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A Study of Social Modernization and Gender Roles in “Their Eyes Were Watching God” and “The Great Gatsby”

Rebecca Renne Soto

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A STUDY OF MODERNIZATION AND GENDER ROLES IN *THEIR EYES WERE
WATCHING GOD* AND *THE GREAT GATSBY*

A Thesis

by

REBECCA RENÉE SOTO

Submitted to Texas A&M International University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2019

Major Subject: English

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Approved as to style and content by:

Chair of Committee,	Manuel Broncano
Committee Members,	Jonathan Murphy
	Paul Niemeyer
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ABSTRACT

A Study of Modernization and Gender Roles in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *The Great Gatsby* (December 2019)

Rebecca Renée Soto, B. A. Political Science, Texas A&M International University;

Chair of Committee: Dr. Manuel Broncano

This thesis focuses on a study of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Scott F. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. The research explores the idea expressed within the opening lines of Hurston's novel; men wait for their dreams to come to them, while women work towards making them reality. Marshall Berman's *All That is Solid Melts into Air: the Experience of Modernity* serves as the foundation upon which the central argument of this paper is built. This study applies Berman's theory to argue that analyzing *Gatsby* and *Their Eyes* through the lens of modernity brings the reader to a deeper understanding of the opening lines presented by Hurston. Furthermore, this work presents the notion that in order to attain their respective dreams, the main characters of both novels must become modern, according to the specifications outlined in Berman's theory. The primary intent is to provide support for the notion that Janie Crawford is successful at achieving her dream as a result of fully subjecting herself to modernization. In contrast, Jay Gatsby is unsuccessful since he struggles to adapt, placing him further away from his dreams. Finally, the application of some of the arguments expressed in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* to the novels aid in providing insight as to how gender, not biological sex, plays a role in determining how an

individual works toward making dreams come true. Traditionally, women have had to adapt to survive within the patriarchal system. On the other hand, the patriarchal system was built for and adapts to serve men. These notions may lead one to conclude that Janie Crawford succeeds because she submits to the process of modernization to achieve her dream and Jay Gatsby fails because he does not fully immerse himself in the process.

DEDICATION

“I’m the closest one to makin’ it, and Latinas don’t quit.” –Snow Tha Product

I dedicate this research project to everyone that feels the pressure of having to “make it” while pursuing the myth of the American Dream. Moreover, this project is dedicated to my maternal grandmother for serving as the real-life embodiment of Janie Crawford’s upward battle against patriarchal society. As a teenager, my grandmother ran away from her home in Mexico to pursue the myth of the American Dream. She rebelled against the patriarchy through the breaking of traditional gender roles and utilized the past as a vehicle to move forward. Without persevering through the battles she faced in her life, this research project would not have come to fruition, as she served as the main source of inspiration. She taught me that Latinx/Chicanx do not quit—we cannot quit while in pursuit of our dreams. *Ana Rosa, usted es mi mas grande inspiración. Sin sus esfuerzos como inmigrante e feminista, yo jamas seria la mujer que soy hoy. Gracias por toda la inspiración, amor, y apoyo incondicional que usted me brinde a diario. A resultado de sus enseñanzas y ejemplos, nunca me daré por vencida y seguiré luchando contra el patriarcado hasta mi final.*

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First and foremost, I am eternally grateful to my mother, Rebeca “Becky” Villarreal Soto, for serving as the ultimate role model, our matriarch, and fearless protector. Every glass ceiling you shatter in the process of attaining your own goals is one less that I have to face when following in your footsteps. I will never cease to admire, in pure amazement, every step you take as you pave the way and raise the bars of expectation for the next generation of women in our family. Your iron will, unwavering independence, and accomplishments inspire me to aspire to greatness. You will forever be Wonder Woman in my eyes. To my father, Juan Soto Jr., I am thankful to for igniting a fire within me that cannot be snuffed out or dimmed by anyone other than myself, teaching me that it is okay to put myself first, and serving as the first male feminist in my life while learning to be a better one by raising me to be independent and self-sufficient. When I face any challenges in life, your inspirational speeches begin to play in my mind on a loop to prevent me from ever giving up. It is because of you that I strive to be a dream-maker for others, not a dream-breaker. I would like to express gratitude to my sister, Kimberly A. Soto Gonzalez, for creating the beings that instigate my incurable drive for upwards mobility: Kendra M. Gonzalez and Kendrick M. Gonzalez. They are my reasons for striving to do and be more every single day. Kimberly, there is no greater love than the one I carry for you and those tiny tots.

I would also like to thank, Christian Cavazos, my better half for the past half-decade, for creating the most calming environments for me to write in, allowing me to read drafts of my thesis to him until his ears bled, and for being my place of peaceful retreat through every phase of turmoil in my life. I would never dream of “adulthood” without you. Jonathan Martinez, I thank for providing me with samples of his own writing to serve as models for my own work and

providing feedback for my really rough first drafts. With your help, I was able to refine the goal of my project.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ix
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW OF THIS STUDY.....	1
II REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	8
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks.....	26
Methodology.....	29
III MODERNIZATION AND GENDER IN <i>GATSBY</i> AND <i>THEIR EYES</i>	32
Conforming to Society.....	38
Breaking from Tradition.....	43
Perceptions of Reality Inform the Future.....	47
Failure or Success.....	56
IV CONCLUSION: EFFECTS OF GENDER ON MODERNIZATION.....	61
WORKS CITED.....	65
VITA.....	68

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW OF THIS STUDY

Ultimately, the intent of this study is to propose that gender roles—not biological sex—significantly impact the efficacy of individuals' progression within modernization. By applying Marshall Berman's theory on modernity and Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory as critical lenses to analyze two novels within the current literary canon, an exemplification of the intended proposition can be highlighted. The discussion found herein is not meant to be prescriptive, but instead illustrative. This study is motivated by the hope that the provision of such an illustration creates a dialectic that can be used to inspire the investigation and reevaluation of the impact of gender on the process of modernity that is present even in today's modern societies.

This illustration depends heavily on highly specific definitions of the key terms found within the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in this study. It is vital that these terms be defined before moving further into any of the research. Here, gender is defined as a set of roles prescribed to regulate behavior in society (Lerner 238). In *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Marshall Berman provides new definitions for the key concepts interwoven within this study. In highly simplified terms, modernity is an individual's understanding of how the past, present, and future are different from one another and how they can be used as a means of informing each other. Modernization describes the state of constant change experienced as a result of what is generally deemed as progress, but can be quite the opposite in some situations, and modernism refers to the intent of an individual to continuously adapt to an ever-changing world and be at peace with the idea that nothing is truly constant

This thesis follows the style of *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Journal*.

except change. The novels selected for this study to illustrate the proposition were chosen based on the presence of intertextuality that generates a conversation regarding the gendered pursuit of dreams, which in this study will be equated to modernism.

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) were selected for analysis within this thesis because they both present storylines about main characters in the pursuit of attaining their respective dreams. In *Gatsby*, Fitzgerald provides his readers with the story of a man named Jay Gatsby who dreams of gaining the love of a woman he met earlier in his life but becomes estranged from. In *Their Eyes*, Hurston tells the tale of a woman named Janie Crawford who longs for love and pursues such a dream throughout young adulthood and all three of her marriages. Each character faces a series of trials and tribulations while in pursuit of his/her dream. It is of great significance to this study that the main characters of the novels in question, Janie and Jay, choose to pursue their dreams through the application of vastly different approaches. The most notable difference between Jay and Janie is that one character succeeds at attaining her respective dream, while the other fails.

Upon a simple surface reading of the novels, one may not find a single link between the 1920's novel, *Gatsby*, by a white male and a work created in the 1930's, *Their Eyes*, written by a black female. In fact, not a significant amount of academic research has been published linking the two. However, thorough analyses of the opening lines of Hurston's work and the closing lines of Fitzgerald's novel are necessary to form an understanding of the greatest tie between these seemingly unrelated literature pieces. The metaphor provided by Hurston at the beginning of her novel and the one provided by Fitzgerald at the end of his seem to open up an entirely new dialectic. The lines referred to here are what initially drew the attention for this study. The dialectic created by these novels inspires an investigation into the gender roles found within each

respective novel and their effects on an individual's pursuit of dreams. As previously mentioned, a thorough analysis of the most significant lines in each novel, at least for the purposes of introducing this study, must take place early on. For this reason, along with the appropriate analyses, they are to be presented within the next few pages of this work.

The opening lines of Hurston's work argue that gender plays a substantial role in determining how an individual pursues a dream. According to Hurston, men are doomed to watch their dreams from afar, while women actively work to ensure their dreams become reality:

Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men. Now, women forget all those things they don't want to remember, and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is the truth. Then they act and do things accordingly. (1)

Through this, Hurston provides a foundation for understanding how Janie and Jay's genders play a significant role on how they ultimately pursue their dreams. Hurston creates an intriguingly powerful metaphor by comparing dreams to ships that sail on a very visible horizon but fail to ever come ashore. In other words, the dreams men hold tend to be out of reach, mostly because they do not actively work towards making them a reality. Even when the dreams seem to be within their grasp, they do not make the necessary changes or sacrifices needed to work their way toward the dream. Instead, men continue to watch from the shore as their dreams move further and further away from becoming actualities, just as the ships do in Hurston's metaphor. Eventually, the men turn away, resigned to live without ever having obtained the dream they were originally in search of, being forever mocked by the idea that they were once so close to

having obtained it. The proximity once had is continuously bothersome to men because the reality is that they could have reached it but did not do so within their lifetimes. The most intriguing part of this metaphor is the statement that some of these men's wishes are brought ashore with the tide. This may imply that some men reach their dreams because the dreams are brought to them, not because they work to obtain them.

Conversely, Hurston's words can be interpreted to signify that women actively work towards the goals they have set. By stating that women's truth is the dream, Hurston elucidates how women internalize their surroundings to create entirely new paths toward the realization of the dreams they hold dear. Simply put, women are not afforded with the opportunity to have their dreams delivered to them by the tide. Since this is the case, it is of the utmost importance that they replace their visions of reality with a more idealistic view based on the dream they choose to pursue. Hurston discusses this within her prose by explaining that women forget everything that does not seem useful insofar as aiding them in accomplishing what they have set out to. The women Hurston refers to are relegated to collecting lists of the actions that have proved useful to them while in the active pursuit of their dreams. This is essentially how the dream becomes their truth. They are obliged to forego anything that does not bring them closer to their goals. As a result of replacing the truth with the dream, the only option left at their disposal is to act in ways that will further their progress toward reaching the dream. Then, they continuously adapt in an effort to reach their dreams. According to Hurston's prose, it would seem that men lack the adaptability that is necessary when working toward a moving goal. Here, the phrase "moving goals" will be used to refer to dreams to which access is blocked by ever-changing obstacles created by ever-changing modern societies. This definition is most appropriate when taking into consideration the ships used in Hurston's metaphor that are used to symbolize the forever

evolving dreams of individuals. Furthermore, it would also seem that Hurston is proposing the notion that men can get by doing the bare minimum, such as waiting for their dreams to wash in with the tide, while women must actively work towards obtaining their dreams.

On the other side of the spectrum, Fitzgerald's *Gatsby* closes with a strong visual of what it is like to remain fixated on what has always been while in active pursuit of a goal, enough so that this fixation leads to stagnation instead of progress. This is made clear through the following masterfully written lines of prose, "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (Fitzgerald 180). Here, Fitzgerald provides his readers with imagery that is substantially thought-provoking. This quote can be used to build upon the notion discussed by Hurston to explain how the past controls dreams and how individuals work toward attaining them. The image of the boat struggling to travel in opposition to the water's current serves as a commentary of man's inability to let go of the past and the inevitable detriment to the goal the boat traveler initially set out to accomplish as a result of the fixation on the past. If the boat was only turned around to allow the current to carry it forward towards progress, the outcome would be a positive one. However, man is unwilling to change his course because his past clouds his vision, so each time he rows, the current exerts a force pushing him in the opposite direction he is rowing in, keeping him in the same place. In finality, it seems to present the notion that it is part of the human condition to use the past as a means of informing the future. If this is taken to be true, Fitzgerald presents his readers with quite the conundrum through those lines. In essence, the passage prompts one to question whether it is even possible to utilize the past as a vehicle to move forward or if it serves merely as an anchor that weighs the characters down and prevents them from ever reaching their dreams. If only *Gatsby's* story is used to inform the response to the previously presented query, the answer would be the latter.

However, Janie's journey serves as a primary example of using the past as a means of generating positive actions that eventually make her success through modernization entirely possible.

When read both with and against each other, Hurston's opening and Fitzgerald's closing allow the reader to conclude that the verbiage used by these authors clearly connects and intersects. The lines lend themselves to create intertextuality between the novels, providing the opportunity for the discourse that will be found within this study. To clarify, they both focus on discussing the effects that the past has on dreams and the future. Particularly for the main characters in *Gatsby* and *Their Eyes*, dreams are derived from experiences in the past. For example, Janie finds herself on a quest to recreate the sexual awakening she experienced while sitting under a pear tree. While watching a bee pollenate a bloom from the tree, Janie adopts the belief that marriage should be as harmonious and beautiful as nature. Essentially, she comes to believe that pleasure should be derived from love, and she strives to recreate the feeling of ecstasy she felt while watching the pollination take place (Hurston 18). Meanwhile, Jay is on a mission to recapture the past he had with Daisy Buchanan. Through the narrator's account, the readers learn that Jay describes having met Daisy and immediately feeling like he was somehow connected to her through a marriage that had never even taken place. Everything he does within the novel is as a means of recreating the feelings he experienced alongside Daisy when they first met (Fitzgerald 158). For both of the characters, the past informs the dreams of the future because the dreams they pursue are based on past experiences. To be successful, it would seem that the characters must transcend their past by turning their boats around and using the currents to their advantage, as opposed to engaging in a never-ending battle against it. In a way, transcendence seems to be a large part of successful modernity.

To better comprehend and more easily follow the complexity of the dialectic created by the combined analysis of the opening and closing lines of these works, a review of currently existing literature that is relevant to the purposes of this study will be presented first. Chapter II focuses on providing an overview of past literary criticism and interpretations that may be considered essential in tracing the context, relevance, and validity of the research provided herein. Additionally, the methodology, theoretical framework, and the conceptual framework will be outlined and discussed within this portion. Chapter III focuses on discussing the application of Berman's theory on modernity as a critical lens to examine how Janie and Jay subject themselves to modernization as a means of reaching their dreams. Correspondingly, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* enters this conversation within the same chapter as a means of providing a lens to conduct a critical analysis of the characters' needs to pursue their dreams in very different manners as a result of the constraints created by socially constructed behavioral expectations based on gender assignments. Finally, Chapter IV aims to deliver a discussion of how the amalgamation of Berman and Beauvoir's theories can be used in conjunction to stimulate the use of a conceptual framework through which the actions of the main characters of the novels can be analyzed to provide a deeper understanding of why the man is unsuccessful, but the female is successful within these novels.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It is crucial to understand that the proposed link between the novels was presented ahead of the literature review because most struggle to find notable similarities between the chosen novels. Nonetheless, early criticism of the novels was particularly harsh and argued that neither of the works would be worthy of canonization due to a lack of depth. In the case of *Gatsby*, the lack of depth stemmed from accusations of poor characterization. On the other hand, *Their Eyes* was vilified due to a lack of inclusion of the pervasive racial tensions of the time. Previous studies have emphasized the presence of the American dream as a motif that is present within both of the texts. There exists a considerable body of literature proposing that *Gatsby* serves as a criticism of the American dream. In the same vein, quite a few articles propose that Janie's journey to self-actualization is representative of the same American dream. Despite the vast numbers of critical works currently available discussing *Gatsby* or *Their Eyes*, not much can be found in which the novels are the combined subjects of study. Most importantly, none of the literature found during the review of literature discussed the synchronicity of the opening and closing lines presented here. The present study aims to address this lack. Therefore, in order to better comprehend the link between the intertextuality of the novels and the theoretical framework that is used to guide the creation of the conceptual framework of this study, a succinct overview of related literature is required.

The Great Gatsby, published on April 10, 1925, was originally met with mixed reviews from the critics. Many critics complained that this novel was autobiographical in nature. Particularly when creating a work of fiction, one ought to be able to adequately create fictional characters. If a character is heavily based on the person writing it, it shows that the writer

struggles with characterization. In the *Dallas Morning News*, Harvey Eagleton asserted that Fitzgerald was writing about himself through the character of Nick Carraway. He also stated that this work was an utter failure and that it should not hope to ever become anything more than popular fiction. Ruth Snyder contends in *New York Evening World* that Fitzgerald would never be in the running for the title of one of the great American writers of his time (11). While others accused Fitzgerald of the inability to create characters that were deeper than the superficial elites he presents in *Gatsby*, H.L. Mencken explains what most other critics vilified Fitzgerald for at the time: “He is unconcerned about the sweatings and sufferings of the nether herd; what engrosses him is the high carnival of those who have too much money to spend and too much time for the spending of it” (22). Mencken retorts that the characters found in *Gatsby* are not overly exaggerated and unrealistic but wholly representative of the wealthy classes of society that have resulted from the economic prosperity Americans were indulging in during the 1920s. Additionally, Mencken recognizes that Fitzgerald was more focused on creating a novel that represented the real dangers of indulgence in society as opposed to the standard fictional characters of the time. Now, the novel is commonly hailed as a social commentary on the pursuit of the American Dream as nothing more than an unattainable myth and warns against the blind pursuit of such a concept. Nicholas Tredell notes that most of the early reviews of the work failed to address the concluding passage of the novel that later became crucial in making a connection to the theme of the American Dream. He also implies that this may be part of the reason why the novel was not received with the acclaim it has today (13). William Rose Benet was one of the first to juxtapose the ideas that *Gatsby* is universal and distinctively American in his review “An Admirable Novel” (1925). Benet writes, “The mystery of *Gatsby* is a mystery saliently characteristic of this age in America. And *Gatsby* is only another modern instance of the

eternal ‘fortunate youth’” (25). Through the first sentence he refers to Gatsby’s ability to pick himself up by his own bootstraps to make something out of himself. The idea that one could work his/her way into the hierarchies of society is American in nature. Furthermore, Benet considers Gatsby’s character to be a universal archetype of people that attain what they desire most through the means of sheer luck or fortune due to their youth. Both of these analyses are of significance because they influenced much of the criticism that *Gatsby* received later.

There is a new wave of publications portraying Gatsby as an antifeminist work that showcases hostility towards women by presenting Daisy as a scapegoat. Most notably, Judith Fetterly poses Jay’s feelings towards Daisy as the equivalent of wanting to possess a material object to obtain status in society (75). She argues that to present Daisy as the scapegoat for Jay’s inability to obtain the power through social acceptance that he is ultimately seeking is to accept that Daisy is nothing more than a means to an end for Jay. Thus, Daisy is reduced to a mere object to be collected on his path towards fitting in. Sarah Beebee Fryer contests the idea that Jay intentionally sees Daisy as nothing more than a pawn through the following: “She is a victim of a complex network of needs and desires: she deserves more pity than blame” (102). Here, she suggests that Jay does not necessarily seek out to devalue Daisy by placing her on a pedestal and seeking to gain her attention to validate his own existence to obtain some sort of rank within the social hierarchies of the novel. According to Fryer, Jay’s objectification of Daisy comes as a result of the social constraints written into the novel’s storyline. Therefore, she is a victim of the institutions built into the society that Jay must adhere to on his quest towards reaching his dream. Thus, this is proposing that neither Jay nor the novel are inherently misogynist. Instead, the misogyny that rears its head within the storyline is a result of that which is found within the society that the story was written in. Technically, Fitzgerald is powerless in the face of female

oppression, but he can aim to highlight its existence within society by writing it into *Gatsby*. The mere production of a work with the intent of highlighting the inequalities that exist is innately feminist.

It is imperative to note that Jay does not meet his end as a result of his illegitimate amassing of wealth. Instead, it comes as a result of his rapid movement toward his ultimate aspiration--Daisy Buchanan. In describing this, Isabel Paterson states, "His stage was a Long Island summer colony, where he came in contact with the realities of his dream and was broken by them. That he was a bootlegger, a crook, maybe a killer (all on the grand scale) is part of the irony of things; for it wasn't his sins he paid for, but his aspirations" (16). Here Paterson explains that his refusal to let go of Daisy leads to his downfall. This serves as an analogy for the paramount warning that blind adherence to the pursuit of a dream based on the past will lead to eventual destruction. Gary J. Scrimgeour, in "Against *The Great Gatsby*," argues that it is quite possible that unknowingly, Fitzgerald created a novel that defends the notion that it is completely impossible to face reality and live entirely in the present. According to Scrimgeour, *Gatsby* is so focused on recreating his past by gaining control over what was to happen in the future that he entirely dismisses the present that is facing him at that very moment (80). Bewley engages with Scrimgeour's discussion regarding *Gatsby*'s infatuation with the past in the following passage:

Thus the American dream, whose superstitious valuation of the future began in the past, gives the green light through which alone the American returns to his traditional roots, paradoxically retreating into the pattern of history while endeavoring to exploit the possibilities of the future. There is a suggestive echo of the past in *Gatsby*'s sense of Daisy (48).

Through this, Bewley also ties Gatsby's pursuit of Daisy to the American dream. Bewley explains that, just as with the American dream, Gatsby's valuation of Daisy began in the past and has him retreat into the pattern of history by trying to recreate his past with her in an effort to enjoy a possible future with Daisy in his life. Bewley goes on to explain that because people are always jaded by the past and the possibilities that lie in the future, they neglect the harsh realities of the present situation. This allows them to become victims of circumstance in the present since they are not proactively engaging with and strategically maneuvering through the obstacles that present themselves. In "Boats Against the Current," James Miller furthers the ideas Bewley discussed by providing an explanation for how Gatsby's dream can be equalized to that of the original American dream. Miller writes, "There is first the identification of [Gatsby's] dream with the dream of those who discovered and settled the American continent [...] there is next the association of Gatsby's dream with the dream of Modern America [...] there is finally the realization that all of these dreams are one and inseparable [...]" (34). Miller equates the dream of those who settled the American continent to that of Gatsby because they are both rooted in making real something that once existed in the past. Therefore, they are the same dream. This is also what makes the dream so unattainable; a refusal to move forward based on what is real in the present holds everything back for those pursuing it.

More recent scholarship points to the use of Nick Carraway as the narrator having a significant impact on the reader's understanding of the novel. Because the narrator is telling his own account of events, the story is inherently biased. Barbara Hochman proposes that meaning within the story is meant to be derived greatly from the interactions between Nick and the characters he is describing through his narration. Hochman presents the notion by arguing, "It is

precisely by articulating both his faith and his doubt about Gatsby that Nick becomes a model for the reader in addition to being a writer and storyteller. [...] Fiction itself, of course, is always something one simultaneously believes and disbelieves” (123). She posits that Nick’s descriptions of Daisy’s voice serve as a signal to the reader that Nick believes voices should always be considered suspect. Therefore, pointing to the reader that all verbal accounts should be handled with utmost distrust. If this is the case, then the reader should remain doubtful of all that Nick presents via his narration because, according to Hochman, he is only retelling Jay’s story out of self-interest. He narrates only to promote his own personhood as a result of the ties he once had with the interesting characters, thereby posing himself as an interesting character merely by association. Ultimately, Hochman points to the idea that meaning must also be inferred from what is missing within the story—Jay’s and Daisy’s own accounts. For the reasons outlined in Hochman’s discussion of the text, this study is limited as a result of any interpretation of the novel being based on Nick’s perception of Jay and of all other characters. Put differently, the novel is missing Jay and Daisy’s own accounts and thoughts, and this should have a noteworthy impact on any reader’s understanding.

Nick’s narrative power is also discussed in Raymond M. Vince’s “Transformations of Space-Time: Fitzgerald’s Modernist Narrative and the New Physics of Einstein.” Here, he discusses the idea that Jay is stuck in a “distorted space-time” in which he is no more than a “hollow construct of others, his family and cultural roots an illusion. Yet, what is true of Gatsby seems scarcely less true of Nick and the other characters” (95). His claim is based on the notion that Jay is a character designed by a need for an acceptable myth to feed to society. For that reason, he neither exists entirely in reality or in the mythological world that he has been situated in by those around him that so willingly accept his fabricated persona. However, if this is true of

Jay, then the same should be afforded to the rest of the characters within the novel because the reader's understanding of them is conceived by Nick's account of his individual perceptions. For this very reason, there cannot be one true reality; everything is grounded on perception. Yet, the most resounding argument presented is that Jay does not embark on a search for Daisy as a mere romantic endeavor or the viewing of her as an object that he must possess. Instead, Vince proposes that Jay's search for Daisy is emblematic of a quest for something deeper, more existential. This idea is interesting, particularly if interpreted to mean that Jay is ultimately on a quest to obtain personhood within a classist society that would have eschewed him simply for being poor. As most would agree, Jay was looking for love, but not necessarily from the external sources that are generally put forward by most. Instead of looking for love from Daisy, he was looking to create a person that he found to be socially accepted by others, thereby achieving a sense of personhood by means of using the otherhood assigned to him by society as a tool to fashion his own understanding of himself. This arouses the view that Jay and Janie were basically chasing the same dream, thus creating another parallel between the novels and their main characters.

Along the lines of concepts being left out that impact the overall understanding of the text, Barbara Will asserts that the term "obscene" is present in the novel as a tool of erasure. The word is used to "whitewash" anything that should not be socially accepted within the novel. Will further argues that the word can be found throughout the novel to describe situations or characters that should be considered unsavory. Through the assignation of such a term, the unsavory characteristics are erased by never actually having been mentioned. While at the same time, it allows the reader to question what is socially acceptable. By never specifying what the obscene is, it allows one to wonder what was considered too unacceptable to even mention. To

drive her point, she draws upon the scene in the text where Nick erases an obscene word from Jay's house after his death. She argues, "Through foregrounding Nick's erasure of the obscene word from Gatsby's house, Fitzgerald deliberately emphasizes the process through which the 'whitewashing' of Gatsby's reputation takes place" (128). Once again, another scholar points to notion that the reader's signification depends heavily on Nick's perception of Jay. Because he erases the word, he symbolically erases all of the negative aspects tied to Jay's character—his bootlegging, poverty, lies, and deceit. He does so as a means of portraying Jay as a symbol of the American dream. It no longer matters that he at various times in his life went against social norms because it was all in the name of his hope to reach his dream. Every action comes as a result of his ability to pull himself out of his current situation to pursue an even better one. That in and of itself is truly representative of American white collar. Overall, the breaking of Jay's ties to the obscene present him as being a significant character of the social hierarchy found in the novel. Moreover, Will details Jay's relationship to time and perception through the following: "Consistently dreaming beyond the material, social, economic, and temporal boundaries of his surroundings, overturning and reimagining the hierarchies of power and social status that constrain him, Gatsby could be seen as a modernist figure, a deconstructive figure, a figure of *différance*, whose 'motivation' is to 'shatter. . . belief' and hence 'invent. . . [new] realities'" (131). Because Jay is consistently working to obtain power, wealth, and social status by creating a mythical character to serve as others' perceptions of him, he is actually overturning and breaking away from the traditions of the very society he is actively trying to become a part of. He overturns them by shattering previous perceptions and creating newer ones that are meant to serve him in his intent to reach his dream.

Similar to the negative reviews that greeted *Gatsby*, *Their Eyes* was also met with harsh criticism that buried the novel for quite a while. Hurston's novel was published on September 18, 1937. The work was considered out of vogue by many because it did not coincide with what the rest of the writers of the Harlem Renaissance were producing--protest novels. A major theme found in most of the literature created by African-American authors at this particular time was racial injustice in America (Wintz). According to many critics, because Hurston produced a work centered on the Black community, the novel does not allow for a thorough analysis of racial tensions between Whites and Blacks in America. One of the critics widely credited for publicly diminishing Hurston's work is Richard Wright. In "Between Laughter and Tears," Wright states that *Their Eyes* lacks a theme and that it prevents anyone from being able to draw any significant interpretation after reading the novel. Wright declares, "The sensory sweep of her novel carries no theme, no message, no thought. In the main, her novel is not addressed to the Negro, but to a white audience whose chauvinistic tastes she knows how to satisfy" (25). Through this, Wright undermines Hurston's attempt at creating a work in which the African-American English Vernacular was meant to be showcased as a means of helping the intended Black readers identify with it, and he argues that it presents the notion to both Black and White readers that segregation is a viable option since the African-American people in the novel seem to thrive living in a town comprised only of their own. Moreover, he accuses Hurston of pandering to the White audiences by propagating stereotypes of Black people.

To negate Wright's critique of *Their Eyes*, Claudia Pierpont explains why Hurston's work was originally disregarded: "Against the tide of racial anger, she wrote about sex and talk and work and music and life's unpoisoned pleasures, suggesting that these things existed even for people of color, even in America; and she was judged superficial. By implication, merely

feminine” (par. 4). Pierpont asserts that because Hurston did not fall into accord with what the other revolutionaries of the Harlem Renaissance were focused on writing about at the time, she originally appears an unlikely candidate for canonization. Furthermore, Pierpont suggests that tying the label “superficial” to Hurston is associated with her gender. Thus, Pierpont hints that Wright possibly implies that her gender prevents her from truly understanding the intricacies of the racial tensions she failed to address in her novel. This could have been a possible jab at Hurston’s willingness to accept help from White benefactors. In response to the plethora of critiques advancing the view that Hurston’s work did not adequately represent the racial tensions that were prevalent during the time the novel was written, Amanda Bailey maintains, “The easily overlooked folktales do not sweep racial concerns under the rug; they instead further illustrate the embeddedness of the dominant culture’s racial ideology” (330). By this, she upholds the idea that the lack of overt depictions of the racial tensions that were expected is a strategy employed by Hurston in an effort to provide a commentary of how profoundly entrenched white supremacy and the ideologies perpetuated by it are even within the black communities. This helps to further the notion that Hurston intentionally centered her novel in a black community to bring attention to the issues that are present as a result of the dominant ideologies overpowering the minorities. This is compounded by Bailey’s examination of Hurston’s narrative techniques to explain how Janie’s liberation comes as a result of obtaining the power to narrate her own story towards the end of the novel and of passing the narrative power on to Phoebe in retelling the rest of their community. In essence, it is through narration that one can assume power to overturn the status quo. If this is a valid interpretation, Hurston’s provision of a narrative of a dominantly black community is an exercise of authority over the racial tensions critics claimed Hurston completely ignores.

Peter Gaál-Szabó declares that Hurston carefully constructed cultural spaces within *Their Eyes* as a means of inversion. Gaál-Szabó explicates, “[The town of Eatonville] represents African-American community in a microcosm (the muck in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* may be taken as an idealized image). It is the place where African-American expression manifests itself with full force” (93). Heavily dependent upon a study of Hurston’s anthropological writings, Gaál-Szabó proposes that Hurston intentionally writes an all African American community and presents the black vernacular as a means of instituting expression within cultural space. Put differently, she creates a novel in which the other is limited as a means of allowing Janie to become an agent within her own culture, as opposed to a story in which she is merely acting in response to the racial tensions and oppressions enacted upon her by the white majority. By producing an attempt to leave out the white majority, Hurston creates a community in which the African Americans become the primary carriers of culture. By presenting her readers with authentic African-American English Vernacular, she forces them to fully immerse themselves into an experience of identification with the community itself (87-88). This effectively helps address the idea that her discord with the expected production of a protest novel is in fact a commentary of the obstacle of race in society. By choosing not to conform to what is expected of her, Hurston produces a more powerful examination of the implications of race that she faced as a Harlem Renaissance writer. To explain this further, Gaál-Szabó writes:

Multiplicity can be pinpointed in Janie’s behavior in particular: from the point of view of the (patriarchal) community, her transgressive conduct that leads her to violate the norms of marriage as a patriarchal institution, her rebellious insistence on joining games not meant for her [...] her cross-dressing at the end of her story, but, perhaps most strikingly, her engagement in a storytelling activity show

oscillation between worlds and a refusal of fixity (90).

Specifically, Janie is a character that focuses on showcasing the anthropological concept of “hybridization” or the blending of culture through the recreation of spaces or situations to make them her own. Even though most scholars, as previously discussed, would dispute the notion that Janie actively works toward obtaining her dream, Hurston showcases a main character that effectively navigates the social constraints she faces by creating spaces for her to submit when Janie realizes it is to her benefit and other spaces to act in rebellion to social expectations. It is important to note that the multiplicity found in Janie’s character is most notable to the reader when she acts in defiance because social expectations dictate that should come in the form of outright rebellion, not submissive dissent. Conclusively, Janie’s freedom comes not from fitting into the socially prescribed roles, but from ascending past them by creating her own spaces from which to exert her liberty (93).

In her essay, “In Search of Zora Neale Hurston,” Alice Walker provokes the new wave of interpretations that led to the eventual canonization of the novel. She does so by providing an in-depth account of her literal search for information that would allow her to become better acquainted with the writer, Hurston. The account of her search renewed interest in *Their Eyes*. Most important to this study, Walker presents Hurston’s original comments regarding her own feelings about allowing the status of one’s race in society impact the perception of capabilities, ‘I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it. . . . No, I do not weep at the world-I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife’ (qtd. in Walker 88). Through this, it may be inferred that Hurston seems to believe that race should not be used as an excuse to justify inaction as a result of mourning over racial status in society. Alternatively, she propagates the

idea that working towards a goal or a dream should be the focus, just as Janie's character focuses on working from within her means to reach her dream. This would point to the idea that even though the novel is not an accurate depiction of the racial tensions of the time, it is exactly as Hurston intended it to be, showcasing a storyline focusing on Janie's ability to adapt to and work from within the constraints placed upon her as a means of reaching her dream. Thereby, Hurston models a modern character that is a representation of the ideas expressed by her own views of race. Jennifer Jordan posits that Hurston's work presents an awareness of black people that was not previously found within the American literary canon. Furthermore, Jordan argues:

The novel [should be] seen as a vehicle of feminist protest through its condemnation of the restrictiveness of bourgeois marriage and through its exploration of intraracial sexism and male violence. It is [...] a quest through which the heroine, Janie Killicks Starks Woods, achieves a sense of identity as a self-fulfilled woman and, through her own self-realization, becomes a leader of women and of her community (108).

Through this, Jordan provides the reasoning to justify the idea that the novel is indeed one of protest. Additionally, she furthers the notion that Janie is an undeniably heroic character and her reaching of her dream does not come from her relationships with men, but instead, the feeling originally experienced under the pear tree returns when she achieves a state of personhood.

Alternatively stated, because the characters and setting in her story appeared to critics to be unrealistic based on the other African-American literature widely accepted at the time, critics reduced it to nothing more than a story of a quest for true love that ultimately fails because Tea Cake dies shortly after subjecting Janie to violence. Interestingly enough, most of the negative reviews Hurston received for *Their Eyes* came from men. Most early feminist interpretations of

Their Eyes maintain that Janie's relationship with Tea Cake is the realization of the dream she was on a journey for because, on the surface, it appears that he considers Janie an equal. Of Janie and Tea Cake's relationship, Cheryl A. Wall writes, "His one act of physical cruelty toward Janie results from his need to show someone else who is boss in his home. In the main though, Tea Cake transcends the chauvinistic attitudes of the group" (228). What Wall is referring to are the attitudes outwardly and explicitly showcased by the two other males Janie was previously married to before Tea Cake. Wall attempts to disregard Tea Cake's violence towards Janie as a mere singular occurrence in an otherwise equal partnership. Through this, Wall completely brushes aside the underlying implications of all previous interactions between Tea Cake and Janie.

On the other hand, in "From Defiance to Creative Submission," Shawn Miller argues that feminist interpretations of the novel propose that the quest Janie faces is not for love that springs from an external being but that it should be more accurately interpreted as a quest for self-actualization that can only come as a result of freedom from the oppressive patriarchal structures in society (92). Miller purports that all three of Janie's marriages prove to be unsuccessful in terms of bringing her the love she initially sets out to find through her relationships to men. He discusses the marriages as being equally oppressive due to the existence of socially imposed roles. He claims that many have chosen to ignore the violence that Tea Cake inflicts upon Janie to assert his own dominance and substantially shape others' perceptions of his masculinity. By dismissing such acts, one rejects the possibility that Janie is a covertly feminist character. It is only through her "creative submission" that she is able to navigate the conventional institution of marriage to obtain her personhood. In the end, Miller argues, "[Janie] achieves both self-reliance and love in spite of, not through, her third husband" (93). Such an interpretation is only possible

if Janie is firstly established as a dynamic character that denounces defiance, to be replaced with strategic submission to prevent from having to sit on the shore to wait for her turn for the tide to bring her dreams to her. Instead, she strategically submits when the horizons are blocked on the road to achieving her dream. When the time comes to choose between allowing the rabid Tea Cake to attack her or shooting him, she chooses to love herself more than she loves him (Miller 90-91). Thus, she relies on herself to provide the ending she envisions, and in doing so, she surprisingly discovers the love she had envisioned for herself while under the pear tree.

Tracy L Bealer enters this conversation by way of responding to Miller's equalization of Janie's three marriages. She argues that doing so ignores the difference between Janie's willingness to work alongside Tea Cake, while the rest of her marriages provided her with forced labor. Bealer argues that Hurston intentionally showcases Tea Cake's violent behavior toward Janie to showcase the idea that regardless of the feeling of freedom that comes with powerful love, one cannot be fully liberated from the social hierarchies (Bealer 315). Through this she claims that a closer analysis of Tea Cake and Janie's relationship is necessary to understand how he does effectively provide a certain degree of liberation for her. In their marriage, Tea Cake does not prevent her from mingling with anyone based on class, in contrast to the happenings of her union with Joe Starks. However, Tea Cake is unable to free her from the constraints she faces due to her gender. Bealer argues that Tea Cake serves as liberation from class structures because he rejects the socially prescribed notions in an effort to assert his masculinity. Instead of conforming to the social expectations, he rebels against them. Nonetheless, he is unable to do the same for gender without diminishing his own masculinity, which is largely based on his ability to uphold his dominance over the opposite gender (316-318). Bealer suggests, "It is a socially mandated racial hatred that infects Tea Cake's psyche to the degree that he feels compelled to

demonstrate power along the axis of gender: manifesting itself as a brutal beating of Janie” (319). Such a defense of the idea that Tea Cake does not beat Janie out of love, but out of frustration with his own lack of power stemming from oppression due to race and class allows for the argument that gender places a great deal of obstacles in between Janie and the obtainment of her dream. It may then be argued that each of her marriages provided blockages grounded on her husbands’ inability to perfectly fit into the social roles they aspired to fill. Furthermore, it legitimizes the idea that gender roles pervasively block the horizons for women, as discussed by Bealer: “The novel suggests that, even this potentially liberatory space is not strong enough to consistently block out the racist hierarchies that attenuate self-sufficiency and lead to sexist assumptions that legitimate male domination” (318). In other words, love that stems from Janie’s relationships with men is an inadequate instrument to procure the liberation she is actually pursuing throughout the novel. All love will let her down if it comes from a man because they are programmed by society to exercise their dominance over women when faced with any racial or class-based tensions; it is the outlet prescribed as a means of resolving their own inequities.

Further, Joseph Uργο explains that as a result of early critiques being based on traditional patriarchal expectations of African American literature, the work was deemed unworthy of canonization: “In this way the novel is allowed into the canon with a wink--the condescending wink of the patriarch. What is more likely, however, is that the weakness sensed in the novel is a flaw of reading, not one of the text” (42). Uργο conveys the message that the novel’s “weaknesses,” as perceived by earlier critics, stemmed not from inconsistencies in the writing of the text but from flawed analyses based on an oversimplification of the novel’s storyline. Again, the oversimplification comes as a consequence of a surface-level reading that focuses on following Janie on a quest for true love, rather than self-actualization resulting from liberation of

the oppressive patriarchal structures found in society. In stark contrast to other male critics, Urgo presents the following notion: “Autonomy, in the novel, flows not from overcoming vulnerability but from locating strength within it” (40). Janie has been accused by many critics of having been complicit in her own oppression in the novel, and Urgo’s quote aids in explaining how her complicity should be regarded as a form of autonomy if a feminist interpretation is the end goal. Each time Janie is faced with oppression from the patriarchal structures, she finds a way to remain strong and continue working her way towards her ultimate liberation.

In *Zora Neale Hurston and the Survival of the Female*, Mary Jane Lupton discusses the survival of the female protagonist in Hurston’s novel. Lupton focuses on analyzing Janie Crawford’s actions in attempting to overcome the female condition she was born into. As a result of the analysis, Lupton deems Janie as capable of ensuring her survival as a result of modernization. Even though the term is not included in the article, it seems particularly relevant here, as the analysis is fixated on the changes Janie undergoes to ensure that her dream materializes. Lupton discusses the notion that Janie made a conscious choice to ensure her own survival after Tea Cake contracts rabies. Instead of sacrificing herself for love, she shoots him in an attempt to guarantee her own survival. She chose herself over the man that she claimed to love (Lupton 49). The self-love she carried within her was apparently greater than the external love she had for Tea Cake. This could have come as a result of Janie possibly realizing that if she sacrificed herself to Tea Cake, her dream would come to an abrupt halt because both of their lives would come to an abrupt end. With this reasoning in mind, the only logical conclusion to make would be to adapt to everything that was falling apart around her in an effort to survive this entire ordeal and continue working towards accomplishing her goals. Lupton discusses this through the following: “By giving us a character highly adaptable to change, who adjusts to

collective labor, and who is able actively to assure her own survival, Hurston is giving us a ‘New Woman,’ a woman whose actions are larger, even , than heroic” (53). This means Hurston was dedicated to showcasing the ways in which Janie was able to overcome each of the unhealthy relationships she had with members of the opposite sex through the ability to adapt and overcome until opportunities arose for her to remove herself from the unfavorable situations she found herself in. This is, in part, what allows for the argument that Janie is a modern character.

All of the prominent ideas found in this literature review help to substantiate the intended argument of this study by providing the framework from which this study will operate. As previously noted, numerous works are available citing the novels being studied here, but only those relevant in providing the necessary background for the application of the theoretical framework of this research were included. Furthermore, this study aims to highlight the lack of research available discussing the intertextuality between *Gatsby* and *Their Eyes*. Current literature highlights the inclusion of the pursuit of dreams as one of the main themes found within each of the novels in question. However, none of the research found linked the novels together as a means of creating a greater dialogue between the texts to discuss why men and women may pursue dreams differently. If this is overlooked, researchers may be more susceptible to accepting as accurate currently existing interpretations that posit the novels as antifeminist works of literature. For this reason, it is important to discuss how the intertextuality between the novels provides a basis for the application of modernist and feminist theory to explore the possibility that gender roles substantially impact an individual’s progress in the face of modernization. Moreover, this practice in signification is undertaken with the hope that, in doing so, it aids in providing a better understanding of gender relations found in everyday life—because Janie’s and Jay’s stories are exact illustrations of these relations.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

As previously noted, Hurston's opening lines assert that men and women work in different ways when trying to reach their goals. She even goes on to say that men are accustomed to waiting for their dreams to come to them, while women actively work towards ensuring that their dreams become reality. Such an interpretation of these lines gave birth to the multi-faceted research question being used to guide this study: does gender impact how individuals pursue their dreams and the outcome of such pursuits? In order to provide a more comprehensive response to this question, several theories must be utilized within this research.

Marshall Berman's *All that is Solid Melts into Air: the Experience of Modernity* serves as the foundation upon which the main argument of this paper is built. Since the central argument of this thesis is based on the idea that the characters must undergo modernity in order to successfully reach their respective dreams, an exploration of the theory is necessary. According to Berman, individuals must continuously change to meet the demands of ever-changing societies while in pursuit of moving goals. Through his work, Berman creates a new venue for possible discourse by redefining the concept of modernity by virtue of combining the historically separated spheres of modernism and modernization. Overall, this study aims to apply a theory regarding modernization that has historically been applied only in the social sciences, not to studies within the humanities, such as this one.

Additionally, Berman's theory seems to be relevant insofar as expounding how Janie and Jay work towards creating new worlds for themselves even though they find themselves in situations of continuous dissolution (i.e., a constant state of modernization) as a means of actively working towards reaching their individual dreams. Nevertheless, Berman's theory fails

to adequately explain how using the past as a means of informing the future ends with different consequences for each of the characters involved. This portion of the study then transitions into an attempt to explain why Jay and Janie use the past differently to inform their futures. Berman's work alone does not suffice to describe and explore why Jay focuses on recreating the past, which leads to his ultimate failure, while Janie adapts based on what she learns from her past to create a new future.

What, then, if not the sole theory of modernity, should be considered the primary contributing factor that leads the characters to pursue their dreams so differently, ultimately resulting in such drastically different outcomes for each of the characters being analyzed in this study? This inquiry points to the evaluation of the need to conform to gender roles to gain ground in the process of actualizing their dreams as a relevant response to such an integral question. Through the application of an integrated approach, the audience can come to a deeper and more significant understanding of the opening lines of Hurston's work and the closing lines of Fitzgerald's, as they both focus on illustrating some of the possible outcomes of pursuing a dream. In the case of Hurston, she seems to go as far as presenting the notion that one gender works harder than the other to reach a goal. Because the characters must conform to gender roles to some extent in order to become modern, the access to their dreams is very different. As a result, the strategies the characters adopt in pursuit of their dreams are based on the avenues that are readily accessible to them based on the gender roles assigned by the societies presented within each work.

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir articulates the idea that women and men are relegated to operating within completely different spheres by society; thus, they are consigned to pursuing the attainment of their dreams through different approaches. She further explains that

men and women are not held to the same standards in a patriarchal society. This results in a targeted blockage to any woman in pursuit of her dreams that men do not have to face within societies that are patriarchal in nature. Beauvoir's feminist theory is used to explicate why one must submit to specific processes in the name of progress and why and the access available to each character is different based on the gender roles they are assigned and constrained by via the societies their storylines are written into. The overlaying of Beauvoir's work over Berman's comes as a result of addressing the second part of the research question: what is it that makes one character more successful than the other if they both submit to the process of modernization?

Hence, the application of this joint theoretical framework allows for a more comprehensive response to the question of why men may appear to face less work than women on their quests to achieve their individual dreams and why one ends up being less successful than the other in the novels being analyzed within this study. The key concepts, *modernity*, *modernization*, *modernism*, and gender are all brought together by the idea that one must be cognizant of the realities of the present being faced within the social processes of the world to initiate progress. This idea is a similarity expressed within both Beauvoir's and Berman's works. This may not come as a surprise, since both of these theories are grounded in Marxism. Along with the aforementioned, this study operates under the assumption that the theory of modernity can and should be used as an application to study works of literature to stimulate new methods of interpretation with the intention of creating meaning. Moreover, while it would seem wise to include a discussion of the intersection of race and gender, this study will operate under the assumption that the novels in question fail to adequately represent racial tensions explicitly within the novel that were prevalently found in the societies of the respective time periods during which the novels were written. Thus, they are unable to serve as adequate representations to form

arguments based on a lack of overt inclusion of the intersection of race and gender. A more thorough analysis of the concealed implications of race included within the novels is needed than what the time constraints for this project allow. Thus, pointing to the necessity to conduct this study with the assumption that race and class have significant implications on gender relations in these novels.

By using these aforementioned theories to analyze the actions of the main characters, Fitzgerald's closing lines lend themselves to a practice of signification that emphasizes the implications of blind adherence to the past while experiencing modernization. More so, the dominant argument and the intertextuality with Fitzgerald's work presented in Hurston's opening lines can be assessed as useful tools that allow one to think more deeply about the ways in which art, in this case literature, can improve the understanding of the complexities brought about by socially designated gender roles and the limitations they place on an individual's ability to exercise modernism. This study aims to contribute to the existing research by arguing that a link exists between *Gatsby* and *Their Eyes* that serves as a warning to their readers against the stagnation produced by strict adherence to patriarchal traditions. Moreover, the presence and analysis of such a link creates a dialectic that enables readers with an illustration that allows for the exploration of the effects of gender roles on modernism while in the process of attaining a dream/goal.

Methodology

Here, the methodology used to complete this study will be clarified as a means of outlining the approaches undertaken to be able to more comprehensively and therefore more effectively respond to the original multi-pronged research question that stimulates this inquiry.

First of all, primary and secondary researches were conducted. The entire study depends on a signification effort instituted to prompt the research question. By and large, the key methodology employed here is discourse theory using Structuralism as the main theoretical perspective. An initial textual analysis and criticism are conducted to create meaning and provoke the research question based on the intertextuality present between the novels in question. Firstly, this method of analysis is employed to explain how the novels can be interpreted as a collaborative effort to propose that gender plays a significant role in the pursuit of dreams. Afterwards, a qualitative research method known as the integrative review approach is used in the evaluation and inclusion of existing literature on the novels in question. Namely, a focus is placed on compiling relevant literature to construct a fairly new conceptual model that focuses on layering Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory over Marshall Berman's theory on modernity to use as a theoretical framework to guide the investigation of the impact of gender roles on modernism. Since the theories being applied are typically used within disciplines in the social sciences, this should be considered an exercise in comparative literature.

Many would argue that the application of modernity to the dominion of literature is preposterous. In his work, "Modernity, Modernism, Modernization: Variations on Modern Themes," Matei Calinescu effectively argues that the application of modernization in the real world can prove to do more harm than good sometimes. For this reason, he leans toward less tangible applications. Calinescu argues that applications in literature are actually beneficial: "Like sartorial fashions whose immanent logic is one of renewal and refreshment of perception, methodological fashions in criticism can also be said to renew the literary corpus by renewing literary percep[tion; i.e., the] structure of assumptions through which one reads words that make up the corpus" (17). He describes the fashioning of new methodologies, such as the combined

one found here, as a starting point for the reevaluation of widely held assumptions. Here, he effectively provides a justification for the application of modernity as a means of imparting literary criticism by explaining some of the benefits. In his opinion, doing so will produce new ideas that can be used to reevaluate generally held assumptions that impact how one interprets the text. He seems to strongly believe that exercises that undertake this as a project can genuinely help to shake things up within the discipline. This is especially relevant to the study in this thesis, as the goal is accurately described by Calinescu's words.

As with almost anything, this type of application comes with a set of prescribed limitations. Calinescu articulates this by stating, "Perhaps the fact that these assumptions may be wrong and reductionist or rigidly dogmatic is less important than their initial novelty and the intellectual-imaginative effort they require in order to be made plausible" (Calinescu 20). The limitations described within the quote are those that are generally related to studies based in Structuralism, as this one is—the very real possibility of reductivity showcased within the study and the inclination to present the research as incontrovertible truth. However, he explains that even if this were the case, the work should be appreciated for having stimulated the creative thinking that made such an initial relationship between the concepts being discussed possible.

Simply put, this study focuses on bodies of generally accepted knowledge that depend heavily on perceived realities. Because the theoretical framework of this work is a combination of theories based strongly on the inclusion of subjectivism as paradigm, it was considered critical that a discussion of the assumptions held by the researcher be discussed within the conceptual framework, as this is typically excluded from works focusing in studies of literature. All of the aforementioned concepts are engaged to tie in and apply two different but related critical lenses as a means of highlighting a unique understanding of the implications of gender on modernism.

The application of these lenses introduces the opportunity for a possible reframing of the portrayals of woman's condition found within two of the most controversial novels in the Western canon; both of which have been formerly accused of being antifeminist works. However, through combined analyses, the texts provide a distinctly feminist view of the plight of women within society, thereby highlighting and possibly acting as a prompt for social change.

CHAPTER III

MODERNIZATION AND GENDER IN *GATSBY* AND *THEIR EYES*

In *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Marshall Berman provides a close examination of the processes of social and economic modernization. For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on his interpretation of modernism as a means of social modernization. Nonetheless, his view of modernity is also relevant to understanding his stance on modernization. Berman argues, “Current thinking about modernity is broken into two different compartments, hermetically sealed off from one another: ‘modernization’ in economics and politics, ‘modernism’ in art, culture, and sensibility” (88). Here, Berman argues that historically, modernism and modernization have been used in completely separate spheres, reserved solely for the fields respectively mentioned above. Those two terms are rarely ever used in relation to each other as a result of historically having been assigned completely separate definitions and uses. However, Berman makes it clear that his definition is based on the one used by Karl Marx in *The Communist Manifesto*. As a matter of fact, within his work, Berman recognizes that his work is produced as a need to allow for a return of modernity to its Marxist nature.

Alternatively, Berman offers entirely new definitions to merge the two spheres together. First, modernity is redefined through the following, “There is a mode of vital experience—experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life’s possibilities and perils—that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience ‘modernity’” (15). Basically, one is experiencing modernity as long as one is alive and conscious of the changes that are taking place around oneself on a daily basis. In other words, modernity is

the state of being subjected to and cognizant of life's experiences. Thus, modernization is characterized by perpetual renewal prompted by continuous disintegration. This is important because in order to progress in life, one must experience modernity to be motivated to subject oneself to constant revolution (15). Lastly, Berman defines modernism through the following, "any attempt by modern men and women to become subjects as well as objects of modernization, to get a grip on the modern world and make themselves at home in it" (5). This new definition does not coincide with the traditional ones that are typically applied within the social sciences and humanities. Rather, this newer one is molded by the combination of sociological studies that are political in nature and analyses of literary works, conducted by Berman himself. The new designation delineates that modernism is essentially to make oneself feel comfortable with the idea of continuous evolution in favor of progression. In other words, Berman believes that ever-changing societies require that individuals attempt to keep up with the constant change.

In trying to explain why he redefines these key concepts, Berman states, "I tried to open up a perspective that will reveal all sorts of cultural and political movements as part of one process: modern men and women asserting their dignity in the present—even a wretched and oppressive present—and their right to control their future; striving to make a place for themselves in the modern world, a place where they can feel at home" (11). According to him, operating under a much more inclusive definition of the words than is the current norm, allows for the curation of spaces in which dialectics are much more likely to occur. He argues that the more inclusive definition he provides helps undercut the divisions that are currently in place preventing the dialectic from coming to fruition. Essentially, he redefines the previously-recognized concept to enable the creation of a metanarrative that is meant to be used to provide meaning for experiences. This explanation is precisely why his work is relevant to this study. As

previously indicated, the analysis of the link between *Their Eyes* and *Gatsby* allow for the creation of a new dialectic. Insofar as this, Berman's redefining of modernity, modernism, and modernization are essential pieces of the puzzle this study aims to help in putting together.

Later, Matei Calinescu enters into conversation with Berman's work through a publication titled "Modernity, Modernism, Modernization: Variations on Modern Themes." In this work, he focuses on providing a succinct overview of the existing definitions of modernity, modernism, and modernization, which is no easy task to undertake. He does so in an attempt to explicate how they have come to intersect with one another. Calinescu begins by providing a definition that builds upon the one provided by Berman, "Modernity then is a temporal/historical concept by which we refer to our understanding of the present in its unique historical presentness, that is in what distinguishes it from the past, from the various relics or survivals of the past, and also in what it promises for the future—in what it allows us to guess, rightly or wrongly, about the future and its trends, quests, and discoveries" (Calinescu 1). The inclusion of the words "our" and "us" creates a world of difference between his definition and the one previously provided by Berman. Here, Calinescu uses those particular words to describe modernity as being based on an individual's subjective interpretation of their own experiences. This attempts to refute the idea presented by Berman articulating modernity is an experience that is universally applicable. However, this may be misguided, as this interpretation of Berman's definition is based on the assumption that he actually meant universal applicability. Instead, it is important to note that it is quite possible that what he meant was that everyone experiences modernity, not that they experience it in the same ways. For all intents and purposes, in this study the rest of this work will operate using the latter and dismisses the former, as asserted by Calinescu. Namely put, everyone experiences modernity, just not in the same ways. Calinescu's

definition is important to this work though because it clarifies the need for internalizing the present and its ability to either positively or negatively inform an individual's future based on the characters' perceptions of reality.

Ultimately, Calinescu reiterates the definition that was originally provided by Charles Baudelaire, which served as a central part of Berman's theory. Through the following, the author presents the simplest definition currently available for modernity, "Modernity, in this sense, is just another word for renovation and innovation combined" (Calinescu 17). The definition provided by Calinescu solidifies the idea presented by Berman in terms that are more digestible to those that are unfamiliar with the concepts of modernism, modernity, and modernization. Calinescu argues that Berman's view of modernity is an obstinately negative one. He does so by proposing that Berman envisions modernity as a trauma that requires that one fight against or through the ordeals that present themselves (4). Instead, Calinescu proposes the idea that modernity can and should be viewed as a positive interaction with one's surroundings. He does so by first suggesting that everyone's experiences will be influenced differently by time, geographical location, and history, so not everyone's experiences may be negative in nature all the time. Additionally, he maintains that creativity should be utilized to deal with the constant flux found in one's world. If done correctly, the creativity allows for individuals to create entirely new ways of enabling their own progress or development.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* provides an overview of the disadvantages faced by women in patriarchal societies. She also aims to specify how these disadvantages came to be and how their perpetuation has continued to induce the subjugation of women throughout history. Overall, she claims that women have been consigned to operating within a state of otherness by the institution of social traditions that are generally controlled by the opposite

gender. This is exactly how this theory comes in to interact with Berman's. When using Beauvoir's theory as a basis, this would mean that the bureaucratic organizations within the novels propagate the strict social traditions that the characters of the novels must work to conform to and then break away from in the name of modernization. To explicate this, Beauvoir writes, "History has shown us that men have always kept in their hands all concrete powers; since the earliest days of the patriarchy they have thought best to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes of law have been set up against her [...]" (139). Here, she effectively explains that societies that are patriarchal in nature seek to promote the subservience of women within society. Also, she articulates that all laws, in this case even those that are unwritten, such as mores and traditions, are created for men. Thus, these laws and traditions generally create obstacles in the paths of women, as opposed to keeping the paths clear, as they do for men.

Moreover, these social traditions dictate what men and women should and should not do in the course of their everyday lives. In a nutshell, the roles of gender are informed by the expectations produced by social standards of tradition. The traditions are grounded in patriarchy. This means that the traditions are instituted to benefit men more so than women, typically so because men are found in positions of power within these societies, while women are less likely to experience this. Beauvoir articulates this through the following, "Men have always held the lot of woman in their hands; and they have determined what it should be, not according to her interest, but rather with regard to their own projects, their fears, and their needs" (128). The men in these societies, particularly those that are wealthy and in power, dictate what roles are prescribed to each gender. This effectively allows men the room to create and propagate social expectations that keep women in positions of subservience. As such, this system of social control is essentially what produces limited avenues of progress for women when compared to those that

are afforded to men, which helps in examining why Jay and Janie must work in completely different ways in their attempts to progress.

Gerda Lerner, in *The Creation of Patriarchy*, builds upon Beauvoir's original work by addressing some of its limitations. For example, Lerner, as a historian, is much more inclusive of historical information and women's scholarship than Beauvoir was. Also, she refutes Beauvoir's claim that men's dominance stems from the biological division of labor on the basis that men are better equipped to hunt, therefore better capable of survival. Lerner effectively argues that the social expectations women are subjected to are not produced on the basis of biological difference, as originally proposed by Beauvoir. Instead, she proposes that gender roles have been carefully constructed to establish women's place within the domestic sphere. She posits, "Sexual attributes are a biological given, but gender is a product of historical process. The fact that women bear children is due to sex; that women nurture children is due to gender, a cultural construct. It is gender which has been chiefly responsible for fixing women's place in society" (Lerner 21). By arguing that gender springs from social construction, she solidifies the notion that the bureaucratic organizations found within the novels in question greatly impact what each character is allowed to do and how they are limited in the pursuit of their dreams. It is plausible to propose that Jay, as a man, has easier access to the pursuit of his goal than Janie does because he is granted the ability to more freely operate on the outskirts of the social expectations he is bound by. Janie, on the other hand, is constantly faced with the ordeal of being held back due to very strictly imposed expectations based mostly on her gender assignment.

Conforming to Society

Based on these interpretations, modernization (a constant state of change) can only come as a result of an accurate exercise in modernity (perception of reality) used to influence

modernism (an attempt to adapt). Therefore, to be modern is to be willing to continuously adapt in the name of progress even when facing odds that seem insurmountable (Berman 1-35).

Marshall Berman's work elucidates what it means to be Modern through the following, "It is to be overpowered by the immense bureaucratic organizations that have the power to control and often destroy all communities, values, lives; and yet to be undeterred in our determination to face these forces, to fight to change their world and make it our own. It is to [long] to create and to hold on to something real even as everything melts" (14). Using Berman's words as a guide for analysis would mean that first, the characters must be affected by bureaucratic organizations present within the texts to be able to argue that Jay and Janie are modern characters. In each of the novels in question, the characters are forced to work against societies that may be considered equal to the bureaucratic organizations Berman refers to within his work. This is so because the societies found within the novels hold a great deal of power over the characters, enough that they have to first conform to the societies within the novels as a means of starting their journeys towards the realization of their dreams. In other words, the only way for either of these characters to be truly modern is to work from within the same traditional systems that they are trying to break away from. Unfortunately for Jay and Janie, the reality is that they must conform to the traditional gender roles dictated by their societies to some degree before they can begin to fight against them. This is the only way their breaking away may occur. Essentially, they cannot break away from something they are not a part of. This explains why Jay must amass wealth and Janie must marry. This is how the characters work from within the patriarchal and bureaucratic systems in an attempt at making their dreams come true. Once they are completely enveloped within the aforementioned systems, they can slowly begin the arduous task of breaking away to make an effort toward realizing their dreams.

In *Gatsby*, the society Jay finds himself in is full of powerful individuals that form a bureaucracy with enough means to destroy anything and everything. However, Jay successfully fights to change his world to make it his own by adopting the belief that he will only ever get to Daisy if he acquires wealth. By doing so, he creates an idea that is real to him, even though everything around him is constantly deteriorating. Throughout the novel, he seems to hold on to the strong belief that he will have better access to Daisy if he continues with the façade of being exceptionally wealthy because he will be in an enhanced position to infiltrate the society that she forms a part of. Beauvoir explains this notion through the following: “Economic success is what will bring [men] adult standing” (431). According to her, the accumulation of wealth is what posits men into their positions of status within society. This compounds the idea behind Jay’s conviction that he must work within the system created by tradition to get to her. This system requires that people of wealth mingle with others that are of similar status in society. This is why Jay works to create an entirely new persona for himself. In describing Jay’s condition the night he engaged in coital relations with Daisy, the narrator shares, “However glorious might be his future as Jay Gatsby, he was at present a penniless young man without a past, and at any moment the invisible cloak of his uniform might slip from his shoulders” (Fitzgerald 149). In other words, Jay’s original motivation to change was the idea that Daisy would find out that he was a fraud. He realizes that if he does nothing to gain wealth, he will never even come close to being able to get back to Daisy, as he once knew her. He has to be rich and fancy to be brought close enough to succeed at reaching his dream, but he creates his own values by choosing to remain on the outskirts of what would be considered the norm in that particular society.

This is so because he is rumored to have amassed the financial gain through illegitimate means, that of bootlegging. This is alluded to when Tom Buchanan describes to Daisy what he

found out about Jay, “He and this Wolfshiem bought up a lot of side-street drug stores here and in Chicago and sold grain alcohol over the counter. That’s one of his little stunts. I picked him for a bootlegger the first time I saw him, and I wasn’t wrong” (Fitzgerald 157). Because Wolfshiem is one of Jay’s associates, Tom is implying that the businesses he works on with Gatsby are of illegitimate means, therefore, reduces Jay’s status to that of a mere “swindler” that Daisy could not possibly leave Tom for (Fitzgerald 155). In this manner, Jay attempts to make something his own, as modernism commands, by working from within the traditional systems that are already in place in society. Since he was presented with the avenue of bootlegging as a means of acquiring wealth that he believed would persuade Daisy to possibly leave the comforts afforded her by her husband, he took advantage of the opportunity that arose before him. The difference here is that simply by acting, Jay is creating an existence within society for himself. As Beauvoir sees it, “It is by doing that [man] creates [his] existence, both in one and the same action” (280). This backs the idea that simply through his own actions, Jay obtains rank within the social structures of the novel. He effectively works to fight against the system by making it his own after having first acquired a position of some power within it.

In the case of Janie, she must work to make the world her own through a union that ensures her some type of economic stability. Otherwise, she would have no power or protection against the formidable society that oppresses her. To introduce the venue traditionally available to women to legitimately earn upwards mobility, Beauvoir writes, “Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society” (425). Because she is a woman, Janie’s social climbing must come as a result of a legitimate venture. She is not afforded the same opportunities as men, as her gender greatly limits the avenues that are open to her. Conforming then, comes to this character in the form of marriage. In *Their Eyes*, Janie’s grandmother

explains why she must marry Logan Killicks, “ ‘Tain’t Logan Killicks Ah wants you to have, baby, it’s protection. Ah ain’t gittin’ ole, honey. I’m done ole” (Hurstons 23). Here, Nanny explains to Janie that she is forcing her into this union, not to unite her with Logan to live happily ever after, but to ensure that she is well taken care of after she no longer has the means to provide for Janie. Without marriage, Janie will be left in a position of limbo, one without any social status of significance having been assigned to her. She cannot create her status as a result of direct action.

Because of her gender, status comes only as a result of conforming to the social standards of marriage. Once married, their value becomes tied to the man they have been joined to. Beauvoir further expounds this idea, “For girls marriage is the only means of integration in the community, and if they remain unwanted, they are, socially viewed, so much wastage. This is why mothers have always eagerly sought to arrange marriages for them” (427). In the same vein, she articulates that unwed women are viewed as old maids no one wants. There is no place of value for them in society, so it is important for maternal figures in their life to find a suitable arrangement to provide them with value that is afforded only through the tying of themselves to a man that is already established as a contributor within the system. For girls, it is a means of survival. Peters argues, “By marrying in Nanny’s way, Janie will have a greater chance of ‘picking from a higher bush and sweeter berry’ so as to not let any man, Black or white, make a ‘spit cup’ out of her” (131). There is no way around being forced to marry because if she remains unmarried, she will never have any protection or status in society. If she did not marry, any other person, most likely a man, could and would take advantage of her low position in the system. She has to work the system that has been created by tradition to find ways to make it her own. Therefore, she marries and creates her own separate sphere from which to operate—that of her

household. This is the case of any woman joined by matrimony. Beauvoir writes, “Furthermore, like all the oppressed, woman deliberately dissembles her objective actuality [...]” (259).

Through this, she effectively explains that as women realize they are being oppressed, they create from within the area of their sovereignty, because from within their limited access at home by way of domesticity, they can operate more freely with a restrained power than they would ever be able to partake in as part of the outside world.

Overall, Jay and Janie both make changes in their lives based on the fear that is caused by the idea that the worlds they know can come to an abrupt halt. Of this, Berman says, “They are moved at once by a will to change—to transform both themselves and their world—and by a terror of disorientation and disintegration, of life falling apart” (13). Both of these characters serve as an exemplification of this concept. Jay amasses wealth because he is afraid of losing Daisy forever as a result of remaining penniless. Janie marries because her grandmother is afraid that the life she knows will cease to exist once her current caretaker is no longer able to provide for her. Both of the changes to obtain upwards social mobility come as a result of being motivated by fear. Furthermore, Berman stipulates that the characters must make an attempt to hold onto something they conceive as being real, even when things begin to grow difficult. This is true for both of the characters. As the stories unfold, as will be discussed in later paragraphs, the characters continue to believe that by operating within the constraints of their newly obtained social statuses and spheres of power, they will eventually reach their dreams. Their pursuits are, however, greatly influenced by gender, as each one comes with the strict imposition of expectations of behavior that must be followed.

Breaking from Tradition

According to Berman, a breaking from tradition must occur to be considered modern. He states: “modern men and women must learn to yearn for change: not merely be open to changes in their personal and social lives, but positively to demand them, actively to seek them out and carry them through” (5). There are various examples within both of the novels that display the characters working to break from tradition. Because this is so, this may allow readers to believe that Jay Gatsby is as much of a modernist character as is Janie Crawford. The only problem in aligning with that frame of thought is that this and his illegitimate means of obtaining currency within society are really the only areas found within the novel that express a break in tradition to institute a new reality that the character holds onto as a means of progressing toward his dreams. For Janie, there are a plentitude of examples to choose from. For the purposes of ensuring that the characters truly fit the definition of what it means to be modern, we will focus on a single point in a break from tradition for each of them. This is also so because it would be of no use to compare or contrast all of the points in the novel that have this take place, particularly because of the difference in gender between the characters. Of this, Beauvoir states, “If we compare these situations rather than the people in them, we see clearly that man’s is far preferable; that is to say, he has many more opportunities to exercise his freedom in the world” (627). Because Jay is a man, there are fewer traditions limiting his progress that he must strive to break away from if compared to that of the situation Janie finds herself in. At the end of the day, it is obvious that men have the upper hand within male-dominated societies. This is profoundly relevant when juxtaposing the approaches Janie and Jay used in their separate pursuits of their respective dreams.

Because Janie is constantly oppressed due to her gender, her breaks from tradition come as a result of the need to break away from the strict social expectations to move toward the personhood she desires. As the novel progresses, she fights against social and gender norms that are imposed against her every step of the way. Even though her early attempts to fight against the patriarchal standards set upon her are completely futile, Janie does not give in. She remains determined to find love in each of the relationships she finds herself in. She creates an idea of what true love should be like and continues to pursue that dream regardless of the deterioration of her relationships and status in society. Although a great deal seems to go wrong in her life, Janie never gives up on her dream. Instead, she remains focused on turning her dream into her reality by internalizing what she finds does not further her goals, and she makes changes she deems appropriate to allow herself to gain more ground to get closer to her ultimate goal. For the character of Janie, the most significant of these breaks is when she and Logan get into a discussion regarding who should do the cooking and who should chop wood. This is the first time where Janie verbalizes her views on marriage to one of her partners. In chapter four, Logan states that he wants for Janie to chop wood and cook, but Janie argues that she believes she should cook, and Logan should chop the wood (Hurston 19). This differs from the traditional values expressed by other characters throughout the novel. Traditional views within the novel dictate that the woman should do as her husband pleases. This coincides with what her grandmother has taught her. Nevertheless, this does not impede Janie from voicing her opinion to make it known that she believes husband and wife should share the responsibility of completing these household chores. This indicates that Janie is a modern character because the aforementioned actions exemplify a rejection of traditional values and a creation of her own.

For example, after Joe dies, Janie has another epiphany. She becomes very upset with her grandmother for lying to her about love, and we see another rejection of traditional values handed down by an elder through the following: “Nanny had taken the biggest thing God ever made, the horizon—for not matter how far a person can go the horizon is still way beyond you—and pinched it in to such a little bit of a thing that she could tie it about her granddaughter’s neck tight enough to choke her” (Hurston 38). This may be interpreted as the moment that Janie realizes that her dream is so far from her grasp that she must gather her past experiences and use them when building her future. This moment is pivotal in decided that she will continue searching for the reciprocal relationship she dreams of. This is what leads to her decision not to give up, and instead forces herself to go through looking for love again. She can only do this because she analyzes her present to realize that she is very far from her dream. This in turn sets her in motion to use her past to proceed further. Previously within this thesis, it was stated that modernism is based on the intent to break from tradition by creating something new to replace what has been broken away. If Janie’s character is interpreted as a dynamic one, instead of a static one, an analysis of her actions displays her constantly choosing to passively resist her oppressive states as a form of maintaining power; thus, remaining strong in her vulnerable state. Every time she finds everything around her beginning to deteriorate, she holds on by electing self-preservation, as opposed to outright revolt, as a means to ensure that she will make it to the eventual attainment of her dream. Likewise, she is aware that she must adapt and change every step of the way because she is a part of a patriarchal society that does not provide members of her gender with many outlets from which to choose to act against oppression, as is beautifully worded by Hurston in the opening lines of *Their Eyes*.

When it comes to the character of Jay Gatsby, it is a bit more difficult to find points where he voices his opinion because Nick Carraway narrates the novel. In this case, one must rely on how others view Jay to prove an association with modernism. The main indication of a rejection of values is when Nick describes how James Gatz becomes Jay Gatsby. Nick states, “The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. [...] He invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end” (Fitzgerald 65). Here, Nick describes one of the ways in which Jay breaks from traditional values. The society that surrounds him dictates that Jay must remain within the social class that he was born into. However, he goes around this by creating an entirely different persona for himself. This is an evident break from tradition that can be described as modernist. Even when he gets caught lying, he stays true to the persona he has created. As the world he has created starts falling apart, he chooses to remain in character because he believes it will help him make his dreams come true.

Janie breaks from tradition many times, but Jay ultimately chooses to adhere to the past as a means of recreating it. Meanwhile, Janie looks to break from tradition in the hope of attaining an experience she dreams of that is entirely new to her. To start proving the very basis of this multi-faceted argument, one must analyze a point in the novels that allow readers to view a distinct break in the characters’ views from the traditional views pushed by the societies around them. For these reasons, it should be found acceptable to have provided a short analysis of the most significant points of a break from tradition for analysis as a means of justifying the characters’ fitting into Berman’s definition of what it means to be modern to continue with the primary intention of this thesis. Consequently, when these characters find themselves realizing that their dreams are no longer within their reach as their stories unfold, they must reassess and

re-strategize based on the dreams they wish to achieve. This is of utmost importance, because as previously stated, gender seems to play a rather important role in the way each character chooses to pursue their dreams. Furthermore, the restrictions that are dictated as norms related to the gender roles that Jay and Janie must abide by have a great impact on why the characters act in the manner they do. This means their actions can be explained or justified by a close analysis of the shift or lack thereof from the traditional gender roles that are imposed on each character and can ultimately be used to understand why Janie successfully reaches her dream, but Jay fails.

Perceptions of Reality Inform the Future

In speaking of conceptions of reality, Berman presents the idea that the characters involved in a journey of progress while undergoing modernization must hold onto their individual perceptions even when they find themselves in situations of increasing difficulty. The issue here though is that the characters have the ability to perceive reality as they see fit for themselves. There is no one reality. Part of being able to create a dream to work toward is dependent on the dreamers' abilities to construct realities that feed into their dreams. The conceived realities must work as paths that are to be used to lead them toward accomplishing the goals they have set. As previously discussed, modernity requires utilizing the past to inform the future as a way to decide which paths in life will provide the most opportunities for progress towards the dream. This is described through the following assertion, "To appropriate the modernities of yesterday can be at once a critique of the modernities of today and an act of faith in the modernities—and in the modern men and women—of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow" (Berman 36). In order to adequately be able to use past experiences as determinants in selecting appropriate courses of action in the present to positively impact the future, one must

be able to clearly see the past and present. If they are clouded in any way, it can lead to the making of a choice that ends up being detrimental to the individual in pursuit of modernization. Jay and Janie both use their pasts as tools to affect the outcomes of their futures. How they choose to use their pasts, though, is highly dependent on the social expectations imposed upon them by their gender roles. Of this, Beauvoir states, "For when she begins her adult life she does not have behind her the same past as does a boy; she is not viewed by society in the same way; the universe presents itself to her in a different perspective. The face of being a woman today poses peculiar problems for an independent human individual" (682). Jay, for example, has the ability to make decisions and act much more rashly than Janie does. For her, every move must be carefully calculated and accounted for. If she is to act, it must come with a lofty compensation. In contrast, Jay is allowed room to make some mistakes, so he can be more experimental with his exercise of action.

First, Janie actively works toward accomplishing her goal by keeping herself grounded in the present and learning from each experience she has that leads her astray from her goal. She takes every unfavorable situation she faces in each of her relationships and internalizes a new lesson from each one until a favorable opportunity to act in her own self-interest arises. She does so as a means of ensuring that she will only act in ways that are useful in bringing her closer to her ultimate goal. In other words, she leaves anything that did not work for her in the past. Her coming to terms with this is described in the following manner, "The vision of Logan Killicks was desecrating the pear tree, but Janie didn't know how to tell Nanny that. She merely hunched over and pouted at the floor" (Hurston 15). Her inability to articulate why she does not want to marry Logan results in her grandmother slapping her, and her grandmother then goes on to explain that she must marry for her own protection because she is a female (Hurston 16). Janie

begins her journey toward her dream when she tries to speak out against being pushed into marrying her first husband. This is the first time Janie realizes that communicating in this manner will not aid her in getting closer to her dreams. She becomes submissive to her grandmother and follows her advice in marrying. From this occurrence, she learns that working to find loopholes within the traditional ways of life will allow her to eventually get to what she wants.

Janie's journey toward her dream continues when she meets Joe Starks. She learns what she does not want in a relationship from her first marriage to Logan. She does not let her past tie her to her future. She moves forward and thinks about how her life would change if she were to run away with Joe. The narrator states, "Janie pulled back a long time because [Joe] did not represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees, but he spoke for far horizon. He spoke for change and chance" (Hurstons 19). This proves that Janie carries her past with her but utilizes it to shape her future, instead of allowing it to hold her back. From her past, she realizes that she is looking for reciprocity in a relationship, as she learned this from the pollenating bees she saw as a child. From the very beginning, she realizes that Logan is not the man she wants, and she comes to the same conclusion about Joe. Yet, she analyzes her present enough to recognize that being with Joe would be a step forward when compared to where she currently is. By making this decision, she keeps her dream within reach. She is merely forced to adjust her dream to her present situation. Kubitschek explains how Janie keeps her dream within her grasp, "Far from remaining passive, Janie struggles with issues in order to bring her own life into harmony with her original vision of the pear tree. [...] Her soul remains triumphantly her own" (21). That is to say, regardless of how she feels about her failing marriages, she does not grow entirely submissive. She refuses to accept her surroundings as her reality, and she does not create an illusion for herself based on the dream that she is reaching for. Instead, she internalizes her

present and motivates herself to find open paths that will allow her to continue pining for the love she dreams of.

On the other hand, Jay refuses to let go of the past. Throughout the entirety of his quest toward obtaining the affections of Daisy Buchanan, Jay places a great deal of focus on the past he experienced with her by his side. He does not appear to be keeping track of her feelings in the present to guide his actions. Instead, he tries to recreate the past by acting in ways that he feels were important to Daisy back when they first met. Jay does not seem to realize that his love interest, Daisy Buchanan, has changed since he met her. Daisy continuously evolves as a person, but Jay is not cognizant of these changes because he remains infatuated with the past. Jay's past is the only truth that exists in his mind. This stops him from allowing himself to look at the present long enough to figure out that he is just chasing an illusion. Nick describes Gatsby's illusion by stating, "There must have been moments [...] when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams – not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. [...] No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart" (Fitzgerald 63). This means that Jay is so focused on the Daisy from his past that he has created an obsession with her that does not take into account who she is in the present. When he is with Daisy, it is as though the past five years of Daisy's life have never taken place—at least in his mind. This is what ultimately leads him to fail at making his dream a reality. He becomes so engulfed in the past that he can no longer learn from the things that are happening in the present to use them to his advantage throughout his quest. Scrimgeour explains Jay's necessity to repress the present, "To Gatsby, to repeat the past is to suppress unwanted elements of it and to select only nice things from which to make an uncontaminated present. Grand this defiance of reality may seem; silly it is nonetheless" (78). Jay tries his hardest to make sure that everything around

him is only a positive representation of what is occurring in the present. If things do not match up with the image he has in his mind, he simply envisions his reality to be different than it truly is. For Jay, the past is the dream. His need to constantly live in the past blocks any possibility of a future with Daisy because he does not rework his strategy to attain his dream based on anything that is real. He merely lives off of the image he has created of the dream in his own mind. This is what will cause him to stray from the path that would have allowed him to make his dream come true.

Janie continues learning from past experiences to shape her future. Due to her first experience with insufficient articulation with her grandmother, she adjusted her sail. Janie began fighting against the system by trying to voice her opinions whenever she disagreed with her husband, but that does not seem to go well for her. The narrator states, "Time came when she fought back with her tongue as best she could, but it didn't do her any good. [...] So gradually, she pressed her teeth together and learned to hush" (Hurston 33). From this, one may infer that she learned that speaking up would not always provide her with the best outcomes. Instead, Janie learned to keep quiet and work on finding other ways to attain her dream. She learns from what does not work for her and uses this to build on what she believes will get her closer to achieving her goal. Peters explains her progression in her fight of tradition by stating, "With each [husband] her language demeanor indicates a new aspect of her assertive individualism as she rebels against male oppression and materialism" (130). Janie continuously changes and develops as a character. At the beginning of the novel, she has trouble voicing her opinions, but as she matures in each relationship, her rebellion gains strength. Her rebellion is what allows her to turn her dreams into reality. She begins to break further and further from the traditional submission of a wife because she knows that conforming to the marriages she has been a part of do not

correspond with the image of love that is in her mind. As a female, she does what she can to fight the traditional oppression of marriage, from within the institution; she refuses to let go of her dream. With the passing of each union, she changes in ways that aid her in gaining the love she years for.

In a very stark contrast, Jay becomes more and more deluded by his illusion each moment he spends with Daisy. At one point in the novel, Jay asks Daisy to tell him that she never had feelings for Tom. Her response is, “‘Oh you want too much!’ she cried to Gatsby, ‘I love you now – isn’t that enough? I can’t help what’s past.’ She began to sob helplessly. ‘I did love him once – but I loved you too’” (Fitzgerald 88). Jay is set on trying to force Daisy into a state of thinking that excludes the existence of Tom. He tries to push her to say that she has never loved her husband, and he is broken by the idea that she could ever love anyone other than him. His head is still set on the past, before Tom had come into the picture. He refuses to realize that the present will have any effect on the future. He begins to rely on his past with Daisy to push him into the dream he expects to find in his future. Scrimgeour describes Jay’s delusion through the following, “As soon as Daisy’s independent will enters the dream, Gatsby is forced to attach himself to the real world, to lose his freedom of action, and to pay the penalty for denying the past in having that past destroy the romantic present” (78). In other words, Jay does not realize that his focus on the past will prove to be detrimental to his future. He does not accept anything Daisy states if it does not fit into the dream he has created in his own mind. This can be taken to mean that he refuses to take Daisy’s free will into account. It is quite possible that Daisy does not want Jay in her present as much as she wants her husband in it, but that does not play a role in Jay’s actions. He pays no mind to anything going on around him because if he were to pay

attention to anything that goes against the illusion he has created it would mean he is distancing himself further from his dream.

In stark opposition, Janie places an emphasis on fixing her reality to get to her dream. Reality strikes Janie very hard the first time that Joe hits her. This eye-opening experience is described through the following, “But looking [at her image of Jody] she saw that it never was the flesh and blood figure of her dreams. Just something she had grabbed up to drape her dreams over. In a way she turned her back on the image where it lay and looked further” (Hurst 33). Here, she adjusts the course she has chosen to take toward her dream once more. Her present situation does not coincide with the dream she has created in her head. She realizes that and this occurrence causes her to turn her back on her husband. Again, the character of Janie is forced to dive deep within her innermost thoughts to conclude that she must reassess her present to successfully make her dream a reality. Kubitschek eloquently explains how Janie is awoken from her dream when it begins to seem like an illusion: “Nanny’s slaps help persuade Janie to marry Logan; Jody’s slaps encourage her to separate her internal and external lives in order to survive” (28). Just at the precise moment when Janie begins to distance herself from reality by withdrawing to the idea of her dream, the act of physical violence from Joe serves as a catalyst in the form of a big wake-up call for her. She recognizes that this is not the life that she has envisioned for herself. She also becomes conscious of the fact that if she gives up, her dream will no longer exist, so she looks for alternate ways to get to her goal.

In contrast, Jay only dives deeper into his delusion each time he spends time with Daisy. The audience is given a front-seat view of Jay’s delusion when he responds to Daisy saying that she did have feelings for her husband. Jay says, “I don’t think she ever loved him. [...] He told her those things in a way that frightened her [...] And the result was she hardly knew what she

was saying” (Fitzgerald 101). This alone allows for the argument that Jay has lost all conception of reality. He is so far immersed in the past, that he does not realize that he has begun to lose Daisy, and with her, his dream. She is outright telling him and those around him that she has had feelings for her husband, but his delusions will not allow him to reconcile what she is saying as reality. He associates her statements with confusion. It becomes apparent that he is waiting for his dream to come to him based on the idea that he has had it in the past. Unfortunately for Jay, that is not how making dreams a reality works. He has become too much expectant that his past will just carry him to his dream based on tradition—the past. Scrimgeour justifies Jay’s continual recreation of the present to fit his needs: “As long as his life is controlled by his own unattained desires, Gatsby’s vision remains safe; he continually recreates the present in the light of his own needs” (78). This is meant to say that Jay’s vision is based only on his desires. He loses all sight of the things that are really going on around him because he replaces the present with whatever it may be that he needs. This may be explained by the example provided above where Jay tries to justify Daisy saying that she loved her husband. Since her saying this does not fit into the needs proposed by his dream, he resorts to creating excuses for what she has said. Once more, he draws his attention to the past instead of the present.

According to these analyses, Jay’s and Janie’s perceptions of reality differ greatly. How they choose to use their perceptions of the past and present realities to inform their futures is especially interesting. This is what seems to make the world of difference in determining whether one is more successful than the other in terms of modernization. Beauvoir describes the grave differences between gendered perceptions of reality:

Man lives in a consistent universe that is a reality conceivable in thought. Woman is at grips with a magical reality that defies thought, and she escapes from it

through thoughts without real content. Instead of taking up her existence, she contemplates in the clouds the pure Idea of her destiny; instead of acting, she sets up her own image in the realm of imagination: that is, instead of reasoning, she dreams (618).

As a result of being able to create a dream that can be conceived as the only reality she prescribes to and operates in search of, Janie does not focus on acting rashly and quickly to make her dream a reality. Instead, she focuses on being patient enough to slowly work her way through the loopholes she finds before her because she is enough of a critical thinker to work in a manner that is more effecting of her intended progress toward her ultimate liberation. As opposed to her, Jay lives in the past that once was and creates a consistent universe from it to fashion his future. He can only think of something he has already held within his grasp in his past as a conception for his future. Whereas, Janie dreams of something she has never had for a future.

Having been grounded by the restrictions of her gender, Janie realizes that she must create her own future reality, instead of trying to exact a replication that springs from her past. Brenda Greene describes the evolution of Janie's dream by stating, "Learning that the realization of self lies within her, not in her relationships with men, Janie's search for love evolves, and she comes to resist male patriarchy with a quiet assertiveness" (271). Unlike Jay, Janie is willing to reimagine her dream and allow it to grow by continuously allowing her experiences to reshape her end goal. This willingness to adapt is a trademark of modernization that is luckily considered a cornerstone of the abilities of women due to traditional oppression based on gender. Berman argues that only the truly modern will prove to be successful through the following: "Thus a class of 'new men,' men who are thoroughly modern, will be able to resolve the contradictions of modernity, to overcome the crushing pressures, earthquakes, weird spells, personal and social

abysses, in whose midst all modern men and women are forced to live” (20). Maybe, as the analysis of Janie’s actions has seemingly proved, women are the beings that are truly modern because they are better equipped at dealing with the oppressive institutions built into our societies. Such an allegation would presumably help to explain why Janie seems to make more intelligent choices in the pursuit of her dream than Gatsby does, which eventually lead to her success and his failure. The ability of women to adapt and work from within their oppressive states seems to have greatly benefitted Janie’s situation.

Failure or Success

Modernism’s breaking away from tradition can leave people on the border of nothingness if they have broken away from tradition before they have created new ideals to follow. Berman explains this further, “[Modernists] all know the thrill and the dread of a world in which ‘all that is solid melts into air’” (13). Defying norms can lead to a state of mere illusion, as it does with Jay, and it can also lead to a renewal of drive, as in the case of Janie. Janie is resourceful in refusing to allow her present to break her determination to achieve her goal of finding love that falls into accord with her dream. Beauvoir explains this further: “Let but the future be opened to her, and she will no longer be compelled to linger in the present” (605). In essence, because she patiently bides her time until the best opportunities rise to allow her to act in manners that will bring her closer to her goal, it may seem to some that she is just allowing things to happen to her, but she is actually acting only when it is strategically better to do so. Inaction and restraint on her behalf become the very necessary mechanisms used to ensure that her actions are always guided by careful measure to enact significant change or progress towards her dream.

Quite the opposite from Janie, when Jay is faced with the idea that his dreams have become out of his reach, he simply discards the notion by falling deeper into his delusion. Nick describes Jay's inability to focus on the present by stating, "He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night" (Fitzgerald 121). Through this, Nick lets the readers know that Jay had worked passionately towards reaching his dream, but ultimately failed because he never considered that dwelling on the past was holding him back. His dream became too far out of reach the minute he resorted to thoughts of the past whenever a new obstacle presented itself in the way of his dream. Dalton and Mary Jean Gross argue, "Gatsby's [dream] is only specific about two things: money and Daisy. The dream is misguided, and it fails. His pathetic belief that if he can only reconstruct some point in the past everything will be alright [*sic*] reflects [his] continuing search for meaning in a culture that no longer has meaning" (11). He allowed himself to delve deeper and deeper into his illusion instead of learning from what was going on in the present to aid him in accomplishing his ultimate goal. When he is knocked over the head with the reality that his dream is sailing away, instead of fighting to work towards it, Jay chooses to withdraw further into the vision he has created. This action allows for the argument that Jay has failed to replace the traditions he has tried to break away from before creating new ideals to follow, and this forces him to rely on the past.

In the end, Janie reaches her dream and feels accomplished. This is made most evident during the scene describing Tea Cake's death: "Janie held his head tightly to her breast and wept and thanked him wordlessly for giving her the chance for loving service. She had to hug him tight for soon he would be gone, and she had to tell him for the last time" (Hurston 66). Here is

when the reader realizes Janie truly feels that she has attained the love she has been searching for. Throughout their relationship, Tea Cake and Janie communicated on an equal ground. He made her feel as though her voice mattered. That is all that matters to her. Peters states, “Her voice, at the end, is a matured one expressing contentment at having fulfilled her dreams, even though, with the death of her beloved Tea Cake, they were short lived” (129). Even from her last relationship, she has continued to learn. Janie learns that she was not only looking for reciprocal love but a state of personhood. While Tea Cake allows for this personhood to be birthed and be nurtured within their relationship, it is up to Janie to continue using what she has learned after his death. Fortunately, each time Janie undertook a new adventure during her quest, she analyzed her past and made changes accordingly to positively affect her future. This allows her to get to the end of the novel where she states, ““Ah done been tuh de horizon and back and now Ah kin set heah in mah house and live by comparisons. Dis house ain’t so absent of things lak it used tuh be befo’ Tea Cake come along”” (Hurston 68). From this it may be deduced that Janie realizes that the journey on her way to the horizon she had set her sights on is what caused her to change and progress victoriously toward achieving her goals. She comprehends that none of this would have been possible without utilizing her past as a tool to get to her dream. Upon a completion of reading of *Their Eyes*, one may rationalize that Janie telling her story to Phoeby is her way of creating her personhood. This is only allowed because of everything she has forced herself to go through. In this vein, Peters argues, “Her telling of her story to Pheoby is the verbal recreation of existence, a means of articulating real experience in proper context. It is also a way to remember those things she never wants to forget [...]” (128). As a result of this creation of existence, she is essentially realizing that she had the love she once longed for within her grasp—self-love via the feeling that she is also a person. She found it within her power to no longer focus on the

confinements restraining her present. Instead, she can now rejoice in knowing that she was loved and loved in return; plus, she has realized that she matters greatly in this story and also in retelling it.

Jay does not reach his dream. Instead, he is killed for taking the blame for Daisy's vehicular manslaughter. This can all be attributed to his inability to let go of the past in an effort to move forward. He believes that keeping the past with him will allow him to succeed in getting Daisy to stay with him, but this could not be any further from the truth. This may be deduced from the following, "He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: 'I never loved you.' After she had obliterated four years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken" (Fitzgerald 73). His blatant disregard for truth and the present lead him further from his dream. Daisy cannot just forget the past four years of her life because they did happen. Instead of encouraging her to build upon this past by creating an environment that would convince Daisy to choose him, he goes on like a deluded person about how she needs to forget her past. That is not an easy task, as she is not as willing as he is to break away from tradition to suit his needs. He breaks away from tradition only insofar as it helps him get closer to the image he has of his dream in his head. Gross and Gross discuss this further by stating, "Gatsby's inability to repeat the past is much more than the failure of an experience in romantic love, because for Gatsby that love is the essence of his powerful desire for a vaguely defined, self-fulfilling greatness" (11). It is of utmost importance to take into consideration that Jay is unable to repeat the past that he so desperately seeks to recreate. Were he more focused on creating a future with Daisy, making his dreams a part of his reality would appear to be more feasible. That is not the case, though, as Jay's entire purpose throughout the novel seems to be driven by his desire to repeat the past he experienced with Daisy. Jay rejects the fact that he is

unable to go back in time; according to Gross and Gross, “Gatsby’s whole purpose is to repeat the past—to get back to some state of perfect love with Daisy. He refuses to believe that he cannot repeat the past” (11). This is exactly why he is destined to fail at attaining his dream. He cannot find a future with Daisy if he has set his heart on repeating the past. It just is not possible. This is the point where he hits a wall by refusing to break from tradition. This is what causes the end of the stagnation. Once he refuses to break away from tradition and adopt new ideals, he has chosen to play a waiting game that will only allow him to watch as his dream sails away on a ship. By doing this, he loses all control over his dream.

When applied to the character of Jay, Hurston’s opening lines can be used to explain that Jay fails to make his dream a reality because he allows the dream to come and go—just as a tide does. His dreams are mocked by time because he places an excessive amount of importance on the past throughout the entire novel, as is discussed in Fitzgerald’s closing lines. On the other hand, Janie forgets every past experience that leads her astray from attaining liberation and instead focuses on utilizing the strategies that help her move toward her dream. Each time her surroundings change, she learns to adapt in ways that will allow her to continue seeking her dream. In other words, Janie concentrates on learning from her past. Each trial and tribulation she faces is taken as a learning experience so that when the opportunity arises, she is ready to seize it. Her dream is her truth, so she utilizes the past as a vehicle to move forward in her life. This in-depth analysis of the aforementioned characters’ actions helps to further substantiate Hurston’s and Fitzgerald’s philosophies. As prescribed by Beauvoir, men and women work to achieve their dreams in different manners because of their gender—some more successfully than others in their pursuits, according to timing, availability of opportunities, and their perceptions of realities, according to Berman.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: EFFECTS OF GENDER ON MODERNIZATION

So far, Marshall Berman's theory seems to have been relevant in providing a critical lens through which Janie and Jay can be analyzed in an attempt to further our understanding of the opening lines of Hurston's *Their Eyes* and the final lines of Fitzgerald's *Gatsby*. Moreover, utilizing Simone de Beauvoir's theory regarding gender roles within patriarchal societies was instrumental in providing an even more in-depth analysis of the implications of gender on the pursuit and the ability to attain or not attain dreams within the novels analyzed within this study.

Overall, the opening lines of Hurston's novel provide a medium of discourse through the analysis of the actions of the characters of Jay Gatsby and Janie Crawford while in pursuit of their respective dreams. Jay stands as a representation of the males in the quote, while Janie represents the females. Through his actions, Jay embodies the men that stand on the shore watching their dreams come and go with the tide of the ocean. His focus on tradition blocks the progression through his prudent refusal to let go of the past. He allows time to mock him because he focuses on the things he has brought from his past, instead of centering on the present to make sure that Daisy is in his future. Alternatively, Janie personifies the women that forget the things they do not want to remember, and who remembers things that will aid them in making their dreams come true. Her focus on progression allows her to break tradition over and over by internalizing her past as a means of moving closer to achieving her goal. She acts according to what her dream has become and rectifies her vision when it needs to be fixed. There is a lesson to be learned from the last few lines of the *Gatsby*, just as there is in the first few lines of *Their Eyes*. No progress can come from only looking to traditions and using the justification that what has been in the past will and always should be the way things are. This is what Jay believed, and

things did not end so well for him. One must look at the past to learn from it and at the present in order to be more accurate in determining what course of action to procure the future that one has in mind.

Additionally, this study aims to have justified the idea that male and female characters within each of the aforementioned novels are not more or less successful because of the inherent biological differences stemming from sex, but instead the gender roles that they are required to submit to as members of patriarchal and bureaucratic organizations as a result of the need to become more modern in their determination to achieve their dreams. Because gender places strict restrictions on the social expectations of behavior on each of the characters, the avenues available from which to operate from are limited in different ways. This means gender impacts the way these characters submit to modernization. Additionally, it may be said that the gender of each character affects their perception of reality, thereby suggesting that modernity is limited by the gender roles society imposes upon them. It would seem, based on the analyses of these characters, that men are unable to see clear visions of the present because their perceptions are clouded by tradition and an adherence to it in an effort to recreate it. On the other side of the spectrum, because women are unhappy with their positions within society, they dream of better-fitting realities that are more pleasing to them than their present situations. In turn, this allows them to view the future through “rose-colored glasses” in which a focus is placed only on the details of present life that benefit women; thus, allowing these details to act as measures of creation that extensively impact their futures. Thus, the illustrations provided by these novels point to the notion that gender significantly impacts the characters’ exercising of modernism. The aim here is not to assert that women or men are better than the other at obtaining their dreams because there are an innumerable amount of internal and external factors that were not

taken into account for the purposes of this study that could have positioned one of the characters to be more successful than the other; for example, those of class and race. In the future, this research could be expanded upon to form a dissertation that develops on the study discussed within this thesis by focusing on an in-depth analysis of the impact of race and class on the characters' abilities to become socially modernized in an effort to reach their primary goals, especially since these are intersections of the oppressions found within the societies written into the novels' storylines.

Some may argue that the phenomena discussed herein is not applicable in today's society due to the reductivity found within this study. With this in mind, the ultimate aim here is not to propose that this discussion is universally applicable to current society, but simply to provide an illustration of the effects of gender on modernity through the examination of two novels from today's literary canon through feminist readings of the texts. If the canon is meant to stand as being representative of the best depictions of the human condition, the illustration provided through this study should be rendered of some importance. If so, highlighting such a plight instituted by patriarchy and caused by gender found within texts that are held in such high regard today may inspire the real-world study of the implications of such phenomena. After all, that is the true hallmark of any true critical work intended to be feminist in nature: to bring attention to the inequalities forced upon all by the patriarchy.

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EDUCATION

B.A. Political Science, Minor in Criminal Justice, Texas A&M International University, 2014
 M.A. English, Texas A&M International University, 2019

WORK EXPERIENCE*Beeville Independent School District*

Classroom Teacher, Courses Taught: Creative Writing, Writing, Reading 2018-Present
 Substitute Teacher Jan 2018-May 2018

Texas A&M International University-Office of Graduate Studies and Research

Associate Director Aug 2015-Jul 2017

Texas A&M International University-University College Writing Center

Writing Consultant Feb 2019-Jul 2019
 Academic Advisor (Supplemental Instruction/Engaging Sophomores) Nov 2014-Aug 2015
 Special Program Aid (Supplemental Instruction/Engaging Sophomores) Apr 2014-Oct 2014
 Writing Consultant Nov 2012-Mar 2014

Johnson's Daycare & Learning Center

Classroom Teacher Jul 2013-Mar 2014

The Radical Reseller, formerly Unique Boutique & Sweet Surprises

Owner/Operator Jun 2010-Present

ACHIEVEMENTS

University Honors Certificate, May 2014, Texas A&M International University
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 College Reading and Learning Association, Level 3 Master Tutor Certification, 2013
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 Border Patrol Youth of the Year Scholarships, May 2010, Department of Homeland Security

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