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**The American Dream between the Question of Identity and the  
Quandary of Absurdism: A Comparative Study *The Great Gatsby* by F.  
Scott FITZGERALD and *Bone* by Fae Myenne NG**

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## **Dedication**

I thank God for reaching the last stage in my academic career. I want to dedicate this work to my hope, my life's sun, and tenderness source, my mother who indescribable with her support and unconditional love. To my father spirit may Allah bless him in his grave. To my gorgeous family whom I love endlessly. I want to thank each member of them for their illimited support.

To all my precious friends especially Souad and Souha. To all my irreplaceable friends with whom I spent unforgettable years: Khaoula Zerrougui, Ismahane, Inas, Khawla Khaldi, Ahlem, Kaouther, Marwa and Ferial.

To all my uncles without forgetting dedication to their wives, to my aunt and her husband. To all my cousins without exception.

To everybody who has the slightest faith and cares to remember, to whose support never ends, to whomever I knew, from whomever life has kept me apart, to your faith, support, love and patience, to your existence.

To all people who know me, but I have forgotten mentioninig them.

MOUAIA Basma

## **Dedication**

Undeniably, the stumbling blocks I've been through are regarded as a step forward to start a new life full of success. I dedicate my humble work to the first ones I saw, my parents.

To my mother who was saving me each time I stumble and fall, and tried her best to color my life with all kinds of joy.

To my father and the symbol of sacrifice.

To all my sisters and brothers who broadcast hope in my life.

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### Abstract

The notion of the American Dream inspired several writers and critics who had interpreted it. Both Fitzgerald, the American writer, and Ng, the Chinese American writer, adhered to express the meaning of the American Dream through different angles. Both writers reflected the natives and Chinese Americans, respectively. This entails a comparative study between both writers' masterpieces, *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*. Specifically, the American comparative school is required since both narratives are written in English. Both literary works did not solely define the American Dream on its own scale, but they have been trying to link it to the quest of identity that it is highly investigated by modern and postmodern writers through fictional characters. Both Fitzgerald and Ng focused on the endless struggles of the individuals who search to realize the American Dream and the luxury life. Some characters collided with the frightening reality, which imposes on them to adopt a new identity other than theirs. For others, they reckoned that their unbridled desire to win the American Dream will be subsided because of their failure. In this case, it will not be easy for them to perceive failure. They will have a negative view around the world that can be gradually developed to achieve absurdism.

**Key words:** American Dream, quest of identity, absurdism, comparative study, American comparative school, *The Great Gatsby*, *Bone*, Chinese immigrants, Americans, failure.

## Résumé

La notion du Rêve Américain a inspiré plusieurs écrivains et critiques qui l'avaient interprétée en fonction de leurs visions. Fitzgerald, l'écrivain Américain, et Ng, l'écrivaine sino-américaine, ont tous les deux adhéré pour exprimer le sens du Rêve Américain sous des angles différents, selon qu'ils étaient natifs ou sino-américains. Il s'agit d'une étude comparative des chefs-d'œuvre des deux écrivains, *The Great Gatsby* et *Bone*. Plus précisément, l'école comparative Américaine est requise puisque les deux romans sont rédigés en Anglais. Ces deux romans n'ont pas seulement défini le Rêve Américain à sa propre échelle, mais ils ont essayé de le relier à la quête d'identité qu'il est très investigué par les écrivains modernes et postmodernes à travers des personnages fictifs. Fitzgerald et Ng se sont concentrés sur les conflits identiques des individus qui cherchent à réaliser le Rêve Américain et la vie de luxe. Certains personnages sont entrés en collision avec la réalité effrayante qui leur impose d'adopter une nouvelle identité autre que la leur. Pour d'autres, ils estimaient que leur désir effréné de gagner le Rêve Américain serait anéanti à cause de leur échec. Dans ce cas, il ne leur sera pas plus facile de percevoir l'échec. Ils auront une vision négative dans le monde qui peut être progressivement développé pour atteindre l'absurde.

**Mots clés :** Rêve Américain, quête d'identité, absurde, étude comparative, école comparative Américaine, *The Great Gatsby*, *Bone*, immigrants Chinois, Américains, échec.

### الملخص

لقد إستهوت فكرة الحلم الأمريكي العديد من الكتّاب والنقاد الذين قاموا بتأويلها وفقاً لرواهم حيث تقيد كل من فيتزجيرالد، الكاتب الأمريكي، والكاتبة الصينية الأمريكية، إنجي، بالتعبير عن معنى الحلم الأمريكي من خلال زوايا مختلفة. عكس كلا الكاتبين إنشغالات السكان الأصليين والصينيين الأمريكيين على التوالي. هذا يتطلب الدراسة المقارنة بين رائعتي كلا الكاتبين، "غاتسبي العظيم" و"عظم" على وجه الخصوص بإتباع مدرسة المقارنة الأمريكية وذلك لإستعمال كلا الروائيتين للغة واحدة، ألا وهي، الإنجليزية. لم يقتصر العملين الأدبيين على تعريف الحلم الأمريكي فقط، بل حاول كلاهما وصله بمسألة الهوية التي تعد محور بحث كتاب عصر الحداثة وما بعدها وذلك من خلال شخصيات خيالية. ركز كل من فيتزجيرالد وإنجي على صراعات الأفراد المستمرة من أجل تحقيق الحلم الأمريكي والحياة الفاخرة لكن الروائيتين تعكسان اصطدام بعض الشخصيات بالواقع المخيف الذي يفرض عليهم تبني هوية جديدة غير هويتهم الأصلية حيث يرى البعض أن رغبتهم الجامحة في الفوز بالحلم الأمريكي ستخدم ذلك بسبب فشلهم وفي هذه الحالة لن يكون الفشل أمراً سهلاً بالنسبة لهم، بل سيخلق لديهم نظرة سلبية للعالم وربما تتغير بشكل تدريجي لتؤكد لهم عبثية الحياة.

**كلمات مفتاحية:** الحلم الأمريكي، مسألة الهوية، العبثية، دراسة مقارنة، مدرسة المقارنة الأمريكية، "غاتسبي العظيم"، "عظم"، المهاجرون الصينيون، الأمريكيون، الفشل.

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## Introduction

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States was the dream country of all people around the world. As a result, a new notion tended to appear called the American Dream. It denotes reaching an ideal life that everybody dreamt of as well as having a freedom in practicing religion, and having opportunities in most fields. It is coined and presented in the 1920's by the author F. Scott Fitzgerald when the United States was the attractive pole for all the immigrants from all over the world. It has been highly spread to be a theme of discussion. American writers attempted to highlight the efforts and the obstacles that Americans faced to obtain their American Dream. F. Scott Fitzgerald is among the first writers who introduced the concept of the American Dream in their writings through his masterpiece *The Great Gatsby*. Seemingly, even immigrant writers presented this concept in their minority literature since the American Dream is not solely related to natives; consequently, its scope became larger.

Ng Fae Myenne as a Chinese American writer discussed the idea of the American Dream in relation to the immigrants' vision through her first novel *Bone*. She proposed to stimulate a comparative study between both literary texts, "With buoyant parting image, Ng invites comparison to F. Scott Fitzgerald and the last line of *The Great Gatsby*.... She invites comparison and, in *Bone*, stands up to it" (qtd. in Ng). Accordingly, Ng suggested to make a comparison between her first novel, *Bone*, and *The Great Gatsby*. The rapprochement of the two novels occurs through the embodiment of the same notions. Authors tended to shed the light on these notions due to World Wars in the twentieth century to depict the image of people who experienced the feeling of loss and despair. Hence, they tried to mirror the identity crisis that people suffered from within the world's radical changes and their feelings of life meaninglessness. Both identity question and absurdism are linked to the American Dream in both *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*. Fitzgerald's novel portrays the relationship

between the three concepts according to the Americans' vision meanwhile Ng's novel depicts them through Chinese immigrants' insights, minority groups, who live in the United States.

Both literary texts portray the efforts of natives and Chinese immigrants to maintain their American Dream, but their outcomes of success are not secured since the realization of the American Dream may be defeated by a set of obstacles. It is essential to investigate if identity and absurdism are the main factors of the failure of the American Dream and if it would be reached, it was mandatory to renounce the original identity and experience absurdity.

Both Americans and Chinese immigrants strongly seek to attain the American Dream without regarding any possibilities of changing their identity or reaching the idea of life absurdity. However, their impulses to reach the American Dream can change their origins and identity as well as alter their view of life. It is essential to recognize whether the American Dream can shape a new identity. Most dreamers can fail in reaching it. It is important to realize the factors behind that failure or the obstacles that restrain them to gain it. In the midst of these queries, it is interesting to detect the truth of the American Dream and the conditions to attain it.

This research seeks to state clearly the relationship between the American Dream, identity and absurdism according to both natives and Chinese immigrants as well as the way that the American Dream is affected by identity and absurdism. Otherwise, it has traced the the American Dream impact on American and Chinese literature as well as to prove or disprove the fact of the American Dream. Further, it is conducted to mention the reasons of the American Dream failure.

The American Dream is illustrated in both Americans and immigrants in accordance with identity and absurdism. It depends on various sources to show their interrelationship. First, the identity crisis is clearly sparked through *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald's magnum

opus, which reckoned as a best illustration of the aforementioned quandary of duality and internal conflicts. Through the tragic protagonist of the story, James Gatz, it is deemed that he is a victim of his dream that caused his death. Since he lost his dream, he reached the idea that life is absurd. While *Bone* is a Chinese American novel that describes the situation of a Chinese family in San Francisco. Leila is the narrator of the novel who tells her family's story. Her stepfather has kept his Chinese identity instead of the assimilation into the American culture; he was living in an absurd place that prohibited him from attaining his American Dream. While her youngest sister left her ancestry and Chinese identity and replaced it with the American identity to reach her American Dream. The main question should be answered here is what would happened if Nina has kept her Chinese identity to reach the American Dream? Moreover, to what extent the Chinese identity and the absurd place, Chinatown, may impact the American Dream.

*The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation* portrays the American Dream history and how the United States was an attractive pole for various immigrants. Besides, “The American Dream in the 1920s & 30s” is an article written by Savannah Grantham who reveals the relationship between the American Dream and identity especially during the twentieth century when the struggles between the individual identity and the American identity have highly presented to reach the American Dream. These struggles were stated clearly through the immigrants who traveled to the United States to gain liberty, happiness, and wealth.

However, *China and the American Dream: A Moral Inquiry* is a book written by Richard Madsen that presented a full picture about the relations between both China and America through history. Madsen explains how the cultural myths of the Chinese culture have been formulated in the United States. Madsen's arguments are a motive to recognize the relationship between the American Dream and the Chinese culture and the way Chinese

people reached it. Further, *Harbors, Flows, and Migrations: The USA in/ and the World: Chapter Twenty-Two Condensing Forces: Chinese American identity and Chinatown as an Ambivalent Harbor in Ng's Bone* states how the Chinese immigrants relied on multiple American harbors, but they may be challenged by a set of obstructions such as the Chinese Exclusion Act. In this case, it is necessary to have an idea about the Chinese immigrants' situations in the American harbors and their obstacles to earn their dream even with the enforcement of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

*A Glossary of Literary terms* by M.H.Abrams, Geoffrey Harpham is a book that discusses mostly all the critical approaches and the important literary notions such as absurdism. It has been introduced in the field of literature, in drama as well as prose. The book demonstrates how absurdism has been applied in specific literary texts besides its emergence. In this respect, absurdism will be examined in both concerned narratives through characters and events. All is mentioned above will be investigated to shape a full picture about identity and absurdism within the notion of American Dream for both natives and Chinese immigrants.

This research is basically based on primary and secondary sources. It follows a comparative method in which the notion of the American Dream is discussed through *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*. Since this research will be a comparison between two different novels, the American school is concerned in terms of focusing on the thematic and cultural study. Additionally, both the descriptive and the analytical methods are part in this study. Through a descriptive method, the notion of the American Dream, identity and absurdism will be drawn clearly. Otherwise, it is analytical by analyzing the two literary works and demonstrating the relationship between the American Dream and identifying identity as well as absurdism as centric elements for both Americans and Chinese Americans.

The American Dream may be related to a set of notions such as identity quest and absurdism that tied up with both natives and Chinese immigrants. Through dealing with two different novels, each writer tried to show how identity and absurdism influenced the American Dream. Therefore, the study sheds the light on culture for Americans as the local population and Chinese as immigrants who searched for opportunities in America, but they ended experiencing absurdity. The first chapter is considered as a theoretical framework. It has been divided into two sections that trace the historical background and the definition of all concepts that have been discussed. The first section displays both American and Chinese fiction, then it tends to reveal the three main concepts the American Dream, identity crisis within identity, and absurdism. Meanwhile, the second section will represent the three critical approaches that are going to be applied on both novels, *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*, such as autobiographical, psychoanalytical, and feminist theories.

The second chapter is divided into two sections that comprise the applied theories and concepts on both novels. The first section portrays a general overview for both literary texts, then the American Dream, identity, and absurdism will be analyzed separately through *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*. The second section follows it to represent the critical approaches. The autobiographical theory is needed since both works revealed a self-representation for both writers. Moreover, by applying psychoanalytical theory on both works, the focus will be on the thoughts of characters, their inner conflicts and their consciousness and unconsciousness. Finally, the application of feminist literary movement will give a vivid picture about both novels through tracing woman position between subjugation and self-identification.

However, the third chapter deals with a comparative study between both novels so that the first section exhibits the affinities and dissimilarities according to the American comparative school fundamentals. Whereas the second section presents the American Dream



and its match with the quest of identity and absurdism according to natives and immigrants insights. The obvious failure of characters to obtain their dream requires exegesis about the failure of the American Dream and its essential factors.

## Chapter One

### Scrutinized Evaluation across Texts and Contexts

The United States witnessed several historical events through eras, which contributed in one way or another to the prosperity of the American literature. With a variety of genres, American literature fulfils the reader's needs and curiosity about discovering what happened in a certain period. American literature included American writers and even immigrants who tried to build their own minority literature within the American literature. For instance, the American Chinese literature made a collection of literary texts to establish it as an independent type of literature. In addition, several concepts are related to both American literature and Chinese American literature such as the American Dream, identity, and absurdism. The first concept was presented during the Jazz Age and linked after to the both identity and absurdism. Moreover, the expression and the interpretation of these concepts were connected to the author's society that he/she belongs to.

These concepts used by various writers, either natives or immigrants. For instance, the novel of *The Great Gatsby* written by the American author F. Scott Fitzgerald and *Bone* by Fae Myenne Ng discussed these concepts that can be deeply explored through a comparative study. Since both novels are written in English, this study will embrace the American comparative school. Ultimately, various literary theories can be applied on both works. It is necessary to apply the autobiographical literary criticism to know the motives that made the writer recount a certain story and to know whether his life influenced his work. Besides, the psychoanalytical literary criticism will be applied on both novels to observe the changes of characters' psyches and their struggles to recognize their own identity. Moreover, since the gender of the two writers is different, it is needful to focus on the role of woman and to look from her perspective as well as to notice how characters with different genders seek to achieve the American Dream and realize their ambitions.

## 1.1 Section One: Historical Background

Since this study comprises two different literatures, it is crucial to present American and Chinese American fiction history to mark what characterizes each genre throughout time. Various themes have been discussed in both concerned literary works as the American Dream, identity and absurdism. Each concept is materialized conspicuously through characters and events as a center of this study.

### 1.1.1 Fiction

Cambridge Dictionary defines fiction as a book form or a narrative, which is put down about unreal characters and events. It does not set out non-fictional people or distribute with facts. Further, Vocabulary Dictionary argues that fiction is a literary text constructed on unreal and unessential facts. Besides, fiction is designed from unreality, and not given as a fact although it might be based on real stories (“Fiction: Literature”).

Fiction genre in literature consists of a considerable number of types, which are flash fiction, short story, novelette, novella, novel and river novel. The first genre is considered as a flash fiction that is any written piece that contains less than thousand words, and its words should be chosen wisely. However, the short story is shorter than the novel or a novella. It may focus on just one moment of time or multiple related events. This genre has many characteristics such as having the same narrator and having a moment of epiphany. *Araby* by James Joyce and *To Build a Fire* by Jack London are famous short stories. Besides, the Long short story that may exist between the short story and the novella. It can have more than a single narrator or a point of view. For instance, *The Dead* written by James Joyce is considered as long short story. It is more complicated than the short story and simpler than the novel. In addition, the novelette is a type of fiction that can be classified between the novella and the short story. It focuses on one character or a chain of events. Then, the novella deems as a plat form between the novel and the short story. It consists of a set of layers that

are more than the short story and less than the novel. It usually focuses on the trip of a character or his/her development. As an example, Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is viewed as a novella. Furthermore, the novel is a genre of fiction that consists of several subplots happening at the same moment. *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Bone* by Fae Myenne Ng are examples of the novel (Adams). Apparently, fiction comprises various genres that bear the creative writings of writers.

The river novel denotes, “A very long novel may overflow the banks of a single volume and become a roman-fleuve, or river novel. Length is very much one of the dimensions of the genre” (Burgess). It can be noted that the river novel is a type of fiction that is longer than the novel. *Ulysses* by James Joyce is considered as a river novel since it is long. Noticeably, fiction has an assortment of types; each of them has its independent forms and characteristics.

#### **1.1.1.1 American Fiction**

Predominantly, literature is a collection of written literary works that are shaped by a particular country history. The American literature is “The body of written works produced in the English language in the United States” (Blair et al.). Briefly, the American fiction is gradually developed through history.

American literature has developed through history, “History of American literature begins with the arrival of English-speaking Europeans in what would become the United States. At first American literature was naturally a colonial literature, by authors who were Englishmen and who thought and wrote as such. John Smith” (Blair et al.). The United States, at the beginning, was an English colony, and the American literature was evolved by the Europeans who originally spoke English.

#### **1.1.1.1.1 History of American Fiction**

Fiction consists of different genres as the short story that is considered as the only purely American genre. It started at the beginning with tales and sketches, and it was undefined until the coming of the American writer Edgar Allan Poe who distinguished between the short story and the other genres. The American short story has been developed in both form and content through movements such as realism, modernism, and post modernism. During the 1920's, most writers started to reflect their feelings and experiences chiefly through the short story. During the 1970's, it was provided as suitable genre in art fiction teaching. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women writers were given more opportunity in short fiction (Champion). Therefore, the short story went through numerous steps to be regarded as an independent type of fiction.

Likewise, the American novel has been expanded so that writers introduced many reasons for this literary genre in the outset of the eighteenth century. These reasons emerged with this genre such as social, philosophical, economic, and religious factors, which depicted the middle class and its determination. Consequently, Protestant Reformation demanded the personal interpretation of literature as well as the integration of psychological experiments that focused on sensual details (“A Short History”). Because of all these reasons, the novel spread as a genre.

#### **1.1.1.2 Chinese American Fiction**

Initially, Chinese Americans is a term that is coined to present people of Chinese origins who reside permanently in the United States. In 1850, the Chinese American literature emerged when the first Chinese immigrants entered America and aimed to exchange their experiences with others (Beňová 14). Chinese immigrants’ experiences was a motive for paving the way to the creation of the Chinese American literature.

### 1.1.1.2.1 History of Chinese American Fiction

The United States witnessed a great deal of immigration from the Chinese people who were attracted by the California Gold Rush in 1849. Then, the Chinese Exclusion Act was introduced, and contributed to the deceleration of immigration in 1882. Nevertheless, after the adoption of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, a number of immigrants has significantly increased because all restrictions were discarded. Moreover, the Chinese American literature appeared to resist all the ideas, visions, and stereotypes that Americans hold about yellow danger. In the nineteenth century, almost Chinese American literature was written in Chinese and English (“Chinese Americans”). The outset of Chinese American literature was through Chinese immigrants who tended to reveal their experiences as a minority group.

Generally, there was a rarity at the level of literature because of the Exclusion Act, but the biracial, Chinese and English, sisters Winnifred Eaton and her sister Edith Maude Eaton were exceptional writers. The former was known as Onoto Watanna, and the latter as Sui Sin Far. Winnifred is known as a first Chinese writer in America who published her novel *Mrs. Nume of Japan* in 1899 under a fake nationality that is Japanese. Edith further published a collection of stories under the title *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* in 1912 to deal with various issues such as segregation and illogical prejudgment faced by Chinese American woman. She was the first Chinese writer to highlight Chinese women's issues in the United States (“Chinese Americans”). Both Chinese sisters, Winnifred Eaton and Edith Maude Eaton, are regarded as the first writers who wanted to convey the image of immigrants in the United States through their writings.

After years, Jade Snow Wong published different works such as a book that reveals what she went through as a Chinese American woman. In addition to two autobiographies, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1945) and *No Chinese Stranger* (1975). In 1950, *Fifth Chinese*

*Daughter* returned to be a book of the Month Club selection and bestseller. It demonstrates what Jade Snow faced as an individual in America by being among immigrants. C.Y. Lee also entered the field of literature as the first Chinese American man through his popular novel *The Flower Drum Song* in 1957. Later on, his novel was introduced as a song due to its saleability in 1958. Then, to a film in 1961 that was shaped by the book story and the musical song. The film reached the climax of success through discussing the new generation struggles between the Chinese traditions and what is new in America. During the Civil Rights period, Chinese American literature followed a new trend. The nation's vision about Asian 'outsider' has been changed with the emergence of the women's movement and the Vietnam War. One of the topics that has been emphasized on is the ethnic literature in relation to identity and assimilation themes ("Chinese Americans"). Clearly, Chinese American literature has involved both female and male writers.

Maxine Hong Kingston is one of the authors who linked these themes to her novels such as *The Woman Warrior* (1976) that is a combination between fantasy and semibiography, it dealt with her conflicts to make a balance between her Chinese identity and her American way of living. As well as *China Men* (1980) which presented the confrontations of men in her family. Currently, American Chinese writers are discussing topics that have relation to what they have experienced as immigrants in America through their fiction books and discuss topics related to historical events about Asia or sacred topics such as family and other traditional themes ("Chinese Americans"). Based on the above, Chinese American writers are regarded as a reflective mirror to the life of Chinese immigrants and the conflicts they faced in the United States.

### **1.1.2 The Jazz Age (Roaring Twenties)**

The Jazz Age or what is called the Roaring Twenties is the period that the United States' history went through after the Second World War and before the Great Depression in

1929. American society as well as culture are still affected until the current time by the 1920's. The Jazz Age started with the emergence of commercial radio and Jazz music birth that were created by African Americans and it was spread after to white Americans. Jazz music was among the first African cultural aspects, which became integrated, in the American culture through African Americans. It is noted that through Jazz music and commercial radio, American culture was standardized. During the Roaring twenties, young people who were affected by Jazz music started a rebellion against their parents' old culture and chose to be modern and more fashionable, so they adopted new traditions as well as culture. In addition, women were freer after the second world war especially after the death of huge number men during the war ("The Jazz Age"). Indeed, women started to work and make money as men used to do. Generally, the Jazz Age is considered as a turning point in the American culture as well as the social conditions.

As culture and social conditions were progressed and changed, literature also witnessed a degradation during the Jazz Age through the writer F. Scott Fitzgerald as it is stated:

It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of success and it was an age of satire, wrote F.Scott Fitzgerald. The handsome Minnesota born author, an alcoholic Princetonian became a sensation with his tale uninhibited bewildered youth in the jazz age. Francis Scott Fitzgerald, American short story writer and novelist was famous for his depictions of the Jazz Age, his most brilliant novel being, *The Great Gatsby*. (Agarwal 33)

F. Scott Fitzgerald was among the writers that were affected by the Jazz Age. Through literature, writers during this era tried to portray the American society image. For example, they included the conception of American Dream and Lost Generation when the United States was in the best conditions as well as they talked mostly about materialism, beauty, and corruption.



The Jazz Age is an important era in the American history as it is professed:

Jazz music is America's past and its potential, summed up and sanctified and accessible to anybody who learns to listen to, feel, and understand it. The music can connect us to our earlier selves and to our better selves-to-come. It can remind us of where we fit on the time line of human achievement, an ultimate value of art.

(“Wynton”)

The Jazz Age is one of the periods in the history of the United States that witnessed a huge evolution in all domains.

### **1.1.3 American Dream**

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, the American Dream is considered as the social ideal for Americans that centralizes equality and in particular luxury. In another way, it is the fulfillment of this ideal.

The American Dream represents the American successful story that is based on two features, a search for success and a life of luxury to achieve it. These two features led to the historical separation from the old and the successive growth of the new. The American Dream is built on the idea of achieving success through unlimited opportunities that everyone has. In addition, it is reckoned on the idea of freedom. If an individual is independent, he does not need to rely on others. The American Dream paves the way to the emergence of individualism and individual responsibility (“Chaptre- I: American” 2-3). The American Dream supports the hard work, freedom and individualism so that different individuals have the same opportunity to reach their dreams and hopes.

#### **1.1.3.1 History of the American Dream in Literature**

The concept of the American Dream was firstly associated with the early immigrants who settled in America, the puritans or the Calvinists, who believe in the doctrine of the chosen people by God. When they reached America, they were of a belief that everyone had

opportunities for success as long as hard work was the basic condition. Through hard work, they will receive the reward of god and he will forgive all their mistakes. Their main concern was to seek wealth. In addition, individualism is one of the elements of the American Dream. The latter focuses on the individual as free to achieve whatever he wants. As well as, the term rugged individualism was formulated to show the rivalry, which people went through to reach wealth or to fail in obtaining their goals (Hocenski 3). According to puritans, the American Dream can be reached through hard work, pursuit of wealth and individualism.

#### **1.1.4 Identity**

It is difficult to define identity, it is what the thing or individual is. It is important to link identity, immigration, and ethnicity together. Writers think that readers can understand their writings about immigration and ethnicity in relation to identity because they believe that the reader can understand its meaning through this relationship. On the other hand, readers do not claim about explanation of this relation. As a result, the writings that related identity to ethnicity and immigration have no satisfactory clarifications (Gleason 910). Therefore, the reader must dive into the depth of any literary work that bears the theme of identity and link it to the immigrants' situation as an ethnic group.

According to Oxford Living Dictionaries, identity is defined as the reality of who and what a person or an object is. Besides, it has been stated that identity is the reality that a person or a thing is the same, and not another one in all cases and under all conditions (qtd. in Fearon 7). Correspondingly, identity is the mirror of individual's reality.

##### **1.1.4.1 Self Concept**

The self is the entire views that each individual possesses about him or her. In addition, the self concept is composed of two levels according to the selfcategorization theory presented by Turner which are personal and social identities (Mehrad 63). The self is considered as an abstract term that its position is inner. It is a building of mind, a hypothesis

of existence, constituted by social formations, yet sometimes contradicts the first formations that defined it (Howe 56). Obviously, the individual can understand his identity through his inner self.

#### **1.1.4.2 Identity Crisis**

Identity crisis is defined as the ignorance about the kind of somebody or what he/she is, or what he/she likes to be later on (“Definition of Identity Crisis”). Undoubtedly, the identity crisis is engendered when the individual loses his identity and enters into successive conflicts.

The concept of identity crisis started with Erik Erikson, a psychologist, who argues that one of the most important elements of any individual's life is identity and the most valuable stage of developing an identity is the years of teenage. He did not link the growth of identity to the age, but to the teenager challenges and experiences during his years of teenage. Identity crisis is a famous theory presented by Erik Erikson and was introduced as a valuable theory in thought and personality, his theory focuses on how the social challenges and crisis affect the lifespans. Erikson defines identity crisis as the conflict that challenges people during their developmental stages and it represents the different views that the individual can look at the same thing. Identity crisis happened when the individual is confused about his identity and life aspects such as relationships. Facing a personal challenge or conflict hence the repetition of the question, "Who am I?", as well as asking questions about the individual's value or role may cause a psychological conflict. In addition, searching for more purposes and reasons of this life and the appearance of uncertainty, anxiety, and confusion about actual and future role in this life may be rised (Cherry). Erik Erikson presented how identity crisis can emerge and influence individual's personality and their worldview.

Through time, identity crisis is considered as one of the main thematic concerns of writers in literature. It happened when the character can not escape from the conflict about he/she is or what s/he is considered to be. In American literature, especially in modern and

postmodern literature, identity crisis is the conflict between the individual and society, another person, or natural forces that causes his change (Cherry). Identity crisis is regarded as a focal point for modern and postmodern writers who intended to typify the conflicts of individuals.

### **1.1.5 Absurdism**

The question that is always asked is what the meaning of life is. And What is the aim of this life?. People can find no answer for these questions. Therefore, without finding a meaning or a value for life is called absurdism. Merriam Webster Dictionary defines absurdism as a philosophy that agrees about the useless meaning of life and the individual's struggle to reach the purpose of life. However, for philosophers, absurdism is the fact that all the efforts of the human beings for finding innate meaning of life will never succeed (“What is Absurdism”). Definitely, individuals who search for the purpose of life will fail and will never access to its meaning.

#### **1.1.5.1 Absurdism in Literature**

Absurdism in literature or absurdist fiction focuses on characters that can find no aim or purpose in this life and consider it as useless or meaningless. As a result, finding a purpose for life is impossible. Albert Camus defines it in his novel *The Myth of Sisyphus* as, “The world itself is not reasonable [...] But what is absurd is the confrontation of this irrational and (the) desperate desire for clarity whose call echoes in the depths of man” (qtd. in “What is Absurdism”). Absurdism is reflected through various writings to depict the rejection of all individual's efforts and curiosity about the meaning of life.

It was flourished during post-second world war in the twentieth century. The world has been changed because of the two world wars. In post Second World War, millions of people died, and as a reaction writers reflected the feeling of people who reached the idea that life is meaningless and it has no value. In addition, each one in this world has its own point of view

to find the meaning of this life. The two leaders of the absurdist theory are Albert Camus and Kierkegaard (“Absurdism in Literature”). Patently, absurdism emerged as a reaction to the effects of world wars and became a concern of writers.

Camus believes that there are three main solutions for absurdism. First, creating a value for life in which Camus believed that reaching something in this universe limits the individual’s freedom so that this solution is seen as a philosophical suicide. Secondly, suicide is another solution for absurdism adopted by Camus, it happened when the individual suffers and faces several difficulties and struggles in this life. He/she reached the idea of meaninglessness of life and universe, so he/she killed him/herself excepting death. Albert Camus argued, “There is only one really serious philosophical question, and that is suicide” in his novel *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Further, the acceptance of absurdism according to Camus is living in this universe and finding the possible extent of freedom without finding a value for this life. There are few differences between absurdism, nihilism, and existentialism. Nihilism denotes that life has no value, it is not meaningful and it is useless to find or create a meaning for it. However, existentialism indicates creating the meaning of life by the individual’s use of his own way for finding this meaning and value. Whereas, absurdism argues that this universe has no meaning but the individual should accept it as well as fight against this universe (“Absurdism in Literature”). Camus gave a precise insight into the meaning of absurdity away from both existentialism and nihilism as well as he introduced how it manifests itself in the absurd individual.

As the other literary notions, absurdism has its own characteristics such as life is useless and hopeless. Then, there is no reality unless it relieved by illusions and dreams. Moreover, objects are more important than language. Furthermore, there is a very little or no meaning for life can appear. Lastly, absurd drama finds no solution for a problem

(“Absurdism in Literature”). Unquestionably, absurdism refers to the individual’s conflicts and their inability to reach the meaning of life.

Both American fiction and Chinese American fiction, as a minority literature, have been presented through history. On the otherhand, the American Dream, the quest of identity, and absurdism has been analyzed theoretically by the identification of their definitions, historical backgrounds, and characteristics.

## **1.2 Section Two: Critical Review**

The Comparative study evokes firstly to recognize about the comparative literature history and its schools. The American comparative school with its terms parallelism and intertextuality are concerned. Finally, literary theories are discussed such as autobiographical and psychoanalytical theories, as well as feminist literary movement with the description of women position during the Jazz Age.

### **1.2.1 Comparative Literature**

Comparative literature is considered as a study of literary works across linguistic, literary and cultural borders. Comparative literature has been defined by Rene Wellek as the study of the relations between two or more literary works. This definition has been enormously varied as well as evolved from the early nineteenth to the current time after being either interpreted or misinterpreted. At present, comparative literature consists of comparative cultural studies, which brought some elements from comparative literature field. This approach has three areas of theoretical content. The first one is studying literature in relation to the context of culture and the discipline of cultural studies. The second is concerned with studying texts and literary works with elements such as theories and methods that were brought from comparative literature. Finally, studying culture and its components and aspects in comparative cultural studies instead of today's single language approach that concerns with topics and issues of only one culture (Sahin 5). Undeniably, comparative literature helps the

reader to know more about other cultures and languages to induce the similarities and differences between literatures.

### 1.2.1.1 History of Comparative Literature

The origins of word comparative came from the Latin word *comparativus* from *comparare*; it is the decision of similitudes and dissimilitudes between two or more of scientific branches, two different literary works, or languages. Shakespeare firstly used the word 'comparative' as an adjective in his play entitled *King Henry IV* in 1597. Then, in 1598, the writer Francis Meres used the term 'comparative' as an adjective in his book *Palladis Tamia*. Particularly, he used it in the section of 'A Comparative Discourse of Our English Poets with the Greek, Latin and Italian Poets' in which he compared and contrasted different poets and writers from different eras and origins such as Greek poets of great antiquity, the ancient Latin poets and the ancient Italian poets, to forerunners of English literature (Sahin 6). Obviously, the term 'comparative' has been used by different writers from different origins.

Moreover, the word was utilized in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as subtitles of books. However, at the early nineteenth century, both words 'comparative' and 'literature' were used in various books in France. In 1816, the two writers Noël and Laplace published courses under the title 'comparative literature', and Villemain made an introduction to the representation of the era during 1827 and 1828 that indicates a 'comparative study of literature'. Besides, J.J. Ampère presented a lesson about 'comparative history of arts and literal temperature in all nations' in Marseille 1830, and it is remarked that all his works have a connection to the history of comparative literature. Many modern French writers hold the discussion of comparative literature such as Chaudes- Aignes who were interested in the history of comparative literature in 1841, after two years, Villemain and Puibusque proposed 'The Comparative History of Literally Tures'. As well as, Benloew who introduced the

comparative history of literature in 1849 (Sahin 6). The term ‘comparative’ has spread widely in France so that various French writers reflect it through their works.

The phrase ‘Comparative Literature’ has been firstly used in English by Matthew Arnold in 1890 through one of his unpublished works as a form of a letter after his translation to Ampre's work entitled ‘Histoire Compartive’. In 1857, Arnold explained the term through a conference entitled ‘On the Modern Element in Literature’ and then it was printed in Macmillan's Magazine. Several books were published about comparative literature; however, Posnett firstly used it through his book *Comparative Literature* in 1886 to be emerged after as an academic discipline in the nineteenth century. Many writers excelled, from different nations, in the field of comparative literature, where a huge number of books were published around 1931 until 2012. Finally, it is undeniable that this field was widely spread after the presentation of a term World literature by Goethe (Sahin 6-7). Definitely, comparative literature has gradually spread through authors from different nationalities who had great credit for the birth of an independent discipline.

### **1.2.1.2 American Comparative School**

The American comparative school comes as a reaction against the principles of the French school. Its founding father is Henry Remak who defines comparative literature as “The comparative study of literature of one country with that of another country or other countries, and the comparison between literature and other expression fields” (qtd.in Jiewen 31). Literature can be compared with a literature of another country or with other cognition fields.

#### **1.2.1.2.1 History of American Comparative School**

The attention of the French, the German, and the American schools was focused on the comparative literature field. The last school emerged as a reaction to the French comparative school. Jiewen stated in his article *Evolution and Schools of Comparative Literature Theories*



that the American comparative school refused a set of the French school principles such as influence. In 1950, Henry Remark with other scholars started a new path by founding American comparative school or what is named 'parallel study'. The American comparative literature compares two literatures far from their direct influences and it permits the comparison between literature and other disciplines. Moreover, The American comparative school emerged during the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century as a new criticism theory that rejects the idea of relating literary works to external factors such as the author's biography, language, society, and history. On the other hand, it is concerned with studying literature aesthetically (Jiewen 31). American comparative school permits the comparison of literature with other fields of cognition such as psychology, architecture, mathematics, and physics.

Henry Remak stated that, "Comparative Literature should not be regarded as a discipline on its own but rather as a connecting link between subjects or 'subject areas'" which demonstrates that writers will not be involved in the problem of nationalism. In addition, the most tentative factor that separates the American comparative school from the French one is 'depolitisization' that separates literature from politics. Most of American comparatists gave an attention for 'interdisciplinary work' that made them far from the idea of nationalism, but they included universalism (qtd.in Enani 39). In other words, the American comparative school supports universality of literature, depolitisacization and the equality between different literary works.

Bassnett sums up the comparative American school as "The American perspective on Comparative literature was based from the start on ideas of interdisciplinarity and universalism which represents the idea that the American school has rejected totally nationalism" (qtd. in Enani 40). In addition, René Wellek, one of the founding fathers of the American school, claims that, "If literature research doesn't regard literature as a discipline different from other human activities or productions, it may not make any progress in terms

of methodology. Thus, we have to face problem of literariness, which concerns the art nature of literature” (qtd. in Jiewen 31). In other words, making a comparison between literature and other fields may contribute to the development of the field of comparative literature.

#### **1.2.1.2.2 Parallelism Theory**

Ihab Hassan, an American critic and Egyptian born, criticized the concept of ‘influence’ which presented by the French comparative school. As a result, he considered parallelism as an alternative to the influence theory. Parallelism was the concern of most comparatists in America such as the Russian comparatist Konrad who sees that parallel theory is discovered through the idea of human social evolution similarities. In parallelism, there are numbers of affinities between different literatures that are similar to the social evolution. The comparatists aim is to seek the similarities between literature and writers (Enani 41-42). The American school seeks to achieve equality between literary works that the French school lacks.

#### **1.2.1.2.3 Intertextuality Theory**

Intertextuality is a theory related to the American comparative school proposed by M. Enani who defines it as the relation between literary texts and how the first one affects the way of reading of the second one, it is a melting pot into the hypotext. Simply, intertextuality is proposed to add meaning with no reference to phenomenon (Enani 43). Patently, intertextuality denotes referencing others' ideas and include them in a creative way.

### **1.2.2 Critical Approaches**

Any literary work can be analyzed from different angles. Through the application of various theories, the reader can have multiple interpretations about a signal work. Undoubtedly, critical approaches can trace different elements that facilitate to convey the essence of the work.

### 1.2.2.1 Autobiographical Literary Theory

Merriam Webster defines autobiography as a narration of someone's life by himself or herself. Autobiography is explained as a writing style concerned with history and during the eighteenth century, it was classified as a genre. The term autobiography started with Robert Southey in 1809 for characterizing Portuguese poet. Robert Southey defines autobiography as “A narrative of the past of a person by the person concerned” (qtd.in Bacon) which refers to the discussion of somebody's life and experiences narrated by him/her self or someone else who is interested in this figure's life. For most of critics, this was too broad. As a result, Lejeune, an autobiographical scholar, narrowed this definition to be formulated as “Autobiography is retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality” (qtd.in Bacon). Using other words, autobiography is a genre that describes somebody's real life with its experiences and the steps that he/she goes through.

Autobiography consists of four types that are religious, fictionalized, thematic, and intellectual. The first one includes several literary texts that were taken from Thomas Carlyle's *Augusten and Kempe* to the autobiographical chapters in the nineteenth century and it is regarded as the first personal life narrative that was included in literature. However, the fictionalized is somehow similar to the novel, but with a distinction that fictionalized autobiography consists of biography. For example, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce in 1903. Then, the thematic autobiography consists of books with different aims such as Edward Bok's *Americanization* in 1920. Finally, the following one appeared in the twentieth century that composed of John Stuart Mill's autobiography (“Autobiography: Literature”). Autobiography varies according to the writer's personal field that it is related to literature.

### 1.2.2.2 Psychoanalytical Literary Theory

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, psychoanalysis is a way of interpreting and analyzing the psychological phenomenon and dealing with mental disorders that go through a considerable number of sessions of treatment to help the patient expressing himself freely about everything related to his conscious and unconscious sides.

#### 1.2.2.2.1 History of Psychoanalytical Literary Theory

Psychoanalysis was known as a therapy for mental disorders. It shows the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements that happened in the mind and it focuses on investigating personal anxieties and meanings to culture as well as it gives viewpoints concerning them. In literature, this modern theory is used to mean a therapy to cure mental disorders and the theories on human mind and its complications (Hossain 41-42).

Psychoanalysis is concerned with the human's psyche with its parts like consciousness and unconsciousness.

The Viennese neurologist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) presented the theory of psychoanalysis through his practice of neuroscience and his studies of mysterious disorders. He discovered that the cause of some mental illnesses was due to mysterious impulses from the depths of the psyche (Perlman and Brandell 44). Through analyzing the individual's psyche, the mental illnesses may be discovered easily.

Sigmund Freud noted a mental disease in one of his patients and he was interested in studying the psychology of the unconscious mind. He proposed that there are three areas in the human's mind. The first one deals with the psychology of psychoneurosis, dreams, jokes as well as the psychopathology of everyday life such as slips of the tongue and writings. Whereas, the second is as a system of pre-conscious and the third is a system of the conscious. In 1990, Freud ideas were presented in the interpretation of dreams, and it can be

supposed that his interest in studying dreams is the basis of his theories (Hossain 42). In this respect, Sigmund Freud explains the role of each of the three regions in the human's mind.

Sigmund Freud presented basic concepts for the theory of psychoanalysis. He suggested that the unconscious is a place that stocks traumatic experiences and emotions, wrongdoing desires, horrors as well as struggles that have no solution. People do not want to recognize all these feelings and incidents because of its negative impact on them ("Psychoanalytic" 1). The unconscious part plays an important role in analyzing the psyche of the individual through focusing on his hidden side.

Freud stated that there are three areas of the mind have been raised by unconscious conflicts. Each area wants to impose itself on the other while an individual grows from infancy, to childhood, to adulthood. The first area is the id. It is the unconscious part of the psyche that neglects logic, and it reacts directly to the instincts under the principal of pleasure without considering the results. The individual can be pleased when his id reaches satisfaction or be displeased when his id has been denied. However, the ego is the conscious part of the psyche and it follows reason and logic seeking to realize the desires of the id through considering the social rules and norms. For ego, the individual's desires should have limits because his selfishness in fulfilling his wishes will not always be in his favor. Finally, the superego depends on the moral values and judgements and it determines what is right and wrong. The possibility of achieving the same resolution is the common point for both ego and superego. However, the latter's decision is further built on moral values and the former leans on the results after the action or how others can receive it ("Psychoanalytic" 2-3). Freud has explained in details the individual's psyche that fluctuates between the appeal of desires, the call of reason or following principles that are more moralistic.

The aim of superego is to reach perfection by controlling the id desires and changing the realistic ego principle to be more moralistic. There are two systems of the superego. The

first one is called conscience and it can engender the feeling of guilt as a punishment for the ego. The ideal self is the second system, it is a fictional image that determines the way an individual can deal with others, have ambitions and act as a part of a society. By behaving properly, the super ego can reward the ideal self. Finally, both the ideal self and conscience are affected by the childhood stage and what it carries from parental values (“Psychoanalytic” 3). Both superego’s systems affect the other parts of the psyche, id and ego, and seek to change their basis.

#### 1.2.2.2.2 Psychoanalysis and Literature

Psychoanalysis has transcended the field of medicine and psychology to include many other fields such as philosophy, culture, religion, and especially literature. Freud made analysis for works such as *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles and *Hamlet* by Shakespeare and he enlarged the scope of the relation between literature and psychonalysis as well as he sought to comprehend creativity through comparing fantasy, plays, dreams and the work of art in his work ‘Creative Writers and Daydreaming’. In addition, he argued that literature is similar to a daydream. In this case, the literary work is like a dream so that the writer attempts to realize an unsatisfied wish since it will not change the unsatisfactory reality (Hossain 43). Accordingly, Freud related psychoanalysis to literature and attempted to investigate its elements.

The psychoanalytic concepts occupied a large part in the literary works of authors and writers through their characters and their thoughts. All the psychoanalytical concepts, used in various literature, were taken from Freud's theories. Such as the primacy of the unconsciousness, the Iceberg theory of the psyche, dreams are an expression of the individual's consciousness, infantile behaviour is essentially sexual and the relationship between neurosis and creativity (Hossain 43-44). Psychoanalysis is included in literature through analyzing characters’ psyches, so that it focuses on the hidden side of the individual.

### **1.2.2.3 Feminist Literary Criticism**

Oxford Dictionaries defines feminism as a pleading for rights of women by supporting sex's equality. In other words, feminism is the equality of genders, women and men, in most domains such as economy, politics, and society. It is represented by organizations of women's rights. Throughout history and in most western countries, people have different ways to obtain their rights according to their gender. As a result, societies gave unequal powers for women and men. Women were treated violently according to social norms in schools or in the workplaces. Recently, men all over the world treated women violently. Violence with its types such as intimate partner, domestic violence were the suffering of women. Feminism denotes avoiding most of these crimes against women and giving more opportunity to the sexes's equality (Brunell and Burkett). Therefore, feminists call for liberating women from the shackles of society and raising their position to be equal to men.

#### **1.2.2.3.1 History of Feminist Literary Movement**

There are various feminist movements, should be taken into consideration, made by women and their allies from other movements such as black and white, young and old, rich and poor. Each movement has its own focus, but it shares the same purpose that is supporting women. Moreover, all the types of feminism have a history. For instance, feminism in the United States started in the 1830's with the labor and the working movements for both genders. Next, the antislavery movement when leading women claimed to fight against slavery. In 1830, the American women made 'A Declaration of the Rights of Women' in 1776 to have the right to vote. Further, feminism was presented in the American Civil War when women were given the right to work as nurses and workers in the field. In addition, immigrant women declared for their rights in the United States. For example, thousands of women worked in strikes and after the Second World War, women felt that they can

participate in the war. There was the International Women's League for Peace and Freedom that made them freer (Orleck). Noticeably, the participation of women in the war and their integration into society made them free, and motivate them to seek equality.

Feminist movement witnessed four famous waves in the United States. The first wave began at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century; this wave emerged due to the urban industrialism and liberal politics to give more opportunities to participate in industry and politics. It started when many women and men made a crowd to the cause of gender equality with the Seneca Falls convention in 1902 to start a new ideological and political movement that supports women. Some declared that women involvements in politics can ameliorate the political system and makes it more developed (Rampton). Through this wave, women's role increased especially in politics and industry.

Moreover, the second wave took a place between the period of 1960's and 1990's, and it reveals “The anti-war and civil rights movements and the growing self-consciousness of a variety of minority groups around the world... the voice of the second wave was increasingly radical... sexuality and reproductive rights were dominant issues” (Rampton). After the Civil War, awareness for gender equality gained more attention. However, the third wave started in the half of the nineteenth century so that it upholds changes as it is stated:

In this phase many constructs were destabilized, including the notions of ‘universal womanhood’, body, gender, sexuality and heteronormativity. An aspect of third wave feminism that mystified the mothers of the earlier feminist movement was the readoption by young feminists of the very lip-stick, high-heels, and cleavage proudly exposed by low cut necklines that the first two phases of the movement identified with male oppression. (Rampton)

In this wave, women felt freer to make changes at the level of their physical appearance.



However, the fourth wave of feminism is still a captivating silhouette. A writer for Elle Magazine recently interviewed about the waves of feminism and asked if the second and the third waves may represent the real liberation of women. She was replied that:

The second wave of feminism ought not be characterized as having failed... many goals of the second wave were met: more women in positions of leadership in higher education, business and politics; abortion rights; access to the pill that increased women's control over their bodies; more expression and acceptance of female sexuality. (Rampton)

Through the second and the third waves, women transmitted their voices and realized huge achievements. Then, after the four wave, they were given more opportunities to express their ideas, to ask for their rights freely, and to prove themselves in their societies.

#### **1.2.2.3.2 American Feminist Literature**

Men did not pay attention to the women's needs. Throughout history, writers and journalists tended to report the events happening around them through writings to support and express their thoughts. This was the case for early feminist writers who expressed the lack of women's rights and how women were frustrated and treated violently. Feminist literature purpose was to express the opinion of women against men dominance and injustice. Feminist writers wanted to change this situation through literature by books, articles, and journals. Most of writers rose women voice during the nineteenth century, this did not change women situation completely, but it has shown how literature was prosperous. Feminist literature is also defined as, "It is often referred to any material written by a woman, any material written by a woman, any female criticism of any material written by a man, or female criticism of literary content produced by another woman". Any literary works made by women and criticized men works are considered as a feminist literature. Consequently, women were declaring for their rights in politics, religion, race, and marriage after the spread of this

literary movement (Thompson). Patently, feminist writings embody the suffering of women and criticizes the work of men as a way to transmit the voice of women.

As the other literary theories, feminism has its own characteristics. Feminist literature uses characters that fight to strength women against men. Moreover, it expresses the idea of the desire to ameliorate women position. Besides, feminist literature is totally against gender inequality in the social and political fields. Finally, it gives women voice and adds a specific feminist overlook that supports women role in all domains (Thompson). Indeed, feminist literature includes the struggle of women and their unbridled desire to change their fate in a patriarchal society.

The women suffrage movement played an important role in shaping the position of women during 1920. It was the main cause for giving women the right to vote after their contribution in the work force after the First World War Women got chances and opportunities to confirm themselves in society after the huge death number of men. They became freer in the Jazz Age holding the image of the 'flapper' that is linked with notions of equity and sexual freedom. Indeed, Women realized their freedom after the Equal Rights Amendment, which prevented any kind of gender segregation. A considerable number of women has supported this rule; however, other women felt panic that the legislation would decrease wages and add additional hours for female workers under the gender equality principle. Most women worked in domestic service, offices, and as clerks, and they got low wages than men ("The Jazz Age"). Women during the 1920's tended to increase their awareness for seeking gender equality.

Women were disappointed because neither the presidential elections of the 1920's nor the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendement contributed in changing their position as women in society. Besides that, women perceived the meaning of liberation as behaving and dressing freely. They were different as compared to the old generations, and they were having the ability to express

themselves in their society through their obvious distinctions. The first sexual liberation was marked by the opening of the first birth-control clinic in New York by the advocate Margaret Sanger. Women were materialistic and impressionable; they perceived themselves as modern feminists who have qualities that never existed before (Rubio and Conesa 4-5). Women started to be liberated from the shackles of society through adopting a modern style in their appearance as well as their behaviors.

As contrary, other women perceived the materialistic emancipation as a contradicted action to what really women wanted to realize. The flapper image of women was a main cause for the weaknesses of the feminist movement, but after years, women gained the political power such as Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming who was elected as the first woman governor of a state in 1924. In addition, Bertha Knight Landes who became the first female mayor of a Seattle city in 1926. From the late 19th century, women were taken part in political, social, economic issues, and they were respected by men for their powerful character and courage (Rubio and Conesa 6-8). Women freedom did not only include the occupation of women to higher positions of employment, but even their outward appearance, which implied a radical change in their freedom and their attraction to money.

Since the study is concerned with a comparison between *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*, comparative literature is involved through the American school with both parallelism and intertextuality. In addition, numerous approaches were discussed such as the autobiographical and the psychoanalytical literary theories, besides feminist literary movement to contribute in analyzing both works from different angles.

Ultimately, the American literature has a great history that was built on a set of theories and basic concepts. It was developed by the assistance of both native and immigrant writers by portraying their societies using similar conceptions. The American Dream, quest of identity, and absurdism were Fitzgerald and Ng's concerns presented through their works,

*The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* respectively. The three mentioned notions have been studied in their historical and contextual backgrounds to grasp more how they were developed and included in the American literature. Then, a comparative study, through the American school, will shed the light on these focal notions of the work. In addition, critical approaches, as concepts used in the American literature, have taken place starting by tracing the autobiographical theory that is concerned with the identification of the relationship between works and the writers' personal lives and experiences. Moreover, the characters' conscious and unconscious sides have been reviewed as well as women position during the Jazz Age. Accurately, the theoretical framework had touched all the elements of the work.

## Chapter Two

### Notional and Extrinsic Analysis in *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*

Through the two narratives, *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*, a comprehensive view will be attained. Primarily, the study tends to give a general overview by going deeper through the events and showing the different characters who appeared in both works where the writer seeks to introduce certain themes and attract the reader to realize what was happening during a particular period. After demystifying both works, it is essential to demonstrate the authors' self-portrayal, analysis of characters' psyches and the role of women during that era.

Through autobiographical application, the reader can find the interconnection between the life of the writer and what is happening in the story. Thus, the two works are studied in a more abstract way by extracting external causes such as the life of the writer and his experiences that led him to reflect all that in his writings and to convey a certain idea, not free from extraneous influences, within his novel. However, the aim of the psychoanalytical reading is to study the psyche of the major characters to understand how their id, ego and superego play an important role in their decisions, actions and reactions, and shape their personality as well as the successive events in the novel. While, the feminist reading, will focus on female characters and their role in a patriarchal society as well as on their follow to the standards of society, or their liberation by living a new life that raises their usual situation and break the chains of habits.

By touching all the main points in each novel, and depending on different analysis, the American Dream notion will be examined in both works to manifest the struggle of characters who attempt to obtain this dream. Besides, the idea of identity will occupy a large part to illustrate the conflict of characters' identities between the adoption of a new identity or the preservation of the original. However, absurdism revolves around the idea of absurdity

that permeates some characters so that some of them conclude that life is meaningless and that all that is absurd.

## **2.1 Section One: *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* Conceptual Analysis: The American Dream, Quest of Identity, and Absurdism**

The following section portrays the parts that are related to both literary works, *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*. It serves to reveal Fitzgerald and Ng's lives histories and depict the experiences they went through during their personal life. Besides, a general overview about both works is going to be presented with an emphasis on characters as well as themes. Since the two novels have common themes along with the American Dream, quest of identity, and absurdism, it is interesting to relate both works under characters' actions and stories.

### **2.1.1 *The Great Gatsby* General Background**

*The Great Gatsby* is a novel written by F. Scott Fitzgerald. It was published in 1925 as a modern work. It captured the 1920's events, especially the lack of morals in the United States during post First World War. This novel has been made, later on, as a film and in the cinema (Reid). Because *The Great Gatsby* depicted mostly the notion of the American Dream that was people's interest in the Jazz Age, it became famous. It is considered as a tragic love story and a depiction of the real American life. It consists of approximately of two hundred pages, and it attracted people's attention from all over the world ("The Great Gatsby"). Fitzgerald's masterpiece covered the most important events that happened during the 1920's and marked radical changes in the American society.

#### **2.1.1.1 F. Scott Fitzgerald Life History**

F. Scott Fitzgerald is an American writer. His full name is Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald; he was born on September 24, 1896 in ST. Paul, Minnesota, that is situated in the United States. Fitzgerald is a writer and a novelist, he is known by his writings during the Jazz Age especially his novel *The Great Gatsby* in 1925 (Mizener). Through his writings,

Fitzgerald tended to depict the events that happened during the Jazz Age to clarify United States' reality in that era. Fitzgerald's father was a salesman and his mother was an Irish-catholic. Fitzgerald was named by his cousin's name after his death since he was a famous poet. Fitzgerald's family was living in New York, but they moved to Minnesota when his father lost his job. He loved a young woman called Zelda Sayre who became later on his wife, but at first, she refused to marry him except if he helped her financially. After he moved to New York, he worked as a short stories writer. Then, he broke up with Zelda, but he resumed this relationship when he returned home. In 1920, Fitzgerald and Zelda got married meanwhile the publication of his literary work *This Side of Paradise*. A year later, their first child was born and named Frances Scott Fitzgerald. Finally, Scott Fitzgerald died due to a heart attack in 1940 (O'Connor). Fitzgerald's life can be understood through his writings that hold excerpts from his real life.

At the beginning, Fitzgerald started his first novel *This Side of Paradise* in 1920. It helped him to reach fame. As a result, he participated in magazines. Fitzgerald's following novel was *The Beautiful and the Damned* in 1922. Further, in 1925, he finished his famous literary work *The Great Gatsby* where he presented the notion of the American Dream through the novel's protagonist Jay Gatsby. In the following year, he wrote three short stories *Sad Young Man*, *The Rich Boy* and *Absolution*. After years, he continued *Tender in the Night* (1934), and *The Last Tycoon* (1939). The last novel represented the success of the dream in the American life (Mizener). Noticeably, Scott Fitzgerald became famous through his valuable works.

### **2.1.1.2 *The Great Gatsby* Overview**

*The Great Gatsby* is narrated by Nick Carraway. He moved to New York, particularly, in West Egg to start his bond business. After a certain period of residence, he visited his cousin Daisy Buchanan and her husband, Tom, who he has known at university. He also met

a young woman called Jordan Baker who is Buchanan's friend. One day, Nick observed for the first time his anonymous neighbor, Gatsby, opens his hands in the sky to a green light. After few days, Tom invited Nick to go together to the Valley of ashes where Tom's mistress lives with her husband George Wilson. Nick was spending his day with Tom and his mistress Myrtle. The latter hosted her sister Catherine to join them and to enjoy the party, but it ended with a quarrel between Myrtle and Tom who has broken her nose.

Nick receives an invitation from Gatsby for one of his parties. He responds to be present where he met Jordan Baker for the second time there and he tries to thank his host Gatsby who heard many grievances and rumors about his reality. Nick and Jordan met Gatsby, a young man in his thirties, who surprised Nick and changed the stuck image in his mind. In private, Gatsby has spoken to Jordan Baker about his story as a young man who joined the army and loved a young woman named Daisy. After his return, he heard the news of her marriage and since that time, he sought to find her. Nick Carraway knew new things about his neighbor Gatsby through Baker, and about his request to invite Daisy to his house. It gets as Gatsby wanted and the meeting takes place in Nick's house. The two lovers were attracted to each other again and the tension between them has gone.

Tom has doubts about the relationship between Gatsby and his wife. As a result, Tom and Daisy host Gatsby where Jordan and Nick were present. A sharp debate happened between Tom and Gatsby about Daisy, so Jay Gatsby states that he had a relationship with Daisy and that she would not love anyone else. Whereas, Tom tells his wife that Gatsby's wealth was the source of alcohol trading. However, Daisy's answer was soothing to Gatsby and Tom that she told them she loved both, but now she is sincere only to her husband. When they return from New York City, Gatsby accompanied Daisy and both Nick and Jordan were in Tom's car. When Tom passes from the Valley of ashes, he knew that Myrtle was hit by a car and discovered that it was Gatsby's car according to eyewitnesses. At the same night,



Nick knew from Gatsby that Daisy was the one driving the car, but Gatsby assured that he would bear the consequences.

Myrtle's husband, George, was looking for his wife's killer and Tom tells him that he is Gatsby. George shot Gatsby in the pool, and then he killed himself. After the crime, Nick made a funeral to Gatsby who was killed without achieving his dream of marrying Daisy. Only Nick, his father, and a man with Owl-eyed glasses who attended the funeral. The story ends when Nick broke up with Jordan Baker, and moved away from the hypocrisy and indifference of people to seek wealth without considering morals and values.

#### **a. *The Great Gatsby* Characters**

Jay Gatsby is the protagonist of the novel. His real name is James Gats, but he had changed it at the age of seventeen to Jay Gatsby. He lives in West Egg, and he belongs to the new riches. He is a handsome young and a very respectful man who is over 30 years old, a pioneer in the war and the owner of shops and liquor secret. Gatsby is generous so that he makes free parties to be attended by hundreds of people. He loves Daisy and he wants to retrieve her but he was killed without maintaining his dream.

Nick Carraway is the storyteller, Gatsby's neighbor, and Daisy's cousin. He is a young, honest and analytical person who focuses on the smallest details. He came from a wealthy family and graduated, after being a soldier in the war, from New Haven University in 1915. Carraway settled in the East in 1922 when he started working in the sale of bonds. Throughout the novel, he is the only one who believes in the greatness of Gatsby.

Tom Buchanan is Daisy's husband who is descended from a wealthy family. He is thirty years old, solid, arrogant man who belongs to the old riches. In addition, he considers Gatsby as a drug dealer and devalues him.

Daisy Buchanan is Tom's wife and Gatsby's former beloved. Her full name is Faye Daisy; she is a beautiful woman from a wealthy family and the mother of a three year old

daughter. She is a materialistic woman who sanctifies money more than love. She kills Myrtle Wilson, without confession and without feeling guilt.

Jordan Backer is Daisy's friend and Carraway's girlfriend. She is a graceful and charming young woman, and a golf player from Louisville. She has a strong personality. As a result, she is an independent woman.

George B. Wilson is Myrtle's Husband and Tom's friend. He is a mechanic who owns a garage repairs in the area of the Valley of ashes. Wilson kills Gatsby and committed suicide at the end of the story.

Myrtle Wilson is George Wilson's wife and Tom's mistress. She is a mid 30's woman who is full of vitality, and lives in the Valley of ashes. She was killed, in a car accident, by Daisy Buchanan.

Meyer Wolfsheimer is Gatsby's friend, and his partner in the shops. He is a 50 years old gambler. Besides, he is the one who helped Gatsby to be one of the new riches.

Henry Gatsby is Gatsby's father, an old man who is very proud of his son and what he has achieved. He was among few people who attended Gatsby's funeral.

### **b. *The Great Gatsby* Themes**

Through *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald alludes several themes that describe events that happened in the Jazz Age, such as the American Dream, social class, and the Jazz Age. The United States during the twentieth century was known as the land of dreams. All the Americans as well as immigrants sought to obtain this dream by making fortune and wealth. Through the novel, the writer conveys this message through the protagonist, Jay Gatsby, who symbolizes the American Dream ("The Great Gatsby" *LitCharts* 3). Gatsby thought that wealth and fortune may help him to gain his beloved Daisy Buchanan, but he failed to gain this challenge and dream.

Besides, *The Great Gatsby* has shown different social classes. The first one is the upper class that demonstrates people who are arrogant and have a high position and power in society. It simply represents both Tom Buchanan and Daisy Buchanan. The following class represents the people who became rich recently such as Jay Gatsby. However, the lower class is the weakest and poorest layer in the society, and it is demonstrated by George Wilson and Myrtle Wilson (“The Great Gatsby” *LitCharts* 3). The conflicts between these different social classes can be revealed through their various social status.

Moreover, F. Scott Fitzgerald describes the United States during the 1920's or what is called the Roaring Twenties. After the Second World War, most of the countries throughout the world have witnessed an economic expansion (“The Great Gatsby” *LitCharts* 3). During this period, the United States was viewed as the land of dreams so that people may become easily rich as Jay Gatsby.

### **2.1.2 *Bone* General Background**

*Bone* is the first novel written by Fae Myenne Ng. It consists of 191 pages, but Ng spent approximately ten years while writing it. *Bone* is considered as Ng's self representation. Although of the novel's success, it was criticized by some Chinese critics who claimed that it does not symbolize the Chinese community in San Francisco, but Ng replied, “I can't write about all of China” (“Fae”). Evidently, *Bone* discusses the life of a Chinese family who live in San Francisco and their struggle between the Chinese and the American culture.

At the last pages of *Bone*, it is stated that, “Her work received the Rome Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a grant from the Lannan Foundation and the Lila Wallace-Readers Digest Writers Award, a finalist for the 1994 PEN/Faulkner Award was a national bestseller and a critical success” (Ng). Inevitably, *Bone* is a postmodern novel that won numerous prizes that indicates that it has known a great success in the world of literature.

### 2.1.2.1 Fae Myenne Ng Life History

Fae Myenne Ng is an American Chinese writer. She became famous after publishing her first novel *Bone*. She was born on 1957 (“Fae”), in California, San Francisco. Her father was a laborer whereas her mother was a seamstress. She studied at California Berkeley University, then at Columbia University where she gained her Master Degree (Nelson 261). During her childhood in Chinatown, she attended a Chinese school that is called Cumberland Presbyterian. Ng used to help her mother who made some items fashionable. The relationship between Ng and her mother was good which helped them to communicate with each other most times. However, her father immigrated to the United States in 1940 when he started to work as a cook in California University. As a result, Ng was supported by her parents' jobs. Moreover, she attended the Columbia University of Arts. In 1984, she has taken her master degree in Liberal Arts. In 1989, she moved to live in, New York, Brooklyn, to work as a waitress while she wrote several drafts of her first novel *Bone* (“Fae”). Ng is one of the Chinese American writers who spent their lives in the United States and delineated their experiences in their writings.

Fae Myenne Ng wrote a set of literary texts. *Bone* is her first novel that was published in 1993. It discusses the story of a Chinese family that was living in San Francisco. Then, she wrote *Ossa* in 1999. However, *Steer Toward Rock* was her last novel which was published in 2008 (“Ng Fae Myenne 1956”). *Bone* is regarded as a turning point in Ng’s career so that it made her famous besides to other literary works that were classified as one of the best Chinese American writings in the United States.

### 2.1.2.2 *Bone* Overview

Through memory, the narrator as well as the protagonist Leila tells the story of her Chinese family who live in Chinatown, San Francisco, in the United States. This family is composed of solely three daughters Leila, Ona, Nina, and their parents Leon Leong, Leila's

stepfather, and their mother Mah. Leila or Lei, the eldest sister, announces, “We were a family of three girls. By Chinese standards that wasn't lucky. In Chinatown, everyone knew our story” (Ng 1). Each family member has his/her own story in the United States through the struggle between his/her Chinese standards and the American conditions. Leila works in a Chinese school, and she married Mason Louie, without Mah and Leon permission, when she visited Nina in New York. Her husband is a Chinese American man who works as a mechanic.

Leila's memory focuses on the central event of the story that is Ona's suicide. Ona is the middle daughter who committed suicide by jumping from the Nam, the reasons behind her suicide remained unknown, but Leila mentioned the surrounding events before her death such as her drugs use and her relationship with a Chinese Spanish boy called Osvaldo. Moreover, the youngest sister Nina left her family and moved to live in New York where she works as a flight attendant to China and Hong Kong. She left her home and ignored her family's Chinese traditions. Besides, the narrator referred to the conflict between Mah and Leon. They got married after the escape of Mah's first husband, Lyman Fu, who is Leila's father. Mah and Leon were living separately after Ona's suicide. Mah is a seamstress and Leon has no steady job, but mostly works as merchant seaman.

Furthermore, Leila considers Leon as her father, she is always helping him to find a steady job, but his problem in the United States was his various birth dates and names. Through Leon, the narrator illustrates the most difficult problem that immigrants may face in the dream country that is language. It is the main reason that prohibited Leon to find a steady job, as Leila stated, “He had job skills and experience: welding, construction, and electrical work, but no English” (Ng 55). As the eldest daughter in her family, Leila was responsible for taking care of her parents and her sisters' problems. So, after Ona's death and Nina's new

life in New York, Leila is considered as the one who may lay the family's bone and collect them together again as one family after her grandfather's lost bones.

#### **a. Bone Characters**

Leila Louie or Lei is a Chinese immigrant and the eldest daughter among three girls. She works as a teacher in a Chinese public school. She is the narrator of the story as well as its protagonist. Leila's father is called Lyman Fu, but her stepfather is Leon Leong and her mother is called Mah Leong. Through the events of the story, Leila faces an identity crisis since she is a Chinese immigrant with Chinese standards living in the United States.

Although her Chinese heritage, she speaks mostly English and rarely Chinese language since she lives in America. Lei married Mason Louie without her parents' permission. Throughout the story, she is the one who lays the family's bone.

Ona Leong is Leila's sister and the middle daughter; her parents are Leon Leong and Mah Leong. She suffers from betweenness in her identity, and she was easily assimilated into the American culture. She committed suicide, but the reason behind this crime remained unknown.

Nina Leong is Leila and Ona's youngest sister. She moved from San Francisco to live in New York to reach her American Dream. Nina escaped away from her Chineseness to act as an American citizen. She works as a hostess to China and Hong Kong.

Dulcie Fu or Mah is the three girls' mother. She works at the beginning as a seamstress, but after she moves to work in her own store of children's clothes. Mah married twice, Leila's father then Leon Leong. Besides, she speaks just Chinese language.

Leon Leong is Mah's second husband and Leila's stepfather. He has no official job, but mostly he works as a merchant seaman. Leila likes Leong's creativity and intelligence in creating and producing things. Leong entered the United States illegally after changing his name. In addition, he speaks only Chinese language.

Mason Louie is Leila's husband and he works as a mechanic. Although Leila married him without her mother's permission, she felt comfortable with him and she loves his personality. Louie has no problem with the mixture between his Chinese heritage and the American culture.

Oswaldo is a Chinese Spanich man who is Ona's boyfriend. Luciano and Rosa, his parents, made a project with Leon Leong, but they deceived him. As a result, Leon refused Ona and Oswaldo's relationship.

### **b. *Bone* Themes**

Through *Bone*, Ng Fae Myenne focused on several themes such as family, American Dream, relationships, marriage, and secrets. While reading *Bone*, the reader may understand the importance of family. Leila tells a story of a Chinese family and the events that each member went through. She tends to lay her family's bone together to unify her mother, stepfather, and her sister as one family that can face all the conflicts together.

Moreover, through Leong's family, the writer exemplifies the Chinese immigrants who live in the United States and try to reach the American Dream in different ways. Leila states through her memory the actions of each member to gain his dream. It has been stated that, "To live in America was to have a future... twenty-five years in the land of gold and good fortune" (Ng 22). The United States was the land of dreams for Leong's family who spent their lives to obtain their dream.

In addition, Leila presented the relationships among her family. She started telling her relationship with Mason Louie and their marriage after a relationship of four or five years. Besides, she mentioned the relationship between her and her stepfather Leon Leong and how he considered her as his daughter as she stated, "He's not my real father, but he's the one who's been there for me" (Ng 1). Lei found that Leong used to treat her as one of his daughters. This good treatment contributed in strengthening their relationship. She described

other relationships such as Mah and her daughters' relationship, Ona and Nina, and Ona and Osvaldo relationship.

Marriage is a crucial point in *Bone*. Leila began the story with her marriage with Mason Louie. She asserts, "On vacation recently, visiting Nina in New York, I got married" (Ng 1). Along with that, she expressed her mother and her stepfather's marriage.

Besides, Ng demonstrates that *Bone* consists of family secrets such as the reasons behind Ona's suicide. Ona committed suicide but without leaving any hint to show the reasons behind this, she preferred to keep it as a secret. Additionally, Leila married Mason secretly without telling her parents.

### **2.1.3 The American Dream Incarnation in *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone***

The American Dream is the backbone theme of both writers. Fitzgerald and Ng embodied it in their literary texts through various Characters. Some characters as Jay Gatsby and Myrtle Wilson failed to attain the American Dream. While in *Bone*, there are characters who reached their dream as Nina, and those who did not as Leon Leong.

#### **a. American Dream in *The Great Gatsby***

F. Scott Fitzgerald has introduced many characteristics of the American Dream through *The Great Gatsby*. Some of these features such as pursuit of happiness, the pursuit of wealth, persistency, individualism, and self-reliance are demonstrated through characters and events (Bouti 5). In this respect, the narrator invites more attention to know about the basis of the American Dream.

The pursuit of happiness is regarded as an important factor in realizing the American Dream. Both Daisy and Tom are having a relationship outside their marriage, this is an evidence of their dissatisfaction with their happiness, and their aim to find happiness elsewhere than marriage (Bouti 5). Seemingly, marriage was not sacred in that time so that betrayal is excessively demonstrated in the novel.



Myrtle was searching for happiness so she betrayed George Wilson, her husband, with Tom because she believes that her husband could not achieve everything she wants (Bouti 5). It is obvious that, while being on the train, she would not have been with Tom, if she had not been attracted to his appearance. She is excited to be with a man like Tom as she describes him, “He had on a dress suit and patent leather shoes and I couldn’t keep my eyes off him” (Fitzgerald 40). Myrtle felt at that moment that Tom can realize her happiness. Through events, Tom buys to Myrtle everything she wants. For instance, he bought her a dog, and made her feel comfortable in their apartment by buying all of her dues and needs.

Moreover, Gatsby represents the success that leads to wealth. He changed his name James Gatz to Jay Gatsby, at his seventeenth, to fit in with his serious career. Gatsby changed his life from a poor man and a farmer's son to a very rich man (Bouti 6). Apparently, Gatsby’s life has been totally changed so that he reached wealth and became one of the new riches.

Persistency is evident in the novel especially through Gatsby who struggled to move from poverty to the world of wealth and luxury (Bouti 6). Definitely, his will and diligence in the pursuit of realizing his American Dream was the reason for his success and his arrival to richness.

Furthermore, the idea of individualism is a feature of city dwellers as some characters in *The Great Gatsby*. Most of them believe that individual diligence gives them the opportunity to do whatever they seek for without any outside help. For instance, Tom is a wealthy and independent man who helps the mechanic George Wilson (Bouti 7). Noticeably, the individualistic person has efforts that indicate his social freedom as Tom Buchanan. Besides him, Jordan Baker is seen as an individualistic, independent, and a persistent woman.

Self reliance appears unequivocally from the beginning of the novel where Nick Carraway tells his transition in the summer of 1922 to New York to begin his bond work

(Bouti 7). He tried to rely on himself in a place he had never dealt with before as he stated when someone asked to show him the West Egg village, “And as I walked on I was lonely no longer. I was a guide, a pathfinder, an original settler” (Fitzgerald 6). Nick became a self-reliant so that he felt he belonged to that new place.

Similarly, Tom asserts to Gatsby that Daisy loves him. Besides, Tom reveals that he does not care about the relationship that Gatsby had with Daisy five years ago (Bouti 8). This confession makes Tom a self-reliant character who relies only on his decisions without integrating others in his personal issues.

*The Great Gatsby* carries the theme of the American Dream sought by characters. For most, the pursuit of wealth is priority to realize that dream. The material life is the criterion that determines the happiness of a person. The writer explained this image through his portrayal of the luxury scenes. He illustrated the idea of the consumer society through Myrtle who is seeking to live a life of luxury with Tom Buchanan. Gatsby has also sought to win Daisy by reaching a fortune through illegal ways. Therefore, both characters see that the American Dream is material. Fitzgerald shows the fall of the American Dream through both Gatsby and Myrtle (Lindberg 13-16). It is clear that the narrator criticizes the wrong vision that people had about the American Dream.

Myrtle bears Tom's arrogance only to feel that she deserves a better life, but she did not realize her dream. She is just a mistress for Tom, as it turns out that he broke her nose because she made fun of his wife Daisy. Likewise, Gatsby tries to repeat the past by having Daisy, even though she was married, to tempt her with his wealth. His strategy failed and he did not reach his dream. Moreover, Fitzgerald criticizes the idealism of the American Dream through Gatsby so that his dream of winning Daisy and regaining the fire of love between them is what brought his death. Jay Gatsby represents the corrupted American Dream as he followed illegal and immoral ways to be with Daisy. Through Gatsby's action, the American

Dream took another way that is far from its original meaning (Islam 21). Indeed, Fitzgerald attempted to reflect how both Myrtle and Gatsby believed in the importance of the material life to achieve their dream.

Undoubtedly, Fitzgerald gave Gatsby a unique character of his kind so that he has a dual personality represented in his achievement of wealth through illegal ways and his crazy love to Daisy. Gatsby sought to raise wealth and achieve a high position in society to realize his American Dream because at that time the American Dream was associated with the pursuit of money and substance. However, the real American Dream for Gatsby is to restore the past (Islam 21-22). It is stated in the novel that Nick had a different opinion about repeating the past, so that he claimed, “[You] Can’t repeat the past”, in return, Gatsby said “Why of course you can!” (Fitzgerald 118). Gatsby has a great will to rebuild his relationship with Daisy as a rich person.

#### **b. American Dream in *Bone***

Through *Bone*, Ng sheds the light on several themes that deliberate the conflicts of the Chinese family in Chinatown, San Francisco, in the United States. She tends to display the notion of the American Dream from immigrants’ vision. Besides, she mentioned the conflicts of each member in this family to reach happiness, wealth, and freedom in the United States chiefly that they are not purely Americans.

Ng focuses on the representation of the poor Chinese immigrant families in the United States and their conflicts to live a better life. According to her, model minority has no hope to obtain their dreams for being wealthy unless they would make hard efforts. She criticized the idea of immigrant’s success and considered it as a myth. In addition, she describes the hard situation of a Chinese family who live in Chinatown, the working class, during the twentieth century. This family is presented as an example of the Asian immigrants who suffer in their lives in America. Leila, *Bone's* narrator and the eldest daughter, describes the events of each

character through flashbacks and their struggles to reach the American Dream (Zhang 105). Undeniably, Ng pointed to the conflicts that the Chinese family faced in their way to realize their American Dream as a minority group in America.

The whole family, Leila, Leong Leon, Dulcie Fu, Nina, fight to know the reason behind Ona's suicide, but Ng left the question opposed and gives the reader an opportunity to recognize the reason behind this event. Donald Geollnicht, a critic, linked this event to the American Dream as he claimed, "Ona becomes the embodiment of their American Dream turned nightmare" (qtd. in Zhang 111). He relates the characters' story to Ona's suicide and considers it as the turning point in their lives.

Leon Leong, who entered to the United States illegally, worked hard to live in this country as Leila confirmed, "Out of sea, on the ships, Leon worked in every room: Engine, Deck, and Navigation" (Ng 34). Despite the efforts he made, Leon has no steady job that led him to work multiple jobs. He can not find this stable job because he is a Chinese immigrant and he faces racism and discrimination. Leila discovered, through the letters of Leong's rejection for jobs, that English language prohibited him to reach his American Dream, and to have a steady job. The narrator professes, "He had job skills and experience: welding, construction, and electrical work, but no English" (Ng 55). Obviously, the immigrants who lacked or did not master English had no opportunity to reach the American Dream, even if they are experts in good works. Leong experienced rejection several times, "We don't want you" (Ng 55), but he did not give up. He made a new business with Luciano Ong, Osvaldo's father, to reach his dream, but he failed again (Zhang 116). Leong, through his challenges and experiences, made efforts as possible as he can to realize his ambitions.

After Ona's death, Leong discovered that all the efforts he made to gain the American Dream failed, so he criticized America as Leila declared, "He blamed all of America for making big promises and breaking everyone where was the good job he'd heard about as a

young man? where was the successful business?... America... this lie of a country!’’ (Ng 100). Patently, Leon did not reach his American Dream because he is not an American and he is unable to speak English. As a result, he blamed America because he views it a source of his family’s dispersion after Ona’s death.

Unlike Leong Leon, Nina escaped from Chinatown to New York with a view to gain her American Dream. She lived in that state as an American citizen; she left her family and her traditions to work as a flight attendant. Nina gained her American Dream through her contact to the American culture. She started a new life and assimilated to the American standards and conditions. Definitely, Leong's family is a typical example of Chinese immigrants who confront to attain the American Dream.

#### **2.1.4 Identity Inquiry in *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone***

Both Fitzgerald and Ng stressed on the theme of identity. Fitzgerald wanted to elucidate the Americans’ identity during the Jazz Age. However, Ng tried to clarify the Chinese immigrants’ identity and their struggles in a strange country. Patently, both writers reveal the quest of identity and its changes.

##### **a. Identity in *The Great Gatsby***

*The Great Gatsby* carries the theme of identity that encompasses both individual and national identity. It is clear that the characters suffer from an identity crisis in search for their individual identity or their real national identity (“The Identity Crisis” 16). *The Great Gatsby* characters tried to question their own identity and their national identity since any change that affects the individual’s identity will affect the whole nation.

The story begins with an advice to Nick from his father about criticizing others where he assured, “whenever you feel like criticizing any one... just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve had” (Fitzgerald 3). In response to his father's words, Nick told himself that, “[he is] inclined to reserve all judgments... reserving

judgements is a matter of infinite hope” (Fitzgerald 3) and that, “a sense of the fundamental decencies is parceled out unequally at birth” (Fitzgerald 4). Nick believed that his father’s advice should be practiced so that it distances him from interferes (“The Identity Crisis” 16). All these provisions indicate Nick's struggle with himself as he tries not to be quick and biased in his view. Accordingly, Nick can have a personal identity crisis that will be a national crisis throughout the events of the story.

The national identity of the United States is demonstrated through four settings; New York City, Long Island, both East and West Egg, and the Valley of ashes. The latter shows the miserable place that contains poor people as contrary to other places, but it reflects the true identity of its inhabitants. In addition, it is clear that the phenomenon of corruption and moral decay appear unequivocally in other places without the Valley of ashes (“The Identity Crisis” 16). Through various places in the United States, the national identity can be represented through inhabitants’ values, actions and their belonging to one nation.

Long Island with its both Eggs includes riches, but the West Egg represents the “new money” whereas the East Egg represents the “old money”. Gatsby acts differently than people from either Eggs so that he hosted East Eggs to his parties in his castle. The connection between East and West Eggs was not existed before. Through his parties, Gatsby contributes in the occurrence of an identity crisis (“The Identity Crisis” 16). Gatsby’s aim to attract Daisy’s attention led him to raise an identity crisis through gathering both Eggs under his parties.

The characters aim is the pursuit of material interests while their values and morals have gone in the way of non-existence. The main reason for this is capitalism that misled their individual and national identity. For instance, Gatsby made his own past as he asserted to be from a wealthy family, the only inheritor and that he had achieved much in his life, but it is a fake past. He had suffered so much in his life and he had given up his name, James

Gatz, at the age of seventeenth to become Jay Gatsby. He has also a different personality so that he tried to erase his past and have a better future (“The Identity Crisis” 17-18). All these changes reveal that Gatsby adopted a new identity that helps him to fit in among the upper layer.

When Gatsby died, it turns out that his quest to win Daisy through the pursuit of wealth makes him a materialistic person whose name only remains in people’s memory. In other words, he lost his dream (“The Identity Crisis” 18). Gatsby’s wrong perspective about using wealth as a mean to win back Daisy shapes his character as being materialistic. In addition, Nick returned to Midwest After seeing a decadent morality and indifference of Eggs. For him, both Daisy and Tom were considered to be missing out. All what matters to them is their wealth and their position, no one of them took responsibility for his/her mistake or for Gatsby's death. Thus, Nick sees that wealth became at the place of morals to form the identity of individuals (“The Identity Crisis” 18). Seemingly, morals and values were neglected in the Jazz Age, and the wealth can be regarded as a standard to represent one’s moralistic principles partially and his individual identity entirely. Therefore, the theme of identity occupied a large place in the novel where the writer portrayed the great difference adopted by the characters after the First World War their remarkable changes contributed to the occurrence of the low morals and the huge interest in money that changed the national identity.

### **b. Identity in *Bone***

Through *Bone*, Ng discusses how the characters try to form their identities between their motherland, China, and the United States. Leon Leong and Mah represent the old generation since they were born in China and immigrated to the United States. Whereas the three daughters, Leila, Ona, and Nina, symbolize the new generation since they were born and lived in the United States, but with Chinese standards. First, Leon Leong found himself

between his Chineseness and the American identity. He tended to assimilate into the American culture to reach the American Dream, but he failed since he kept his Chinese identity. He faced a difficulty in choosing between his official identity and the American one. Although he has changed his name, he failed to be an American.

Even The three daughters faced the same problem. Indeed, they belong to a Chinese family, but they live far from their ancestors and parents' country. Therefore, they would face an identity crisis between their Chineseness and the American standards. The narrator professes, “We were a family of three girls. By Chinese standards... in Chinatown” (Ng 1). The three daughters find themselves between their culture as well as the culture of the place they live in. Moreover, Leila and Ona found themselves between two cultures and were unable to separate between them or adopt one of them. They believe that the American culture is better than the Chinese. Leila and Ona represent the symbol of the second generation's identity crisis that is challenged by the dual culture and the complex paradoxes. According to Bhabha, they belong to the unstable space called the liminal space that is ruled by culture (Cheng 151). Furthermore, Ona was suffering from betweenness in several situations. Primarily, she experienced betweenness as being the middle daughter in family. Then in her world between her Chinese values and the American freedom since American culture allows love relationship unlike Chinese principles. Ona faced a dilemma of choice; her first choice is to make a successful relationship through the American standards while the second is breaking up with her boyfriend to keep her Chinese standards.

Ona's identity crisis may be considered as the reason for her suicide. Although the narrator did not mention the reason behind Ona's suicide, it is stated, “She never felt comfortable, even with the Chinese crowd that Osvaldo hung around with; she never felt like she fit in” (Ng 170). Ona was not comfortable simply because she could not adjust or belong to just one culture. Her identity crisis prohibited her to make a good life neither in



Chinatown, Chinese world, nor outside of it. She could not feel as neither purely Chinese nor American. Leila was similar to Ona because of her inner struggle. Clearly, after Ona's death, Leila was living with her mother in Chinatown for a long time. In this case, she faced an identity crisis between the Chinese and the American cultures. She moved between Chinatown that represents the Chinese identity and the places where her husband work during his missions. These places represent the American identity where Leila felt more comfortable as she claimed, ‘‘I agreed. At Chinatown places, you can only talk about the bare issues. In American restaurant, the atmosphere helps me forget’’ (Ng 24). Leila has a tendency to the American culture, but she was obliged to follow the Chinese one.

Besides, Lei was combining between the two languages, Chinese and English, in difficult situations that revealed her crisis between two identities. Finally, Nina, the youngest sister, was the most Americanized daughter since she left Chinatown, Chinese world, to live in New York, American world, but she is belonging to her Chinese family (Cheng 159). The Chinese family members found an obstacle in obtaining just one identity, so they kept conflicting between the American and the Chinese identities.

### **2.1.5 The Embodiment of Absurdism in *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone***

*The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* hold the concept of absurdism. Each writer inclined to highlight it through Americans and Chinese Americans respectively. Both narratives have signs about the meaningless of life, but each writer introduced it in his way.

#### **a. Absurdism in *The Great Gatsby***

Albert Camus claimed that a human being ‘‘never be happy if [he] continue[s] to search for what happiness consists of’’ (qtd. in Madiou). In this respect, the hero of the story, Jay Gatsby, has the wealth that he dreamt of, but his happiness was not completed since he did not win back Daisy. He was looking for the ingredients of happiness, so he thought he

would feel happy only with Daisy. Searching always for his happiness, which is completed by Daisy, makes him unhappy and an absurd hero.

In addition, Fitzgerald affirmed that there “‘was a new generation... grown up to find all gods dead, all wars fought and all faith in man shaken’” (qtd. in Madiou), so he used his novel *The Great Gatsby* as an illustration for his speech. Therefore, the writer portrayed the situation of people after the First World War. They were characterized by indifference and their values, based on religious principles, had been totally changed. Further, they were in a case of loss so that the radical changes happened in the Jazz Age.

Obviously, Gatsby is aware of his struggle to identify the meaning of life. Therefore, he tried to confront it with a strong will and determination by bringing Daisy's attention to him and his wealth to find the meaning of his presence in life. Notably, Jay Gatsby adopted the qualities of the absurd hero, as he is a rebellious (Madiou). Being rebellious is shown when the poor young man, James Gatz, turned to be a rich man and came out of poverty.

Besides, the absurd hero has a great interest in appearance as Albert Camus professes that he “‘demonstrates to what degree appearing creates being’” (qtd. in Madiou). Likewise, Jay Gatsby who sanctifies appearance as Nick describes his clothes as “‘shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel... he brought more and the soft rich heap mounted higher—shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple-green and lavender and faint orange, with monograms of Indian blue’” (Fitzgerald 99). Undoubtedly, it is shown that all his clothes are from the expensive brand. In addition, he was very elegant the day he met with Daisy at Nick's house as he is described “‘In a white flannel suit, silver shirt and gold-colored tie’” (Fitzgerald 90), so he is considered as an absurd hero who cares of the physical appearance.

Furthermore, suicide is an action that indicates the belief of the useless meaning of life. Through *The Great Gatsby*, George Wilson committed suicide after killing Gatsby. George

sees that life has no meaning after his wife's death. Apparently, he was living as normal people who tried to get a better life; he has a garage repairs, he was helped by Tom Buchanan, and he worked hard to gain more. Wilson has no friends, no family and no children. He has only his wife Myrtle who lived with her eleven years. Her death made him feel desperate of life so that all what he sought is to revenge for her, and then he killed himself since life is absurd in his view and he has no purpose to live for.

### **b. Absurdism in *Bone***

Through *Bone*, Ng has represented suicide as the central event that is related to absurdism. She introduced the place where Leong's family live in, Chinatown, as an absurd setting, "Fae Myenne Ng in her first novel *Bone* presents an Absurd Chinatown that must be treated as 'home', as resulted from the play of the spatial dislocation and temporal anachronism" (Jie). History defined Chinatown as an absurd place. In addition, "Chinese Americans deeply stuck in such a source of pressure and in the binary pair of presence and absence construct their subjectivity" (Jie) so that Chinese immigrants tend to find a way out of the American culture.

Chinatown, in the United States, is known through history as the place that Chinese immigrants live in. It traced the racial discrimination of the Chinese immigrants as they were treated violently. For Americans, Chinese people who live in Chinatown are viewed as other because they were marginalized (Cheng 144). Chinese immigrants were treated as if they do not belong to the United States; simply because they were born in another country and they are not purely Americans. Through *Bone*, Chinatown is a place of darkness and failure for Leong's family, as it is described, "A failed family. That Dulcie Fu. And you know which one: bald Leon. Nothing but daughters" (Ng 1). It represents the bad luck, Leila states, "We were a family of three girls. By Chinese standards that wasn't lucky" (Ng 1). Unhappiness,

loss, Ona's suicide, and family's struggle are due the absurd place. For instance, Leila's parents conflict with each other. It is said:

Chinatown is a place of loss, sadness, and dullness: Ona's suicide, family conflicts, and discrimination. The settings in the novel are mostly negative referential places orienting the reader: buildings of darkness, gloominess, dampness, and crampedness. These places expose the reader to the unpleasant smell of Leon's room, the narrow, messy scene of apartments, and the tense laboring in the sweatshop. These scenes reveal frustration, boredom, and suffocation of life. (Cheng 145)

Chinatown can be viewed as an absurd setting where Leong's family suffers and faces problems. It is the place of tragedy because it always makes them remember Ona's suicide. For the family, Chinatown is an oppressive place and the main cause of her suicide since she considered that life is absurd.

Both Fitzgerald and Ng have reflected their life experiences on their novels *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* respectively. Through both stories, writers have shed the light on three major concepts that are the American dream, quest of identity, and absurdism. Seemingly, the characters and their stories bear the three notions from both natives and Chinese immigrants' visions.

## **2.2 Section Two: *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* Extrinsic Analysis**

*The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* are a mirror that portrays many aspects of the writer's life. This is not the only common thing between the two narratives so that they have both carried a set of themes that have been clarified. After the raising notion of the American Dream, both Americans and immigrants such as Chinese tried to achieve it. As a result, a fundamental shift happened in their principles, so their first goal was to seek wealth. In their way to achieve their American Dream, some sink in the cycle of identity loss or surrendering to a new identity imposed by their desires to reach their dream. Their psyche has known a wave

of internal and external conflicts that shaped their personality under the daze of realizing the same dream. In the midst of these changes, the concept of the new woman emerged to liberate women from the chains of the old customs. Although some of them did not reach the meaning of emancipation, but both types of women sought to realize their American Dream alongside men.

### **2.2.1 Autobiographical Interpretation**

Many writers tend to depict their personal life and experiences through their literary works. As such, Fitzgerald and Ng sought to involve some of their lives events through *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* respectively. Correspondingly, the reader can notice that the author's work bears a resemblance to his/her life.

#### **2.2.1.1 F. Scott Fitzgerald's Self Portrayal**

Fitzgerald was fond of writing and literature. His first writing was in the school newspaper as he wrote texts for theatre performances and participated in magazines such as the Princeton Tiger humor and the Nassau Literary Magazine ("F. Scott"). It can be noted that Nick is similar to Fitzgerald where he claimed that "I was rather literary in college one year I wrote a series of very solemn and obvious editorials for the 'Yale News' " (Fitzgerald 6). Appropriately, Fitzgerald has given some of his qualities to the character of his novel Nick Carraway. In addition, the writer was a second lieutenant in the infantry after joining the army in 1917 ("F. Scott"), as Gatsby who joined the army as a first lieutenant as he confessed, "Then came the war, old sport... I accepted a commission as first lieutenant when it began" (Fitzgerald 71). Therefore, Gatsby experienced the feeling of joining the army and being present during the war as Fitzgerald did.

Moreover, Fitzgerald falls in love with a very beautiful girl called Zelda Sayre from a rich family ("F. Scott"), as happened with the hero of the story, Jay Gatsby who falls in love with Daisy. Furthermore, Fitzgerald and Gatsby share the same problem, which is alcohol;

the latter is alcohol addict while the former is alcohol dealer. Nevertheless, Zelda and Daisy were not alcoholic. Besides that, Fitzgerald was so famous, but the spread of the news of his addiction is a reason to undermine his reputation as a writer lacking responsibility (“F. Scott”). As was the case with Jay Gatsby, who was famous for his richness and loud parties, but his reputation among people was bad because of the spread news of his alcohol business and other illegal works.

### 2.2.1.2 Fae Myenne Ng’s Self Portrayal

Many writers tell their own stories through writing; they use fictional characters to symbolize their personal life. Fae Myenne Ng as a writer did the same, she took her life experiences and applied them in her first novel *Bone* (“Fae”). Through some events of the novel, she was telling her own life through Leong's family. Ng argued in an interview that:

The moving backwards structure comes from life. I grew up among the Chinese bachelor society, a generation of old timers who, because of a whole series of conditions—exclusion and miscegenation laws, revolutions in China—came to this country to work and ended up not being able to return home. (Ng Interview)

Ng belongs to the first generation of Chinese immigrants as the case with Mah and Leong and she experienced what most Chinese community went through in the United States.

Then, *Bone's* author spent her childhood in, Chinatown, San Francisco where she was born (“Fae”). Similarly, the three daughters in the novel, Leila, Ona, and Nina grew up in the same region where Ng did. It is stated that, “Fae Myenne Ng takes readers into the hidden heart of San Francisco's Chinatown, to the world of one family's honor” (Ng). Ng used to speak Chinese language in her home (“Fae”) as Leila, *Bone's* narrator, who used to do the same with Mah and Leong. For instance, when she tried to tell Mah about her marriage she proclaimed, “I went up to Mah and started out in Chinese” (Ng 19). Furthermore, Ng's father immigrated to the United States in 1940 (“Fae”) who is similar to Leong who

immigrated to the same country. Ng's mother is a seamstress ("Fae"), as Mah's job, "her mother, Mah, a seamstress in a garment shop run by a Chinese Elvis" (Ng). Indubitably, Ng's life resemble different characters in *Bone* that construe that she is influenced by her personal life.

In addition, Ng moved from San Francisco to live in New York ("Fae"). As similar to the youngest daughter in the novel, Nina, who left Chinatown to continue her life in New York as it is affirmed, "The family's youngest, Nina, who has escaped to New York by working as a flight attendant" (Ng). Fae Myenne was living between the Chinese and the American societies where the Chinese people may face an identity crisis between the two cultures ("Fae"). This issue was presented through the characters who struggle to find a way out, and try to balance between the two identities, "Fae Myenne Ng's luminous debut explores what it means to be a stranger in one's own family, a foreigner in one's own neighborhood \_\_and whether it's possible to love a place that may never feel quite like home" (Ng). Enourmously, Ng vouches the stuggles and the challanges of Chinese immigrants, through characters, in America.

Besides, Ng received a good education ("Fae") as Leila in the story who is well educated and speaks both English and Chinese fluently. Moreover, Ng likes her Chinese traditions and wants to apply them in *Bone* as she assures:

America was work and China was home. The ritual of sending our ancestors' bones back home to China was one that moved me. I included bone among the five Chinese elements: fire, water, metal, earth, and wood. I thought bone was the best metaphor to speak about the enduring quality of the immigrant spirit. The book is called *Bone* to revere the old timers' tradition of sending their bones back to China. (Ng Interview)

She presented this idea in her first novel and chose *Bone* as its title.

Finally, Ng's parents did not understand and speak English as she claimed in New York Times review that her parents are as Leong and Mah who do not experience this language. Through *Bone*, Ng wrote her own experiences and the suffering of the Chinese community live in the United States through fictional characters as Leong, Mah, Leila, Ona, and Nina.

## 2.2.2 Psychoanalytical Interpretation

Characters' psyches differ according to the situations and the events they have witnessed. In both novels, the conscious and the unconscious sides have a significant role in shaping characters's personalities. Through analyzing characters's psyche, the reader can deeply understand each character.

### 2.2.2.1 Characters Psychological Conflicts in *The Great Gatsby*

Through events, behaviors and the narrative point of view, the identity of each character can be shown in the novel. The inner motives and impulses prove everything that characters do. Besides, the id, the ego, and the superego form the character's psyche.

Starting by Gatsby, his id is represented in his inclination to win back Daisy. He became a part of the upper class through his enormous wealth that he owns. He believed that everything could be bought by money (Gholipour and Sanahmadi). Gatsby's pursuit of wealth was his aim to attract Daisy and to win her love again. However, Tom Buchanan's id is based on his "instant gratification", he satisfies himself and his desires without caring for his actions. For instance, he betrayed Daisy with another woman called Myrtle (Gholipour and Sanahmadi). Obviously, he responds to his desires call. Whereas, Daisy Buchanan's id is demonstrated through her unbridled desire for money so that it is described that, "Her voice is full of money" (Fitzgerald 128) to show how much she is materialistic. While seeing shirts, she sobbed, "It makes me sad because I've never seen such—such beautiful shirts before" (Fitzgerald 99). She was insignificantly concerned with a material life. Her crying when she



saw Gatsby's expensive shirts is a proof of her desire to fill her eyesight and her life entirely with materialism.

Definitely, Gatsby's ego is shown through his dual personality that is mixed between moral and immoral (Gholipour and Sanahmadi). Gatsby followed illegal ways to be rich that made him lack morals, at the same time he has values since he struggled for his pure love. Whereas, Tom's ego can appear when he told George Wilson, Myrtle's husband, that Gatsby is the one who killed his wife. By doing that, he assured that Daisy can not be with someone else. On the other hand, Daisy's ego is represented through her marriage to Tom, so she has taken a step by marrying him and giving her life a priority in order to build a family instead of waiting Gatsby and losing her time.

Nick Carraway is Gatsby's superego so that he tried always to direct Gatsby and gave him advice and warnings (Gholipour and Sanahmadi). Accordingly, Nick tries always to help Gatsby to reach perfection through being his superego that he aids him to control his desires and to be more moralistic. However, Daisy's superego is revealed through her sticking to community standards, so she did not drink alcohol and she tried always to show her joy of marrying Tom. She was not happy in her marriage so that she was drunk at first time in her life, cried a lot, and she was about to break up if Jordan did not intervene and help her regain consciousness.

Throughout the novel, the story is woven from events that bear the external and internal conflicts of the characters. At its beginning, the reader is aware of Tom's hidden relationship with a woman when Nick Carraway was present at the Buchanan's house. In addition, Myrtle got upset because of Tom and Daisy's relationship and she repeated Daisy's name several times, ending with a violent reaction from Tom, who broke her nose. Along with, Daisy told Nick about her despair when she put her first baby, a girl, and Tom was not there that day. Daisy attempts to tell her cousin about her struggles and her griefs (Boggs).

Apparently, both Daisy and Myrtle went through struggles that shaped their life. Moreover, Daisy pretends that she lives in prosperity and happiness, but bears the image of Tom's abuse to her.

### **2.2.2.2 Characters Psychological Conflicts in *Bone***

Leong family were introduced as a sample of Chinese immigrants who have witnessed various problems. The conflicts of each character differ from others according to the settings and the events that they face in this land, especially their internal conflicts after Ona's suicide.

The family's thoughts related and concentrated on the main event of the story that is Ona's suicide. After Ona's death, each character started blaming him/herself about this tragedy. Leila blamed her self for not paying more attention to her halvesister problems. In addition, Ona's parents, Mah and Leon, blamed themselves about this suicide. Leila confirms, "The old timers believed that the blood came from the mother and the bones from the father. Ona was part Leon and part Mah, but neither of them could beleived that Ona's unhappiness was all her own, Mah blamed herself" (Ng 101). Ona's suicide led to the appearance of characters' internal conflicts. As the external conflict is concerned, Ona's death urged the external conflicts to appear chiefly between Mah and Leon, "Mah called Leon a do-nothing bum. He called her a bad mother the world's worst wife" (Ng 124). After blaming themselves, Mah and Leon tended to blame each other. Furthermore, the characters faced many struggles through Leila's memory such as their conflicts between, two worlds, Chinese standards and American conditions and the conflicts between parents and children.

Leila's id appears when she followed her desire of marrying Mason Louie. She liked his personality and agreed that he is her suitable husband, but Lei married that man without her parents' permission when she visited her youngest sister Nina in New York. Besides, her id is revealed when she neglected Ona's problems. While, Ona's id appears when she committed suicide without thinking about her family and about the results that would appear

after her death. She left nothing for her family to know the reasons behind this tragedy. Further, Nina's id is represented while she escaped from San Francisco to New York to start a new life without her parents. Nina works as a flight attendant, she inclined to realise her dreams and desires through neglecting her responsibility towards her family and her Chineseness to live as an American. In addition, Mah's id is introduced when she ignored her responsibility toward her daughters. She is perceived as the cause of the family's separation when she was in relationship with her boss Tommie Hom. For Leon Leong, his id is to achieve his dream to make a fortune without thinking about the results. He entered the United States illegally to obtain his dreams and ignored his promise to his paper father to return his bones to China.

In addition, Leila's ego occurs through her responsibility towards her parents particularly and her family generally. As the eldest daughter in her family, Leila was responsible to control every thing in her family. Mostly after Ona's death and Nina's new life in New York, Leila was almost spending her time with her parents in Chinatown although she is married. Whereas, Mah's ego appears when she took care of Leila alone when her first husband Lyman Fu, Leila's father, escaped to Australlia. Mah was pregnant by Leila; she worked in a shop and took care of her only daughter. Then she married Leon because she needs a man behind her.

According to her memory, Lei introduced that she is the link between her parents and the new world, America, because she is their translator since they do not speak English fluently. Although Leila speaks English fluently, her unconcious appears when she is in difficult situations by mixing unconsciously Chinese and English. According to the plot that Leila went through, she wants, in the first situation, to inform her mother about her marriage with Mason. Leila describes the situation while telling her mother about her marriage, "I went up to Mah and started out in Chinese [that] I want to tell you something. [In return] Mah

looked up, wide-eyed, expectant. I switched to English [and I said] Time was right, so Mason and I just went to City Hall. We got married there’’ (Ng 19). Leila, unconsciously, combined Chinese and English languages to escape from difficult situations. Nevertheless, in the second situation, she mixed both languages when she was concerned to inform her parents about Ona's suicide.

Characters conflicts were due to Ona's suicide. Ona was in betweenness that led to the emergence of her internal conflict. She is in the middle position in her family since she is neither the eldest daughter nor the youngest, ‘‘Our order of birth marked us and came to tell more than our given names’’ (Ng 1). Ona's order in the family can be regarded as the main reason that affected negatively her psychology. Moreover, when her father Leon ordered her to break up with Osvaldo, she found herself in the middle again; between her father's decision and her boyfriend whom she loves as Leila claimed, ‘‘[Leon] told her to break up with Osvaldo. [He said] I forbid you to see that mongel boy. Crooked father. Crooked son, [Ona] told Leon she loved Osvaldo, [in return, he said] you will no longer be my daughter, I will no longer be your father’’ (Ng 169). The relationship between Ona's father and Osvaldo affects her psyche. Ona's third in-between position is marked when she finds her self between her Chinessness and her new world America.

Definitely, the setting affects the characters' psyches. Through the narrator's description, Chinatown represents sadness, loss, depression, suicide, darkness, bad luck, and family's struggle. For instance, Leila argues, ‘‘When I suggested China town, Nina said it was too depressing, at Chinatown places, you can only talk about the bare issues. In America restaurants, the atmosphere helps me forget’’ (Ng 24). For Leong's family, Chinatown is the land of stress and the dark side in their lives.

Society can be regarded as a factor that determines the story's events and the characters' reactions. The traditions limit in away the characters' freedom. Leila's super ego is her

society and her position in the family as the eldest daughter as she assured, “I was the eldest, they thought I was responsible: You should have known, you should have said something, done something” (Ng 23). Obviously, Leila was obliged to take care of her parents and sisters because of her position in the family. Moreover, America is regarded as the super ego because Leon Leong blamed this country, as it is mentioned, “He blamed all of America for making big promises and breaking every one” (Ng 100). He assumed that America is the main reason for his family's problems.

### **2.2.3 Women between Self-identification and Subjugation**

Women, as a part in their society alongside men, fight to ameliorate their situations in a patriarchal society. Both narratives represent two types of women. Some demonstrate their strengths and their overcome of various obstacles to transmit their voice. However, others tend to obey the old norms of the society and keep being dependent so that they are seen as oppressed.

#### **2.2.3.1 In *The Great Gatsby***

Although the author F. Scott. Fitzgerald introduces the life of a male protagonist, Gatsby, yet he tried to concentrate on showing the position of women in the Jazz Age. Three female characters in the novel play a major role, Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker and Myrtle Wilson. Despite their various distinctions, each one of them demonstrates the position of women in a patriarchal society as a new kind of woman. Nick Carraway tries to make the reader see through his perspective and have a comprehensive overview about all female characters. In the novel, women are negatively portrayed as most of them were drunk and unaware of their actions, which represents the image of women after the First World War (Tavandashti). For instance, in the third chapter, a woman was described as being, “One of these gypsies in trembling opal, seizes a cocktail out of the air, dumps it down for courage

and moving her hands like Frisco dances out alone on the canvas platform” (Fitzgerald 45). This action reveals her abnormal state that is influenced by wine in one of Gatsby parties.

In addition, it has been recounted that, “Old men pushing young girls backward in eternal graceless circles, superior couples holding each other tortuously, fashionably and keeping in the corners” (Fitzgerald 51), to portray how women were considered as a fun for men. Moreover, a singer of the party, a young lady, was completely drunk, and through her singing, “she was not only singing, she was weeping too” (Fitzgerald 56). Her song was mixed with tears and sadness. Some women also complained about their husbands and refused to return to their homes, as one of them claimed that “We’re always the first ones to leave” (Fitzgerald 57). They were fond of night parties and its fun and fuss, as contrary to traditional women who used to stay at their homes.

Furthermore, the novel bears a picture of the social freedom that women have reached. For example, the appearance of characters is very variable than before and it matches with the Jazz Age. All the clothes and hairdos of female characters were modern (Tavandashti). For instance, Jordan Baker represents the new woman who is a player of golf, and used to wear sports clothes as Nick describes her “All her dresses, like sports” (Fitzgerald 55). Definitely, women entered new fields like sports and became independent as men.

In addition, both Daisy and Myrtle are married, but they did not respect the principles of marriage. Daisy betrays her husband, Tom Buchanan, Myrtle betrays her husband, George Wilson, and Jordan does a prenuptial relationship (Tavandashti). They have different purposes, Daisy wanted to live her old love story, however Myrtle needed to live the life of luxury she dreams of, and Jordan tried to have a new experience through a love story with Nick Carraway.

Besides, women had the freedom to get children so that Myrtle had no children despite her marriage that lasted more than eleven years whereas Daisy has only one daughter.

Apparently, women are out of the old society norms that force them to stay home and get children. Plainly, women in the Jazz Age are totally different from their grandparents. They are more independent; they reached social freedom as well as they are party fans and hustlers.

Although *The Great Gatsby* reveals the picture of the new woman, there is a category that represents oppression and subjugation. In the East Egg, women are regarded as dependent on men as well as they lack qualities that men have such as working and being more intellectual (Affroni and Hendrarti 3). Women were oppressed so that they rely on their husbands in everything. For instance, Daisy follows her husband's orders and decisions, and he seems more intellectual than her. Tom asked Nick about a book that he has read, and Daisy seems less intellectual than him when she said, "Tom's getting very profound... He reads deep books with long words in them. What was that word we\_\_" (Fitzgerald 16). Clearly, Tom is a passionat reader unlike Daisy who is out of reading and less interested in.

### **2.2.3.2 In Bone**

Through *Bone*, female characters take an important role in the events so that Mah and her daughters were highly present more than males. It is professed, "We were a family of three girls. By Chinese standards, that wasn't lucky. A failed family. That Dulcie Fu. And you know which one bald Leon. Nothing but daughters" (Ng 1). According to the Chinese society, females who live in Chinatown are less valued than males that manifests as gender inequality. Leong's family was critisized because it is formed solely by women that indicates the oppression of women in this society. In addition, Leila's father, Lyman Fu, escaped to Australia and left Mah pregnant in a strange country. This action represents the image of women oppression, especially immigrant women who suffer in the United States. Moreover, Mah is double oppressed by her husband, the traditions as well as the society. The narrator describes Mah's situation after Lyman Fu's escape, "She went to bed with questions: Tell me how to live? how to face life? how to see people... her cries told the whole story: the

runaway husband, the child, the shame in her face, her heavy, heavy face'' (Ng 185).

Patently, Mah's suffering exemplifies the immigrant woman and her oppression by traditions and society that prohibit her to get social freedom.

Women position differs from a female character to another. Ona indicates woman's weakness in her society. She committed suicide instead of fighting or getting rebellious, she gets desperate and shows that women are weak in facing their problems, and she escaped from her problems instead of facing them. Whereas, Nina and Leila are examples of women strength. Leila married a man who she loves, she chooses her husband by even without asking for her parents' permission as she claims, "Visiting Nina in New York, I married. I didn't marry on a whim... Leon was the first person I wanted to tell" (Ng 1). She got married and then she informed her parents. Likewise, Nina chooses the way that she wants to live her life; she escaped from Chinatown to New York to start a new life as a flight attendant. Accordingly, she resembles the strength of an immigrant woman who can live an independent life far from her family and alone with her own plans. As a result, the strong women can obtain their dreams like Leila and Nina, but if they choose to be weak, they will suffer and give up like Ona.

Fitzgerald and Ng tried to film the reality of the Americans and Chinese who were so interested in reaching the American Dream. In both novels, the events have played a big role in shaping male and females's personalities. Some of them abandoned their names, customs and their human values to suit their dreams through adopting a new way of life or face changes and cling to their identities and origins. *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* are the greatest works that have captured real scenes during the raising of the American dream.

Overall, *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* have been broken up in parallel from the same perspectives. It has revealed that American natives and Chinese immigrants may share the same themes. As such, the conflicts of characters in obtaining the American Dream to reach



either success by losing some of their identity's aspects, or loss to discover the absurdity of life. Moreover, three critical approaches were applied on both novels. Firstly, both authors' self representation took part to illustrate the reflection of their personal experiences on their writings. Then, through the psychoanalytical theory, the characters's psyches in both works have been analyzed to recognize the impact of conciousness and unconciousness on their lives experiences. Besides, both native and Chinese women are concerned through an emphasis on their role in society. Both kinds of women conflict to have equal rights to men, some women can reveal their strength whereas others can show weakness and oppression. Clearly, women position with its different forms has been manifested through *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* to indicate the struggle of women in the patriarchal society.

## Chapter Three

### *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* behind the American Dream, Quest of Identity and Absurdism

The comparison method requires a study between any literatures so that it reveals the similitudes and dissimilitudes after a profound reading and comprehension. Through the American comparative school, *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* are going to be equally analyzed to trace the common as well as the diverse elements between them. Besides, both American school theories, intertextuality and parallelism will clarify how both writers share a similar way to convey a message through their works.

Through analysis, the quest of identity, absurdism and the American Dream are focal points that reveal the vision of two writers about the same concepts. It is interesting to deal with novels that tell the story of different people, natives and immigrants, who share the same place, the United States, and the same goal that is the realization of the American Dream. Undoubtedly, both Fitzgerald and Ng attempt uphold the central points together through various characters to maintain a real picture about their struggles and challenges in one country.

*The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* hold the notion of the American Dream and its failure. Various characters in both novels have a belief of realizing their dream but some failed in attaining it due to miscellaneous factors. Apparently, Fitzgerald and Ng attempt to clarify the vision of the American Dream for both natives and Chinese immigrants respectively.

#### **3.1 Section One: Reciprocal Affinities and dissimilitudes under the American Comparative School Fundamentals**

Through *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*, it is requisite to trace the similitudes and dissimilitudes between both novels. Through this method, the American comparative school with its theories, intertextuality and parallelism, allow to measure to what extent both novels

are similar or different. Correspondingly, the reader can identify the focal points that both novels share.

### 3.1.1 *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* Affinities

#### a. Genre

*The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* belong to the same type of fiction. Both of them are regarded as novels. *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald consists of approximately two hundred pages and it includes nine chapters. While *Bone* by Ng Fae Myenne consists of 191 pages and includes fourteen chapters.

#### b. American Dream

The central idea that gathers both *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* under the same agenda is the American Dream. This notion started during the Jazz Age through native writers then immigrant writers have discussed it in postmodern era. The American Dream in *The Great Gatsby* is shown through the protagonist Jay Gatsby who fights to reach his American Dream by reaching wealth and happiness to gain back his beloved Daisy Buchanan. Jay Gatsby changed his life totally from a poor to a wealthy man.

The American Dream in *The Great Gatsby* is not only limited to Jay Gatsby, Myrtle Wilson also tries to reach this dream. She thinks that her husband George Wilson has no ability to make her happy. On the other hand, she feels that Tom Buchanan is suitable for her. Myrtle feels comfortable with Tom because he is rich enough to fulfill her materialistic needs and to realize her dreams. Obviously, Myrtle makes her efforts to gain her American Dream through Tom Buchanan.

Similarly, through reading *Bone*, it is noticed that the American Dream takes a place in this novel. Leong family attempt to obtain the dream in different ways. Leon Leong travelled to the United States to live a happy life full of money, but he failed. He could not speak English that prevented him to have a job in the United States as well as he has different

names that gave a fake identity about him. Meanwhile, his youngest daughter Nina changed her life to obtain that dream by moving to New York. She forgets her Chinese heritage and sticks to the American culture, so she reached her American dream unlike her father.

### c. Identity

In *The Great Gatsby*, different characters tried to question their identity. Nick Carraway appears as the first character who has an identity crisis represented through his struggle of keeping his judgements for himself. However, Jay Gatsby has an identity crisis so that he hosted East Eggs people who did not use to attend free parties with West Eggs, as well as when he tried to change his past and renounce his origins. Besides, people's values had been changed and corruption took place. According to Nick, wealth became the interest of people so that they lost their values and real identity and kept running over money.

Likewise, characters in *Bone* suffer from an identity crisis, some were from the first generation and others were from the second. Leon Leong is from the first generation; his identity crisis is represented in his conflict either to keep his Chinese identity or to adopt the American identity. For instance, he wanted to have a stable job, but that requires mastering English language and his numerous wrong dates of birth prohibit him to find a job. Different events necessitate acting like an American, but Leong can not be involved in the American society. Even the three daughters, Leila, Ona and Nina are having an identity crisis and they experienced the case of betweenness because they have dual cultures. For instance, Ona committed suicide because of her conflicts and identity crisis. Similarly, Leila has an internal conflict so that she lived in Chinatown for a long time, and she moved to different American places with her husband. Simply, she experienced both atmospheres that are totally different. Leila was more comfortable in the American places, but she believed that she must follow her origins despite of her tendency to the American culture. In addition, she was mixing between

Chinese and English languages. Whereas, Nina adopted the American culture and relinquished her origins after an identity crisis.

#### **d. Absurdism**

Absurdism simply denotes that life is meaningless. Throughout *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*, the reader can have a vision about different characters who became desperate from life. In *The Great Gatsby*, Gerorge Wilson views that life is absurd after he lost his wife. Further Gatsby dedicated his life to be with Daisy, but she abandoned him, so he believed that he is living for nothing. As the case in *Bone*, Ona committed suicide, but it deems that her suicide is one of the steps that reveal absurdity. Patently, some male and female characters in both novels could not understand the purpose of life and its meaning, so they simply gave up and lived in absurdity.

#### **e. Memory**

Both *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* are regarded as memory novels. Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby* and Leila Leong in *Bone* narrate stories according to what they have witnessed during the whole story. In *The Great Gatsby*, several events were narrated through memory. Jordan Baker started telling the love story of Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan when she met them for the first time, “One October day in nineteen- seventeen... the largest of the banners and the largest of the lawns belonged to Daisy Fay's house. She was just eighteen... his name was Jay Gatsby and I didn't lay eyes on him again for over four years” (Fitzgerald 81). Jordan describes the first meeting with Daisy and Gatsby four years ago (“Great Gatsby 6”). Through memory, Jordan knew that Jay Gatsby is the same young man she saw with Daisy.

Nick Carraway also told the event of Myrtle death through memory, “Now I want to go back a little and tell what happened at the garage after we left there the night before” (Fitzgerald 166). Nick recounts the circumstances before Myrtle’s death (“Great Gatsby

6’’). Nick knew that Daisy was behind Myrtle’s death, but Gatsby told him that he will bear the consequences.

Nick remembers the night of Gatsby’s death as he narrates, ‘‘After two years I remember the rest of that day, and that night and the next day, only as an endless drill of police and photographers and newspaper men in and out of Gatsby’s front door’’ (Fitzgerald 174). He describes the situation in Gatsby’s house after his death:

Next morning I sent the butler to New York with a letter to Wolfshiem which asked for information and urged him to come out on the next train... when the butler brought back Wolfshiem’s answer I began to have a feeling of defiance... the third day that a telegram signed Henry C. Gatz arrived from a town in Minnesota... it was Gatsby’s father. (Fitzgerald 176)

Carraway sates the memory of Gatsby’s funeral when he tends to invite people to attend (‘‘Great Gatsby 6’’). *The Great Gatsby* contains events that are told through the narrator’s memory as well as the other characters’ memories that cover the details of the story.

Similarly, *Bone* is told by the eldest daughter, Leila. She does not follow the chronological order in telling the story; instead, she used her memory to describe the situation of her Chinese family in San Francisco. She assured, ‘‘Bone is a memory-novel, a novel composed of Leila’s memories of her family, and her family’s memories of their past lives in China and their new lives in the United States. It is a meditation upon the circumstances surrounding the mysterious suicide of Leila’s sister Ona’’ (Kakutani). Through memory, Leila tends to portray the events that her family went through in the dream land. She describes the fully experiences of each family member in relation to the main event of the story that is Ona’s suicide.

Since *Bone* is a story told through memory, Leila stated, ‘‘Remembering the past gives power to the present’’ (Ng 44). Leila introduces the importance of memory in relating the

past with the present and that the way of retelling the past events may empower the present (Kakutani). Since, the past is a bridge to the present, Ng stresses on its importance in making the current events. Besides, Leila tends to approve that the events of her family story supports her positively. She professes, “Memories do add up. Our memories, can't bring back the dead, but they count to keep them from becoming strangers” (Ng 44). Memory can not change the past, but it may give a positive view of the present (Kakutani). Leila learned from Ona’s death to be responsible and to take care of her family.

#### **f. Suicide**

Another common point between the two literary texts, *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*, is the dilemma of suicide. In *The Great Gatsby*, George Wilson committed suicide after Daisy Buchanan kills his wife Myrtle Wilson. He thinks that Gatsby is his wife's killer, so he killed him, then he killed himself. Similarly, Ng involves suicide as a central event. Ona, Leong's family youngest sister, committed suicide. As a result, all the characters struggle in Chinatown to know the reason behind. Noticeably, Suicide is a common point between both novels.

#### **g. Narrative Point of View**

The reader can notice that *The Great Gatsby* is narrated by Nick Crraway. Indeed, it is narrated from a first narrative point of view since the narrator used the pronoun “I” and he witnessed all the events (Wulick). The reader is able to know everything about the story through Nick’s perspective. Similarly, *Bone* is narrated from a first narrative point view through the character Leila Leong who told the story of every character and their struggles in Chinatown.

#### **h. Failed Relationships**

Various characters in both novels, *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*, lived a failed relationship. In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick had a relationship with Jordan Baker, but they broke up when Nick felt that Jordan is similar to Tom and Daisy who are careless. On the other

hand, Jordan Baker believed that she went through a new experience even if she was somehow hurted, but she kept showing her strong personality. In addition, although Myrtle is married, she lives with her husband, George, a failed relationship since she betrayed him with Tom. Even her second relationship is failed because after having a quarrel with Tom, both of them did not meet again. Moreover, Daisy's confession to Gatsby that she loved Tom, and she felt comfortable with him deems that she broke up with Gatsby.

Likewise, *Bone* includes failed relationships. Starting with Mah who failed in her both marriages with Leila's father, Lyman Fu, who left her alone without caring even about her daughter. In addition, the struggle between her and Leon who left her most times and complains about her irresponsible motherhood. Ona and Osvaldo reached a failed relationship because Leon, her father, refused that relationship. Nina experienced the same, shed id a relationship with a Chinese boy without her parents' permission, but it failed.

### **i. Conflicts**

Characters face internal and external struggles in both novels. Through *The Great Gatsby* events, Daisy faced conflicts while she got a girl because she was panic if her baby will go through hard situations as she did. In addition, she went through harsh periods while waiting for Gatsby, but she married Tom and accepted to restart her life. Gatsby also faced various conflicts, but he kept strong despite all the lies and indictments told about him. On the other hand, Nick Carraway had difficulty in understanding West Eggs actions and bad behaviors especially their carelessness. Consequently, he returned to Midwest to be away from their hypocrisy, as well as he had internal conflicts in reserving his judgements and views.

Through reading *Bone*, a set of conflicts can be noticed. Leong's family are between the Chinese and the American cultures so that they were having confusion to any of they can belong. However, Leila proclaims that all the family members seek to find the reason behind



Ona's suicide. Leon and Mah conflict with each other, Mah accuses Leon about their daughter's suicide and Leon accuses her as a bad mother. It is expressed that, "Mah called Leon a do-nothing bum. He called her a bad mother the world's worst wife" (Ng 124). Mah and Leon consider that their struggles may be a reason for their daughter's suicide.

After her marriage, Leila was struggling to find a solution for her liminality between her parents and husband. As the internal conflicts are concerned, Mah blamed herself, "The old timers believed that the blood came from the mother and the bones from the father. Ona was part Leon and part Mah, but neither of them could believe that Ona's unhappiness was all her own, Mah blamed herself" (Ng 101). She believes that Ona committed suicide due to her lack of responsibility.

#### **j. Love Story**

Both novels carry the theme of love. Fitzgerald made his protagonist a lover who lacks the meaning of life despite the luxury he lives. The whole work narrates a sacrifice of a young man called Jay Gatsby who attempts to win back his beloved Daisy and repeat the joyful memories. Similarly, Ng made Leila and her husband Mason Louie love each other so that Leila confesses, "Visiting Nina in New York, I got married. I didn't marry on a whim \_\_\_ don't worry, I didn't do a green -card number. Mason Louie was no stranger. We'd been together four five years, and it was time" (Ng 1). Leila and Mason's relationship lasted four or five years; they lived a long love story and ended it with marriage. Besides, Ona and Osvaldo loved each other as Leila assures, "I agreed but Ona refused to lie. She told Leon she Loved Osvaldo" (Ng 169). Although Ona loves Osvaldo, her father refused, so their relationship failed. As a result, Ona committed suicide without a clear reason. However, Mah loves her second husband Leon so that the narrator claims, "I finally saw what Mason had been saying all along: Mah loved Leon" (Ng 190). Mah and Leon lived a strong love story, but their relationship failed after Ona's suicide.

### **k. The Past and the Present**

Both *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* discuss the idea of the past and the present relationship. Fitzgerald explains how the past can not be separated from the present through his protagonist Gatsby. The reader can realize that the whole story is over repeating Gatsby's past with Daisy so that all what Gatsby did is to win back Daisy and to be again with her. In addition, the past must be hidden for Gatsby because he was poor and had a low position, so he tried to change it and create a new identity for himself.

Similarly, *Bone* shows that people may never forget the past. Leila claimed, "Remembering the past gives power to the present" (Ng 85), the past and the present are totally related. Leila recounts the suffering of her family, Ona's death, that happened in the past, and continues to affect their eventual lives. After Ona's suicide, Leon remembered the lost bones of his paper father while Mah remembered her affairs with her boss. Leila also remembered how it was her relationship with her sister. Although these events happened in the past, Leong's family think that all the events they went through in the past are a curse that led to Ona's death.

### **l. Women Position**

Female characters played a significant role in both narratives. Despite the few number of female characters in *The Great Gatsby*, yet the writer sheds the light on women position. All female characters represent the new woman which occurred in conjunction with the Jazz Age. Women took a new way; they became more independent as the case with Jordan Baker who was a competitor to men since she is a golf player and fond of sports clothes. In addition, both Daisy and Myrtle's clothes deem modern with a bold touch. Although the three female characters were independent as compared to earlier women, some of them were subjugated and oppressed. For instance, Daisy is oppressed so that Tom treated her harshly and sees her as

dependent on him. Besides, Myrtle is viewed as inferior to Tom who considered her a mistress.

Likewise, *Bone* holds the image of the immigrant women in the United States. Ng portrays the position of women that is between self-identification and subjugation. Leila and Nina represent women strength in a strange country and their fights to maintain their dream and rebel against the patriarchal society. Meanwhile, Mah and Ona represent women subjugation; Mah is oppressed by her two husbands, whereas Ona is oppressed by her Chinese culture that led to her suicide instead of being rebellious.

### **m. Intertextuality**

*The Great Gatsby* author started his novel by some stanzas from the poet Thomas Parke D'Invilliers who is an imaginary poet created by Fitzgerald. Besides, the poet's name has been used at first in Fitzgerald's previous novel *This Side of Paradise* as a minor character who write unrealistic poems. The poem is used as an epigraph to give a clue about the protagonist Jay Gatsby (Wulick). Fitzgerald excelled in portraying his protagonist through some lines that carry the novel's clues and inspire the readers to know more.

The four lines of the poem are made as a preface, “Then wear the gold hat, if that will move her, If you can bounce high, bounce for her too, Till she cry ‘Lover, gold-hatted, high-bouncing lover, I must have you!’” (Fitzgerald 2). Through these stanzas, the reader may wonder about its meaning and its significance, but he can have a hint that it is a kind of a seduction of a young man for his lover to be with him and to win her love.

The four lines of the poem are regarded as an advice because it is started with the word “then wear”. The poet advises a young man to do his best to win his beloved and at the end she will respond. The poem summarizes in a way the central idea of the novel. The protagonist Jay Gatsby followed the advice of the poet to reach his beloved Daisy; he bought a castle and he made parties attended by hundreds to attract Daisy. In addition, putting a hat

is a mean of adopting a different personality as Gatsby has claimed to be an “Oxford man” as well as he was perceived by owl eye glasses guest as David Belasco, a famous theatre producer (Wulick). Owl eye man claimed, “This fella’s a regular Belasco. It’s a triumph” (Fitzgerald 50). Gatsby followed the two conditions of the poet “the gold hat” and “bouncing high” to win back his lover so that he became rich and through his free parties he became a famous man. Besides, he created a new personality that suits his position and wealth so that he has changed his past and origins.

The pronoun “she” in the poem resembles Daisy, and “she” is mainly seen as a goal or as someone to astound instead of a person as the case with Daisy who is Gatsby’s aim. The poem demonstrates an ironic young man as Gatsby who is manic to win back Daisy so that he lost his dignity to reach her (Wulick). Evidently, Jay Gatsby was blinded by love; he was alcohol bootlegger and a liar with feigned actions only to reach Daisy and to return their love.

In *Bone*, Ng used intertextuality through including some Chinese words. Through Leila's memory, she used Chinese words from her dialect as well as the writer's dialect. Leila describes the nam that her half-sister Ona committed suicide from. Leila states, “Nam means south and ping yuen- if you want to get into it- is something like “Peaceful gardens.” We call it the Nam. I’ve heard other names: The Last Ping, The Fourth Ping. For us, the Nam is a bad-luck place, a spooked spot” (Ng 12). In Chinese dialect the ‘nam’ refers to the floor. Leila used it to show the place where Ona ended her life. In addition, Leila thinks that Chinese people in Chinatown talk English in a funny way, “this comic started in on how Chinese people talked funny, that when they said ‘three’ or ‘five’, it sounded like ‘fee-fie-fo-fum” (Ng 42). Lei comments on the way Chinese people pronounced English words. When Mah complains about the American food that Leila used to eat in New York, she argues, “Mah wasn't just talking about food, she said. “Boo nai.” Good for you” (Ng 45). Mah suggested a Chinese food instead of the American food.

*Bone* comprises names and expressions from the Chinese culture. Leila portrays, “Fu in our dialect sounds like the word for bitter” (Ng 15). Leila tends to explain how her family name can be sounded in English. Besides, Ona’s name is extracted from the Chinese culture, “But Mah was thinking of Leon when she picked the name Ona. Leon/Ona. Ona was part of Leon's Chinese name, too. It means ‘peace’ in our dialect” (Ng 128). The use of the Chinese names indicate that Ng is proud of her origins, and wants to transmit her Chinese dialect and culture.

In addition, Ng included some Spanish words since the novel contains characters that are Spanish such as Osvaldo's parents, Luciano and Rosa, who made a project with Leon. Leila professes, “Luciano was Leon's kind of guy. Leon called Luciano Dai Gor, Big brother. He tried to impress him with all the Spanish words he'd learned on the ships: muchacha, maricòn, calle, merengue” (Ng 162). Since Luciano uses Spanish words, Leon tried to learn them through repetition.

#### **n. Parallelism**

The American comparative school was built on two theories that are intertextuality and parallelism. The principles of the American school are against the French one, “The Egyptian American critic Ihab Hassan has severely criticized the comparative literary study based on the principle of ‘influence’, believing it to be inaccurate and ambiguous” (qtd. in Enani 41). Ihab Hassan criticized the concept of influence that is presented by the French comparative school. In addition, he argued:

The impact of Rousseau or Byron, for instance, on the various Romantic attitudes in the late 19th century Europe is in fact not based on the presumed idea of literary influence or imitation, but rather on more than one factor. Above all, the circumstances surrounding both the influencing and influenced writers were similar. (qtd. in Enani 41)

It is not necessary that writers who write similar literary texts are influenced by each other, but they might live the same conditions or witnessed the same events.

Parrallelism can be applied on both *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*. Primarily, Both F. Scott Fitzgerald and Fae Myenne Ng lived in the twentieth century. As a result, they lived in the same era. Besides, they lived in the same country, the United States, where they lived the same conditions within the same circumstances. There is no direct influence between both writers since they have not met so that Fitzgerald died in 1940 when Fae Myenne Ng has not yet born because she was born on 1956. Since they lived in the same era, the same country, and the same conditions, they disscussed mutual concepts such as the American Dream, quest of identity, and absurdism. Fitzgerald represents the three concepts through the native Americans point of view, but Ng discusses the same concepts through the Chinese immigrants point of view. Although Fitzgerald and Ng had not never met, they disscussed the same notions since they share the same circumastances.

Parallelism is based on social evolution, “Konrad, a Russian comparatist, sees that this theory [Parallelism] is derived from the idea of similarities in humanity's social and historical evolution, which means harmony in the process of literary development” (qtd. in Enani 42). Literary texts that have the same social evolution go in parallel or harmony. Both *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* share a set of affinities based on social evolution such as the American Dream, identity, and absurdism that are traced in both literary texts. In addition, they share the idea of memory, suicide, love stories, failed relationships, and woman position in both societies. As a result, both novels share common similarities, which reveal the same social evolution.

The affinities and the differences between *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* have been traced according to the American school concepts and theories such as intertextuality and

parallelism. In addition to their use of the same language, English, the two literary texts are unified under the same agenda of circumstances and conditions that led both Fitzgerald and Ng to be similar in a set of thoughts.

### 3.1.2 *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* Disimilarities

#### a. Culture

Both *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* have distinctive elements. Culture is the first difference so that in *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald writes only about the American culture. Through using English language, the writer tends to use English idioms as a mean to show the aspects of the American culture, as well as to make readers think behind the surface meaning. For instance, he used the idiom “Shake one’s head” to indicate a rejection of an idea or view or anything else through moving the head on both sides right and left (Arakelyan 8). This idiom was repeated many times throughout the novel. In addition, the idiom of “From head to toe” which denotes the meaning of gazing to someone from up to the bottom (Arakelyan 9), and it can be seen as an impressive look or underestimating someone. Moreover, through saying “A heart to heart talk”, the writer emphasizes on the kind of debate which is truthful and forthright (Arakelyan 13). The writer used a figurative language through idioms which call the readers to look for the hidden meaning.

Whereas *Bone* is a bicultural novel because Ng includes two cultures, Chinese and American. It is told, “summons a quiet urgency from simple language, both in her physical descriptions [...] and in her depictions of the characters’ seesawing thoughts and feelings as they move between the Chinese- and English-speaking cultures” (“Chapter 3: A Narrative” 1). Through the use of English and some Chinese words from her dialect, Ng mixed both cultures in portraying the conflicts that a Chinese family went through. Furthermore, “Ng lives and writes across the margins of another tradition and culture... it is a double- visioned, two-cultured genre that Ng adopts for her exploration of Chinese American culture and

identity” (“Chapter 3: A Narrative” 4). Accordingly, the writer tends to mirror Leong's family by mixing the two cultures. She depicts the reality of the Chinese immigrants who confront two cultures and identities in their way to gain their dreams. As such, Nina has nearly neglected her Chinese culture because of her assimilation to the American one.

Fitzgerald narrates a story about purely American people during the summer of 1922. Through characters and places description in *The Great Gatsby*, the reader can notice how Americans wear and how they live. For instance, male and female characters wear modern clothes, and they were settled in different American places such as New York, Long Island with its both Eggs, East and West, Midwest, and The Valley of ashes. Besides, the author used American names so that all characters' names are regarded to be Americans.

*Bone* narrates a story of an immigrant family in the United States. Ng used the setting, Chinatown, San Francisco, where Chinese immigrants live together. Besides, she used Chinese and American Chinese characters as well as Chinese names. Leila explains, “Leon/Ona. ‘On’ was part of Leon's Chinese name, too. It means ‘peace’ in our dialect” (Ng 128). Ng used names that are common in her culture and she mixed two cultures to reveal the way Chinese Americans look like.

In the Western culture as well as the American culture, the number thirteen symbolizes bad luck. Most people have a fear from this number called triskaidekaphobia.

“‘triskaidekaphobia’ is widely accepted among Western cultures. Most Western hotels omit the 13th floor. Many airlines omit the 13th row in seating. Even some cities and towns skip over 13th Street. Friday the 13th is considered a particularly unlucky day” (Fritscher). The number thirteen made most people afraid of so that they avoid it in their daily activities and settings such as hotels. While, in China thirteen is a lucky number. Leila wonders, “I kept asking why Ona chose the thirteen floor. In our dialect, it was a good number. Thirteen sounds like ‘to live’” (Ng 119-120). Ona committed suicide from the thirteen floor although



it is a lucky number in the Chinese culture, so Leila could not understand the message behind Ona's action.

### **b. Narrator's Reliability**

It is necessary to recognize if the narrator of *The Great Gatsby* is reliable or not so that unreliable narrator is the storyteller who has mental problems or tends to “deviate from the truth” (Sweat). Nick Carraway has no mental problems, and he is described as being an educated young man, graduated from Yales University and came from a wealthy family. Although, he is not insane, he has conflicts in reserving his judgements as he argued, in the first paragraphs of the story, that his father advises him not to criticize others. In this respect, the narrator is unreliable although he claimed that he became “inclined to reserve all judgments” (Fitzgerald 3), but different events demonstrate that he hides some truths. For instance, he has never claimed that Gatsby is an alcohol bootlegger, yet he gave Tom and some guests views about Jay Gatsby. Besides, Nick stated that, “Only Gatsby, ... was exempt from my reaction—Gatsby who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn... there was something gorgeous about him” (Fitzgerald 4). In this sense, Nick is biased to Gatsby since he focuses more on his strengthes and covers his weaknesses.

However, *Bone*'s narrator is reliable since she was truthful in narrating the events without any judgements or biases. Leila tried to give readers an image about immigrants' life in the United States through her family members. Throughout the story, she moved from a character to another, and depicted their situations in Chinatown as well as mentioned their struggles and confrontations in cohabiting in a new world.

### **c. Plot**

The Plot can simply show the plan of the story, so the events that follow a chronological order will have clear and direct consequences (Westhuizen). Through time and events, the reader can recognize that a narrative is linear or complex. To know wether

Fitzgerald and Ng used a simple or a complex plot, the reader should realize how events occur in the story so that its sequence indicates that it is a linear narrative, however the use of flashback and flash forward present a complex plot.

*The Great Gatsby* plot is linear because events follow a chronological order and there is only one climax in the story. The exposition starts when Nick moved to New York particularly, in West Egg to start his bond business. However, the raising event is when Gatsby met Daisy at Nick's house. The event just before the climax of the story is when Daisy hit Myrtle by Gatsby's car in their return from the city. The climax is Gatsby's death that signalizes the peak of the story. Whereas, the events fall down so that Nick and Gatsby's father attend Jay's funeral besides owl eyes man. Finally, the story ends when Nick returned to Midwest that indicates the resolution.

*Bone* follows the complex plot so that, "The novel *Bone* is written in a circular narrative form, in which the story doesn't follow the linear format where the suspense slowly builds up and finally reaches a climax stage" ("Essay"). Leila moves from the present to the past and the vice versa while telling her family stories. Leila gives the starting point of each character's story and shows the climax of the story that is Ona's death. The exposition occurs when Leon and Luciano made a project together. As a result, Ona and Osvaldo loved each other. The rising event happens when Ona and Osvaldo breaks down their relationship after the failure of their parents, Leong and Luciano, project. Then, the first climax is Ona's suicide that drives to the beginning of Leong's family conflicts. The events raise again when Leila visited Nina in New York. The action of Leila's marriage Leila with Mason Louie is the second climax. The falling event occurs when Leila declared her about her marriage to her parents. The story's resolution came back as the story started; Leila takes care of her parents as well as her husband.

#### d. Era

*The Great Gatsby* is a modern literary text that is precisely written in the Jazz Age, “*The Great Gatsby* has often been described as the ‘definitive’ or ‘conclusive’ representation of life in America in the 1920s... There is clearly a sense in which the novel is centrally concerned with America in the aftermath of the First World War (“Knowledge”). The novel portrays the American society during the twentieth century after First World War and it is regarded as the best illustration. Furthermore, others claimed, “The novel [*The Great Gatsby*] therefore, much like America in the 1920s, is a paradox of virtue and vice; morality and materialism” (“Knowledge”). The Jazz Age witnessed the spread of corruption inside the American society and the pursuit of money.

While *Bone* is a postmodern novel. Ng wrote her novel in 1993, “Most widely held works by Fae Myenne Ng, *Bone*... 42 editions published between 1993 and 2015 in 7 languages and held by 1,587 WorldCat member libraries worldwide” (“Ng, Fae Myenne 1956”). *Bone* became Ng’s famous work since it depicts the life of the Chinese immigrants in the United States through Leong’s family. Apparently, *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* were written in different eras, each one of them mirror the events that his/her society went through during the era that he/she lived in.

#### e. Family

Although *The Great Gatsby* characters have few connections to each other, they seem to be independent and far from each other. Fitzgerald attempts to link different characters to their lives stories to the whole narrative. For instance, the only connection between Nick and Daisy is that they are cousins. Nick is only Gatsby’s neighbor who became his friend later on. In addition, Nick knew Tom only at university, then Jordan through Daisy, and other characters through a sequence of events. Obviously, the writer tried to create characters who

share the same setting despite their distinctions to contribute in drawing the whole image of the story.

While *Bone* holds the theme of the family's importance and the way, each member builds his/her life in the United States. Leila claims, "We were a family of three girls. By Chinese standards, that wasn't lucky" (Ng 1). Leila states how Leong's family makes efforts to live a better life in America. Ng clarifies the real meaning of being one family:

Fae Myenne Ng takes readers into the hidden heart of San Francisco's Chinatown, to the world of one's family honor, their secrets, and the lost bones of a 'paper father' ... it is up to Leila to lay the bones of the family's collective guilt to rest, and find some way to hope again. (Ng)

Each member of this family lives differently, but they know the real meaning of being a unified family. Leila is responsible for taking care of her family and gathering the family's bones.

#### **f. Death**

Through both literary works, death is viewed as a crucial point in the story. *The Great Gatsby* ends tragically by the death of the protagonist, Jay Gatsby, whose funeral was attended only by Nick, his father, and one of his guests. The writer created a sad ending not only through the death of the protagonist, but even when people did not attend his funeral and forget about his generosity. This statement reveals the case, "Why, my God! they used to go there by the hundreds" (Fitzgerald 187). It deems a kind of sympathy towards Jay Gatsby who was always alone in his life and death.

Meanwhile, *Bone* started with death through the presentation of Ona's suicide. Leila describes the changes of her family after her sister's death. Since the story is a memory, Leila started it with introducing the main event of the story, "Mah and Leon are still married, but after Ona jumped off the Nam, Leon moved out" (Ng 1). Ona killed herself by jumping off

the name as Leila begins to introduce the events and the conflicts that her family went through before and after the story's main event that is Ona's suicide.

### **3.2 Section Two: The Myth of the American Dream in Pertinent to the Quest of Identity and Absurdism**

Although the varied similar elements, both novels resolve around three essential notions which are the American Dream, the quest of identity and absurdism. Through characters, Fitzgerald and Ng bestow an evident vision that resumes the function of the three concepts together. Overall, both novels hold the idea of the fall of the American Dream for both natives and immigrants.

#### **3.2.1 *The Great Gatsby* Significance**

The title of any book is regarded as the key of the whole story and the first element that attracts the reader attention and increases his curiosity to know the content. It is so hard to choose a title that includes the central idea of the work. *The Great Gatsby* was not the first title suggested by Fitzgerald; however, there were different titles. For instance, *Gatsby*; *Among Ash-Heaps and Millionaires*; *Trimalchio*; *Trimalchio in West Egg*; *On the Road to West Egg*; *Under the Red, White, and Blue*; *Gold-Hatted Gatsby* and *The High-Bouncing Lover*. In all these names, he found that *Trimalchio* or *Gold-Hatted Gatsby* look more suitable for the novel, and then he selected the last title *Under the Red, White and Blue* as a symbol for American flag, but it was too late to rechange it. Therefore, the novel was named under the first suggested title *The Great Gatsby* and published in 1925, but Fitzgerald was not totally satisfied about it (Samkanashvili 73-74). Despite the differences around the novel's title selection, the final title gives a magical touch to the cover, and catches reader's attention to dive deeper through reading the novel.

The word "Great" has an influence on readers who seek to know the qualities of a great person, and it can be seen that Gatsby wants to be great through wealth and high

position, but he failed (Samkanashvili 74). Fitzgerald attempts to reveal that a great person is not the one who owns money and position. In this case, the title can seem ironic since Gatsby has both, but lacks values and morals. From another view, Gatsby is great in his pure and honest love to Daisy (Samkanashvili 74). Perhaps, the writer's aim through the selection of this title is to show how Gatsby did his possible to regain Daisy so that he took a long way to become rich and to make free parties only to attract her attention.

### 3.2.2 *Bone* Significance

Through reading *Bone*, the reader may relate this title to different events in the story. Ng chose *Bone* as a title to sanctify the Chinese traditions and heritage by coming back ancestors' bones to their motherland China. In the story, Leon Leong promised his paper father to return his bone to China, but he forgot later on his promise. As a result, a curse happened to his family. In an interview, Ng Fae Myenne admits:

Among the pioneer generation of Chinese immigrants, the worlds of work and family were separate. America was work and China was home. The ritual of sending our ancestors' bones back home to China was one that moved me. I included bone among the five Chinese elements: fire, water, metal, earth, and wood. I thought bone was the best metaphor to speak about the enduring quality of the immigrant spirit. The book is called *Bone* to revere the old timers' tradition of sending their bones back to China.

(Ng Interview)

*Bone* as a title referred to the Chinese culture and traditions that should be moved from a generation to another through returning the Chinese ancestors' bones.

From one hand, Ona's suicide can be linked to the title. After her suicide, she broke her bones, through jumping from a high place, as well as her family's bones. Since after her death, the family is separated and the conflicts tend to appear as Ng states, "it's interesting what happens within the book. Ona jumps from a place called the Nam, a name with

significance. That when Ona dies, she jumps, it is toward Chinatown, not facing the outside world, and that she breaks all her bones” (Ng Interview). Ona killed herself from the nam and broke her bones.

On the other hand, the title can be related to the story's narrator Leila who is responsible for gathering her family's bones especially after Ona's death and Nina's escape to New York. It is declared, “It is up to Leila to lay the Bones of the family's collective guilt to rest, and find some way to hope again” (Ng). As the eldest sister, Leila is concerned to take care of her parents and Nina's problems in order to gather the family bones.

### **3.2.3 The Interrelationship between the American Dream, Quest of Identity and Absurdism in *The Great Gatsby***

Fitzgerald endeavors to reveal what characterizes people during the Jazz Age through his novel *The Great Gatsby*. Noticeably, identity and absurdism are regarded as two focal points that elucidate the changes that happened to characters while trying to achieve their American Dream. In other words, the writer shows the connection between identity, absurdism and the American Dream.

Since the American Dream represents wealth and luxury life, it seems that the protagonist Jay Gatsby has some characteristics of the American Dream. He became rich and lived a luxury life in his castle. Indeed, Gatsby was closer to reach his dream through his pursuit of wealth so that he abandoned his origins and adopted a new identity. He tried to change facts about his past so that he claimed that he is descended from a wealthy family and he is an Oxford man. Besides, he had changed his name from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby. Through his declarations, Gatsby wanted to give a fake history about himself to keep his position as an upper class man. Moreover, he is viewed as an individual who lacks morals and values since he is alcohol bootlegger. In a way, he adopted new behaviors and actions. He used different gestures as the case when greeting guests with a small bow and using the

word “old sport” which indicates some of his cultural aspects. Therefore, Fitzgerald clarifies that reaching success needs abandoning the original culture and identity as Gatsby did so that he relinquishes his origins and identity to create a new personality that suits his high position. Consequently, identity is an obstacle for achieving the American Dream since Gatsby’s first step to reach his dream is to forget about his identity and origins and embrace new cultural forms.

Gatsby lost his identity while he tried to achieve his American Dream. It is stated that, “*The Great Gatsby's* fascination with the multiple identities of America embodied in the figure of Gatsby himself, are played out around the idea of dream and new beginning” (Campbell and Kean 25). Fitzgerald's novel portrays the fact of a set of identities formation that related to the American Dream through Gatsby's character. Gatsby changed his name, his history and origins to shape a new personality. Throughout the novel, Gatsby’s identity seems unstable. The reader recognizes each time something new about Gatz who is the real poor young man lives in North Dakota. However, Jay Gatsby is the new rich man who settles in his mansion in West Egg. He was hidden under a fake personality that is totally different from his real one so that he is regarded as an absurd hero. Gatsby reached the idea that life is meaningless; he believes that life is absurd since he made everything to regain back Daisy, but he failed. Gatsby abandons his origins, and his only purpose in life is to win Daisy and repeat their past memories together, but since Daisy had chosen Tom, Gatsby lost his only purpose in life and experienced the feeling of life absurdity.

As Gatsby, Myrtle had failed in reaching her American Dream. She dreamt about living a life of affluence with the aristocrat Tom Buchanan. She believed that she got an opportunity to realize her dream since she met Tom. Her miserable life with George Wilson was the main factor that pushed her to look for a luxury life with Tom. She was imitating upper class behaviors and actions, and she tried to have an upper class appearance. Myrtle



felt that life has meaning since she has a relationship with Tom. He made her live as an upper class lady through realizing her needs and having an independent apartment. Myrtle believed that her relationship with Tom would be developed to marriage since he betrayed Daisy with her. However, through Tom's abusive actions towards her, she recognized that she is only a mistress. She failed in reaching her American Dream because she lacks what the American Dream consists of such as individualism, persistence and self reliance.

Besides, Myrtle adopted a new culture through being influenced by upper class people so that she attempted to imitate their behaviors and actions. Although, the Valley of Ashes, her origin, is a rotten place that lacks morals and values, she was deviated from her culture and origins. She shaped a new personality that represents her abandonment from her real origins. Myrtle lost her identity in her way to reach her American Dream that is living far away from her miserable life with George Wilson. Since Myrtle's dream failed, she reached the idea that life is meaningless.

Moreover, although George Wilson's minor role in the story, Fitzgerald wanted to clarify that Wilson is a self-reliant man. He tried to ameliorate his situation and to realize a good life for his wife, Myrtle, but his job and social status prevented him. Wilson committed suicide after shooting Gatsby as Nick described, "The gardener saw Wilson's body a little way off in the grass, and the holocaust was complete" (Fitzgerald 173). Noticeably, Wilson has only his wife who represents everything for him. Wilson's neighbour, Michaelis, wanted to help Wilson so that he asked him, "Have you got a church you go to sometimes, George?", "Did you ever have any children?", (Fitzgerald 168), and "Maybe you got some friend that I could telephone for, George?" (Fitzgerald 170). Michaelis searched for a way to help Wilson and to find someone close to him to console him, but he found that he is alone and all what he got is Myrtle. Through Wilson's suicide, it reveals that Wilson lost his dream

that is realizing a good life for his wife. Patently, he experienced the feeling of absurdity so he believed that he has no purpose to live for.

### **3.2.4 The Interrelationship between the American Dream, Quest of Identity and Absurdism in *Bone***

In the twentieth century, a set of concepts appeared in literature such as the American Dream. Julian Castro states about the American Dream, “In the end, the American dream is not a sprint, or even a marathon, but a relay. Our families don’t always cross the finish line in the span of one generation. But each generation passes on to the next the fruits of their labor” (qtd. in “Selected Quotes”). The notion of the American Dream can be passed from a generation to another as inheritance. In addition, Ng presented the American Dream among two generations, and included the notions that may surround it such as the question of identity and absurdism.

In *Bone*, the efforts made to gain the American Dream is different from a character to another and from a generation to another. Leon Leong presents the first generation whereas Nina exemplifies the second generation. *Bone* is an example of the immigrants who travel to the United States to obtain the American Dream, “Since its coinage in 1931, the concept of “the American Dream” has lured tens of millions of immigrants from all corners of the planet to the United States with promises of prosperity and happiness far beyond anything attainable in their native countries” (Murphy). Leong and Mah from China immigrated to the United States in order to get happiness and prosperity, but they may face obstacles that may prohibit them to reach their dream easily so that:

Every story is faced with similar challenges in an altogether unfamiliar land.

Unfortunately, while chasing down their coveted Dream, many immigrants become tripped up by conflicting desires to both successfully assimilate themselves into an

entirely foreign culture, and maintain the distinct set of cultural values and practices that defined their entire previous existence. (Murphy)

Culture can be perceived as the main obstacle because the immigrants find difficulty between their native culture and the new American culture.

Various characters face the obstacles of cultural inbetweenness that lead to the identity crisis. Leon Leong tends to keep his culture and identity, but he does not gain the American Dream. After all, he blames America for the curse that his family suffers from as it is described, “He blamed all of America for making big promises and breaking every one. Where was the good job he'd heard about as a young man? Where was the successful business?... ‘America’, he ranted, "this lie of a country!” (Ng 100). Leon discovers that the American Dream is a lie since he failed to gain it.

Leon speaks just his native language that it is a part of his identity. He believes that English language is difficult and it represents the American identity. As a result, he gets no job with his official language although the experiences he has. Leon failed to reach his American Dream simply because he does not assimilate into the American culture:

The common conception is that the “Dream” is attainable by all, and suggests instead that Leon Leong, the father figure in the novel, fails to attain the “American Dream” because he remains torn between maintaining a distinctly Chinese identity, and shedding that same identity to assimilate into mainstream American culture. (Murphy)

Leon Leong is an example of the Chinese immigrants who may fail in getting their American Dream because of the problem of identity.

Unlike Leon Leong, his youngest daughter Nina realizes her American Dream by assimilating into the American culture and neglecting her Chinese identity. It is confirmed, “After her parents rejected her over an abortion, Nina in turn rejected them and her entire Chinese identity, moving 3000 miles across the continent to New York. She methodically and

effectively removes the “Chinese” from herself” (Murphy). Nina refused her parents' traditions and culture, so she escaped far from her family and her Chinese identity to realize her American Dream. For instance, “Nina picked up her fork and pressed her thumb against the sharp points. ‘I like three-pronged forks,... it's funny, but you know I hardly ever use chopsticks any-more. At home, I eat my rice on a plate, with a fork. I only used chopsticks to hold my hair up’” (Ng 25). In the Chinese culture, the food is eaten by chopsticks, but Nina ignores this and uses the fork instead like the American people do.

In addition, Nina has escaped from her Chinese identity through her residence in New York instead of her homeland Chinatown. As a result, Nina gained her American Dream through renouncing her Chinese identity:

American Dream is impossible while remaining in cultural limbo. On one end there is Leon, who works hard his entire life in an attempt to create a better future for himself, his wife, and his children. Unfortunately, his unwillingness to forgo his “Chineseness” in order to assimilate into American culture results in a failure to attain the “Dream.” On the opposing side sits Nina, who completely rejects her Chinese heritage and culture, and moves to New York City to begin a whole new life, family, and career. Unlike Leon, she frees herself from the traditions of her past and the “Chinese” portion of her Chinese American identity in order to completely and successfully obtains the “American Dream” that Leon could never quite grasp. (Murphy)

The American dream can not be reached by keeping another identity except the American identity. Mostly, this problem faces the immigrants who find themselves between two worlds, two culture, and two identities. As a result, the identity question is an obstacle for obtaining the American Dream.

The American Dream is not obstructed just by identity, but also by absurdism through discovering life's absurdity or living in an absurd place. Ng represents the concept of the

American Dream as well as absurdism. Ona's suicide and Chinatown are viewed as an absurd. Ona committed suicide by jumping from the nam. Although the reason behind her suicide is mysterious, the reader may have some clues about the difficult situations that she went through. She killed herself since she believed that her life is meaningless. She was unable to assimilate into the American culture and she did not succeed in gaining her love with her boyfriend Osvaldo. As a result, Ona failed to obtain her American Dream; she killed herself due to her belief of life absurdity.

For the immigrants, their place of living, Chinatown, can prevent them from reaching their dreams. Ng illustrates the setting as an absurd since the family witnessed a crime, Ona's suicide, "Fae Myenne Ng in her first novel *Bone* presents an Absurd Chinatown that must be treated as 'home', as resulted from the play of the spatial dislocation and temporal anachronism" (Jie). Chinatown is an isolated place from America since it does not resemble the American society. As a result, Chinatown is an obstacle for the assimilation into the American culture. Chinatown limits the Chinese immigrants to reach their dreams as it is explained, "Chinese Americans deeply stuck in such a source of pressure and in the binary pair of presence and Absence construct their subjectivity" (Jie). Chinatown is a place of oppression and sorrow that hold different people who wanted to realize the American Dream.

Leong's family lives a life full of depression and pessimism in Chinatown. Leila introduces her family as unlucky, "A failed family. That Dulcie Fu. And you know which one: bald Leon. Nothing but daughters" (Ng 1). Chinatown symbolizes unluck for Leong's family. It is an absurd setting, "Chinatown is a place of loss, sadness, and dullness: Ona's suicide, family conflicts, and discrimination. The settings in the novel are mostly negative referential places orienting the reader: buildings of darkness, gloominess, dampness, and crampedness" (Cheng 145). Ona's suicide is the family's curse. After her death, all members started to quarrel together to discover the reason behind Ona's suicide. As a result, Leong's

family failed to gain their American Dream because of the absurd place Chinatown. Leon Leong believes that both Chinatown and the United States are a lie since he failed to obtain his American Dream.

### 3.2.5 The Failure of the American Dream

*The Great Gatsby* represented highly the failure of the American Dream. Fitzgerald depicted the struggles of natives to reach their American Dream after their belief that their country is the land of opportunity and dream. Throughout the novel, mainly two characters represented the failure of the American Dream who are Jay Gatsby and Myrtle Wilson. Gatsby, the poor young man, became rich so that, “Not only did he flourish in the fast-paced, modern urban milieu of skyscrapers, taxicabs, and pleasureseeking crowds, but he proclaimed himself an expert on the latest crazes in fashion, contemporary lingo, and popular pastimes.” (qtd. in Hodo 303). Accordingly, Gatsby is regarded as a real image of the American Dream so that he worked hard to be among the upper class people and to have qualities that represent his success. However, he failed due to his belief that through money he can realize everything, so Gatsby indicates the wrong vision of the American Dream.

Not only Gatsby sees that wealth is a sign of the American Dream realization, but even his guests and the people who have been amazed by his wealth and gigantic castle. In fact, Gatsby’s dream can be realized through winning back Daisy (Hodo 304). Noticeably, people were having a wrong vision about the American Dream principles as Gatsby. They view that the pursuit of wealth is the only factor for reaching the American Dream and they forget about their morals and values. Undoubtedly, their wrong belief and perception of the American Dream led to its failure.

Likewise, Myrtle was confirmed that through wealth she can reach her dream. Her relationship with Tom Buchanan gave her a chance to realize her dream through him. She lost her values after betraying her husband George Wilson to attain a luxury life without

considering bad consequences. She failed in realizing her dream since she considers that money can realize everything.

For most, the American Dream can not be easily identified, “This has often been a belief in the possibility of renewal set alongside doubts and questioning about the reality of such concept. This has often been interpreted as a naive” (Campbell and Kean 25). The American Dream is considered as efforts of innovation. It has been no longer than a myth that it is far way from reality, but related to doubts. Besides, it is viewed that:

Superficial dream associated with the mythic portrayals of America as the promised land and a new Eden. This 'new' continent seemed to offer the last great hope for mankind to begin again and put right all the wrongs of the Old World. The truth of such claims was quickly dispelled and yet it survived as a structural myth in American culture. (Campbell and Kean 25)

America used to be the dream country where most people would realize their dreams, fulfill their hopes, and correct their mistakes. The idea of the American Dream has been mythical at surface in reality, but it would still in the American culture as successful myth.

Immigrants escaped from their countries and oriented to the United States for the sake of the American Dream realization, but not all of them may succeed to reach their objectives. Through *Bone*, Ng represents how the immigrants conflict to obtain their American Dream, “*Bone* narrated by Leila, the oldest of three daughters of the Leong family, explores the lure and failure of the American dream of gold and success” (Huang 149). *Bone* is a story that portrays the events that a Chinese family have gone through in the way of the American Dream realization, but all the efforts they have made failed. As a result, their American dream has been defeated.

Ng portrays the failed American Dream through Leong, while Nina symbolizes the successful American Dream. Leong failed since he is unable to honor the dream's condition such as the assimilation into the American culture, but Nina tends to honor it:

Ng asks us to consider what kind of pressures and recriminations a Chinese American family would face if they failed to achieve the American Dream. Suppose the laundry business goes bust and the savings are wiped out. Suppose after a lifetime of hard work, they're still stuck in the same apartment in the same neighborhood they started out in. (“Bone”)

Ng clarifies the situation of the Chinese immigrants who failed to reach their American Dream in a strange place that they may die in without gaining nothing.

The immigrants’ American Dream may fail for a set of reasons such as the question of identity and absurdism. As it is presented in *Bone*, Leon Leong failed to reach his American Dream since he kept his Chinese identity rather than assimilating into the American culture. Moreover, he started his life in the United States where he lived in oppression, darkness, and experienced the feeling of absurdity. It is introduced that, “Leon symbolizes the stereotypical male in Asian American Literature. Deprived of patriarch power circumvented by laws, limited by language, race, and frustrated by the opportunities in life” (Raibaud 156). Leon Leong immigrated to the United States to realize his dreams, but instead he failed because he does not speak English and he has been as stranger. As a result, he has lost all the opportunities of success.

In addition, Ona may think of her life as an absurd. As a result, she killed herself before she gains her American Dream. Leong's family is a representative sample for the immigrants who tend to realize their American Dream, but the problem of identity and absurdism may prohibit them to reach their objectives. Therefore, both identity and absurdism are viewed as obstacles for reaching the American Dream.



In Both, *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*, a set of concepts were disputed in different ways. As such, the notion of the American Dream has been associated with the inquiry of identity and absurdism in both narratives. The relationship between the three notions have been demonstrated according to the authors' perspectives. In *The Great Gatsby*, the relationship is introduced according to the natives' perspectives. On the other hand, it was presented from immigrants' sights through *Bone*.

Generally, based on the American comparative school fundamentals, *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone* have been compared. The similarities and the differences between the two literary texts have been portrayed alongside intertextuality and parallelism. Each title of them has its own interpretation that has been illustrated. Then, the concepts of American Dream, question of identity, and absurdism were debated in both novels in different points of view. As a result, the American Dream success or failure is pertinent to the question of identity and absurdism, but this relationship differs from the natives and the immigrants according to the setting, the experiences, and the events experienced by characters.

### Conclusion

Despite all the dissimilarities between natives and immigrants, both Americans and Chinese Americans sought to realize the American Dream. Through a comparative study between *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*, the analysis suggested that the American Dream can significantly alter the identity of its dreamers and in a way can push them to experience absurdity. Accordingly, identity and absurdism are perceived as obstacles. This study entails a recognition at a glance across Fitzgerald and Ng standpoints to recognize how the American Dream may shape a new identity for both natives and Chinese who earn it.

Taking into account the autobiographical analysis of the two writers, both works carry a real reflection of their lives that focus on the representation of natives as well as Chinese. Through both stories, Fitzgerald and Ng related the inclination of characters in the American Dream to their psyches. Most of characters get into the whirlpool of identity crisis since their identity appears as an obstacle for their dream. It necessitates embracing a new identity that paves the way to realize the American Dream as the case with Jay Gatsby and Myrtle Wilson in *The Great Gatsby*. On the other hand, Nina Leong in *Bone* concedes her identity to begin a new life full of hope and happiness after she realizes her dream. Since, both male and female characters endeavour to attain the American Dream; this study has focused on women position and their tussles to change their situations and to be eligible alongside men.

The realization of the American Dream is not only prohibited by identity as an embodiment, it is also prevented by other factors such as life absurdity. In both novels, life absurdity is clearly painted through characters or places. In *The Great Gatsby*, the protagonist Jay Gatsby did great efforts to gain his American Dream although he has enough money to do whatever he wants, but he was unhappy since he did not earn his beloved Daisy Buchanan. He is an absurd hero because despite all the money he owns, he could not get the most important part that it is a component of the American Dream, namely happiness. Likewise,

immigrants agree with Americans in the idea of life absurdity. Through *Bone*, Ng states the life meaningless of characters after their defeat in to achieve the American Dream. For example, Ona killed herself after her discovery of her life worthlessness. In addition, Leon Leong failed to reach his American Dream simply because he lived in an absurd place where his story began and ended in the same place. As a result, absurdism has been discussed by natives as well as immigrants, and it is linked to the American Dream, in particular, its failure.

Despite all the efforts made by both Americans and immigrants to reach the American Dream, they may be unsuccessful. As a result, it would be for them a myth as it is shown through *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*. In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald pointed out through his protagonist, Jay Gatsby, how the American citizen may lose the challenge to win the American Dream in the face of difficulties to be a fantasy. Jay Gatsby improved himself to become a high class after being a poor man. He is rich enough to earn his American Dream, but these funds did not help him to win his love. He lost his identity so that his life has no sense after his failure to realize his dream because he died before being with Daisy. The American Dream has become a myth for him. Immigrants do not differ much, in *Bone*, Ng illustrates the picture of Chinese immigrants who struggle to obtain the American Dream. For example, Leon Leong immigrated to the dream country and he tries to be one of American Dream winner, but he found himself in front of many obstacles such as identity quest when he stuck his Chinese identity instead of the American one. He lived in Chinatown, the place of loss, failure and darkness, which prevented him to gain his American Dream. Both immigrants and natives faced obstacles to reach the American Dream such as identity quest and the meaninglessness of life. As a result, the American Dream failed although all the efforts made to obtain it.

Inevitably, the American Dream is related to identity and absurdism since characters in both novels, *The Great Gatsby* and *Bone*, face them as obstructions that prohibit them to reach their American Dream. Otherwise, they would fail if they rely on their original identity and attempt to get into the American Dream. Notably, the American Dream renews the lives of characters and gives them a new identity that begins with their new life. From one hand, the American Dream failure can draw a new picture for characters who may think about life meaningless. On the other hand, others keep the optimistic vision of life. They might maintain the dream through the loss of their original identity. Through Fitzgerald and Ng's writings, this study has examined the hidden side of American Dream and regarded it as a myth.

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