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**Faculty of Arts and Philosophy**

**Female characters in *The Great Gatsby* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's***

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## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Závěrečná bakalářská práce se bude věnovat zobrazení ženských postav v románu Velký Gatsby Francise S. Fitzgeralda a v novele Snídaně u Tiffanyho Trumana Capoteho. V úvodu práce studentka stručně zasadí obě díla do jejich historicko-literárního kontextu a zdůvodní jejich výběr. Objasní také zvolený přístup k dílům (charakterová analýza, feministická kritika). Jádrem práce bude analýza vybraných děl, v níž se studentka zaměří především na zobrazení ženských postav, jejich charakteristiku, postavení ve společnosti, apod. Své analýzy doloží odkazy na primární díla a opře o relevantní kritické a teoretické zdroje. Pozornost bude věnovat také formálním rysům obou děl a stručně zmíní jejich recepci. Závěrem studentka své analýzy shrne a oba romány porovná.

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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

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## ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis deals with emancipation and the role of American women in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly in the 1920s and 1940s, when many of the most important changes in the status of women in the United States occurred. The theoretical part of this paper provides a historical and literary context of these two periods with a particular focus on the status and roles of American women. The practical part further demonstrates these changes on the female characters of two culturally significant novels from these periods – *The Great Gatsby* written by Francis Scott Fitzgerald and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* by Truman Capote.

## KEY WORDS

American women, emancipation, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *The Great Gatsby*, female characters

## NÁZEV

Ženské postavy v dílech *Velký Gatsby* a *Snídaně u Tiffanyho*

## ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá emancipací a rolí Amerických žen v první polovině dvacátého století, zejména ve dvacátých a čtyřicátých letech, kdy se odehrálo mnoho významných změn ve společenském postavení žen ve Spojených státech amerických. Teoretická část této práce poskytuje historický a literární kontext obou období a zaměřuje se zejména na role a společenské postavení žen v Americe. Praktická část dále demonstruje tyto změny na ženských postavách dvou kulturně významných literárních děl z těchto období – *Velký Gatsby* od Francise Scotta Fitzgeralda a *Snídaně u Tiffanyho* spisovatele Trumana Capoteho.

## KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

americké ženy, emancipace, *Snídaně u Tiffanyho*, *Velký Gatsby*, ženské postavy

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# Introduction

*“The freedom of women is the greatest revolution, not just of our own day, but of all time, since it breaks fetters which are as old as the world.”*<sup>1</sup>

**(Louise Dittmar 1848)**

For thousands of years, the role of women was viewed by society as domestic and supportive. Maintaining the home and childcare were the norms, with opportunities for either paid employment or freedom of choice highly restricted both in a legalistic and cultural sense. For centuries women were “imprisoned” in their homes, dependent upon men and denied equal social, economic or political rights to the opposite sex. Today many American women take equality for granted, neglecting to appreciate the long and difficult path to achieving emancipation, which in some societies has to this day sadly not yet been achieved.

According to many historians, the North American journey of emancipation began in the early settlement era when women were brought to the American Colonies for two main purposes - as child bearers and housekeepers. This transition from early Colonial women, who had no legal rights and were held under their fathers or husbands authority, to emancipated and independent women of America, working as politicians, soldiers, scientists, etc and having the power to control their own destiny, took nearly four centuries.<sup>2</sup> Artists, particularly literary authors, preserved this tortuous journey in their works and through them we are able to remember and analyse it today.

This bachelor thesis focuses on emancipation and the role of American women in the first half of the twentieth century when many of the most important changes in the status of women took place. This will be analysed through the female characters of two culturally significant novels from that era – *The Great Gatsby* written by Francis Scott Fitzgerald and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* by Truman Capote. These female characters can be seen as representing American women in the 1920s and 1940s, their roles and positions in the society, their emancipation and lifestyle in relation to the historical context of the period.

The first chapter describes the historical and literary context of the 1920s in America where the plot of *The Great Gatsby* is set. Firstly, a broad picture of the decade is discussed with a focus on socio-economic, political and lifestyle changes. This is followed by a literary

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted by Davis, "Declaring Equality: Sisterhood and Slavery," 3, assessed December 3, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1nq75q.5>.

<sup>2</sup> Greene, "Legal Condition of Woman in 1492-1892," 41-52.



context and a brief biography of the author of the novel, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, his views on the decade and a short summary of the plot of *The Great Gatsby*. Secondly, the chapter provides a detailed analysis of American women in the 1920s and the changes the decade brought into their lives.

The second chapter focuses on the historical and literary context of the 1940s in America where the second novel *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is set. Like the first chapter, this begins by painting a broad picture of American society in the 1940s, focusing on the social, economical and political background of the war and post-war era. The chapter further introduces the literary context of the decade with a brief biography of Truman Capote and a short introduction to the plot of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Finally, this chapter analyses American women in the 1940s, depicting their roles, position in society and lifestyle. It will contrast these findings with those of women from the 1920s to provide additional context and understanding.

The third chapter analyses in detail the main female character of *The Great Gatsby* – Daisy Buchanan and two supporting female characters from the novel, Myrtle Wilson and Jordan Baker. The portrayals of these characters, who draw upon different backgrounds and social classes, are analysed and compared. They are assessed from the perspective of their characteristics, social status, lifestyle and level of emancipation. The goal of this chapter is to explore these themes in relation to the historical context of the period, using both primary and secondary literary sources.

The fourth chapter is focused on a detailed analysis of the major female character of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* – Holly Golightly/Lulamae Barnes. As well as the characters from the first novel, Holly's character is analysed and compared with special attention paid to her social status, reputation, lifestyle and the perceived level of emancipation and this is subsequently analysed and compared with the historical background of the 1940s in America.

The final chapter summarizes and compares the analysis of the female characters from both novels *The Great Gatsby* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. The goal of this chapter is to analyse and discuss differences or similarities between the characters, particularly in their social status, lifestyle and level of emancipation with relation to the changes in women rights and lifestyles in the 1920s and 1940s in America.

# 1. America in the 1920s

The 1920s, also commonly referred to as the Roaring Twenties or the Jazz Age, represents a period of dramatic change in both American society and its economy. This era, “tantalizingly benchmarked by the devastation and brutality of World War I and the cataclysm of the crash and the Great Depression”<sup>3</sup>, is generally characterised as a great era of economic prosperity, consumerism, female liberation and cultural change. As historian Dorothy Brown phrases, “only few decades have been so labeled, stereotyped, celebrated, or derided as the 1920s in America.”<sup>4</sup> This chapter will expose the contrasts between those who supported, enjoyed and benefited from these changes with other social groups and movements who either opposed these reforms or saw little change in their own experiences.

After a brief economic recession at the beginning of the Twenties, the American economy boomed and soon America became the wealthiest country in the world. Thus, as Brown says, the age of consumerism began – Americans were buying radios, telephones, cars, etc. and also spending money on entertainment such as dance parties and listening to jazz music. The wave of prosperity hit mainly the North-East of the country where the major cities such as New York and Chicago rapidly grew in size and population. This rapid urbanisation caused a boom in housing and rapid architectural changes. After producing large apartments units, builders continued breaking urban skylines with skyscrapers.<sup>5</sup> At the same time America was experiencing prohibition which paradoxically caused a higher consumption of alcohol, an integral part of the night time economy, which led to organised crime and corruption.<sup>6</sup>

Chafe points out in his feminist studies that this increased social activity helped to break down traditional religious mores and was part of a sexual revolution where premarital or extramarital sex was no longer taboo.<sup>7</sup> America in the 1920’s was a place of contrast where old social mores were challenged in urban centres, however for many populist conservative groups such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union this was in fact viewed as a threat to social order<sup>8</sup>. As Carroll phrases: “Women joined the Women’s Christian Temperance

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<sup>3</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 189-92.

<sup>7</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 105.

<sup>8</sup> Carroll, “Abolishing Liquor; advancing society WCTU in the United States” (paper presented at the annual meeting for the 2016 Phi Alpha Theta Upper New York Regional Conference, Plattsburgh, New York, April 30, 2016), accessed December 18, 2016, [http://digitalcommons.plattsburgh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=phi\\_alpha\\_theta](http://digitalcommons.plattsburgh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=phi_alpha_theta).

Union in such large numbers that the organization became the largest women's movement of the nineteenth century and the first women's mass movement."<sup>9</sup> Alcohol, and through that the changes in social behaviour described above, were a threat to women's previous position as the maternal figure.

However, as some historical articles refer, the often neglected truth is that for many Americans, especially Southerners, the 1920s was a decade of poverty, racism and violence. Immigration rose rapidly as well as membership of the Ku Klux Klan. Not only African Americans but all people who were not white, Protestant or from Western Europe were experiencing various racist attacks, including physical torture and illegal executions.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.1 American literature in the 1920s

The 1920s was an era rich in all forms of art such as music, film and most of all - literature. As Brown says, "never had America had such a profusion of good novelists. [...] The novel was the form that most deeply and subtly reflected the culture."<sup>11</sup>

Much literature of the 1920s is associated with the term "Lost Generation" - a group of US writers and artists who experienced World War I and felt disillusioned and unable to fit into post-war society. F. Scott Fitzgerald belongs along with E. Hemingway, G. Stein and T.S. Eliot as one of the most famous writers of the era. These authors are connected mainly by the central concern of their works, which is, according to Brown," the individual's search for meaning in the face of rapid and sharp changes in tradition and institutions."<sup>12</sup>

One of the most authentic portraits of the Roaring Twenties can be found in F. Scott Fitzgerald's book *The Great Gatsby*, where he masterfully exposes the freedom of upper class men and women to enjoy this new social, financial and sexual freedom in fast-growing New York.

Fitzgerald started his career publishing magazine articles and writing short stories during his high school and university studies. After having experienced the war as a lieutenant, Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda moved to France where he wrote his most famous

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<sup>9</sup> Carroll, "Abolishing Liquor; advancing society WCTU in the United States" (paper presented at the annual meeting for the 2016 Phi Alpha Theta Upper New York Regional Conference, Plattsburgh, New York, April 30, 2016) , accessed December 18, 2016,  
[http://digitalcommons.plattsburgh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=phi\\_alpha\\_theta](http://digitalcommons.plattsburgh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=phi_alpha_theta).

<sup>10</sup> "Racism in the USA," History GCSE, accessed November 16, 2016,  
<http://www.gcsehistory.org.uk/modernworld/usa/racismandintolerance.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 221.

<sup>12</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 221.

novel - *The Great Gatsby*. The novel tells a story set sometime after 1922 in New York about a millionaire Jay Gatsby who lives a glamorous and extravagant lifestyle of the Twenties. Gatsby is in love with Daisy Buchanan who is married to a wealthy ex-football player but Gatsby persuades her to run away with him. At the last minute, Daisy changes her mind and after an argument with her husband she accidentally hits and kills a woman while driving Gatsby's car. To protect her, Gatsby takes the blame and is murdered by the killed woman's husband. Throughout the novel readers learn the truth behind Gatsby's story which reveals the darker sides of the Twenties as moral decay, corruption, dishonesty and blind pursuit of wealth.

As historian Zeit observes, *The Great Gatsby* was, unlike Fitzgerald's other novels, publically well-received but it was not until the 1950s, long after Fitzgerald's death, that it was considered to be the most important American novel of the age.<sup>13</sup> Fitzgerald has often been called a chronicler for his authentic depiction of the era. His novels not only give an accurate portrait of the lifestyle of the upper class Americans during the 1920s, but they challenge the values of the American society. Thanks to his excellent narrating we can nowadays, almost a hundred years later, immerse ourselves into the glamorous lifestyle and atmosphere of the Twenties. Not only does Fitzgerald chronicle the era but it almost seems as if he predicted its bitter end, when he writes that the main protagonist of *The Great Gatsby* unexpectedly and tragically dies, in the same way as the prosperous era of the 1920s. Matthew J. Bruccoli, the expert on Fitzgerald, wrote in his essay: "Fitzgerald's view of the Twenties was serious and complex, for he recognized the glamour as well as the waste, the charm as well as the self-destruction."<sup>14</sup> Fitzgerald himself admitted his favouritism for this decade. In his novel *Echoes of the Jazz Age* which he published in 1931, two years after the end of the Jazz Age, he nostalgically remembered the era:

It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire. [...] we drank wood alcohol and every day in every way grew better and better, and there was a first abortive shortening of the skirts, and girls all looked alike in sweater dresses, and people you didn't want to know said "Yes, we have no bananas," and it seemed only a question of a few years before the older people would step aside and let the world be run by those who saw things as they were—and it all seems rosy and romantic to us

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<sup>13</sup> "F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Age of Excess" by Zeit, Joshua, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, accessed December 18, 2016, <http://gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/roaring-twenties/essays/f-scott-fitzgerald-and-age-excess>.

<sup>14</sup> Bruccoli, "Fitzgerald's Eras: Social and Political Backgrounds of the 1920s and 1930s," 58.

who were young then, because we will never feel quite so intensely about our surroundings anymore.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the criticism of the American society in his novels, Fitzgerald obviously looked back to the 1920's as an age of great change and excitement where there was a genuine belief in the opportunities the future would bring. The above quote specifically draws out many of the key themes that will now be explored surrounding women's emancipation, freedom and equality of opportunity.

## 1.2 American women in the 1920s

“The new women, across the generations, entered the 1920s with high expectations, ready for challenge and for choice,”<sup>16</sup> stated feminist historian Brown in her studies, and this would appear to be the case. The second decade of the nineteenth century brought long expected changes into lives of American women of all classes. As Chafe points out, the first major shift towards the emancipation of women in the USA came at the very beginning of the decade. On August 18, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was finally, after more than seventy years of campaigning, ratified and American women won the right to express their political opinion at the polling booth.<sup>17</sup> While some historians, “by virtue of their focus on recognizable events and dates”<sup>18</sup>, consider this event as a measuring point for the changing status of women in America. To focus on such specific points in time, however, may be misleading.

Many feminist historians such as Betty Friedan, William Chafe and Dorothy Brown date the initiatives of women's emancipation in America further backwards in history, particularly in relation to the scientific theories about sexual nature of women. Friedan believes that it was the famous Austrian neurologist and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud who started this revolution. She wrote in her groundbreaking work:

Freudian psychology, with its emphasis on freedom from a representative morality to achieve sexual fulfillment, was part of the ideology of women's emancipation... (this) thought has become the ideological bulwark of the sexual revolution in America. Without Freud's definition of the sexual nature of women to give the conventional image of femininity new authority, I do not think several generations of spirited American women would have been so

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<sup>15</sup> Fitzgerald, *Echoes of the Jazz Age*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 47.

<sup>17</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 3.

easily diverted from the dawning realization of who they were and what they could be.<sup>19</sup>

Dorothy Brown also sympathizes with Freud's beliefs that women are "not ministering angels to the needs and comforts of men"<sup>20</sup> as was commonly thought, but they can, too, enjoy their sexual experiences.<sup>21</sup> In her studies, Brown further relies on ideas of a British physician and sexologist Havelock Ellis who, as well as Friedan, hails Freud's impact.<sup>22</sup> Ellis says that "Freud had taught the world that the sexual impulse – as it exists in our civilisation has even wider and deeper implications (on the status of women) than have usually been suspected."<sup>23</sup>

Thus, the common belief of the majority of feminist historians is that the stimulus of the emancipation in the United States, which brought the major changes in the 1920s, was neither social nor political but sexual. They draw a direct link between women's freedom of choice, sexual fulfillment and the wider changes to their role in society.

Linked to the connection between greater sexual freedom and the Twenties are "flappers" - a new generation of women, who wore knee-length skirts, cut their hair and listened to jazz music. Covered in silk and fur, flappers were often portrayed as driving cars, smoking, swearing and drinking in public. They did not care about manners or morals. "Portrayed as checking their corset in the cloakroom, partying without a chaperone, and dancing to hot jazz with skirts hiked above their knees"<sup>24</sup>, Chafe suggests that flappers "personified a lifestyle totally alien to the older generation."<sup>25</sup> Conservative elements of society, along with the veterans of the women's emancipation movement, had no understanding of these new trends, in fact, they were alarmed. An article in *Atlantic Monthly* from May 1920 describes the new women as: "Restless, excited, noisy human beings, possessing no mystery, no romance. [...] they trot like foxes, limp like lame ducks, one-step like cripples, and all to the barbaric yawp of strange instruments which transform the whole scene into a moving-picture of a fancy ball in bedlam."<sup>26</sup>

Although the conservative minded elements of society were threatened by these changes, Brown claims that some psychologists, such as G. Stanley Hall, saw greater

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<sup>19</sup> Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 80.

<sup>20</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 39.

<sup>21</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 38.

<sup>22</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 36.

<sup>23</sup> Ellis, introduction to *Sex in Civilization*, xxii.

<sup>24</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 104.

<sup>25</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 104.

<sup>26</sup> Grundy, Mr. "Polite Society," *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1920, accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.unz.org/Pub/AtlanticMonthly-1920may-00606>.

potential and promise in this new generation of women. Hall thought that flappers “glorying in their femininity and giving free course to its native impulses, might be the leaders in the complete emancipation of woman from the standards man had set for her.”<sup>27</sup> However, flappers cared little for approval or disapproval and were enjoying their newly gained freedom regardless these opinions.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, many feminist historians believe that this new wave of emancipation was caused by the new sexual awareness of women. The carefree manners of flappers contributed to a sexual revolution. Sex was no longer taboo, in fact, it was so available that “the number of brothels declined and prostitutes were replaced by call girls and nightclub hostess”.<sup>28</sup> Discussion of sex in magazines, novels and movies became very popular. Both Brown and Chafe refer to an increasing number of women who experienced premarital or extramarital sex. According to the statistics that Chafe uses in his book, the women who came to maturity in the early 1920s were twice as likely to lose their virginity before marriage as their mothers.<sup>29</sup>

Chafe also observes that it was the ability for women to of control the birth-rate that contributed to the change in sexual habits. Usage of artificial contraceptive devices brought a new degree of freedom into women’s personal lives. As he says: “Family size could be controlled, women could express their sexual desires with less fear of becoming pregnant, and the double standard ceased to exert the same restrictive influence over women’s behavior that it once had.”<sup>30</sup> Brown has similar views as Chafe and gives the credit for “the most enduring and effective advocate for birth control”<sup>31</sup> to Margaret Higgins Sanger, an American birth control activist, nurse and writer.

The 1920s also brought new education and career opportunities for many women. As Chafe points out, the number of college-educated women rapidly grew and new female occupations were created. American women now worked as editors, publishers, doctors, pharmacologists, bankers, etc., some even became professional sportswomen. However, the career women were usually restricted to female positions and rarely received the same treatment as men, which discouraged many of them from pursuing their ambitions.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, the careers of women were confronted with their marriage and family life. Chafe argues that:”The distribution of sexual roles made it difficult, if not impossible, to do

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<sup>27</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 32.

<sup>28</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 19.

<sup>29</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 105.

<sup>30</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 105.

<sup>31</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 112.

<sup>32</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 99-100.

both, because in order to achieve success in a men's world, they had to accept failure in a women's world."<sup>33</sup> Despite all the changes that the decade brought into lives of American women, for many their roles as wives and mothers remained unchanged. The majority of women lacked the desire to work outside the home and they continued to work as homemakers and child bearers. What's more, according to Chafe an even higher number of women married in the years after 1920 and "women's place in the home seemed to have been strengthened rather than weakened."<sup>34</sup>

Brown shares Chafe's view on the importance of marriage in lives of American women in the Twenties. In the conclusion of her book she describes a typical married woman, affected by the major changes of the decade as:

"The married woman was to be a wife-companion, a knowledgeable consumer-in-chief, scientific homemaker, child bearer and child rearer. She was to master these roles while becoming more conscious of her sexual needs, grappling with the opinion of birth control and mechanizing her housekeeping. [...] Across class, ethnicity, and creed the challenges varied, but they were unrelenting."<sup>35</sup>

The position of women was frequently discussed in magazines for housewives that became very popular in the 1920s. For example, *The Ladies' Home Journal* in the early 1920s explored "What the Newest Woman Is." The female author of the article stated:

"I believe in women's rights; but I believe in women's sacrifice also. I believe in women's freedom; but I believe it should be within the restrictions of the Ten Commandments. I believe in women's suffrage; but I believe many other things are vastly more important. I believe in women's brains; but I believe still more in her emotions. I believe in women's assertion of self; but I believe in her obligation of service to her family."<sup>36</sup>

This article demonstrates the philosophy of the new generation of women and its remarkable contradictions. It seems that although American women were fully aware and proud of their new political and social freedom, they still valued the traditional roles of women.

The 1920s was indisputably a groundbreaking decade for all women in the United States and despite the bitter end of the Roaring Twenties that was caused by the Great Depression in 1929, women walked out of the decade as winners. When the rest of America was mourning, women still had a reason to celebrate. They were, in most cases, still preferably mothers and wives depended on their husbands, but they were politically, economically and socially freer than ever before. They were better educated, emancipated and

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<sup>33</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 111.

<sup>34</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 118.

<sup>35</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 247.

<sup>36</sup> Abbot, "What the Newest Woman Is," 221.



sexually liberated. They were enjoying all these remarkable achievements, but they were yet to realize that the most important change, in order to become fully emancipated, must take place within – “within the home, and, more profoundly, within themselves.”<sup>37</sup> As psychologist Beatrice Hinkle says, emancipated women need to be “recognized as individuals first, and as wives and mothers second.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, despite all the great changes that the Twenties brought into their lives, American women were still in many senses restricted from greater liberation.

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<sup>37</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s*, 249.

<sup>38</sup> Hinkle, Beatrice M., “The Chaos of Modern Marriage,” *Harper’s Magazine*, December 1925, accessed January 10, 2017 from the University of Surrey Library, <http://harpers.org/archive/1925/12/the-chaos-of-modern-marriage/>.

## 2. America in the 1940s

Comparing the periods of the 1920s and 1940s in the United States of America, we find that the decisive changes during those periods were driven by the two world wars. While the 1920s was a period of post-war prosperity and economic boom that followed War I (1914-1918), the 1940s was directly impacted by events of ongoing World War II (1939-1945). The following text summarizes and compares the lives of Americans before, during and after the most destructive conflict in the history of mankind that lasted until the mid-40s and was the bearer of big changes in American society.

After the glamorous and consumerist 1920s and economically difficult 1930s, when America dealt with the consequences of the Great Depression, the USA stood on a threshold of the new decade. The United States entered the 1940s, often abbreviated as the Forties, at the time when the war was already raging in Europe and Asia. For almost the whole first two years of the new decade, America, led by the president Franklin D. Roosevelt, managed to stay out of the war conflict.

However, as historians Opatrný and Raková observe, the doctrine of isolationism and non-interference in foreign policy, revived after World War I due to the horrific experiences of the devastating conflict, was interrupted by a series of new policies.<sup>39</sup> According to Michael Genovese, the most important policy was the Lend-Lease Act, approved March 11, 1941, which obliged the USA to supply France, Great Britain, China and later the Soviet Union with food and military aid, including weaponry, warships and warplanes.<sup>40</sup> Officially, the United States remained neutral until the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941, when Japanese fighter planes destroyed the US naval base. One day later, the United States of America declared war on Japan, officially entering World War II.

U.S. mobilization began along with the entry into the war. As historian Edmund Lindop refers, Americans were immediately “united in their desire to defeat the Axis”<sup>41</sup> - the alliance of German, Japan and Italy - and American men joined the Army by tens of thousands. The initial minimum age-entrance requirement was 21, later reduced to 18. American men, coming from different social backgrounds and ethnic groups, were

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<sup>39</sup> Raková a Opatrný, *USA: Stručná historie států*, 178.

<sup>40</sup> Genovese, *Encyclopedia of the American Presidency*, 312.

<sup>41</sup> Lindop, *America in the 1940s*, 10.

experiencing heavy fights on two fronts – European and Pacific. All citizens were treated equally, which helped to erase class and cultural differences among soldiers.<sup>42</sup>

Opatrný and Raková further point out that the “home front” was equally important. Thanks to the huge economic growth caused by the transition to war production, unemployment almost did not exist. All economic sectors, thanks to the demand of the military and thus the state procurement, recorded unprecedented expansion. Several years of incessant fights required an increasing number of men to join the Army, many of whom were killed or returned injured. Their positions in enterprises, factories and government were filled by women who fully replaced men’s work.<sup>43</sup>

Soon before the war ended, America lost its president Franklin Roosevelt, who was replaced by Harry S. Truman. On May 8, 1945, fighting in Europe stopped and on September 2 of the same year, after the surrender of Japan, the Second World War officially ended. Demobilization was launched and thus a new era, so-called post-war era (1945-1960s), of American history began.

Although the early post-war era was, according to Lindop, a time of uncertainty mainly due to the threat of Cold War, Americans emerged from the war full of optimism and hope for future.<sup>44</sup> Hundreds of thousands of American soldiers, after experiencing the hardship of wartime and suffering on the battlefields around the world, were now returning home to their wives and girlfriends. As some historians observe, people were getting married on average two years earlier than in the previous decade and establishing families.<sup>45</sup> America experienced a huge expansion of population, the so-called baby-boom. The economy started to grow again as well as suburb areas of cities, where new families lived in the typical pre-fabricated houses. While the rest of the world was slowly recovering from the war, the USA was, once again, on its rapid way to become the most prosperous and powerful country in the world.

## 2.1 American literature in the 1940s and the postwar era

The war affected not only the American economy and politics, but also literature. As well as in the era after the First World War, many Americans now decided to portray their war experience through writing. Thus, the post-war years gave rise to the greatest number of

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<sup>42</sup> Lindop, *America in the 1940s*, 11.

<sup>43</sup> Raková a Opatrný, *USA: Stručná historie států*, 180.

<sup>44</sup> Lindop, *America in the 1940s*, 61.

<sup>45</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 186.

iconic works of American literature. The literature in the post-war era “attained a new maturity and a rich diversity”<sup>46</sup>. Opatrný and Raková state that outside the themes of war and induced disillusionment, portrayed for example by Joseph Heller or Norman Mailer, the new generation of writers, among whom many were immigrants and Afro-Americans, focused on ethnic, social and political issues in America. Also feminist issues were, due to the rise of feminism, a frequently discussed topic. What’s more, women gained a greater recognition as writers after the war.<sup>47</sup> One of the most famous female writers, not only of the post-war era but in the entire history of American literature, is Harper Lee, who in her novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* portrays racial, social and gender issues of the American South.

The Lost Generation of the 1920s became a predecessor to the Beat Generation; a group of authors who rejected materialistic and conservative values of American society as well as standard narrative techniques. Some of the famous authors of this movement, who experimented with alcohol, drugs and philosophy, are Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs. Other popular American authors of the post-war era are for example Vladimir Nabokov, Tennessee Williams or Truman Capote.

Truman Capote (1924 – 1984) is one of the most popular and controversial literary authors in contemporary American literature. Born as Truman Streckfus Persons in New Orleans, Capote had an uneasy childhood. In an interview for *Playboy* in 1968, Capote described his youth life; neglected by his divorced parents, he spent most of his youth life with his relatives in Alabama. As well as Fitzgerald, Capote started his career publishing magazine articles and writing short stories. Many of his early stories were written during Capote’s teens and early twenties and reflect loneliness, anxiety and insecurity that he had experiences as a child. Later, at the end of the 1940s, Capote started writing novels.<sup>48</sup>

A major success came in 1958 with *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*; a story about a young girl Holly Golightly who came to glamorous New York City in search for the American Dream. Although Capote conceived Holly’s story as fiction, in the interview for *Playboy* admitted that Holly’s character was based on a real story.<sup>49</sup> Capote also stated that Holly “was the

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<sup>46</sup> “American literature,” Encyclopædia Britannica, accessed February 20, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/art/American-literature/After-World-War-II>.

<sup>47</sup> Raková a Opatrný, *USA: Stručná historie států*, 185-186.

<sup>48</sup> Inge, Tomas M., editor, *Truman Capote: Conversations*, (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), 38.

<sup>49</sup> Inge, Tomas M., editor, *Truman Capote: Conversations*, (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), 142.

prototype of today's liberated female and representative of a whole breed of girls who live off men but are not prostitutes."<sup>50</sup>

Although Capote was openly homosexual, women played an important role in his life. For example, an article in the popular magazine *Time* points out his long friendship with a famous writer Harper Lee that positively influenced some of his work.<sup>51</sup> It seems that Capote was greatly interested in the issues of women's position in American society. In the interview for *Playboy* in 1968, he said: "Women's liberation has gone along and done a terrific lot."<sup>52</sup> Through Holly's character Capote discusses the issues of emancipation and liberalization of American women in the post-war era.

Capote's greatest success, however, came later in 1965 with *In Cold Blood*, which is by some critics considered to be the first non-fiction novel. He could not handle the fortune and fame *In Cold Blood* brought into his life and took on alcohol and drugs. Being homosexual in the conservative social climate of the post-war years along with his childhood trauma contributed to his poor mental health. Capote died in 1984 at age of 59.<sup>53</sup>

Although Capote lived in the war and post-war era, his life, as well as work, seems to be untouched by the significant events of that period.

## 2.2 American women in the 1940s and the postwar era

The growing emancipation of American women in the early decades of the twentieth century was hit hard by the Great Depression in 1929. In the 1930s, America faced the consequences of the economic crisis. The unemployment was extremely high and American women were discouraged from seeking work. As feminist historian William Chafe states:

"Legislatures enacted laws restricting the employment of married women; labor, government, and the mass media joined in a campaign urging women to refrain from taking jobs; and the overwhelming majority of average citizens—including women—showed little interest in altering existing gender roles."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Inge, Tomas M., editor, *Truman Capote: Conversations*, (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), 141.

<sup>51</sup> Sarah Begley, "The Legendary Friendship of Harper Lee and Truman Capote", *Time*, February 19, 2016, accessed February 28, 2017, <http://time.com/4230925/harper-lee-truman-capote-friendship/>.

<sup>52</sup> Inge, Tomas M., editor, *Truman Capote: Conversations*, (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), 142.

<sup>53</sup> Clarke, *Capote: A Bibliography*, 427-435.

<sup>54</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th century*, 121.

Thus, the traditional role of women as housewives and mothers strengthened and “there seemed little reason to expect any change in the future.”<sup>55</sup>

World War II, however, brought dramatic changes into lives of American women. An enormous number of men joined the Army and were deployed overseas; leaving their work positions and causing manpower crisis. Women immediately took the advantage of the situation and entered the labor force. Chafe describes these changes in his studies:

“Over six million women took jobs, increasing the size of the female labor force by 50 percent. Wages leaped upward, the number of married women holding jobs doubled, and the unionization of women grew fourfold. Even public attitudes appeared to change. Instead of frowning on women who worked, government and the mass media embarked on all-out effort to encourage them to enter the labor force.”<sup>56</sup>

The status of women dramatically changed during the war. From restricted housewives with no claim for paid occupation women became, almost overnight, much needed workforce. For many this was an opportunity to improve their economic status and become financially independent.

As Chafe further refers, women replaced men in almost all job positions – from office and factory workers to bus drivers and blacksmiths. Soon after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the manpower crisis became so serious that government abandoned its reluctance and women replaced man in war industries as well. With only brief training, women became munitions makers and metal workers. They filled any job historically performed by men, showing their unprecedented skills and ingenuity. What’s more, having created their own branch of the US Army–The Women’s Army Corps (WAC)–in 1943, American women were allowed to serve overseas and ‘free a man to fight’. It is worth to mention that the motives of women were patriotic rather than feministic.<sup>57</sup>

With the entry into the workforce, women faced the challenge of having two full-time jobs: as workers and homemakers. According to Chafe, “seventy-five percent of the new women workers were married and over three million were full-time housewives”.<sup>58</sup> Their job responsibilities were confronted with the general belief of most Americans that the primary responsibility of women was to care for the household and rear children. Many American women were having difficulties with their new dual role and some were forced to leave their jobs and return to their traditional positions in the home. The lack of community services,

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<sup>55</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 121.

<sup>56</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 121.

<sup>57</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 122-130.

<sup>58</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 142.

such as central kitchens and laundries, made the situation of women even more difficult. The idea of the establishment of child-care centers caused a wave of indignation as many Americans believed that mothers could not make a greater contribution to the nation than to raise their children in the security of the home.<sup>59</sup> Thus, it seems that even though the economic status of many American women during the war years significantly improved, their greater social liberation and emancipation was still restricted by the conceptions of society about the traditional roles of women.

When the war officially ended and millions of soldiers came back home to their families, many American women returned to their roles in the home. As the economic boomed, there seemed to be no reason for women to persist in their work positions. As Chafe observes, the post-war years, in some ways, witnessed the revitalization of family life. The nation experienced a sharp rise in marriage rates. Americans were getting married at younger age and women were under the pressure to marry immediately after the high school. This caused an enormous “baby-boom” when the birth rates dramatically increased. Thus, the traditional role of women as mothers and homemakers seemed to have strengthened again.<sup>60</sup>

The feminist historian Chafe, however, believes that the war, after all, constituted a milestone for women in America. Although the majority of young women after the war returned to the home, middle-aged women, whose children were in their teens, sought for jobs or other activities outside the home such as volunteering. The biggest change Chafe sees in the attitude of women, who “wanted to get married and have children, but also wished to participate in the world beyond the home.”<sup>61</sup>

The late post-war era also recorded revival of feminism that was frequently discussed previously during the 1920s but almost forgotten during the economic crisis and war era. According to Chafe, many women started to realize that as “housewives they were segregated from reality and denied the opportunity to develop into mature, well-rounded individuals.”<sup>62</sup> This awareness later in the 1960s contributed to a feminist worldwide movement, so-called Second-Wave feminism.<sup>63</sup>

What’s more, men’s view of working women changed after the war. Women had proved their unprecedented potential, strength and ability to work during the war years and broke the gender roles stereotypes. An example of the changed perceptions of men on women

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<sup>59</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 141-146.

<sup>60</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 186.

<sup>61</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 175.

<sup>62</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 185.

<sup>63</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 201.

labour gave Truman Capote in an interview for *Playboy*: “The old husband is glad to push the old wife to work nowadays. Before he would have said ‘Oh honey, I wouldn’t have you soiling your hands down the garage.’ Now he has her pushing an 18-ton truck.”<sup>64</sup> The quote demonstrates that men no longer viewed women as fragile creatures unable to work. Moreover, Capote here proves his interest in the issues of emancipation in the post-war era. He also discusses these issues in his novella *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* on the character of Holly, an emancipated young woman who rejects her role as a housewife and seeks for her own self.

In the end, World War II became a measuring point in the history of American women. During the war years, women earned their place in the labor market. Although many went home as soon as the fighting stopped, American women were no longer denied the right to work. They proved the society, but above all, themselves, that they were ready for a new role outside the home. The experience from the war years increased the confidence of woman and encouraged them to search fulfilment outside the home. As Chafe concludes, despite the persistence of traditional ideas of woman’s place and economic inequality, “the wife who worked became a permanent feature of American life. For that reason, if for no other, the war and its aftermath constituted a milestone for woman in America”<sup>65</sup>

For more than a decade it seemed that the desire for emancipation and liberation of American women that was so significant in the Twenties was forgotten. World War II, however, caused the revival of this desire and set American women on the journey to emancipation again.

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<sup>64</sup> Inge, Tomas M., editor, *Truman Capote: Conversations*, (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), 347.

<sup>65</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 172.



### 3. Analysis of the female characters in *The Great Gatsby*

In *The Great Gatsby*, Francis Scott Fitzgerald portrays the new generation of American women of the 1920s through the characters of Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker and Myrtle Wilson. Although Fitzgerald himself claimed that the female characters in his novel were unimportant<sup>66</sup>, the majority of readers, critics and historians disagree. Each one of these three female characters represents a different social class and background and is affected by the social, political and economic changes that the Twenties brought to American society. Through their different experiences we can view the period and the changes that swept through society, profoundly affecting the roles and position of women, from various perspectives.

#### 3.1 Daisy Buchanan

Daisy Buchanan, born Fay, is the main female character of *The Great Gatsby*. She is unhappily married to a wealthy and abusive Tom Buchanan and is having an affair with her previous lover - a young and mysterious millionaire Jay Gatsby. To Gatsby, Daisy is an embodiment of all his desires and throughout the novel it becomes clear that he is prepared to sacrifice everything for her. Daisy faces a difficult decision when Gatsby asks her to leave her husband and run away with him. Eventually, Daisy rejects Gatsby and on her frantic run accidentally kills Myrtle Wilson, a mistress of her husband. Gatsby, still hoping that Daisy changes her mind, takes the blame for the murder, which results in his own death at the hands of Myrtle's husband. Daisy, then, returns to her husband.

Daisy is a portrayal of a typical upper-class American woman of the 1920s. Coming from a wealthy family from Louisville, young and glamorous Daisy is very popular amongst men. However, she fell in love with a young soldier Jay Gatsby and promised to wait for him to return from World War I. Gatsby's return is, however, postponed and Daisy, as well as the majority of young women in the 1920s, wants to secure her future through marriage: "And all the time something within her was crying for a decision. She wanted her life shaped now, immediately – and the decision must be made by some force – of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality – that was close at hand."<sup>67</sup> Although Daisy loved Gatsby and

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<sup>66</sup> Turnbull, *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 197.

<sup>67</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 152.

wanted to keep her promise to him, she could not bear the uncertainty of his return and has chosen “money and the security promised through marriage to Tom Buchanan.”<sup>68</sup> She cannot really be judged for her decision. As the historian Chafe points out, the majority of women in the Twenties saw marriage as the only way of life, especially if they wanted to maintain or enhance their social status.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Fitzgerald himself suggests that Daisy was acting to fulfil the social norms of this era when he writes that “she was feeling the pressure of the world outside.”<sup>70</sup> As a woman from a wealthy family, she would have been expected to marry someone of the same or higher social status by her mid twenties. To continue to wait for Gatsby, while an act of love would have been highly abnormal.

After almost changing her mind the day before marriage, Daisy marries Tom “without so much as a shiver.”<sup>71</sup> Although Jordan Baker, Daisy’s friend, says that she’d “never seen a girl so mad about her husband” as Daisy was during their honeymoon, her marriage with Tom is unhappy. Tom appears to be cheating on Daisy from early on in their marriage<sup>72</sup> and he is also physically abusive to her<sup>73</sup>. Nick Carraway, the narrator of *The Great Gatsby*, comments on Daisy’s situation: “It seemed to me that the thing for Daisy was to rush out of the house, child in arms – but apparently there was no such intentions in her head.”<sup>74</sup> Daisy does not show any intentions to leave her husband, despite referring to him as “a brute of a man”<sup>75</sup>, until she meets Gatsby again. She is willing to remain in a marriage with someone like Tom because she does not see any other option at that point in time. As for many women in the Twenties, Daisy’s husband means a social and financial stability for her and leaving him is not an option.

The marriage with Tom brought Daisy a daughter Pammy. She is the only female character of *The Great Gatsby* who has a child. Fitzgerald, however, does not provide much detail about Daisy’s relationship with her daughter. Daisy does not speak much about Pammy and when she does, she describes her in a very simple way: “You ought to see the baby. She is asleep. She is three years old.”<sup>76</sup> Pammy shows on the scene only once, when she is brought, dressed up, to a guest room by her nurse. Daisy seems to be thrilled with her as she

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<sup>68</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course : American Women in the 1920s*, 225.

<sup>69</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 118.

<sup>70</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 152.

<sup>71</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 77.

<sup>72</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 77.

<sup>73</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 12.

<sup>74</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 21.

<sup>75</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 12.

<sup>76</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 10.

says: “The blessed precious, come to your own mother that loves you”<sup>77</sup>. But soon she admits that she just wanted to show her child off.<sup>78</sup> This could also be seen to represent her materialistic nature.

Daisy does not appear to place her role of mother high among her priorities. Although she apparently has a lot of free time, there is no mention about her spending it with Pammy. Another example of her limited relationship is the fact that she does not discuss her daughter when she considers leaving her husband with Gatsby. It seems that Daisy views her child only as an inevitable part of her marriage. The feminist historian Brown, however, points out that the roles of mothers and homemakers were important for many married woman in the Twenties<sup>79</sup>. Thus, the issue in Daisy’s relationship with her daughter could be the fact that the novel was written by a man and women’s views on motherhood were not represented accurately.

Although Fitzgerald does not speak openly about sexual activity in *The Great Gatsby*, the new sexual freedom of women can be observed through the behaviour of the female characters. Not only does Daisy have an extra-marital affair with Gatsby, Fitzgerald also refers to her pre-marital affairs. Before Daisy married Tom, she was playing “around with soldiers”<sup>80</sup> and “all day long the telephone rang in her house and excited young officers from Camp Taylor demanded the privilege of monopolizing her that night.”<sup>81</sup> It is obvious that Daisy, as well as many young women of the Twenties, was enjoying the new found sexual liberation of this period.

Daisy, as was the case with the majority of upper class women, does not have any paid occupation. Nor does she appear to have any interests or aspirations. Fitzgerald portrays her as passively spending her days lying on a sofa with her friend Jordan Baker. She often shows signs of boredom when yawning and begging: “Oh, let’s have fun.”<sup>82</sup> or “what’ll we do with ourselves this afternoon, and the day after that, and the next thirty years?”<sup>83</sup> The interesting fact about her friendship with Jordan, who seems to be her only friend, is that although they appear to be close, their friendship is not very personal. They appear frequently together but with relatively little interaction. As the narrator observes: “Sometimes she (Daisy) and Miss Baker talked at once, unobtrusively and with a bantering inconsequence that was never quite

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<sup>77</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 117.

<sup>78</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 117.

<sup>79</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course : American Women in the 1920s*, 247.

<sup>80</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 76.

<sup>81</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 75.

<sup>82</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 120.

<sup>83</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 118.

chatter, that was as cool as their white dresses and their impersonal eyes in the absence of all desire.”<sup>84</sup> Despite having the freedom to explore and take on new roles in society, Daisy seems to be limited in her outlook, this could be caused by her marriage, social position or, possibly, the perception of women’s role within society.

As several critics pointed out, *The Great Gatsby* employs symbolism of colours. Thus, for example, Daisy’s character is represented by the colour of white she is often associated with. For example, she “dressed in white, had a little white roadster”<sup>85</sup> and her house was full of white as well. The colour white traditionally represents innocence, purity and nobleness – and that is Gatsby’s idealized vision of Daisy. However, Haibing Zhang who studied symbolic meanings of colours in the *Great Gatsby* says that „white symbolizes Daisy’s emptiness, selfishness, hypocrisy and ignorance. Thus she represents the spirit and mood of the Jazz Age and the hypocritical values and moral standards of the bourgeois.”<sup>86</sup> The character of Daisy reflects the materialistic upper- class society of the Twenties. Wealth and high social status is the most important thing in her life. She marries Tom because of his money and remains in her unhappy marriage because of her desire to maintain financial security.

Another sign of this can be taken from her decision to begin her extra-marital affair with Jay Gatsby after seeing his wealth. It is written that even her voice is “full of money – that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals’ song of it.”<sup>87</sup> As Fetterley observes, an example of Daisy’s focus on wealth can be seen when she cries as Gatsby throws very expensive shirts on her<sup>88</sup>, because she’s “never seen such beautiful shirts”<sup>89</sup>. When these emotions are contrasted with her behavior at Jay’s death, it is notable that despite her apparent desire and even love for Jay Gatsby she does not cry when he is killed, even though the death was a consequence of her actions.

Daisy is a materialistic and superficial character and she is not afraid to makes this clear when she says: “I’ve been everywhere and seen everything and done everything.”<sup>90</sup> Through Daisy and her husband, Fitzgerald criticizes a society driven by money, consumerism and social status, with the false belief that these can bring them happiness: “They were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then

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<sup>84</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 13.

<sup>85</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 75.

<sup>86</sup> Zhang, “Symbolic Meanings of Colors in The Great Gatsby,” *Studies in Literature and Language*, May 2015, accessed February 8, 2017, <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/7178>.

<sup>87</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 120.

<sup>88</sup> Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*, 77.

<sup>89</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 94.

<sup>90</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 18.

retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people to clean up the mess they had made.”<sup>91</sup> As Fitzgerald states in his short story *The Rich Boy* “the very rich are different. They possess and enjoy early, and it does something to them, makes them soft where we are hard, and cynical where we are trustful, in a way that, unless you were born rich, it is very difficult to understand.”<sup>92</sup> When Daisy realizes that Gatsby is not an upper class born, she leaves him, fearing that she could lose her social status. Daisy, “high in a white palace the king’s daughter, the golden girl,”<sup>93</sup> was born rich and is able to sacrifice her own happiness and lives of two innocent people without flinching, in order to maintain her wealth and position in society.

Daisy’s character is generally considered to be highly controversial. As Ellen Protheroe observes in her analysis, many critics refer to Daisy as empty, amoral, unintelligent and careless. In most cases, she is blamed for Gatsby’s tragic death. Although there are definitely causes to judge Daisy, the novel gives reasons to pity her as well.<sup>94</sup> She could be seen as a foolish girl caught in between of two men who are both asking her for more than she could offer and ultimately as a product of her upbringing and social norms. Leland S. Parson sympathises with this idea: “Daisy, in fact, is more victim than victimizer, she is victim first of Tom Buchanan’s cruel power, but then of Gatsby’s increasingly depersonalized vision of her.”<sup>95</sup> Even Fitzgerald indicates that Daisy has become the victim of Gatsby’s illusions. He writes in the novel: “There must have been moments when Daisy tumbled short of his (Gatsby’s) dreams – not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything.”<sup>96</sup> Thus, it seems that Daisy’s failure was, as Parson points out, more of “the progressive result of her treatment by the other characters.”<sup>97</sup>

Daisy seems to be a confrontation between the old and new generation of women. Under the pressure of society and her family, she sticks to the traditional role of a woman as a wife and mother with no occupation, although it does not fulfil her. She is aware of the opportunities that the 1920s offered to women. She enjoys her consumer life, dance parties

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<sup>91</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 182.

<sup>92</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Rich Boy*, 11.

<sup>93</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 120.

<sup>94</sup> Protheroe, “Daisy Buchanan, Fran Dodsworth, Kate Clephane: upper class women in three novels of the 1920s” (M.A. diss., Iowa State University, 1998), accessed January 14, 2017, <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1183&context=rtd>.

<sup>95</sup> Leland, S. Parson, Jr, “Herstory and Daisy Buchanan,” *American Literature*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (May, 1978), accessed February 9, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2925105>.

<sup>96</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 97.

<sup>97</sup> Leland, S. Parson, Jr, “Herstory” and Daisy Buchanan,” *American Literature*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (May, 1978), accessed February 9, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2925105>.

and sexual freedom but when she is given the opportunity to take control over her destiny and run away from her unhappiness, she fails. The lack of emancipation does not allow her to stand up to her abusive husband and break free from the chains of stereotypes that the society had set for her. She chooses security and wealth redeemed by unhappiness over unconditional love and freedom because she is too afraid of the unknown. Although Daisy is socially and economically more liberated and emancipated than the generations of women before her, she is still a victim of society, its image of femininity and hunger for wealth. It appears that she is fully aware of this issue and she does not have much hope for her daughter's generation either: "I hope she'll be a fool – that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool."<sup>98</sup> This was the position that Daisy fulfilled, that of a beautiful fool with the ability to enchant, seduce and lure, but never able to find true fulfillment or to truly fulfill those around her.

### 3.2 Jordan Baker

Jordan Baker is another important female character within *The Great Gatsby*. Portrayed as a famous professional golf player running around the country <sup>99</sup> and, in contrast to Daisy, enjoying the opportunities of the new era, Jordan represents Fitzgerald's vision of a flapper. As well as the "new women" of the Twenties described in Brown's and Chafe's studies, Jordan smokes, drinks, drives cars, goes to parties and does not care about her reputation.

Jordan is Daisy's slightly younger friend from Louisville, where they both spent their "white girlhood".<sup>100</sup> Despite coming from very similar backgrounds they have ended up taking very different paths. Jordan, like Daisy, is associated throughout the novel with the colour white which, in Jordan's case, presumably stands for nobleness but not purity. Neither her reputation nor her character is pure. Nick, the narrator, refers to her as "incurably dishonest"<sup>101</sup> when he finds out that she cheated on a golf championship. Another "impure" feature that Jordan possesses is her recklessness, which she openly admits in a conversation with Nick about her driving:

"You are a rotten driver," I (Nick) protested. "Either you ought to be more careful, or you oughtn't to drive at all."  
"I am careful."

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<sup>98</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 18.

<sup>99</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 19.

<sup>100</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 20.

<sup>101</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 59.

“No, you’re not.”  
“Well, other people are,” she said lightly.  
“What’s that got to do with it?”  
“They’ll keep out of my way,” she insisted. “It takes two to make an accident.”  
“Suppose you met somebody just as careless as yourself.”  
“I hope I never will,” she answered.<sup>102</sup>

The dialogue above demonstrates that Jordan does not take responsibility for her actions but expects other people to do so. As well as Tom and Daisy, Jordan “let other people to clean up the mess”<sup>103</sup> she had made. Once more, Fitzgerald here criticises the loss of morals of the upper classes in the 1920s.

Although Jordan and Daisy both come from the same social class and background, they are different from each other in many ways. While Daisy is portrayed as delicate, fragile and feminine, Jordan’s appearance is almost manlike. She is depicted as “slender, small-breasted girl with an erect carriage and hard, jaunty body.”<sup>104</sup> It seems that through her masculine appearance Fitzgerald emphasizes the emancipation of flappers. As Brown observes, flappers, in order to make a place in men’s world, changed their behavior (smoked, swear, drove cars) and their appearance (bobbed their hair) to look more like men.<sup>105</sup>

Moreover, Jordan is viewed differently by men than Daisy. In her husband’s eyes, Daisy is a stupid girl who “gets foolish ideas in her head and doesn’t know what she’s doing”<sup>106</sup>. She is an insecure romantic girl who has dreams about her future but does not have the courage to follow them through. Furthermore, Daisy seems to be easy to manipulate by men, especially by her husband when he convinces her to stay with him. Jordan, on the other hand, is in charge of her own destiny and as Nick says: “unlike Daisy was too wise ever to carry well-forgotten dreams from age to age.”<sup>107</sup> Thanks to her apparent independence, self-confidence and brightness, Jordan seems to be better respected by men than Daisy. What’s more, Jordan has courage to argue with Nick and expresses her opinion about him openly when she says: “I don’t give a damn about you.”<sup>108</sup> When she leaves Nick, he admits being “angry, and half in love with her and tremendously sorry”<sup>109</sup>, which shows that Jordan had affected his emotions and had a certain power over him. This is something that Daisy lacks in her relationship with Tom.

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<sup>102</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 59.

<sup>103</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 182.

<sup>104</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 11.

<sup>105</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course : American Women in the 1920s*, 43.

<sup>106</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 132.

<sup>107</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 136.

<sup>108</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 180.

<sup>109</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 180.

Unlike Daisy, Jordan does not seem to be in a hurry to secure her future in a marriage. Although “there were several she could have married at a nod of her head”<sup>110</sup>, she chooses to stay unmarried and independent. It is quite obvious that because of this decision she has to face the pressure of the society. When Jordan meets Nick for the first time, Daisy suggests arranging a marriage for them and Jordan’s response is: “I haven’t heard a word.”<sup>111</sup> It seems that Daisy here represents the old traditional values of women, who saw marriage as an inevitable necessity, whilst Jordan represents the philosophy of the new, liberated and emancipated generation of women who were less dependent on men. Jordan proves her independence when she ends her relationship with Nick. She is not afraid to walk away from a relationship that does not work for her, unlike Daisy, who sees her husband, despite his abusive behavior towards her, as representing security. However, at the end of the novel Jordan announces that she is engaged. Nick suggests that even this could be a lie, which would correspond with Jordan’s dishonesty. On the other hand, Jordan’s engagement would confirm Chafe’s theory that even flappers of the Twenties eventually sought marriage.<sup>112</sup> Even Fitzgerald suggests that flappers were dependent on men more than they appeared when he writes: “girls were putting their heads on men’s shoulders in a puppyish, convivial way, girls were swooning backwards playfully into men’s arms, even into groups, knowing that someone would arrest their falls.”<sup>113</sup> They were emancipated and free, yet they ultimately would seek support in men.

Although Fitzgerald does not speak openly about sexuality in this novel, through Jordan’s affair with Nick and Fitzgerald’s remark about satisfying “the demands of her body”<sup>114</sup> we can assume that she enjoys the new sexual freedom of women as well as the new generation of American women in the 1920s. Jordan makes no secret that she likes large and intimate parties.<sup>115</sup> This indicates that women in the Twenties were looking for big public parties where they could enjoy their sexual freedom without being judged.

Another great indicator of the changes in the social status of women during this period is Jordan’s career as a golf player. As Brown observes, until the Twenties it was very rare for a woman to be a professional athlete.<sup>116</sup> This issue further discusses an article in *Literary Digest* from 1926:

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<sup>110</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 180.

<sup>111</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 19.

<sup>112</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 118.

<sup>113</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 51.

<sup>114</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 59.

<sup>115</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 50.

<sup>116</sup> Brown, *Setting a Course : American Women in the 1920s*, 42.



“A woman could not possibly have accomplished this same feat thirty years ago, for corsets and other ridiculously unnecessary clothing hampered her physical condition and deprived her of the muscular effort so necessary in the development of a good athlete. Physical education has brought about an evolution of common sense that has wrought a complete turn-over, not only in woman’s physical condition but in her whole mental attitude.”<sup>117</sup>

The 1920s brought new possibilities of physical activities to the lives of American women. As the article suggests, sporting activities helped to keep not only their physical but also mental health. Connected to this was also the new ideal of beauty. The ideal woman of the 1920s had, according to Lois Banner, “youth appearance and a slim body with good muscle tone.”<sup>118</sup> Thus, Jordan with her career of a sportswoman, athletic shape and “slender muscles”<sup>119</sup> seems to represent Fitzgerald’s portrayal of the ideal new woman.

Jordan, more than any other female character in *The Great Gatsby*, represents the opportunities of woman that the Roaring Twenties had to offer. She breaks the myths and preconceptions of society about the roles of women when she proves that a woman can exist without a man. She could have chosen to get married at the end, not because of the pressure of society as Daisy did, but because of her own intentions. Jordan is everything that Daisy is scared to be - she chooses happiness over living according to the norms. She is the embodiment of what American women had fought for centuries – a self-made, emancipated and liberated woman who was in charge of her own destiny.

### 3.3 Myrtle Wilson

Although Myrtle Wilson may seem to be a minor character in *The Great Gatsby*, she plays an important role. The significance of her character is in that the changes in the status of women can be observed from a different perspective and social class than the other two female characters analyzed earlier in this paper.

Myrtle is a lower-class woman, married to George Wilson who runs a garage on the suburb of New York. Being very unhappy in her marriage with her passive and spiritless husband, Myrtle is having an affair with Tom Buchanan. Although she is far away from the

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<sup>117</sup> “How a Girl Beat Leander at the Hero Game,” *Literary Digest* 90 (August 21, 1926):53, in *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s* by Dorothy M. Brown, 43.

<sup>118</sup> Banner, *American Beauty*, 278.

<sup>119</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 18.

ideal of beauty: “in the middle thirties, faintly stout...no facet or gleam of beauty”<sup>120</sup>, Tom finds her sexually more attractive than his wife Daisy.

The cause of Myrtle’s unhappiness is not only her marriage, but also her low social status. She is married to a working class man, who is not able to satisfy her social and sexual demands. It can be assumed that Myrtle, as well as Daisy, was married because she followed the rules society had set for women. Myrtle admits that she married her husband, who is obviously still in love with her, with high expectations even though she never loved him: “I married him because I thought he was a gentleman...I thought he knew something about breeding, but he wasn’t fit to lick my shoe.”<sup>121</sup> The main reason why Myrtle despises her husband is his low social class. She shows her materialism when she explains her sister why her marriage with George is a mistake: “he (George Wilson) borrowed somebody’s best suit to get married in and never told me about it.”<sup>122</sup> Like Daisy, social status and wealth are key drivers of Myrtle’s actions throughout the novel. Again Fitzgerald is critiquing the role of consumerism and class within the novel.

Myrtle naively believes that her affair with Tom could be the way out of her miserable life. Tom is everything her husband is not – he buys her expensive things, satisfies her sexual needs and gives her hope for a better life. She even tolerates Tom’s violence when he breaks her nose when she discusses Daisy.<sup>123</sup> Myrtle is desperate to move beyond her social class and within a patriarchal society sees Tom a social leader she could follow to climb up the social ladder and escape her dirty and poor life with her own husband. However, Tom never intended to leave his wife for Myrtle, as she foolishly believes. He sees her affair only as “a spree.”<sup>124</sup> As Fetterly observes, the reason why he has an affair with Myrtle, “neither a nice girl nor a golden girl,”<sup>125</sup> is her surplus and sensuous flash and vitality that Daisy lacks.<sup>126</sup> As well as Daisy, she is a woman to be used by Tom, regardless of her own desires, wants or aspirations.

Although Myrtle never meets Daisy, she is very jealous of her. In Myrtle’s eyes, Daisy is everything she desires. She is jealous of her husband, money and social status. Little does she know that Daisy’s life is full of unhappiness as well as hers. Through this irony,

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<sup>120</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 24.

<sup>121</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 35.

<sup>122</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 35.

<sup>123</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 36.

<sup>124</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 132.

<sup>125</sup> Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*, 91.

<sup>126</sup> Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*, 91.

Fitzgerald again refers to the decadent values of the society in the 1920s, where the main focus was on class and money.

However, it is worth noting that Myrtle seems to be more emancipated than Daisy, when she finds the courage and “rushes out into the dusk”<sup>127</sup> to escape her unhappiness. Unfortunately, she ends up ripped open and destroyed in a car crash caused by the very woman she aspired to be. Thus, Myrtle becomes a victim of her own desires. Through Myrtle’s tragic end, Fitzgerald criticizes the darker elements of the 1920s society, its blind pursuit of the illusion of the American dream and a hunger for wealth. He further refers to the moral decay when he describes the reaction of people to Myrtle’s death, which was only viewed as a curiosity. Nobody really cared about the wasted life of a lower class woman:

“I supposed there'd be a curious crowd around there all day with little boys searching for dark spots in the dust, and some garrulous man telling over and over what had happened, until it became less and less real even to him and he could tell it no longer, and Myrtle Wilson's tragic achievement was forgotten.”<sup>128</sup>

There is a certain parallel between Myrtle’s and Gatsby’s fate. They were both born into classes they reject and when they try to move out and follow their dreams, they both end up destroyed and forgotten in the end.

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<sup>127</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 138.

<sup>128</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 157.

## 4. Analysis of the female character in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*

Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is a character-centered story. The main focus of the novel is on the heroine Holly Golightly, who, according to Clarke, became an American fictional icon. Capote himself admitted that, of all his characters, Holly was always his favorite.<sup>129</sup> In this chapter, Holly's character is analyzed with special attention paid to her social status, reputation, lifestyle and a perceived level of emancipation and this is compared with the historical background of the 1940s in America.

### 4.1 Holly Golightly

Holly Golightly, throughout the novel often called just Holly, is the female protagonist of Capote's short story *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Holly is portrayed as a carefree and independent young woman with a mysterious past, who enjoys her life in glamorous New York City in the early 1940s.

Although Holly's story is set in the period of World War II, the book was written and published in the late 1950s and the influence of the later decade is evident. Apart from several mentions about the war, Capote does not reflect the full reality of the 1940s when American society was hugely affected by the wartime. As Chafe observes, especially women's roles were changing during the war period as the majority of them had to take the men's place as breadwinners and workers.<sup>130</sup> However, Holly seems to be almost untouched by these changes. An article in *The Telegraph* observes that: "Capote seemed to occasionally forget he'd set his story during the war years."<sup>131</sup> While American women in the 1940s faced the challenge of being in full-time employment and maintaining their roles as homemakers at the same time, Holly lived an independent and reckless life, enjoying her sexual adventures and searching for fortune. The article in *The Telegraph* further discusses the historical background of Holly's character:

Holly likes men and she believes appearances matter. In these regards at least she is very much a woman of her time, although Holly sometimes seems a little more like a woman of the Fifties than a woman of the Forties... In her disregard for the conventions of polite society and her sexual adventurousness,

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<sup>129</sup> Clarke, *Capote: A Bibliography*, 313.

<sup>130</sup> Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, 123.

<sup>131</sup> Jay McInerney, "The making of Holly Golightly," *The Telegraph*, August 28, 2013, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10259451/The-making-of-HollyGolightly.html>.

Holly is something of an avatar of the liberated woman of the Sixties and Seventies...<sup>132</sup>

According to Peter Krämer, there were speculations that Holly's character was based on a real person. Several women claimed to be the model for Capote's heroine and Capote was even sued, unsuccessfully, by a girl named Bonnie Golightly, who believed that he used her story.<sup>133</sup> In an interview for *Playboy* in 1968 Capote admitted that the characterization of Holly was based on a real person, but not on any of the women who claimed to be her. The real model for Holly's character was a 17 years old German refugee who was Capote's close friend during the World War II.<sup>134</sup> Further in the interview, Capote mentions the reason why he wrote about her:

“The main reason I wrote about Holly, outside the fact that I liked her so much, was that she was such a symbol of all these girls who come to New York and spin the sun for a moment like May flies and then disappear. I wanted to rescue one girl from that anonymity and preserve her for posterity.”<sup>135</sup>

Thus, the character of Holly seems to represent “the epitome of midcentury New York sophistication, a free spirit with chic style, endearing eccentricity, and easy virtue,”<sup>136</sup> rather than the typical life of an American woman affected by World War II.

Holly's character is portrayed by an unnamed narrator, an up-and-coming writer, who nostalgically reminisces to the time when he was her neighbour. Throughout the story the narrator reveals Holly's mysterious past, complicated presence and uncertain future. Orphaned at a young age, Holly, whose real name was Lulamae Barnes, had a difficult lower class childhood. At the age of fourteen, Holly ran away from her guardians with her brother Fred and end up with Doc Golightly, an older widower, who Holly eventually marries. Not satisfied with her married life in rural Texas, Holly runs away again. She flees to Los Angeles where, in an effort to escape her past, changes her identity and continues her journey to New York City, where she seeks for freedom, fortune and most of all – to discover her own self. Nineteen years old Holly spends her days sleeping in her little apartment near the famous

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<sup>132</sup> Jay McInerney, “The making of Holly Golightly,” *The Telegraph*, August 28, 2013, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10259451/The-making-of-HollyGolightly.html>.

<sup>133</sup> Peter Krämer, “The Many Faces of Holly Golightly: Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and Hollywood,” *Film Studies: An International Review*, December 1, 2004, accessed February 15, 2017, [http://www.lettere.uniroma1.it/sites/default/files/609/Kramer\\_0.pdf](http://www.lettere.uniroma1.it/sites/default/files/609/Kramer_0.pdf).

<sup>134</sup> Inge, Tomas M., editor, *Truman Capote: Conversations*, (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), 142.

<sup>135</sup> Inge, Tomas M., editor, *Truman Capote: Conversations*, (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), 142.

<sup>136</sup> Jay McInerney, “The making of Holly Golightly,” *The Telegraph*, August 28, 2013, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10259451/The-making-of-HollyGolightly.html>.

Fifth Avenue and „her nights at glamorous nightspots in the company of men“<sup>137</sup> in whom she sees a promise of wealth. She almost manages to secure her future with a wealthy Brazilian politician José who, however, leaves her in the end because of her criminal affair. Thus, Holly runs away once more and “her ultimate fate remains a mystery.”<sup>138</sup>

Although, Holly is depicted as a free and independent woman who enjoys her free and consumerist lifestyle in glamorous New York, she had to walk a long way to this achievement. Her journey to the better future begins when she rejects to accept her fate as an orphan with a low social status. Soon after, she is given the opportunity to live an easy and secured life in rural America, but although she “didn’t have to lift a finger”<sup>139</sup>, Holly is in search for something more. She rejects her role as a homemaker and wife and affected by “show-off pictures”<sup>140</sup> in popular magazines, she decides to exchange her secure future for an uncertain promise of freedom and happiness. The desire and determination to follow her dreams brings her to California, where she changes her identity, appearance and manners in order to climb up the social ladder. Thomas Fahy, who studied Capote’s work, suggests that Capote through Holly criticizes the American culture “that encourages – even requires – superficial transformations for social acceptance.”<sup>141</sup> Also Krämer in his article refers to the same issue when he compares Holly to liberated women of the post-war period “who come from a foreign, provincial or lower class background and therefore have to reinvent themselves to gain entry into the social and economic elite.”<sup>142</sup> Holly had to abandon her past in order to get a chance for a better future. Thus, her freedom and independence seem to be only an illusion. She is, in fact, a victim of American class society.

Later in the story Holly realizes this issue when she says: “I’m not fourteen anymore, and I’m not Lulamae. But the terrible part is I am. I’m still stealing turkey eggs and running through a briar patch. Only now I call it having the mean reds.”<sup>143</sup> Even though Holly changed her identity, appearance and behaviour, she is still the person she used to be. She is

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<sup>137</sup> Jay McInerney, “The making of Holly Golightly,” *The Telegraph*, August 28, 2013, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10259451/The-making-of-HollyGolightly.html>.

<sup>138</sup> Jay McInerney, “The making of Holly Golightly,” *The Telegraph*, August 28, 2013, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10259451/The-making-of-HollyGolightly.html>.

<sup>139</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 65.

<sup>140</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 65.

<sup>141</sup> Fahy, Thomas Richard. *Understanding Truman Capote* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2014), Kindle edition.

<sup>142</sup> Peter Krämer, “The Many Faces of Holly Golightly: Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and Hollywood,” *Film Studies: An International Review*, December 1, 2004, accessed February 15, 2017, [http://www.lettere.uniroma1.it/sites/default/files/609/Kramer\\_0.pdf](http://www.lettere.uniroma1.it/sites/default/files/609/Kramer_0.pdf).

<sup>143</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 69.

aware that she will never be able to run away from her past completely. However, she continues in her search for a better future.

Holly seems to be constantly on the move, which is caused by her desperate attempts to escape her past. Her restlessness and hate of routine emphasizes her free spirit and nomadic nature. There is a motif of travelling recurring throughout the story. She sings songs about travelling<sup>144</sup>, her mailbox card says “Miss Holiday Golightly, Travelling”<sup>145</sup> and she has “everything packed and ready to go, like the belongings of a criminal who feels the law not far behind.”<sup>146</sup> Even her new name Holiday, which she had chosen, carries a promise of a journey. Holly refers to herself as a “wild thing”<sup>147</sup> and she says that she cannot “bear to see anything in a cage.”<sup>148</sup> Travelling and being able to move freely is Holly’s vision of independence.

Another thing that Holly associates with independence and happiness is money. She does not hide her desire for wealth which is throughout the whole story represented by Tiffany’s, an expensive and luxurious jewellery store. When afraid or anxious, Holly goes to Tiffany’s:

“It calms me down right away, the quietness and the proud look of it; nothing very bad could happen to you there, not with those kind men in their nice suits, and that lovely smell of silver and alligator wallets. If I could find a real place that made me feel like Tiffany’s, then, I’d buy some furniture and give the cat a name.”<sup>149</sup>

To Holly, Tiffany’s is an epitome of a glamorous upper-class life, happiness and safety. As Fahy points out, “this fantasy about Tiffany’s contributes to Holly’s characterization as someone constantly longing for things that are out of reach.”<sup>150</sup> He also adds that through Holly’s obsession with Tiffany’s Capote refers to the blind pursuit of wealth and elite culture that many American shared.<sup>151</sup>

Holly’s shows her extreme desire for financially secured future when she asks the narrator to look for her future husband: “Do me a favour, darling...get a list of the fifty richest men in Brazil. I’m not kidding. The fifty richest: regardless of race or colour.”<sup>152</sup> She proves

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<sup>144</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 21.

<sup>145</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 16.

<sup>146</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 51.

<sup>147</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 69.

<sup>148</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 52.

<sup>149</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 41.

<sup>150</sup> Fahy, Thomas Richard. *Understanding Truman Capote* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2014), Kindle edition.

<sup>151</sup> Fahy, Thomas Richard. *Understanding Truman Capote* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2014), Kindle edition.

<sup>152</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 94.

that she does not care about love or any personal values, all she wants from her marriage is money. Once more, her character reflects the moral decay of American wealth-obsessed society.

On the other hand, although Holly seeks for wealth and does not doubt that she will manage to achieve it one day, she is aware of the power and bad influence money has on people when she says: “I don’t mean I’d mind being rich and famous. That’s very much on my schedule, and someday I’ll try to get around to it; but if it happens, I’d like to have my ego tagging along. I want to still be me when I wake up one fine morning and have breakfast at Tiffany’s.”<sup>153</sup> Holly is undoubtedly a money-driven character, however, she, after all, proves that she has some morals.

Holly’s life is full of spontaneous decisions. She marries Doc only because she “has never been married before”<sup>154</sup>, she goes to New York only because she “has never been to New York”<sup>155</sup>. She lives in the moment disregarding the consequences of her actions. Her husband spent five years looking for her after she ran off and broke his heart. However, Holly does not seem to care about feelings of other people. She knows that she hurt Doc but she does not take the responsibility for her actions. What’s more, she puts the blame on Doc for caring too much about her: “Never love a wild thing. You’ll end up looking at the sky...That was Doc’s mistake.”<sup>156</sup> However, nobody seems to blame Holly for acting in her own interest.

Although being often called a phony or nuts, Holly is very popular among men. What’s more, she even seems to have a certain power over them. Even though she is playing around with wealthy upper-class men, teasing and exploiting them, they keep running after her. The following quote reveals a great deal about Holly’s personality and her perception by men: “You can beat your brains out for her, and she’ll hand you horseshit on a platter.”<sup>157</sup> Despite all her flaws, Holly seems to be almost an angel in eyes of all the men characters, even those who are gay.

There is some kind of innocence and charm in Holly’s vision of the world that makes other people forgive her actions. In Holly’s eyes there are no boundaries, restrictions or responsibilities. She refuses to follow a trodden path. For her, the whole world is open and she wants to explore everything at once. The idea of owning something or belonging to

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<sup>153</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 39.

<sup>154</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 65.

<sup>155</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 34.

<sup>156</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 69.

<sup>157</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 33.



someone scares her. As Doc points out, she is like a wild bird<sup>158</sup> that flies wherever it wants. Holly believes that she can go for anything she wants, regardless of circumstances or other people's opinions: "She believes all this crap she believes. You can't talk her out of it. I've tried with tears running down my cheeks."<sup>159</sup> Although Holly's blind pursuit of her dreams makes her look self-interested and careless, in fact, she is just a naïve romantic girl who cannot be judged for her restlessness.

Linked with Holly's free spirit is also her sexuality. Capote, unlike Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby*, speaks about sex openly. Holly is depicted as a girl who enjoys her sexual liberation with, especially, wealthy men and is not shy to talk about it. Thanks to her progressive attitude towards sex, Holly is often viewed by critics and readers as a prostitute. Capote himself, however, denies this in the interview for *Playboy* in 1968:

Holly was not precisely a call girl. She had no job, but accompanied expense-account men to the best restaurants and night clubs, with the understanding that her escort was obligated to give her some sort of gift, perhaps jewellery or a check... if she felt like it, she might take her escort home for the night. So these girls are the authentic American geishas and they are much more prevalent now than in 1943 or 1944, which was Holly's era.<sup>160</sup>

Holly might not be a prostitute but she certainly uses her sexuality in order to climb up the social ladder. She proves that when she says: "I simply trained myself to like older men, and it was the smartest thing I ever did."<sup>161</sup> Holly intentionally seeks older and rich men who could help her to secure her social status. It seems that she uses sex not for her satisfaction, but rather as a tool for building a better future. Although Holly seems to be sexually liberated, she is, in fact, a victim of her desire for a better social status. As Fahy observes, through Holly's lifestyle Capote "critiques the culture of sexual repression in 1940s and 1950s in America."<sup>162</sup>

Holly's sexual adventures are not the only sexual issue discussed in the novella. According to Tison Pugh, who studied the sexual behaviour of the characters in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, the predominant heterosexuality of Holly eclipsed the subtle homosexual presence. Thus, the issue of homosexuality has gone unnoticed by many readers and scholars. Tison believes that there are several homosexual characters in the story and that through Holly's attitude towards them Capote, who himself was openly gay, reflects his opinion about this

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<sup>158</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 65.

<sup>159</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 32.

<sup>160</sup> Inge, Tomas M., editor, *Truman Capote: Conversations*, (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), 141.

<sup>161</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 23.

<sup>162</sup> Fahy, Thomas Richard. *Understanding Truman Capote* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2014), Kindle edition.

issue.<sup>163</sup> Looking for a lesbian roommate,<sup>164</sup> referring to herself as “a bit of a dyke”<sup>165</sup> and believing that all kind of “love should be allowed”<sup>166</sup>, Holly obviously does not share homophobic conceptions of American society. On the contrary, Holly seems to be very anti-homophobic when she calmly utters her opinions about her homosexual friends:

Can't you see it's just that Rusty feels safer in diapers than he would in a skirt? Which is really the choice, only he's awfully touchy about it. He tried to stab me with a butter knife because I told him to grow up and face the issue, settle down and play house with a nice fatherly truck driver.<sup>167</sup>

In the quote above, Capote not only presents his beliefs that “homosexual relationships need a public/legal place in American society”<sup>168</sup> but he also refers to a potential danger of homophobic culture.

Speaking of Holly's sexuality, it is also important to mention her appearance, which is another significant factor of her character. She is described as a chick, thin girl with “an almost breakfast-cereal air of health, a soup and lemon cleanness and a rough pink darkening in the cheeks.”<sup>169</sup> She usually wears a slim cool black dress, black sunglasses, noticeable jewellery and her boy's hair well groomed. This sensual appearance, according to Jürgen Müller, became later in the 1960s, mainly thanks to the famous film interpretation by Audrey Hepburn, an idol of female beauty.<sup>170</sup>

Holly's character, in general, became one of the most famous female characters of modern literature.<sup>171</sup> Being often referred to as a symbol of femininity and emancipation, Holly Golightly has been discussed and admired for decades. Capote managed to create a female icon that, after more than a half-century, still remains unforgotten. However, it seems that Holly's character is often idealized.

Being portrayed as running around the country, living on her own and doing and saying what she wants, Holly definitely reached some kind of level of emancipation and independency that many women of her decade lacked. She is strong enough to escape her

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<sup>163</sup> Tison Pugh, “Capote's Breakfast at Tiffany's,” *The Explicator* 61.1 (2002): 51-53, accessed December 14, 2016, [search.proquest.com/docview/216776281/fulltext/3FB9822BE22A40DAPQ/3?accountid=17256](http://search.proquest.com/docview/216776281/fulltext/3FB9822BE22A40DAPQ/3?accountid=17256).

<sup>164</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 25.

<sup>165</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 25.

<sup>166</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 77.

<sup>167</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 42.

<sup>168</sup> Fahy, Thomas Richard. *Understanding Truman Capote* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2014), Kindle edition.

<sup>169</sup> Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 17.

<sup>170</sup> Müller, *Movies of the 60s*, 6.

<sup>171</sup> Jay McInerney, “The making of Holly Golightly,” *The Telegraph*, August 28, 2013, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10259451/The-making-of-HollyGolightly.html>.

unhappiness and set for a journey to the better future. When Holly rejects the role as a homemaker and mother and decides to follow her dream, she proves that she is emancipated enough to stand up to social conventions. Unfortunately, she does not realize that her desires are a social trap. Motivated by the consumer and material culture, Holly rejects her past and remakes herself. Her transformation, however, does not bring the promised happiness. On the contrary, her past haunts her and she is caught somewhere in the middle of what she was and what she wants to be. Thus, from this perspective, Holly's freedom and independence seems to be a mere illusion.

Capote in *The Breakfast at Tiffany's* created a character that reflects the desire of young American women for greater liberation and emancipation and their restriction by perceptions and values of American wealth-driven society.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to examine social, economic and domestic roles of American women and a perceived level of emancipation in the 1920s and 1940s, when many of the most important changes in the status of women in the United States occurred. The theoretical part of this paper provided a historical and literary context of these two periods with a particular focus on the status and roles of women. Building on this historical analysis, the practical part further demonstrated how these changes could be seen in the female characters of two culturally significant novels from these periods – *The Great Gatsby* written by Francis Scott Fitzgerald and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* by Truman Capote. These female protagonists were analysed with a particular focus on their roles and positions within the society, emancipation and lifestyle in relation to the historical context of the period. Although these characters are seemingly very different from each other, as the analysis has shown, they all have one significant trait in common and that is their desire for greater emancipation, liberation and recognition in patriarchal society.

Francis Scott Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby* depicted three women of the 1920s, a decade when the economic boom came alongside a wave of emancipation and female liberation. Each of these three characters represents a different social class and level of emancipation.

The most liberated and emancipated of the three female characters is Jordan Baker, who portrays a typical flapper of the 1920s. She reflects the new generation of American women who enjoyed their new liberated lifestyle and did not care about manners or morals. What makes Jordan different from the other two characters of the novel is that she defies the social norms and does not depend on men. She rejects the role of a wife before all else and seeks recognition as an individual, as portrayed by her career as a golfer and single status. Thus, Jordan is the epitome of what many American women had fought for centuries – a self-made, emancipated and liberated woman who was in charge of her own destiny.

While Jordan portrays the philosophy of the “new women”, the character of Daisy Buchanan reflects the conflict between the new and old values. Daisy is aware of the opportunities that the 1920s offered and enjoys the new freedom to some extent, such as going to dance parties and having an extramarital affair. Nevertheless, unlike Jordan, she follows the traditional norms of society – marries a man with the same social status, has a child and occupies the role of a housewife. Although this role does not fulfill her and is the cause of her unhappiness, Daisy chooses not to seize the opportunity for a different life. The

lack of emancipation along with her hunger for wealth means she does not stand up to the conventions that society had set for her. Thus, although Daisy has the highest social status of all the three women in the novel, she is paradoxically the least emancipated.

Myrtle Wilson in the *Great Gatsby* represents the lower class women of the 1920s who defy their social status and aspire for more. Although Myrtle and Daisy are seemingly polarized characters, they have more in common than is apparent on the surface. Like Daisy, Myrtle follows the social conventions of the 1920s and gets married, which is the main cause of her unhappiness. What's more, Myrtle, too, lives for materialistic satisfaction and craves for increased social status and wealth. Myrtle, however, finds the courage to follow her dreams and even though she dies in her attempt to escape her unhappy life, she proves that she is more emancipated than Daisy, who is too scared to break the stereotypes and leave her husband.

In *Breakfast at Tiffany's* Capote, unlike Fitzgerald, focused only on one female character and described her in a greater detail. Although the story of Holly Golightly is set in the war era, Capote himself admitted that the book reflects the post-war years when the status of American women had changed. The confidence of women had increased since the war and that is reflected in Holly's approach to life.

Holly is portrayed as a liberated young woman who at a very young age rejected the social conventions of the time and decided to pursue her dreams. Her rejection of the traditional role of women as housewives and mothers, in combination with her independent lifestyle, highlights Holly's emancipation. When examined more closely, however, it is evident that Holly's freedom is, in some ways, only an illusion and that she is restricted by perceptions and values of American wealth-driven society.

When we compare Holly to Fitzgerald's characters, who fought the same social perceptions some thirty years before Holly, we find that there are clear similarities that can be drawn out.

In many ways, Holly is similar to Jordan. They can both be seen as independent and liberated women who reject the conventional roles for women of their time and are in control of their own destiny. They both place their recognition and aspirations before all else and are not afraid to be single women in patriarchal society. Thus, from this point of view, Holly can be seen as a modern flapper of the post-war era.

Holly and Daisy are, from the perspective of emancipation, two polarized characters. While Holly escapes her unhappiness and marriage as soon as possible and is not afraid of the unknown, Daisy does not find the courage to follow her dreams even when she has them

within reach. However, there is one thing Holly and Daisy have in common and that is their hunger for wealth. Although Holly, unlike Daisy, is able to financially support herself, she seeks the financial stability in a marriage, which makes her no different from Daisy. They both seek money over all else and thus become victims of their desire for material possessions that restricts them from greater liberation. Both Capote and Fitzgerald reflect through these characters the moral decay of American society and its impact on the liberation of women.

Comparing Holly and Myrtle, we can observe direct similarities between the two. They both reject the social status they were born with and seek happiness outside their class. They both reject the love of their poor husbands and seek for partners who can help them to climb the social ladder. Like Daisy, they are driven by their hunger for wealth and believe that money and a high social status equals happiness. Paradoxically, this desire is what limits their happiness, in Myrtle's case it even causes her death. Once again, the authors here criticise the moral decay and wealth obsession of American society.

The first half of the twentieth century became a milestone in the long and difficult path of American women towards achieving emancipation. They entered the century fully dependent upon men and lacking equal social, economic or political rights to the opposite sex. For the majority, the only possible role was a homemaker and mother. After five decades, American women had the right to express their political opinion at the polling booth, opportunity to work outside the home and were in many ways more emancipated and liberated than ever before. However, despite all these great achievements, American women were still in many senses restricted from greater liberation. As this paper has shown, some of the issues could be seen in the materialism and moral decay of American society. All the examined female characters appear to be a criticism of these issues in their era. The analysis of the female characters indicates that some American women had rejected the traditional roles as wives and mothers and replaced them with a desire for material goods. In both novels, a common theme is how ultimately this desire restricts them from liberation and happiness.

## Resumé

Emancipace žen, jejich postavení a role ve společnosti jsou témata, s nimiž se na počátku 21. století stále setkáváme. V dnešní společnosti, kde mají ženy a muži stejná práva, je jen těžké si představit, že ještě před pár desetiletími bylo ženám odepřeno například právo volit či mít placené zaměstnání. K zrovnoprávnění žen ve společnosti však vedla dlouhá a strastiplná cesta, která je dnes bohužel často opomíjená. Díky umělcům, především literárním autorům, byla tato cesta zdokumentována a můžeme si ji dnes skrze mnohá literární díla připomenout.

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje konkrétně na emancipaci a společenské role amerických žen v první polovině dvacátého století, respektive v dvacátých a čtyřicátých letech. Záměrně byla vybrána období, kdy došlo k mnoha nejdůležitějším změnám v postavení žen v 20. století a obecně v celé historii lidstva. Tato práce se nejdříve věnuje historickému a literárnímu kontextu obou období a následně analyzuje hlavní hrdinky dvou kulturně i společensky významných románů ze zkoumaných období. Prvním z nich je román *Velký Gatsby*, vydaný v roce 1925, který napsal americký spisovatel Francis Scott Fitzgerald. Druhým dílem je novela *Snídaně u Tiffanyho*, vydaná v roce 1958, od taktéž amerického autora Trumana Capoteho. Hlavní hrdinky dvou výše uvedených významných děl, jsou v této práci zkoumány, jakožto reprezentační vzorky amerických žen ve dvacátých a čtyřicátých letech, na nichž je popisována role a pozice žen ve společnosti, míra emancipace a jejich životní styl v kontextu dané doby. Téma je rozpracováno v pěti kapitolách.

Kapitola první se věnuje historickým a literárním souvislostem Spojených států amerických ve dvacátých letech 20. století, ve kterých se odehrává děj románu *Velký Gatsby*. V její první části jsou popsány významné politické, ekonomické a sociální změny tohoto období, stejně tak jako změny životního stylu a návyků obyvatel. Spojené státy americké ve dvacátých letech dokončily cestu k postavení světové ekonomické i politické velmoci. Efektivní vylepšování technologií a úspěšná průmyslová revoluce umožnily ve 20. letech Spojeným státům nebývalý ekonomický růst. Tím se změnila poptávka obyvatelstva a jeho priority, poprvé v americké historii ovládal společnost konzum. Celosvětový trend uvolnění, změny mravů a tradičních hodnot, které nastaly po otřesných zkušenostech První světové války, se nevyhnul ani Spojeným státům. Je ovšem nutné dodat, že jakkoliv 20. léta představovala období blahobytu a převratných změn, větší část společnosti stále žila v chudobě stranou těchto změn, stále existoval rasismus a zejména v jižních státech unie silná rasová segregace a velké rozdíly mezi chudou a bohatou vrstvou obyvatelstva.

Pro snazší pochopení literární tvorby této doby se následující podkapitola krátce věnuje literárnímu kontextu doby, zejména tzv. „Ztracené generaci“, čili autorům přímo ovlivněným zkušenostmi z První světové války. Následuje stručný životopis Francise Scota Fitzgeralda, autora románu, který stejně jako mnozí jeho současníci prodělal zážitky z bojišť První světové války. Kapitola obsahuje i krátkou rešerši děje románu *Velký Gatsby*. Kniha nebyla v době svého vzniku příliš populární, světového věhlasu dosáhla až v 50. letech a dodnes je považována za nejzdařilejší dílo portrétního období tzv. „jazzového věku“. Na sérii výrazných postav románu, z nichž každá je synonymická pro určitou vlastnost či jev, typický pro vyšší společnost 20. let, autor bez obalu otevírá témata dekadence, života v nadbytku a luxusu, odporu ke společenským změnám, sociálním otřesům a nastavuje zrcadlo bouřlivým dvacátým létům ve Spojených státech.

V poslední části se první kapitola zaměřuje na podrobnou analýzu života amerických žen v dvacátých letech a na zásadní změny, které do jejich životů tato doba přinesla nejen v rovině větších politických práv a rovnoprávnějšího postavení ve společnosti, ale i v rovině života osobního, intimního a sexuálního. Typickými pro dvacátá léta byly takzvané „flappers“, do češtiny občas překládané jako „ptáčata“, což byla mladá generace žen, které si užívaly nově nabitou svobodu a konzumní život dvacátých let. Typické pro tyto ženy byly krátké vlasy, sukně po kolena, chození na večírky a pití alkoholu na veřejnosti. „Flappers“ vzdorovali tradičním hodnotám společnosti, což také přispělo k uvolnění mravů, kdy předmanželské či mimomanželské vztahy již nebyly tabu. Přestože dvacátá léta přinesla mnoho změn do života amerických žen, jejich primární role jakožto žen v domácnosti a matek zůstala nezměněna.

Druhá kapitola se zaměřuje na historické a literární souvislosti Spojených států amerických v čtyřicátých letech 20. století, do kterých je zasazen děj novely *Snídaně u Tiffanyho*. Stejně jako kapitola první, i tato kapitola se nejprve věnuje vylíčení obrazu americké společnosti ve čtyřicátých letech, se zvláštním zaměřením na sociální, ekonomické a politické pozadí. Tak jak byla dvacátá léta ovlivněna skončenou První světovou válkou, byla léta čtyřicátá ovlivněna probíhající Druhou světovou válkou. Po Velké hospodářské krizi, trvající celá 30. léta se Americe administrativně vedené prezidentem Rooseveltem podařilo nejhorší následky zažehnat a díky státním intervencím ekonomiku oživit a pomalu nastartovat. Vstup Spojených států do války v roce 1941 a jejich rozhodující úloha v tomto konfliktu měly silný vliv na vývoj myšlení a postavení jednotlivých vrstev amerických obyvatel. Díky velkému růstu ekonomiky, který způsobil přechod na válečnou produkci,



vymizela nezaměstnanost. Všechna hospodářská odvětví zaznamenávala díky poptávce armády a tím pádem státním zakázkám nebývalou expanzi.

Následující podkapitola krátce popisuje literární kontext doby, která, na základě pohnutých událostí druhoválečných čtyřicátých let dala vzniknout snad největšímu počtu ikonických děl americké literatury, dodnes patřícím k těm nejvýznamějším ve světové literatuře. Kapitola také uvádí stručný životopis spisovatele Trumana Capoteho, jakožto autora poválečné doby, jehož život a tvorba byly silně ovlivněny spíše jeho pohnutým dětstvím a autorovou homosexuální orientací, než samotnou válkou. V krátkosti také kapitola představuje novelu *Snídaně u Tiffanyho*, jejíž děj se odehrává v New Yorku na pozadí druhoválečných let. Hlavní hrdinkou, a dle literárních kritiků zároveň Capoteho nejzdařilejší fiktivní románovou postavou, je mladá venkovská dívka Holly Golightlyová, která si skrze známosti s vlivnými a bohatými muži naplno užívá možností společenského života v horečném tempu amerického velkoměsta.

Poslední část druhé kapitoly analyzuje život amerických žen ve válečném a poválečném období, zachycuje jejich role, životní styl a postavení ve společnosti. Každá z katastrofických válek v dějinách lidstva se silně projevila na změně postavení ženy ve společnosti a její roli v ní, a tak i druhoválečná léta ve Spojených státech znamenala právě onu přelomovou dobu pro ženy. V období války byly americké ženy hromadně nasazovány na pracovní pozice mužů, jež byli odvedeni na válečnou frontu. Toto znamenalo obrovskou změnu v životě amerických žen, jelikož do té doby byly primárně ženami v domácnosti a jejich možnosti placeného zaměstnání byly značně omezeny. Ženy se této nové role však zhostily statečně a předčili očekávání společnosti. Mnohé musely čelit výzvě zastávání dvou rolí na plný úvazek; jakožto hospodyňky a zároveň i živitelky rodiny. Po válce se mnoho žen vrátilo zpět ke svým rolím matek a žen v domácnosti. Válečné období však zvedlo v ženách vlnu sebevědomí a mnohé začaly hledat uplatnění mimo domov, což přispělo k emancipaci amerických žen a jejich větší ekonomické svobodě.

Kapitola číslo tři podrobně analyzuje hlavní ženskou hrdinku díla *Velký Gatsby* - Daisy Buchananová a dvě vedlejší ženské postavy z románu, Myrtle Wilsonová a Jordan Bakerová. Hrdinky jsou v této kapitole hodnoceny z hlediska jejich vlastností, společenského postavení, životního stylu a úrovně emancipace, rozdílné aspekty jsou porovnány. Hlavní hrdinka Daisy Buchananová představuje na jednu stranu ztělesnění fyzické dokonalosti, na druhou stranu jsou na ni vyličené amorální znaky americké aristokratické společnosti dvacátých let, tedy povrchnost, znuďenost, přelétavost, schopnost přetvářky a spatřování priorit v luxusu a pohodlí. Moderní ženu poválečných dvacátých let, představuje v knize

postava Jordan Bakerové, profesionální golfistky, kteréžto povolání samo o sobě naznačuje velkou míru emancipovanosti. Jordan vidí svět cynickým pohledem, je sebestředná, soběstačná a bez skrupulí jde za svým cílem. Příznačná touha doby po materiálním zajištění, a tedy i po vzestupu ve společenském žebříčku je vtělena do postavy Myrtle Wilsonové, která ač sama pochází z nízkých třídních poměrů, je schopna lidmi ze stejných poměrů ostentativně opovrhovat. Myrtle najde dostatek odvahy a pokusí se utéct od svého chudého manžela, tudíž i ze své sociální třídy, její pokus však končí tragicky.

Čtvrtá kapitola podrobně rozebírá vlastnosti, společenské postavení, životní styl a úroveň emancipace hlavní ženské postavy románu *Snídaně u Tiffanyho* - Holly Golightlyová. Postava na jedné straně vyjadřuje svobodomyslnost, bezstarostnost a užívání si života v New Yorku plnými doušky, na druhou stranu ale i obavy z budoucnosti a snahu o finanční zajištění nemorálními prostředky. Kriticky je nutné doplnit, že ačkoliv děj je do čtyřicátých let zasazen, částečně nereflektuje specifika a aspekty druhoválečného období ve Spojených státech, mimo jiné i proto, že dílo bylo napsáno téměř 15 let po skončení války. Stejně jako u hrdinek románu *Velký Gatsby*, je tato analýza srovnána s historickým kontextem dané doby, v tomto případě let čtyřicátých.

V závěru práce shrnuje poznatky z analýz, které zároveň i porovnává. Fitzgerald ve svém díle z dvacátých let popsal tři ženy: Jordan, která je ztělesněním nové generace emancipovaných žen z dvacátých let. Daisy, která, ač si do jisté míry užívá nově nabitě svobody, kterou její doba přinesla, stále podléhá společenským konvencím, které jsou, spolu s její touhou po bohatství, příčinou jejího neštěstí. A Myrtle, ženu spodní společenské vrstvy, která, je stejně jako Daisy, nešťastně provdaná a touží po vzestupu na společenském žebříčku. Když porovnáme tyto ženské postavy s hrdinkou Capoteho románu Holly Golightlyovou, která se zdá být emancipovanou ženu čtyřicátých let, zjistíme, že mají mnoho společného. Holly, stejně jako Jordan, je svobodnou a nezávislou ženou, která rozhoduje o svém vlastním osudu a nepodléhá konvencím doby. Co spojuje postavu Holly s postavami Daisy a Myrtle je jejich společná touha po bohatství. Všechny tyto tři postavy jsou oběťmi svých materialistických hodnot a skrze ně autoři kritizují upadající hodnoty Americké společnosti a slepou touhu po bohatství.

První polovina dvacátého století se stala mezníkem na dlouhé a trnité cestě amerických žen za emancipací. Od začátku století, kdy sociální, politická a ekonomická práva žen byla v Americké patriarchální společnosti silně omezena, ušly americké ženy za pět desetiletí velký kus z této cesty. Kromě práva volit a větších příležitostí pracovat mimo domov, získaly hlavně větší svobodu a uznání ve společnosti. Nicméně v některých ohledech

byly stále ještě značně omezeny. Tato práce zkoumala tyto změny v životech amerických žen a demonstrovala je skrze analýzu ženských postav z kulturně významných literárních děl z popisovaného období. Za jeden z hlavních poznatků této práce může být považováno zjištění, že emancipace a společenské role žen v popisovaném období byly do značné míry ovlivňovány materialistickými hodnotami Americké společnosti.

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