¹¹Ornstein, Robert. *Scott Fitzgerald's Fable of East and West*. College English 18: no. 3, 1956, 139-43.

¹² Lacey, Rafik.F. *Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby: Variations on Forms and Themes*. Mouloud Mammeri University, 2018, 12.

¹³Joyce A. Rowe. *Equivocal Endings in Classic American Novels: The Scarlet Letter; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn; The ambassadors; The Great Gatsby*. Cambridge University Press, 1988, 2.

II- Method and Materials

This part introduces the methods to be used in order to analyze *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Great Gatsby* and provides the latter's summaries. To reach the aforementioned aims, the analysis of the books will be primarily based on Frederick Jackson Turner's *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893).

1/Method

Summary of Turner's Theory of the Frontier

Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932) is a famous American historian known for his "Frontier thesis." He argues that the process of the moving frontier has an impact on the pioneers who have crossed the wilderness. He theorized the frontier experience that had transformed the Europeans settlers into new individuals with a distinct identity, giving birth to such ideas like democracy, freedom, individualism, and independence.

Turner begins his thesis by explaining the uniqueness of the American spirit that emerges from the capacity of the pioneers to adapt in a new Frontier. In fact, as the Frontier settlers crossed the continent and moved to new free lands, they acquired an original character. As Turner argues: "The peculiarity of American institutions is the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress."¹ Turner believes that the distinctive character of the United States is shaped by the history of the conquest of the Wild West. The experience of the Frontier gave the Americans a character that is capable of adapting to new environments where they settled. Moreover, Turner advanced that the Frontier experience of the West allowed the Americans to dissociate themselves from their Europeans origins. He states,

The fact is, that here is a new product that is American. At first, the frontier was the Atlantic coast. It was the frontier of Europe in a true sense. Moving Westward, the frontier became more and more American. As successive terminal moraines result from successive glaciations, so each frontier leaves traces behind it, and when it becomes a settled area the regions still partakes of the frontier characteristics. Thus the advance of the frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of independence on American lines.²

In other words, the movement of the settlers to the west shaped the American identity and made them distinct from the Europeans, it has also created a sense of independence and individuality that set them apart from others.

Besides, Turner mentions another important element in American history that is slavery. He says, "Even the slavery struggle, which is made so exclusive an object of attention by writers like Professor von Holst, occupies its important place in American history because of its relation to westward expansion."³ The advance of the pioneers towards the wilderness carried with it slavery down into the southwest, and thousands of slaves were travelling and worked the American Frontier between 1830 and 1860.

Apart from the frontier experience and slavery, Turner mentions the notion of Self-Reliance in the fostering of individualism among the western pioneers. He argues that the pursuit of opportunities in the free lands of the Great West relates them to self-reliance and that it allowed them to adapt to new environments by being innovative. Turner portrays the frontiersman personality as follows:

That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom--these are the traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier.⁴

Indeed, the frontier gave the settlers a dominant individualism to their character that helped them to cope with the challenges that they faced while moving westward to seek new opportunities.

Turner also mentions in his thesis that the frontier promoted democracy in America as well as in Europe. He writes, “But the most important effect of the frontier has been in the promotion of democracy here and in Europe. As has been indicated, the frontier is productive of individualism.”⁵ The free lands in the new continent gave birth to the American Democracy, and the individualism fostered by the frontier’s wilderness created a national spirit complementary to democracy, as the wilderness defies control. Furthermore, Turner claims that the frontier produced a distinctive American spirit. The west, he suggested, held the promise of freedom for everyone. According to him, the frontier had decreased the American’s dependence on England. As the pioneers moved westward they grew more self-reliant and needed less support from the East and Europe, and this made them free and liberated them from any outside control. The west offered the American individual a new vision about the world. For instance, as early as 1822, Emerson invokes the West to reject the dependence of his native culture on European traditions.

Thus, Turner demonstrates that the frontier’s experience has produced the characteristics that shaped the American identity and liberated them from European influences. Indeed, Turner mentions that the English Government along with the Eastern coast have tried to control the westward movement through religion and other social institutions, but, as he says, “...the attempts to limit the boundaries, to restrict land sales and settlement, and to deprive the West of its share of political power were all in vain.”⁶ Thus, the East’s attempt to control the westward march proved a failure and the frontier settlers gained their independence.

Turner ends his thesis with a crucial point. He writes, “And now, for centuries from the discovery of America at the end of hundred years of life under the constitution, the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history.”⁷

Indeed, the closure of the frontier means a central change in the American history. It may greatly affect their life because the frontier is no longer exerting its power.

2/Materials

Summary of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is Mark Twain's masterpiece published in 1884 and is hitherto regarded as one of the greatest American Literary works ever written. Huck Finn is the narrator of the novel. He narrates the story of his adventures that involve his escape from society, his foster parents and his alcoholic father, and heading towards the unknown in order to seek his freedom. Huckleberry Finn is raised by the Watson sisters who are devoted Christians, and who took it upon themselves to civilize him, but the restrictive way in which he was raised did not appeal to him, and his father Pap Finn who suddenly appears after a long absence, took him by force and locked him in a cave. Soon after, Huck fakes his death and decides to escape from the grip of his father and society down the Mississippi River. Huck was not alone on his adventures, in fact, Jim who used to be the Widow Douglas's slave ran away and joined Huck in the hope of seeing his family again. In the course of events, Huck and Jim encounter different characters, including a band of robbers aboard a wrecked steamboat, and two aristocratic families who have a long unresolved feud, despite their attending the church. Jim and Huck feel the safest when they are on board the raft, but it does not take too long until their safety is threatened at the encounter of two individuals who pretend to be a Duke and a King. They both exploit the kindness and naivete of Huck to help them steal the money of a family's inheritance. Later on, Huck discovers that the thieves have sold Jim to the Phelps, who happen to be Tom Sawyer's relatives, and after facing a moral crisis about helping a runaway slave, Huck finally decides to head towards Jim's rescue with the assistance of Tom. Huck and Tom finally succeed in helping Jim to escape, and Huck chooses to go his own separate way and heads towards the territory.

Summary of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

The Great Gatsby (1925) is a modernist novel written by F. Scott Fitzgerald. It depicts the great changes that occurred during the Roaring Twenties and their impact on the American society. Nick Caraway, the narrator of the story, is from a prominent Midwestern family. He moves to East to bound business and sets in West Egg near New York City.

Once there, Nick became the neighbor of a mysterious man named Jay Gatsby who used to organize wild luxurious parties and people came from all New York. Nick visits his cousin Daisy Buchanans who is married to a wealthy man named Tom Buchanans. Nick also encounters Jordan Baker who is a golf professional. She recounts to Nick about the affair that Tom has with a mechanic's wife named Myrtle Wilson. Later on, Tom decides to take Nick to New York City. On their way, they stop at a garage owned by Myrtle's husband. Tom invites her to join them in the city.

Some time later, Gatsby invites Nick to join his party and they become close friend. Gatsby presents himself as a Businessman who comes from a privileged family. For Nick, Gatsby's origins are uncertain. Gatsby asks Nick to invite his cousin Daisy for a meeting with him. Once there, they began an affair. Jordan baker recounts to Nick that Gatsby had fallen in love with Daisy years before her marriage.

Eventually Nick learns the truth about Gatsby's past and the origins of his wealth. His real identity is Jay Gatz originated from the West in North Dakota but he changed his name legally after meeting Dan Cody, a fortunate fifty years old man. Together, they roe the world for five years. Cody introduces Gatsby to the world of wealth, power, and privileges. When Cody dies Gatsby moves to the East. There, he indulges in illegal business during the Prohibition.

Moreover, being jealous of Gatsby, Tom Buchanans, starts an investigation into his origins and suspects his participation in illegal activities. He informs Daisy about how Gatsby made his fortune. She regrets having had an affair with him and denies her love for him.

Finally, while passing the Wilson's Garage, Daisy hits Myrtle accidentally and causes her death. Tom convinces Wilson that it is Gatsby who killed his wife. Thus, Gatsby is accused of a murder he has never committed and he is assassinated in his house. After Gatsby's death, Nick, Jordan, Daisy and Tom, all decide to leave New York and go back Midwest.

Endnotes

¹Turner, Frederick Jackson, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. US: Martino Publishing, 2014, 3.

² Ibid, 5.

³ Ibid, 4.

⁴ Ibid, 27.

⁵ Turner, Frederick Jackson, *The Frontier in American History*, New York: Henry Holt and company, 1920, 35

⁶ Ibid, p35

⁷ Ibid, 28.

III- Results

From our readings and studying of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, we have come to notice that despite the differences between the authors' historical backgrounds and periods of writing, there exist many similarities between the two writers' themes and characters. Therefore, this allowed us to bring these two works under the light of a comparative study relating to the notions of antihero.

In Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the main character Huck fits the criteria of an Antihero. Twain uses Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance as a mechanism to forge the character Huck Finn. As a protagonist, Huck proves to be fearless to embark into the unknown along with Jim and to follow his intuition instead of abiding by society's standards. In the first chapter, we have discussed Slavery as a major theme during the era in which the book was published, and that Black Americans had undergone horrible experiences before slavery was abolished nationwide. After that, we have seen how social and religious hypocrisy are reflected in the novel and how Huck Finn finds the societal rules to be meaningless. He then escapes from the grip of his father who also tries to control him and keep him locked in a cave but fails to do so after Huck fakes his death and finally goes down the Mississippi River with Jim in quest of their freedom. We have also mentioned the fact that Huck Finn displays the characteristics of a self-reliant and transcendentalist individual who does not depend on anyone to form his own opinions, nor does he need somebody to dictate how he should live his life. He also chooses to live in nature, as this offers him the opportunity to be himself and to be free from the society's corrupting influence and constraints. All this non-conformist behaviour of Huck and his rejection of social rules characterize him as an antihero.

Similarly, in the second chapter, we have shed light on the major factors that marked America in the twentieth century precisely during the 1920s, and which were of a great influence on Scott Fitzgerald's writing style. In this context, we have analysed the novel, *The Great Gatsby* from the Antihero perspective through Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance. The analysis shows that Fitzgerald depicts the character Gatsby through his Transcendentalist behaviour as he decides to dedicate his life for an ideal love and transcend the corrupt society. This highlights Gatsby as a romantic and self-reliant individual. In addition, we have analysed the character Dan Cody under the perspective of a Frontiersman. The analysis confirms that the traits of a frontiersman are similar with the ones of a self-reliant man which also appear in the character of Gatsby. Although Gatsby lived next to Cody for five years in the spirit of the Frontier, he drops everything in the West, after Cody's death, to go East. In this way, we can say that he went opposite to Dan Cody's spirit of the Frontier and this emphasizes the antihero traits in Gatsby. Finally, we can confirm that the Transcendentalist and the Self-Reliant values shape and qualify Gatsby as an Antihero.

Mark Twain and Scott Fitzgerald are both proponents of Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance. Despite the differences in the time when the novels were published, they both reflect the American antihero through Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance, since these themes are considered to be typically American.

IV. Discussion

Chapter 1: Huckleberry Finn as an Antihero

Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* remains, to this day, one of the iconic pieces of American Literature. Although it had raised controversy among critics, the novel has always caught the attention of many admirers of literature. The story is narrated by the protagonist Huckleberry Finn or 'Huck' who does not exceed the age of thirteen, but proves to be fearless to embark on many adventures into the unknown. We learn from the story that Huck was adopted by the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson —after he was abandoned by his father— they want to make sure that he receives a good education and becomes “civilized.” However, Huck is not content with that idea, instead he would rather live a simple life and enjoy his freedom. He is a nonconformist who dares to defy the social norms and chooses to go his own way instead of abiding by the traditional rules that do not align with his core beliefs.

Historical Background of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Since the early colonial period, Slavery had been a legal institution in the United States. In fact, between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, many Africans were shipped from their homeland as slaves to the American continent to work on the fields. They were sold to work on coffee, tobacco, and cotton plantations. Besides, as the settlers were moving westward, they carried their slaves to the frontier. The treatment of slaves in America during that period is characterized by brutality, cruelty, and inhumanity.¹ The men among them were forced to hard labour, and were treated mercilessly. Women, were exploited and even raped. Many of the slaves attempted to escape to the Northern States, and some of them succeeded, others were tortured, and in extreme cases killed.²

By 1804, the Northern states of America abolished slavery based on abolition movements that viewed slavery as unethical, and contradictory to the core principles of the United States.

Abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison, founder of the American anti-slavery society, condemned slavery for contradicting the principles of Freedom and Equality upon which the United States was founded. In the South, however, slavery remained present, and the period of history known as the Antebellum South was marked by the economic growth of the southern region, mainly due to its reliance on slaves. It was not until the late 19th century that slavery was abolished nationwide, after America's westward expansion caused a debate over slavery, which then brought about a civil war. The civil war broke out in 1861 and was fought between Northern States that were loyal to the Union and Southern States that formed the Confederate States of America.

Moreover, during the war, President Abraham Lincoln issued an Emancipation Proclamation on January 1st, 1863 which declares "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious states "are, and henceforward shall be free."³The war produced significant losses in both parties, and did not end until 1865 when the Confederate States decided to retreat and surrender. However, the abolition of slavery did not stop African Americans from being subjected to ill-treatment. In fact, when confederates gained control over Southern legislatures, they instituted the Black Codes. The latter refer to restrictive laws designed to limit the freedom of African Americans, and to force them to work under poor conditions. They were denied even basic rights. Under Black Codes, many states forced blacks to sign yearly labor contracts, and in case they refused, they were arrested, mistreated, or forced to work. Furthermore, the African Americans' freedom was still restricted, despite the fact that the Black Codes allowed them to buy and own property, marry, make contracts. In some states, the type of property that blacks could own was limited. And anyone who offered higher wages to a black laborer was punished by the law.⁴

Besides, during The Reconstruction, or the period following the civil war, Congress passed three notable amendments that granted African Americans equal rights which include freedom, and the right to vote.⁵And by the late 1870s the federal government's military presence that

used to enforce the Amendments in the Southern states were ordered to withdraw by President Rutherford with the compromise of 1877. The latter marked the effective end of the Republican Party's active support of civil rights for black Americans, and Southern States rapidly passed laws disenfranchising African Americans and implementing racial segregation.⁶

Mark Twain wrote *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* during the period following the Civil War, when slavery was abolished nationwide. However, the novel is set in the Antebellum South, when slavery was still present. At that time, black people are defined as subhuman and the stereotypical black person is considered immature, irresponsible, unintelligent, yet physically strong to withstand hard work. In his book, Twain shows how black people are often accused of immoral actions. For example, Huck's father states that blacks are a thieving race. In chapter 26, the Duke and the King decide to change the location of the hidden money in fear of it being stolen by the slaves who clean their room, and that was based on racial prejudice that all blacks are thieves by nature.⁷

Throughout the novel, Mark Twain uses the protagonist, Finn, to ridicule the religious hypocrisy in society by placing him in situations that created a moral conflict in his mind. For instance, although the widow told him that if he prayed, God would instantly answer his prayers and would get what he wants. Huck realizes after desperate attempts that it did not work and that he has never got what he wished for. According to Chrissie Henning,

The idea of spiritual gifts can be an exotic concept to a simple person like Huck, and while the widow explains that true gift is with helping people Huck still does not appreciate prayer; however, in the climax of the novel, Huck begins to question himself and pray in the concept of saving Jim escape or not. Notably, this produces the infamous line, you can't pray a lie, and with Huck concluding that he would rather go to hell and help Jim escape than do the correct thing. Henning continues by explaining that through Huck Finn, Twain states that society and religion are just as bad as hell. In conclusion, Twain's view of religion can be seen through the thought process of Huck, and how it affects the views and morals of the protagonist throughout the story with satire.⁸

Thus, through Huck's lens, Twain demonstrates his views concerning religion and society that

he regards as flawed systems that failed at creating honest and virtuous individuals.

Nineteenth century America has also witnessed a great change not only in the social and cultural fields, but also in literature. As we have mentioned in our introduction, the period is characterized by the emergence of the philosophical and literary movement known as Transcendentalism. Ralph Waldo Emerson, being the founder of the movement wrote a number of essays including, *Nature* in which he moulded Transcendentalism. Transcendentalists believe that the existence of an ideal spiritual reality transcends the empirical and materialistic worldview, and that one can attain higher truths by trusting their intuition. The movement is associated with Ralph Waldo Emerson who promoted certain values such as individualism, self-reliance and non-conformity. A number of writers had been influenced by this philosophical movement, including Mark Twain who portrays his character Huck Finn as a Transcendentalist who rejects society's beliefs and remains true to himself. Besides, renowned historian of the 19th century Frederick Jackson Turner wrote his paper *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* and demonstrated how the frontier produced individualism and democracy and shaped the American identity, he writes: "But the most important effect of the frontier has been in the promotion of democracy here and in Europe. As has been indicated, the frontier is productive of individualism."⁹

In Twain's work, the main character Huck Finn can be considered a Self-Reliant character who endorses the philosophy of the transcendentalists that advocates the liberation of the individual from all social restrictions. Huckleberry Finn feels imprisoned and enslaved by the rules and conventions set on him by society and particularly by his foster parents. He therefore seeks his freedom by venturing to the unknown in order to experience life by himself, without anyone imposing rules on him. In truth, Ralph Waldo Emerson emphasizes that independent thoughts are a crucial aspect of self-reliance.

Huck demonstrates his ability to form opinions separate from those of society, and proves to be a self-reliant and independent thinker who trusts his own opinions and judgments. Huck grows up in a society in which black people are enslaved and are not viewed as human beings. However, Huck's experience on the raft taught him that Jim is in fact as capable of experiencing human emotions as any other; Huck then concludes: "I do believe Jim cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their'n. It don't seem natural, but I reckon it's so"¹⁰

Society and Hypocrisy

Mark Twain is a social critic who observed a society that was corrupted with hypocrisy and racism, and that even after the abolition of slavery, the black people were still treated differently. Through the protagonist, Huck Finn, Twain demonstrates the racial and religious hypocrisy that was present in the South using satire.

In the beginning of the novel, Huck's foster parents, Widow Douglas, and her sister, Miss Watson, attempt to "civilize" him by teaching him the proper behaviours and manners that each member of society is expected to adopt. However, Huck realizes that the rules imposed on him did nothing but bore him and make him uncomfortable. Huck narrates: "The Widow Douglas, she took me for her son, and allowed she would civilize me, but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her way."¹¹ Turner asserts that: "The most effective efforts of the East to regulate the frontier came through its educational and religious activity, exerted by interstate migration and by organized societies"¹²

According to Turner, the British government and the East vainly attempted to limit the advance of the frontier in order to maintain control in the land. Likewise, Huck's foster parents Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas, try to regulate his behaviour using religion, and expect him to follow strict guidelines that would supposedly make him a civilized and decent member of society.

The Widow Douglas attempted to teach Huck about the Christian values by reading to him stories of the prophet Moses from the Bible. However, Huck shows no interest and considers it unimportant and as he put it, “But by and by she let it out that Moses had been dead a considerable long time; so then I didn’t care no more about him, because I don’t take no stock in dead people”¹³ Afterwards, Huck wanted to smoke, but the widow Douglas did not allow him, for she judged it was “a mean practice” and that “it wasn’t clean.” Yet, Huck mentions that she takes snuff too, (which is a form of tobacco that people inhale into their nose.) When Huck says, “she took snuff too, of course, that was all right, because she done it herself.”¹⁴ He is calling out the widow Douglas as a hypocrite. Although she insisted on teaching Huck the right and proper conduct, she did not practise what she preached.

In Addition, when Huck Finn wore his old rags and his sugar-hogshead, and felt free and satisfied, his friend Tom Sawyer, who started a band of robbers told Huck that he could join his band only if he returned to the widow and “be respectable”, which is ironic since robbers are not respectable; it clearly shows the hypocritical side of Tom Sawyer who fails to recognize that he is not respectable himself by starting a band of robbers and murderers.¹⁵ The Widow Douglas’s hypocrisy is also revealed when she urges Huck to help other people and to do everything he can for them, yet does not consider it morally wrong for her to own slaves.¹⁶

Besides, in Chapter 2 when Miss Watson describes Heaven and Hell for Huck, he said that he wished he was in the bad place, hell that is. To Which Miss Watson answers, “it was wicked to say what he said” after that, Huck asked her if Tom Sawyer would go to heaven, and she replies: “Not by a considerable sight.”¹⁷ And this shows that Miss Watson places herself in the position of the judge and telling who is good and who is bad, because she believes that she is good herself, while being blinded by her flaws.

Another example of hypocrisy in “the civilized society” is when the judge allowed Pap Finn

to gain custody over his son Huck, despite the fact that Pap was a dangerous and reckless man. On the other hand, Jim who also has children was deprived of seeing his children and having custody over them, due to the fact that he is a slave.¹⁸ Mark Twain here satirized the religious hypocrisy that was present in the South by drawing parallels between Jim the slave and other adult figures such as Pap Finn.

In the novel, Mark Twain, tried to portray how the Christians of the South were deeply religious and believed that all men were equal, yet felt that it was appropriate for them to own slaves. Twain also shows how Christians perceived black people as being inferior to the whites, and that although their religion teaches them that all men are equal, the black people were still treated differently.

Moreover, when the Duke and the King planned to steal the inheritance money after they had claimed to be part of the family that hosted them, The Duke was scared that the money would be stolen by the black servant who cleans the rooms, he states,

Mary Jane'll be in mourning from this out, and first you know the nigga that does up the rooms will get an order to box these duds up and up and put 'em away, and do you reckon a nigga can run across money and not borrow some of it?¹⁹

The Duke here implies that all black people are thieves, even though the Duke and the King were thieves themselves, and this shows the hypocrisy of these two characters who are frauds, and who keep on changing their identities to get what they want. Huck did not find it difficult to realize that they were frauds, but he kept it to himself to avoid getting into trouble. Unlike the Duke and the King, Huck seems to have a conscience. He learned from the experience with his dad Pap that the proper way to deal with that kind of people is to go with the flow and let them have their way in order to keep the peace. Huck states:

If they wanted us to call them kings and dukes, I hadn't no objections, 'long as it would keep peace in the family; and it warn't no use to tell Jim, so I didn't tell him. If I never learnt nothing else out of pap, I learnt that the best way to get

along with this kind of people is to let them have their own way.²⁰

In this passage, Huck Finn proves to be a cunning individual despite his young age, in the way he deals with the two dangerous robbers.

In his Thesis entitled *The Development of the Anti-Hero in the American Novel* Roger Harms states that:

Sometimes the alienated anti-hero just sits, inactive, in a corner, but not often. More likely, he is an active rebel. In the 1920'S, Sean O'Faolain writes, the anti- heroes were urged by personal sincerity and truthfulness to make some gesture of defiance against the hypocritical world. The anti-hero is a rebel, not without a cause. He is against all the self-deception for which modern society seems to stand.²¹

That is, an antihero is a rebel who rejects the hypocritical world and chooses honesty and truthfulness, similar to Finn who defiantly challenges the societal and religious rules to do the thing that he sincerely believes to be right. For instance, he was battling his conscience that made him feel guilty about acting against what he was taught by the Watsons and society's influence on him. He finds himself in a moral confusion, and struggles to discern what is right from what is wrong, and whether he should follow the guidelines of society and religion, or act according to what he knows in his heart to be right. However, in chapter three, Huck comes to a realization when he states "I think different." This statement is the point where he feels separated from civilization and that he does not need anyone to form his own judgments.²² Roger D. Harms writes:

Sean O'Faolain makes this point clear when he says that society is ready to accept anyone as hero who acts bravely in its cause, but not one who acts bravely in some contrary cause; therefore the word "hero" has little moral content, for a public hero may be a private villain. Since the hero is defined by society, the true hero, in a false society, must be an anti-hero.²³

Indeed, society can be a major factor in creating individuals who act morally but are privately vicious, thus, society encourages hypocrisy because people are judged superficially. As for those who are honest and refuse to abide by the rules of society are considered to be the villains,

regardless of their moral actions.

The Mississippi River as a Symbol of Freedom

It is worth mentioning that the protagonist Huck was escaping from any people or situations that restricted his freedom and made him feel like a slave. Huck along with Jim, embark on a raft and sail through the Mississippi river to gain their freedom. Transcendentalists believe that nature allows individuals to escape reality and to free their minds from outside influences. Turner comments in his thesis that, “The significance of the Mississippi Valley in American history has lain partly in the fact that it was a region of revolt.”²⁴ According to Turner, the Mississippi valley has witnessed the emergence of many movements that advocated freedom and democracy. For both Huck and Jim, the Mississippi river represents freedom and a refuge from society’s shackles. Additionally, the river is used on several occasions as an escape from troubles. Soran Afrasiabi writes:

In order to breakout and release himself from the limitations, his father’s captivity and abuses, Huck decides to fake his own death and escape with the help of a raft and the river to secure his freedom, freedom in a form that he is allowed to be himself and live life in his own way without having anyone interfering in his life.²⁵

That is, The river provides Huck with the freedom that he has been lacking in “the civilized society”. For instance, when Huck goes back to the town after having disguised himself as a girl as a way to inquire about whether people are still searching for Jim, and after the inhabitants found out about their location, Huck informs Jim, “Git up and hump yourself, Jim! There ain’t a minute to lose. They’re after us! [...] I took the canoe out from shore”²⁶ The place where Huck and Jim

go to seek freedom is nature. Though the latter is surrounded by obstacles and dangers, nature also provides havens to escape from society. In chapter twenty-nine Huck says: “So in two seconds away we went a-sliding down the river, and it did seem so good to be free again and all by ourselves on the big river, and nobody to bother us.”²⁷ Huck and Jim feel this each time they

set off down the river. Here, they are able to leave the restrictions of life behind them. On the river, they can be friends and enjoy each moment as it comes. During that moment, they are able to stop worrying about the direction of the raft while they are talking, letting their feet dangle in the water and enjoying the stars.²⁸

The Transcendentalists emphasize the importance of nature in the way that it provides the individual with safety and freedom from restrictions imposed by social institutions. Nature gives the individual the opportunity to be themselves and to think freely, thus producing independent and original thinkers.

Indeed, through the use of personification, Twain wants to convey his high regard and appreciation of nature. Twain changes his tone as he describes the beauty of nature to flowing and daydreaming as opposed to the cynical and sarcastic tone that he usually utilizes. In doing so, Twain wants to demonstrate the importance of nature. In the novel, the Mississippi river is not only a detail to describe the scene, but rather serves as a character that carries Jim and Huck on their journey. Moreover, in chapter nineteen Huck expressed that it was “lovely living on a raft” and that is because of the feeling of freedom and liberation that he experienced. The fact that he can be himself, and do whatever he wishes to do without any restrictions satisfied and comforted him even in a seemingly uncomfortable environment. Afrasiabi explains,

The river supplies Huck and Jim with a comfortable, relaxing and secure setting on several occasions throughout the novel. It is on the raft they are allowed to enjoy the beautiful things life has to offer such as the sounds of singing birds, the stars that show during the nights and other positive vibes that could be interpreted as relaxing.²⁹

The river provides them with certain comfort that they could not afford to enjoy and experience when living in a “civilized” environment.

Huckleberry Finn as a Transcendentalist and Self-Reliant Character

According to the Transcendentalist philosophy, reality is understood through experience, and society is not to be trusted to form one's beliefs. It is also a philosophy that emphasizes the interaction between man and nature. Indeed, the philosophy of Emerson focuses on Self-Reliance, individualism and non-conformity. He believed that man should follow his own path and believe in his own ideas as opposed to the ideas presented to him by society. In his thesis, Turner held that the American character was decisively shaped by conditions on the frontier, in particular the abundance of free land, the settling of which engendered such traits as self-reliance, individualism, inventiveness, restless energy, mobility, materialism, and optimism.³⁰

Similarly, Transcendentalism encourages independent thinking and originality, and Huck demonstrates this throughout the novel. He's not afraid to go against the grain to fulfill his desire for freedom and live up to the ideals he believes in, and finally liberate himself from all the shackles of society that restrict him. And although Huck experienced some moral dilemmas as he took Miss Watson's slave with him down the Mississippi river, he managed to remain true to what he truly believed and renounced the social values that expected him to turn Jim in, because he believed deep down that he was doing the right thing.

In fact, "Self-Reliance" is central to the philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson, his most famous and attractive idea. Emerson challenges the individual to "set at naught books and traditions," to "be a nonconformist," to recognize that ideas, books, religions, institutions, and occupations acquire life and value only when an individual enlivens them with his or her own experience and effort.³¹ Transcendentalists believed that humans were fundamentally good but corrupted by society and that they should therefore strive for independence and self-reliance. And we can clearly see in the novel that Huck embodies these qualities, the people he encounters

and the situations he experiences while traveling down the Mississippi River help him become an independent thinker in the very conformist society of 19th century Missouri.³²

The best example would be when Huck's father catches up with him and takes him away to live in a hut. Huck is locked up and beaten periodically by his Dad. He enjoys the freedom to be dirty but when his father does not return once for three days, Huck is scared and thinks he "wasn't ever going to get out any more." That is when he makes up his mind that he would "fix up some way to leave there." His father curses him and makes him feel so desperate that Huck dreams of his independence.³³ In Chapter 6 Huck states:

I reckoned I would walk off with the gun and some lines, and take to the woods when I run away. I guessed I wouldn't stay in one place, but just tramp right across the country, mostly night times, and hunt and fish to keep alive, and so get so far away that the old man nor the widow couldn't ever find me any more.³⁴

Huck does manage to escape and although the others come searching for him, they are unable to find him and Huck is happy to be living alone, doing exactly as he pleases.³⁵ Huck exhibits the natural goodness of man that Emerson believes in, being free from all social influence and corruption, Huck remains sincere and true to his feelings, and does what feels right. His genuine emotion and compassion is what allowed him to help Jim escape. This genuine compassion could be seen in many instances throughout the novel.

For example, when Huck goes to the circus, and starts seeing a performer who pretends to be drunk while riding a horse, Huck notes that the whole crowd were roaring in laughter, even though the man was in danger, Huck then declares that: "It warn't funny to me, though; I was all of a tremble to see his danger."³⁶ And this demonstrates the soft and caring side of Huck that confirms what the transcendentalists believed, that men are naturally good until they become corrupted by society's influence. And the fact that he didn't find a man exposing himself to danger to be a funny spectacle shows Huck's individualism and independent thinking that sets him apart from the crowd. Individualism is one of the transcendentalists main principles, in his work *Self-reliance*

Emerson states: “Insist on yourself; never imitate” and we can clearly see this in the character of Huck who is only willing to be true to himself even at the cost of being rejected. Huck Finn does not fit in society and completely rejects the norms and customs imposed on him; he finds solace and comfort only when being by himself onboard the raft, and going down the Mississippi river. Huck feels free from society because he realizes that society is trying to change him into someone he is not.

Transcendentalists believe in the natural goodness of man, and Twain’s character, Huck Finn is described as being in agreement with the transcendentalists’ belief. In fact, he did not rely on anyone else besides himself to know what is right and what is wrong, Huck’s natural goodness guided him to realize that the morality that was being imposed on him by society is flawed, and thus he decided to escape to nature as to not become corrupted by society’s influence. His escape to nature opened his eyes, and allowed him to learn and form his own judgments through experiences instead of following rules and norms blindly. Over the course of their adventures together, it allowed him to see that Jim is a human being with feelings like him. In the beginning of the novel, Huck viewed Jim the way everyone around him viewed slaves, being property to their owners. Along with Tom Sawyer, Huck played practical jokes on him, but as the story progresses, Huck realizes that it is not amusing to toy with Jim as the latter has human feelings as he does. And that’s what compelled him to help Jim however he can to be free and join his family, and although Huck experiences feelings of guilt throughout the journey over helping Jim escape, he remained determined to do so even if that meant going to hell. In chapter 31 Huck says:

It was a close place. I took it up [the letter I’d written to Miss Watson], and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I’d got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: “All right then, I’ll go to hell”—and tore it up. It was awful thoughts and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming.³⁷

Roger D. Harms explains: "Huck's final decision is in violent opposition to society's laws and values. Having made his choice, Huck qualifies as a mature anti-hero."³⁸ Huck finally makes a decision that contradicts society's values and expectations and determines to take the side of a runaway slave.

Huck's Hatred Towards his Father

In his thesis Turner emphasized the freedom that comes with free land and the desire for independence, he writes: "But the democracy born of free land, strong in selfishness and individualism, intolerant of administrative experience and education, and pressing individual liberty beyond its proper bonds, has its danger as well as its benefits."³⁹ Thus, Turner believes that the existence of free land gives birth to democracy and gives the individual a strong desire for freedom. Huck Finn follows this path by selfishly going after his liberty and breaking free from anyone who threatens to restrict him even if it's his own parent, since as Fredrick Kallin writes: "Huck's relationship with his own father is also similar to that of a master and his slave."⁴⁰

Huckleberry Finn was raised by the sisters Miss Watson and Widow Douglas, and none of them is his biological parent. There is no mention of the identity of his real mother; we only know that she died. His father, on the other hand, appears in chapter 5 when Huck finds him in his room. However, instead of being received as a father would normally receive his son after a long absence, Pap Finn proved to be a ruthless and uncaring father, who is concerned only about himself. Contrary to Huck, Pap Finn is a disheveled, uneducated wanderer who steals for a living.

Moreover, Pap Finn's sudden visit to his son is not to see him because he missed him, in fact, Pap Finn needed money to get drunk. He has heard that his son became rich, and so he went all the way back to his son to get money from him when he says:

Looky here- mind how you talk to me; I'm a-standing about all I can stand, now- so don't gimme no sass. I've been in town two days, and I hain't heard nothing but about you bein' rich. I heard about it away down the river, too. That's why I come. You git me that money to-morrow- I want it.⁴¹

After Huck tells his father that he is not rich and that he has no money, Pap Finn asks him about how much he does have in his pocket, but Huck had only a dollar. Even then, Pap Finn took that last dollar that Huck had to buy Whisky. Pap Finn is an irresponsible father who makes his own son's life much more complicated, and uses him to raise money, and if Huck refused to do so, Pap Finn would punish him severely. After the judge gave Pap Finn custody over his son, Huck says, "That pleased the old man till he couldn't rest. He said he'd cowhide me till I was black and blue if I didn't raise some money for him."⁴² Pap is ready to do anything to gain money in order to get drunk even if that means beating and abusing his own son, and using him as a slave. Pap was also bothered by the fact that his son is more educated than him and goes to school, so he orders him not to go to school anymore. However, Huck went to school much more than he used to beforehand in spite of his father.

Huck's intelligence is shown in the way he planned his escape. When he and his father went out into the woods for hunting, Huck perceived an abandoned canoe, so he hid it so that his father will not see it and went back to the cabin. After that, Pap Finn took a raft that Huck found in the river and went to town in order to sell it after locking Huck in the cabin. Taking advantage of his father's absence, Huck fakes his own death by using the blood of a wild pig that he shot then immediately jumps into the canoe that he hid and eventually escapes from Pap's grip. And American intellect owes its form to the frontier as well. The traits of the frontier as mentioned in Turner's thesis are:

coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom.⁴³

Huck's strong independence and individualism helped him overcome the obstacles that he faced

all along his journey to freedom.

Slavery and Human Values in *Huckleberry Finn*

At the beginning of the chapter, we discussed the historical context of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and the presence of the institution of slavery in the United States. One of the main themes explored in Twain's work centers on slavery, since the novel reflects the reality of the Antebellum South, when blacks were owned and treated unfairly. Turner writes: "Even the slavery struggle, which is made so exclusive an object of attention by writers like Professor von Holst, occupies its important place in American history because of its relation to westward expansion."⁴⁴ Indeed, the westward expansion carried with it slavery down into the Southwest, into Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana, and historians estimate that close to 200,000 slaves travelled and worked the American frontier between 1830 and 1860.⁴⁵ Through Huck's lens, Twain tried to show us his position in regards to slavery, by pointing out the social hypocrisy and exploitation of slaves in the name of religion. He also used Jim, another main character, who happens to be a slave, and develops as the story progresses a strong bond of friendship with Huck. Jim has a family but he is separated from them, and this is the reason why he ultimately escaped in quest for his lost family. Initially, Huck was reluctant to aid Jim gain his freedom and was thinking about turning Jim in as this seemed to be the right thing anyone would do "But you knowed he was running for his freedom, and you could 'a' paddled ashore and told somebody."⁴⁶

Yet, Huck was struggling to get to a final decision as he discovers that Jim is as capable of experiencing pain and human emotions. For example, Huck tries to play a prank on Jim, not expecting his serious reaction. He does not think about the humiliating effect the joke would have on Jim. Jim calls Huck out on the cruelty behind his antics, telling him that, "When I wake up en fine you back agin, all safe en soun', de tears come en I could a got down on my knees en

kiss' yo' foot I's so thankful. En all you wuz thinking 'bout wuz how you could make a fooluv ole Jim wid a lie."⁴⁷ For the first time in his life, Huck is forced to realize that his actions can inflict emotional pain on others. Huck feels so guilty that he "could almost kissed [Jim's] foot to get him to take it back" and decided to change his ways, never "[doing] him no more mean tricks."⁴⁸

The characters in the novel who take pride in being Christians have no objections in owning slaves, on the contrary, they believe that they are doing a favour for the slaves by having ownership over them. Twain wanted to demonstrate that Slavery and Religion are linked together and that fact is what made the abolition of slavery a difficult task. In the novel, we learn in chapter 31 that when Huck was experiencing guilt after reconsidering his decision of helping Miss Watson's slave Jim, he tried to comfort himself by saying that,

I was brung up wicked, and so I warn't so much to blame; but something inside of me kept saying: "there was the Sunday-school, you could a gone to it; and if you'd a done it they'd a learnt you there that people that acts as I'd been acting about that nigger goes to everlasting fire."⁴⁹

Huck knows that among the things that are taught in Sunday-schools is that acting as he did i.e. freeing a slave from his master, is morally wrong, and thus, can result in him being condemned to burn in Hell. But after a while, Huck recognizes his deep attachment to his friend Jim, and determines not to turn him in even if he'll go to hell. "Alright then I'll go to Hell." Huck is willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of the black slave, because he believes that Jim has emotions like any other human being, and therefore he deserves to be free. Rather than listening to society's warning that helping runaway slaves will lead to eternal damnation, Huck follows his gut instinct and makes one of the most important moral decisions of his life.⁵⁰ By declaring that he will go to Hell, Huck renounces what society conceives to be morally wrong and right, and decides to follow his heart instead.

Huckleberry Finn as an Antihero

Turner believed that what made the American people distinct from others is their experiences during the settlements in the new continent, and heading towards the unexplored lands in quest of new opportunities. The experience of the frontier, or the westward march of pioneers from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast, is what distinguishes Americans from Europeans, and gives the American nation its identity. Huck Finn embodies the frontier spirit, by leaving behind the security he was provided in his town and courageously embarking on adventures into the unknown. As a self-reliant character, he remains firm in his pursuit of freedom and refuses to abide by the rules and the restrictions that were imposed upon him. Although Huck Finn prove to be a helpful companion to his friend Jim, and showed compassion in many instances throughout the novel, he was a rule breaker and acted in ways that contradict society's standards. He has abandoned the accepted morality and norms, and has joined bands of robbers and rascals. Huck is not a typical hero who acts on what is right or just, and even though he is unwilling to turn Jim in, he is rebellious and lacks manners, which can be seen particularly in the first chapter with the Watsons. This flawed nature of his character is what renders Huck an unorthodox hero, in other words, an Antihero.

In fact, an Antihero is a main character in a story who lacks conventional heroic qualities and attributes such as idealism, courage and morality.⁵¹ Although antiheroes may sometimes perform actions that are morally right, it is not always for the right reasons, often acting primarily out of self-interest or in ways that defy conventional ethical codes.⁵² Thus, rejecting the social conventions and heading towards nature in quest of freedom is what sets him apart from others. As a protagonist, Huck wants nothing else except being free and doing whatever he wishes to do, while relying on himself. His purpose has never been to save lives or free the slaves, but as he says in the first chapter, "All I wanted was to go somewhere; all I wanted was

a change, I wasn't particular.⁵³ According to Roger D. Harms:

Inasmuch as the "hero," then, has been defined as one who represents socially approved norms, perhaps the anti-hero is best defined as a character who reacts against the norms and conventions of society. This reaction is highly varied, but it is characteristic of the anti-hero.⁵⁴

The fact that Huck Finn fails to recognize the value in conforming to the socially acceptable norms is evident in the novel, and that is what qualifies him as an Anti-hero. Turner states, "That dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom —these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier."⁵⁵ The frontier gave the individual the freedom and opportunity to be themselves and to act in ways that society deems immoral.

In addition, using the principles of Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance that Ralph Waldo Emerson advocated, Twain portrays the protagonist Huck as an unconventional character who does the opposite of what is expected of him rather than being respectable and virtuous as a traditional hero would be. Huck Finn is not motivated by a certain duty or a sense of justice, but the desire to break free from the shackles of society and anyone who attempts to deprive him of his freedom. Self-Reliance, for Emerson, requires a rejection of society as it exists; conformity is the opposite of self-reliance. It is quite important for the self-reliant individual to reject conforming to all societal standards, for such conformity ties the person to society, in his essay *Self-Reliance* Emerson states:

The objection to conforming to usages that have become dead to you, is, that it scatters your force. It loses your time and blurs the impression of your character . . . under all these screens, I have difficulty to detect the precise man you are. And, of course, so much force is withdrawn from your proper life.⁵⁶

Emerson refers here to the fact that conforming to the rules imposed by outside systems restrict the freedom of the individual and forces him to live a life that others have chosen for him to

live as opposed to the life that he chose himself. Huck insists throughout the novel on going against the stream, and opposing societal norms and expectations. He is a true non-conformist who chooses to live a free and authentic life, instead of abiding by society's rules and being a follower, and this is what makes him a self-reliant individual who goes after what he believes to be true regardless of the fact that others may disapprove of his actions.

To conclude, Mark Twain's *the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is one of the greatest pieces of American literature, the character, Huck Finn, was portrayed as an antihero who goes on a journey to seek his freedom and to escape from social restrictions. Along with the slave Jim, he embarks on the raft down the Mississippi river and seeks comfort and solace in nature away from the shackles of "the civilized world". He remains true to himself and relies on his own intuition, and decides to help a runaway slave despite the fact that doing so goes against what is acceptable.

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Chapter 2: Gatsby as an Antihero

The following chapter discusses the way the nineteenth-century Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance served as tools in the making of the American Antihero of the early 20th century literature. Relying on Turner's theory of the frontier, we intend to show how the frontier spirit is still present three decades after the moving frontier had reached the Pacific Ocean as portrayed in Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*.

Historical Background of America and *The Great Gatsby*

It is well agreed among literary critics that no novel is written just for the writers' sake and their pleasure to write. In fact, behind each literary work, a historical context along with its social and cultural background is summoned. The time of writing melts within the events that took place in reality. This is confirmed by what is said about Greenblatt's critical approach *New Historicism* in the following "New Historicism is characterized by a parallel reading of a text with its socio-cultural and historical conditions form the co-text."¹ Therefore, understanding these characteristics helps to understand any literary work and this applies to Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

The novel is set in 1922 New York. That era is marked by a tremendous change in the country's culture and lifestyle. The American writers who participated in World War I felt disillusioned and could not anymore recognize themselves in the traditional characteristics of the American literary works. We can mention among them Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, T.S. Eliot, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. They experienced a dark and horrible time, in which many of their hopes and dreams had crashed. Thus, many of them lost faith in the traditional American way of life and its landmarks. This is why they are commonly referred to as "the Lost Generation."²

By the end of World War I, there was a readiness to embrace the new; America was clearly entering a new era, an era defined by a vast and complicated urban culture that would dominate the 20th century. This period is known as the Roaring Twenties. It started with the economic boom and began to grow at great speed. By the early 1920s, the US had become the wealthiest country in the world, which boosted mass production and a massive consumer economy.³ Meanwhile, people left the countryside to move to cities resulting in an urban population in the country, and outnumbering its rural population for the very first time. During that time, there were stark changes that included women winning the right to vote, and widespread automobile ownership.⁴

The Roaring Twenties can be depicted by its other name “the Jazz Age.”⁵ People were amazed by the innovations that emerged in both songs and dance which became the trend of the new generation. Fitzgerald was the first author to use the term “Jazz” in his 1922 short story collection entitled *Tales of the Jazz Age*.⁶ It is during this time that jazz reached New York and Chicago, coming from New Orleans.⁷

Moreover, the 1920's was about this cultural time when there was a lot of money and everyone focused on seeking pleasure after the destruction of World War I. With no doubt, this epoch reflects prosperity and wealth as the American society had more freedom and a disposable income than any other generation. This confirms the statement rooted in the US Declaration of Independence: “We hold these Truths to be self-evident: that all Men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with inherent and inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”⁸ That is to say, they are entitled to do anything they want in America if they work hard enough, and distinctions will not hold them back. The historian James Truslow Adams defines those promises in one term that is “The American Dream.”⁹ In his book *Epic of America*, he claims, “That dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability

or achievement.”¹⁰ As a result, people were so obsessed by the American Dream, that they would try everything to achieve their own, no matter the way.

Furthermore, there is another outstanding political and economic event that impacted this era. It is the Prohibition. Indeed, the 18th amendment of the United States Constitution stipulated that the production, sale, and consumption of alcohol was illegal in America.¹¹ This amendment came as a reply of the growing temperance movement in the 19th century and the Anti-Saloon league, which argued that drinking alcohol was damaging the society by destroying families and creating corruption.¹² Paradoxically, the prohibition act, aiming at banning alcohol, gave birth to illegal business in America. Bootleggers produced alcohol illegally; they found inventive ways of manufacturing and selling alcohol and nobody paid attention to it. Consequently, the American Dream became materially corrupted. The moral values of the past such as happiness, peace, contentment became corrupted by prohibition, materialism, and selfish ambition and even violence. The pursuit of the American Dream formed a society of superficial people who became selfish and spent a huge amount of money on material stuff.

It is worth mentioning that all these upheavals affected not only the cultural, social, political, and economic life of America, but also the literary tendencies. In this context, during the 1920s, a new writing style emerged. Indeed, after the war, the Lost Generation writers shared a sense of loss, and began to feel that the old form of writing is no longer adequate to represent their age and reality. In other words, a new different experience of the period requires a new varied expression. Hence, a new Literary Renaissance was born. Alike the First American Renaissance which was marked by Emerson and his contemporaries as mentioned in our introduction, the Second American Renaissance also gave birth to a great number of authors such as T.S Eliot, Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald. They were often writing about exaggerated personal experiences. Generally, these experiences revolve around World War I, and the post war years. Their writings dealt with common themes such as the ridiculously superficial and materialistic

lifestyles of the wealthy, the breakdown of traditional gender roles, and the perversion of the American Dream.

It is through their works that we get to know who this generation was, and what they truly felt while going through such stressful and thinking times. Perhaps no novel better documents the 1920s than the classic novel Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* written during that period. Incidentally, he said, "So in my new novel I'm thrown directly on purely creative work—not trashy imaginings as in my stories but the sustained imagination of a sincere yet radiant world"¹³. He imagines a story where the main characters symbolizes both the country and the period as well. Indeed, the main characters in the novel are westerners who used to live in the West but left it for the East seeking a new ideal. The story is full of people who are liars, cheaters, criminals, and very immoral. In fact, at the end of the novel, the narrator Nick Caraway reveals that the book is about the inability of westerners to adapt to East's materialistic culture, a culture where money has weakened tradition so much that all sense of decency and convenience have disappeared. He explains: "I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all—Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life"¹⁴.

In the same context, professor Barry Gross argued in his article "Back West: Time and Place in *The Great Gatsby*" that Fitzgerald can mean by "Eastern life" the corruption, the decadence, and the immorality of people, as well as the indifference and dishonesty of Buchanans and Jordan.¹⁵ He notes:

Nick's statement has provided incontrovertible evidence for those who interpret *The Great Gatsby* as a "tragic pastoral." According to this interpretation, Fitzgerald posits a corrupt, materialistic East against a simpler and, hence, morally superior West. But Tom's Lake Forest, Daisy and Jordan's Louisville, Nick's St. Paul are hardly frontier towns and certainly not pastoral.¹⁶

That is to say, at the very beginning of the story, which Nick's return from World War I, he wanted to move from Midwest, his home and go to East. He says, "Instead of being the hot center of the world, the Midwest seemed to be the ragged edge of the universe- so I decided to go East and learn the business."¹⁷ Historically speaking, the fundamental movement of American history is to go West, "Go west, young man. Go west."¹⁸ The movement to West is also known as the Westward Movement or Westward Expansion, which is the 19th-century movement of settlers into the American West.¹⁹ At that time, American people believed in what is called the Manifest Destiny, that America was destined to run from the Atlantic Ocean (East) to the Pacific Ocean (West). Some people were moving from East to West looking for new land, some were looking for gold, and others for freedom.

Similarly, Turner gives birth to such ideas as individualism, democracy, freedom, and independence. The West, he argued, held the promise of freedom for all, the means to live, and the possibilities for personal development.²⁰ In short, Turner said, "America has been another name for opportunity"²¹. However, he ended his essay with a crucial point: "And now, four centuries from the discovery of America, at the end of a hundred years of life under the constitution, the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history."²² Same, in 1890, after 400 years, the frontier has closed, and with it ended the first period of American history. Based on Turner's statement, the close of the frontier means a central change in the American history. It may greatly affect their life because the frontier is no longer exerting its power.

Back to 1925 and the publication of *The Great Gatsby*, which is 35 years after the close of the frontier, the call of destiny in America is now: "Go East young man."²³ That is to say, the great American myth is no longer the Western, but the Eastern. At that time, the movement to East promises success, freedom, and wealth and this is precisely what Fitzgerald suggests in his novel.

Gatsby as a Transcendentalist and a Self-Reliant man

Historians have labored persistently to answer the famous question posed by the French-American writer Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur in the eighteenth century, “what then is the American, this new man?”²⁴ In fact, Turner asserted that the most recognized answer that is, according to him, “The American was a new man who owed his distinctive characteristics and institutions to the unusual New World environment—characterized by the availability of free land and an ever-receding frontier—in which his civilization had grown to maturity”²⁵. Turner considers the experience of the frontier as an important founder of the American history. This experience has been nourished by the mechanism of Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance. These values often presented as having a special status have greatly contributed to the construction of the American personality.

Despite the fact that this philosophical and literary movement lasted only a few years, from 1830s to 1850s, it greatly influenced an important number of American writers in both the first and second American Literary Renaissance.²⁶ Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is a concrete example. The novel has attracted critical attention as having to do with Romanticism in general, and American transcendentalist thought in particular.²⁷ In this context, Professor Richard Lehan claims, “That Gatsby is a product of visionary romanticism is a point important enough to emphasize. We know of Fitzgerald’s interest in the subject from the famous course in romanticism he took with Christian Gauss at Princeton.”²⁸ Similarly, Professor Carmine Sarracino, argues in his book, *The Last Transcendentalist*, that “Gatsby is the Last Transcendentalist”²⁹ and highlights the resemblances between Gatsby and Transcendentalism.

Scott Fitzgerald’s primary concerns in writing is to earn sufficient money in order to marry the woman of his dreams, Zelda Sayre. However, when he came to write *The Great Gatsby*, he wanted to create something that may allow the readers to see his real self.³⁰ He told the

American book editor Maxwell Perkins: "I want to write something new- something extraordinary and beautiful and simple and intricately patterned."³¹ Indeed, the author's transcendent ambitions reflect truly his real self. His concerns are typically romantic and transcendent much like Gatsby, love and happiness are their primary purposes. The use of materialism by both of them is a pure means to achieve their transcendent goals. In other words, the story is maybe a parallel between Fitzgerald and Gatsby, and Zelda and Daisy.³²

Furthermore, at the beginning of the novel, Nick states the following about Gatsby, "If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away."³³ In this statement, Nick is commenting on Gatsby's optimistic personality, which refers to an enigmatic positivity and hope for the future. By comparing Gatsby to a machine, Nick hints that there is a purpose behind his "unbroken series of successful gestures." That is to say, Gatsby's unique nature may suit any social setting. His charisma, charm, and appearance reinforce his character and allow him to integrate any environment. Therefore, Nick goes on to mention that Gatsby's character cannot be described as a "creative temperament" but would more accurately be defined as a "romantic readiness."

This responsiveness had nothing to do with that flabby impressionability which is dignified under the name of 'creative temperament' – it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again.³⁴

In the quotation above, Gatsby may seem like a protagonist who has solid transcendent ambitions and is very sensitive with "a romantic readiness to the promises of life." In fact, "creative temperament" is another way to describe how Gatsby's nature is original and can be expressed and adapted to any environment if necessary. He trusts in the virtual world of moral

qualities like love in proper sense. Individuals should try to show the positivity of life much like Gatsby who is a fine model of a decent man. His focus is directed towards the realization of his dream and reinforces his personality. His knowledge and charisma are based on his naive and innocent love for his beloved Daisy.

Moreover, Gatsby has a “platonic conception of himself.”³⁵ The love he has cherished for his “golden girl” Daisy, is also a platonic love. That is to say, he did not love her just for sensual satisfaction. On the contrary, he loved the soul of Daisy with all her present realities and without any hopes and greed for material expansions or physical desire. Indeed, “True love is not only limitless but also meaningful. It rises above all the physical barriers and transcends itself to an endless unwrinkled height.”³⁶ Accurately, Gatsby’s love for Daisy transcends not only material obstacles, but also time barriers. The passing years did not weaken his love for her nor even her status as Tom Buchanan’s wife. Gatsby is aware that, being a poor man with the incapacity to have enough money that made her broke up with him and marry Tom Buchanan, an extremely wealthy but insensitive and careless person.³⁷ Gatsby, in a remarkable contrast to Tom, has a “romantic readiness,” very sensitive and thoughtful. Whenever he sees Daisy, or imagines her, he finds himself passionate.

Besides, despite being a millionaire, money is not his priority, and he is not devoted to the fortune that he has gained somewhat illegally. It may be true that Gatsby chooses to be involved with criminals and illegal affairs to become rich. However, he is conscious that it is the only way for a man from a poor origin like him to marry a wealthy girl like Daisy. He has lived a prestigious and glamorous life and has organized luxurious parties just to win back his dear.³⁸ He has even sacrificed himself for her when he assumes a crime that he did not commit. His decision to take responsibility for what Daisy did to Myrtle Wilson, Tom’s mistress, demonstrates the deep love he feels for her and how far he can go for her. This sacrifice that

has coast his own life exemplifies the basic nobility that defines his character.

One may question how someone can be so amazed by a person that they become unable to see the truth. Although Nick does not actually believe that Daisy is as perfect as she appears to be, the truth is that, she is pretty far from being perfect but everyone around her “is so blind that they don’t see or care.” It is true that Gatsby did not know that he was in “the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty.” Yet, he suspected that she cared a lot for money. For instance, Nick claims in this quote:

She’s got an indiscreet voice,” I remarked. “It’s full of—” I hesitated. “Her voice is full of money,” [Gatsby] said suddenly.” That was it. I’d never understood before. It was full of money—that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals’ song of it.³⁹

Despite this suspicion, he does not let doubt influence the feelings he has for her. He accepted her as she is and continued to love her unconditionally. Gatsby’s love for Daisy knew no limits because for him, she reflected the good and the beautiful things of life.⁴⁰ He had an idealized image of her that no one and nothing could change even himself as he was incapable to understand the illusion he was living in. His dream to reunite again with her is the reason behind his “heightened sensitivity to the promises of life.” The goodness of his heart and his ignorance for the corrupted mind of the high class (the Eastern) makes him spiritual like “the Son of God.” He believes in the natural goodness of man, a quality that is typically transcendental. Thus, having cherished such an idealism in his heart in the middle of such a materialistic and corrupted society can only be noble and transcendental.

Another element that may link between Transcendentalism and Fitzgerald is in the analysis of *The Great Gatsby* keeping Emerson's concept of *Self-Reliance* in mind.⁴¹ We notice the existence of the concept of the self-made man along with some aspects of the frontier spirit in the novel. Turner defined the concept of the frontier as “the meeting point between savagery

and civilization,”⁴² and claims that this point was the foundation for American identity. He considers the uniqueness of American character to emerge from the frontier experience. In other words, the experience of participating in the settlement of the West, in contact with the frontier has contributed to build the characteristics of the Americans including self-reliance. Thus, risk taking, adventurous mind, braveness, and the desire to discover the unknown have built the American character. Brian M. Barbour, the author of *The American Transcendentalism; an anthology of criticism* described Gatsby as a man who has “Emersonian greatness.”⁴³ He states that Gatsby “is a version of the Emersonian dream: in a great imaginative act he has created himself and set out to explore the possibilities of life.”⁴⁴ Besides, he believes that the relationship between Gatsby and Emerson is the presence of romanticism in the novel.

Indeed, Gatsby is a successful self-made man who, despite his poor origins, accumulates enormous fortunes thanks to the experience he has acquired from his journey with Dan Cody, a wealthy fifty years old self-made man. In fact, Cody offers to Gatsby a job, and Gatsby becomes a general assistant and a good friend to Cody. He embarks Gatsby on a journey that lasted five years to conquer the world, and it is thanks to Cody, that Gatsby fakes his name legally and changes it from James Gatz to Gatsby.

James Gatz – that was really, or at least legally, his name. He had changed it at the age of seventeen and at a specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his carrier – when he saw Dan Cody’s yacht drop anchor over the most insidious flat on Lake Superior.⁴⁵

Some critics argue the fact that Gatsby did not accept his real identity and falsify his name dismisses him from being a self-made man.⁴⁶ However, back at that time, while the “nouveau rich” or the new rich became more common, the perfect American became an inaccessible mixture of old money characteristics. To be more explicit, the new factory owners labored hard to transcend their social status. Yet, those who were born rich kept their wealth, having already transcended society. Therefore, when one attempts to focus on the American Dream to rise

socially, their lack of birthright to wealth leads to mockery and ridicule. And when one tries to stay away from social transcendence and chooses to work hard to transcend intellectually, they are mocked for their lack of understanding the modern America. Hence, transcendence has become unattainable for new money; it is presented in *The Great Gatsby* through a corruption of common transcendentalism imagery.⁴⁷ And Gatsby, as a man of young and disadvantageous generation who lived in a superficial and materialistic society, is conscious that the only way to reconcile his low position with his social aspirations is to detach himself from his self-made identity. Therefore, when narrating his story to Nick, Gatsby declares, “I am the son of some wealthy people in the Middle-West – all dead now. I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years.”⁴⁸ This falsified past that Gatsby recounts about himself shows that he wants to look like an old money. In fact, he does not want to appear as a new rich because he knows that the Eastern society would reject him; and this is exactly what happened. When Tom reveals the truth about Gatsby's fortune, he recounts his story with mockery. Even worse, soon after hearing the truth, Daisy chooses to abandon him.

Eventually, some critics believe that the ideal of self-reliance is unachievable in the corrupted and materialistic society of the 1920s.⁴⁹ Incidentally, Gatsby fits into this nineteen twentieth society, far from Emerson's one. Gatsby belongs to a generation of ambitious and determined American men who are born during the industrial age and into its social consequences, a period when prohibition reached its peak. Therefore, the only way to transcend during that period is to be involved in illegitimate activities encouraged by prohibition. Getting a self-made man accomplishment by honest and legal conducts is almost impossible, particularly for a man from a poor farmer family who used to live in the West like Gatsby. As we mentioned it previously, he indulges in illegal business because it is the only way to make his dream come true.⁵⁰

Still, at the end of the novel, we came to realize that despite his bootlegging experience and despite the corruption that surrounds him, Gatsby cherished an “incorruptible dream”⁵¹ in his heart. His only concern is to achieve his own aspirations and dreams. This is what we discover at his funeral when his father Henry C. Gatz talks to Nick about Gatsby’s departure from home. He says, “Of course we was broke up when he run off from home but I see now there was a reason for it. He knew he had a big future in front of him. And ever since he made success he was very generous with me.”⁵² Soon after this conversation, Mr Gatz finds Gatsby’s diary as a young man. The notebook contains a personal time schedule along with general resolutions he endeavoured to follow:

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 |
| Practice elocution, poise and how to attain it..... | 5.00-6.00 |
| Study needed inventions | 7.00-9.00 |

GENERAL RESOLVES

No wasting time at Shafers or [a name, indecipherable]
 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.⁵³

The to-do list above is a real evidence that Gatsby was a very ambitious person whose aim was self-improvement in all fields from his younger age. He believed that hard work would allow him to transcend as the American dream promised. Mr Gatz states, “Jimmy was bound to get ahead. He always had some resolves like this or something. Do you notice what he's got about improving his mind? He was always great for that.”⁵⁴ Gatsby’s father is a witness of the transcendent aspirations that his son has always prized even when he goes to eastern world aiming to achieve a noble goal which is love. And this self-reliance quality is something that Fitzgerald admires although many critics state that Gatsby was not self-reliant.

As a matter of fact, Nick says that Gatsby was a misunderstood person, “He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: 'I never loved you'... just as if it were five years ago.”⁵⁵ All what Gatsby wanted from her is to love him only. Yet, Daisy misunderstands his feelings. She chooses to blind her eyes to the sacrifices he makes for her. Incidentally, Emerson believes that it is fine to be misunderstood, as great men in history have always been misjudged. Emerson states, “To be great is to be misunderstood,”⁵⁶ and Gatsby is, indeed, “Great” as the title suggests.

Dan Cody as a Frontiersman:

The notion of the frontier is very influential in the American fiction even years after its closure, and precisely during the second American literary Renaissance. As we saw earlier, the frontier has shaped the American character as Turner assumes. He believes that the frontier is an environment that emphasizes a specific set of character traits,

That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom--these are the traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier.⁵⁷

In other words, most of Turner’s frontiersmen are a combination of initiative taking, courage, creativity, individualistic, freedom lover and so on. Fitzgerald depicts these characteristics in Dan Cody. Rafik Lacey claims in his thesis entitled “*F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby (1925): Variations on Forms and Themes*” that, “The Great Gatsby invokes other Western archetypal characters in relation to Gatsby”⁵⁸ and he suggests that the character of Dan Cody may be considered as a good example that embodies Turner’s frontiersman.

One may wonder about Fitzgerald’s reason behind using the name “Cody.” In fact, the character Cody reminds us of the American mythic figure William Frederick Cody nicknamed Buffalo Bill, a Westerner of the 19th century.⁵⁹ Perhaps no name from the history of the frontier

is more widely known than his name. Through the character of Dan Cody, Fitzgerald creates a “fictional amalgam of William Frederick Buffalo Bill”⁶⁰ quite like a combination between Bill Cody and Dan Cody. That is to say, in 1859, Bill rushed to the Colorado gold fields with thousands of other prospectors searching for gold for two months. Similarly, Dan Cody, who becomes Gatsby's benefactor and role model, is “a product of the Nevada silver fields, of the Yukon, of every rush for metal since Seventy-five.”⁶¹ He becomes very rich by directing the Montana Copper market.⁶² Nick recounts about Dan Cody:

I remember the portrait of him up in Gatsby's bedroom, a grey, florid man with a hard empty face—the pioneer debauchee who during one phase of American life brought back to the Eastern seaboard the savage violence of the frontier brothel and saloon.⁶³

In this passage, Nick refers to Cody's experience with the violence and the cruelty of nineteenth century Western life. And he means by "a debauchee" an intemperate and a decadent man, determined to indulge in his sensual pleasures. Nick compares Cody to the man of the western frontier, who has frequented the lawless places that had saloons and brothels. Indeed, he thinks they brought a "savage violence" with them by taking what they wanted and often killed those who are in their way.⁶⁴ In addition, Nick suggests the indirect influence of Dan Cody as a frontier hero on Gatsby. They have been partners for five years, and Gatsby “was employed in a vague personal capacity”⁶⁵ during his journey with Cody. They travelled together over the world, and it was thanks to him that Gatsby acquired the willingness to go on an adventure, taking risk and discovering the unknown, thus, the characteristics of a frontiersman.

Other notions of the Frontier in *The Great Gatsby*:

From another perspective, we notice that another impact of the frontier appears through other characters in Fitzgerald's novel. Turner suggested that the frontier had been responsible for producing a distinctive American spirit. He said:

The peculiarity of American institutions is the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life.⁶⁶

From this angle, one may assume that Fitzgerald applied an “updated version of the American frontiersman of earlier times.”⁶⁷ Because, as we know, the concept of the traditional frontier is to go West seeking for freedom and new land. However, after the First World War, the frontier moved from the West and the East became the new frontier. Even after the independence, the eastern coast of the United States wanted to control the West. Therefore, the East became the financial business center of America, and the center of the American Dream.

Similarly, the characters of the novel like Gatsby, Nick Caraway, and Jordan Baker; the famous golfer and Daisy’s best friend, as well as Tom and Daisy Buchanans were all westerners; they are all originated from the West and left for the East. Starting with Nick Caraway. His comment in the first chapter of the novel explains how he felt and what happened to him after his graduation from college in 1915, and after the war: “I enjoyed the counter-raid so thoroughly that I came back restless. 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.”⁶⁸ After coming back from the war, Nick felt like a stranger in his home, he felt disillusioned and decided to go to New York precisely to Wall Street. Eventually, Tom and Daisy Buchanans are both Chicagoans from a wealthy family in the Middle West. In spite of having all the luxurious life they wished for, they both left the West for the East:

His family (Tom Buchanans) were enormously wealthy—even in college his freedom with money was a matter for reproach—but now he’d left Chicago and come east in a fashion that rather took your breath away Why they came east I don’t know. They had spent a year in France for no particular reason, and then drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and where rich together.⁶⁹

Gatsby is also presented as a millionaire who lived in West Egg outside New York. It is revealed later on that he comes from the West Coast, North Dakota. Yet, his quest leads him the opposite way; he leaves the west, his home and moves to East.

Moreover, at the end of the novel, Fitzgerald draws another rebirth direction of the frontier like the movement back to the West. After the tragic death of Gatsby, the narrator declares that the story is about the westerners who could not adapt to the Eastern life. He says, "I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all – Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life."⁷⁰ The characters Nick, Jordan, Daisy, and Tom, all decide to go back home starting with Tom and Daisy, who both decide to go back to Midwest and leave the East after Gatsby's death. They are the ones who have given the impression that the only thing that matters for people in East is only class privileges. Although their lives are full of comfort and material success, it seems as if there were something empty inside themselves, as if they have neither spiritual nor meaningful transcendence. This appears through Daisy's statement when she says, "What'll we do with ourselves this afternoon... and the day after that, and the next thirty years?"⁷¹ Her fear about her future shows that her life is meaningless. So after the terrible tragedy that she caused, she moves away from the East with her husband.

Nick, for instance, leaves the West because he has found life unbearable there. His innocence and naivety could not stand the corruption and materialism of the East anymore. As he notes, "After Gatsby's death the East was haunted for me like that, distorted beyond my eyes' power of correction.... I decided to come back home."⁷² These statements make us realize that the Midwest is like a mirror of an authentic America whose moral values such as honesty, goodness, and incorruptibility are old-fashioned but still preserve their integrity. The Narrator Caraway embodies those values. Therefore, he is the character who could most not adapt to Eastern life. He expected to work and transcend in Eastward but he finds himself as a witness

of a terrible and tragic story between immoral, selfish and thoughtless people such as Tom and Daisy, so he decides to return to the West and write his book. And this explains his statement at the beginning of the novel, “When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart.”⁷³ It reveals his negative feelings towards the immoral people of East Coast, “The orgastic future year by year recedes before us”⁷⁴ taking with it the possibility to transcend. Actually, this passage reminds us of Turner’s theory, he had expected that crossing the wilderness might extinguish the human spirit. After coming back home to the quiet, stable society of the Midwest, he feels disillusioned and disappointed with his experience in the East Coast. Nick describes his desire for the world to be “uniform” and “moral” which is the opposite of life in the East.

Anti-heroism in *The Great Gatsby*

From the previous parts of our chapter, one may deduce that Transcendentalism and self-reliance have influenced Fitzgerald in making his main character distinct from the usual American hero. The author used his own transcendent ambitions to create a unique character whose traits do not conform to the mould of the conventional hero. Usually, heroes are the ones who used to owe the merit of a noble personality. Yet, the following lines will present another type of character who is anti-hero but still has noble qualities.

Before coming to study anti-heroism in *The Great Gatsby*, we suggest to refer first to the American western hero. While some historians consider all those who have participated in the conquest of the West to be heroes, Turner gives the merit of heroism to the farmers since they are the first step towards civilization facing all the risks of the wild spaces they reach.

Similarly, in Fitzgerald’s novel, the characters of the story such as Nick, Gatsby, Jordan, and Tom and Daisy are all westerners, as their ancestors used to be, but they leave their home and choose to move East, each one for their own reason. However, in the case of Gatsby, he is the

only one among them to leave his home place as well as his identity for transcendental aspirations. Fitzgerald portrays Gatsby as a protagonist who goes opposite of what would be expected from a westerner. Unlike the frontiersman of the preceding generation embodied, in the novel, by the character Dan Cody, Gatsby's intuition leads him not westward but the opposite direction. Thus, he contradicts Turner's frontiersman when he goes East seeking for his transcendent dream that is Love. In this way, Fitzgerald uses Transcendentalism as a mechanism in the transition from a conventional hero to an Antihero.

It is important to make the difference between the antihero and the antagonist or villain in literary works since they generally harm the other protagonist. On the contrary, the antihero, as we have said in the introduction and the first chapter, is someone who does not harm the others. Besides, like Gatsby, the antihero does not follow the path of the hero. They even go the opposite way to create their own path as seen above. They follow what they believe is true deep in their heart and work towards it their own way even if it opposes society. The writer Richard Chase in his book entitled *"The Great Gatsby: The American Novel and Its Traditions"* confirms that Gatsby, "has an enormous sense of his own destiny. The purpose of his quest is to "enter life", which he does by launching a campaign to conquer and subdue to his own purposes the great world that regards him as an insignificant outsider."⁷⁵ In other words, Gatsby appears as a self-reliant man and his quest for an ideal leads him to conquer a new wilderness, the East.

Despite being heavily influenced by the frontier hero Dan Cody, Gatsby had to turn his back to the Frontier that offered an unlimited free land thus unlimited opportunity. In fact, the West was a lawless and open opportunities inland border. It was a place where law was not yet established. Turner described the Lawless Territories as a "safety valve" and "an innately democratic classless" that provides an escape from the legal civic oppression. Yet, the antihero Gatsby leaves this safety and lawless land and moves East where the prohibition is engendering

illegal businesses and violence. Noting that the main action of the novel is set in 1922, two years after Prohibition was mandated into law in early 1920 New York cities. Following his transcendentalist beliefs, Gatsby mortgages the spirit of the frontier and its freedom, and moves East where he gets involved with illegal business for the sake of his love.

Only a self-reliant man who has transcendent ambitions like Gatsby would have made this decision. He is that self-made man Emerson depicted. This determination reminds us of the concept of individualism in Emerson's *Self-Reliance*. Indeed, he argues, "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, — that is genius."⁷⁶ Much like Emerson, Gatsby believes that men should have the courage to follow their intuitions which is "The Transcendent Destiny."⁷⁷ What this implies is that the individual should be able to follow his own path regardless of whether it aligns with society's expectations, or it is conceived as unconventional by the masses.

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V-Conclusion:

As a conclusion, throughout this research paper, we tried to analyse Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance as mechanisms of the American Antihero in both Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), and Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925). We focused upon the similar aspects between the two writers under the framework of Turner's theory of the Frontier. In fact, both Transcendentalism and Self-Reliance are key elements to modelling the Antihero. The characteristics of this type of protagonist remind us of Transcendentalism's main thought, that is Emerson's Self-Reliance, which includes individualism, Freedom, and Non-Conformism.

Nineteenth and twentieth century America were characterized by the strong presence of Transcendental thought in all fields, including social, cultural, politics, economy as well as literature. These fields were all under the dominance of the two eras. With the emergence of the Transcendentalist movement, Mark Twain and Scott Fitzgerald were influenced to write their works. Huck Finn was depicted as being a hero who is in conflict with his society and who attempts to escape in quest of freedom. As a self-reliant character, he proves to be an independent individual who does not rely on the assistance of others nor conforms to the socially accepted norms, Huck Finn constantly breaks the rules and follows what he personally believes to be true and moral when he decides to help a runaway slave. His strong individualism shows that Huck embraces the values of a frontiersman. Similarly, Fitzgerald portrays Gatsby as a self-reliant character who, in a perfect anti-hero posture, leaves his home seeking the transcendental dream of winning back his beloved Daisy, using whatever means, be they illegal. In a time when people's thoughts revolved around the accumulation of wealth and living in luxury, Gatsby's pursuit of happiness is unconventional. Instead of making money for the sake of living a luxurious life as his fellow contemporaries, he does so for the sole purpose of gaining the approval of Daisy.

Both characters Huckleberry Finn and Gatsby fit the criteria of the anti-hero, since both heroes are described as being in conflict with the society in which they were brought up. Both of them took the road less travelled, in other words, they are non-conformists, and even when met with resistance, they remained firm in the pursuit of their ideals; they are transcendentalists in the sense that society fails to corrupt them, they remain true to themselves and are relentless about achieving their dreams and goals. Huck Finn is not convinced that slavery is justified and that motivates him to help his friend Jim. As for Gatsby, despite being involved in illegitimate activities, his end goal and motivation has always been to win the heart of Daisy. His accumulation of wealth was not an end in itself, but a means to an end. And that leads us to believe that the above mentioned heroes embrace the “Emersonian” values of Transcendentalism as well as Self-Reliance.

Eventually, we conclude that Mark Twain and Scott Fitzgerald’s main characters are, indeed, unconventional heroes or antiheroes. Both Huckleberry Finn and Gatsby were created on the bases of Transcendentalism and Self-reliance Values. This may constitute assets for further research comparing other works of the respective periods to investigate deeper the relationship of the notions of the Antihero, the Frontier and Transcendentalism.

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