

T.C
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BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI BİLİM DALI

PROSPECTS OF NEW NEGRO IDENTITY IN
JESSIE REDMON FAUSET'S EARLY NOVELS

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

DANIŞMAN
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ÖZET

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Jessie Redmon Fauset'in İlk Romanlarında New Negro Kimliğine İlişkin Görüşler

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“Jessie Redmon Fauset'in İlk Romanlarında New Negro Kimliğine İlişkin Görüşler” adlı bu çalışmada, yazarın *There is Confusion* (1924) ve *Plum Bun: A Novel Without a Moral* (1929) isimli romanları ele alınmaktadır. Çalışmada, 1920’li yıllarda Amerikan toplumunda yaşayan kentli zenci topluluğun durumu incelenmektedir. Zencilerin Amerika sınırlarındaki varlığının kısa bir tarihi ile birlikte, zenci entelektüel hareketi olan Harlem Rönesansı’nın Afro-Amerikalılar için ne ifade ettiği özellikle ele alınmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu harekete önderlik eden entelektüellerin kendi halkları için neler yapmak istedikleri, hedefleri ve bu hedeflere ulaşmak için öngördükleri yollar çıkarsanmıştır. Yazarın seçilen romanlarında, Rönesans’ın hararetli yıllarında zenci insanlara ve genel olarak Amerikan toplumuna bakış açısı yansıtılmaya çalışılmıştır. Bir yandan yazarın genel hatlarıyla kentli zenci toplum ile ilgili sınıf, ırk ve cinsiyet konuları hakkındaki izlenimleri takip edilirken, diğer yandan bu ayrımcılıkların daha dar bir bağlamda beyaz-erkek-sınıf odaklı Amerikan toplumundaki yansımaları da ele alınmaktadır.

Çalışmanın giriş kısmında, zencilerin Amerika’daki tarihi genel hatlarıyla sunulmuştur. 17. yüzyılın ilk yıllarından başlayarak, 20. yüzyılın başlarında ortaya çıkan ve Harlem Rönesansı’na kadar devam eden dönemde kölelik ve iyileşme süreci gösterilmiştir. Bu süre zarfında, iyileşmeye katkı sağlayan olaylar, kuruluşlar ve

özellikle de zenci entelektüeller irdelenmiştir. Buna ek olarak, Cornell Üniversitesi'nde okuyan ilk zenci kadın olan Fauset'in edebi kişiliği hakkında ayrıntılı bilgi ve onun, gününün sorunlarına yaklaşımı ifade edilmiştir.

Birinci bölümde, Fauset'in seçilen yapıtlarında, 'sınıf' konusunu nasıl ele aldığı çalışılmıştır. Ekonominin, insanların bilim, din ve evlilik gibi kurumlara yaklaşımlarını şekillendirmedeki gücü dile getirilirken, sınıfın, insan ilişkilerini belirlemedeki etkisi de vurgulanmıştır. Ayrıca, toplum bireylerindeki 'sınıf bilinci' gerçeği yansıtılmıştır.

İkinci bölümde, yapıtlardaki 'ırksal' konular çalışılmıştır. Toplumsal yükselme düşüncesi, özel örneklerle netleştirilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, Amerikan toplumunun acı gerçekleri de verilmiştir: bu toplumun zenci bir üyesi olmak beraberinde pek çok olumsuzluk getirmektedir ve koyu tene sahip olmak beyazlar tarafından adileştirilmek için yeterli bir ölçüdür.

Üçüncü bölümde, kadın bir entelektüel olarak Fauset'in o dönemdeki 'cinsiyet' konusuna bakış açısı açıklığa kavuşturulmuştur. Yazarın, yerleşmiş cinsiyet rollerini ve kadınların var olan durumu kabulünü eleştirisi analiz edilmiştir. Ayrıca, kadın karakterlerin, evliliği bir kurtuluş yolu olarak gören çarpık yaklaşımları, sınıf endişeleri ve erkeklere bağımlılık düşünceleri ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Son olarak, kadınların eşitlik istemini içeren ve böylece kendilerine uygulanan baskıya bir tepki olarak beliren söylemleri dile getirilmiştir.

Sonuç bölümünde, Fauset'in romanlarında ele aldığı konulardan çıkarılan bazı önemli gerçekler ortaya konmaktadır. Yazar, zencilerin mutlu olabilmek ve ırklarına yardımcı olmak için sınıf ile ilgili yanılsamalarını terk etmeleri ve ırkçı bakış açısını saf dışı bırakmaları gerektiği gerçeğini vurgulamaktadır. Irk konusunda, Fauset iyimser bir yaklaşım içindedir; zencilerin, entelektüel olarak donanımlı olurlarsa, sınırları aşabileceklerine inanmaktadır. Son olarak yazar, cinsiyet konusunda bazı mesajlar vermektedir: öncelikle, kadınlar erkeklerle kurdukları çıkara dayalı ilişkilerinden vazgeçmelidir ve zenciler, ırksal dayanışma için cinsiyet çizgilerinden kaçınmalıdır. Seçilen romanlarda yazar, genellikle toplumundaki olumsuz unsurları gösterir ve okurun olumlu ve olması gerekenleri görmesine izin verir; 'New Negro' kapsamındaki zenciler için evrensel eşitlik öngörmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Harlem Rönesansı, Jessie Redmon Fauset, *There is Confusion, Plum Bun: a Novel without a Moral*, sınıf, ırk, cinsiyet, kentli.

ABSTRACT**Master Thesis****Prospects of New Negro Identity in Jessie Redmon Fauset's Early Novels****Fatih ÖZTÜRK****Firat University****Institute of Social Sciences****Department of Western Languages and Literatures****Division of English Language and Literature****Elazig-2013, Page: VII + 88**

In this study called “Prospects of New Negro Identity in Jessie Redmon Fauset's Early Novels”, the writer's novels, *There is Confusion* (1924) and *Plum Bun: A Novel Without a Moral* (1929), are handled. In the study, the situation of the black community living in the American society in the 1920s is examined. With a short history of the blacks' presence within American borders, especially the meaning of the Harlem Renaissance, which was a black intellectual movement, for the Afro-Americans is studied. Besides, what the leading intellectuals wanted to do for their people, their goals and the ways they envisioned to reach these goals are inferred. In the selected novels of Jessie Redmon Fauset, it is tried to reflect her perspective of the colored people and American society in general during the fervent years of the Renaissance. While her impressions on class, race and gender issues are traced with regard to the urban black society in general, the reflections of these discriminations within the white-male-class oriented American community in a narrower sense are also handled.

In the introduction, the history of black people in America is presented in general terms. Beginning with the early 17th century, slavery and the process of betterment until the Harlem Renaissance of the early 20th century are shown. The events, foundations and especially black intellectuals that contributed to this improvement during this period are scrutinized. Additionally, detailed information

about Fauset's literary personality, who was the first Afro-American woman to attend Cornell University, and her approach to the problems of her day are stated.

In the first chapter, the way how Fauset deals with 'class' issues in the selected works is examined. While the power of economy in shaping the people's attitudes towards such institutions as science, religion and marriage is stated, the effect of class in determining the human relations is also emphasized. Besides, the reality of 'class consciousness' in the members of the society is reflected.

In the second chapter, the 'racial' issues in the works are studied. The idea of communal uplift is clarified with specific examples. However, the bitter facts of American society are also given: being a black person in this society brings a lot of disadvantages and having a dark skin is a sufficient criterion to be debased by whites.

In the third chapter, as a female intellectual, Fauset's point of view to the 'gender' issues is made clear. Her criticism of the established gender roles and the women's acceptance of status quo are analyzed. In addition, the female characters' distorted approaches to marriage as a way of escape, their class obsession and their feeling of dependence on men are revealed. Finally, the discourses of women that include a demand for equality and thereby appear as a reaction to the oppression of women are expressed.

In the conclusion, some crucial facts inferred from the topics that Fauset studies in her novels are manifested. She emphasizes the fact that black people should abandon their illusions related to class and destroy the racist point of view to be happy and to be promotive for their race. As to race, Fauset is optimistic; she believes that black people can transcend the restrictions if they are equipped intellectually. Finally, the writer gives some messages about gender: first, the women should give up their self-interested relationships with men, and then blacks should avoid gender lines for racial solidarity. In the selected novels, she usually shows the negative features of her society and lets the reader see the positive and necessary ones; she envisions universal equality for the blacks within the scope of 'New Negro'.

Key Words: Harlem Renaissance, Jessie Redmon Fauset, *There is Confusion*, *Plum Bun: a Novel without a Moral*, class, race, gender, urban.

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INTRODUCTION

1. EARLY YEARS OF BLACKS IN THE UNITED STATES

“Every declivity has an acclivity” is one of the most respected and relied on idioms denoting hope for the hopeless. It is true not only for human beings but also for societies, civilizations and ‘so-called’ races, as well. Whenever the idiom is in question in relation to the black community, and especially the black community within the geographical and psychological borders of America, the declivity is to be traced back to nearly two hundred and fifty years before the Civil War.

Unfortunately, the first presence of the black community on American soils coincides with the first arrival of the slaves around 1619 when a Dutch ship brought twenty enslaved Africans to the Virginia colony at Jamestown. It is important that the English settlers treated these captives as ‘indentured servants’, that is, they were not slaves; they were freed after a period and given land by their former masters. However, the situation changed soon. The wealthier planters found that it created a problem because the indentured servants were to leave on schedule when they became the most valuable workers. So began the transformation of the status of Africans from indentured servitude to slavery, whereby they could never leave.

In 1654, John Casor, who was an African, became the first legally recognized slave in the United States. In 1662, Virginia passed a law adopting the principle of ‘Partus sequitur ventrem’ stating that any children of an enslaved mother would take her status and be born into slavery even if the father were a freeborn Englishman, and so making the sexual abuse of black women by the owners legitimate. Massachusetts was the first colony to legalize slavery in 1641. Other colonies followed them passing slavery on to the children of slaves and making non-Christian imported servants slaves for life. By 1700 there were 25,000 slaves in the American colonies, about 10% of the population. The Virginia Slave codes of 1705 further defined those people imported from nations that were not Christian as slaves, as well as Native Americans who were sold to colonists by other Native Americans. This established the basis for the legal enslavement of any non-Christian foreigner. As seen, the slave holders produced artificial and nonethical laws in terms of gender and religion in order to justify the abuse of the slaves.

The second half of the 18th century was a time of political upheaval in the United States. By the time the Declaration of Independence was adopted in July 1776, the Thirteen Colonies and Great Britain had been at war for more than a year which ended with the victory of the Americans. The Constitutional Convention of 1787 sought to define the foundation for the government of the newly formed United States of America. The constitution set forth the ideals of freedom and equality while providing for the continuation of the institution of slavery through a law of ‘the fugitive (runaway) slaves’, slaves who had escaped from their masters to travel to a place where slavery was banned or illegal. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, signed by the first US president George Washington (1732-1799), allowed any black person to be claimed as a runaway unless a white person testified on her/his behalf and it established the legal mechanism by which escaped slaves could be seized in any state and returned to their masters. In short, the Act made every escaped slave a fugitive for life unless freed by the owner. Additionally, free blacks’ rights were also restricted in many places during the time; most were denied the right to vote and were excluded from public schools, restaurants and even churches.

The indentured servitude, which had been a major element of colonial labor economics from the 1620s until the American Revolution, was almost over until the 1750s, mostly due to the high cost of the indentured servants in comparison with the black slaves. Then, beginning in the 1750s, there started a widespread sentiment during the American Revolution, which took place in the second half of 18th century, that slavery itself was a social evil for the whites and for the country as a whole and that it should be abolished. All the Northern states passed emancipation acts between 1780 and 1804 and most of them arranged gradual emancipation and a special status for freedmen. In 1787, the Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance and barred slavery from the large Northwest Territory. In 1790, there were more than 59,000 free blacks in the United States. By 1810, that number had risen to 186,446. Most of these were in the North, but Revolutionary sentiments also motivated Southern slaveholders.

In the early part of the 19th century, a variety of organizations were established advocating the movement of black people from the United States to locations where they would enjoy greater freedom; some of them supported colonization, while others advocated emigration. However, most of this struggle was in vain because wherever they went, the shadows of the slavery and prejudice were to follow them. During the

1820s and 1830s the American Colonization Society (A.C.S.) became the primary vehicle for proposals to return black Americans to greater freedom and equality in Africa, and in 1821 the A.C.S. established Liberia as a colony for former African American slaves, assisting thousands of former African American slaves and free black people to move there from the United States. After 1830, a principally religious thought introduced by William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879), a prominent American abolitionist, journalist, and social reformer, declared slavery to be a personal sin. He demanded the owners repent immediately and start the process of emancipation. The movement was highly controversial and was a factor in causing the American Civil War.

1.1. A Black Rebellion and the American Civil War

In 1831, a bloody slave rebellion took place in Southampton County, Virginia. A slave named Nat Turner (1800-1831), who was able to read and write and had broader visions in comparison with most of his black friends, started what became to be known as 'Nat Turner's Rebellion' or 'the Southampton Insurrection'. With the goal of freeing himself and others, Turner and his followers killed approximately sixty white inhabitants, mostly women and children, for many of the men were attending a religious event in North Carolina then. Eventually, Turner was captured with seventeen other rebels and subdued by the militia. Across the South, harsh new laws were enacted to reduce the already limited rights of African Americans. New laws in Virginia prohibited blacks (free or slave) from practicing preaching, from owning firearms, and forbade teaching slaves how to read. Typical was the Virginia anti-literacy law which was against educating slaves, free blacks and mulatto children, and it specified heavy penalties both for the student and the teacher.

What followed this period of harsh discrimination were more divisions within the society together with the 1860 presidential election. The electorate split in four: the Southern Democrats endorsed slavery, while the Republicans denounced it; the Northern Democrats said democracy required people to decide on slavery locally and the Constitutional Union Party said the survival of the Union was at stake and everything else should be compromised. This presidential election was a turning point in terms of slavery. Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), the Republican, won with a plurality of popular votes and a majority of electoral votes and became the 16th president of the United States. Many slave owners in the South feared that the real intent of the

Republicans was the abolition of slavery in states where it already existed, and that the sudden emancipation of four million slaves would be problematic for the slave owners and for the economy that drew its greatest profits from the labor of people who were not paid. So, eleven Southern slave states declared their secession from the United States and formed the Confederate States of America (the Confederacy) in response to the election of Lincoln as President of the United States. The other 25 states supported the federal government (the Union). What followed was The American Civil War (1861-1865), which took place mostly within the Southern states, and at the end, the Confederacy surrendered and slavery was outlawed everywhere in the nation. The Thirteenth Amendment, abolishing slavery, was passed by the Senate in April 1864 and by the House of Representatives in January 1865. However, the amendment did not take effect until it was ratified by three fourths of the states, which occurred on December 6, 1865 when Georgia ratified it. On that date, all remaining slaves became officially free. In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment granted full U.S. citizenship to African Americans. The Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1870, extended the right to vote for black males.

1.2. The Reconstruction and the Great Migration

After the Union victory over the Confederacy, a brief period of Southern black progress, called Reconstruction (1865-1877), followed. During this time, the blacks established their own churches, towns and businesses. Some black Northerners left their homes and migrated to the defeated South, building schools, printing newspapers, and opening businesses there. However, this betterment in the South, having arrived after the Civil War, was not to go on for a long time. In a short time, the time of recovery started to slow down, and soon the society turned back and adopted its past discriminations and prejudices against the black people. Following this, the largest internal population shift in U.S. history took place during the first half of the 20th century. Starting about 1910, over five million African Americans made choices and moved from the South to Northern cities in hopes of escaping political discrimination, hatred and violence, finding better jobs, voting and enjoying greater equality and education for their children through the Great Migration (1910-1930).

Underlying the migration, the First World War was a quite important factor as it had created new industrial work opportunities for people in the place of those having gone to the War; the years between World War I and the Great Depression were boom

times for America and for the blacks in terms of jobs which were plentiful in cities, especially in the North. Nevertheless, this migration meant more than that; this was a migration from the rural to the urban; from the country to the city; from the simplicity to the complexity and so, this was a search and demand for a life and opportunities like those of the whites'. This great mobility most naturally changed the social and political structure of America, and in economic terms too, the migration helped the economy of the country from the agricultural to an industrial one. The migration of Southern blacks to the North also changed the image of the African American community from peasant to a more sophisticated position. This new identity led to a greater social consciousness, and African Americans became players on the world stage, expanding intellectual and social contacts internationally. As a direct result of the migration to the North, Harlem became the political and cultural center of African Americans and in the 1920s, the concentration of blacks in New York was to lead to the imminent 'acclivity' of the Black Community: the Harlem Renaissance. Because this acclivity did cover not only social and cultural, but also literary structure of the Black community, what led to this acclivity were not just the social and cultural events mentioned above starting with the first arrival of the Black slaves to America in 1619; there were also literary factors and an intellectual accumulation over the years.

1.3. The Birth of Harlem Renaissance

1.3.1. The Political and Intellectual Background: The Leading Figures

Many black and white writers, intellectuals and artists became the mouthpiece of the blacks after the Civil War. They related the social, cultural, and economic situation of them. One of the first figures to draw attention to the social, cultural and literary background after the Civil War was Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), who was a social reformer, writer and statesman. He was a firm believer in the equality of all people, whether black, female, Native American, or recent immigrant. He believed and in fact, as a person living the slavery personally, witnessed that racism destroyed humanity. His *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), a memoir and treatise on abolition, was a perfect reflection of the life at that time and his views on slavery and the effects of slavery on the African American community. As Douglass personally witnessed the evils of slavery and prejudices of inequality, he always maintained a stern approach against racism, which reflected to his work, too. His ideas about the white community in

America were naturally not positive, and he was in the opinion that most of the white population in America, especially the slaveholders in the South, had a corrupted and hypocritical understanding of Christianity to justify their unfair deeds against the black community. In his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, he criticizes this situation rigidly:

I assert most unhesitatingly, that the religion of the south is a mere covering for the most horrid crimes,-a justifier of the most appalling barbarity,-a sanctifier of the most hateful frauds,-and a dark shelter under, which the darkest, foulest, grossest, and most infernal deeds of slaveholders find the strongest protection (Douglass, 1995: 46).

He saw the injustice of the white society, and as a more or less religious person himself, he could observe how the white slaveholders could use even religion to show the debasement of the blacks as something usual. One of the best representatives of ‘antislavery’ writing, he stood as a living counter-example to slaveholders’ arguments that slaves did not have the intellectual capacity to function as independent American citizens. He did not see the color of a person’s skin when judging them and he believed that they should be judged by their morality and intelligence, instead. There were two things that represented Douglass’s approach to the problem of racism. First, he was positive in his social reform, in that he always believed there was a solution to the problem. Second, he created a racial consciousness among the black community that was positive and was one aiming to uplift them to equality. He was the clear leader of his race from the end of the Civil War until his death. Edgar A. Toppin (1928-2004) talks of Douglass’s leadership and importance for the black community with the following lines: “[h]is unceasing militancy inspired blacks of his day and of today to fight against slavery, segregation, discrimination, and all forms of oppression” (Toppin, 1971: 282).

After the end of slavery, a number of African American authors continued to write nonfiction works about the condition of African Americans in the country, but the focus changed: the topics like individualism, self-reliance and personal and/or communal achievement largely took place of the reflections of the slavery. Booker T. Washington’s (1856-1915) *Up From Slavery* (1901), detailing his slow and steady rise

from a slave child during the Civil War, to the difficulties and obstacles he overcame to get an education at the New Hampton University, which was a historically black university, was a pioneer in this genre. With such works, Washington encouraged the blacks to acquire the habits necessary for success in a materialistic society such as cleanliness, frugality, honesty, and especially patience (Inge, 1995: 410). He was an educator and the founder of the Tuskegee Institute, a Black college in Alabama. He believed that as there were a lot of limitations for the black people rising against the white society, they had to help each other, and the Institute was a step through this goal. Among his published works are *The Future of the American Negro* (1899), which set forth his ideas regarding the history of enslaved and freed African American people and their need for education to advance themselves, *Tuskegee and Its People* (1905), and *My Larger Education* (1911). Washington believed that blacks should first lift themselves up and prove themselves the equal of whites before asking for an end to racism. He moved away from the 'confrontational approaches' embraced by his predecessor in the African American community, Frederick Douglass who was much sterner and even provocative in his search of equality. Like Douglass, he believed in equality, but differed on the manner in which it would be achieved. He told blacks that the most important goal was economic respectability and called his people to give up higher education and politics then, in order to concentrate on gaining industrial wealth before all.

On the other hand, the leader for 'Niagara Movement' of 1904-5, which was opposed to the policies of accommodation and conciliation promoted by Booker T. Washington and aimed at abolishing all distinctions based on race, W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) had different views on curing the ills of black community. He believed that education was much more important than industrial training and he thought that Washington's ideas on education and his excessive commitment to industrial wealth meant submission to the white society. Having adopted a more confrontational attitude toward ending racial strife in America, he believed that African Americans should, because of their common interests, work together to battle against prejudice and inequity. He was one of the original founders of "The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People" (NAACP), which was founded as the nation's oldest civil rights organization in 1909 and continues to fight for justice for Americans even today. He was also the editor of the NAACP's *The Crisis*, a magazine which was

founded in 1910 and undertook a crucial role for the advancement of the Pan African ideology.

While at high school Du Bois showed a keen concern for the development of his race. At the age of fifteen he became the local correspondent for *the New York Globe* and in this position, he conceived it his duty to push his race forward by lectures and editorials reflecting upon the need of black people to politicize themselves. Upon graduation from high school, he, like many other students of his caliber, desired to attend Harvard. However, he lacked the financial resources to go there. With the aid of friends and family, and a scholarship, he eagerly headed to Nashville, Tennessee, instead, to further his education. This was his first trip to the South. In those three years there (1885–1888), his knowledge of the race problem became more definite. He saw discrimination in ways he never dreamed of, and developed a determination to accelerate the emancipation of his people in its fullest sense. In the process, he acquired a fighter-attitude toward the color bar. In addition, while at Fisk University, he spent two summers teaching at a county school in order to learn more about the South and his people. There he learned first-hand of poverty, poor land, ignorance, and prejudice, but most importantly, he learned that his people had a deep desire for knowledge. After graduation from Fisk, he entered Harvard and his education focused on philosophy and history but then he gradually began to turn toward economics and social problems.

He received his bachelor's degree in 1890 and immediately began working toward his master and doctoral degrees. He chose to study at the University of Berlin in Germany which was considered to be one of the world's finest institutions of higher learning then. During the two years spent there, he began to see the race problems in the Americas, Africa, and Asia more and more clearly. This was the period of his life that united his studies of history, economics, and politics into a scientific approach of social research. His doctoral thesis, "The Suppression of the African Slave Trade in America", remains an authoritative work on racism and slavery and it is the first volume in Harvard's Historical Series. In 1903, he published his highly influential collection of essays titled *The Souls of Black Folk*, which contained several essays on race, some of which had been previously published in *The Atlantic Monthly* magazine. He drew from his own experiences as an African American in American society to develop this groundbreaking work. In *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911) *Black Reconstruction* (1935), and others,

he talked extensively about the lives of black people not only in America but also all around the African continent. He was the most intellectual political African American leader in the first half of the 20th century and was concerned about the segregation and the political disenfranchisement of black people. In his later life, he was thought to be a communist because he talked positive about Stalin. He died in Ghana at the age of 95 having lived a life dedicated to the emancipation of his folk.

Influenced by Du Bois, Alain LeRoy Locke (1885-1954) believed that white Americans needed to readjust their attitudes toward African Americans and he had a lasting influence on both philosophy and the social sciences (Lane and O'Sullivan, 1999: 217). With a celebration of his heritage, Locke recognized the role of both Africa and America in shaping their heritage. He was also inspired by the Irish literary renaissance of the late 19th and early 20th century, and he sought to connect black Americans with their African roots. He believed that an understanding of the rich interaction of cultures would generate a pride in this unique legacy. He attended the Philadelphia School of Pedagogy, where he graduated first. He was accepted by Harvard University and had an education in Philosophy. During his junior year, he became a member of Phi Beta Kappa, the nation's oldest and largest academic honor society, and became very popular with his classmates. His new friends at the university began to draw his attention to a major issue on campus: racism. Through his hard work and dedication, he graduated from Harvard in three years and was awarded the prestigious Bowdoin Prize in English Literature for an essay, "The Literary Heritage of Tennyson", he had written in an English class. After graduation, he decided to study issues of color outside the United States. He applied for the Rhodes scholarship, which allowed a group of men to attend Oxford University and experience a culture different from their own, in hopes of attending the university in England. At the qualifying exam, he scored the highest and was awarded the scholarship before the committee discovered he was black, but after careful consideration the committee decided to let the award stand. He arrived at Oxford in 1910 with high expectations and they were met when he found himself surrounded by diverse crowds of students who, unlike those at Harvard, considered themselves equals regardless of race. However, by talking with this diverse group of students at Oxford, he discovered that discrimination was a problem throughout the entire world, and this troubled him. He later decided to leave Oxford and move to Germany to study philosophy and learn how to combine diversity with

community. In Germany, he looked at the participation of minorities in economic, civil, and social life of the community. This was a subject he wanted to study in America as well, so he left Europe and returned to the United States in 1913 in the hope of continuing his studies and becoming a teacher.

Upon his return to America, he found himself in a dilemma; white universities would not allow him to teach because he was black. So, with the limited opportunities available, he chose to teach at Howard University, an African American college in Washington where he would remain for forty-two years. While teaching English at Howard, he also found time to earn a Ph.D. in Philosophy at Harvard in 1918. He enjoyed philosophy because it allowed him to focus on the impact of race on culture, a topic which first attracted him as an undergraduate at Harvard and he began to develop the Department of Philosophy at Howard University. His hard work would eventually lead him to become the chairman of the department. He decided to address the issues of race in his writings. His most well-known work, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race* (1916), focused on how blacks and whites could come together and live in a multiethnic society. He later became head of what was called the 'New Negro Movement', shifting his focus to young African American poets, writers, and artists with talent. Later in his life, he decided to teach adults how to live in a democratic and multiethnic society. In 1945, he became the first African American president of the American Association for Adult Education (AAAE), a program that provided leadership for adult growth and development. He moved permanently to New York City where he taught at the City College for New York (CCNY). He was preparing to retire in 1954 while working on "The Negro in American Culture", which he would never get the chance to complete.

Just like LeRoy, Marcus Garvey (1887–1940), another important personage of the time, encouraged people of African ancestry to look favorably upon their ancestral homeland and get inspiration from there to create their identity and art. He was a newspaper publisher, journalist, and activist for Pan Africanism, which was based on the idea that the fates of African peoples were intertwined and they had a common destiny, through his organization "The Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League" (UNIA), which was founded in 1914 and survives today. He was also influenced by the ideas of Booker T. Washington and made plans to develop a trade school for the poor similar to the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Like

NAACP, Garvey campaigned against lynching, denial of black voting rights and racial discrimination. What UNIA differed from other civil rights organizations was on how the problem could be solved. Garvey doubted whether whites in the United States would ever agree to African Americans being treated as equals and argued for segregation rather than integration and so he suggested that African Americans should go and live in Africa. He had suspicions as to whether the white people would ever give them the deserved equality. So, he thought that the black people would do better if they returned to Africa.

Apart from the personages above, who had mainly critical and philosophical approaches to the case, there were others whose literary studies were dominant. African American history predates the emergence of the United States as an independent country, and African American literature has similarly deep roots. Until the Harlem Renaissance, there were many poets. Lucy Terry (1730-1821), who was taken from Africa and sold into slavery as an infant, is the author of the oldest known piece of African American literature, "Bars Fight", a ballad about the attack upon two white families by Native Americans. Although written in 1746, the poem was not published until 1855, when it was included in Josiah Holland's *History of Western Massachusetts*.

As the period was determined by colonialism and slavery, the literature of the Black Community made under oppression and mostly illegally was a reflection of the social life and it was shaped by slavery. The writers of this period were interested in the expression of the black life at the time of slavery, the Civil War, segregation, oppression and as a natural result of all these factors the struggle for freedom and equality. 'The black experience' was the keystone of the literature of the time. Under these circumstances, the coming out of the 'slave narratives' cannot be disregarded. The birth of the slave narrative genre was during the mid-19th century and the writings, mostly made by the fugitive slaves, were about their lives in the South. In the course of time, slave narratives became integral to African American literature. Although the writings under the title were so various, they can be broadly categorized into three distinct forms: tales of religious redemption, tales to inspire the abolitionist struggle, and tales of progress. The tales written to inspire the abolitionist struggle have been the most famous ones because they tended to have a strong autobiographical motif. Many of them are now recognized as the most literary ones of all 19th century writings by African Americans. Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784), who studied such themes as race and slavery

was the first African American poet and first African American woman whose writings were published. *Memoir and Poems of Phillis Wheatley, a Native African and Slave*, which was written in 1834, was her only novel as she mainly wrote poems.

Harriet Jacobs (1813-1897) was a prominent personage of the period. Her *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) on one level chronicled the writer's own experiences as a slave and the various humiliations she had to endure in that unhappy state, and it also dealt with the particular tortures of women. Often in the book, she pointed to a particular punishment, like whipping, that a male slave would endure at the hands of slave holders, and commented that, although she found the punishment brutal in the extreme, it could not be compared to the abuse that a young woman had to face, which was not only racial but also sexual. Traditionally considered the first female African American novelist, Harriet E. Wilson (1825-1900) was another shining writer. *Our Nig: or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* was published in 1859. Considered the first novel published by an African American on the North American continent, it illustrated the injustice of indentured servitude in the antebellum Northern United States.

A poet like Phillis Wheatley, Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906), who often wrote in the rural black dialect of the day, was the first African American poet to gain national prominence. His first book of poetry, *Oak and Ivy*, was published in 1893. Much of his work, such as *When Malindy Sings* (1906), provided revealing glimpses into the lives of rural African Americans of the day.

This literary richness of the Black community together with the social and cultural activity taking place in Harlem was the thing what brought out the Harlem Renaissance by the end of the World War I.

1.4. The General Lines of the Harlem Renaissance from the Beginning to the End

In general terms, we can define a 'renaissance', a French word, as the rebirth or the revival of the literary ideas. However, when it comes to the Harlem Renaissance, it was not just a revival of the literary ideas, but rather a revival of a community as a whole from politics to literature, from social life in general to entertainment. While at its core it was primarily a literary movement, it touched all of the African American creative arts. The name of the movement may be a little misleading, since this

Renaissance was not unique to Harlem. Certainly it can be seen as the capital of the movement, as the birthplace of the Renaissance since it was most noticeably there, but it might just as easily be called the ‘New Negro Renaissance’ because the Harlem Renaissance was exactly a Renaissance of the Color and Class. Wintz explains and in a way summarizes the Renaissance with these words:

The Harlem Renaissance, then, was an African American literary and artistic movement centered in Harlem, but influencing African American communities across the country; it flourished in the late 1920s early 1930s, but its antecedents and legacy spread many years before 1920 and after 1930 (Wintz, 2003: 1).

The Renaissance was very important in that it was able to draw the attention of the whole nation to the African American art so intensely for the first time in the history of American intellectual and cultural life. It gave a voice to the demand for equality and justice. Like other literary and artistic movements, the Renaissance did not cover or affect a short period of time; it was a process starting with the end of the World War I and continuing to the Great Depression of the 1930s, but its underlying reasons were felt even decades before.

Having a look at some definitions of the Renaissance will be of great use to have a broader understanding of it. Ella O. Williams, who is the author of *Harlem Renaissance: A Handbook* (2008), defines the Harlem Renaissance as follows: “The Harlem Renaissance may be defined as a movement in African American history between 1910 and 1940 wherein a group of Harlem intellectuals encouraged and promoted literary and creative art pertaining to the negro” (Williams, 2008: 1). Williams widens the borders of the Renaissance a decade earlier and a decade later taking into consideration its background and impact. She emphasizes the artistic potentials of black people that were disregarded until then.

The period in terms of its goal of expression and cultural exchange should also be paid attention: “The Harlem Renaissance was the first period in the history of the United States in which a group of African American poets, authors, and essayists seized

the opportunity to express themselves and were embraced by others both nationally and globally.”¹

As understood, the Renaissance was local in color; because it was the chance for the colored people to express themselves, and global in effect; as its effects went on for decades, and showed itself as a paradigm for the oppressed communities of color in the world.

The Renaissance coincided with a time known as the ‘Jazz Age’. Although the Renaissance and the Jazz Age writers lived in the same period, their interests, background and reason for expressing themselves were different. In a time shaped by Jim Crow Laws, which represented the legitimization of anti-black racism by showing the blacks as cursed servants and whites as the people chosen by God, the differences between the interests of black and white writers were quite natural.

Having ‘the blues’, an African American music form born in the South and a form that had the pain of lost love and injustice at heart, in its origin, it took place during the 1920s or in other words ‘the Roaring Twenties’ from which jazz music and dance emerged. Cities like New York and Chicago were cultural centers for jazz, and especially for African American artists. 1920s’ youth used the influence of jazz to rebel against the traditional culture of previous generations. When it comes to the literary aspect of the Jazz Age, the term ‘Lost Generation’ is of vital importance. As a term coined by Gertrude Stein (1874-1946), it defined a sense of moral loss or aimlessness apparent in literary figures during the 1920s. A direct result of World War I, it had destroyed the idea that if you acted virtuously, good things would happen. Many young men went to the war and died, or returned home either physically or mentally wounded and their faith in the moral guideposts that had earlier given them hope, were no longer valid, that is they were ‘lost’. Alcohol was used by many to heal the wounds of war and love-lost. The value set embodied by this generation was often contemptuous of religion, because it did not solve the problems, and the sexuality, women, and love dominated the space when religion was discarded. The black American soldiers, on the other hand, were double disillusioned: they were sent to France with the consolation that they were equal U.S. citizens, but both when they were in France and after they came home, they met the same racial contempt and they found that nothing was changed on the social and economic base.

¹ Excerpt from <http://utaspring2009theharlemrenaissance.blogspot.com/> accessed on 8 May 2013

Apart from these themes, the writers made statements against post-war capitalist America in their works. Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald (1896-1940) and Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) were two of the most important representatives of this generation in that they reflected the meaning of 'being lost' in their works so effectively. Published in 1925, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) reflected such themes as the decline of the American Dream, society and class, love, dissatisfaction, isolation and absence of religion. Hemingway's 1926 novel *The Sun Also Rises* was a perfect reflection of aimlessness, insecurity, the destructiveness of sex, excessive drinking, love, exile and warfare. The Jazz Age ended in the 1930s with the beginning of The Great Depression but has lived on in American pop culture for decades.

Unlike their white counterparts, it is natural that the Harlem writers did not write their works just for self-expression or for money; they had their own visions. The idea that most of the Harlem Renaissance writers relied on was not 'art for art's sake'. They had an ideology, and most of the time the ideology was beyond being personal; it was communal and related to racial issues unlike the Lost Generation writers. They aimed at the socio-politic and economic uplift of their race. They wanted to compensate the oppression and persecution on their race for centuries. They wanted to emphasize the fact that blacks can produce art, and they had a vast and rich history and culture as material, and enough tools to express them.

The Black community had a rich oral literature they had brought from Africa. But all this richness of folklore and literature had never been taken seriously because of slavery and so most of it had been forgotten. The participants of the Renaissance had a commitment to represent honestly and completely this African American experience in all of its variety and complexity as realistically as possible. The Renaissance writers were determined to express the African American past; both its rural Southern roots and its African heritage were quite prevalent among them. Rather than looking at Europe and colonial America as the source of ideas, beauty and insight, most of the writers produced novels and other works based on themes and issues about Africa and Southern life. The artists and writers aimed at giving voice or image to the African American experience, and they demanded the freedom and independence to do this on their own terms, based on their own vision. The creation of art and literature based on the African American experience would help uplift the race as a whole.

As the black person had never had a certain identity apart from being a slave and had always been identified in their lower relation to their masters, the Renaissance writers found it crucial to concern themselves with the identity problem. The aim of the black writers was to create an ideal image of black character, and then show it to their black readers. This new identity was one who was self-reliant and was proud of her/his race. The ideal black man would not feel revenge for the past, and would be optimistic about future. These writers felt an urgent need for a clearly defined image. But, as F. R. Keller expresses, there was a sharp disagreement on how to represent the image and identity of the new black person. Some of the writers felt the need to invest their people with a sense of dignity and intelligence in their own eyes as in the eyes of white Americans. However, the writers disagreed on how to create this type of person (Keller, 1968: 32-33). This is why the Renaissance writers stressed different, sometimes incompatible attitudes, convictions, needs, visions and hopes. This is why there were sharp conflicts between writers and even within the works of the same writer. This diversity alone explains the intensity of the disagreements and debates on the representative identity for the black. Naturally, the Renaissance writers could not reflect their aims without having some common themes in their works. The notion of 'twoness' - a divided awareness of one's identity, was one of the most prominent themes of the Renaissance and it was introduced by Du Bois: "One ever feels his two-ness - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled stirrings: two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (Du Bois, 2008: 6).

His point was that the Negro was forever looking at herself/himself through the eyes of white people; trying to be what they thought he/she was, or trying to be what they wanted her/him to be rather than having an independent personality of herself/himself. In parallel with the identity problem of the black person, the concept of twoness occupied an important place in the works of the Renaissance; exploring characters of mixed racial heritage who struggle to define their racial identity in a world of prejudice and racism became one of the most popular themes of the time.

Another prominent theme in the writings was the psychological and social impact of race. Although the existence of 'race' can be discussed and was discussed at that time, one of the leading intellectuals of the black community, Du Bois accepted that there was something as race and defined it in this way: "It is a vast family of human

beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life'' (Eze, 1998: 292). With the subject definition above, he set the course for the black writers by making the whole community accept race as a concept and support each other in order to accomplish the 'conceived ideals' of life. Rather than escaping and ignoring the real situation around, he tried to face the problem and wanted his friends to do so in order to fight for their ideals in union.

Another important concept of the Renaissance was 'Harlem' itself. The writers of the Harlem were an extremely mobile crew, who felt joined, not estranged by their wanderings; because they were part of the great migration of black people to the urban Northeast around World War I. Collectively they developed a vision of an urban home that was at once an organic place, a birthright community, and a cultural aspiration. The people, character types, lifestyle and activities energized and inspired its creative types. Both Langston Hughes and Claude McKay drew on Harlem images for their poetry. McKay used the ghetto as the setting for his first novel, *Home to Harlem* (1928). However, some writers like Rudolph Fisher and Wallace Thurman were accused of overemphasizing crime, sexuality, and other less savory aspects of the ghetto life in order to feed the voyeuristic desires of white readers and publishers. A white writer, Carl Van Vechten (1880-1964), was also blamed for pioneering this 'exploitive literature' in his controversial 1926 novel *Nigger Heaven*.

The concept of the 'New Negro' was a prevalent theme in the Renaissance. Black protest throughout the period of American slavery showed the proof that where there is oppression there will be resistance. The ultimate product of this physical and psychological resistance was the emergence of 'New Negro'. Of course, the birth of this concept was not only about the sufferings of slavery and resistance; it was also the result of a process of awareness, an awareness of the beauty and power of the colored people. The New Negro's task was to discover and define her/his culture and her/his contribution to what had been thought the white American civilization. Wagner-Martin explains the concept and task of the New Negro in these lines:

The 'new Negro' should not be buried under faddish concepts of sociology, philanthropy, or politics; neither should he or she be

confined to images that existed through history (“old Negro” concepts of servility, or rebellion). What would characterize the new Negro would be the spirit of discovery, of pride, of the search of origins- many of them American- that would lend a different tone to art and literature (Wagner-Martin, 1990: 80).

Most of the pioneers of the Renaissance were representative of ‘New Negro’. They were educated, and believed the importance of integration with the American society as a whole. Independence from the stereotypes that whites held about African Americans and the expectations that they had for black literary works were other prevalent problems of the Renaissance. The white community expected that a work by a black person was to reflect the superiority of the white male patriarchy while showing the meanness of the black community, but the new generation of the black intellectuals would defy against this cliché as Du Bois states:

We must come to the place where the work of art when it appears is reviewed and acclaimed by our own free and unfettered judgment. And we are going to have a real and valuable and eternal judgment only as we make ourselves free of mind, proud of body, and just of soul to all men (Du Bois, 2013).

As Du Bois brilliantly summarizes, the determination of black writers to follow their own artistic vision was one of the principal characteristics of the Harlem Renaissance. They were now determined to behave as they were, disregarding the prejudices of the white society. These young black writers were aware of the beauty of their color, and so they would live and write as self-reliant individuals. In another occasion, Du Bois puts forward the idea that “All Art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists” (Du Bois, 2013). Hughes also had similar ideas about the self-reliance and pride of the ‘New Negro’, and New Negro Art:

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn’t matter. We

know we are beautiful. And ugly too...We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves (Hughes, 2012).

They were conscious of their art, its nature and goals. To sum up, African American literature explored the issues of freedom and equality long denied to the blacks in the United States, along with further themes such as African American culture, racism, twoness, slavery and a sense of home centered in Harlem.

All the figures from the first presence of the Black community on America to those at the time of the Civil War had indirect contribution to 'the acclivity', but it gained impetus with the efforts of some literary figures living in the Renaissance period. Among them was James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938). He was a writer, poet and a distinguished statesman. He attended Atlanta University with the intention that the education he received there would be helpful to further the interests of the black people. After graduation, he took a job as a high school principal in Jacksonville. In 1900, he wrote the song "Lift Every Voice and Sing" on the occasion of Lincoln's birthday, which became immensely popular in the black community and became known as the "Negro National Anthem". He had his poems published in the *Century Magazine* and *The Independent*. In 1912, he published *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* under a pseudonym, the story of a musician who rejected his black roots for a life of material comfort in the white world. The novel explored the issue of racial identity in the 20th century, a common theme in the writings of the Renaissance writers. Of mixed white and black ancestry, Johnson examined the complex issue of race in his fiction. In 1920, he became the national organizer for the NAACP. He edited *The Book of American Negro Poetry* in 1922, a major contribution to the history of African American literature. His book of poetry, *God's Trombones* (1927), was influenced by his impressions of the rural South, drawn from a trip he took to Georgia while a freshman in college. It was this trip that inflamed his interest in the African American folk tradition. Using the component of African American folk culture, he produced eight poetic sermons. The strength of these pieces was the simple but powerful language and the message that captured the depth of black religious feeling. His autobiography, called *Along This Way: The Autobiography of James Weldon Johnson*, the first autobiography by a person of color to be reviewed in *The New York Times*, was

published in 1933. He, much like his contemporary Du Bois, was a man who bridged several historical and literary trends and like him again, he found inspiration in African American spirituals. He was very active in the advancement of the African Americans in all social and academic fields.

Another active participant in the Renaissance was Claude McKay (1889-1948). He was a Jamaican-born American poet and novelist and he was a major writer of the Harlem Renaissance. Written in 1928, *Home to Harlem*, which won the Harmon Gold Award for Literature, depicted the street life in Harlem. The novel gained a substantial readership, especially with people who wanted to know more about the intense, and sometimes shocking, details of Harlem nightlife. *Home to Harlem* was a work in which the writer looked among the common people for a distinctive black identity. His works, which expressed his anger about the poor economic and social position of blacks in American society, helped establish him as a voice for the Civil Rights Movement that fought for racial equality after World War II (1955-1968).

Nella Larsen (1891-1964), who mainly wrote novels like McKay, reflected the life going on at that time just like Dunbar. In her first novel *Quicksand*, written in 1928, she told the story of Helga Crane, a fictional character loosely based on her early life. Although she published only two novels and a handful of periodical pieces, she was regarded as an important writer of the Harlem Renaissance.

Rudolph John Chauncey Fisher (1897-1934) was also a novelist and a short story writer. In 1932, he wrote *The Conjure-Man Dies*, the first novel with a black detective as well as the first detective novel with only black characters. Respected by a number of notable black writers, he helped spark interest in black literature. He was an active participant in the Harlem Renaissance, primarily as a novelist, but also as a musician.

Sterling A. Brown (1901-1989), like Johnson, was an American folklorist, poet and critic. Considered one of the best black American poets of the early 20th century, he was a pioneer of the academic study of black literature. He was one of the first critics to identify folklore and folk music as vital to the black aesthetic like Langston Hughes (1902-1967), whose devotion to black music led him to novel fusions of jazz and blues with traditional verse in his poem "The Weary Blues", written in 1925. Langston Hughes was an American poet, short story writer, novelist, playwright, autobiographer, and nonfiction writer. He was one of the seminal figures of the Harlem Renaissance;

some critics consider him the most significant African American writer of the 20th century. He inspired and encouraged two generations of black writers, including Margaret Walker (1915-1998) and Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000), and later Ted Joans (1928-2003), Mari Evans (1923-), and Alice Walker (1944).

A poet like Hughes, Arnauld Wendell Bontemps (Arna Bontemps) (1902-1973) was also a novelist, author of children's literature, and anthologist. An important figure in the Harlem Renaissance, he is noted for stressing in his works a sense of pride in one's color and heritage. Mainly a poet again, Countee Cullen (1903-1946) is best remembered for the five early volumes of poetry that established him as a luminary in the Harlem Renaissance: *Color* (1925), *Copper Sun* (1927), *The Ballad of the Brown Girl* (1927), *The Black Christ and Other Poems* (1929), and *The Medea and Some Poems* (1935). Like many of his contemporaries, he was committed to themes of Pan Africanism, racial equality, and artistic freedom.

Zora Neale Hurston (1903-1960) was also interested in folklore and she was another efficient intellectual in the Harlem Renaissance. She first came to New York City at the age of sixteen, having arrived as part of a traveling theatrical troupe. A strikingly gifted storyteller who captivated her listeners, she attended Barnard College, where she studied with an anthropologist named Franz Boaz and came to grasp ethnicity from a scientific perspective. Boaz urged her to collect folklore from her native Florida environment, which she did. In 1925 she went to New York City, drawn by the circle of creative black artists, and began writing fiction. She found a scholarship at Barnard College. While studying there, she also worked as a secretary for Fannie Hurst (1889-1968), a black novelist. After college, she began working as an ethnologist and combined fiction and her knowledge of culture. Her early patron, Mrs. Rufus Osgood Mason, supported her work on the condition that she would not publish anything. It was only after she cut herself off from Mrs. Mason's financial patronage that she began publishing her poetry and fiction. Appearing at the height of the Harlem Renaissance during the 1930s, she was the preeminent black woman writer in America. She worked with Langston Hughes and was a fierce rival of Richard Wright. Her stories appeared in major magazines and she was consulted on Hollywood screenplays. She penned four novels, an autobiography, countless essays, and two books on black mythology. Her best-known work was published in 1937; *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, a novel which was controversial because it did not fit easily into the stereotypes of black stories.

This work was a moving, fresh depiction of a beautiful mulatto woman's maturation and renewed happiness as she moved through three marriages. The novel vividly evoked the lives of African Americans working the land in the rural South. However, she was criticized within the black community for taking funds from whites to support her writing.

A harbinger of the women's movement, Hurston inspired and influenced such contemporary writers as Alice Walker and Toni Morrison. She gave women a voice and vindicated them in a not only racist but also patriarchal society through books such as her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942) and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), in which she showed the quest of Janie to find a voice to express herself and discover her 'self'. She also spent time in Haiti, studying voodoo and collecting Caribbean folklore that was anthologized in *Tell My Horse* (1938). The *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934) and *Mules and Men* (1935) were among her other striking works. Her natural command of colloquial English put her in the great tradition of Mark Twain. Her writing sparkled with colorful language and comic, or tragic stories from the African American oral tradition, but her popularity waned in time. Her last book was published in 1948. By the late 1950s, she was living in obscurity, working as a maid in a Florida hotel. She died in 1960 in a Welfare home, was buried in an unmarked grave, and quickly faded from literary consciousness until 1975 when Alice Walker almost single-handedly revived interest in her work.

The only field that the Harlem Renaissance excelled was not literature. Art was one of the areas in which the 1920s and 30s were distinct and the spirit of the Harlem Renaissance was as much expressed in the visual arts as it was in literature. Visual artists played a key role in creating depictions of the New Negro. The Harmon Foundation, an organization set up by wealthy people to support culture in 1922, discovered and gave prizes to many rising young black artists who became famous later. Black painters portrayed blacks as sensitive and dignified individuals rather than comic stereotypes. Pride in Africa and African origins arose and became widespread in the 1920s and especially in the 1930s. African American artists began to use an African style and Africanic visual devices to suggest themes such as the African past and liberation for African people in their work. The expression of African images and motifs as well as modernist themes in black American art were the hallmarks of the Renaissance. Many artists of various kinds contributed to it, but some of them were

most representative of its art. In painting, Aaron Douglas (1899-1979), who used black men and women as central symbolic figures, was often chosen to illustrate key books, for example by James Weldon Johnson, and magazines like *Opportunity*. Palmer Hayden (1890-1973) and Archibald Motley (1891-1981) depicted, among other things, folklore, African American social life and strongly African features.

In sculpture, Richmond Barthe (1901-1989) and Meta Warrick Fuller (1877-1968) excelled with themes related to Africa and the beauty of the black people. Their art consciously sought to express the ‘black is beautiful’ concept long before it arose as an identifying principle and aesthetic ideology many years later in the 1960s. In photography, photographers such as James Van Der Zee (1886-1983) and others like James L. Allen and the Morgan brothers visually documented Harlem’s community life and prominent African American cultural and intellectual personalities.

Beyond the figures helping the intellectual accumulation of the black community leading to the Renaissance, there were some foundations which were of great help. One of them was a library. In the early 1920s, the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library, under the leadership of Ernestine Rose, played a significant role in the Harlem Renaissance. By drawing on the resources of the community, the library staff facilitated the connections between writers and their readers with literary gatherings; between artists and their viewers with art exhibitions; and between playwrights, performers, and their audiences with theatrical productions. The personages such as Angelina Weld Grimke (1880-1958) and Georgia Douglas Johnson (1880-1966) and their plays *Rachel* (1916), one of the first plays to protest lynching and racial violence, and *Plumes* (1927), a folk tragedy set in the rural South, respectively were crucial in the drama world of the Harlem Renaissance. In 1917, Hubert Harrison (1883-1927), the father of Harlem radicalism, founded the “Liberty League” and *The Voice*, the first organization and the first newspaper of the Renaissance respectively. Charles S. Johnson’s magazine *Opportunity* became the leading voice of black culture, and Du Bois’s journal, *The Crisis*, with Jessie Redmon Fauset (1882-1961) as its literary editor, launched the literary careers of such writers as Arnauld Wendell Bontemps, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen. The literary magazine *fire!!* was another important magazine for the promotion of the black ideas.

Another major element of the Harlem Renaissance was its music. Black musicians were drawn to New York by the excitement and the opportunity to make

money and to show their talent and see their works on stage. Even before the period, many talented black musicians had come to New York and made a name for themselves. Will Marion Cook (1869-1944), Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954) and many others created a tradition of successful black music. New York in the 1920s and 1930s became the scene of a long lasting black musical explosion. Popular music had overwhelming success. Eubie Blake (1887-1983) and Noble Sissle (1889-1975) were the members of a very successful musical theater team who took Broadway by storm. Jazz and popular musicians of national importance such as Duke Ellington (1899-1974), Cab Calloway (1907-1994) and others brought Harlem's music to the rest of the world and were widely acclaimed. Major concert singers such as Roland Hayes (1887-1977), the first Negro male to gain wide recognition as a concert artist and Marian Anderson (1897-1993) became internationally recognized for their excellence and artistry. A new way of playing the piano called "the Harlem Stride Style" was created during the Renaissance, and helped blur the lines between the poor black and socially elite black; the traditional jazz band was composed primarily of brass instruments and was considered a symbol of the South, but the piano was considered an instrument of the wealthy and with this instrumental modification to the already existing genre, the wealthy blacks now had more access to jazz music. Its popularity soon spread throughout the country. Innovation and liveliness were important characteristics of performers in the jazz.

As prolific as it was, the Harlem Renaissance started to decline in the mid-1930s. One of the most important factors underlying this decline was the Great Depression and its economic aftermaths. Many organizations like NAACP either changed their interests towards economic issues or stopped activity because of the Depression. Having lost the interest and support of these organizations, the Renaissance's dissolution began because the Harlem Renaissance and the Renaissance writers had always felt the support of these organizations from the beginning. In addition to the Depression and close down of the organizations, another reason behind this decline was the departure of many key figures in the late 1920s and early 1930s to Europe and especially to France; James Weldon Johnson, Du Bois and Langston Hughes were among them. After the loss of the important organizations, the departure of such important writers had a much greater effect than maybe it would be otherwise. The separation of these figures meant more loss of blood and this made the decline of

the movement faster, because they could not give the needed support and energy to the black community from so far away. Lastly, some supporters like Alain Locke became critics of the movement; they criticized what they had created and sustained for so long. The reason for this was that some critics like Alain Locke asserted black writing should be free to abandon its explicit social and political purposes in favor of more aesthetic goals (Gates, 2012). The criticism of the former supporters, who had a great power on the black Community, dealt the Renaissance a death blow because the black community began to suspect their ideals, aims, culture, pride and greatness all of which had seemed so real, concrete and right all through it. The guidelines of the Renaissance, which had been created and supported by the organizations and writers mentioned above, were shaken to the hilt by the loss of them.

1.5. A Compact Mirror of the Renaissance: Jessie Redmon Fauset

Jessie Redmon Fauset (1882-1961) mirrors her age impeccably and reflects and summarizes the aura of the Harlem Renaissance in a smooth, clear but at the same time critical way through her writings.

Born in Philadelphia, she is the first black woman to attend Cornell University, and as one of the best-educated black Americans of her generation she is the first black woman to be elected to Phi Beta Kappa, an academic honor society founded in 1776. Her career is varied; she taught classics in Washington, D.C. and New York and lectured at Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes. In addition to her academic aspect, she worked as the literary editor of *The Crisis* from 1919 to 1926. For these seven years, the magazine became the focus of her professional life, yet she had a much longer association with the magazine. In fact, what made *The Crisis* different for Fauset and her whole career was the chance of working with Du Bois who can be described as the milestone in her life. This interconnectedness between Du Bois and Fauset, and other black intellectuals in general is obvious:

What DuBois offered Fauset is clear. Intellectual, activist, and artist, he not only was Fauset's friend, supporter, and then colleague and boss in the years that they worked together on *The Crisis*, the official publication of the NAACP, DuBois as editor in chief and Fauset as literary editor (a post she filled formally from

1919 to 1926); but even more important, W. E. B. DuBois provided a model of fused political and artistic energy and of the artist as aesthetic pioneer (for both of these points think of his brilliant *Souls of Black Folk* in 1903) which obviously inspired and encouraged his young friend and co-worker and could, her recommendation of his work implies, do the same for other aspiring Afro-American writers (Ammons, 1987: 210).

Her writing is first seen in its pages in March, 1912 when the journal is newly published and she has been seven years out of Cornell and not quite thirty. From that date, she starts to contribute essays to the journal and while being its literary editor, she adds informative ones to her contribution. In these pieces, she especially favors biographical sketches of blacks who are prominent in her day as well as in the past, a deed she probably carries out in order to keep up with the Pan African politics of the magazine she has been working for. In some other essays, she informs *The Crisis* readers about important happenings within the black world. However, she does not limit her publications in the journal to essays. Before and during her term as the literary editor, she publishes poems and short stories as well, extending many of the stories over several installments. In these short stories, she experiments with the themes and characters she will later use in her novels; she deals with ‘passing’, the act of a generally black person’s struggle for leaving his black blood and becoming an accepted one in the white community by using the advantage of his light skin. She scrutinizes the theme in the two parts of her first short story, “Emmy”, and in the three sections of “The Sleeper Wakes”. Furthermore, she portrays black professionals in all the stories, as she will in her novels; her main characters are industrious physicians, teachers, engineers and men and women of business because there is always a strong underlying social purpose in her works like portraying the educated black middle class and thereby uncovering American racial prejudice.

Apart from her prolific business life during her editorship for *The Crisis*, she, in her desire to teach black children their heritage, serves as the literary editor of *The Brownies’ Book* in 1920 and 1921, a magazine edited by Du Bois and dedicated to the black children. The magazine includes short stories, pieces of poetry, African folk tales, historical features, games and puzzles. However, the Depression changes the landscape

of the black community in Harlem as it does elsewhere, and Fauset, then in her fifties, is no longer in the forefront of the New Negro movement. She struggles to find work after leaving *The Crisis* but her race prevents her from getting employment in white publishing houses, even after she volunteers to work from home, nor can she find a place as a social secretary. For this reason, she returns to high-school teaching in New York City.

Her father being a reverend, she, as a person grown up with the values of the Methodist parsonage, is inevitably a conservative. She adopts the conventions of 'the sentimental novel', an 18th century literary genre, which celebrates the emotional and intellectual concepts of sentiment, sentimentalism, and sensibility to her own purposes, which are to explore the impact of racism and sexism on black Americans' lives and represent the means by which black Americans can overcome these oppressions and get on with the business of living (Wall, 1995: 66). Accordingly, her novels depict the idea that if African Americans are given the freedom to educate their minds without enduring prejudices or economic hindrances, they can achieve just as well as any other American. That is, African Americans do not possess any inborn or inherent characteristics that distinguish them from whites; it is all a matter of social and economic boundaries that differentiate the African American race. In most of her works, she writes about racial discrimination, the blacks who 'pass' to avoid this discrimination and the middle class values which she sees as the way to freedom and equality for her race. She views these values as crucial for the salvation of her folk. As Johnson emphasizes:

She wrote of people who lived on the borderline of two races and who flirted with the idea of passing. She pictured structured and elite black communities, modeled after old Philadelphia. At times, she showed distinctions among Negro socialites living in Philadelphia, Washington and Baltimore. With such interests, she wrote to a small segment of the black population (Johnson, 1978: 149).

Apart from the idea of 'passing', she portrays class awareness in urban black community. She is a committed social activist and this class consciousness and cautiousness, too, can be seen in her works. She is able to create rich and complex black

characters who undergo class problems. She can interpret the contradictions of the position of black woman and man, having the sensibilities inherited from centuries of intraracial class and color prejudices.

When it comes to the female characters, the first thing that attracts attention is the fact that she attempts to dispel the stereotype of African American women as exotic and overtly sexual beings. With the object of creating this new black female image, such issues as the critique of the economics of marriage for women, of fairy-tale illusions of love and salvation, of the tension between class and gender and of the deep rivalries and divisions that sever bonds among women take their places among her widespread themes. She also has a special approach to the relationship between the mother and daughter; the mother-daughter conflict and alienation, the agonizing break between mothers and daughters experienced by the women at the turn of the century, the drama specifically of a daughter leaving her mother's world and the bitter split that consequently exists between the two worlds of the mother and the daughter are other popular topics she uses. From the point of view of an early feminist, Fauset reflects not only the injustices between colors and classes, but also the ones between genders. So, she often uses the female characters as the protagonists of her novels and often discusses the role of the black woman in the white patriarchal American society. In fact, her works have enough evidence to be studied from a feminist perspective alone. Nevertheless, the feminist factors are handled in relation to the racial and class matters in the context of this study.

Generally, Fauset writes about the people positioned between two races, because she often finds herself in that situation. Apparently, she likes her race and furthermore, she is proud of her race. She cordially sticks to the Renaissance ideals. Besides, she knows people who has passed and considers such action wrong, as emphasized again and again in her novels and stories. Her novels are not simply romances as they are often claimed to be; they have a twofold structure and a complex tone. What appears on the surface to be a conventional romance stands also as a novel of betrayed hope or near-tragedy or sardonic comedy. Her allegedly pleasant pictures of the comfortable middle class mask a world of pain, prejudice, suicide and unfair choices (Feeney, 1983: 20-22). The novels she wrote, *There is Confusion* (1924), *Plum Bun* (1929), *The Chinaberry Tree* (1931), and *Comedy, American Style* (1933), are all social critiques of African American middle class life and a condemnation of the racism and sexism that

restrict African Americans. *There is Confusion* deals with black family life in a world of racial discrimination. *Plum Bun: A Novel Without a Moral* is concerned with light-skinned blacks' 'passing' white. *The Chinaberry Tree* examines miscegenation and *Comedy, American Style* centers on a woman who hates being black. Her fiction sheds light to the ways in which race, gender and class both construct and constraint the black identity. She recognizes the importance of African history and feels that black children need to know and appreciate their heritage. Just like Du Bois with whom she has worked for years, she believes that race pride is essential for the survival and progress of her community. She tries to reflect her faith in the colored people in her works and she encourages other blacks to write; she will often publish the writings of those who give an honest view of African Americans. She is instrumental in the development and publication of both Jean Toomer and Langston Hughes, and offers crucial help early in the careers of Arna Bontemps, Anne Spencer, Nella Larsen and Countee Cullen. As Langston Hughes states in *The Big Sea* (1940), Fauset is one of the three people together with Charles Johnson (1893-1956), the first black president of historically black Fisk University and editor of the *Opportunity*, and Alain Locke to midwife the New Negro literature into being (Hubbard and Hughes, 2002: 173).

In the atmosphere of the Renaissance, the black intelligentsia, including women writers, naturally paid more attention to certain topics: "Women novelists of the Harlem Renaissance focused on questions of race, gender, and class, and in instances sought to transcend the notion of race" (Woloch, 2009: 20). Being not an exception, Jessie Redmon Fauset draws an honest picture of the Harlem Renaissance in terms of class, race and gender in her enthusiastic novels *There is Confusion* (1924) and *Plum Bun: A Novel Without a Moral* (1929), which is shaped by the particularities of Angela Murray's, the female protagonist of the novel, identity and therefore grapples with the construction of class, race, and gender with almost all possible details (Kathleen, 2001: 79).

PART I

1. THE ISSUE OF 'CLASS' IN FAUSET'S *THERE IS CONFUSION AND PLUMB*: A NOVEL WITHOUT A MORAL

The issue of 'class' is not only one of the most prominent subjects of the Renaissance works, it is also among the priorities of Fauset. In an environment full of discrimination against classes and the desire for advancement among them, Fauset feels obliged to deal with the topic in both novels. She handles these issues mainly in three phases: First, she discusses class in terms of being a 'base-structure' for all other institutions through which she tries to prove the American society as one shaped mostly by capitalism; then, she continues with studying class as a determiner for the relationships between people regardless of their gender or age; and at the last step, she sheds light upon the reality of 'class consciousness' instilled deep inside all of the members of the society.

1.1. Economy as the Base of the Super-Structure

Fauset begins with displaying the fact that economy is the 'base-structure' of all other institutions in the community, and so the approach towards these social institutions is determined by economics. What she criticizes is that people in the American society, black or white, live their lives and arrange their relationships with their environment according to their economic status. The existence of economy under every single action of these people clearly creates distorted ideals and relationships in the 1920s.

For a striking example on the importance of power, Fauset makes the damaged relations between class and science clear with an example in which she shows the distorted relationship between power and science, science being an indicator of status. In a passage on Peter Bye, the male protagonist of the novel, and his father Meriwether Bye, a man who sees the white community as enemy and believes that there is no need to work in a white-oriented society, she gives a parallel example that is clear enough to show this distorted relationship: "The books on medicine and anatomy had been well thumbed by Peter, too. Meriwether had received them from old Isaiah, his father, and

had carried them around on his runs to impress his co-workers in the Pullman service” (Fauset, 1989: 35).

As clearly seen, science here is not perceived as an object of love or as an instrument used for the advancement of humanity, but it is taken for being a source of social prestige and flaunting. The reality that Meriwether carries the books on science only to ‘impress’ his friends is a quite effective example. Moreover, Fauset does not content herself with the damaged relations between one’s class and science; she goes on with the unnatural relationship between power and religion via Joel, who is a locally famous and successful caterer and the patriarch of the Marshall family, by stating “His material success, his position in the church, in the community at large and in the colored business world, - all these meant *power*” (Fauset, 1989: 11). Within these words, she easily clarifies that not only the material possession but also the social position are the determinants of power. At this point, Joel seems a direct product of the class-oriented society he lives in, which teaches one to sacrifice even religious values for the sake of power. Undoubtedly, her including the institution of church as an element of power is worthy of close examination to see the situation within the larger frame of dominant ideology. In terms of power relations, Michel Foucault (1926-1984) specifies:

[w]hat happens is that, in society, in most societies, organizations are created to freeze the relations of power, hold those relations in a state of asymmetry, so that a certain number of persons get an advantage, socially, economically, politically, institutionally, etc. And this totally freezes the situation. That’s what one calls power in the strict sense of the term: it’s a specific type of power relation that has been institutionalized, frozen, immobilized, to the profit of some and to the detriment of others (Foucault, 2013).

Fauset in this way shows the function of institutions and the role of people, intentionally or unintentionally, in sustaining these institutions in a class-focused society. As a direct result of the American dream of success, this understanding of power influences all human relations with society to a great extent. This situation uncovers the reality that relations of power shape the ways in which people perceive themselves, others and their relations to them. Closely related to power, class lies at the

center of the formation of black identity, too. This identity is far from a collective one that is proposed by the 'Renaissance'. This is not surprising because the dominant ideology oppresses and silences people mentally and they unconsciously accept and maintain its values. By this way, Joel Marshall becomes one of the servants of class interests, helping hold, promote and continue wrong points of view.

Servitude for class advancement and sacrificing any sacred value for it is not limited to him, though. His wife also employs religious activities as a show-off of power. In this context, even the quality of what one wears becomes important and in some situations, the desire of being differentiated from other classes can come before one's religion. Fauset emphasizes this hypocrisy in a church scene: while talking about Mrs. Marshall on their Sunday visit to church, she clarifies that the aim of Mrs. Marshall has nothing to do with a religious act; it is rather a show off stage for her: "His wife found Sunday a rather distracting day. It was eminently satisfying, doubtless, to be able to show off such a number of stylish costumes" (Fauset, 1989: 71). The abuse of religion for the show of class and power is once more exhibited in this way. In fact, she is not a pious woman, and for her, religious activities are nothing but an excellent chance for proving her status.

In addition to science and religion, another apparatus which Fauset employs largely is the institution of marriage. In a respectively great part of her books, Fauset highlights the interconnectedness between money and marriage (Czarnecki, 2004: 114). She shows that class and the desire to reach power through class may sometimes precede love when a person decides to marry and the marriage patterns she draws are in this vein. In such an instance, she explains that the reason why Maggie, one of the female characters and a member of the lower class, wants to come close with Philip Marshall, Joel's son who is a university student and has intellectual pursuits, is the opportunity of a privileged class, power and the pleasure of being seen with him rather than pure love, as initially "[s]he had only yearned for respectability and comfort, and Philip represented such a convenient short cut to her heart's desire" (Fauset, 1989: 69). Undoubtedly, she is not honest in her love, and her aim is elevating herself in class structure. Her flirtation with Neal Henderson, a mysterious middle-aged man who later comes out to be a gambler, is not emotional, but because he has a nice car to give her an enjoyable driving. Later on, Maggie's relationship with Peter will be of similar kind: this time the issue is not money, but Peter's physical appearance and name: "She was

proud to have him there, he was so handsome and charming, but much more than that, so clearly a personage. She enjoyed being seen with him” (Fauset: 1989: 142). Peter looks beautiful and stylish. His outlook is the reason of his attraction, and Maggie is interested with this side of him, rather than his spiritual qualities. When Peter comes to her house and suggests helping her in cooking, she does not accept it saying ‘it is no man’s job’ just like a traditional woman, unconscious of her rights and the ideas of equality between the two genders. Her defective approaches toward men display how she is obsessed with class advancement and how she judges them, which is based on their social and physical outlook. She can relinquish from her gender rights and ideas of equality among genders imprudently for the sake of a marriage that will help her climb the social ladder.

In *Plum Bun*, too, the institution of marriage is sacrificed for material gain again through Angela Murray. Having decided to leave for New York after her parents’ death with the share left from them, Angela desires to ‘pass’ not only in terms of color but also class. When she meets a white and rich boy there, she takes this as a good chance for her goals. About this boy, Roger, Angela’s boyfriend and the son of a rich and classist man, Fauset specifies, “She had secured not only him but an assured future, wealth, protection, influence, even power” (Fauset, 1990: 151). That is, marriage for her is a means to get security and to reach self-actualization in her own terms. The idea of marriage at this occasion comes as an institution to provide wealth and protection; within these lines, the reader does not come across a word of affection. However, Fauset does not confine herself with Angela’s point of view, and she mirrors the perspective of Roger who “[h]ad no thought, had never had any thought, of marrying her or any other woman so far removed from his father’s ideas and requirements” (Fauset, 1990: 227). The situation is clear: on the side of the rich and white Roger, the case with Angela needs no serious consideration and any woman inconvenient for his father’s standards is out of the borders of marriage. On the other hand, for Angela, Roger represents a life of ease and security. She very well knows that she is not in love with him. Yet, it does not matter for her, since her primary goal is a marriage of class and power rather than love. Fauset has a clear message and criticism of marriage patterns in her time with the example of Angela. While she presents marriage as a practicable option for women on the surface, she disavows “[t]he previous centuries’ message that marriage in and of

itself procures class stability or ascendancy for women, especially black women” (Allen, 1998: 63).

It can be inferred that Maggie and Angela have only one aim: being ‘inside’, which means to be inside the desired class. Their aim is to reach economic and social security through marrying a man of upper class. It is a bitter reality, but they are forced to behave like this. The situation is the result of capitalism, but on the other hand, according to Fauset personal illusions and obsessions must be overcome before marriage. Their great effort to be inside through color, gender, or if the others are impossible class is understandable in that for a person both black and female in the white and male American society, the only way to be inside may be the class structure. There is no doubt that in an environment in which economy is the ‘base-structure’ of any other institution, and by this way responsible for the paralyzed relationships of people with such institutions as science, religion and marriage, Fauset includes an indirect criticism of capitalism.

1.2. Class: A Determiner of Human Relations

Apart from reflecting the economics as the base of any institution, the function of class in determining the social relations in the community is also among the most widely handled class issues in the two novels. The novels disclose the sad truth about how every single individual within the community tries to create her/his connections according to the class. Fauset commences this situation with the children, who are expected to have the freest point of view without any prejudices. Through Belle Bye, the grand-grand mother of Peter, and her son Isaiah, the writer displays how the families themselves, intentionally or not, create a class-based society:

She had been glad to have her boy the associate of young white Bye. Without expressing it to herself in so many words she had realized that association with Meriwether was an education for Isaiah. Already he was talking more correctly than other colored boys in his group, his manners were good, and though his work was of the roughest kind, his vision was broad, he knew there were other things (Fauset, 1989: 27).

In this case, the issue of race may be included in white Bye's making a good associate for Isaiah, but it is not only something about the color of 'white' Bye; his class is also explicitly at the forefront. The reason why Isaiah should have a friendship with Bye is not his merits or his affection towards him, but his class. Unfortunately, it is the mother figure who directs Isaiah in this way. This reality carries a great importance in that the family, accepted as the smallest social institution in the society, represents the beginning point where the members of the society are acquainted with class. A similar situation comes through Peter's aunt, Miss Susan's ideas about Peter's friendship with Marshalls when she reveals that "She was poor; Peter was penniless. These were the sort of people her nephew ought to know" (Fauset, 1989: 51). This time, the possibility of color in the preceding example is destroyed, since the Marshalls are colored people, too. Peter, having no financial power and security like Isaiah, should be in a relationship with them because they have money, which means power in such a society and accordingly brings the social status. In both cases, Fauset successfully clarifies how the children and their relations to other people are involved in the class issues as they are the beginning point of a class-oriented society. It is not a coincidence that the writer uses the female figures, functioning as the mothers, as the ones who shape the children in a classist way.

Different from the realm of the children, another aspect of class in determining human relations comes through man-woman relationships. Fauset actualizes this mostly with young female characters in both novels. In this direction, one of the prominent characters is Maggie. As mentioned before, the author shows that in her relationship with Philip, she had initially wanted respectability and comfort, and he had the power and position to provide this (Fauset, 1989: 69). Maggie wants togetherness with Philip not because of her feelings about him but because of his socio-economic power. It is worthy of considering that the situation is much more serious than the occasions with the children. What is in question here is marriage, and even in such serious issues, Fauset makes her characters have an approach determined by class. Later on, this reality of self-interest and sacrificing one's inner quality for class advancement is displayed by Joanna, the opposite of Maggie in many ways, yet another female character who is classist enough to think social relations should be shaped according to the circles people belong to. When a tiny possibility of togetherness between the 'hairstresser' Maggie and her brother Philip arises, she does not hesitate a moment to write to her in an

excessively harsh way: “I’ve often heard my mother say that only people of like position should marry each other, and I hardly think that would be true in the case of you and Philip” (Fauset, 1989: 86). For Joanna, the only obstacle for their marriage is their ‘position’, and what is more, it is her mother whom Joanna learns this differentiation from. After the cases with Isaiah and Peter, the family, especially the mother of the household, has this classist approach. Joanna learns her distorted approach towards human relations from her mother, and she will possibly be a good teacher of this demeanor.

In another occasion, a similar event takes place, this time in Philadelphia where Peter goes for his education of medicine. The reason why Louis, Peter’s cousin living in Philadelphia, thinks the women of the city will ‘take’ him is because “[o]f course, you’re a Bye. Mentioned your name to old Mrs. Viny the other day and she told me to be sure to bring you around” (Fauset, 1989: 107). Peter will be easily accepted by his new environment for he has the surname of Bye. It is significant that this scene appears in a different city from the former ones, by which Fauset intentionally puts forward how extended this issue of class is, having already crossed the local borders. She generalizes the situation for all America and displays that class underlying relationships is taken for granted no matter where one goes. The final scene of *There is Confusion* in this context is quite striking and *confusing*. For the first time in the novel, it is possible to trace a class-free relationship through the marriage of Philip and Maggie, the former ‘hair-dresser’ as Joanna calls her. However, the secret of this marriage lies under its timing. It is important that they can marry only when Philip is wounded in the war and returns his hometown injured that means a sort of inferiority for him. Fauset implies that an environment where there is no class and people have no conscious or unconscious prejudice as to class is impossible. It can become possible only when the higher-class person is disabled in some way. In this context, she continues to surprise and confuse her reader by showing war as an effective component for a classless society, because the main factor of this marriage is clearly the result of a relentless war.

Plum Bun also includes instances when class is the first criterion for man-woman relationships. Paulette, one of Angela’s friends in New York where she has gone to ‘pass’ white, reflects the rigidity of this class system about Angela and her possible boyfriend Roger, “But he mustn’t marry outside certain limits. No chorus girl romances for his father” (Fauset, 1990: 127). In fact, this occasion is like an echo of the

letter written by Joanna to Maggie. It is possibly more than a simple coincidence that at this point, the source of the prejudice is again largely the parent. Just like the 'hair-dresser' Maggie, 'chorus girl' Angela does not deserve to have a serious and honorable relationship with a man from the upper circles. Yet, Angela, just like Maggie again, does not seem disheartened to leave her ideals, which are similarly based on class awareness, due to these difficulties:

She thought of her mother who had loved her father so dearly, and of the wash-days which she had endured for him the long years of household routine before she and Jinny had been old enough to help her first with their hands and then with their earnings. She thought of the little, dark, shabby house, of the made-over dresses and turned coats. And then she saw Roger and his wealth and his golden recklessness, his golden keys which could open the doors of beauty and ease and-decency! (Fauset, 1990: 142)

Apparently, Angela is reluctant to live her mother's life, but the way she tries to open the golden doors of life with 'golden keys' has nothing to do with her own capabilities and virtues. She tries to catch the ease and comfort through a man from higher class. Fauset evaluates Angela and her relationship with Roger like this: "Marriage with Roger meant protection, position, untold wealth, unlimited opportunities for doing good" (Fauset, 1990: 320). It is worthy of considering the reasons for Angela's togetherness with Roger that are 'protection', 'position' 'wealth' and 'opportunity', but not love or affection that is expected from a truthful link. Angela has an unhealthy view of love and marriage. She is focused on progress, which would undoubtedly receive much more appreciation if it were based on her 'self', not Roger's. Fauset goes on to emphasize the class perception underlying the interrelationships with a case on Roger and Angela: "[i]t would have been a fine thing if this girl had been endowed with the name and standing and comparative wealth of-say Carlotta Parks" (Fauset, 1990: 190). While Angela takes her affair with Roger as a fortune for her life, the people around view it as an impossibility. They have the same ideas on power relations and the same classist approaches with the only difference that the point where they and Angela stand varies. As Roger's spirituality is of secondary importance for

Angela, Angela's merits similarly have no importance for other people. Since she has no 'name' and 'standing' unlike Miss Parks, Angela should not marry Roger.

What is more surprising is that the novels reveal the fact that the characters, who are from lower classes and who are exposed to all these harsh prejudgments themselves, have already internalized the discrimination. Furthermore, they, most probably unconsciously, have become an instrument for this class apartheid. In such an instance, Virginia, Angela's dark-skinned sister, tells her about a man she has just met and she tries to communicate with her sister about her affair. Yet, having experienced the relentless classism of the society herself, Angela asks a highly interesting question: "What's the matter, is he very poor?" (Fauset, 1990: 213) This short question is adequate for the reader to witness the unhealthy mentality of the people grown up in a class-oriented environment. The only problem for them in such a society is lack of power. The man one should marry may not be affectionate and he may do whatever he wants. There is no problem as far as he has money, because money covers all the defects.

Fauset shows that economic power is a determinant not only in the relationships of children or man-woman relations, but it also affects the relationships of the other members in a larger sense, as well. On an occasion about Maggie, she proves the importance of economics in establishing a relationship: "Cut off from them, she had no way of meeting these people, she possessed no background" (Fauset, 1989: 115). In a society in which all the lines are drawn by economic power, one has to have 'background' to be in connection with her/his surroundings, and lacking this prerequisite, Maggie's single chance is the Marshall family with a great background. She has to have a relation with the Marshalls because they represent a chance for her. They can provide her good opportunities because they have power and position.

Fauset maintains to stress the indispensability of economics for human relations in her next novel, too. When talking about Mary, one of Angela's new friends in New York, she states:

And presently she began to know more than happiness and satisfaction, she was knowing the extreme gratification of being the chosen companion of a popular and important girl, for Mary, although not quick at her studies, was a power in everything else.

She dressed well, she had plenty of pocket money (Fauset, 1990: 41).

The cause that Mary makes a notable companion is her dressing well and having a lot of money. In the passage, it is difficult to meet a word of goodness or virtue. The features looked for a good friend here have nothing to do with a balanced personality. The appearance and the masks people wear to create artificial identities for themselves according to the needs and expectancies of the society are given more importance than the spirituality. Later, a parallel issue is handled about Angela:

But she was not quite happy, her economic condition interfere here. Constantly she was receiving every conceivable manifestation of an uncalculating generosity at the hands not only of Mrs. Denver but of her new acquaintances. And she could make no adequate return; her little apartment had turned so shabby for her to have guests of this caliber, even in to tea (Fauset, 1990: 269).

The way how class works in human relations is expressed in a direct way. It is significant that Angela cannot return her friends and neighbors' delicacies as she lives in a small apartment and does not have enough economic power. She feels inferior because she has a poorer house and less money. Her inferiority comes from her financial status, and it is not related to her character. She is not in consensus with her self and with what she possesses. The situation clearly affects her affairs with people around in a rather negative way.

1.3 Class Consciousness Instilled Deep in Every Single Member of the Community

Another issue examined as to class in the novels is depth of the 'class consciousness' in almost all age groups in the society. Fauset displays the class awareness and its negative effects on social relations with many examples. Among the leading figures in this respect is Maggie. She experiences relationships based on her benefits. She dreams of marriage first with Philip and then, having lost him, with Peter. In both cases, however, not love but her desire for class advancement is the basic

reason. While it is money and status in Philip's case, what attracts Maggie to Peter is the reality that he has an established name. Maggie's quest for a new identity and new surroundings is open. Her self-interested relationship with other people is based on nothing but class consciousness and this kind of liaison is unquestionably an unhealthy and harmful one for people. On the other hand, her relationship with other people is important in determining her relationship with herself, as well. As Pietro Chiodi (1915-1970) argues, it is not possible for a person to enter into an authentic relationship with herself/himself without having a real relationship with others (Chiodi, 1976: 128). Her relations with people being anything apart from real, it is not surprising that Maggie can realize her inner power and real self only when she leaves her former selfishness and decides to have real relationships with people. As Fauset clarifies, "She would stand on her two feet, Maggie Ellersley, serene, independent, self-reliant" (Fauset, 1989: 261). It is crucial that Maggie can marry Philip only after awakening to her real identity and starting to have honest intentions towards people. Leaving self-interested relationships behind, Maggie, with her independence and self-reliance becomes a self-satisfied person.

Though with different reasons, Joanna comes as another example in this parallel. She is a self-determinant girl and she pursues freedom through becoming a famous singer and dancer. Unlike her mother and Maggie, Joanna aims at economic freedom, which makes her an ideal 'New Negro'. However, the problem is that although she is in love with Peter, she does not want to marry him till he studies medicine and becomes a doctor. At this point, her class perception dominates her emotions and as the occasion clearly states, her marriage will be based upon not pure love, but class and power like Angela and Maggie. She cannot let her emotions interfere with her love affairs. Her materialistic side outweighs her feeling. Unquestionably she is the heroine of the novel, yet she is apparently flawed by class snobbery (Wall, 1995: 67).

Not much different from two women characters of the novel, Philip Marshall has the same awareness of power and status, too. In a conversation about Henderson Neal, he shows his class consciousness to his sisters: "'You might just as well hear this, too, Jan. I won't have you and Sylvia going about with a man like Henderson Neal. Maggie can go with men that my sisters can't afford to associate with'" (Fauset, 1989: 70). Philip, as a mirror of the society in large, stresses that Maggie, representing lower class, can go with Henderson Neal who his sisters cannot 'afford to associate with'. The basic

and single thing that makes this possible and even expected for Maggie is her class, which makes a great difference according to Philip. For him, his sisters are superior to Maggie, and they should not establish friendships with people who are not as rich as them. Only Maggie, the poor 'hairstresser' can be a friend of Neal's.

On the other hand, Joanna maintains his brother's classist ideas in a perfect way when Brian, a family friend from the school, only implies a possible relationship between Maggie and Philip:

'She wouldn't dare...Why, Philip-he's going to be somebody great, wonderful, a Garibaldi, a Toussaint! And Maggie, Maggie's just nobody, Brian. Why, do you know what she's taking up? Hair work, straightening hair, salves and shampoos and curling-irons' (Fauset, 1989: 77-8).

Joanna's scorn comes from her financial power and her blindness to the fact that no job is inferior. She has more power and money than Maggie, and this gives her the 'right' to look down on her. Her brother will be great, and he must not marry a girl like Maggie, who knows nothing but hair work. Furthermore, Fauset shows how stable this class perception is and gives another example of the same topic from quite a former time about Isaiah's father, Joshua: "Joshua was the genuine peasant type-the type, black or white, which believes in a superior class and yields blindly to its mandates" (Fauset, 1989: 26). This point of view is the proof of how the lower class people have internalized their situation.

It should be taken into consideration that the issue of class is beyond color, since the acceptance of a superior class is valid in both colored and white people. It is crucial that just before this comment on Joshua, which shows how a person from lower classes obey the superior class's mandates blindly and accepts the material power's superiority, Fauset gives one of the most absorbing situations in this vein: "Joshua, delighted, wrote his own name under the inscription and ran and showed it to his mother" (Fauset, 1989: 23). More important than it seems to be, this single act expresses much more than the tip of the iceberg. Joshua, with this act, defines his position with comparison to his owner: he accepts his inferiority as a black employee under the rule of a white employer. Of course, this acceptance of the inferiority cannot be handled only from the

aspect of social status. One of the underlying factors in this circumstance is Joshua's color. As a black, who works under the command of a white owner in a white-centered society, he seems to be used to discrimination just because of his color and he seems to take the situation as something natural and normal. In understanding Fauset's point in this bitter concretion of 'internalized racism', Donna Bivens's following definition is of importance:

Internalized racism is the situation that occurs in a racist system when a racial group oppressed by racism supports the supremacy and dominance of the dominating group by maintaining or participating in the set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures and ideologies that undergird the dominating group's power (Bivens, 2012).

Secondly, and more importantly in this context, his class plays a key role. As a poor and dependent employee under the role of the rich and independent employer, Joshua has learnt very well where to stand and he accepts that he is in a lower position just because he owns less material success. This exemplification of class consciousness is of endless importance in understanding the soul of human relations all through the work. As the event tells, Joshua's class, as well as his color, is a determinant in his relation with others. Fauset clarifies that even after one or two generations, the situation is the same.

Unfortunately, the class consciousness seems to have been instilled influentially in the realm of the children, too. In a dialogue between the white owner's son, Meriwether, and black worker's son Isaiah, about their dreams on what to do in the future, Meriwether shows the natural way for Isaiah:

'It means –now-you see a bare tree in the winter time don't you, and you don't know what it is? But you do perhaps know an apple blossom when you see it, or a peach blossom. In the spring you see that tree covered, let's say, with apple blossoms. Well, you know it's an apple tree' (Fauset, 1989: 25).

As a child, Meriwether is well aware of the class distinctions. He clearly displays how the people are easily differentiated. Besides, the quotation following this monologue has the quality to show how difficult class advancement is. Having compared his 'friend' to a *bare* tree, he sees an explanation necessary, "That's the way it always is: good trees, good fruit; rich, important people, rich important sons" (Fauset, 1989: 25). In the end of the conversation, he puts an end by saying, "Your father and your father's father were slaves. 'Course your father's free now but he's just a servant. He's not what you'd call his own man. So I s'pose that's what you'll be, a good servant" (Fauset, 1989: 26).

Meriwether, in this way, not only judges his peer, but also he thinks he has the right to determine his future job. As the son of a slave, Isaiah deserves to be a slave, while Meriwether is expected to be an owner because of his father. The picture drawn on these children is a representative of the 'caste' system and its stableness. The class awareness of these children is deep: it gives Meriwether the arrogance and Isaiah his resigned posture.

Fauset's handling with economics, power relations and class with so many details is, in fact, not a surprising situation. In the time the novels were written, the American society, in part with the fear of the state of the affairs and the dominant political opinion in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, was taught to live in a class-oriented community which was based on the capitalist ideology. It is natural that as the members of the under-privileged group who struggle with prejudices and disadvantages in almost every area including class distinction and capital distribution, the black intellectuals have always concentrated on the class issues. Hazel V. Carby (1948-) affirms the case: "Many intellectuals, including Jessie Fauset, registered the gap between the immediate and disconcerting presence of the black masses and being a member of a black elite by representing this difference in class terms" (Carby, 1987: 165).

Nevertheless, the question of class system for the black society, and the whole American society in a larger sense, is not an issue of recent years. Apart from the contemporary critics like Carby, many black intellectuals of the early 20th century are also very active in their propagandas against classism of the society, and as a civil rights activist and one of the most respectable Pan-Africanists, W. E. B. Du Bois gives a

thought to the issue, and especially stresses the unfairness of the power relations in the society or societies in a more general sense:

[t]hroughout the world today organized groups of men by monopoly of economic and physical power, legal enactment and intellectual training are limiting with determination and unflagging zeal the development of other groups; and that the concentration particularly of economic power today puts the majority of mankind into a slavery to the rest (Du Bois, 2009: 137-38).

Clearly, Du Bois takes class and the distribution of power as the basic reason of slavery. He is aware of the importance of power for the black community in gaining equal rights with its white counterparts. Yet, he is equally aware that the economic power is monopolized by certain groups, which makes the situation for the blacks much more difficult. On the other hand, Fauset takes the issue one step further. She does not show the class system in general: her aim is especially to show the presence of the same rigid class rules within the black community, and thereby to show the power of classism within the society regardless of color. Her examples in both novels are mostly based upon black characters who verify this statement.

PART II

2. THE CONCEPT OF RACE

2.1. The Idea of Racial Uplift and Equality

The years during which Fauset lived were discriminatory not only in terms of class and status. Though there was nothing as slavery as an institution any more, the prejudices and segregations against the colored people like Jim Crow laws were beyond measure. Naturally, this was one of the most important problems to be solved and the colored intellectuals of the time had a great deal to say on race in an environment in which everything was defined as regard to one's color. Fauset, too, dealt with racial issues to a great extent in her works. However, what made her different was that she had a two-sided approach to the trouble: on the one hand, she tried to show the positive sides, inner qualities, the notion of solidarity among the black folk to give them the necessary courage not to feel inferior; but on the other hand, she showed the mistakes and injustices among the colored people to make them give up such fallacies as early as possible.

One of the most prominent topics in this vein is the idea of the racial uplift, and accordingly the demand for equality among the members of the black community. In *There is Confusion* (1924), the patriarch of the Marshall family, Joel Marshall is among the most important figures in this direction. He often talks to her daughter Joanna who is passionate for advancement and success and so she is his greatest hope beyond his sons. In such moments, he tries to encourage her to believe in herself and not to give up no matter what happens by showing examples of success from the blacks' history. In one of these occasions:

He told her himself of Douglass and Vesey and Turner. There were great women, too, Harriet Tubman, Phillis Wheatley, Sojourner Truth, women who had been slaves, he explained to her, but had won their way to fame and freedom through their own efforts (Fauset, 1989: 14).

As the situation states, Joel is quite hopeful about the future of black community. He clearly believes there is always a chance for the blacks, and he conveys his optimism to his daughter. By including female examples, he clearly shows the possibility of uplift not only in terms of individuals or as males, but as a whole race. Fauset's message is clear: the success of the black community is indispensable for the demand of equality. The personal accomplishments should result in communal ones, and without such uplift, the blacks have no chance to ask for equal rights. It is not a coincidence that, after only a few paragraphs, a living female character steps in to prove that Joel's ideas are not sheer imagination and the idea of black success is possible. A relatively famous and successful black singer now, Madame Caldwell, after her visit to Marshall household is pictured as follows:

Madame Caldwell gasped. She had won her own laurels through bitter experience in various studios, meeting insult, indifference and unkindness with an unyielding front, which brought her finally consideration, a grudging interest, sometimes a genuine appreciation (Fauset, 1989: 15).

In this way, Madame Caldwell is presented as a perfect prototype of the 'New Negro' as a female, who was able to gain her 'laurels' in spite of the cruelties and injustices she experienced in the society. She is a personification of the black uplift as a female member of the group. As to Joel, he comes out to be the male leading actor in this regard. Having just given the examples of greatness from the history, he includes himself, as well:

Joel believed that all things were possible. 'Nothing in reason,' he used to tell Joanna, 'is impossible. Forty years ago I was almost a pauper in Richmond. Look at me to-day. I spend more on you in a month, Joanna, than my mother and I ever saw in a five-year stretch. One hundred years ago and nearly all of us were slaves. See what we are now. Ten years ago people would have laughed at the thought of colored people on stage. Look at the bill-boards on Broadway' (Fauset, 1989: 18).

It is not only Joel as an individual but also the blacks as a whole that have experienced progress. By this way, Joel's optimism is supported once more and the possibility of advance seems now much more convincing than before. Soon, it seems that Joel's ideas about his race show the expected effects on Joanna, too. Similarly, she has a great confidence for her community and shows this when she claims that "Colored people can do everything that anybody else can do. They've already done it" (Fauset, 1989: 45). Joanna believes in the power of the black people and she thinks that her folk has the necessary potential to reverse the white people's perception of them. The instances of accomplishment are not so far away now. She has the opportunity to see Madame Caldwell. She witnesses a similar one through her father every day. As a result, she has enough evidence to believe in the blacks' capacity.

Later on, Fauset takes the advantage of Joel again. As a person trying to transfer his hopefulness to her daughter, he is aware of the importance of young generation and their responsibility for this cause: "But colored men of old Joel's type are obsessed with the idea of a progressing younger generation. 'They must advance,' thinks the older man, 'I must do all in my power to help them. This is my contribution to mine own'" (Fauset, 1989: 68).

Between these lines, Fauset takes a step forward, and after giving the possibility of improvement and the necessary hope in black individual, she goes on with showing the way to the black people, which is a contribution on the side of the older generation, and acceptance and advance on the side of the younger generation. The idea of solidarity is prominent here. The necessity of cooperation between the generations is clear, and this can form the basis of communal progress.

The only characters with a racial consciousness in the Marshall family are not Joel and Joanna. Joel's son, Philip, is also filled with the ideas of racial advancement. Fauset's first comment on Philip about the racial consciousness is clearly related to her own experiences. Du Bois's effects on her during their *The Crisis* years are important in shaping her ideas on especially race issues, and with Philip she emphasizes this reality once more: "Philip always dreamed of a leader who should recognize that psychological moment and who would guide a whole race forward to the realization of its steadily increasing strength" (Fauset, 1989: 73). Philip, it seems, is aware of the strength of his society, just like Fauset's co-worker, and he believes in the qualities of black people, as well.

It should be kept in mind that the Marshalls are relatively rich people. They can do many things that the poor blacks cannot. So, their belief in progress may be met natural. However, Fauset shows that one of the members of the lower class, Peter has the same assurance on the side of the blacks, as well. More interesting than the preceding instances, Peter, with no idea of uplift on the individual or social scale at the beginning of the novel, shines out on the issue, as he says, ““Oh, Joanna, I’m glad I’m colored-there’s something terrible, terrible about white people””(Fauset, 1989: 270). He seems to be pleased with being black as opposed to the white people’s point of view. This pleasure of being colored and self-reliance is certainly something new for the whites. Having claimed not only equality but also superiority on behalf of the black community, Peter continues to deny the claims of difference between black and white people:

‘Funny, isn’t it, Joanna; those two families, the black and the white Byes, lived so long together that they developed similar characteristics, like husbands and wives, you know. And they say white and colored people are fathoms apart!’ (Fauset, 1989: 280)

By this way, Fauset goes on to negate the established ideas of difference between the two races. This comment of Peter is one of the most significant ones in that it shows not the demand of superiority, or not the necessary hardships to experience to achieve advancement; it only shows how natural the case of equality and how unnatural the idea of difference between colors is. The final example on the topic in the novel is in fact like a hopeful scene from the future that summarizes the idea of social equality and uplift handled all through the novel: “He rose, a tall, straight, white figure and looked at the two young people, still in silence” (Fauset, 1989: 293). It is worthy of considering that he, being the white Meriwether Bye, is now old, and the two young people are Peter and Joanna. What is more is Meriwether Bye is not only old, but also ‘in silence’. At this point, these people are to be taken as the representatives of the white and black society as a whole, and by this way, this case comes out as a direct picture of the old slavery regime coming to an end.

Fauset’s aim of displaying the idea of racial uplift can also be seen in *Plum Bun*. The first occasion in this way appears with the mother figure of the Murray household,

Mattie Murray, who tells her husband Junius the unfairness and absurdity of discrimination in the society, “[r]ules that are unnatural and unjust,—because the world was made for everybody, wasn’t it, Junius?” (Fauset, 1990: 32) As understood, what is going on in the society is totally unjust. The discrimination of people is not based on any acceptable reason. It is totally artificial and it is determined by the members of the powerful group for their own interests. The passage is also important in that, it includes a religious dimension for the situation. If God created the world for everybody and considered every single individual equal, how the white American society dares discrimination is a dilemma.

Afterwards, an echo of Joel’s ideas in *There is Confusion* is met here again. A family friend of the Murrays, Arthur Sawyer claims his disapproval of the injustice in the American society, and adds his positive ideas on his race:

‘I’m sick of planning my life with regard to being colored. I’m not a bit ashamed of my race. I don’t mind in the least that once we were slaves. Every race in the world has at some time occupied a servile position. But I do mind having to take it into consideration every time I want to eat outside of my home, every time I enter a theatre, every time I think of a profession’ (Fauset, 1990: 53).

With this statement, Arthur repeats Joel’s idea that peoples can experience rises and falls, and this perspective gives the situation Joel’s optimism again. The emphasis is on the injustices and the hardships created for blacks, and still their ability to increase their power. On the other hand, Fauset includes the idea of not only equality but superiority in another case. In a passage about Angela and her view about Miss Burden, the young teacher of defective children, she displays this explicitly: “...Angela, a little astonished to observe how the warmth of her appearance overshadowed or rather overshadowed everyone else in the room” (Fauset, 1990: 115). It is easy to understand that the black person is under no circumstances inferior to the white one; in contrast, he/she can overshadow the white members in any field. To take this comment one step further, an occasion occurs when, just like the perspective of Philip Marshall, the idea of racial consciousness is retold by Van Meier, a great colored American, a litterateur, a fearless and dauntless apostle of the rights of man as Fauset describes him: ““We must still look

back and render service to our less fortunate, weaker brethren. And the first step toward making this a workable attitude is the acquisition not so much of a racial love as a racial pride” (Fauset, 1990: 218). This claim is in fact the soul of the racial uplift. The blacks must love themselves, and only this racial pride can bring success to them. The case is not limited to this: Van Meier’s words have also the quality of suggesting solidarity among the black people. Van Meier seems to be the person that Philip desired for the racial awakening, the person who can guide the whole race to the uplift. Such qualities of him are emphasized by Paulette according to whom Van Meier:

‘[i]s a man, just that; color, race, conditions in his case are pure accidents, he over-rides them all with his ego. Made me feel like a worm too; I gave him my prettiest smile, grand white lady making up to an ‘exceptional Negro’ and he simply didn’t see me; took my hand,-I did my best to make my grasp a clinging one-and he passed me right along disengaging himself as cool as a cucumber and making room for a lady of color’ (Fauset, 1990: 220).

Fauset gives the superiority to black Van Meier against white Paulette, and she proves that the quality of a person has nothing to do with one’s color. More importantly, it is the white lady herself who accepts the superior behaviors of him. His giving priority to black woman against the white one is a significant indicator of the racial pride. Clearly, he is the personification of the ideal leader who is to internalize racial pride and reflect this to his folk.

Another friend of Angela from the art class who is similar to her in that he is experiencing the phase of ‘passing’, as well, Anthony Cross displays his ideas to Angela, which are in parallel, “‘I’m not ashamed of my blood. Sometimes I think it’s the heaven that will purify this Nordic people of their cruelty and their savage lust of power’” (Fauset, 1990: 291). It is possible to see a combination of Peter’s enmity and Meier’s idea of superiority against the white people in Anthony’s words. The blacks are not the people who spoil the white community. In contrast, they are the ones who have the power to save the whites from their egocentrism and unstoppable desire for power. A few pages later, Fauset confirms her characters. As a firm believer of the racial love and pride, she clearly disapproves the idea of ‘passing’ whatever the reason is. To

display this idea, she uses Angela. She has had a great and long-termed struggle to 'pass' white, and during this time she has witnessed the ideas and life of the white people closely. Considering this reality, her ideas become more important:

She thought then of black people, of the race of her parents and of all the odds against living which a cruel, relentless fate had called on them to endure. And she saw them as a people powerfully, almost overwhelmingly endowed with the essence of life. They had to persist, had to survive because they did not know how to die (Fauset, 1990: 309).

It is true that she can see differences between the two races. However, it is not similar to the conventional ones showing the whites superior in all aspects. For Angela, the superior ones are the colored individuals, since they have suffered all possible difficulties, yet they are the ones who have the essence of life. Fortunately, it is not only the black characters that assert the injustice. Different from the claims of racial uplift and equality by black people, the writer creates a white figure, Ralph Ashley, a white friend of Angela, who confirms the assertions of the black people, and naturally makes the situation more convincing: ““We’re wrong, all wrong about those people; after all they did to make America habitable! Some day we’re going to wake up to our shame. I hope it won’t be too late”” (Fauset, 1990: 324). Fauset, thereby, adopts a different approach. She takes the case as back as America’s foundation. She shows that blacks had as much part as the whites for this country. As a result, what they want is their natural rights and nothing more. Furthermore, by making a white person seem aware of the unfairness of the white society and equality of the black community, she justifies the optimism of her characters. If the rights of blacks are acknowledged even by white individuals, there are a lot of reasons to be hopeful about the future of the black community.

Later on, Fauset mentions about Harlem in this parallel. As the place represents the gathering place of the blacks in New York, it is different from other locations for them. On this occasion, Fauset uses Harlem as a symbol and microcosm of black ideology: “Harlem intrigued her; it was a wonderful city; it represented, she felt, the last word in racial pride, integrity and even self-sacrifice” (Fauset, 1990: 326). These ideas

of racial pride, integrity and self-sacrifice are the basic issues to be passed to the reader, as she is in the opinion that if there is an equality to come, the black community itself should do it and this can only come true by believing in this and doing everything necessary. The author's continuous emphasis on racial pride and self-sacrifice for the communal uplift is revived in the personality of a black friend of Angela from the art class, Miss Powell:

Miss Powell was triumphant; not unpleasantly, she gave the impression of having justified not only her calling but herself and, in a lesser degree, her race. The self-consciousness of color, racial responsibility, lay, Angela had discovered, deep upon her (Fauset, 1990: 334).

Miss Powel is apparently drawn as the female counterpart of Van Meier in the novel. Both of them represent the ideal black person. The uplift can only come with such people who not only believe in their strength but also live accordingly. They are the personifications of the ideal black from Fauset's point of view and they can provide the necessary racial awakening and consciousness. Taking the time of the novels into consideration, it is right to claim that there were a lot of different ideas about the image and duty of the black person, though their aim of creating a racial awareness was the same. In such an environment, the writer's aim is to draw correct examples by which the reader can see the right way for racial uplift, and so that they can adapt it to their own lives. A highly important character in Fauset's life and ideology, and one of the leading figures for the uplift, Du Bois shows what the goal of the (New) Negro for the racial uplift is, or should be:

He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face (Du Bois, 2008: 6).

As he claims, the desire of the black community is to live in a society in which they are not looked down on and have equal conditions. They do not ask for superiority. They do not have a target of changing America in their own way. What they want is their most natural right: as the people having contributed to the establishment of the country, they want equal opportunities, and desire an environment where they do not have to give their African identity up. Their aim is to be allowed to live as they are without being contempt, and it is all.

2.2. The Disadvantages of Dark Skin in America

The idea of uplift and Fauset's reflection of it is undoubtedly an optimistic approach to the race issue. Like many other leading personalities of the time, she could not disregard the poor conditions of her community and tried to inform her readers about these difficulties being experienced. In this direction, she successfully reflects the disadvantages of being a black person in the white-oriented American society of the 1920s in both novels. The first instance accordingly comes through a discussion between Joel and his wife, a former school teacher. When Mrs. Marshall gives birth to their first child, Mr. Marshall wants to name him Joel. However, Mrs. Marshall is not in the same opinion, because according to her, "It's hard enough for him to be colored, and to call him a stiff old-fashioned name like that would finish his bad luck. I am going to name him Alexander'" (Fauset, 1989: 12). This seemingly unimportant case is of vital importance, since it displays how deep the racial discrimination in the society is, and how even a name of a person can be a matter of prejudice. In such a society, every detail is crucial for the black members, as anything, seemingly significant or not, can be an object of bias.

After that, the topic is maintained with the figure of Maggie. She is not well off, yet it is not limited to this. In a passage about the poor situation that her mother, Mrs. Ellersley and she live in, Fauset purports that poverty is not the only hardship for Maggie by saying "Add to that the fact that she was black in a country where color is a crime and you have her complex" (Fauset, 1989: 55). This is only one of the numerous direct explanations in the works by which the author nakedly presents the conditions in American society. The black members of the society have to live on their nerves all the time, since they are living in a community which accepts the black skin of a person as

guilt without any hesitation. In another occasion, Maggie is once more in the centre of the event that comes out as another aspect of difficulty of living in a racist society when “A white man sitting opposite mistook the smile and leaned forward, leering a little” (Fauset, 1989: 81). Through this short instance, the writer shows the case from a different standpoint. Maggie, the personification of the whole black females here, exemplifies how difficult to live in such an environment where even a smile is easily misunderstood because of one’s color, and under what kind of a pressure they have to survive. By this way, Maggie seems to experience all the troubles possible in that country. As a poor, black and female person, she has to endure much more discriminations than anyone else.

Soon, Fauset’s criticism gets harsher when, as a person with hostile emotions against the white people, even Peter seems to be justified in his feelings against the whites. During a conversation with Joanna, he claims that the barber refused to shave him the other day (Fauset, 1989: 156). In perfect accordance with the other cases provided, this occasion is elaborate enough to show the depth of prejudice. The instance proves the availability of discrimination in, great or small, every social circle. Even a haircut can be a means of discrimination and the colored people live with the possibility of this discrimination every second. The examples of first Maggie and then Peter may mislead the reader, because they may naturally assume that the cases about them have more about their social status than their color. However, Fauset tries to prevent this miscomprehension and does this with the character of Joanna: “After all, Joanna, though she had not had to contend with poverty, had had as hard a fight as he. ‘She’d have been on the stage long ago if she’d been white’” (Fauset, 1989: 188). It is true that Joanna does not have to fight against many monetary problems that Maggie and Peter have to experience all the time. Yet, she, too, has to struggle with many difficulties because of her dark skin. With this instance, Fauset shows that the prejudice and the discrimination in American community cannot be explained with sheer class, and in most occasions color is one step ahead. She continues to support this with another person from Marshall household, Philip. In the end of the novel, he makes the handicaps of being a black citizen clear:

‘You know, Maggie, I’ve never made any kick about being colored. Rather, I looked at it as a life work ready and cut out for a

man, for me, and I rushed rather joyously into it to do battle. Now as I look back, I think I realize for the first time what this awful business of color in America does to a man, what it has done for me' (Fauset, 1989: 266).

In fact, Fauset's apparent aim with this example is to include another dimension to the case. The case about Maggie was important in that it proved that Maggie and Peter's instances of prejudice could not be explained in respect to their class. Now, the occasion with Philip takes the issue further, since he is a man and thereby refutes the possible assumptions that Joanna's situation has something to do with her gender. As a male and a well off person, Philip cannot escape the prejudgments of the society, and this once more discloses the reality that the contempt against the colored people of the country has no limitation.

In the following pages of the novel, Fauset's dealing with war and its results for especially blacks come to front. As the final comment about the matter, she presents an intriguing example after the war: "Everything conceivable must be done for 'the boys', for those boys who having fought a double battle in France, one with Germany and one with white America, had yet marvelously, incredibly, returned safely home" (Fauset, 1989: 269). What differentiates this instance from the rest is that even in a war where everybody fights for the same goal and the same country, the issue of color interferes and one's skin can be a matter of discrimination. They are in the same line and they are fighting side by side. Yet, the white Americans' enmity towards them does not seem to have a rest. Whenever it is and wherever they are, the blacks' war against the misconceptions of the whites continues. This case has a function of emphasizing and strengthening all other things told till this point.

Most naturally, *Plum Bun* does not have less to say about the handicaps of being colored in American society. The first occasion in the novel appears related to Angela, a small child then, as the writer states:

Color or rather the lack of it seemed to the child the one absolute prerequisite to the life of which she was always dreaming. One might break loose from a too hampering sense of duty; poverty could be overcome; physicians conquered weakness; but color, the

mere possession of a black or white skin, that was clearly one of those fortuitous endowments of the gods (Fauset, 1990: 13).

It is worthy of considering that Fauset includes the concept of class, too, in this passage, but like some other cases in *There is Confusion*, she once more puts the color problem one step ahead. As the situation shows, everything except color has a solution. The poverty and physical deficiencies can be cured; but, color is the will of God, and so unchangeable. The line between happiness, opportunities, welfare and their opposites is so thin that the birth can determine a person's rest of life. Afterwards, in an instance about Mrs. Murray, who can reap the benefits of life just because she has a light skin and can 'pass' white, the writer claims, "Much of this pleasure, harmless and charming though it was, would have been impossible with a dark skin" (Fauset, 1990: 16). The only reason that Mrs. Murray and likewise his daughter Angela Murray can experience the good things easily in the community is their light skin. It is significant that this pleasure is 'harmless', but still the colored people are not given this chance. What is more interesting about the color issue is its artificiality and absurdity. To display this, Fauset makes it clear that, though from the same household, Mr. Murray and their daughter Virginia could not have this pleasure with their *dark skin*. The seemingly complex situation is in fact the manifestation of a simple reality: the white society's fallacious approach to blacks has no base, because the people from the same family can face totally opposite treatments. Her fortification of this claim comes about Angela's struggle to make this absurdity meaningful in her mind: "First, that the great rewards of life riches, glamour, pleasure, are for white-skinned people only. Secondly, that Junius and Virginia were denied these privileges because they were dark" (Fauset, 1990: 17).

This time, Fauset makes her discourse directly. What has been implied in the case of Mrs. Murray and her ability to enjoy the beauties of life before is stated at this point. Junius and Virginia are bereft of their natural rights. Even not their blood, but their color is their crime. As a result, Junius cannot have the rights of her wife, and similarly Virginia does not have the privileges of her sister. The writer's evident desire is to create awareness in her folk against the unnatural rules for the blacks. In this direction, Angela and her thoughts about the color issue appear once more:

All the good things were theirs. Not, some coldly reasoning instinct within was saying, because they were white. But because for the

present they had power and the badge of that power was whiteness, very like the colors on the escutcheon of a powerful house (Fauset, 1990: 73).

This quotation creates an echo of the injustices in the society. By showing whiteness as a means of power, she, also, explains that for the black community it is almost impossible to obtain power. Besides, it is also emphasized that this state of affairs has no underlying logic. It is a sheer result of the whiteness and it has no relation to reason.

In both novels, the unfairness of the American society and the reality of this discrimination having no reasonable explanation are reflected via the individuals. However, there is also the social dimension of the case, and the writer does not disregard this. In a scene at the theatre where Angela and Matthew Henson, who is in love with Angela with no return at all, go in the hope of having a good time, the person in charge reveals the harsh discrimination in social circles: ““Well, you won’t sit in there to-night; the management’s changed hands since then, and we’re not selling tickets to colored people”” (Fauset, 1990: 75). Angela and Matthew are refused because Matthew has dark skin. If Angela were to go there alone, she would most probably experience no difficulty in entering the theatre due to her light skin. The reaction of the man in charge has no foundation, and it is no more than an established frivolity. It is beyond doubt that being colored in this country brings only sorrow and struggle, and being white is the only key for the doors opening to the happiness and enjoyment.

Having introduced the racial enmity on the social scale with the scene from the theatre, Fauset creates a more general atmosphere in this vein by making Philadelphia as a city biased against the black community by revealing that in this city, “deliberate insult could be offered to colored people without causing the smallest ripple of condemnation or even consternation in the complacent commonwealth” (Fauset, 1990: 261). The dimensions of the color problem seem to have gone out of control. Not only the white individuals, but also the establishments owned by whites have internalized and even justified the restrictions against the blacks. This institutionalization of the color problem is unquestionably the most dangerous aspect of the case. In a state where the insult to colored people is not regarded as crime and even disregarded, the now and then hopeless views of the characters start to gain meaning. In one of such cases,

Anthony externalizes how the black community is exhausted and fed up with this issue of race:

‘If you knew the ceaseless warfare which most colored people wage, you’d understand that sometimes they have to stop their fight for the trimmings of life in order to hang on to the essentials which they’ve got to have and for which they must contend too every day just as hard as they did the first day’ (Fauset, 1990: 338).

Undoubtedly, the state of this continuous struggle is a difficult one. The black people have been fighting against the people blinded by the desire of power and rules created for self-interest of certain groups from their first step on the country. Yet, they sometimes have to stop their battle for the sake of basic elements of the life, which they occasionally forget in this turmoil. Unfortunately, the single reason for the black people to stop fighting is not their weariness. There is also the constant possibility of being punished unless they obey the rules determined by white folks and stay within the borders drawn for them. Fauset addresses this issue:

The president returning her good-morning with scant courtesy, showed her a clipping and asked if she were the Miss Mory of the story. Upon her assurance that she was none other, he handed her a month’s salary in lieu of notice and asked her to consider her connection with the firm at an end (Fauset, 1990: 352).

It is not unusual for a black person to be hard done by the white community. But, what makes this case different is that it is about Miss Powell, a black friend of Angela, who wins a prize for a journey to France in an art competition but whose prize is cancelled later on in case the contact with a colored girl might be ‘unpleasant’ for the people on the boat. Angela, having given up her effort to ‘pass’ white now, decides to seek her friend’s right, which can easily be taken as her own rights and her people’s rights in the larger sense. However, the response to her disobedience will be soon and severe. When her efforts are heard by the public, it is not taken kindly by the white side of the city, and the writer reveals the occasion in this way. It is useful to remind that

Miss Mory of the passage is no other than Angela Murray, who changed her name as Mory in New York. She pays for her 'disobedience' immediately and loses her job in a society where a colored person has the minimum percentage of getting one.

2.3. Color as the Basic Criterion of Evaluating People

In addition to exhibiting the disadvantages of being a colored member of the society in America, Fauset deals with the color matter from another point of view by which the reader can easily follow how the people are valued and/or discriminated just according to their color. She gives exact examples in her works which disclose the fact that American society is biased to assess the people by their physical rather than spiritual attributes. The motto mentioned in *There is Confusion* appears as the opening instance of the issue: "*By their fruits ye shall know them*" (Fauset, 1989: 24). It has a quality of creating a great difference between people both in terms of class and race. The writer implies any creation of the people with the word 'fruits' and thinks the act of giving birth as the ultimate creation of humankind. The racist approach in the motto can easily be seen: a black person gives birth to a black one, and you can evaluate them just according to this reality. Later on, in fact, this explanation is provided by the writer herself. When Isaiah shows white Meriwether, a small child then, the motto and tries to understand its meaning and the reason why it is written in their family Bible by their white owners, Meriwether can easily satisfy his curiosity. He explains the fact that it is inevitable for one to be other than or different from her/his parents. In their child consciousnesses, racial lines are engraved and cannot be transcended; they grow up with this mentality.

Meriwether, by this way, declares that a white and important person produces a white and important product, while a black and unimportant person produces a black and unimportant one. At this point, the constancy of the system in the country is apparent. It is based on rigid lines, and its permanence is important for those with power and status. So, there is not a way out of these borders. As Meriwether claims, "That's the way it always is: good trees, good fruit; rich, important people, rich important sons" (Fauset, 1989: 25). There is no doubt that these rich and important people are the white members of the community. As expressed, if one is not rich and important, that is if he/she is not white, he/she has no possibility of producing good fruit. The result is that a person's black skin is enough to consider her/him worthless. There is an understanding

in the society that if there is anything positive, it must be related to the white people. On the other hand, the blacks can only be associated with base things. The situation about the Marshall household is in this direction. The children of Mr. and Mrs. Marshall are successful individuals. In school, they usually overshadow the other students, most of whom consist of whites. Quite naturally, it is very difficult for the white people to accept this in an environment where even the claim of equality needs no consideration. They clearly do not see any virtue fit for blacks, ““Pretty nice looking children, too, if only they weren’t colored. Their father is a caterer, has that place over there on Fifty-ninth Street. Makes a lot of money for a colored man”” (Fauset, 1989: 40). The qualities of looking nice and making a lot of money are the merits seen as belonging to white citizens, and when a black person has them, the color rather than the qualities comes into prominence so that such people are once more able to be assessed by their skin rather than their qualities.

Fauset also explains that it is not only the words of the white people that show their attitude towards colored people; sometimes, they can display their indifference by their actions. One of the leading figures in this field is Mrs. Lea, a white and rich lady. Peter, now bored with his university studies mostly because of the prejudiced society and tries to make some money with music, goes her house to make music for a party. But, when she meets him in the morning of the party, the dress she is wearing does not escape Peter’s attention. She “[i]s dressed in a lacey, too transparent floating robe, too low in the neck, and too short in the skirt. ‘Something she would wear only before some one for whom she cared very much, or some one whom she didn’t think worth considering’” (Fauset, 1989: 183). It needs no explanation that what is in question in this occasion is the second option. Just because Peter is a colored person, Mrs. Lea does not think him worth considering, though she does not have the smallest idea about him and what he is like. One’s color affects the people’s perception to a great extent and makes them ignore anything else. However, Mrs. Lea is not one of the some white individuals with such negative approaches towards blacks. Soon after Peter’s impression, she easily mentions that her guests will not be pleased to see black people in such a night and so Peter’s men “[w]ill have to get here very early so as to get behind all this without being seen” (Fauset, 1989: 184). By this way, Fauset shows that the situation is not limited to personal dimension and Mrs. Lea cannot be displayed as the single responsible of the occasion; the white people in general cannot stand even to

see colored people because they have a dark skin. This social and wider dimension of the case is soon confirmed through an instance with another character in which Joanna features in. When Joanna wants to do some shopping and enters a store, her impressions are not much different: “The saleswoman had been very pleasant, but she had seated Joanna well in the rear of the store quite away from the lighted front windows and the mirrors which were so adjusted as to give all possible views of the figure” (Fauset, 1989: 195).

Joanna is not seated in the ‘lighted front windows’ because she is colored and due to this reality, she does not have the right to sit there; she should seat backwards in case a white person sees her, gets displeased and does not enter the store. Joanna’s financial status does not have the power to resist. The color is more dominant and thereby the determiner of the attitudes towards her. Afterwards, Joanna is again in the centre of a similar case. After she had gained more or less fame in the District Line Theater as a dancer, Fauset states that “Special writers came to see her, took snapshots of herself and of Sylvia which they never published, and speculated on the amount of white blood which she had in her veins” (Fauset, 1989: 231). What differentiates this occasion is that the white community seems to accept the positive qualities in Joanna, but in spite of this they do not publicize her as she is colored and they cannot internalize the reality of a black individual’s having positive characteristics. If she had a white skin with the same talents, the white writers would have no hesitation to introduce her to the country.

Soon, the state of color-determined society is stated by a white person, as well, and this time America as a whole is in the target. During their journey to France for war, white Dr. Meriwether and black Peter have the chance of a conversation on the ship. Dr. Meriwether puts the case into words:

‘Here America was founded for the sake of liberty and the establishment of an asylum for all who were oppressed. And no land has more actively engaged in the suppression of liberty, or in keeping down those who were already oppressed. So that a white boy raised on all sorts of high falutin idealism finds himself when he grows up completely at sea’ (Fauset, 1989: 245).

There is no doubt that the ‘oppressed’ in the passage is the black community living in America, and the naked truth of valuing people according to their color in that society can be seen from a white person’s speech. Established with the aim of freedom for everyone, America has not been able to escape from becoming a place of restrictions and injustices. What is more, the situation goes worse day by day. The debasement of black people continues without slowing down. Their talents and virtues are continuously ignored, and the single criterion for their assessment continues to be the simple reality of their color. Unfortunately, this state is not limited to any certain place or time. As before, Fauset does not pass over the occasions from the war to demonstrate the seriousness of the situation. The discrimination of people by their skin colors and the reality that this absurdity does not have an end even in the war in which black people are fighting for the same thing as white people do are displayed:

For a time the Negro soldiers had been permitted to go over to Aix-les-Bains once a week, to reap the benefit of the baths, but a white American woman seeing in this an approach to ‘social equality,’ contrived to start a protest which resulted in a withdrawal of this permission and the black men were confined strictly to Chambéry (Fauset, 1989: 259).

This passage is among the most significant ones to show the race reality in that it takes place in the war during which one cannot talk about class distinction as the source of this segregation. It is a woman who starts the event, which implies that the case of color has no relation to the gender issues, either. The only cause of this fear of ‘social equality’ and black people’s confinement to Chambéry is their color.

The same issue is sustained elaborately in *Plum Bun* with similar examples. In a passage on Mrs. Murray, Fauset states:

[i]t amused her when by herself to take lunch at an exclusive restaurant whose patrons would have been panic-stricken if they had divined the presence of a ‘colored’ woman no matter how little her appearance differed from theirs. It was with no idea of disclaiming her own that she sat in orchestra seats which Philadelphia denied to

colored patrons. But when Junius or indeed any other dark friend accompanied her she was the first to announce that she liked to sit in the balcony or gallery, as indeed she did... (Fauset, 1990: 15)

What is dreadful about the situation is that Mrs. Murray can get service in wherever she wants, and all the social circles are wide open for her because of her light skin. However, as the passage tells, if the black blood in her veins were known, she would be denied as easily as let's say her husband Junius. The author clarifies that for a colored person whose appearance does not differ from hers, it would be impossible to sit in such a restaurant. The evaluation of people by their colors is at the core of the case.

Afterwards, during a flashback about Mrs. Murray, her female employer, an actress feels "dimly that all colored people are thickly streaked with immorality" (Fauset, 1990: 29). The situation is so simple for the white community. By looking at the color of a person, they can easily make a decision about their features, characters and spirituality. They do not have to think about anything else, since the dark skin of a person means meanness. This occasion of deciding a person's morality or the opposite according to the color comes out as one of the cruelest instances in the novel. It is important that just before this occasion, Fauset shows the actress as a woman who "[k]new that in spite of Mattie's white skin there was black blood in her veins; in fact she would not have taken the girl on had she not been colored; all her servants must be colored..." (Fauset, 1990: 29) According to this point of view, what the blacks deserve is being a servant, and the whites are not employed as servants by the actress. They are considered superior to blacks, and the work distribution is affected by this reality. This cruelty of determining one's honor and morality with regard to one's color is continued with the character of Mrs. Murray, referred as Mattie. In an occasion, the actress, referred as Madame, sends Mattie as a messenger to a household. The following scene after Mattie's return has a quality of promoting the preceding instances:

When the girl had come to her with tears in her eyes and begged her not to send her as messenger to the house of a certain Haynes Brokinaw, politician and well-known man about town, Madame had laughed out loud. 'How ridiculous! He'll treat you all

right. I should like to know what a girl like you expects' (Fauset, 1990: 29).

Once more, the color becomes the determiner of the character in the eyes of other people. As Madame knows the black blood of Mattie, she debases her and all the values related to her. Furthermore, she thinks she knows what a girl like her expects. What is more interesting is that Haynes Brokinaw has a relationship with Madame and the actress even does not take the pain of being jealous of Mattie. It is definite that Madame does not have the idea of taking a black as a person.

Another scene in this direction comes from a highly suggestive environment: the school. The occasion is that the editorial staff of the school magazine should be composed of two representatives from each class. So, there appears a need for election in Angela's classroom, too. Mary Hastings, one of the students in the class, wins the election and she has the right to choose her an assistant, who she announces as Angela Murray. This becomes the starting point of the ruthlessness, and one of the students in the class, Esther Bayliss, who knows Angela from the former school years and so knows she is in fact a black person, interferes: "I don't know how it is with the rest of you, but I should have to think twice before I'd trust my subscription money to a colored girl'" (Fauset, 1990: 43). Angela should not be relied on, because she is colored. In Esther's statement, nothing about Angela's past and mistakes can be followed. The only reason that renders her unreliable seems to be her black blood. Fauset's choice of the classroom for such an occasion cannot be taken as a mere coincidence. She shows the institutions of the state, which have to be neutral, and especially the school expected to harbor the purest and freest minds, as the places where the foundation of discriminations and prejudices are laid.

In the succeeding instance, Fauset displays the same reality once more about Mrs. Murray and Angela, "No one could tell, no one would have thought for a moment that she and her mother had come from tiny Opal Street; no one could have dreamed of their racial connections" (Fauset, 1990: 58). To be obvious, if their racial connections were known, in other words, if they had darker skins, everything would be as different as chalk and cheese. The line between the respect and contempt lies under the reality of color, and there is nothing else in question. Additionally, she approaches the situation from another perspective. Her basic goal is not only to show the white society's cruel

and biased behaviors towards the black people, which is already known and widely accepted. She also wants to show the great dilemma of the black society, especially those with lighter skin:

The story is of a family of the better educated class, of mixed white and negro blood. It centers mainly about the experiences of the predominantly white daughter who is determined to get away from the eternal problem of color by going alone into a new environment where her 'whiteness' was taken for granted. The writer deals understandingly, as only 'one of them' could, with the poignant problems of such a situation as they unfold, and without undue emphasis reveals the tragic consequences of race prejudice, particularly as affecting the white members of this race (B. G., 2011).

Fauset intends to specify that the ones with lighter skin in the black community do not experience less confusion. On the contrary, the people like Angela live more of this struggle because it is too difficult for them to decide on one side. In such a case, she takes Angela, the tragic mulatto of the novel in this sense, to the stage. As a person having experienced the discrimination by white people just because of her racial connections, she herself appears as an echo of the white community:

She heard footsteps hurrying behind her, heard her name and turned to see Miss Powell, pleased and excited. She laid her hand on Angela's arm but the latter shook her off. Roger must not see her on familiar terms like this with a colored girl for she felt that the afternoon portended something and she wanted no side issues (Fauset, 1990: 148).

An individual with racial connections, she has to learn to behave as a white to get access to the opportunity, ease and maybe happiness. This is a direct result of the complexity of the situation. As a black, it is almost impossible to reach the beauties of life. On the other hand, as a white, it is hard to erase all her connections and emotions as

to her ancestry. This aspect of the case may sometimes end up with extremely problematic results, and the issue of color may have great impacts even on relationships between the family members. The weekend activities are significant; Mrs. Murray and Angela spend their weekends together while Junius and Virginia with darker skins choose activities accordingly. In one of these occasions:

Angela had put on her gloves and was waiting for her mother, who was drawing on her own with great care, when she glimpsed in the laughing, hurrying Saturday throng the figures of her father and of Virginia. They were close enough for her mother, who saw them too, to touch them by merely descending a few steps and stretching out her arm. In a second the pair had vanished (Fauset, 1990: 18).

The discrimination of people according to their colors, and debasement of the colored people is instilled in the individuals so deeply that even the people in the same family can create an environment based on color. Kristin Kommers Czarnecki explains this case in the novel with these words:

Weekends are a different matter, however, as light-skinned Mattie and Angela set out for the city while dark-skinned father Junius and Jinny stay home to explore local neighborhoods. The Murray household seems placid enough on the surface, yet the family's color-specific weekend activities disclose the means by which America's race obsession disrupts familial bonds (Czarnecki, 2004: 120).

Obviously, Fauset's aim is not to show Angela as a guilty person; rather, she tries to display what this issue of discrimination in the American society can make of an individual. First, the example about Miss Powell, and then the instance about the paralyzed family relationships are the indicators of the identity confusion that a black person can experience in such a 'color-specific' society. Du Bois clears up this confusion as follows:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in an amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (Du Bois, 2008: 6).

For the family members adopt white cast of mind, they feel to behave like whites. The father and Virginia have black skins, but they experience the confusion. They cannot see themselves as a part of American society. At the same time, they cannot live as Africans. As to the mother and Angela, they have light skins. Yet, they cannot see themselves belong to either side. They are neither black nor white. Although they are unique personalities, they act as if they had two identities.

PART III

3. THE APPROACH TO GENDER IN THE NOVELS

3.1. The Traditional Gender Roles

The problems that were to be fought against and needed solution were not confined to class and racial issues in the period the novels were written. The black female members of the society had a threefold struggle: class, race and gender. Different from the males, the women had to face many difficulties because of their gender in countless fields. As one of the few females among the black intelligentsia then, it is not surprising that the issues of gender are handled meticulously by Fauset. She draws the picture of society's approach to gender in a scrutinizing way, and by displaying the reality of the case, positive or negative, she tries to awaken her readers to the injustices and prejudgments towards women. When we consider that the plots of both novels are mostly based on female characters, her concern with this issue becomes much clearer.

One of the leading topics related to the writer's experience with gender is the concept of 'gender roles'. She discloses the fact how the people, consciously or not, comply with the established roles, determined by the male-oriented society, in a way. Her first comment in this vein comes through the patriarch of the Marshall family, "Joel Marshall, now a man of forty, gave up his old ideas completely and decided to be a good business man, husband and father; not a bad decision if he had but known it" (Fauset, 1989: 12). Without any doubt, this is the perfect definition of the traditional male figure. Joel is a great companion to his wife and a good parent for the children. More importantly, he is a successful businessman, and so he accomplishes to be the provider of his family. Conventionally, the patriarch must have the financial power and must be able to keep his family in comfort. He is presented to the reader as a man who exactly carries out what is expected by the society in an obedient way.

Later on, however, the first and one of the few instances of defying against the socially determined and established roles manifests itself. When she was a young girl, in a conversation with Peter on marriage, Joanna tells scathingly what the concept of marriage means to her "“You know perfectly well that for a woman love usually means a household of children, the getting of a thousand meals, picking up laundry, no time to

herself for meditation, or reading or—” (Fauset, 1989: 95). In contrast to the example of her father in the former occasion, Joanna is making fun of traditional gender roles and marriage. Different from many other female characters, she does not see the way of ascent in marriage. She is undoubtedly a feminist figure who seems to be able to give up her love for her own ideals. Her desire to spare time for reading and contemplation is of great importance in this direction. Furthermore, it must be considered that even though she has two brothers, it is Joanna who seeks for greatness in the Marshall family. In fact, she decides to be different at a very young age. As a child, she tells her father that she will be great, and by this way she wants to follow in the footsteps of other great women like Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, colored women who had “[w]on their way to fame and freedom” (Fauset, 1989: 14). The family naturally expects this idea of success from the sons, Alexander and Philip. Yet, who provides them with this expectation is Joanna. There is a clear change of roles in the Marshall household and Fauset’s biographer Carolyn Sylvander affirms this situation: “Fauset has cleverly reversed the customary roles of sons and daughters in *There is Confusion*. Father Joel, looking for the urge of greatness in his son, is surprised by it in his daughter Joanna” (Sylvander, 1981: 164).

However, Fauset’s reverse of the gender roles is unfortunately limited to Joanna. The other female characters in the novel are presented as the conventional women prototypes. They behave in the way they are expected and completely obey the patriarchal system. One of such characters is Maggie who in many cases does not question the artificial roles and borders settled by males. Naturally, her behaviors win approval by the men, and in such an instance, Peter’s comments about her reflect this reality: “‘Why, I’ve never eaten in my life anything so wonderful as that dinner Sunday. You certainly have the knack of making a fellow feel comfortable’” (Fauset, 1989: 142). It is clear that Peter is looking for a traditional woman who has ‘the knack of making a fellow feel comfortable’, and Maggie is an example for this kind. Peter’s unsuccessful relationship with Joanna makes more sense at this point. He could not be happy with her, since she has different views about being female. In contrast to Maggie, her priority is her own life and happiness, not Peter’s. Unquestionably, Peter’s continuous criticism of Joanna as too ‘cold’ and his appreciation of Maggie is a direct outcome of this reality. The writer’s emphasis on the matter through Maggie is supported by another example. When Maggie sees the unstitched buttons on Peter’s

overcoat, she takes it her duty to mend it. Even Peter's resistance would be of no help: "He said he could attend to it himself, but she told him no, that wasn't a man's job" (Fauset, 1989: 143). It is apparent that Maggie knows and adopts the traditional female roles well, and having already internalized them, she has no idea of questioning these social duties. She takes the things as they are, and does not let Peter do a 'no man's job'. There are certain areas determined for the men and women. The woman is to do the tasks within her realm while the man is responsible for his space. As Maggie states they are aware of this fact enough not to interfere each other's realm.

While Maggie's occasions are in a perfect harmony with each other, the change in Joanna's attitude is surprising. Having been presented as a 'rebel' in the preceding cases, she now appears to be aware of the social roles. Furthermore, the situation is not limited to awareness; she seems to believe in their necessity: "But she knew vaguely that the man was supposed to be the head. How could she, Joanna Marshall, ever surrender to a man who was less than she in any respect?" (Fauset, 1989: 146) It is worthy of considering that she only knows 'vaguely' that the man is expected to be the leader in the family. By using this word, Fauset shows the possibility and reality that the female individuals in the society do not necessarily behave in compliance with the gender roles consciously. In some occasions like this, the person may have a faint perception of these roles, which implies the fact that the social duties are instilled upon every individual in society in a way, either via the family structure or with the help of the other establishments. Having this vague idea in her subconscious, Joanna expects his man to be superior which makes her come to close with Maggie in this regard. Later on, a similar instance that strengthens this impression occurs. When Miss Sharpless, one of the directors of the District Line Theater, visits them, her behaviors are perceived by Joanna as too masculine: "Her visitor settled herself comfortably in a chair, crossed one leg over the other, and took out a cigarette. 'Mind if I smoke?' Joanna watched her wide-eyed, picturing her father's surprise if he should happen to look in on them" (Fauset, 1989: 226).

Joel's inclusion to the event carries a great significance. He is an ideal man of duty, and he has been represented as a man who carries out the necessities of his gender as much as possible. So, it is not surprising that he would be surprised if he saw a woman like Miss Sharpless whose standing and behaviors remind of mannish manners. However, the fundamental change in Joanna's approach cannot be passed over without

astonishment. She once more appears as a person who is aware of the behaviors suitable for each gender. She finds the behaviors of Miss Sharpless strange, since she thinks that crossing legs and smoking are masculine demeanors. This is the reason why she watches her 'wide-eyed'.

In the rest of the novel, the likewise cases about her show up quite often. Fauset practices this during one of Joanna's meditations about her relationship with Peter: "In a thousand little ways she deferred to him, and showed him that as a matter of course he was the arbiter of her own and her child's destiny, the *fons et origo* of authority" (Fauset, 1989: 292). It is noteworthy that 'fons et origo' means 'the source and origin'. Obviously, Joanna thinks the male as the source and origin of the authority. In this kind of thinking, the woman has little to say, as the female herself accepts and even internalizes the superiority and control of the male. The patriarchal system seems to be fairly successful in making the women accept the men's power and control. In the male-dominated community, every woman has to acknowledge this reality now and then. On the other hand, the male characters are also expected to be aware of this acceptance of male dominance, and they must behave accordingly. This fact is reflected in a remark about Peter, "No one but himself, not even Joanna, should captain his ship. He meant to be a successful surgeon, a responsible husband and father, a self-reliant man" (Fauset, 1989: 292). This passage reminds the reader the instance at the beginning of the novel, which was about the 'fons et origo' of the Marshall household. It is beyond any doubt that Peter carries the traces of Joanna's father in a great extent, and it is the reason why she wants him as his man. Both Joanna's expectation from Peter and Peter's expectation from himself are the reflections of Joel's personality. He must be the provider of the family, a good husband for her wife, and finally a perfect parent for his children. It is clear that the young generation is affected by the older one. The ideas and the rules of the older generation are successfully conveyed to the youth. It appears that the artificial gender duties are to survive for a long time due to the perfect chain of the patriarchal society.

The stress on the same issue continues in *Plum Bun* with various instances. In fact, the female characters in this novel are drawn quite similarly to those of *There is Confusion*. As a result, the reader meets many echoes of the preceding work. The topic begins with the dark-skinned daughter of the Murray family: "She was only twelve at this time, yet she had already developed a singular aptitude and liking for the care of the

home, and this her mother gratefully fostered” (Fauset, 1990: 20). Apparently, Fauset wants to stress Virginia’s age, as she especially notes that she is ‘only’ twelve years old at that time. This emphasis is crucial because it discloses that the female members are taught the patriarchal doctrines from an early age. Moreover, the function of the family in this is directly included in the event. It is not a coincidence that Fauset makes Virginia’s mother seem as a woman that ‘gratefully fostered’ the traditional behaviors in Virginia, which makes the family seem as the microcosm of the outer environment where the child has to learn the social teachings. The teacher of these teachings is the mother in the family. The females seem to take the situation for granted. They teach their daughters what they have learnt from their mothers. The function of family in sustaining the status quo is centralized in this way. What follows this process is presented with Virginia again:

She envied no one the incident of finer clothes or a larger home; this unity was the core of happiness, all other satisfactions must radiate from this one; greater happiness could be only a matter of degree but never of essence. When she grew up she meant to live the same kind of life; she would marry a man exactly like her father and she would conduct her home exactly as did her mother (Fauset, 1990: 22).

She has learnt her lesson well. What she wishes is in fact the wish of the patriarchy. She wants to be like her mother, who is a perfectly conventional woman. Also, she wants to marry a man like her father who is the male counterpart of her mother. In any case, what is certain is that she will never be a danger for the system.

However, it is not only Virginia that is imposed to such tenets. The light-skinned Angela, also, seems to get her share: “After supper she refused to let him help her with the dishes but had him rest in the big chair in the living-room while she laughed and talked with him from the kitchenette at a distance of two yards” (Fauset, 1990: 101). This occasion reminds of the case about Maggie and Peter. Just like Maggie, Angela does not let Anthony do housework. Traditionally, housework is associated with women. With a deep understanding of the gender differences, Angela has to protect her realm. As a woman, she tries to create the environment to make him feel happy and comfortable: he should not do a ‘no man’s job’.

On the other side, whether one can blame Mattie for serving the male dominance or not is a difficult question to find an answer in the novel, because many hints that present her as a victim, too, can be caught. She does not necessarily behave in this way consciously and willingly. No different from other women, she has learnt this as the only right way, and as a result she has never had an alternative. This reality is demonstrated in a passage where Fauset explains why Junius likes Mattie, and what Junius means to her: "Mattie her husband considered a perfect woman, sweet, industrious, affectionate and illogical. But to her he was God" (Fauset, 1990: 32). It is an important passage in showing the different approaches of genders towards each other and the case can be examined from many different aspects. To begin, it is striking that the first reason of Mattie's perfection comes from her being 'sweet'. The principal duty of the woman is clear: she must seem beautiful to her husband, which is a clear objectification of the female. The woman's no feature other than physical appearance and appeal is taken into consideration. What follows as the second component of this perfection is her 'industriousness'. This side of the situation has the quality of displaying what the woman is expected to do in the household: she must work hard, as she has to put the whole household in order from the laundry to cooking. And finally comes the most interesting element. The excellence of Mattie is shown to have a relation to her being an 'illogical' woman. The woman is not expected to think and behave logically. What is anticipated from the traditional woman is to look beautiful, do the housework and to do whatever her husband tells her. These are the Victorian ideals about women summarized in the motto 'Angel at home'. Unless a woman has these qualities, they may pose danger for patriarchy, which makes them 'imperfect' women.

On the other hand, the case also covers the perspective of the woman, which is in a sharp contrast. Fauset states that Mattie considers Junius as God. With this relationship drawn between the man and God, the occasion gains a religious dimension. In this context, we can see an indirect criticism of the religion(s) that present God as a male, and the male as the representative of God on earth; that is, as the 'fons et origo'. Apparently, there are many artificial stereotypes within the society, and they determine the perception of the people to a great extent. As the example discloses, Junius takes Mattie as an illogical person while Mattie perceives him as God, the source of logic. Such binary oppositions of culture and/or religion associating the male as 'reason' while

representing the woman with ‘unreason’ are already accepted by the both sides of the society.

This differentiation of the genders can be traced in every dimension, and it can have an effect upon even the choice of profession. In an occasion in this direction, Fauset expresses, “Arthur Sawyer, who had just entered the School of Pedagogy and was a little ashamed of it, for he considered teaching work fit only for women” (Fauset, 1990: 52). The traditional view that being a teacher is the suitable profession for the women seemingly survives in this generation, too. The gender awareness is so dominant in these people that the jobs they carry out are determined by their gender.

It is unquestionable that the gender awareness is deep in Fauset’s characters whether they are female or male. Her characters behave in perfect accordance with their genders, and the traces of gender consciousness can easily be followed in their every action and saying. They readily acknowledge the different duties of different genders, and live in this direction. The lines between the spheres of men and women are clearly defined. Moreover, the members of the society show no indication to transgress one another’s realm.

3.2. The Dependence of Woman on Man and Man’s Claim of Superiority

Fauset’s adventure with the issues related to gender does not come to an end with the awareness of gender roles in the male and female members of the society. In addition to this, she often describes scenes where the women’s dependence on men becomes clear. It is not surprising that the male characters’ claim of superiority over the women steps in during such situations. More interestingly, the dependence of woman and the superiority of man are apparent mostly with the words and actions of the female characters. In this context, the writer’s primary field to reflect is marriage. In this direction, the most notable figure in *There is Confusion* is undoubtedly Maggie. Her approach to man-woman relationships is not healthy at all. Marriage means not love but advance for her, and this situation goes on for a long time until she gives her selfishness up for her self-actualization towards the end of the novel. One of the earliest discourses accordingly is that “Maggie found early that one avenue of escape lay through men. They were stronger than women, they made money” (Fauset, 1989: 58). It is true that the quotation has a direct reflection of classism. Yet, it would be wrong to explain the occasion with only this reality. The society has a sexist understanding as well as a

classist one. In such a community, the power relations are anything but fair. The man has the capital, and this single fact is enough to make them stronger than women. Maggie seems to have learned well that the male in society has the power, and she thinks that one of the best ways for uplift lies under this reality. In many similar cases, Fauset is content with presenting the situation without making any direct comment. However, by showing the injustice of the society, her apparent goal is to heighten the awareness in her readers. Her dealing with Maggie for this is a long-termed one. When Joanna writes a letter to her to explain the impossibility of the relationship between her and Philip because of financial differences, she is highly disheartened. She has been dreaming of marriage with Philip, and she was well aware of the gainings of such an occasion. Having been reminded of the reality of rigid class system by Joanna, she immediately begins to evaluate other options. She thinks about Neal Henderson, who stays at their lodge. Though he is quite older than her and she knows nothing about him, she starts to see him as a way of escape. At this moment, her state of mind is reflected in the following way:

She began to toy with the idea. Marriage with Neal was not what she wanted, but it represented to her security, a home for herself and her mother, freedom from all the little nagging worries that beset the woman who fights her own way through the world (Fauset, 1989: 90).

It is important that her marriage with Neal will bring her sorrow and unhappiness. For the very reason, Fauset's attitude towards the topic becomes explicit. Maggie is punished in a clear way, and her punishment continues as long as her approach to relationships does not change. She inwardly knows that Neal is not the ideal husband. Yet, her materialism and weakness rather than her emotions outweigh. Neal can provide the safety she looks for, and this safety may be physical as well as financial. The man functions as the 'saviour' of the woman and the woman is pictured as dependent on man for security.

However, the only one to be blamed in this occasion is not Maggie. In addition to her deficiencies, Joanna is seen as another participant. Her letter is based on class distinctions, and she does not see Maggie fit to her brother only because there is

financial gap between them. Her classist approach is more powerful than the idea of women's solidarity. She brings unhappiness for another woman because of her class consciousness. Clearly, Fauset presents and criticizes her as a character that, consciously or unconsciously, becomes a tool in the hands of the patriarchal society. It is meaningful that only after a few pages, she is presented as feeling "[s]afe to stand for long moments watching the children play, to enter queer dark shops, to taste strange messes" in the times Peter accompanies her (Fauset, 1989: 99). In fact, this situation is both different from and similar to Maggie's case about Neal. It is different because unlike Maggie, Joanna has no economic interest. She already has more financial power than him. Yet, it is similar because she, too, finds the physical security with a man. The only way for her to discover the dark streets is the presence of Peter. She seems to be dependent on him to accomplish her quest for self-actualization and overcome her fears. Peter, as the male figure in the scene, makes her feel comfortable and secure because he is the future patriarch of the society.

As the author discloses, the women's unconfident and dependent behaviors are naturally well received by the men. They are founders of the patriarchal society, and whenever they witness the faultless working of the system, they are pleased: "She had a very charming, flattering air of deference, of dependence when she was out. It was singularly pleasing and yet puzzling to Peter" (Fauset, 1989: 190). Maggie's dependence is worthy of appreciation, and it makes Peter happy. The patriarchal society supports the female subjection, and unfortunately the females easily obey with their rules.

Though less in number, the traces of the issue can be found in *Plum Bun*, too. In the first occasion in this vein, Fauset creates a direct comparison of male and female, "Her mother's sweetly merry face took on a certain childish solemnity, her father's stern profile softened into beatific expectancy" (Fauset, 1990: 23). It is notable that this is Angela's impression. She is expected to learn the difference and apply them herself. It is the patriarch of the family who has the expression of the expectancy while the female has only a 'childish' solemnity. The father figure is once more presented to be the source of the hope for the family. As to woman, she is hoped to be dependent on man like a child all the time. It may be a daughter's dependence on her father, or the wife's dependence on her husband. It does not matter in the least. What is essential is the man's superiority over woman, and the rest is not important. The woman has no

right to defy against the system. In fact even if they want to confront, it is too difficult to come to a conclusion because it is the man who is at the top and gets the largest share of the blessings. The reality is that power is in the hands of the man, and there is a great injustice in the distribution of power between the genders regardless of color: “She knew that men had a better time of it than women, colored men than colored women, white men than white women” (Fauset, 1990: 88). As Angela states, the gender may come before the race. Even within the black society, this unfairness survives. In this way, life for the black women gets more and more difficult. They are not only exposed to the injustices because of their color, they also meet countless inequities for their gender. They are rendered dependent to men, and this makes the men’s task easier. They give as much as they want, and they keep all the power in their hands: “[i]t represented for her the apparently unbridgeable difference between the sexes; everything was for men, but even the slightest privilege was to be denied to a woman unless the man chose to grant it” (Fauset, 1990: 229). This event takes place after Angela’s calling Roger again and again which is not received well by him, since it makes him ridiculous in the eyes of his servants. Much as she says he can call whenever he wants, and so she also should call as she likes, this is not acceptable on the side of the man. The reason of this is explained by Roger himself: “Of course I do, that’s different. I’m a man” (Fauset, 1990: 228). The difference between being a man and woman is great. The woman’s implication of fairness does not please the man. She should know her limits and behave accordingly. Otherwise, she is taught the necessary lesson by the patriarch. A woman in such a society can have only as much as given, and in many cases she has to be content with it because of the dominant ideology.

3.3. Women’s Demand for Equality

All of the instances as to gender in the novels are not pessimist for women. In some cases, Fauset’s discourses show a demand of equality on the side of the female. Moreover, she presents some scenes where the woman has the priority over the man. Interestingly, the leading actors in the preceding topic, Joanna and Maggie are at the centre of this issue, as well. In the occasion about Joanna, “It was Joanna who first acquainted Peter with himself” (Fauset, 1989: 40). It is Joanna that provides Peter with the chance of knowing himself. Her role in the shaping of his character is of great significance. She is clever and able enough to help him in his quest for identity. His

self-actualization will be by means of Joanna. Clearly, Fauset puts Joanna in a higher place against the male protagonist of the novel in this context.

Seemingly, Fauset does not believe in the traditional perception of genders. As opposed to the common belief that the responsibility of life is shouldered by the man, she claims the opposite, “[i]t was women who had the real difficulties to overcome, disabilities of sex and of tradition” (Fauset, 1989: 234). She is aware of the disadvantages of her sex, and her aim is to create awareness in people. She knows that if there is a possibility of changing the status quo, it can begin with the consciousness especially on the side of the women. Her inclusion of tradition is also noteworthy. The oppression on the women has a long story, and now this situation is accepted traditionally. The conventional perception has no base, as it is artificial and created by the male-oriented society for the advantage of them.

The reality that the female has the necessary capacity to help a male comes true in Joanna’s case with Peter. The woman does not have to take passively what is given and be content with it. She has a lot of merits, and if given a chance, she can provide the man and society in general with a great deal of virtues. In this direction, when she is given the chance, Maggie is able to go to France to help her folk, ““Me, go to France! To help the poor boys! Oh, I’d love it, John”” (Fauset, 1989: 258). At this point, the female character gains the right to help the helpless men. Fauset shows her as a supporter of the males. Besides, it is significant that she can help the men even in the war environment which is taken mostly as a masculine environment. Obviously, the reverse of gender roles is at the centre of the case, and the female’s primacy against the male is shown directly. Fauset’s disbelief in the socially determined realms and man’s superiority is clear.

In *Plum Bun*, a different dimension of the case is obvious: ““Of course we can’t get along without them any more than they can without us, but I get tired of them,—they’re nearly all animals. I’d rather have a good woman friend any day”” (Fauset, 1990: 103). What is emphasized by Paulette is the idea of friendship among women. They have to feel compassion and respect to one another. Otherwise, it is impossible for them to be loved and respected by the men. Although the quotation begins with a neutral saying which accepts the mutual needs of the genders, it continues with a stern discourse. Paulette’s preference of a female friend to a male one indicates that a woman can live on without a man. In this way, it comes out as a direct claim of independence.

Fauset creates an environment where the woman has the opportunity to 'get tired of' the man. Afterwards, the emphasis on woman friendship and the female's superiority gain speed again with the same character, "Any woman is better than the best of men" (Fauset, 1990: 128). This sentence is one of the severest statements in the novel about gender issue. In the comparison of both genders, the female is given the indisputable primacy. Paulette is conscious of the male-dominated society. She knows how the system works for the disadvantage of woman all the time. Accordingly, she defies against the present situation of the society which is established on injustice and self-interest. By rejecting the necessity of man, she clearly confronts the patriarchy as a whole.

Fauset sees the deficiencies of the system well, and she has a message for the world: the women should be self-reliant and self-sufficient. They should be able to survive without men. When it comes to the mutual relations with men, it should be based on affection, not dependence and self-interest. To destroy the established black female prototypes, she presents the ideal relationship. For her, marriage is a necessary outcome of relationship for the woman, not to be exposed to sexual exploitation. Yet, she underlines the fact that marriage should be relied on mutual love and equal rights: "But for most women there must be the safety, the assurance of relationship that marriage affords. Indeed, most women must be able to say as did men, 'You are mine,' not merely, 'I am yours'" (Fauset, 1990: 275).

One way or another, Fauset tries to give a new identity to the black female figure in the society. By showing the defects of the female and male characters of the society in this vein, giving the voice sometimes to the men and sometimes to the women, she targets at creating a new image by showing the dos and don'ts. One of her primary goals is clearly to destroy the negative perception of the black woman. In this direction, she draws promiscuous white women in *Plum Bun* to invert the racist notions and stereotypes of black women's sexuality (McClendon, 1995: 37). It is again for this goal that Angela maintains "the values of Victorian middle-class morality at a time when other American women were breaking away from outdated Victorian standards" (Cash, 2001: 8). By this way, she denies the black female stereotypes and furthermore, she shows that the reality is vice versa. Mary Schenck summarizes Fauset's goal of creating a new identity purified from the established negative stereotypes for her female characters:

As a well-educated, refined woman, she created characters who are particularly careful to avoid the negative stereotypes of black female sexuality, a stereotype that was cultivated, not only by racists, but also, ironically, by those very white people who embraced black culture for its purported spontaneity and sexual liberation (Schenck, 2001: 104).

Obviously, Fauset is conscious of the mistakes and injustices imposed to black women. As an intellectual, she knows the importance and power of art, and accordingly she tries to convey her messages to her folk through her works.

CONCLUSION

The institution of slavery and the contempt against the black people date back to hundreds of years. America has almost always been one of the centres of the racial issues since the history of slavery began there in the early 17th century. Even today, it is an undeniable fact that there are a lot of direct or indirect insults, discriminations and prejudices against the black community. However, it can easily be argued that there is a great betterment on the side of the blacks when compared to the state of the affairs in the past. Naturally, this betterment is the result of a huge struggle and racial consciousness led by the black intellectuals.

In this context, one of the most important figures is William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879). He claimed slavery as a sin in 1830 and called slave owners to repent and free their slaves. This was one of the earliest discourses that included a direct rejection of slavery. Nevertheless, it was too difficult to arouse a social reaction in the larger sense at that time. Later on, Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) and Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) undertook this role respectively. As their experiences were different, they had different approaches to the problem. Douglass had experienced slavery with all its dimensions. As a result, he exhibited a rigid and radical picture in his works. Differently, Washington witnessed more improvement than him, and accordingly he saw the solution in blacks' getting a commercial education and gaining material power. Though with different points of view, they served for the same ideal. With the aim of freedom, they tried to display the realities of the biased society. They tried to awaken their folk. One of their primary goals was to encourage their people to improve themselves and to show them the right way to walk for independence and a new identity. Who followed them with great success was W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963). He was undoubtedly one of the most active participants of black progress. He conveyed his ideas to his readers with many articles through *The Crisis*. In such pieces and his books, he reflected the unnaturalness of the racial discrimination and called his people to work together for an uplift.

Together with the Great Migration of the 1910s, the struggles of the black intellectuals reached peak. With the concentration of blacks in New York, especially in Harlem, the blacks began to gain a new identity which was an evolution from the rural to urban one. The Harlem Renaissance was the result of all this process.

Much more than being a simple social and political movement, the Renaissance hosted a boom time for blacks in literal terms, as well. The names of these literary figures were different, yet they fought for the same goal as their predecessors: the single goal was to arouse a consciousness which should lead to a desire for equality and awareness for the necessity of racial uplift. Only this uplift could have the power to destroy the negative stereotypes of the black community, and thus create a new identity defined as the 'New Negro'. It is not surprising that the new identity would have a lot of differences from the former black stereotypes and this New Negro, representative of the new possibilities available in the urban North, would possess a "spontaneously generated black and self-sufficient self" (Gates, 1988: 129).

These intellectuals were well aware of the power of art, and they thought to show the right way to their folks with their tools. They were in the belief that art had to discover and reveal the beauty which prejudice had overlaid (Locke, 1992: 264). Being among the most important figures of this kind, Jessie Redmon Fauset shone with her instructive and subtle writings. By disclosing the negative and positive features of her characters, she drew an ideal picture of 'New Negro', who was to revise her/his values and question herself/himself.

In this study, two of Fauset's most famous novels, *There is Confusion* (1924) and *Plum Bun: A Novel Without a Moral* (1929) are examined in terms of class, race and gender from the perspective of a black female writer living in the white-male-centred American society in the twenties.

Obviously, Fauset takes class as one of the most important elements in the social structure, and reflects this reality in her works. She approaches to the class issue from different perspectives. She is aware of the power of class, and she discloses the fact that economy may be more important than any other institution in many occasions. It is for this reason that her characters can sometimes disregard the values of such institutions as science, religion and marriage for the sake of material power. Besides, she presents a society where the relationships between people are also determined by class and economic power. She especially concentrates on her female characters and shows how they establish their relationships with men according to class concerns and for class advancement. Her final comment in this vein comes with the reality of class consciousness instilled deeply to the members of the society. She clearly shows that the people in American society have a life and ideology based on class, and this creates a

deep class perception in all the members from children to adults. She criticizes society in general with its black or white members. Class comes before every value and this situation leads to distorted relationships among people. Her criticism focuses especially on her black folk, since she knows that blacks should destroy their class borders and awareness for racial solidarity.

She has a great deal to say in terms of race, too. She not only signalizes the facts of the society, she also gives advice to her readers for independence from oppression. In this way, her primary topic is the idea of racial improvement. By making almost all of her characters have a demand for equality, and even sometimes superiority, she has a clear message for her readers. Her goal is to create awareness of the inner power and qualities of the black people. This awareness will create self-confidence and it is the first step for getting equal opportunities. However, she does not ignore the disadvantages of being colored in American society. From individual to social scales, she exhibits how American society applies harsh rules against black community and how the life for blacks can be difficult in such an environment. She finishes her scenes on race with the picture of the biased white society. In both of her novels, she draws many pictures where the virtues of black people are disregarded and blacks are humiliated because of their dark skins. She discloses that American society has unjust rules against black people. These artificial rules are formed by whites and they work for the disadvantages of blacks all the time.

As a female member of the black intelligentsia, she is not pleased with the attitudes towards women at that time. Accordingly, she tries to reflect these fallacies both on the side of men and women to make them take the necessary lessons for the right way of things. She begins with a more or less direct criticism of the society and shows how gender roles are passed from one generation to another. She reflects the reality that the family functions as the place where the young members of the society are taught the traditional gender roles. It is notable that this gender awareness is not less in the realm of women than men. The female characters seem to have accepted and internalized the artificial roles and they do not question the patriarchal system most of the time. Interrelated with the preceding subject, Fauset also shows the dependence of the female characters on male ones, and thus echoes the men's claim of superiority over women. Most cases show how women need men to feel in comfort and secure. She indicates that this obedience to gender roles and this feeling of dependence on men are

dangerous for women. In this vein, her final topic is a claim of equality on the side of women. In some instances, she explains the potential of women and tries to instill the necessity of self-sufficiency for them. While making a criticism of marriage patterns that are based on self-interest and seen as escape for women, she is sure that only the self-reliant and independent women can have natural and happy relationships. With an apparent feminist approach, she tries to arouse consciousness about the injustices against the women and the potential power of the women to change this situation.

She is very well aware that the black community have no time to wait any more and they have to work together to establish their new identity themselves. In this environment, the concept of solidarity gains more and more importance than before. It is clear that the black community should create a microcosm within the white society in the light of the guidance provided by the black intelligentsia. Delores P. Aldridge interprets this necessity as follows:

Black liberation seeks the establishment of a lovingly free movement within and between Black males and Black females that creates both parties and establishes a tradition that is non-capitalist, non-sexist and draws from the cultural experience of free Black people (Aldridge, 1990: 95).

Now that the black people are asking for freedom, they have to unite regardless of genders and class. The only way for uplift is that black society must be based on an understanding of equality where there is no differentiation between genders and where the people from all economic status become together erasing their class lines. In fact, this passage is like a definition of ‘solidarity’ in the sense that Fauset and the black intellectuals of the time in general comprehended the term and tried to convey to their readers for a non-capitalist, non-sexist and non-racist society.

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