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THE PORTRAYAL OF THE ROARING TWENTIES IN
FRANCIS SCOTT FITZGERALD'S NOVEL THE GREAT
GATSBY

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I confirm that this thesis is my own work written using solely the sources and literature properly quoted and acknowledged as works cited.

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Anotace

Cílem této bakalářské práce je prozkoumat dopad dvacátých let minulého století amerických dějin, známých také jako The Roaring Twenties, v jedinečné knize Francise Scotta Fitzgeralda *Velký Gatsby*. Tato práce užívá historických akademických textů za účelem usazení zmíněné knihy do jejího literárního kontextu a k analýze vlivů událostí, které inspirovaly autora k jejich zobrazení v uměleckém díle. Bakalářská práce se skládá ze čtyř kapitol, každá se soustředí na určitou problematiku. První popisuje téma, metodologii, okrajově nastiňuje děj a soustředí se na autorovu biografii s ohledem na *Velkého Gatsbyho*. Druhá kapitola se soustřeďuje na knižní líčení post-válečných Spojených států. Následující kapitola je zaměřena na popisy americké společnosti a jejích mnohých úskalí. Nakonec čtvrtá vyzdvihuje Fitzgeraldovu reprezentaci dobové kultury spojené s Roaring Twenties.

Klíčová slova: Velký Gatsby, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, historický kontext, Spojené státy americké, společnost, kultura.

Abstract

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to examine the reflection of the Roaring Twenties in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's outstanding novel *The Great Gatsby*. The study uses historical academic texts to place the book in its literary context and analyse what particular characteristics of the period influenced the author and how he portrays them in his work of literary art. This thesis consists of four parts, each of which concentrates on a specific subject. The first chapter introduces the topic and methodology, briefly describes the plot and pays attention to the author's biography regarding its influence on *The Great Gatsby*. The second part deals with the portrayal of the post-war United States in the novel. The following section analyses how the writer describes American society and its issues, while the fourth chapter studies Fitzgerald's depiction of the culture of the Roaring Twenties.

Keywords: The Great Gatsby, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, historical context, The United States, society, culture.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Thesis statement

Francis Scott Fitzgerald is an outstanding American author whose contribution to literary art can hardly be overestimated. The writer's books to this day fascinate the readers with engaging storylines and characters. One of such magnificent works of literature is *The Great Gatsby*. This novel immortalised the author's name in the readers' hearts not only with the help of the exciting plot but also thanks to the incredible atmosphere of the Roaring Twenties. Since the author lived and wrote during the Jazz Age, his subtle perception and literary skill made it possible to convey the period's mood and depict it through the smallest details that flawlessly fit into the plot. Thus, the purpose of this work will be to analyse what features of the era had a significant impact on the author and how Fitzgerald reflected the 1920s in *The Great Gatsby*.

The first part of the thesis will contain the introductory information necessary for the understanding of the topic. Firstly, it will shortly describe some highlights in the novel's plot. Then, because Fitzgerald experienced the 1920s, it will be necessary to analyse different fields of the author's life regarding its impact on *The Great Gatsby*. Thus, this chapter will present how the writer's personal experience influenced his perception of the Jazz Age.

The second part will take a look at the representation of the post-war United States in the book. It will discuss what period is portrayed in the novel and the effect the Great War had on the writer. The other essential sections will be the analysis of Fitzgerald's depiction of politics and economy, followed by the study of a distinct feature of the period—Prohibition.

The third part of the thesis will concentrate on the social aspects mentioned in the novel. Society of the 1920s was subject to change. Such essential issues as class system and racial inequality, religion and revolution in morals appear in the plot. Thus, it is necessary to examine these topics to determine what particular features inspired the author.

Culture is an essential part of the Roaring Twenties, as it was a very distinct period with changes in architecture, fashion, cinematography, musical art, and even sports. All these aspects appear in *The Great Gatsby*. Therefore, the fourth chapter of

this work will discover what historical circumstances inspired Francis Scott Fitzgerald to describe it in the novel. The analysis of them will help learn more about the author's perception of the decade.

The work will be finished with a conclusion, which will summarise the results of the previous chapters.

1.2 The plot of *The Great Gatsby*

Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* takes place in New York in 1922. One of the main characters and the narrator of the story, Nick Carraway, comes to the city to be engaged in the bond business. The young man rents a house in West Egg, next door to a mansion owned by a self-made businessman Jay Gatsby. He is a man with "an extraordinary gift for hope" (Fitzgerald, 2), who does his best to win back his beloved one—Nick's cousin, Daisy Buchanan. Fitzgerald endows this character with a severe fate. Being born into a family of poor farmers, Jay does his best not to miss his stroke of luck. During his formative years, he enlists the army and meets Daisy Fay before he sails to Europe. Gatsby falls deeply in love with her; however, he has no chance to marry the golden girl, as he is not wealthy enough. The young man asks her to wait, but she marries a famous football player—Tom Buchanan. Jay gets to know about it and decides to win her back. Even though Nick Carraway chooses to become a connecting line between Jay and Daisy and helps them reunite, a series of unfortunate circumstances prevent the main character from the embodiment of his hopes.

It is important to emphasise that not only did Fitzgerald create a unique plot with diverse characters and unpredictable twists but also depicted the post-war United States, its culture, and society. He endowed the novel with various descriptions of the way of life of different classes of people during the Roaring Twenties. Therefore, even nowadays, while enjoying the book, the readers have an opportunity to get acquainted with its historical background.

1.3 Francis Scott Fitzgerald's life as an inspiration for the novel

1.3.1 The impact of the writer's early years of life on his literary work

Francis Scott Fitzgerald is a great American writer who brought various remarkable novels, short stories, and essays into the world, and *The Great Gatsby* is one of his most outstanding works. The enormous importance of it lies in the elaborate plot, diverse life-like characters, and the precise depiction of the ambience of the decade. The root of such a proficient portrayal of the Roaring Twenties might be one of the sources of inspiration for the novel—the writer's own life.

One of the most important topics that influenced Fitzgerald's life and later became an inspiration for the plot is society and its class system. The confirmation of this statement may be seen in the following lines of the book *Scott Fitzgerald: A Biography* by a famous American biographer Jeffrey Meyers:

Fitzgerald's novels portray the restless American middle and upper classes in the early decades of the century, and his fictional themes evolve from his origins in St. Paul. His young heroes are, like himself, fascinated by money and power, impressed by glamour and beauty. Nevertheless, they know they can never fully belong to this secure and prosperous world, that the goal of joining this careless, dominant class is an illusion. (Meyers 1)

According to Meyers's words, social status and wealth were a matter of great importance even before the Jazz Age, and Fitzgerald experienced its consequences both during his childhood and adulthood. Therefore, the first inspiration for the novel came to the author from his memories of his early life. The writer was born in 1896 in the city of St. Paul in an apartment on Laurel Avenue. Fitzgerald depicted the social hierarchy of this place in *The Great Gatsby*, as the highest positions of the community took old established families, while the families of self-made businessmen and some middle-class groups followed them. While his family, as a part of the middle class, lived on Laurel Avenue—the prototype of West Egg, the wealthiest people lived on Summit Avenue, which served as a pattern for the fanciest place in the novel, East Egg. Another essential detail of Summit Avenue is James J. Hill's mansion. This luxurious house might have inspired the author to create a magnificent building, Jay Gatsby's home. What is more, the owner of this massive piece of architectural art was a railroad magnate and represented the upper-class society of the Jazz Age. Meyers mentions that "Hill was also one of the models for Gatsby's wealthy patron, Dan Cody. After

Gatsby's death, his old father, ignoring the criminal basis of Gatsby's fortune, tells Nick Carraway: 'If he'd of lived, he'd of been a great man. A man like James J. Hill. He'd of helped build up the country'" (3).

1.3.2 Education years as a source of the ideas for the novel

Fitzgerald's years of education were an inspiration for the novel as well. Unfortunately, the division between the "old money" and the "new money" was present both in schools and colleges. In school, the writer felt that he was not good enough, as he was one of the poorest boys in the institution. Unfortunately, Fitzgerald met the same problem during his college years at Princeton, and like Gatsby in the novel, he knew that he was inferior in comparison to the other students. Nevertheless, the writer's college years were one of the most saturated periods of his life, and this experience became crucial for the ideas of the book. Even though he was not successful in his academic life, the young man was elected to one of the biggest clubs, Cottage, whose lavish parties found their depiction in the significant events of the novel—the extravagant celebrations of life in Gatsby's mansion (Meyers 27–28).

During his education, Fitzgerald also faced the difficulties of social inequalities in his love life. He met Ginevra King, who became one of the patterns for the most memorable female character of the book—Daisy. Meyers mentions the evidence of it in the following lines:

Fitzgerald's greatest tribute to the elusive, unattainable Ginevra appeared in *The Great Gatsby*, in which he portrayed her as Daisy Fay Buchanan. . . . throughout the novel [he] described her as an almost disembodied voice which, Gatsby realises at the end, was "full of money." . . . Gatsby's ability, like Fitzgerald's, "to keep that illusion perfect" sustains his self-deceptive and ultimately self-destructive quest, with the help of his own fabulous money, to win Daisy back from her husband. (30)

According to these words, Fitzgerald's one-sided love for Ginevra had a significant impact on him. Just like Daisy, she was a lady from a wealthy family and was a part of the upper-class society. Fitzgerald was in love with her for almost two years, and during this period, he also met Ginevra's close friend, Edith Cummings, who was an amateur golf player and later became a model for the novel as Daisy's friend and Nick

Carraway's girlfriend Jordan Baker. With the flow of time, the writer had realised the impossibility of the relationships with the golden girl, and like Gatsby, tried to keep the perfect illusion of her. After some time, this episode of the novelist's life found its depiction in *The Great Gatsby*, as not only does it portray social inequalities but also represents its consequences in various areas of life.

1.3.3 The influence of Fitzgerald's acquaintance with Zelda on his future life and works of literature

Fitzgerald did not stay in college for a long time, which he later portrayed in Gatsby's biography. Freed of his duties, the writer joined the army during the Great War to achieve fame and success. Even though he was a horrible officer and did not build any military career, he found in this experience some inspiration for the novel, particularly for Gatsby's fate. During this period, Fitzgerald was stationed in Montgomery, where he met his future wife, Zelda Sayre. Ms Sayre, a representative of the upper-class society, was an embodiment of the new post-war phenomenon—an emancipated flapper girl. The evidence of it may be found in Fitzgerald's description of Zelda in his letter to Isabelle Amorous:

Any girl who gets stewed in public, who frankly enjoys and tells shocking stories, who smokes constantly and makes the remark that she has "kissed thousands of men and intends to kiss thousands more," cannot be considered beyond reproach But, Isabelle, I fell in love with her courage, her sincerity and her flaming self-respect. . . . (qtd. in Meyers 54)

According to the beforementioned lines, the writer was fond of the young lady's unusual, free character. Zelda influenced the writer's description of women and sexual relationships in the novel. The evidence of it can be seen in Fitzgerald's interview with Frederick James Smith for the *Shadowland* magazine:

I'm sick of the sexless animals writers have been giving us. I am tired, too, of hearing, that the world war broke down the moral barriers of the younger generation Girls, for instance, have found the accent shifted from chemical purity to breadth of viewpoint, intellectual charm and piquant cleverness. It is natural that they want to be interesting Personally, I prefer this sort of girl.

Indeed, I married the heroine of my stories. I would not be interested in any other sort of woman. (Smith 39,75)

According to these words, Zelda had an incredible influence on the writer and, therefore, on the novel. Fitzgerald later endowed almost all female characters of the literary work with freedom inspired by Zelda's personality. Despite the strong feelings, the unstable young author of a lower social class could not afford to become her husband; therefore, he had to become wealthy to marry Zelda. As a result, this complicated situation became one of the central ideas of the plot of *The Great Gatsby*.

To win the opportunity to be with his beloved one, Fitzgerald wrote *This Side of Paradise*, which was published in 1920 and gained tremendous success. Similar to *Gatsby*, the author turned into a famous, wealthy young man and got a chance to marry Zelda. The young couple had a careless lifestyle: they did not have any roots, never owned a house, did not care about the troubles, and spent too much. Also, notwithstanding his previous admiration of Zelda's wild personality, Fitzgerald became unsatisfied with his wife, who was flirting with other men. Zelda's character became the stress point in their relationships for some time. Consequently, this couple became the depiction of the irresponsible society described in *The Great Gatsby*.

Fitzgerald's life in Great Neck during 1922–1924 became another crucial timespan for inspiration for the novel. First of all, the place itself became another model for the book and represented West Egg. Secondly, during that period, the film industry was still based in New York; therefore, the writer had an opportunity to meet many famous actors, writers, and producers during various amazingly lavish parties in Great Neck (Meyers 96). Thus, these wild evenings were another inspiration for the novel. What is more, during this time, one of the writer's friends was Tommy Hitchcock. The young man became a prototype of Tom Buchanan, one of the main characters in the book. Hitchcock was born in Aiken into a very wealthy family. He became a talented, famous polo player and inherited his incredible skills from his father, Thomas Hitchcock. Tommy, a powerful man with an athletic body complexion, was not only a great sportsman but also a war hero. Apart from the last point, Fitzgerald endowed Tom Buchanan with all the beforementioned characteristics of his close friend. This personage is essential both for the depiction of sports and the upper-class society of the Jazz Age.

Fitzgerald's life during 1924 became a crucial source of inspiration for the central conflict of the novel. During this year, the young couple stayed in France, Saint-

Raphaël, and it was a significant time of the creation of the incredible book *The Great Gatsby*. While Fitzgerald threw himself into the work on the new piece of literary art, Zelda fell in love with their new acquaintance Édouard Jozan—a French naval aviator. “The son of a middle-class family in Nîmes with a long military tradition, he was a year and two days older than her. The antithesis of Fitzgerald, Jozan was a dark, romantic man with curly black hair and a Latin profile” (Meyers 116). For Zelda, these relationships were a matter of great importance, as later she asked her husband for divorce. However, Jozan was not so serious about their romance and put an end to their affair. These turns of fate had hurt Fitzgerald; therefore, he used them as the most important plotline for *The Great Gatsby*. Zelda stayed with the novelist, just as Daisy chose to be with Tom Buchanan. The same year, Fitzgeralds left France and went to Italy, where the writer finished the most famous novel of his.

According to the beforementioned arguments, it is necessary to emphasise that each period of Fitzgerald’s life had an immense significance for the book. The context of the author’s early years helped create the setting for the novel, while his later years of life influenced his perception of the Roaring Twenties and created the pattern of social structure and characters in his literary work. Nevertheless, Fitzgerald’s biography mirrors only a small part of the incredible epoch of the Jazz Age that the author has managed to depict in *The Great Gatsby*.

2 The depiction of the United States in the post-war period in the novel

2.1 The overall analysis of the period depicted in *The Great Gatsby*

The Great Gatsby occurs in 1922, the time of the United States’ growing prosperity. Francis Scott Fitzgerald manages to enrich the fictional plot with the crucial details of life during the new decade. With the help of the characters, setting, and some events in the novel, the writer refers to the Roaring Twenties’ actual occurrences. Nevertheless, he also mentions some significant features of the years at the turn of the decade so that the reader could apprehend the roots of the tremendously important events and circumstances of the post-war decade, masterly depicted in the book. Therefore, with a close look at the novel, it is possible to perceive which historical occasions and conditions inspired Fitzgerald to create the setting of *The Great Gatsby*.

First of all, it is essential to mention that even though the novel takes place in 1922, it might be incorrect to consider that the writer describes only the beforementioned year's occurrences. The reason lies in the fact that it was a year when Fitzgerald had started his work on the book; however, he completed it only by 1925. Therefore, to enclose all real-life circumstances hidden in the novel, it is necessary to analyse the United States history up to the middle of the decade.

The Great War is the earliest event of great importance mentioned by Fitzgerald in the book. By inserting this immense historical occurrence into the plot, he affected the story on several levels. Firstly, it impacted the storyline, as it was essential both for Gatsby's biography creation and the fate of his relationships with Daisy. Secondly, by mentioning the war, Fitzgerald allowed the readers to relate themselves to the characters, as at that time, they shared the same experience. Finally, adding this event to the book helped create the reasoning for the future setting. Although the writer did not participate in the war himself, he witnessed its effects and long-term impact on the country, all its aspects and the nation itself.

2.2 Politics of the 1920s and its influence on the novel

The most critical outcomes of the Great War both in the history of the United States and the novel appeared in the post-war economic situation and politics. What is more, just as in real life, these areas have a strong impact on society's well-being, which has an important place in the novel. Fitzgerald mainly concentrates the reader's attention on the characters' wealthy lifestyles, notwithstanding the post-war period. It is not an accident, as the writer depicts the real-life consequences of 1920s politics. After Woodrow Wilson left his presidential post with his spirit broken by the inability to bring his Fourteen Points to life and ratify the Treaty of Versailles, and his body surrendered by strokes, Warren G. Harding became the new president. His presidency might have served as an inspiration for the government and its influence on the economy in the novel. Bill Kte'pi describes the years of Harding's administration in the following lines:

Even with Harding's pleasant style and his assurances of normalcy, the years that followed were marked more by departure from the past than by any return to a bygone era. In fact, republicans began to describe their economic plan and the apparent prosperity that evolved from it as the New era. New era prosperity was

reflected in rising stock prices, greater stock market trade volume, and a boom in real estate values in Florida and elsewhere. The prosperity gave rise to new fortunes and new ways of spending money. (3)

According to these words, Harding's strategy helped decrease unemployment and inflation, increase stock prices and improve trade, and help the United States start thriving after the war. The years of the post-war recessions and joblessness were drifting away, and the time full of new, promising prospects was approaching. Such changes could inspire Fitzgerald to portray the wealthy population in *The Great Gatsby*.

Notwithstanding the beforementioned positive outcome of politics, another government's side portrayed in the novel is its engagement in crime and corruption. Excellent examples can be found in Chapter 4. Despite Prohibition, Gatsby's guests drown in alcohol during his lavish party, and it is necessary to emphasise that one of the visitors, listed by Nick Carraway, is State senator Gulick, who ignores the Volstead Act. Another example is Gatsby's conversation with a policeman who wants to pull his car over. The dialogue depicts corrupt police, as after seeing Jay's card, the man apologises and lets him go. Therefore, the Harding scandals, later described in the book *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the Nineteen Twenties* by Frederick Lewis Allen, most likely served as an inspiration for *The Great Gatsby's* corrupt government. The investigation series began to disclose the rotten, corrupt authorities only six months before Harding's death. It happened to be that the new president came not only with the plan to turn the country back to normalcy but also with the Ohio Gang. These leaders were engaged in various criminal affairs in several fields of their impact, and all of them were somehow related to huge bribes and so-called "loans". Some of the loudest scandals related to the Veterans' Bureau and the Teapot Dome (Allen 164-182). According to Frederick Lewis Allen, due to the financial machinations of the head of the Bureau, Charles R. Forbes, over two hundred million dollars went astray (173). Further investigation showed that even more money was stolen due to the Teapot Dome schemes, tarnishing the president's reputation, even though he did not participate in it. The importance of the beforementioned events lies in the fact that they might have influenced Fitzgerald's perception of the U.S. government during the Jazz Decade.

The Harding scandals echo followed the new president Calvin Coolidge, who later made the U.S. economy "roar". Coolidge became the leader in 1923; therefore, his presidency could have been another pattern for the novel's setting. According to Allen, Coolidge's approach to the economy was relatively passive; however, despite this, with

the help of reduced taxes, business freedom, and the cut of governmental spending, the United States was striving up until the Great Depression (209–210). However, not everybody was able to enjoy the new time of prosperity. Coolidge vetoed farm bills as he considered them to be economically unbeneficial, and the result of this might be found in *The Great Gatsby* as well (Allen 209–210). Gatsby was born into a family of poor farmers, and his main wish was to get away from such a life. With this plot element, Fitzgerald portrays an important political circumstance of the Jazz Age. Nevertheless, the years of Coolidge's presidency were considered the time of the United States' prosperity, and the setting of the novel proves it.

2.3 The economic situation in the United States during 1920–1925

As was mentioned before, although Fitzgerald does not show any evidence of the visible connection between politics and the economy in the novel, the bond between the two fields was very strong. As a matter of common knowledge, politics is a prominent source of impact on a country's economy, and the United States during the Roaring Twenties was not an exception to this linkage. Therefore, to get the complete image of such an influence as a source of inspiration for depicting wealth in the novel, it might be helpful to turn to Allen's analysis of the economic graph:

Pick up one of those graphs with which statisticians measure the economic ups and downs of the Post-war Decade. You will find that the line of business activity rises to a jagged peak in 1920, drops precipitously into a deep valley in late 1920 and 1921, climbs uncertainly upward through 1922 to another peak at the middle of 1923, dips somewhat in 1924 (but not nearly so far as in 1921), rises again in 1925 and 1926, dips momentarily but slightly toward the end of 1927, and then zig-zags up to a perfect Everest of prosperity in 1929—only to plunge down at last into the bottomless abyss of 1930 and 1931. (Allen 182–183)

According to this analysis, the recession of 1920–1921 melted with Harding's presidential term, and business grew until the peak of the scandals. After this, the situation slightly worsened during the first year of Coolidge's official presidency; then, the graph grew until it dipped in 1927, but only to rise even higher before the Great Depression. According to the beforementioned information, it is possible to correlate

the book with this analysis. As in real life, Fitzgerald portrays 1922 as a year of economic growth, which reaches its maximum in 1923, and after a slight dip in 1924, rises again. Nevertheless, the novelist could not perceive the most remarkable years of Coolidge's presidency as a template for the book's setting, as they were only to come by the time the novel had been finished. As a result, it is possible to conclude that in *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald portrays wealth, inspired by the years of Harding's post-war improvements and their outcomes during the first years of Coolidge's administration. However, as was mentioned before, Fitzgerald depicts Coolidge's attitude toward farming and his business advancement.

Even though politics had an immense impact on the post-war economy portrayed in the book, it was not the only source of the rapid growth of prosperity in the 1920s. To find out other reasons, it might be helpful to refer to Allen's text. According to him, although the United States became weaker after the conflict, the country was not nearly as damaged as the other war participants. After the demobilisation, the amount of workforce increased, and with plentiful resources, the process of rapid economic growth began (Allen 191).

The other reason for such an improvement was mass production. According to Elizabeth R. Purdy, the appearance of an assembly line enabled to decrease the time necessary to create a product and increase productivity (173). It also allowed hiring more inexperienced workers since one person had to perform one particular task. Moreover, electrification helped expand working hours and apply various machines to make a production process simpler. Therefore, goods became less expensive. Even though Fitzgerald does not depict such improvements directly, he portrays their consequence — automobiles. Mechanical engineering was another significant part of American industry. Henry Ford made automobiles so affordable that “even as early as the end of 1923 there were two cars for every three families in “Middletown,” a typical American city” (Allen 187). This fact might explain why Fitzgerald portrays cars so often and even creates the tragic scene of Myrtle's death with its help. The writer also places Tom's lover's home in a strong connection with the new popular means of transportation. The close analysis of the setting and Allen's description of the decade might lead to a surprising conclusion. The historian writes that the automobile industry in the 1920s became a competitor of the other popular kind of transportation — trains (Allen 187–188). Therefore, the fact that the novelist makes Myrtle's house a part of the car repair shop, which faces the railroad, clarifies that this rivalry inspired the writer.

The author depicts the outcomes of industrialisation in the “valley of ashes”. Fitzgerald portrays it as a grey, dull place, a land of industrial waste, a mainstay of the upper class’s wealth. What is even more peculiar is its position, as it is situated near a small river with a drawbridge, which lets barges through (19). This short description of the setting tells some important information about the influence of the growing economy. Barges, mentioned by the novelist, could refer to the growth of mass production and the need to ship various goods to different destinations. Therefore, the “valley of ashes” portrays the underside of the wealth of the 1920s.

It is essential to emphasise that electrification, also mentioned in the novel, was a matter of great importance for the U.S. economy. According to Leigh Kimmel’s words, domestic electrification became common during the Roaring Twenties; therefore, houses grew bigger, as it became easier to heat and light the buildings (120). The evidence appears, for example, in the writer’s descriptions of Gatsby’s and Buchanan’s huge mansions. In the following lines, Carraway describes Jay’s home:

When I came home to West Egg that night, I was afraid for a moment that my house was on fire. Two o’clock and the whole corner of the peninsula was blazing with light, which fell unreal on the shrubbery and made thin elongating glints upon the roadside wires. Turning a corner, I saw that it was Gatsby’s house, lit from tower to cellar. (Fitzgerald 67)

This passage shows the benefits of popularised electrification, as Gatsby’s mansion is lightened during the night despite its size. Moreover, because of domestic electrification, household devices, such as Jay’s juicer, became a popular branch of sales, affecting the economy.

Another reason for prosperity lies in the fact that increased employment and rising wages, which were an inseparable part of the novel’s wealthy society, created a strong purchasing potential (Allen 191–193). Furthermore, a new-fashioned instalment buying allowed using goods without immediate payment. Such circumstances produced a considerable market demand, and businesses used this opportunity. Companies became more interested in attracting a final customer, and advertisement became a new tool in manufacturers’ hands. The writer mentions it several times in the novel and even creates an important symbol around one particular advertisement of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. Aside from buying goods, Americans could also spend their finances to invest in the stock market. The depiction of it may be easily found in *The Great Gatsby*, as Nick Carraway comes to New York to be engaged in the bond business. In reality,

the stock market was far from what it became in 1929; however, it was unregulated and rose rapidly with the economy.

According to the analysis above, Fitzgerald describes the economic aspects during the early 1920s in various ways. The political impact on the country's well-being is mainly portrayed with the help of the novel's social structure and the wealth of different parts of society. The other sources of impact, such as mass production and industrialisation, business and sales, and the bond market, are mainly depicted in the novel's setting.

2.4 Fitzgerald's portrayal of the Prohibition movement and bootlegging

Another effect of the Great War, which became an immense source of inspiration for the novel, was an attitude to alcohol. In the book, such beverages are an important element directly related to essential plotlines and events. However, to better understand the author's frequent mention of it, it is necessary to refer to the real-life circumstances and correlate them with the novel's plot. The U.S. during the Roaring Twenties was under the influence of the Prohibition movement. According to Tim McNeese, the idea of prohibiting alcoholic drinks was not new in 1920 and was at least 20 years old (89); however, the war and post-war period provided the nation with a new argument favouring the ban: "with supporters calling for grain to be used as food for starving Europeans, rather than for distilling alcoholic beverages" (McNeese 89). Therefore, the Eighteenth Amendment was ratified, and 1920 became the first year of Prohibition. Nevertheless, its outcomes were so ambiguous that they even found their depiction in one of the most outstanding novels of the twentieth century—*The Great Gatsby*.

Despite the beforementioned period's feature, the novelist makes alcohol an inseparable part of almost all meetings and parties in the novel. He also clarifies that the population violates the law and that even though they are illegal, such drinks are still quite popular and regular. One of the examples is Nick's first visit to Buchanan's mansion. He, Jordan, Tom and Daisy drink while they spend time together. Another instance is the party in Myrtle's apartment. The guests consume whiskey during the evening, and the narrator even says the following words: "I have been drunk just twice in my life, and the second time was that afternoon . . ." (Fitzgerald 24). Nevertheless,

such examples only depict alcohol consumption during private meetings, which might not be very representative, as they portray the violation of the law by a small group of people. Therefore, it is essential to point out some of the most extraordinary events mentioned in the book—Gatsby’s parties. During these occasions, alcohol was served in huge amounts. The following description of the bar proves it: “In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another” (Fitzgerald 32). Such a variety of beverages during Prohibition might confuse the reader; however, the number of visitors during these parties is even more surprising. Various people of different classes, ages, and occupations spent their weekends at Gatsby’s. It is possible to conclude that the majority of the characters broke the Prohibition law. Such representation is not a coincidence, and it comes to be that the real-life violation of the order inspired Fitzgerald. David H. Lippman describes the overall outcome of Prohibition in the following lines:

Designed to enhance morality in America, the Prohibition movement actually turned millions of Americans into criminals overnight, strengthened and glamorized the already growing organized crime movement, corrupted city governments and put them in the hands of gangsters, and brought new levels of violence to the streets of those cities. (155)

This citation proves that although alcohol was forbidden, the law could not affect people’s habits, and they began breaking it from day to day.

Not only does Fitzgerald portray the consumption of banned beverages, but he also mentions their distribution. He gets inspired by a new phenomenon of the Jazz Age—speakeasies—hidden bars with no signs, which served illegal drinks during Prohibition. These establishments welcomed both men and women due to the change in morals, which will be discussed in the following chapter. Even though the author does not directly mention speakeasies, he still uses them as a setting in Chapter 4. Fitzgerald describes a restaurant situated in the cellar, and it might seem that the author portrays a typical eatery, but its peculiarity appears when Meyer Wolfsheim orders an alcoholic cocktail, Highballs (57). This unobvious description signifies that Fitzgerald manages to give an exact depiction of speakeasies which gained popularity due to the Volstead Act.

Such alcohol consumption created a high demand for its banned supplies. Throughout the whole novel, the illegal consumption of alcohol, called bootlegging, appears several times. Hence, it is essential to correlate the book’s events with real-life

circumstances to perceive Fitzgerald's inspiration's roots. In Chapter 7, one of the characters, Tom Buchanan, reveals Gatsby's actual field of occupation: "I found out what your "drugstores" were.' . . . 'He and this Wolfsheim bought up a lot of side-street drugstores here and in Chicago and sold grain alcohol over the counter'" (Fitzgerald 112). The reader gets to know that the young gentleman and his business partner Wolfsheim sell prohibited alcohol over the counters of the chain of drugstores. In real life, during the 1920s, alcohol could be delivered to the counters of drugstores and speakeasies in several different ways. One of them was simple, located in the basements of houses and bars, which now were turned into speakeasies, equipped with stills. A more complicated way was to deliver alcohol through the borders. According to Lippman, due to the lack of personnel compared to the length of the borders, there was only one guard per every twelve miles; therefore, the territory was almost unprotected. What is more, due to low salaries, Prohibition agents became corrupt (Lippman 161). Due to these circumstances, "the Bahamas, British Honduras, and Bermuda became centres for shipping Canadian whiskey and French champagne to America" (Lippman 162). The venal government provided bootleggers with federal protection. Therefore, the sale of alcoholic beverages became a vast, complicated business, led by various people but primarily by gangsters. With a close look at Gatsby's biography, it becomes clear that Fitzgerald found inspiration in the second method of this illegal trade.

The details of Gatsby's criminal business also depict actual historical circumstances. First of all, his partner, Wolfsheim, was inspired by a real-life person. According to Jeffrey Meyers, this character was based on the personality of the famous gambler Arnold Rothstein, as this man was the one who fixed the 1919 World Series and committed many other crimes (125). Moreover, just like Wolfsheim, he was engaged in bootlegging. Secondly, the main character mainly talks to "Chicago" regarding his business affairs. As it comes to be—it is not a coincidence. Chicago was a centre of crimes connected with bootlegging, with several gangs in its head. Alphonse "Scarface" Capone was one of the most famous gangsters who entered the business under the commandment of Johnny Torrio. As the gang's power was growing, they gained rivalry with the North Side Gang, and during one of the conflicts, Torrio was wounded and had to pass control to Capone. Capone became one of the most influential men in Chicago, controlling bootlegging and speakeasies. Consequently, one may conclude that the influence of this real-life figure on Fitzgerald's idea of the Jazz Age might be found in Gatsby's biography.

Therefore, it is possible to summarise that the Prohibition movement and its violation greatly impacted how the writer portrayed the Roaring Twenties in *The Great Gatsby*. Depictions of the speakeasy and the parties with guests of different social classes, drowning in champagne, whiskey, and other alcoholic beverages represent Fitzgerald's perception of the decade. What is more, even the main character's fate, connected with bootlegging, was inspired by the criminal affairs spinning around the violation of the Amendment.

It is essential to emphasise that the post-war United States' unique setting found its depiction in one of the best novels written by the remarkable author Francis Scott Fitzgerald. The vast effects of politics and the decisions made by politicians found their portrayal in the descriptions of the authorities and prosperity of different social classes. The post-war economy inspired the novelist to create the book's setting and portray the population's way of life. Finally, the Prohibition movement violation became an inspiration for Gatsby's plotline, corrupt officials, and some parts of the storyline, such as parties and meetings. All the beforementioned features became an instrument of Fitzgerald's talent and will to convey the unique description of the Jazz Age to the reader.

3 Society of the Roaring Twenties reflected in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's characters.

Although the previous chapter explains what aspects of the post-war economy and politics Fitzgerald depicted in some features of *The Great Gatsby*, another highly distinct element of the period, which the author could not omit, is unique American society. The reason lies in the fact that it is the population, who created such a recognisable phase in the United States history, who were live carriers of all changes, and Fitzgerald was one of them. He took the most striking social characteristics of the period and placed them in the novel. Therefore, it is necessary to put *The Great Gatsby* in its historical context to highlight such elements and understand them from a new perspective.

3.1 Class inequality in society

One of the critical topics mentioned in the book is class inequality. According to Marius Bewley, “More than any other writer in the American tradition, Scott Fitzgerald’s novels have been based on a concept of class” (23). The reader might find several social ranks in the book: upper class, middle class, and lower class. During the 1920s, the hierarchy faced some changes due to the socio-economic and political aspects described in the previous chapter. According to Elizabeth R. Purdy, the rich got wealthier, while the midclass’ income did not undergo any significant changes due to the synchronical growth of wages and prices (175). Some groups of the population, such as farmers, did not experience period’s positive impact and formed the lower class. Fitzgerald portrays these aspects, and further analysis of the book and history will help understand the writer’s perspective.

The Great Gatsby mainly concentrates on the depiction of the upper class. To study it, it is essential to note that the 1920s gave people an opportunity to switch their social position, just as Gatsby did. Born into a low-income family, he decided to change his life and became one of the richest men mentioned in the novel. Nevertheless, one should notice that he differs from some other representatives of the upper class. The reason can be found in Fitzgerald’s source of inspiration. American wealthy class was divided into two parts: “old money” and “new money”. “Old money”, such as Tom and Daisy Buchanan’s, and Jordan Baker, were the representatives of old established families and inherited their wealth. Just as a real-life upper-class, they are careless and have many possessions, such as a huge mansion. Nick Carraway’s relation to class is not as easy to determine. Professor of English A. E. Dyson describes Nick’s position in society in the following lines, “Between the two extremes lies Nick Carraway, the middle-west narrator, who can see the foibles of both sides - the plight of the poor and the destructiveness of the rich” (60). The author says that he is “the one middle-class character in the novel . . .” (63). However, being a part of a well-to-do family and Daisy’s cousin, Carraway still belongs to “old money”. Their wealth influenced their education, manners, and lifestyle, while “new money”, like Jay Gatsby, were young businessmen who became rich just recently, as the new time of prosperity gave some Americans an opportunity to obtain money both legally and illegally. The government provided businesses with freedom and support, while Prohibition allowed getting

involved in bootlegging as Jay did. Nevertheless, as portrayed in the novel, these classes were not equal because they did not share the same background.

The middle class is not very distinctive in the novel. It would be possible to relate Nick Carraway to the upper-middle position in the hierarchy, as even though he is the descendent of “old money”, he is not as wealthy as Buchanans or Gatsby. During the Roaring Twenties, the representatives of this part of society did not perform any manual work, were employed as white collars, and faced some advantages of prosperity. Nick has enough funds to live in rather good conditions but still works as a white-collar employee selling obligations and feels comfortable both among the wealthiest representatives of society and those with a low income. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the narrator represents the privileged social group by origin, while his lifestyle depicts the upper-middle class.

Another character who stands on the verge of different social positions is Myrtle Wilson. She is married to a poor owner of a car shop, George Wilson. Even though he owns the business, he and his wife have been living in a house situated above his garage in the “valley of ashes” for eleven years. This detail shows the reader that the couple is a part of the lower class. Myrtle does her best to omit such a lifestyle and uses the opportunities Tom gives her. He rents an apartment and buys presents for her, allowing his mistress to live as a wealthier part of society. She could also be identified as a representative of a consumerist middle class. Tom Collins writes that with the help of mass production and instalment buying, the middle class received an opportunity to afford various goods, inaccessible during the previous decades (71). In the book, the reader might find similar details in the following lines:

At the news-stand she bought a copy of Town Tattle and a moving-picture magazine, and in the station drugstore, some cold cream and a small flask of perfume. Upstairs, in the solemn echoing drive, she let four taxicabs drive away before she selected a new one, lavender-coloured with grey upholstery, and in this we slid out from the mass of the station into the glowing sunshine.

(Fitzgerald 22)

Among other things, Myrtle buys a puppy. This materialistic consumption makes her a representative of the middle class. The woman also tries to blur her relation to the working class, as she changes her clothing several times and talks with a specific haughty attitude: “I told that boy about the ice”. Myrtle raised her eyebrows in despair at the shiftlessness of the lower orders. “These people! You have to keep after them all

the time” (Fitzgerald 26). This excerpt is also an evidence of the unequal relationships between the two parts of society, as it pictures the attitude of the privileged groups to the low-income ones.

Even though Fitzgerald does not pay much attention to it in the book, one should notice that the lower class inspired the author. Despite the economic boom, there still were some people who lived in poverty. Such characters as Gatsby, his father and George Wilson result from the author’s vision of the decade. Although these characters are similar because they are not or were not wealthy, Fitzgerald portrays different sources of poverty in each of them. Gatsby’s father is a poor, uneducated farmer. Bill Kte’pi writes that “it may have been a boom decade for most of the country, but the 1920s were not a good time for increasingly marginalised farmers” (77). He explains that the commodity prices fell after the war, but the Great Depression made them stay at the lower level for a long time (K’tepi 77). Henry’s son, Gatsby, is the representation of people who were already born into such families. Therefore, he became a representation of the American dream—a dream of improving life and social status. George Wilson represents a different cause of poverty. According to his wife, he was penniless, and the state of things had been the same for more than a decade. Although George follows the tendencies and organises a business connected to the developing car industry, success does not follow him, making the man a hostage of misery. This personage’s importance for the analysis of the topic can be found in his relationship with Tom Buchanan. Tom does not respect and manipulates him. He knows that George needs money but does not hurry to sell him the car. This situation demonstrates the upper class’s contemptuous attitude toward the rest of the population.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that Fitzgerald masterly depicts particular nuances of different social groups and shows their relations. He describes both “old money” and “new money” as the wealthy class representatives. The author also shifts the reader’s attention to the middle and lower classes, demonstrates their differences and mindsets. As a result, he provides the book with a portrayal of the class system and its inequality.

3.1.1 Education as a part of social evaluation

Even though an origin was the main criterion for the identification of a social position, there still were specific expectations, which the upper-class representatives followed. One of such standards was education. There are several essential points concerning it in the novel, which might help understand Fitzgerald's depiction of the importance of this subject.

First of all, as can be seen from the book, education was an indicator of a certain level of prestige and place in society. It was presumed that a person who was educated in one of the Ivy League or other reputable universities should follow a particular lifestyle and be well-mannered. For instance, Tom Buchanan and Nick Carraway studied at such an institution and graduated, while Gatsby, who did not have a similar opportunity, makes up information about his family tradition to be educated at Oxford, as he expects this lie to raise his social position.

One should also pay attention to the specific universities mentioned in the novel. Jay Gatsby spent five months at Oxford after the war. It was highly prestigious and provided its students with quality knowledge and personal growth. Nevertheless, the young man did not have an opportunity to spend much time there. Hence, Tom does not believe this chapter of Gatsby's past because Jay does not correspond to it: a man who wears a pink suit cannot be associated with an Oxford man. Another institution mentioned in the novel is Yale. Its graduates are the representatives of the upper class: Tom Buchanan and Nick Carraway. Tom even became a famous football player during his years in New Haven, as college tournaments gained popularity during the 1920s. Fitzgerald's own experience with education could serve as an inspiration for this part of the novel. According to Scott Donaldson, the author considered studying at Yale, but he perceived its students as too brutal and powerful, which he later portrayed in Tom Buchanan (37).

It is necessary to point out that even though the characters' student years are in the past, both Tom and Nick still visit the Yale Club, situated in Manhattan, which depicts their superior status. This circumstance is not coincidental, as the novelist was impacted by college clubs, which were very significant during that period. Fitzgerald entered one of the clubs while in Princeton; however, later, he wrote that this system is snobbish and should be abolished (Donaldson 42).

Thus, the analysis above portrays how the elitist comprehension of education influenced the author. Not only does he portray social expectations and attitudes surrounding the subject, but he also mentions some particular universities and the club system, which were considered prestigious during the Jazz Age.

3.2 Racism as a significant social issue of the 1920s

Another type of social inequality mentioned in *The Great Gatsby* is racism. The portrayal of this topic in the book is somewhat controversial, as the author uses stereotypical racial images; however, its source might not be the author's viewpoint and beliefs but his representation of the 1920s discriminatory society. Even though the Jazz Age was a period of revolutionary changes, some of them were only to come during the following decades. Of course, there was a shift in attitude toward other races, but it was happening gradually, and society maintained rather racist views. In his novel, Fitzgerald portrays discrimination of both African Americans and Jews, as his characters from privileged social circles do not exist in an isolated world.

The Great Gatsby demonstrates such issues both with the help of the personages' beliefs and the narrator's comments. The first significant mention of racism surfaces in Chapter 1, when Tom Buchanan starts a conversation about the book "*The Rise of the Colored Empires* by this man Goddard" (Fitzgerald 11). Alan Margolies writes that by mentioning it, "Fitzgerald was thinking of Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color* (1920)" (81). According to him, the author refers to Nordicism, a racist ideology that believes that the Nordic race is superior (80-81). The book by Stoddard mentions the same ideals and thoughts like those in the character's speech; what is more - it even shares Tom's fear that other races will outnumber whites. Margolies writes about the other example of Tom's racist attitude, which is mentioned during one of the tensest scenes in the book - the argument in the Plaza Hotel (81). During it, Buchanan says, "Nowadays people begin by sneering family life and family institutions, and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white" (Fitzgerald 108). Here, the character expresses Nordistic idea once again, which is that interracial marriages should be forbidden. Fitzgerald portrays such views as extreme because he makes Tom's words absurd with the narrator's comment.

The other examples of discrimination do not appear in the character's ideology but the narration. There are several examples in the book, but one of the most prominent appears in Chapter 4. Nick goes to New York with Gatsby and expresses his thoughts during the trip: "As we crossed Blackwell's Island a limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish negroes, two bucks and a girl. I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled towards us in haughty rivalry" (Fitzgerald 56-57). First of all, Carraway uses vivid racist physical description when he talks about the people's eyes. He also calls Afro-American men "bucks", which is a racial slur. What is more, he laughs at the situation as he is surprised by it. Nick's reaction tells the reader that it was not usual for Afro-American people to be rich and to be able to afford a car ride, especially with a white chauffeur. Fitzgerald's black contemporaries faced racism on a daily basis. The southern part of the country remained highly segregated. Schools, hotels, hospitals, and many other social institutions were separated, resulting in a much lower quality of life for the discriminated part of the population. The result of such circumstances may be seen in the following lines:

In the course of the urbanization of America, there had been a migration of hundreds of thousands of African Americans from the segregated south to the north, initially inspired by the greater opportunities that came with economic expansion during World War I. This population influx . . . produced a negative reaction in many quarters. (Eversole 49)

According to this text, African Americans left the south to avoid racism and get better economic conditions. The north was different, as the segregation there was not as prominent, which provided, for example, a better level of education. Nevertheless, people still faced racism every day, which resulted from the fact that "Existing white populations saw the movement in terms of racist stereotypes, and as a competition for jobs and housing. Such tensions could explode, as they did in East St. Louis in 1917 when 39 African Americans died as a result of rioting" (Eversole 49). Thus, racism in the north resulted from discriminatory views passed on from older generations to younger ones, which later led to the awful circumstances during the migration mentioned above. Fitzgerald, being a part of American society, and aiming to demonstrate life during the Jazz Age, portrayed it through the instances described above.

Another group of people who faced racism were Jews. Fitzgerald depicts them through one of the most vivid characters in the book—Meyer Wolfsheim. The first

evidence of discrimination appears in the narration when Nick Carraway describes him: “A small, flat-nosed Jew raised his large head and regarded me with two fine growths of hair which luxuriated in either nostril. After a moment I discovered his tiny eyes in the half-darkness” (Fitzgerald 57). Of course, the author could use this vocabulary to create a more vivid character; however, Margolies argues such a statement, as it “still seems to be an example of ethnic stereotyping” (78). It is probable that Fitzgerald grasped this popular perception and placed it in the book. Wolfsheim also owns a company named “The Swastika Holding Company”. According to the article, even at that time, the swastika was a rather famous anti-Semitic symbol in such countries as Germany and Austria (Margolies 83). However, it was also an exotic Asian sign, which meant good luck, peace, and harmony. Therefore, it is not entirely clear with which meaning Fitzgerald endowed this symbol in the novel. The author could either mention it as an irony, in case of an anti-Semitic interpretation, as the character is a Jew, which would make him seem evil or as a cultural reference, as during the fashion for Art Deco, Asian motives were quite popular.

Another source of racism that could have an immense impact on Fitzgerald’s writing was nativism. It appeared during the Red Scare period due to the fear of radicalism coming from such groups as socialists, which included many newcomers. Such attitudes revived one of the most racist organisations—the Ku Klux Klan. The group’s intolerance affected not only the black part of the population but also all immigrants, including Jews whom Fitzgerald mentioned in the book. More and more people across the country joined the organisation; however, its popularity faded when the government decided to decrease the amount of arriving people with the Emergency Immigration Act.

To sum up, *The Great Gatsby* depicts one of the biggest social problems of the Jazz Age —racism—both through the characters and narration. Fitzgerald not only concentrates the reader’s attention on the discrimination towards black people but also towards such minorities as Jews. He mentions the extremes of the racist ideology of the period through Tom Buchanan’s beliefs, which resemble real-life Nordicism, and maybe even through the symbolism of Wolfsheim’s “The Swastika Holding Company”, referring to one of the most prominent Nazi’s signs. Fitzgerald portrays discriminatory attitudes through Nick Carraway’s narration, depicting stereotypical racist perceptions of minorities by the white population. Therefore, the author manages to mention this essential social issue and seamlessly integrate it into the plot.

3.3 Religion in *The Great Gatsby*

Another essential social aspect that influenced the population and was subject to change during the 1920s is religion. It has always had an essential role in almost every society. The American nation was not an exception, as most of the population were Christians, and their faith was a source of regulations in their morals, way of life and values. Nonetheless, during the 1920s church began to lose its impact. Therefore, it is essential to discover how the author portrays faith in the book and find out more about the historical circumstances which influenced him.

Even though churches appear in Fitzgerald's descriptions of the setting, and religion appears in traditional ceremonies such as Wilsons' wedding and Gatsby's funeral, the writer does not mention this topic very often. However, this omission is a reference to the characteristic of the period. Frederick Lewis Allen writes that church attendance decreased, especially among the younger generation (222). There were various reasons which led to it, such as the ones described below:

. . . the general let-down in moral energy which followed the strain of the war; . . . prosperity, which encouraged the comfortable belief that it profited a man very considerably if he gained a Cadillac car and a laudatory American Magazine; to the growing popularity of Sunday golf and automobiling; and to disapproval in some quarters of the political lobbying of church organizations, and disgust at the connivance of many ministers in the bigotry of the Klan. More important than any of these causes, however, was the effect upon the churches of scientific doctrines and scientific methods of thought. (Allen 223)

These circumstances led to the decline in churches' acclaim. Prosperity and the post-war period provided people with new values, while the popularisation of science broadened their worldviews. With the help of such personalities as the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, Americans got to know more not only about the outer world but also about themselves. His studies created a shift in the perception of humans' psyche and sexuality. Another scientist, Charles Darwin, provided people with an opportunity to look at humankind from a scientific perspective. Even though the historian created his theory in the 19th century, it remained relevant during the Jazz Age. Such factors made people, especially the young generation, question some doctrines. Thus, it is possible that Fitzgerald decided not to pay too much attention to religious motives in *The Great Gatsby* in order to show the slowly declining popularity

of church. Even the majority of his characters are not led by Biblical doctrines and morals, as, for instance, married Buchanans are unfaithful to each other, which is considered sinful from a Christian point of view.

Nonetheless, not all personages ignore religious viewpoints on life. For example, the writer portrays people uninfluenced by the beforementioned changes through George Wilson. This character lives in the “valley of ashes”- a place under the control of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg’s eyes, whose stare Fitzgerald compares with God’s one. Wilson is an exceptional person whose morals come from the awe of God. The following lines are George’s retelling of his dialogue with Myrtle when he gets to know about her adultery:

‘I spoke to her,’ he muttered, after a long silence. ‘I told her she might fool me but she couldn’t fool God. I took her to the window’ - with an effort he got up and walked to the rear window and leaned with his face pressed against it - ‘and I said, “God knows what you’ve been doing, everything you’ve been doing. You may fool me, but you can’t fool God!”’

. . . he was looking at the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, which had just emerged, pale and enormous, from the dissolving night.

‘God sees everything,’ repeated Wilson. (Fitzgerald 134)

This dialogue portrays how drastically different Wilsons are. The wife dates a married man to change her life, which tells the reader that she is influenced by the shift in morals, while the husband looks at marriage and adultery from the Christian perspective of God’s omnipresence.

What is more, this part of the book could serve as a reference to the competition between Fundamentalists and Modernists. Even though both organisations existed within the Protestant denomination, their views on religion were different. Fundamentalists, who exclusively followed traditional Christian doctrines described in the Bible, felt a threat not only from immigrants who brought Catholicism and Judaism to America but also from science. Theodore W. Eversole writes that the primary danger was coming from Darwinism, as this theory denied one of the most important Christian concepts—the creation of man (55). Fundamentalists even tried to forbid it in the educational system; however, ultimately, their attempt failed. In contrast, Modernists were liberal Christians who did not ignore scientific knowledge in their interpretation of holy writings. Therefore, it is probable that Fitzgerald created the conflict between

Myrtle and George to portray the historical conflict between Modernists and Fundamentalists accordingly.

Consequently, it is possible to assume that Fitzgerald's rare mention of religion might be connected to the period's changes, such as the popularisation of science, switch in morals, and prosperity, which decreased the population's faith. The reader can also notice it by analysing the deeds of such characters as Buchanans' who do not follow Christian doctrines. Nevertheless, the author still portrays religious views on life through George Wilson and his attitude to marriage. It would also be reasonable to conclude that Fitzgerald depicts the rivalry between Fundamentalists and Modernists through the relationships between George and Myrtle.

3.4 The shift in morals and gender relations

The declining popularity of the former religious perspective on life had to be substituted with the new way of living. The causes which moved people further from church brought them closer to the revolution in morals. It influenced several fields of life, including faith described above, gender relations, marriages, and even culture. Fitzgerald not only took a significant part in it himself but also did magnificent work, describing it in his novels. This part of the chapter will discuss how the author portrays one of the most drastic social changes of the period and examine historical references in terms of the derivation of these shifts and their consequences.

First, it is necessary to refer to history to find out what exact circumstances inspired Fitzgerald. The revolution in morals happened mainly within the shifts in gender roles. Nevertheless, there still were some circumstances outside this field that encouraged the changes. One of them was the Great War. Before this significant event, it was expected of young ladies to stay innocent until their marriage, especially among the upper social classes (Allen 107). They could only have close relationships with their husbands, with whom they were supposed to spend their lives. However, the war and the uncertainty it brought changed the course of things. Fearing that there will be no tomorrow, the young generation stopped caring about such moral principles. Frederick Lewis Allen describes it in the following lines:

There had been an epidemic not only of abrupt war marriages, but of less conventional liaisons. . . . American girls sent over as nurses and war workers

had come under the influence of continental manners and standards without being subject to the rigid protections thrown about their continental sisters of the respectable classes It was impossible for this generation to return unchanged when the ordeal was over. (Allen 113)

It is impossible to emphasize enough the importance of this event for the change in the perception of life by thousands of Americans. When the young generation returned home after the war, they could not simply get back to their previous lifestyles.

Moreover, they met with even more circumstances that pushed the revolution even further. These consequences greatly impacted the writer, as he portrays them through extra-marital sexual relationships in *The Great Gatsby*. One of the most apparent instances would be the adultery present in the marriage of Buchanans.

The shift in morals would not have such intensity without Sigmund Freud. The founder of psychoanalysis provided people with new ideas about their psychics, mental health, and sexuality. According to Allen, Freud's theories became very popular during the 1920s (117). The discussions of these ideas gave people an opportunity to change their perception of sex, and consequently, it no longer was taboo. It was less often seen as sinful and more often a necessary part of human health and life. This fact could be used for further analysis of the example mentioned in the previous paragraph: even though Buchanans commit adultery, their social circle takes it for granted and does not conclude that Daisy has ruined her reputation due to her connection with Gatsby; moreover, they help them build their relationships.

Another reason for the revolution in morals frequently appears in the book. While the conditions above provided Americans with a new comprehension of sex, the automobile industry allowed them to escape the glances of those with the former viewpoints. Henry Ford made cars more accessible, which changed the dating form drastically: young people received more freedom, privacy, and mobility. Fitzgerald was inspired by this circumstance, as he portrays it in *The Great Gatsby*. For instance, Daisy independently visits Gatsby's mansion, which allows them to have some isolation from interference and provides them with an opportunity to conceal their relationships.

Even though the conditions mentioned above played an essential part in shaping new morals, the most notable shifts occurred due to gender roles rearrangements. As can be seen from the novel, almost all female characters are rather liberated. The reason lies in the fact that after the war, women's independence began its growth. It was influenced by several factors, such as, for example, freedom in personal life described

above. The other component was comparative economic independence, which appeared because, during the war, women became a big part of the workforce. Some work positions, which were considered the ones for men, became accessible to women. Thus, to get better career opportunities, more ladies went to colleges; however, from now on, “they were not only attending the women’s colleges or state teachers’ colleges, but studying alongside young men in the various state universities and even prestigious private institutions” (Kimmel 23). Moreover, one should not forget about one of the most meaningful law changes for women- the right to vote. Such opportunities enhanced females’ independence and made them more equal to men. Even so, they would not be able to use it without electrification and industrialisation, which created new household devices and eased housekeeping. As women were still responsible for the housework, this change saved them much time for themselves. Because of these factors, many females projected their autonomy through their looks and behaviour. Thus, the flappers appeared and became one of the central features of the period and *The Great Gatsby*.

3.4.1 Flappers

Flappers were the embodiment of the Jazz Age. Francis Scott Fitzgerald used them as a potent symbol of the new morality and the emancipation of women in his novel. As this part of the American population stood out both due to their looks and behaviour, it is necessary to pay attention to both features to understand the author’s perception.

One could easily recognise flappers by their appearance. The 1920s fashion will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, but it is essential to note that moral changes and liberty greatly influenced it. Their masculine silhouette, short dresses, bobbed hair and relatively vivid makeup substituted the feminine modesty of the past decades. However, their behaviour was even more recognisable. Flappers enjoyed all of the freedoms of the period. Young ladies no longer wanted to be the synonyms of innocence. Instead, they praised youth and “wanted to be—or thought men wanted them to be—men’s casual and light-hearted companions; not broad-hipped mothers of the race, but irresponsible playmates” (Allen 128). Flappers smoked and drunk alcohol

alongside men, visited speakeasies, were outspoken about their sexuality, and even created their slang.

It is rather explicit that this ideal of women inspired Fitzgerald. The majority of his female characters' behaviours and appearances indicate that they represent such a prototype. The reader recognises them, for example, in two girls in yellow at Gatsby's party, by their bobbed hair and colourful dresses. There, some ladies drink alcohol and dance while the others have an obstetrical conversation with a man. Still, it is also essential to analyse the main characters, as there is a unique class system in the novel, and it would be interesting to look at the differences in the characteristics of flappers from different social groups.

The characters of Myrtle and Catherine are the representatives of the lower middle class. Although Myrtle's behaviour corresponds to the flapper's one, her appearance does not quite match it. Fitzgerald describes her as a woman in her thirties with a thickish body. Her style differs from pre-war fashion, as she wears colourful, tight dresses; however, there are not many physical indications that would refer her to the new female ideal. Nevertheless, as was said before, Myrtle Wilson behaves like one. First, she lives according to the new morality. For instance, when she decides to be with Tom, her mind is struck with the following thought “. . . “You can't live forever; you can't live forever”” (Fitzgerald 30). She becomes Buchanan's lover, spends time in the apartment with him, where they have parties with alcohol. Nevertheless, she lacks freedom, as she is dependent on Tom.

Dissimilar from Myrtle, her sister is a flapper as well due to her looks:

The sister, Catherine, was a slender, worldly girl of about thirty, with a solid, sticky bob of red hair, and a complexion powdered milky white. Her eyebrows had been plucked and then drawn on again at a more rakish angle When she moved about there was an incessant clicking as innumerable pottery bracelets jingled up and down upon her arms. (Fitzgerald 24)

This woman has short trendy hair, wears accessories, and puts on makeup, just as movie stars, who exaggerated their facial features to emphasise their emotions. She visits parties, consumes alcohol, and travels Europe with another girl. Consequently, all the features above relate the sisters to flappers and indicate that the author took much inspiration from this display of the new morality.

In contrast, the characters of Daisy and Jordan represent the upper-class flappers. As both ladies belong to the wealthy part of society, their behaviour differs.

Both their acts and looks do not contain vulgarity inherent to the personages above. Fitzgerald does not endow Daisy with a detailed physical appearance, with the help of which the reader would be able to assume that she is a flapper. Even though he only mentions little details of her clothes, such as colours, and accessories, such as hats, these modest descriptions carry some elegance of her looks. Daisy's behaviour is what makes her a new ideal of lady. Since her juvenility, she was surrounded by admirers. When Gatsby disappeared from her life, "Daisy began to move again with the season; suddenly she was again keeping half a dozen dates a day with half a dozen men . . ." (Fitzgerald 126–127). Then she married Tom and tolerated his adultery; however, when Jay reappears in her life, she cheats on her husband. This might indicate that Daisy follows the new morals. She drinks and smokes during meetings and parties. Nevertheless, her freedom is somewhat restricted by the fact that she is married and has a child. Therefore, it would be fair to state that Jordan Baker is a more prominent embodiment of flapper among the main upper-class personages. Although Fitzgerald does not point out many typical features of the new ideal in her appearance, her lifestyle details substitute it. Jordan is a professional sportsman - a golfer. She belongs to a wealthy part of society and has a careless life; however, unlike Daisy, she is independent. Nick emphasises that she acts somewhat distant, while from Tom, the reader gets to know that "“She's a nice girl,’ . . . ‘They oughtn't to let her run around the country this way’” (Fitzgerald 16). This short excerpt identifies that Jordan is not under her relatives' control. What is more, up to the end of the book, she is not engaged nor married and genuinely belongs to herself. She drinks alcohol and visits parties. Her relationships with Nick do not correspond to former standards as well. These features prove that Jordan is an excellent example of how the author portrays the new ideal of woman.

To summarise, flappers were an essential part of the period and a great inspiration for the book. Fitzgerald uses them in the plot to depict the liberated women and portray the changes in morals and behaviour. The author does it both through the secondary characters and the main ones. What is more, he endows them with different features, depending on their social position. Therefore, it becomes clear that even if the flappers were not the reason for the revolution of morals, they sure were its consequence.

3.4.2 Gender relations and marriage

Another area of life that underwent drastic changes due to the shift in moral code was relationships. Everything about it was subject to change, influenced by various circumstances mentioned above. This topic is also essential in the novel, as love is one of the central themes in *The Great Gatsby*, and with a close look at it, one should note that the author masterly portrays all its stages and their new characteristics. Therefore, this chapter will discuss different phases of relationships during the 1920s, according to the novel.

Let us start with the portrayal of dating during the Jazz Age. As was mentioned before, it was influenced by several significant historical circumstances: social acceptance of premarital sex after the Great War, the emancipation of women, scientific viewpoint on life, and even the automobile industry. Unlike modest meetings of the past years, usually accompanied by witnesses, dates during the 1920s could be private. Young people spent time away from home, received an opportunity to have privacy, had so-called “petting parties”, were outspoken about sexuality and followed their desires. Thus, freedom in the perception of relationships was supported by the means to escape strict beliefs of the past. Fitzgerald mentions it in many parts of the novel, but one of the best examples would be the dating of Daisy and Jay. Their connection contains two stages necessary for the analysis. The first one is their dating during the war, which includes the previously mentioned characteristics. The reader might find the evidence when reading about Gatsby’s return to Louisville: “He stayed there a week, walking the streets where their footsteps had clicked together through the November night and revisiting the out-of-the-way places to which they had driven in her white car” (Fitzgerald 128). Here, the writer manages to describe the new form of dating in one sentence. He mentions both an opportunity to stay alone and have privacy and the automobile as the source of mobility. It would also be essential to analyse the couple’s affair five years later. Daisy cheats on her husband with Gatsby and leaves her house independently, without Tom, to visit her lover. This detail directs the reader to the historical fact of the liberation of women. In this case, the car still has a role of an escape mechanism. Their love also includes extra-marital sex, which was a sign of new morality.

When analysing the shift in relationships portrayed by Fitzgerald, it is almost impossible to omit the topic of marriage. The chain reaction of changes did not skip this

field of life. One of the most explicit shifts was the normalization of premarital experience. Allen writes that “One began to hear of young girls, intelligent and well born, who had spent week-ends with men before marriage and had told their prospective husbands everything and had been not merely forgiven, but told that there was nothing to forgive; a little “experience”, these men felt, was all to the good for any girl” (137). What is more, as can be seen in the novel, the new moral code made infidelities relatively common. Consequently, not every couple could withstand such a trial, which led to a larger quantity of divorces. Fitzgerald does not ignore this adverse effect and portrays it both through complicated marital and extra-marital relationships of Buchanans. For instance, Daisy knows about Tom’s affairs, and obviously, feels distressed about it, which the reader can understand both from her own words and Nick’s commentaries. This can be one of the reasons why she agrees to tell her husband that she never loved him, to get a divorce. At the same time, Myrtle Wilson is ready to leave her spouse and believes that Tom Buchanan would leave Daisy if only he could dissolve the marriage. These instances are the portrayal of the negative effects the revolution in morals had on family institution.

To conclude, the 1920s change in morals was a matter of great importance both for history and the novel. The text above explains that it was an enormous source of Fitzgerald’s inspiration. The author portrays both some of the causes of the changes, such as the war, popularity of science, emancipation of women, the automobile industry, and the consequences, such as frequent cases of premarital and extra-marital sex, the result of Freud’s theory in changed attitudes to sexuality, the freedom and privacy of dating which appeared due to cars, flappers as a result of women’s liberation and changed morals. He even portrays the revolution’s influence on one of the central fields of life—relationships. It is evident from the analysis above that the writer observed the changes which happened during different stages of love affairs and inserted them into the plot, providing the reader with the true essence of the revolution in morals and gender relations.

4 Fitzgerald’s depiction of the culture of the Roaring Twenties.

As can be seen from the chapters above, *The Great Gatsby* portrays the decade’s social, economic, and political aspects. However, there is one more essential feature,

which has not been mentioned yet—culture. The 1920s were one of the most vivid cultural periods of American history. It changed under the influence of the war and the innovations it brought. Susan Currell describes it as “an era of cultural renaissance created from the very ambivalence, the irresolvable tensions, over ideas about the past and the possibilities of the future. (2)” This transitional period encouraged shifts in many cultural fields. This chapter will discuss Fitzgerald’s portrayal of various tendencies in architecture, fashion, music, and cinematography.

4.1 The portrayal of New York City and its architecture in the novel

Let us start with the description of the city and its architecture. The novel is set in New York and takes place either on Long Island or Manhattan. Long Island has a unique meaning for the book and the author's life, as Fitzgerald lived there from 1922 to 1924. He settled in the village called Great Neck, which became a prototype of West Egg, while either Manhasset or Plandome, situated on the opposite shore, became the prototype of lavish East Egg. The author depicts two other essential locations on Long Island—Brooklyn and Queens. The first borough is connected to the writer’s mention of one of America’s most famous amusement areas—Coney Island, where Gatsby invites Nick in Chapter 5 (67). In reality, it was a constantly evolving place, which attracted many people with such entertainment as Luna Park. Queens also has a significant role in the novel, representing one of its darkest regions—the “valley of ashes”. It serves as a place where Wilsons live and becomes a setting for the novel’s most critical event—Myrtle’s death. The real-life place was named Flushing Meadows and, just as described in the novel, contrasted with the wealth of the areas mentioned above.

Doubtless, one of the liveliest areas introduced in the novel is Manhattan, and the majority of its locations are actual. Fitzgerald included many streets and buildings in the book but let us look at those that stand out in the plot. When the characters plan to go to one of the most remarkable parts of New York, they pass Queensboro Bridge above Blackwell’s Island. It was constructed in 1909 to connect Long Island and Manhattan. Most of the other locations are positioned either near Central Park or down Manhattan, reaching the Financial District. The last area is significant, as it is a place where Nick works, the heart of the bond business. Other interesting spots are placed above it. For instance, after work, Nick usually has dinner at the Yale Club, a relatively new building,

finished in 1915 and situated at 50 Vanderbilt Avenue. Then he walks to Pennsylvania Station through Madison Avenue and 33rd Street (Fitzgerald 47). Nearby, on 42nd Street, Carraway meets Meyer Wolfsheim, who tells him nostalgic stories, which took place on the opposite 43rd Street, in the Metropole Hotel (57–59). Nick also likes to walk near 5th Avenue, which stretches up to Central Park, near which he spends time with Jordan (64). The only location situated above the park is 158th Street—the one where Myrtle’s apartment is situated. Thus, the streets and objects mentioned above are real-life places, which inspired the author and helped him make the novel even more realistic.

It is also essential to pay attention to the buildings described in the book, as they may improve understanding of the author’s portrayal of popular architectural styles. The most peculiar ones are Gatsby’s and Buchanans’ mansions placed on Long Island. Both constructions embody different architectural styles, popular since the 19th century. According to Curtis Dahl, Gatsby’s home represents neither modern nor traditional American architecture. The exterior of the building looks according to the previous century’s Châteauesque Style (92). It combines Italian Renaissance and Gothic architecture and makes the constructions look similar to palaces. Nick even ironically compares the house to “Hôtel de Ville in Normandy” (Fitzgerald 4). What is more, he provides the reader with vivid descriptions of interiors, such as the Gothic library and Marie Antoinette music-rooms. Even though the main character’s home looks luxurious, it is also glitzy, according to the narrator. On the contrary, Buchanans’ mansion looks more traditional. Nick describes it in the following lines:

Their house was even more elaborate than I expected, a cheerful red-and-white Georgian Colonial mansion, overlooking the bay. . . . The front was broken by a line of French windows, glowing now with reflected gold and wide open to the warm windy afternoon, (Fitzgerald 5–6)

The style mentioned above was not new at that moment, and unlike the Châteauesque design, it represents modest but elegant architecture. Its characteristics include symmetry and proportion, and the buildings are usually made of red or colourful bricks. It often includes gardens, just like in front of Tom’s home. Thus, one can notice that both mansions are designed in very different styles, representing their owners’ personalities. Gatsby’s is untraditional and extravagant, which mirrors his desire to seem one of the upper-class society as new money. In contrast, Tom's house looks more

classic and sophisticated; it does not need to be flashy to represent his class. Both styles remained popular during the 1920s but were used by different groups of the population.

Let us also examine Manhattan's architectural styles. One of the outstanding buildings mentioned in the novel is the Plaza Hotel. It opened in 1907 at 758 Fifth Avenue with a view of Central Park. According to Dahl, it too is built in Châteauesque style, just like Gatsby's home (101). It is endowed with a tea garden and offers its guests large rooms. Fitzgerald chooses this building as a setting for important meetings which appear in the plot: here, Jordan drinks tea with Nick and tells him about Gatsby and Daisy, and here their relationships come to an end.

One should also mention Myrtle's apartment. It is small, situated on the top floor and crowded with French-inspired furniture, which is obviously too big for it. This short description might be associated with French Renaissance design. The beforementioned disproportion in the interior also portrays an important social issue. Even though Myrtle cannot afford a bigger apartment, she still tries to be a part of the upper class and attempts to decorate her accommodation with expensive unfitting furniture, making it look vulgar.

As can be seen from the paragraphs above, the author does not endow *The Great Gatsby* with clear descriptions of one of the characteristics of the decade—the 1920s style Art Deco. The reason lies in the fact that it reached its popularity and definition in America only by the late 1920s. According to Anthony W. Robins, several Art Deco constructions, as American Radiator Building, were built before the novel was published (87). Nevertheless, the author does not mention them, preferring to portray older styles, which were more popular at that time.

4.2 Fashion of the decade

The previous chapter discussed the city's outlook and its architecture. Nevertheless, to perceive how Fitzgerald portrayed New York, it is necessary to find out more about the appearance of its most significant part—the citizens. Fashion has always mirrored people's life and historical consequences. Thus, during the 1920s, it mirrored the revolution in morals and the Great War.

Let us first take a look at the subject which underwent drastic changes—women's clothes. *The Great Gatsby* provides the reader with different descriptions of the new

styles. However, to interpret them into Fitzgerald's sources of inspiration, it is necessary to refer to historical circumstances and identify the shifts.

Kelly Boyer Sagert portrays the former ideal of women with "although slender, boasted a curvy, hourglass figure, thanks to a swan-bill corset beneath her bustled dress. Her neck was graceful, her hair piled upon her head with wisps and curls tumbling out . . ." (2). It is known that nothing lasts forever, and during the 1910s, clothes became more relaxed and changed entirely after the war. The reason lies in the fact that women had to substitute men at their workplaces, and the garments of the previous decade were not suitable for the new conditions. Nevertheless, one of the people who paved the path to 1920s fashion before the Great War was French designer Paul Poiret (Lussier 8). His collections changed the perception of female gowns, made straight, flat silhouettes fashionable, and changed the shape of the corsets. He used bright colours and geometrical or folk patterns. Even though Poiret's designs became revolutionary, they did not handle the pressure of time. Stunning but too theatrical, his dresses became less popular during the post-war period.

After WWI, the daywear gowns became shorter, and some of Poiret's innovations, such as flat silhouettes and various patterns, remained. Women preferred a boyish look created by loose clothes with dropped waistlines. The eveningwear, according to Lussier, included long, sleeveless dresses with gatherings and embroidery (26). Females also changed their hairstyles and makeup. They wore their hair bobbed; however, ladies chose visible makeup to emphasize their feminine beauty. They used accessories, such as tight hats, purses, and jewellery. Such fashion was successfully popularised by cinematography, but not everyone could afford to buy designer clothes. Thus, mass production came in handy, making the garments more affordable.

Let us now correlate the beforementioned information with the novel. As can be seen from the text above, *The Great Gatsby* mirrors most of the changes in fashion. For instance, the two girls at Gatsby's party wear yellow dresses. Moreover, one of them received a blue evening gown with lavender beads from Gatsby, just as in Poiret's colourful designs. They also have dyed bob hair, usual for the period. During the other party, the reader meets Catherine, who uses makeup and wears many accessories. Her sister, Myrtle, appears in a dark-blue spotted crepe-de-chine dress, then changes to a brown muslin one, and lastly, to a cream-coloured chiffon attire. Even though her garments are tight and do not correspond to the epoch's fashion, these descriptions provide us with various common fabrics used for production.

One should also discuss the trends among the upper class. First of all, it is visibly more elegant and less vivid, as, for example, when Daisy and Jordan appear on the scene for the first time, they wear white light dresses. The other instance might be found in the description of the company's trip to the Plaza Hotel when Fitzgerald portrays "Daisy and Jordan wearing small tight hats of metallic cloth and carrying light capes over their arms" (100). This mention of headdresses is another evidence of Fitzgerald's precise portrayal of the period's fashion, as such garments were rather popular.

It is essential to pay attention to men's fashion of the Jazz Age. Although it did not undergo such critical changes, some shifts still happened. Just as during the previous decade, the essential part of men's wardrobe was a suit. Wilcox R. Turner writes, "The slim, high-waisted silhouette of 1919 was modified into a more conservative style with patch pockets and a two-button closure instead of one" (161). Until 1925, trousers remained relatively narrow. Jackets became shorter than in previous decades, while coats remained nearly the same. Wilcox also mentions that light-coloured woollen costumes became more popular than dark ones. The author adds that felt slouch hats were also popular during the 1920s (161–162). Finally, the attires could be complemented by watches or cufflinks.

Fitzgerald demonstrates many examples of the beforementioned garments in the book. Thus, the analysis of three central male characters, Tom Buchanan, Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby, might help identify his inspiration sources. The reader may notice that Tom follows classical styles, as he ridicules Gatsby's vivid clothes. There are not many descriptions of his wardrobe in the text; however, in Chapter 2, Myrtle recounts her first meeting with him when he wore a dress suit and leather shoes (Fitzgerald 30). Nick also prefers modest outfits, such as the white flannels mentioned in Chapter 3 (Fitzgerald 34). Gatsby's style is different. The author provides the text with various descriptions of his garments. Although he wears a rather usual and fashionable caramel-coloured suit, he complements his white flannel one with a "silver shirt and gold-coloured tie" (Fitzgerald 69); the man also appears in pink clothes. Jay's wardrobe is full of different shirts: "of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel, . . . with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple-green and lavender and faint orange, with monograms of Indian blue" (Fitzgerald 77). His colourful clothes do not correspond to Tom's classic style. Instead, it reminds the colour pallets of the Italian Futurists (Lussier 44). What is more, even Gatsby's chauffeur wears a robin's-egg blue

uniform, which even more emphasizes his taste. Men in the novel frequently complement their outfits with coats and choose hats, watches and even cufflinks as accessories.

To summarise, the analysis above demonstrates how the Jazz Age fashion inspired Fitzgerald and shows his perception of various styles through the novel. He masterly depicts both in women's and man's fashions, providing the reader with a clear and unobtrusive image of the period.

4.3 The cinematography in *The Great Gatsby*

The discussion of the portrayal of American cultural life in the novel would not be complete without art. During the materialistic period of the 1920s, some of its branches followed the demands of consumerism and became a part of the entertainment field. One of such products of human creativity mentioned in the novel is cinematography. Since it appeared in the 19th century, it evolved into an essential part of arts and a great way to express and popularise ideas. Thus, the analysis of this topic might answer how Fitzgerald viewed this essential developing industry.

One of the most important references for the analysis is Jordan's suggestion to go to "Those big movies around Fiftieth Street . . ." (Fitzgerald 104). This part of the text indicates that the writer perceived motion pictures as a common leisure activity. Let us correlate this quotation with the historical literature. According to Currell, during the 1920s, movies became not only one of the most popular fields of entertainment but also a huge business, which could be used to popularise both ideas and goods (103-105). Such companies as "Fox, MGM, Paramount, RKO, United Artists, Universal and Warner Brothers built huge studios in California between 1915 and 1925 to manufacture their products for maximum profitability" (Currell 105). Huge rivalry made the corporations develop and produce more films, bringing them huge profits. New cinemas, which were built across the country, provided the citizens with relatively cheap tickets, making cinematography accessible for almost all social classes. Thus, people were provided with a new way to escape reality, through which new morals and the ideas of materialism and consumerism were popularised.

Fitzgerald also endowed his novel with references to people who worked in the industry. Even though the majority of such characters remained either nameless or with

made-up names, there is one celebrity, Gilda Gray, who was a real-life actress. One of her outstanding works was a revue, Ziegfeld Follies; however, her career also included some movies. She, and many other famous actresses, such as Cecil DeMille, became the embodiments of female ideals, while examples of masculinity were created by such male actors as Rudolph Valentino and Tom Wix.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that even though Fitzgerald does not portray the cinematography in detail, it is clear that this part of the Jazz Age influenced him, and as a result, he immortalised it as a significant feature of the culture through his novel.

4.4 Jazz as a new impetus to music

The analysis of Fitzgerald's portrayal of American culture during the 1920s would be impossible without exploring jazz. It is not just a term referring to one of the most fantastic genres of music. Jazz is an embodiment of the idea of dawn, after the dusk of war, the expression of joy and expectations for a bright future, which came with the new stage of United States history.

Jazz has a special place in the novel. It is present during most of the parties, especially the ones held in Gatsby's mansion. Nick Carraway mentions it in the following line: "There was music from my neighbour's house through the whole summer nights" (Fitzgerald 32). What is more, when the narrator describes the party, he says there was an orchestra with various instruments, such as "oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums" (Fitzgerald 33). The importance of this excerpt lies in the fact that these instruments were used to create playful rhythms of jazz. Later, Nick even names a song, which sounded during the joyful evening— "Vladimir Tostoff's Jazz History of the World" (Fitzgerald 41). Even though the composition is fictional, it still reminds the reader of how omnipresent the new genre was during the parties. Thus, it is essential to discover which aspects of this new impetus to music inspired the author and which historical circumstances he decided to portray in the text.

The representation of jazz in the book might be explained by its importance for the decade. "With hybrid origins in both African and European musical traditions it was quintessentially representative of America in the post-war world: modern, mongrelised, energetic and vernacular" (Currell 71). It borrowed motives from equally popular blues,

ragtime, and classical compositions. The art of jazz was a collective improvisation, and according to many of its performers, communication through melody. Its heart was in New Orleans, although after the war, its beat echoed in almost every corner of the country, changing the perception of jazz as a primitive craft to a new rebellious form of musical art. While the Great Migration encouraged its widespread, the prosperity and revolutionary ambience of the period created a significant demand for it. The fame of the genre was also supported by speakeasies, where the bands could perform. Thus, it is not surprising that Gatsby chooses this genre for his luxurious parties. The new compositions were also popularised by radio broadcasts, as “there were over five hundred radio stations throughout the United States and where three-quarters of the broadcasting over the decade consisted of music, 75 per cent of this was jazz” (Currell 77). As a result, the genre was prevalent and performed by both black and white musicians, going beyond race and delighting the world with such incredible artists as Joe Oliver and Louis Armstrong. No wonder that Fitzgerald’s observant eyes could not omit such a remarkable cultural feature.

It is also essential to pay attention to the songs mentioned in the novel. The author uses many popular melodies of different genres in the book, such as blues and foxtrot compositions, but only one belongs to jazz. It is a real-life piece of music written by Harry B. Smith. It appears in Chapter 4 and starts with the words, “I’m the Sheik of Araby” (Fitzgerald 65). By using this song in the text, the author created a unique ambience for the readers in the 1920s who heard it and an essential historical reference for future generations.

To conclude, the realistic atmosphere of the Jazz Age in *The Great Gatsby* would not exist without Fitzgerald’s depiction of the new wave in musical art. The author endowed Jay’s parties with joyful notes of the rebellious genre, referring to its prevalence and popularity among bootleggers’. Moreover, he even mentions the real-life popular song to share the mood of the 1920s melodies with the reader.

4.5 Sport as an important cultural aspect in the novel

Francis Scott Fitzgerald pays special attention to sports in *The Great Gatsby*, as it is an essential cultural feature. The post-war American society sought entertainment to have some careless and joyful time, and the prosperity allowed it. People were engaged

in various fields of activities; however, sport became one of America's most important cultural features during the 1920s.

Baseball, football, tennis, boxing, golf, and polo were popular and found their place in the text of *The Great Gatsby*. Nevertheless, first, it would be helpful to analyse one particular reference from the book—World Series. In Chapter 4, Gatsby tells Nick Carraway that Wolfsheim fixed the game in 1919 (Fitzgerald 60). It comes to be that this is a real historical circumstance, during which “Major League Baseball had ... been rocked by the 1919 Black Sox scandal. Eight members of the Chicago White Sox were accused of fixing the World Series that year, that is, intentionally causing the White Sox to lose so that gamblers would benefit” (Buckley and Walters 6). Even though it happened before the 1920s, this event represents how important this part of cultural life was even during the preceding decade. What is more, this case was actively discussed, which could draw even more attention to the sport in the following years. Soon, in 1921, the players were banned from future games to save baseball's reputation. Such a strategy helped, and as a result, supporters could still enjoy matches and the development of such great players as George Herman Ruth, George Sisler, and Rogers Hornsby during the Jazz Age.

Another widespread kind of sport was boxing. Just as baseball, it was considered a professional activity that gathered people from all over the country. Especially popular were Jack Dempsey's fights, one of which “became the first in history to earn \$1 million on ticket sales” (Buckley and Walters 16). Nevertheless, the writer mentions boxing only once, without any precise details, in Chapter 7, during the discussion about a man named Biloxi (106).

One should also pay attention to Fitzgerald's mention of football. The root of his inspiration might lie in the fact that as a professional sport, it appeared in 1920 when the American Professional Football Association was formed (Buckley and Walters 12). College football gained more popularity during the Roaring Twenties, and such leading players as Harold Grange became famous. Thus, in the novel, the author portrays this sport through Tom Buchanan, one of the most influential and successful players during his years at Yale.

Fitzgerald also mentions important sports which were considered elitist. For instance, polo was one of Tom's fields of interest. It was a popular activity during the 1920s. Moreover, Tom is a personification of Tommy Hitchcock, the United States' top polo player, so it becomes clear what inspired the author to mention this game (Buckley,

Walters 16). The novelist also places golf in the book as an essential field of Jordan Baker's occupation. Even though during the 1920s, golf was mainly seen as a male sport, Jordan is a depiction of a real-life polo player Edith Cummings. Fitzgerald knew her, as she was Ginevra King's friend. Even though she was not as successful as Glenna Collett-Vare—the leading female player of the decade, Edith still won several essential competitions. Last but not least, tennis also appears in the novel. This sport was highly favoured among Americans. What is more, it was another game that allowed women to participate in various competitions. Thus, it was perceived not only as a professional activity but also as a way to spend spare time, as can be seen in the novel.

To conclude, the analysis above proves that Fitzgerald perceived sports as an essential part of American life during the 1920s. The novel depicts not only its various kinds but also events and players. The author portrays it both as a professional activity and a free time entertainment, thus an essential part of the culture.

5 Conclusion

This bachelor thesis aimed to find out how American novelist Francis Scott Fitzgerald portrayed the Jazz Age—one of the most vivid periods in the history of the United States—in his outstanding work of literary art, *The Great Gatsby*. This work studied four different aspects of life described in the book. Let us now summarise the results of the analysis above.

The purpose of the first chapter was to introduce the topic, present a short description of the plot and take a look at Fitzgerald's biography in terms of its relation to *The Great Gatsby*. As a result, it came to be that the author's childhood, juvenescence and youth influenced the plot of the novel, the characters, and the setting. What is more, an especially important impact on the book had the writer's acquaintance with Ginevra King and relationships with Zelda Sayre, which began right before the Jazz Age.

The second chapter of the thesis studied Fitzgerald's depiction of the United States after the war. Even though it was not obvious at first glance, the analysis of the topic and the correlation of the novel with historical literature proved that the book contains various references to the country's condition during the 1920s. We found out that the author was inspired by the politics and presidencies of Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge. Moreover, he portrayed the growing American economy, which was

impacted by industrialisation, mass production, and the population's strong purchasing potential. Last but not least, the analyses showed that except for politics and the economy, Fitzgerald also portrayed a significant post-war social tendency—the Prohibition movement.

The third chapter aimed to examine the writer's representation of the 1920's society in the novel. We explored different distinct social issues mentioned in the book and compared them to the historical circumstances. It turned out that the author was inspired by two types of social inequalities: class system and racism. Fitzgerald also masterly described the decaying popularity of an essential source of human moral principles—religion. Moreover, he precisely depicted the revolution in morals, its causes and consequences, which even influenced gender roles and relations.

The fourth chapter analysed the most distinctive feature of the Jazz Age—its unique culture. Because Fitzgerald portrayed its versatility, we paid attention to the key aspects to perceive the author's vision of the decade. The first step of the analysis was the study of the depiction of New York and its architecture. It demonstrated that the author used real-life places and architectural styles to create the novel's realistic setting. The further review of the Roaring Twenties fashion proved that Fitzgerald knew about the tendencies and decided to use them in his literary work. The author also paid special attention to the portrayal of entertainments and arts of the period. He grasped the ambience created by the new style in music—jazz, and recreated it in the novel. The novelist could not ignore the growing popularity of cinematography and depicted it in the plot. Finally, he described the golden age of sport in the United States by mentioning almost all of its popular kinds in the text.

Thus, it is possible to summarise that the Roaring Twenties greatly influenced the author, and, as a result, he masterly portrayed the period in *The Great Gatsby*.

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