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*The Great Gatsby &
Breakfast at Tiffany's: A
Study of Literary Confluence*

Antía Román Sotelo

Constante González Groba

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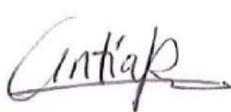
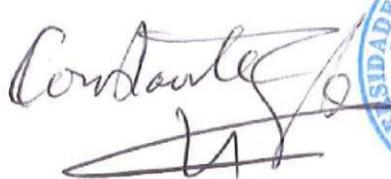
Título: *The Great Gatsby* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's*: A study of literary confluence.

Resumo [na lingua en que se vai redactar o TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

The Great Gatsby is an icon of the American Dream related to the disillusionment that remained after World War I, this novel being set in New York in 1922. *Breakfast at Tiffany's* represents once again the failure of those American ideals during the Second World War, that is to say, two decades later, and in that same city which stands for the whole country. Both literary works can be considered a faithful reflection of their times within their cultural and sociological contexts. Furthermore, they play with the tensions between idealism and opportunity, which are inherent in the American literary thought.

The aim of this project is to analyze the optional intertextuality that *Breakfast at Tiffany's* shows with respect to *The Great Gatsby*, after placing each of these works in its respective context. There is not only a repetition of such themes as disappointment and incertitude, but also of materialism and corruption. In addition, a reiteration of characters' roles can be acknowledged; the narrators of the two novels function as observers and the protagonists develop throughout the stories in a very similar way, from humble origins to a new identity that allows them to pursue their own aspirations.

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1. Introduction

This study of literary confluence is going to be based on the major works of two renowned American prolific writers of the 20th century. *The Great Gatsby* is very well-known for being the pessimistic and critical novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald that best illustrates the Jazz Age and the death of the American Dream, whereas *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is Capote's most famous novella and has been severely criticized because of the protagonist's dubious morality at the time it was written. Both novels obtained more recognition years later; in the case of *The Great Gatsby*, it gained strength thanks to the success of the edition for the American soldiers of the Second World War and in the case of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, the film adaptation made the novel, and especially the main character performed by Audrey Hepburn, internationally famous. *The Great Gatsby* is set in 1922, four years after the end of the First World War, whereas *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is set in the autumn of 1943, just two years before the end of the Second World War, although both novels were written later, and published in 1925 and 1958 respectively. As Rod W. Horton and Herbert W. Edwards say, "In the twenty years between World Wars we passed through contrasting emotional stages at home from an overconfident positiveness to a chastened negativity" (300), going through the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the subsequent Great Depression. It could be thought that these two periods diverge from each other in the sense that the so-called Roaring Twenties are well known for their economic prosperity and happiness and, on the contrary, the 1940s had already suffered the consequences of the economic crisis and besides a second war takes place in the first half of the decade, but, as usual, things are not what they seem. According to Horton and Edwards:

The first post-war manifestations in our literature seemed to be hardly more than the self-pitying outburst of another "lost generation" reviving the disillusionment and sense of injury of a Hemingway, a Fitzgerald, or a Dos Passos . . . The authors of the late Forties and early Fifties, in registering their indignation . . . were by and large content

to . . . point out the bankruptcy of Western leadership, the pervading loss of faith in the old ideals of democracy and individual worth. (515-16)

Much of this academic study will focus on the conceptualization of these democratic ideals and human values in the Declaration of Independence, later extolled with the promises of the American Dream, their following implementation in society during the Industrial Revolution and how they have been killed, changed or misunderstood in the modern world through the examples of Jay Gatsby and Holly Golightly, who reflect the society of their times. Their personal failure can therefore be related to the failure of the traditional conception of the American Dream as an ultimate goal in the 20th century or to the loss of old values in a society that has been corrupted by the rise of materialism and superficiality. The intrepid and inquisitive spirit that had first characterized the settlers turned into disillusionment, indifference and elusiveness. Citizens escaped from crude realities through alcohol, parties and television, pretending tranquility and happiness in spite of the evident increase of drugs, including tranquilizers and antidepressants.

Apart from the contemporary context of both novels and their protagonists' tensions fitting in at the same time that differentiating themselves from it, the personal journey of the characters, from James Gatz and Lulamae Barnes to Jay Gatsby and Holly Golightly respectively, will also be developed, together with their corresponding aspirations and frustrations. At the same time, we will see how much of the protagonists' expectations and impediments are actually projections of the same feelings experienced by their authors, Scott Fitzgerald and Truman Capote respectively, one author being the portrait of the Lost Generation and the other one a renowned homosexual in a postwar society that valued that everything and everyone was straight.

Finally, the observer narrators will also be taken into account and compared to each other, since they are able to depict both the society and the protagonists from particular points of view. Although there are other characters that could be compared, such as Daisy and Holly, or other themes and motifs, my aim is to point out those aspects concerning the mindset within society at both periods, the 1920s and the 1940s respectively, as described by these literary works, emphasizing both the similarities and the differences between the epochs, and the way the behavior and the actions of the protagonists converge.

2. The American Dream

The American Dream is a well-known concept around the world, since it is frequently dealt with in the news, in magazines and in movies. Nevertheless, we must wonder what is exactly the idea that this term entails. Cal Jillson provides this definition:

The American Dream is the promise that the country holds out to the rising generation and to immigrants that hard work and fair play will almost certainly lead to success. All who are willing to strive, to learn, to work hard, to save and invest will have every chance to succeed and to enjoy the fruits of their success in safety, security, and good order. Education (physical and intellectual skills), good character (honesty, cleanliness, sobriety, religiosity), hard work (frugality, saving, investing), and a little luck form a broad pathway to the American Dream. (6)

The American Dream is therefore based on individual willingness and effort to succeed in life, but with the possibility of that success assured by the system. The disposition towards success and happiness is not exclusively American, as Jeffrey Kluger notes:

All human beings may come equipped with the pursuit-of-happiness impulse . . . but it's Americans who have codified the idea, written it into the Declaration of Independence and made it a central mandate of the national character. American

happiness would never be about savor-the-moment contentment. . . . Our happiness would be bred, instead, of an almost adolescent restlessness, an itch to do the Next Big Thing. (68)

That American spirit of entrepreneurship is present in the country since its beginnings in the colonies and still prevails in the image that the rest of the world has about the US.

2.1. The origins of the American Dream

The idea of the American Dream was already present in the 17th century in the spirit of the settlers who first came to America to establish themselves and start a new life of possibilities, but it was not until the 18th century that it was materialized in the Declaration of Independence. However, the proper term that defines the idea today was actually coined during the Great Depression of the 20th century. As Fareed Zakaria remarks:

The historian James Truslow Adams published *The Epic of America* in 1931, in an atmosphere of even greater despair than today's. He wanted to call his book *The American Dream*, but his publishers objected. . . . Still, Adams used the phrase so often that it entered the lexicon. The American Dream, he said, was of "a better, richer and happier life for all our citizens of every rank, which is the greatest contribution we have made to the thought and welfare of the world. That dream or hope has been present from the start. (19)

Notwithstanding, Jillson points out that J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur in the 18th century and also Henry Adams in the 19th century had already "described the powerful American ethos of freedom and opportunity as a 'dream'" (5). James Truslow Adams makes reference to an equal right to happiness and well-being. It is fair to call this idealistic vision a *dream*, since this right has been denied to many ethnic groups and also to women throughout history.

It all started at the beginning of the 17th century in the East Coast with the settlement of Jamestown by the Virginia Company of London. According to Jillson, the settlers of Virginia were adventurous people who wanted to rapidly make a fortune and so they were in search of gold and trade routes (21). Although they could be seen as opportunist businesspersons, that entrepreneurship continues to characterize and differentiate the American citizens from the conformism that prevails in other countries. As Jillson notes, “Individualism, competition, and luck played distinctive roles in the Virginians’ view of the world” (22).

A little later, a different kind of people disembarked from the *Mayflower* in Plymouth, Massachusetts. They were known as the Pilgrim Fathers and, although their purposes differed from the Virginians’ ones, they did not lack courage either. As Jillson remarks, “Massachusetts and Pennsylvania were settled by families and sometimes whole communities that shared religious goals and were willing to sacrifice greatly to achieve them” (21). Puritans and Quakers had left the British Isles in quest of freedom of belief together with the opportunity to create new communities according to their own values. Kluger talks about how the pilgrims’ courage to go beyond the known was taught to the new generations: “It took us 100 years to settle the continent and less than 200 to become the world’s dominant power” (68). Thus, the yearning for conquest and progress has modelled the American Dream since the beginning.

These first settlers’ ideals of work, opportunity and freedom gained momentum with the rise of Rationalism in Europe during the 18th century, thanks to Descartes’ foundations of the 17th century. The Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson in 1776, was the culmination of the Enlightenment’s aims. Horton and Edwards give this assessment of the Age of Reason in colonial America:

To them [rationalists] labor, not property, was the basic measure of value . . . To attain this individual betterment, . . . man must not only exercise initiative and self-reliance

but he must also have relatively free rein for his efforts by living in a society which offered freedom of thought, speech, and worship as necessary concomitants of man's happiness. These commodities, along with the rights of life, liberty, and property (changed by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness") constituted to the Enlightened the natural rights of man . . . regardless of wealth or social station. (72)

Therefore, already in the 18th century, the conception of birthright and the lack of mobility within the social hierarchy were being dissolved. A world previously believed to be arranged by a divine and unaltered order started to change, resulting, according to Horton and Edwards, in "the establishment of a Kingdom of Heaven on earth" (74). The population was starting to abandon the ideas of humbleness and of waiting for a better life in Heaven and to make instead the most of life on earth, which would eventually bring about the profit motive during the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century.

2.2. The American Dream in the 20th century

The first half of the 20th century would be characterized by the presidency of Democrat Woodrow Wilson during the Great War, followed by three Republican governments led by Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover, and the return of the Democratic Party with the inauguration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933. As Jillson notes, "Every president, Republican and Democrat, . . . felt compelled to pay obeisance to American individualism and the self-help tradition" (189), but they had to confront the new realities that changed society and therefore necessarily changed the traditional point of views as well. Jillson analyzes the transformation in this way:

The transition from rural to urban life, the diversification of the economy, and the increasing importance of education, science, and technology – the falling importance

of strong backs and the rising importance of strong minds – had changed the meanings of freedom, equality, and opportunity. (191)

Already during the 19th century, the thirst for money and power of the owners of factories increased social inequality and led to the exploitation of workers. The rise of a labor market and the emphasis on production triggered a competitiveness and individualism higher than ever, to the point that the government began to wonder whether intervention should be necessary. Jillson refers to Woodrow Wilson, who assured that “men should look out for themselves, but that in the new industrial era they could only do so when the competition was fair and the rules applied equally to everyone in the game” (165), so he tried to restrict the privileges of the rich and established the eight-hour workday.

Nevertheless, as Jillson explains, “The horrors of World War I . . . brought an end to the progressivism of . . . Wilson and left Americans thirsting for domestic security and prosperity” (166), which resulted in the Republican ascendancy of the 1920s. It was called a “return to normalcy”, because, according to Jillson, it “brought a decided shift back in favor of business priorities” (189), clearly confirmed by Coolidge when he stated that “the business of America is business” (166).

Undoubtedly, the 1920s was a period of economic prosperity when more and more people were accessing new goods and services such as the car, but it ended abruptly with the Stock Market Crash of 1929, which had a profound impact on the lives of American citizens. As Horton and Edwards argue, “The life of the United States in the decade before 1929 was comparable to that critical period in human existence when one is conscious of his recently attained manhood without having any real awareness of the responsibilities of his new estate” (301). America was presented as apparently unaffected by the catastrophes of the Great War. In fact, it had proved to be a great power fighting for global hegemony, but unaware of the

obligations it would have to assume later on and of how the consequences of its acts would influence the proper functioning of international relations. The country was exemplifying what Heidegger called *Alltäglichkeit*, banality, which “provides an excuse and justification for the flight from responsibility and individual choice, and . . . enables the individual to take refuge in the seeming solidity of a socially approved mode of existence” (Horton and Edwards 489-490). Already during the 20s and especially in the 30s and 40s, America would have to follow what Kant thought to be the maxim of the Enlightenment: “man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage” (Kant). Thus the definition of the Jazz Age by Horton and Edwards is: “the beginning of a cycle of stress, a testing period to determine whether the long-cherished ideals of democracy, progress, and opportunity will continue as the motivating forces in American life, or whether our destinies will henceforth be controlled by some new . . . and more frankly cynical system” (303).

It was precisely the irresponsible escapist belief that everything was going well in the US after the Great War that shocked the young people coming back from the war in Europe with serious traumas and made them feel completely detached from society. Horton and Edwards describe it as follows: “an age marked by the shocking decline of (that) idealism . . . an age when patriotism among the young turned into cynical disillusionment, when the unity of the family was weakened by the centralizing influences of the lure of the city, the automobile, and cheap mass entertainment” (302). Each of these distractions shape the New York society depicted in *The Great Gatsby*. Moreover, in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, in spite of the war in the background, with the death of Fred, the brother of the protagonist, there is an apparently calm and cheerful atmosphere, also with many banal parties, which is even more surprising if we take into account the fact that the attack on Pearl Harbor, which affected deeply the US and triggered its entry in the conflict, had already taken place in 1941. The war is mentioned once by Mag Wildwood, simply by saying: “There's a war on” (Capote 47). She

states that she is proud of her country, but just before that, when she was drunk, she proclaimed that Hitler was right (Capote 45).

Prosperity and disarray in excess during the 1920s had its consequences in the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the subsequent Great Depression that President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his interventionist politics of the New Deal would have to fight during the 1930s. According to Jillson, “reaching back to Jackson and Lincoln, he demanded a better balance between the interests of the dollar and the man – between property rights and human rights” (163), which put the emphasis on equal opportunity back in the focus of attention. Jillson also remarks that the most frequently repeated words by Roosevelt were “opportunity” and “democracy” and that he promised that “he was not proposing new ideals just new means to secure old ideals” (164). But then again a new World War came, bringing disillusionment, traumas and lack of prospects to the population.

Although right after seeing themselves involved in the Second World War the idea of the US as an isolated nation seemed no longer possible because, as Jillson points out, “The United States emerged from World War II as the dominant cultural, political, military, and economic power in the world” (191), the population did not feel that mood of empowerment. As Horton and Edwards explain, after the destructive potential of science showed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, together with Einstein’s theories of relativity that destabilized our vision of the cosmos, the common man “felt a sense of haunted insecurity in a world in which inconceivable forces of destruction could be unleashed at any moment” (458). The disillusionment that was first experienced mostly by the soldiers coming back from the Great War and the writers of the Lost Generation would now be felt by all the inhabitants of the country. However, the population would continue to take refuge in their material goods, within an environment of complacency and alienation that was depicted by the traumatized war veteran J.D. Salinger in

The Catcher in the Rye (1951). Jillson summarizes people's attitude after the death of President Roosevelt:

Eisenhower and Stevenson both sensed that the balance between the material and the spiritual in American life was shifting. Eisenhower complimented Americans on what they had achieved, while Stevenson challenged them to do more. Voters accepted the compliment but not yet the challenge". (193)

Thus, the Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower won the presidential elections of 1952 and of 1956 as well.

After World War II, the philosophy that gained strength was Existentialism. Horton and Edwards point out three main characteristics of the movement:

(1) the rejection of any closed system of thought which attempts to explain the meaning of life and human existence by reference to some rationally comprehensible reality outside man himself; (2) the emphasis on the uniqueness and importance of the individual, and (3) the freedom and responsibility of the individual human being who wills to do a particular thing in a world in which there are no moral certainties. (470-71)

It is possible to relate both novels to these issues. The first one can reflect Gatsby's thoughts about repeating the past, which contrast with the rationality of Nick Carraway. The second and third could correspond to both protagonists, Gatsby and Holly, willing to change their names and to construct a new identity that opens the way for a reality where they are the protagonists, or even the final image of Holly looking for self-definition in solitude. According to Nietzsche, who was one of the most powerful influences on Existentialism, "In a world of perpetual becoming there can be no certain or permanent knowledge for a creature who is himself constantly in the process of becoming" (Horton and Edwards 482). That is probably

Holly's fate, a never-ending state of non-conformism and contradictions pursuing an ideal happiness that depends on her own identity and how she wants to lead her life, which is what she will always try to discover. Her life priorities change once his brother is dead, since our personal experiences influence our conception of life and our ideals to the point of becoming lost. It is a continuous frustration of expectations, which is why Nietzsche also said that "man must have the courage to live without illusions" (Horton and Edwards 478). The losses of the protagonists' love objects, of Daisy in the case of Gatsby and of Fred in the case of Holly, affected them in the same way that Nietzsche thought God's death would affect humanity, and thus a question must be raised: "if all divine or idealist justification of life has been removed, has existence any significance at all?" (Horton and Edwards 483).

2.3. The failure of the American Dream through Jay Gatsby and Holly Golightly

Taking into account the original values promulgated by the Declaration of Independence and the great personalities of the 18th century, it is easy to see how the protagonists of the two novels fail to adapt themselves to them. They are representations of the society of their times, when the American Dream had already been modified according to people's own interests or even misunderstood. In fact, according to Robert Ornstein, *The Great Gatsby* "is not simply a chronicle of the Jazz Age but rather a dramatization of the betrayal of the naive American dream in a corrupt society" (54).

Jay Gatsby and Holly Golightly are dreamers pursuing an ideal happiness who think they have to climb the social ladder in their attempt to achieve it, which is exactly the idea that began to be engendered in the Enlightenment. Everyone could ascend through hard work; inferiority was not a question of race, gender or social status anymore, at least in theory. It depended instead upon your possibilities of education, opportunity and progress. In conclusion, as Horton and Edwards note, "man is what he makes of himself" (76), which is opposed to the

religious worldview, especially to the radical Calvinist ideology of predestination. Born of humble origins, Gatsby and Holly took the necessary initiative to abandon their respective situations of disempowerment. However, it seems that they chose a different path than the labor promulgated by the rationalists of the 18th century: whereas Gatsby is involved in illegal activities, not having the standard weary job expected of a person who has no money, Holly has no work and thus she depends on men's economic protection. We could think either that they take shortcuts or that they do not play fair. As Jillson considers, regarding Gatsby, "The collision between illegitimate means and ill-conceived ends was bound to conclude badly" (168).

It is highly significant that the reader has no access to the actual development of the protagonists in their way out of poverty. Some excerpts of their past lives are given, but in the case of Holly, they are related to her early marriage and family life, instead of her personal struggle and solitude after that, and, regarding Gatsby, he himself provides an account of all his experiences through life, both at university and during the war, but Nick does not seem to believe the story completely and therefore, neither does the reader. As Jillson says, "Gatsby's life story, as well as his personality and its projection into the world, was more a hologram than a human life grounded in effort and reality" (128). In both narratives, there is a character who says he was responsible for the protagonist's success. These are Meyer Wolfshiem in *The Great Gatsby* and O.J. Berman in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. The first time Nick meets Meyer Wolfshiem, the latter only describes Gatsby in positive terms: "I knew I had discovered a man of fine breeding . . . There is the kind of man you'd like to take home and introduce to your mother and sister" (Fitzgerald 72). However, when Nick meets him again after Gatsby's death the former protector says that the first time he saw Gatsby, "He [Gatsby] was so hard up he had to keep on wearing his uniform because he couldn't buy regular clothes" and he was asking for a job; when Nick asks him if he started Gatsby on business, he clearly answers: "Start him! I

made him . . . I raised him out of nothing, right out of the gutter” (Fitzgerald 173). Regarding O.J. Berman, he talks about Holly as if she was his own creation: “I’m the guy was giving her the push. . . . I’m the first one saw her. . . . But it took us a year to smooth that accent. . . . We modelled her” (Capote 33-34).

The idea of the protagonists being helped in that way could be contrasted with the life of Benjamin Franklin, the great example of the self-made man during the 18th century. Furthermore, he is considered to be an honorable man, thus contrasting with Gatsby’s dubious business. *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* could also be compared with novels such as Theodor Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie*, a novel whose protagonist also comes from the lower-middle class and has the necessity to find a job in order to make a living. Although Carrie at some points in her life gets the help of two men, she goes through different jobs and eventually is able to support herself thanks to her employment. Throughout the novel the reader witnesses her ups and downs in a way that is not reflected in *The Great Gatsby*, since Gatsby is already rich, and this is partially perceived in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, where Holly pretends to lead a glamorous life of carelessness. In spite of the lack of noticeable ups and downs, both the attitude of Gatsby towards the law and the astuteness of Holly to take advantage of people are typical of the picaresque genre, but the lack of a clear moral and personal development of the protagonists excludes them from the *Bildungsroman* genre.

Regarding the right to property, which was also established as common to all human beings by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, both characters are looking for a home. Gatsby has tried to get a high status that allows him to involve Daisy in his life, acquiring an enormous mansion with gardens, an ideal place to impress and start a life with her. Holly also desires the welfare of somebody, but in her case, his brother; she wants to get a house for him to stay with her when he comes back from the war. Both protagonists intend to provide a welcoming refuge to the person they love; as the TV series *Show Me a Hero* reflects, according

to Oscar Newman's theory of defensible space, home is not a block of chaotic other people's apartments, but an individual space in which you can have a sense of ownership and feel safe. It was thought to improve social relationships and equality. Curiously enough, the series title pays homage to the famous quote of Fitzgerald: "Show me a hero and I'll write you a tragedy". Nevertheless, the protagonists of the novels fail to fulfill their expectations in different ways. Daisy cannot deal with the origin of Gatsby's money, so he is rejected and, had he not died, he might have followed the same fate as Holly, which is to start again and alone after having experienced a profound dissatisfaction affected by the death of his brother and also by the same high class's values and prejudices that harassed Gatsby. This is because, as Jillson notes, after World War II, "Moderates, both Democrats and Republicans, admitted that more justice demanded to be done, but they warned that equality, absent the striving and competition that had always characterized American life, might be an attractive dream, but it was not *the American Dream*" (192). Therefore, there is a conflict or confusion between the idea that everyone, regardless social position, can ascend in society and the fact that everyone should be under the same conditions, so, according to Jon Meacham's opinion, "we have only been promised a chance to pursue happiness – not to catch it" (75) and "Experience teaches us that the more aggressively we pursue it, the harder it can be to find. (Ask Jay Gatsby . . .)" (75).

As Jillson states, "Race, gender, wealth, ethnicity, and religion have all been used to exclude persons and groups from the community of American citizens" (7). In the case of Gatsby, his major impediment to fulfill his obsessive desire to be with Daisy is the division between East and West. Although during the 19th century the expansion of the Frontier towards the West was considered a source of new opportunities, the industrialization and the rise of big cities in the East inverted the situation. Gatsby, in spite of going East, stays in West Egg as a nouveau riche, whereas Daisy, who belonged to a higher social class, lives at the other end, in East Egg. According to Fahimeh Keshmiri, this "sociology of wealth" is one of the main topics

in *The Great Gatsby* (1925). When it comes to Holly, being a woman is her main obstacle for making a living without having to depend on her relationships with men. According to Jillson,

Women's struggle for equality in America, while less overt and less obviously intense than the struggle of blacks, has in its own way been just as difficult. Women were held in subjection at least partially by religious and cultural assumptions . . . The Christian teaching that wives were to love, honor, and obey their husbands was powerfully reinforced by the common law principle of "coverture". Coverture held that a woman was subsumed, or covered, by the legal personality of her father until marriage and of her husband after marriage. (7)

The American Dream has been conceived as a means to achieve happiness. Jefferson had also promulgated it as a human right in the Declaration of Independence, but he was talking about a sensible collective joy. As Meacham observes, "That sense of reason [during the Enlightenment] was leading Western thinkers to focus on the idea of happiness, which in Jefferson's hands may be better understood as the pursuit of individual excellence that shapes the life of a broader community" (75). It was a question of achieving personal satisfaction through society. If you make an effort to get a job, you are also getting a position within the community that will allow you to collaborate and serve your equals. It is the society that allows you in the first place to get a determined role and it is the citizens who must play their parts to make society work. Meacham notes that "Given the Aristotelian insight that man is a social creature whose life finds meaning in his relation to other human beings, Jeffersonian *eudaimonia* – the Greek word for happiness – evokes virtue, good conduct and generous citizenship" and describes happiness as an "ultimate good" (75).

Although the ancient theory of Aristotle and the vision of Jefferson coincided, in the 20th century individualism gained ground. As Meacham also observes, "If the 18th century

meaning of happiness connoted civic responsibility, the world has occasionally been taken to be more about private gratification than public good” (76), which is exactly the case of Jay Gatsby and Holly Golightly. In the case of Gatsby, he focuses on Daisy so much that his happiness depends totally on her acceptance. Therefore, he is extremely concerned to cause a good impression on Nick Carraway once he finds out he is Daisy’s cousin. As Jillson points out, “Gatsby’s glow was dependent both upon Daisy’s continued belief in him and his own confidence in her belief. Doubt and rejection killed the dream and brought Gatsby’s complete collapse” (168), since it was more an illusion than the reality itself. It seems the typical situation of courtly love poetry, in which the lyric voice identified the lady with the Lord, since all his bliss depended on whether she looked at him to guide him through life showing him much more than ordinary appearances or she rejected him. That situation is very dangerous and some poets tried to take care not to commit a heresy, since putting your life in the hands of another human being as if she were a superior being was seen as punishable behavior. Taking this into account, Gatsby’s death could be seen as a sort of poetic justice if it were not for the fact that his violent death is his ultimate act of heroism trying to protect Daisy by assuming the blame of the car accident, which redeems him and extols him over the Eastern careless rich. Jillson concludes that “Gatsby paid a high price for living too long with the wrong dream; the dream of adolescent romance proved an insufficient basis for later stages of adult life and accomplishment” (169). The idea of personal progress that the American Dream involves was accomplished because he got indeed out of poverty and started a new life; however, that was not the goal that Gatsby really wanted to achieve. Jillson thinks that instead of regarding the novel as an icon of the American Dream, “It seems more reasonable to say that Gatsby reminded us that not every American dreams the American Dream” (168).

Whereas the individualism of Gatsby comes from the isolation of the lovers in the courtly love tradition (they are considered asocial because they live for one another and do not

intend to have children), Holly's individualism is inherent to her. As Nan S. Heinbaugh says, "the reader faces a lonely heroine without roots or ties" (79). She is an orphan who left her husband and who lost her brother. She only has a cat, but it does not even have a name and when she explains the reason why, she talks more about herself than she does about the cat: "We just sort of took up by the river one day, we don't belong to each other; he's an independent, and so am I. I don't want to own anything until I know I've found the place where me and my things belong together" (Capote 40). Because of that, instead of having a decorated apartment full of furniture, she has just some suitcases; she is always ready to move. However, towards the end of the novel, the fact that she abandons her cat, according to Heinbaugh, "suggests that she lacks identity as long as she lacks relationships. Madness is not comprised of eccentric behavior but is simply the state of isolation from others" (79). She immediately regrets the separation from her cat: "her voice collapsed, a tic, an invalid whiteness seized her face. . . . she shuddered, she had to grip my arm to stand up: 'Oh, Jesus God. We did belong to each other. He was mine.'" (Capote 98-99). Right after, according to Heinbaugh, when she confesses to be scared, "She recognizes . . . that 'the mean reds' . . . are not the ultimate terror: it is instead the lack of attachment to people and things which causes the greatest anxiety" (71), and she is afraid that "Not knowing what's yours until you've thrown it away" (Capote 99) goes on forever, but Holly finally goes away alone because she has nothing more to lose. The conclusion of Heinbaugh is that "If in earlier periods Capote warned against forming too dependent relationships in weak people [as Gatsby does], he suggests here that self-sufficiency is not enough to overcome insularity and loneliness" (80).

If these characters are embodiments of society and are considered personifications of the American Dream, their failures and tragic ends are of great significance for the vitality of the dream in the modern world. Does it mean that the dream is also dead or that it has been changed? The problem in our time is, according to Kluger, that Americans have moved from

inventing the lightbulb, the telegraph, the movie camera and the airplane, which demonstrated the American spirit of entrepreneurship, to buying happiness, which is to say, they have moved from building the house to watching TV, and, as a result, “The pursuit of happiness, once an ideal, has become a big business [with 5,000 motivational speakers earning money all over the country] but not an especially effective one” (69). It could be thought that people have become quite comfortable and distracted by the new entertainment services and that they lack targets and the old boost to improve human lives. Maybe in the 20th century, the same as now, the ideas that the American Dream involved are no longer the main requisites for achieving happiness and we must remember that both concepts, the old dream and joy, are not incompatible, but they are not the same either. The American Dream comes from a past in which people needed to struggle to assure their basic rights and it was the promise that the struggle was worth it. Nowadays we still have ideals to fight for, but in the developed countries, most of people have access to education, work and property. It is the idea of happiness the one that is more personal and subjective, especially in a society in which what previously was a right has become an obligation, for instance, in many students who feel themselves pressured to go to college, since they are constantly reminded of aiming for a good job. It seems not just a question of earning money. Megan Gibson and Kharunya Paramaguru put Panama as an example of a country with a high rate of poverty, but also with a high rate of happiness, and that can be contrasted with Singapore, where in spite of having a very high GDP, a great education system and a low unemployment rate, its citizens are among the most negative-minded of the world. Thus, Gibson and Paramaguru conclude that “Achieving bliss is complicated, no matter where you are in the world” (80).

3. Materialism and corruption

Together with the attempt to make the most of our time on earth came an improvement of the social condition that started to displace the spiritual condition. In this way, the idea of

progress, present in the new ideology of the Enlightenment and the basis for the American Dream, conflicted with Puritanism, which was deeply rooted in American society. According to Horton and Edwards:

The young colonies needed the Puritan concept of sobriety, hard work, and the glory of God, but they also needed a justification of their desire to improve, and to feel a vibrant optimism in the face of the rich and boundless opportunities within their grasp. With a new continent to develop, the colonist could pardonably allow his concentration . . . to think of life in terms of crops, income, and the building of cities rather than in abstractions of Predestination, Grace, and Original Sin. (77-78)

This would eventually result, together with the disillusionment of the Great War, in a sharp declension of church attendance, according to Horton and Edwards (302), and in a generalized trivialization that would continue to influence American lives throughout the twentieth century.

3.1. The culture of consumerism

Economic interests started to grow together with cities during the Industrial Revolution, which modified the social structure and went along with the rationalist ideas of the self-made man. As Jillson notes, “It was the end of homesteading and the beginning of clock punching” (72). Business owners of large factories made their way into positions of power and aristocratic circles. Money became the new means of upward mobility and some men gained so much that they started to play the stock market. They are represented in Edith Wharton’s *The House of Mirth* (1905) by the fictional figure of Rosedale, an investor who yearns for the acceptance of the old founding families of New York. A similar behavior can still be observed in *Holly* and *Gatsby*; they both live in the same city and rub shoulders with influential people, although they are never completely accepted by them.

According to Horton and Edwards, President Warren Harding, who was in office from 1921 to 1923, was the perfect representation of America's reluctant maturity due to his policies of return to normalcy (305). He declared: "America's present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but restoration; not agitation, but adjustment; not surgery, but serenity; not the dramatic, but the dispassionate; not experiment, but equipoise; not submergence in internationality, but sustainment in triumphant nationality . . ." (Freidel and Sidey). Thus, he applied an economy based on protectionism and a return to the years before the Great War. A similar method of using a distraction from the contemporary situation at the same time that trying to carry on can be observed later on, according to Kluger, in the building of the Empire State Building, "because what better way to respond to a global economic crisis than to build the world's tallest skyscraper?" (68). As Horton and Edwards argue, "Under the normalcy program of the three Republican presidents of the Twenties [Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover], the middle class enjoyed a prosperity unprecedented in its history" (307). It was probably the increasing purchasing power together with the governmental and public indifference that triggered an era of materialism that seems to begin with the rise of advertising in the 1920s. According to Jillson,

Modern America became recognizable in the early years of the twentieth century. The commercial application of electricity in the first decade of the century powered lights, mass transit, and round-the-clock use of factories. Soon came telephone, radio, and movies. In the second decade of the century, railroad building declined and road building increased, reflecting and promoting growth in the oil, gas, and auto industries. Through the first third of the century, consumer goods continued to displace capital goods as the leading products of American business. Advertising and marketing became increasingly important as white America became a mass-consumption society. (153)

In *The Great Gatsby*, we have the ophthalmologist's billboard of the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg just in the middle of the valley of ashes, as a substitute for God's omnipresence or, according to Keshmiri, the eyes may represent "God gazing upon and criticizing American society as an ethical wasteland" (1298). As Richard Lehan notes, "*The Great Gatsby* was one of the very first novels to depict the vacuousness of the new commercial culture" (32), which is also "carried by the motif of careless driving, suggesting the rise of power . . . without a sense of responsibility or of human welfare" (33). Furthermore, the valley of ashes itself, as Keshmiri also notes, "is a wide deserted land created by industrial ashes, . . . [and] symbolizes the moral and social corruption" (1298). In *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, we have the protagonist's yearning for the exclusive products of Tiffany & Company. According to Chantal Cornut-Gentile D'Arcy, in the film "the centrality given to Tiffany's – sanctuary of investment and consumption – as a heaven of peace and security" (381) becomes apparent to the point that, as Heinbaugh notes, "Holly's cure [to the 'mean reds'] is a trip to Tiffany's where the quietness, the pride, and the smell of the alligator wallets provide some sense of peace" (69). If you could afford such expensive jewelry, then you would automatically be seen as a prominent socialite, as it is reflected in Guy de Maupassant's novella *La Parure*. In a world of appearances, the main requisite to be part of it is to have, or at least to pretend to have, money no matter how. Therefore, most of the products are simply bought as a symbol of wealth to make other people know about your social status. Consumerism, originated by the general well-being, has characterized the modern era and motivated the mistake, according to Kluger, of "choosing to buy things instead of experiences" (72), deeply affecting our pursuit of happiness.

The possible consequence of such a deceptive world is the inability to distinguish what is real from what is fake, which is what happens to both protagonists. Regarding *Gatsby*, as Ornstein explains, "He wants Daisy to say that she never loved Tom because only in this way can the sacrament of *Gatsby's* 'marriage' to her in Louisville . . . be recognized. Not content

merely with repeating the past, he must also eradicate the years in which his dream lost its reality” (59). Even more impossible than going back in time is the idea of erasing Daisy’s relationship with and marriage to Tom. She and Gatsby have lived separately, experienced different situations and conditions, so pretending they are the same people as years ago is a terrible fallacy. When it comes to Holly, Cornut-Gentile D’Arcy remarks that “she speaks of Mexico as some limbo-land where she and her brother can live a dream life and she ineffectively struggles to amass enough money to make that dream a reality. The ‘room of her own’ she is searching for is therefore not a concrete space in the sense Virginia Woolf described it” (379). She is basically also basing her ultimate goal on a dream that is not totally unrealizable such as Gatsby’s, but it also lacks concretion and tangibility in the real world.

3.2. The promotion of criminality and immorality

At the time of *The Great Gatsby*, the American war heroes, including Gatsby himself, had returned home and had probably found no jobs waiting for them, nor did they receive the recognition they expected. Contrary to them, the country was already in a state of relief because the war was over and also because of its citizens’ not so accurate conviction, as Horton and Edwards note, that “the Prohibition Amendment had settled once and for all the problem of the moral laxity and industrial inefficiency of the working classes, and that above all, the country could at last settle down to its divinely ordained mission of making money” (304). Influenced by the Temperance Movement, Prohibition in the US forbade the production and sale of alcoholic beverages from 1920 to 1933. However, many people profited from the situation and made their fortunes from illegal businesses. Al Capone is himself a real example of a gangster who associated with the Mafia and enriched himself in large part thanks to the smuggling of alcohol, such as Gatsby himself did. After being introduced to Wolfshiem, Nick asks about him and Gatsby answers that Wolfshiem is a gambler: “He’s the man who mixed the World’s Series back in 1919” (Fitzgerald 73). Holly is also included in underhand activities, apparently

without even noticing, because of her relationship with a convicted racketeer, Sally Tomato, whom she carries a coded message every Thursday she pays him a visit in Sing Sing in exchange for some money.

In the environment of prosperity corresponding to a powerful nation that has just won the war, it was shocking to see such an augmentation of crime and contraband; “the country did not boast about its homicide rate . . . Robberies . . . cost American public 250 million a year . . . Gang wars terrorized large cities . . . and police departments seemed unable or unwilling to cope with [that situation]” (Horton and Edwards 315-316), since they were either threatened or suborned. It seems that society turned a blind eye, since “the gangster became a sort of public hero, as though American worship of success had finally burst all moral bounds in its admiration for the slick operator” (Horton and Edwards 317), something similar to the current public idealization of some figures, such as Pablo Escobar through *Narcos*, in this case due to a current context of political corruption where going against authority and its laws is also seen in a positive light. One key factor that foments the rise of criminality is the lack of regulation of firearms that still continues today in the US. The antecedents of corruption can also be seen in what Horton and Edwards describe as “the booming of American industry, with . . . its corporate impersonality, and its large-scale aggressiveness, [that] no longer left any room for the code of polite behavior and well-bred morality fashioned in a quieter and less competitive age” (324). Even regarding protagonists’ respective love aspirations, Gatsby has no scruples about breaking the law in order to acquire the necessary money to be an adequate suitor, whereas Holly is ready to ridicule a model called Mag Wildwood at her party, probably suggesting that she has a venereal disease:

“It’s really very sad.” . . . “And so mysterious. You’d think it would show more. But heaven knows, she *looks* healthy. So, well, *clean*. That’s the extraordinary part. . . .

“But then, . . . I hear so many of these Southern girls have the same trouble”. (44-45)

She needs to be the only one capturing men’s attention, but then she will take advantage of Mag in order to get José. Holly seems to have another kind of morals instead, because she protects Sally Tomato by refusing to cooperate with the police even though Sally is a criminal: “I may be rotten to the core, Maude, but: testify against a friend I will not” (Capote 93), and not precisely because she is afraid of the consequences of betraying a member of the Mafia, but simply because he has treated her well. She says: “he’s a darling old man, terribly pious. He’d look like a monk if it weren’t for the gold teeth; he says he prays for me every night” (Capote 27). Furthermore, she also affirms that the most important quality to succeed is to be honest with yourself: “I’d rather have cancer than a dishonest heart” (Capote 77).

In addition to the rise of smuggling, prohibition increased the demand for liquor, producing the opposite effect of that pursued by the measure. As Horton and Edwards note, “By the middle of the decade drunkenness was fashionable, and only the socially retrograde continued to voice dry sentiments. Even light or reluctant drinkers found themselves getting publicly intoxicated with great frequency as a means of achieving social acceptance” (321). We find the same mood much later in the society of *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, as clearly seen in Mag Wildwood: “Suddenly she was blind. . . . She took it out on everyone. . . . She told Berman, Hitler was right” (Capote 45), and she finally ended up on the floor. A state of inebriation can be perceived in the atmosphere of Gatsby’s parties as well. The main characters of both novels give parties as a way of drawing attention. Gatsby has the intention to invite Daisy to one of them and she even says that for her big crowded parties like that are the most intimate ones, probably because people do not know each other. Holly’s guests are mostly affluent men seen as prospective husbands in her eyes. Once they find their lovers, they suspend the parties, as if they were just a mere method or attempt to fill their spiritual emptiness, something that neither

the gatherings' sumptuousness nor their love interests could finally achieve. This reminds me of a passage in V. S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street* in which the main characters talk about Edward's attempts to fit in with Americans: "The parties at Edward's house grew wilder and more extravagant. Hat said, 'Every party does have an end and people have to go home. Edward only making himself more miserable.' The parties certainly were not making Edward's wife any happier" (Naipaul 153).

Attached to this life full of soirées and luxury are the flappers, portrayed by Fitzgerald, whose wife Zelda is usually described as an extant example of the type. Horton and Edwards are very critical of those frivolous women and think that "it is difficult to see . . . how these young persons were anything but conventional and harmless faddists" (313) and they also point out how they simplified Freud's philosophy to the release of our repressions (339). Freud's ideas imply an id full of instincts and impulses that are exhorted by an ego to renounce them; the reason for this repression of our deeper feelings is, according to Freud, the mediation of a super ego that contains the social external conventions. This theory inspired the flappers to rebel against authority and social beliefs, but it is actually the individual himself who puts a censor wall as a social adaptation to the rules and morals in an attempt to keep order and to fit into society. Holly's style of life could be considered similar to that of the flappers, displaying her glamour and sexuality overtly and without moral restrictions. When talking with Mag about José, Holly asks her: "Well. Does he bite?" and when Mag does not seem to understand, Holly clarifies it: "You. In bed" (Capote 48). Then, Holly keeps insisting on details:

"Listen. If you can't remember, try leaving the lights on."

"Please, understand me, Holly. I'm a very-very-very *conventional* person."

"Oh, balls. What's wrong with a decent look at a guy you like? Men are beautiful".

(49)

In fact, both this excerpt and the one where Holly discusses the possibility of having a homosexual woman as a roommate are omitted in Blake Edward's film version of 1961, due to the censorship of the times in which it was released.

Holly seems to be the modern woman that goes beyond moral restrictions, so the character is isolated and opposed to the postwar mentality of the population. Regarding *The Great Gatsby*, according to Thomas A. Hanzo, "Its subject is an American morality . . . explored historically through the conflict between the surviving Puritan morality of the West and the post-war hedonism of the East" (69), so the established tension is between the values of two worlds, the country and the city, that are still coexisting. On the one hand, the traditional point of view is represented by Gatsby and Nick; on the other hand, the irresponsibility and lack of morals can be seen through the characters of Daisy and Tom. Already at the end of the novel, we can see the triumph of the East over the West because Tom and Daisy do not suffer any consequences for their acts, so in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, that is a later work, we see the domination of the East and a protagonist who, coming from rural Texas, is out of place.

3.3. Conformism and convention

The Wall Street Crash made the population shift from exuberance and lushness to panic, but, according to Jillson, "As Depression memories faded, the American Dream came to focus on a comfortable, high-consumption, leisure-oriented private life. For the white middle and working classes this meant securing and enjoying single-family homes, cars, televisions, washing machines, refrigerators, and lawn mowers" (192). Therefore, the change was finally from recklessness to mentally detached comfort. Even science fiction reproduced the social conceptions and traditional gender roles at the time in which *Breakfast at Tiffany's* was written. According to Pamela Sargent,

a fair amount of science fiction written by women during the 1950s centred on domestic affairs. Some of these stories featured homemaker heroines, who were often depicted as passive or addle-brained, and who solved problems inadvertently, through ineptitude, or in the course of fulfilling their assigned roles in society. . . . These stories showed women as mothers whose children were generally a good deal more gifted and intelligent than they were, as consumers of goods, . . . or as wives trying to hold their families together after an atomic holocaust or some other disaster. (227)

Therefore, as Diana M. Smith notes, housewives could be understood within the “Cold War containment culture” (86), in which women appear within their houses in seclusion. It was not until the 60s when feminist movements started to raise. After the Second World War America searched for a tranquility and banality that helped individuals to forget. According to José Ángel García Landa,

The cultural role of woman has been an incarnation of Otherness. She is characterized by means of polarities: she is conceived either as sexless or as the incarnation of sexuality, an angel or a demon. Female sexuality is represented as either nonexistent (in mothers, virgins, or Angels in the House) or threatening (in sirens, Medusas, prostitutes, femmes fatales). (26)

The first representation would correspond to postwar women of the late 1940s and of the 1950s, the period in which *Breakfast at Tiffany's* was written, but Holly is not just a mere contraposition. In her case, both traditions coexist, especially regarding the differences between the novel and the film, but also within the novel. Holly is not a mother, but she behaved as such at a young age when she was married to Doc Golightly and, although in the novel she gets pregnant and seems ready to start a domestic life with José, Capote liberates her from that with a miscarriage. She differentiates herself from the rest because she is, as Smith describes, “an

untenable, though tantalizing, figuration of a deviant postwar female sexuality” (75-76). Therefore, the tradition that prevails in her is the second one because, as Cornut-Gentille D’Arcy considers, if she is the dweller who organizes parties, forgets her keys and disturbs her neighbors at night, she fits into the patriarchal and religious stereotype that independent women are evil (373). As Peter Krämer says, the novel was greeted with many negative reviews because of its controversial themes and *Harper’s Bazaar*, the magazine where Capote used to publish his works previously to the book, “objected to the explicit sexual references in the story and to what was perceived as the heroine’s immorality” (61) , whereas the reviewers thought that it “lacked the drama and insight that a more dynamic and decisive male narrator-protagonist could have brought to it” (61-62). The main problem for the conservative society of the 1950s was the sexual approach: the protagonist’s lack of restraint when talking about sex and the possibility of her being a call girl, together with the doubts about the narrator’s sexual orientation. Against this background, the movie director tried to solve the polemic. According to Krämer,

The traditional romantic comedy formula of boy-meets-girl-loses-girl-wins-girl-in-the-end provided the story with the tight narrative structure and satisfying dramatic resolution that the novella lacked, while also demonstrating the heroine was basically a good girl, who had been waiting for the right man all along, and that the hero was a ‘real’ man after all, who knew what he wanted and how to get it. (62)

It is not only that the narrator is given a name, Paul Varjack, and a clear heterosexuality, as if he were a gigolo, differing from his authentic character, but also that the final message of the novel disappears completely in the film. Holly goes from not knowing exactly what she wants, from her lack of attachment to people and places and from that ultimate uncertainty, not only in her life, but to the extent of the lives of all human beings, to finding an answer in conventional love. Paul declares his love for Holly and relates it to the idea of belonging to

another person: “I love you. You belong to me” (*Breakfast at Tiffany’s*). Although she resists and proclaims that “People don’t belong to people” and refuses to be put in a cage, establishing a relation between love and prison, after Paul’s moral sermon about her being afraid of real life and having built up a cage by herself that will always chase her, she finally agrees to put on the ring as a symbol of bonds. Paul’s conclusion is in line with Hollywood’s happy ending, in which love in return is the key to joy: “People do fall in love. People do belong to each other, because that’s the only chance anybody’s got for real happiness” (*Breakfast at Tiffany’s*). Furthermore, even the actress’s election was carefully considered. Capote wanted Marilyn Monroe to play Holly’s role, but the director and the producers did not agree. According to Krämer, “Audrey Hepburn’s celebrated style, respectability and even nobility finally neutralized Holly’s sexual transgressiveness” (63).

Regarding *The Great Gatsby*, the film version of 1949 by Nugent also turned the novel into a moral lesson. According to Taina Tuhkunen, “Nugent’s *Gatsby* is rushed onto the screen as a specimen of the underworld, a bootlegger whose criminal past provides a justification for the final punishment scene of the villain” (104). His criminal connections are not the only punishable characteristic in a moralistic society, but also *Gatsby*’s identification with Trimalchio, since, according to Maggie G. Froehlich, “In the “Dinner with Trimalchio” section of the *Satyricon*, Trimalchio hosts wild, orgy-like parties that serve merely as a venue for his ostentatious display of wealth” (212-213). The identification between them is accurate because, apart from the fact that Trimalchio was a slave before acquiring such riches and power, as Froehlich also notes, this is the reason why Fitzgerald wanted to name his novel *Trimalchio* or *Trimalchio in West Egg*. Therefore, it can be concluded that during the 1940s and 1950s there was a necessity of moralizing works to make them good and innocent for the public, whether because of their sexual exposure or because of their rebellion against authority and its laws.

4. Reinventing themselves

Both Jay Gatsby and Holly Golightly abandon their roots and try to leave behind their humble origins, Gatsby leaving his parents and the conservative Mid-West and Holly leaving his husband and rural Texas, so that they could prosper and be part of the most glamorous society in America, the one of New York City. They change their names and they learn from their mentors how to behave, in the case of Holly; and how to make business, in the case of Gatsby, but it was for both a question of acquiring reputation and establishing prestigious social connections. Gatsby himself has been considered a personification of the American Dream in his way out of poverty, and, according to Smith, “From Audrey Hepburn to Holly Golightly, the fifties ingénue captivated precisely because she suggested the promises, lost or found, of the elusive American dream that hinged on her movement from ragamuffin to princess” (79). As it was discussed above, although they may not have dreamed *the* American Dream, they were able to develop different identities that led them to progress.

4.1. The importance of a name: James Gatz and Lulamae Barnes

The transition of the protagonists from poverty and anonymity to glamour and fame is accompanied by their change of names. James Gatz, or Jimmy, as his father called him, made his name smarter, whereas Lulamae Barnes acquired the surname of her husband, as it was expected according to the social condition of women at that time, but she decided not to change it afterwards; instead, she did change her first name to Holly.

Names can be considered rather significant. The surname Holly decides to keep, as Smith notes, defines her character: “Holly moves with ease, as her name ‘Golightly’ suggests” (104). She never settles. Even at the end, although she is moving to Brazil, we know since the beginning of the novel that the last place where she has been seen is in Africa and “she rode away on a horse” and “nobody else had ever seen her” (Capote 13). Krämer summarizes Holly’s moves as if they were different identities or roles:

a golddigger who expects to be paid, not for sexual encounters, but for her company . . . and who is looking for a rich husband; a former Hollywood starlet who casually discarded her film career; a Southern child bride who ran away from her husband but stayed loyal to her brother; an expectant mother who is ready to settle down into domestic life with a Brazilian diplomat. Holly is always on the move, continually reinventing herself. (60)

Even the name *Holly* could be related to her period as a young promise, when she was being prepared by O.J. Berman and radically changed her southern accent and looks. The word *Hollywood* not only begins with her name, but it also contains a postponed /ʊ/ that is also present within the first syllable of her surname, *Go*-lightly.

Regarding James Gatz, it is interesting to mention what Jillson explains about the conception of immigrants in America:

Throughout the colonial and early national periods, most Americans saw immigrants as important to settlement, defense, and economic development. But when too many immigrants arrived too quickly, concern grew that the fundamental nature of the country might be submerged in a sea of unacculturated newcomers. . . . An upsurge in immigration and a change in the sources of immigration heightened nativist concern between 1880 and 1920. (8)

According to *Ancestry*, the surname Gatz comes from German “Gato, a short form of an old personal name formed with the same root as Middle High German gate ‘companion’”. Therefore, it was logical for Gatsby to change his German surname for one that sounded more American. Furthermore, “The most Gatz families were found in the USA in 1920” and “In 1880, the most common Gatz occupation in the USA was Farmer”; these data coincide with the real story of Gatsby the narrator discovers later on: “James Gatz – that was really, or at

least legally, his name. He had changed it at the age of seventeen and at the specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his career . . . His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people – his imagination never really accepted them as his parents at all” (Fitzgerald 98-99). However, according to *Ancestry*, “The Gatsby family name was found in the USA in 1880. In 1880 there were 8 Gatsby families living in Massachusetts. This was 100% of all the recorded Gatsbys in the USA”, so it was a surname that already belonged to the East, not the West as happened to Gatz. Nick concludes: “The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. . . . and to this conception he was faithful to the end” (Fitzgerald 99). Gatsby felt out of place at home and he considered himself better than his parents and environment; as his father tells Nick, “He told me I et like a hog once, and I bet him for it” (Fitzgerald 176). He was a different person inside and he started to live according to this second personality. In a similar way to Yeats’s concept of the mask, Gatz’s double was created from his opposite and it entailed the possibility of rebirth.

Society also tries to protect itself with illusions and that is why, according to Horton and Edwards, “Human truth is always an oversimplification of the chaotic and conflicting forces underlying the smooth surface of life” (482) and a clear way of simplifying things is to give them a name. However, both characters reject a name that characterizes them and decide to make up one more in line with their complexities and desires. In fact, Holly refuses to name her cat as an attack on the traditional possession attached to love relationships, but probably also as a defense of individuality and of life’s indefiniteness.

4.2. Past, present and future

Holly Golightly and Jay Gatsby move between the three temporal stages. First of all, their past chases them and seems always present. Secondly, they are representations of the society of their times, including the lives of their creators, and finally, they are always looking

to the future. For his article, Kluger chose this statement from MTV Research and Strategic Insights: “People who dwell on the past and future are less likely to be happy than people who concentrate on the present” (69). This anticipates both Gatsby’s and Holly’s isolation and failure. Gatsby tries to repeat the past to achieve a future with Daisy, whereas Holly is concerned with her past at the same time that she tries to plan her future, first with Rusty, then with José and finally with some Brazilian rich man.

The protagonist’s pasts are revealed differently in each novel. In the case of Holly, she wants to hide her past: “I . . . asked her how and why she’d left home so young. She looked at me blankly, and rubbed her nose, as though it tickled: a gesture, seeing often repeated, I came to recognize as a signal that one was trespassing. Like many people with a bold fondness for volunteering intimate information, anything that suggested a direct question, a pinning-down, put her on guard” (Capote 24). Nevertheless, her past comes back to her with the arrival of her husband and it is just then that the protagonist finds out that she was married. As Smith notes, “She [Holly] acknowledges how the past is always in the present, how poverty can’t be washed or waved off by a magical wand or by a mystical narrative. And . . . Holly also illustrates the uncomfortable price paid by the economically/socially mobile, a mobility that, like Capote’s own celebrity, sometimes takes the form of social prostitution” (81-82) to the point that “Eventually, his professional identity shifted from writer to the talk-show oddity by the late-sixties and 1970s” (98). The efforts of Capote to be the center of attention and entertain the audience can be appreciated in the film *Capote*, directed by Bennett Miller, starring Philip Seymour Hoffman and released in 2005.

However, Gatsby is the one who starts his own account of his past because he wants to make a good impression on Nick: “I don’t want you to get a wrong idea of me and from all these stories you hear” (Fitzgerald 65). When he says he comes from a wealthy family from San Francisco and that he has been educated at Oxford, Nick understands why Jordan accuses

Gatsby of lying: “He hurried the phrase ‘educated at Oxford’, or swallowed it, or choked on it, as though it had bothered him before. And with this doubt, his whole statement fell to pieces” (Fitzgerald 65). Gatsby himself will reveal the whole truth to Nick in Chapter VII once he is uncovered by Tom, so Nick will find out that this part was a lie because he actually came from a poor family of North Dakota; this was revealed to the reader a little earlier, in Chapter VI, but when Gatsby continues his account in Chapter IV and starts giving many details about his life in Europe and the war and ends up showing Nick a medal for “Valour Extraordinary” (Fitzgerald 67), then Nick thinks it was all true. According to Horton and Edwards, Heidegger stated that “Man’s projection of himself into the future of his possibilities will, by reflection, affect the way in which he evaluates and even records his past” (493). This can be put in relation to Gatsby’s account focusing on all his past glories instead of on his authentic family: “I didn’t want you to think I was just some nobody” (Fitzgerald 67). He always wanted to be worthy of Daisy in the future and for that he wants to erase that part of his past, but he expects to revive his past with her, which seems contradictory.

Regarding the respective periods in which the works were set, according to Krämer, “Capote’s portrait of Holly Golightly made use of biographical details and character traits of a myriad of young women he got to know after he permanently moved to New York in the early 1940s” (60), yet despite reflecting the reality of these young women, the novella had to be criticized and the movie censored. The same Capote confesses in *Truman Capote: Conversations*: “The main reason I wrote about Holly . . . was that she was such a symbol of all these girls who come to New York and spin in the sun for a moment like May flies and then disappear. I wanted to rescue one girl from that anonymity and preserve her for prosperity” (141). Therefore, he was not inventing a character out of the blue to cause polemic and indignation among society, but just reflecting the changes in mentality and attitude that women were starting to experiment and which reached their highest point in the Second-wave feminism

during the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, Capote also said that “Holly Golightly was not precisely a callgirl. She had no job, but accompanied expense-account men to the best restaurants and night clubs, with the understanding that her escort was obligated to give her some gift” (*Truman Capote: Conversations* 141). Talking about this type of women in general, the author went on to say that “Usually, her escort was a married man from out of town who was lonely, and she would flatter him and make a good impression on his associates, but there was no emotional involvement on either side . . . although if she felt like it, she might take her escort home for the night. So these girls are the authentic American geishas” (141). Some critics, however, have classified Holly as a prostitute, whether as an example of the current defense on women’s rights concerning their bodies or as the erroneous exhibition and idealization of an immoral and punishable livelihood. A comparison of Holly with Capote’s own mother is also possible, as Krämer explains when commenting on Clark’s work:

Clarke writes: “Both Nina (Capote) and Holly grew up in the rural South and longed for the glitter and glamour of New York, and they both changed their hillbilly names, Lillie Mae and Lulamae, to those they considered more sophisticated.” [Clarke, *Capote*, p. 313] Furthermore, Lillie Mae married at the age of 17, . . . and within a year Truman was born. After several affairs Lillie Mae separated from her Southern husband to move to New York . . . eventually married Joseph Garcia Capote and settled down . . . She abandoned him [Capote] for long periods of time when he was a little child, bewitched him with her beauty, vivaciousness and glamour while he was growing up, expressed disbelief, disgust and rage when he confronted her with his homosexuality. (61)

On the one hand, although Holly may be based on the author’s mother, she was morally improved by Capote, in the sense that she is sympathetic and supportive to the narrator’s homosexuality: “Listen. If you came to me and said you wanted to hitch up with Mad o’ War, I’d respect your feeling. No, I’m serious. Love should be allowed. I’m all for it” (Capote 77).

On the other hand, Holly has been liberated from the child, contrary to Capote's mother, as if she was not fated to be a mother and settle, which might be based on the author's abandonment on the part of her mother. Moreover, Holly uses men to climb the social ladder in the same way that, according to Smith, "Capote used his lovers and male admirers to gain cultural capital" (98) and also "his New York 'swans' – the society women who befriended the charismatic young writer-to teach him the ins-and-outs of society etiquette and décor" (98).

Regarding Gatsby, who had been in the war, he represented the disillusionment of the soldiers that came back home with torn up perspectives and aspirations because of the lack of concern of American citizens. Gatsby also returns expecting his desired life in tranquility by Daisy's side just to realize that she has moved on too fast for him to assimilate it. If they had not killed him, he may have ended in isolation feeling himself detached and alienated from society as it happened to the young idealist soldiers. Besides, as with *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *The Great Gatsby* has some elements that reflect the author's own experiences. According to Froehlich, "Like Gatsby, Fitzgerald's life was shaped by older men who mentored him into the literary life; . . . Alone at the age of 15, the (metaphorically) fatherless boy comes East, where he is chosen by mentors who help him rise; the young man's hard work and success (drafting, revising, publication of a first novel) are re-warded by marriage to a beautiful girl" (223). Gatsby got help from Cody and Wolfsheim and his goal, if he succeeded, was Daisy. As Keshmiri notes, "Like Scott and Zelda, they [Gatsby and Daisy] had fallen in love when Jay was a young officer in World War I with no funds or position" (1296) and, although he finally achieves the wealthy and the house he expected, he is incapable of acquiring a distinguished social position due to his western humble origins, so, as Keshmiri also notes, "The surroundings and the resulting pattern of winning and losing Zelda was the most significant of his life and had the most impressive effect on this story. A continual altercation between the desire and the loss is obvious in this novel" (1297). First, in Louisville, Gatsby must leave Daisy to become

a better man and then, just when Gatsby achieves his long-awaited meeting with Daisy thanks to Nick's intervention and is almost grasping his dream, everything falls abruptly apart.

Finally, the future is always present in the two novels, because characters are so much focused on their coming happiness that they forget to live and enjoy the present. As Keshmiri remarks, "the Green Light located at the ending of Daisy's East Egg wharf, symbolizes Gatsby's hope and dreams for the future" (1297). Meanwhile, he seems to know nobody at his parties and the only relations he has established are related to business. Holly might have said that she loves José, but she seems contradictory. She begins by saying: "Oh, he's not my idea of the absolute *finito*. . . . He's too prim, too cautious to be my guy ideal" (Capote 76), and although she concludes "I *do* love José", she explains that the reason why is that "He's *friendly*, he can laugh me out of the mean reds, only I don't have them much any more, except sometimes" (Capote 77). She could be refusing to idealize lovers and love and thus she would be showing a mature vision and much more realistic than Gatsby's, but previously in the novel, she had told the narrator, "you can make yourself love anybody" (Capote 42), so is she really in love with José and has she opened up her heart simply and in a realistic way, or is she actually building up an illusion to live by?

Both Gatsby and Holly are out of place in their respective epochs: whereas Gatsby belongs to a past that has been irrevocably lost, Holly is the modern woman ahead of her time. This distinction may correspond to Gatsby's belief in a return to the past and to Holly's desire to move on. Robert Ornstein explains the comparison of Gatsby with the Dutch sailors: "Like them, he set out for gold and stumbled on a dream. But he journeys in the wrong direction in time as well as space. The transitory enchanted moment has come and gone for him and for the others, making the romantic promise of the future an illusory reflection of the past" (57). Therefore, as Lehan concludes, "Fitzgerald gave birth to the nowhere hero, located between a dead past and an implausible future" (33). Holly has no place to stay either, since as soon as

she is involved in the scandal of Sally Tomato, José turns her back on her and she is fully aware that her possibilities in New York society have ended. The only woman with whom Holly becomes close throughout the novella is Mag Wildwood, who confessed to be a conventional person, and she eventually sentences her to ostracism: “My husband and I will positively sue anyone who attempts to connect our names with that ro-ro-rovolting and de-de-degenerate girl. I always *knew* she was a hop-hop-head with no more morals than a hound-bitch in heat. Prison is where she belongs” (Capote 87). Capote seems to use her stutter and her drunkenness at the party for the purpose of making this character more ridiculous and unsympathetic, so, by her being opposed to Holly as a conservative woman, Holly would be highlighted. In this respect, what differentiates the respective protagonists from the rest is not something regrettable or bad, on the contrary, they have important values, some of them are old-fashioned and others precocious, but they isolate them from a reality where people do not share the same point of view.

5. Observer Narrators

Both novels, *The Great Gatsby* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, have a secondary character narrate the story and they both seem to have the necessary sensibility and skills to write. In fact, the narrator of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is actually an aspiring novelist. Both of them contrast with the society they depict, in which, according to Horton and Edwards, “the best minds in the country were being ignored, . . . art was unappreciated, and . . . big business had corrupted everything [from journalism to politics]” (329). They provide a point of view not completely objective, especially because they show ambiguity and ambivalence in their depictions of the protagonists.

Regarding Nick Carraway, Keshmiri argues that he “is one of the best personifications of double vision in Fitzgerald's work . . . Nick was both interested in the luxurious lifestyle of

New York and he found that way of life critical” (1296-1297). He feels himself attracted both to the East and to Gatsby’s glamorous mystery from the beginning of the story. He starts to watch Gatsby’s parties, motor-boats and Rolls-Royce, he notices the servants’ toil on Mondays and the arrival of oranges and lemons on Fridays and of caterers every fortnight (Fitzgerald 39). He comes to New York in order to learn the bond business simply because it was in vogue and because for him “the Middle West now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe” (Fitzgerald 3). However, he moralizes and judges people’s attitudes much more than the narrator of *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* does, although he states that he is “inclined to reserve all judgements” (Fitzgerald 1), as his father taught him, and justifies himself stating that tolerance has a limit (Fitzgerald 2). Curiously, he says: “Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction – Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn” (Fitzgerald 2). Therefore, by the end of his story, what he has finally learnt is not to judge people by appearances.

Regarding the narrator of *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, Heinbaugh stresses “the ambivalence the narrator feels throughout their relationship which is fraught with many arguments, but which is always patched up again whenever Holly comes up with one of her romps” (68). The same as Nick, he is interested in the protagonist from the beginning, before they actually meet; he starts to pay attention to her clothes, finds out the readings, cigarettes and hair colors she bought by watching her trash and notices her cat and her ability with the guitar: “if Miss Golightly remained unconscious of my existence, except as a doorbell convenience, I became, through the summer, rather an authority on hers” (Capote 20). After reading one of his stories to Holly, her lack of interest and her interpretation, a story “about a couple of old bull-dykes” (Capote 25), annoy the narrator: “The same vanity that had led to such exposure, now forced me to mark her down as an insensitive, mindless show-off” (Capote 25), but when she realizes it is Thursday, he becomes intrigued and wants to know why the day is important: “I was tired

enough not to be curious. I lay down on the bed and closed my eyes. Still it was irresistible” (Capote 26) and he even begs her to tell him (Capote 27). He seems both repulsed and attracted at the same time. At the end of the novel, although he never delivers the moral sermon of the movie, he indeed calls her a bitch, judging her when she throws her cat out of the taxi, but it is her alone who realizes her loss and runs out of the taxi to chase the cat, so the narrator just follows Holly: “Then she had the door open, she was running down the street; and I ran after her” (Capote 98). Furthermore, he expresses his concern simply because he does not want Holly to look guilty by running away and to be unable to come back later on, especially because he knows she is innocent. When she asks him “what business is it of yours?”, he just answers: “None. Except you’re my friend, and I’m worried. I mean to know what you intend doing” (Capote 92). There is therefore no love confession and no deeper meaning.

According to Smith, “Reminiscent of *The Great Gatsby’s* Nick Caraway who seems detached from both the working-class and affluent parties he attends, Capote’s narrator is an alienated spectator within the visual tableau of Holly’s party” (84). Nick is between East and West because he is not fully satisfied with either of them and he seems a little ashamed of his western origin at dinner when he confesses to Daisy: “You make me feel uncivilized, Daisy, . . . Can’t you talk about crops or something?” (Fitzgerald 13). He runs away from the rural West to the fashionable and modern East, he regrets his decision and runs away again, but to return to the comfortable and well-known West. Regarding *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, as Smith also notes, “Holly and the narrator represent the twin narratives of postwar ‘deviant’ sexuality, freedom and containment: Holly is open, libidinally free; the narrator is self-denying, to the point of never identifying (naming) himself” (99). Many critics have pointed out the homosexuality of *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* narrator. According to Tison Pugh, “The first clue to the narrator’s homosexuality lies in Holly’s formulation of how to determine if a man is gay: ‘If a man doesn’t like baseball, then he must like horses, and if he doesn’t like either of them, well, I’m in trouble

anyway: he don't like girls'" (52). And then, when the narrator is describing the bookshelves of Holly, as Pugh also notes, he comments: "Pretending and interest in *Horseflesh and How to Tell It* gave me sufficiently private opportunity for sizing Holly's friends" (Capote 36). Pugh also remarks the way Holly addresses the narrator with the word "maude": "In homosexual slang, 'maude' signifies a male prostitute or a male homosexual" (52). Apart from this, there is the bar of Joe Bell. Pugh considers that "its anonymity suggests that it is hidden from general view: the narrator remarks that it has no neon sign to attract the attention to itself . . . the windows of the bar are mirrorsMirror windows allow patrons to see outside but do not allow passerby to look in; to this day many gay bars have such mirror windows to protect the privacy of their patrons" (53). What is true is that throughout the novel there is no clear sign of a romantic interest on the part of the narrator, just a deep curiosity and a developing friendship, as it was mentioned above. Some critics have also argued about Nick's homosexuality as well. Froehlich puts it this way:

Early in the novel, Nick says that his observation of the events in New York ended, for a time, his interest in men . . . He acknowledges that he came East from his Midwestern home to escape being "rumored into marriage" . . . In this move he joins other young men in what George Chauncey, a historian of gay culture, refers to as a "bachelor subculture" . . . Having just turned thirty, Nick is extremely aware of his own aging, calling himself "five years too old" . . . [and so] he bemoans the "thinning list of young men to know" as men in their mid-to-late twenties get married and there are fewer men his own age with whom he can associate. (214-215)

However, there are other literary critics who do not agree with the idea of Nick being homosexual. For instance, according to Lehan, "To argue that Nick is a homosexual . . . overparticularizes the scene at the end of Myrtle's party where Nick . . . finds himself standing beside Mr. McKee who, 'sitting up between the sheets, clad in his underwear' is showing him

a portfolio of his 'art' work" (132). Furthermore, the attraction that Nick feels for Jordan seems quite sincere until he starts to reject everything related to the East.

Whether they are or not homosexuals, both narrators are loyal friends of the protagonists. After Holly goes to Brazil, "Fred" manages to find the cat as he promised her, whereas Nick is the one who prepares Gatsby's burial. Their relationships go beyond friendship, in the sense that the characters of Holly and Gatsby have fascinated the respective narrators to the point that they have felt simultaneously repelled by and that attracted to them, as if the protagonists were so different from the rest of human beings that the two narrators, by looking at them, were contemplating something sublime. In fact, the first time Nick sees Gatsby, in the middle of the darkness, just a figure, he is tempted to call him and present himself, but he finally backs out "for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone" (Fitzgerald 22).

The respective narrators' accounts are posterior to the events, the same that happens with the two novels, which were set years before they were written by Fitzgerald and Capote. Nick has already concluded that "Gatsby turned out all right at the end" (Fitzgerald 2), whereas "Fred" confesses: "It never occurred to me in those days to write about Holly Golightly, and probably it would not now except for a conversation I had with Joe Bell that set the whole memory of her in motion again" (Capote 9). For both narrators, it seems that the inspiration comes from a restoration in tranquility of their lived experiences and sensations relative to the protagonists, according to Wordsworth's poetics, and in the first lines they both talk about themselves, so both narrations are not just a mere tale about a person, but rather an exposition of how the intrusion of someone changed their lives. "Fred" opposes to the protagonist's lack of attachment because he has found a home: "with all its gloom, it still was a place of my own" (Capote 9), and at the end he desires that Holly has found her place too. His writing is his farewell and his attempt to understand her, and the same applies to Nick. At the end of the

novel, Nick identifies Gatsby with the Dutch sailors, with an idealized past that has been lost, but his last written words are: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past” (Fitzgerald 184), because it is exactly what Nick decides to do. According to Ornstein, Nick’s going back to Minnesota “seems a melancholy retreat from the ruined promise of the East, from the empty present to the childhood memory of the past . . . not the reality of the West which Nick cherishes” (59). Therefore, like Gatsby, Nick has created an illusion for himself, despite the fact that he had previously contradicted Gatsby: “You can’t repeat the past” (Fitzgerald 111). The first sentence of *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* echoes the last words of Nick: “I am always drawn back to places where I have lived, the houses and their neighbourhoods” (Capote 9), which, according to Bede Scott, reveals the sedentary nature of the narrator (142), opposed to Holly’s light movement. Whereas Nick has been influenced by Gatsby’s vision and his disappointment with the East, the other narrator has wanted to differentiate himself from Holly’s solitude.

6. Conclusions

One may think of *The Great Gatsby* and *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* as illustrations of the death of the American Dream in the 20th century, but there is an unresolved debate about whether they are really showing the failure of the dream and the values it entailed, or the substitution of those values by new ones and therefore, the absence of the traditional American Dream as such in the protagonists’ perspectives. First of all, we must wonder whether it is really the ideal’s failure, even when the protagonists have not entirely followed the principles of legality, honesty and hard work that had been promulgated in the Declaration of Independence. Secondly, in the 20th century, it was said that the American Dream meant an opportunity for everyone, but not a guarantee of success because the final achievement always depends on the person’s own efforts and merits. Notwithstanding, it was sold as a promise after all and, moreover, opportunity is certainly conditioned by the social position of the citizen,

which has traditionally depended on gender, race, birthplace and family. Success may not be guaranteed, but what about the opportunity? Both Gatsby and Holly are limited due to their birthplaces and families and, on top of that, Holly is also limited by her role as a woman, not only within the novel, but also in many literary essays and articles: the more natural option based on documents and our ideology is to address her by her first name, whereas critics refer to Gatsby by his last name, because Jay sounds much too informal, whether because of the name itself that seems too short or because of he is seen as an older and more compelling character. If Gatsby and Holly did not have the same opportunities as the rich of the East, then the illegal selling of alcohol supported by the purchases of a corrupt government and the fact of taking advantage of men who are in a better economic and social position seem the fair solutions. Finally, none of the respective protagonists wanted to progress as an ultimate goal; instead, it was a means to achieve Daisy's love on the part of Gatsby and protection and a home for Fred on the part of Holly. They may have managed to prosper, but when these aspirations fail, they have no further motivations to move forward. After the death of Fred, "Holly never mentioned her brother again: except once. Moreover, she stopped calling me Fred. June, July, all through the warm months she hibernated like a winter animal who did not know spring had come and gone. Her hair darkened, she put on weight" (Capote 74). She immediately stops her efforts to look good in order to win men over, whereas Gatsby goes from shock to anxiety, trying to keep faith with Daisy so that his life does not collapse. When Daisy confesses that she *also* loved Gatsby, "The words seemed to bite physically into Gatsby" (Fitzgerald 133), while, without noticing, his dream was already disappearing together with the daylight: "only the dead dream fought on as the afternoon slipped away, trying to touch what was no longer tangible" (Fitzgerald 135). Soon thereafter, the house begins to reflect Gatsby's isolation and the death of his dream: "There was an inexplicable amount of dust everywhere" (Fitzgerald 148). However, he desperately tries to persist on his illusion: "I don't think she ever loved him.

. . . He [Tom] told her those things in a way that frightened her . . . And the result was she hardly knew what she was saying” (Fitzgerald 153), but it is actually Gatsby the one that is more confused by the truth.

It was the modern society, with a greater purchasing power or with new gadgets and varieties of entertainment at their disposal that changed the ultimate goal of human beings. The American Dream was a question of enjoying success, but that idea of succeeding implied a personal progress from a position of disempowerment and finally an employment. At the turn of the 20th century, since people start to be born with more opportunities than before, once the basic needs are supplied, once they have studied and obtained a job, it is difficult to see beyond, to discover what is the next step to succeed and what are the things in life we really enjoy. Progressing in life and having a good job is still very important and acclaimed even nowadays, but most of people just go through mechanical stages marked by convention and afterwards, they are content with that. It has become both an imposition and a habit and it has stopped being the desired target. In the postwar era, even though some citizens might have struggled to get a home and to maintain their families, they became accustomed to that. The situation started to change in the sixties, with the coming of counter culture movements like feminism, hippies and pacifism during the Vietnam War and now scientists come up with new inventions every day, because the more we have, the more we want. Therefore, achieving happiness has become more complicated and personal than ever. According to Lehan,

The romantic unfolding of self is inseparable from the romantic belief that the universe is alive and that fulfillment is a process of growth. The emphasis is on becoming rather than being, on expectation rather than reality. . . . And when the heroes and heroines are not physically destroyed, they often experience radical disillusionment, become eternal wanderers, alienated from society, outcasts. (62)

Here Lehan mentions Alastor, a poet created by Shelley, who, after experiencing a vision that allows him to enter into another dimension and to feel another perception of things, is no longer capable of living in the ordinary world and goes into the forgetfulness of death. Probably, if Gatsby had not died so soon, he would have first experienced the same disillusionment and disorientation at the loss of his idealized Daisy, who was Gatsby's particular vision of life's fulfillment: "he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy" (Fitzgerald 111). In *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, the current situation and the well-being of Holly at the time when the narrator is supposed to write the story, is totally unknown, but she is also wandering, from Brazil to Africa and beyond, but was it really her decision or was she indirectly forced to run away because of her "social death" in New York? She affirmed to love New York, although the city was not hers (Capote 78). It did not belong to her indeed, since she was an outcast that came from the outdated South with an ideology that surpassed the boundaries of time. Isolation and exile seem her fate, which questions the idea of human free will. Likewise, as David L. Minter notes, Gatsby's progress has been possible by his own belief in himself, his will and determination to fix the past in order to change the future (83), but what he accomplishes is only the creation of an illusion that is never accomplished. Free will, whether to succeed or to achieve happiness, surrenders to the impositions both of society and of reality itself, and writers like Truman Capote and Scott Fitzgerald were so fully aware of those impediments that they decided to capture their own concerns in their most famous characters.

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