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THE ROLE OF CRIME IN MODERNISM

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ABSTRACT

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The major aim of this thesis is to analyze crime on the modern novel, specifically Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* and Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* and on their subsequent film adaptation.

The thesis is divided into five parts. The first one describes historical events which affected American society and which were reflected in literature during the age of modernism. The second and the third parts are focused on the way this environment influenced behavior of literary characters. Firstly, women are generally considered as *femme fatales*, who represent the main danger for their male opponents. Their characterization reveals various reasons why they behave in this way. Furthermore, there are also described reactions of male characters on those fatal women. The fourth part deals with the influence of the environment on the morality and ethical behavior of the main characters Jay Gatsby, Samuel Spade and Phillip Marlowe. The last part captures the significance of a typical language and surrounding in the books for their subsequent film adaptation into the genre called film noir. *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep* are further compared to the film *The Great Gatsby* and there is also argued why this film cannot be ranked among the genre of *film noir*.

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Introduction

Environment and society were affected by several historical events in the age of modernism, which contributed to creation of new surroundings in literary works and to developing characters who are confronted with those changes. Similarly to people who compete in society for achievements, so do literary characters that adapt their behaviour to survive and to succeed in their dangerous environment. Only those, who are the most adaptable, have bigger chance not to be devastated. Robert B. Reich in the article “The Two Darwinisms” describes the society as “a competitive struggle where only those with the strongest moral character should survive, or else the society would weaken” (56). Every period is influenced by certain events and only the ones that are flexible and able to conform can achieve success.

Modern society was firstly affected by the impacts of the First World War and by the consequent post-war mood caused by returning veterans who brought new European manners to the United States. Secondly, American women endeavoured to become more independent and to achieve their suffrage by the feminist revolution. Thirdly, American Congress passed the Eighteenth Amendment, the prohibition in purpose to reduce criminality and finally, the United States experienced several cultural and economic changes which culminated by the Great Depression.

Those events, however, influenced all of society, but the impact is particularly evident in literature. As roles of men and women changed as also male and female characters transformed. Romantic heroic features were replaced by modern qualities. Women’s position became rather negative or even destructive and men were more selfish and hard-boiled. Characters were influenced by the environment where they lived and those who did not adapt to new conditions were destined to fail.

One of the writers, who captured the historical changes of 1920’s, was Francis Scott Fitzgerald. Although lots of his contemporaries expressed the uselessness of war in their books, Fitzgerald does not write about war horrors. He describes the period of post-war America and enables the reader closer insight into the decade of modern manners of males and females, into a new style of music and dancing. As Joshua Zeitz declares in the book *Flapper*, “Scott’s female characters smoked, rouged their cheeks and lips, cut their hair short, and took swings from the hip flasks of their world-weary boyfriends” (44).

Fitzgerald's masterpiece is certainly the book *The Great Gatsby* published in the year 1925 where he mixes not only features of the period of the Roaring Twenties, but also persisting qualities of the past. One of the main characters is Jay Gatsby. He represents a bootlegger who devoted his life to his dream and to his vain effort to return the past. Gatsby is a criminal, but rather than a dangerous gangster he has a character similar to Robin Hood who takes from the rich and gives to the poor. Gatsby is a dreamer who endeavors to earn a huge amount of money to win back his beloved Daisy. Gatsby, however, becomes rich, but he can never have the old money status of Tom Buchanan (Daisy's husband). Gatsby's money is only an unstable property which is not sufficient for careless Daisy, who prefers wealth and fame to real love. It seems Gatsby is a character with romantic qualities which would better fit to the society of Victorian era in the 19th century. Nevertheless, he conforms all to achieve his desire, but he does not adapt to the careless time of the Roaring Twenties. Robert Ornstein mentions in the article "Scott Fitzgerald's Fable of East and West" that *The Great Gatsby* is "a dramatization of the betrayal of the naive American dream in a corrupt society" (139). Gatsby's character does not fit to the Jazz Age. Post-war America does not create a proper place for romantic love and Gatsby is too romantic and unable to adapt himself to the rough environment and thoughtless people. As a result his originally pure dream turns to a disaster which destroys him.

An increasing crime during the Great Depression in the United States creates a new and more dangerous environment in literature. While Gatsby is a pre-depression character living in the time of the Roaring Twenties, characters created during the decade of the depression are confronted with more perilous criminals. Except from typical gangsters there are also women, known as *femme fatales*, representing beautiful murderers and also the biggest danger for detective heroes. In 1930 the famous private eye Samuel Spade appeared in the detective novel *The Maltese Falcon* written by Dashiell Hammett. Hammett endowed Spade with qualities important for surviving in this rough decade. This is the reason why Spade is able to confront the corrupted society and fatal women. Spade is smart, hard-boiled and seems to have no emotions because he does never falls in love even with the most beautiful woman. Although he is seduced by Brigid O'Shaughnessy, Spade withstands her intrigues and rather than being manipulated, he stands lonely and free. He is not a romantic Victorian hero as Gatsby. Spade is rather a kind of an anti-hero whose character can survive in corrupted American society. He is strong, sometimes even

unethical, but very those qualities enable him to succeed, because according to the theory of Social Darwinism only the fittest survive.

A character staying somewhere between the naive dreamer Jay Gatsby and uncompromised Samuel Spade is a private eye Phillip Marlowe. Spade and Marlowe originally played an important role in the crime stories in the magazine *Black Mask*. While Spade appeared in the detective novel already in 1930, Marlowe had to wait until 1939 when Raymond Chandler's first and probably his most successful detective novel *The Big Sleep* was published.

Marlowe's character is polished enough. He represents a hero who is not only hard-boiled, but also honest and virtuous. He respects the law and deals in the best interest of his clients. Gene D. Phillips declares in the book *Creatures of Darkness* that Chandler wanted to create a hero "who is unswerving in preserving a traditional code of honor while living in a disordered and tarnished environment" (xxii). Although Marlowe has to face two fatal women, Carmen and Vivian Sternwoods, he does not allow them to destroy him. The novel *The Big Sleep* proves, that it is possible to recover romantic Victorian values in a detective story, that a private eye can behave moral in the corrupted society and survive.

The environment is very important in all the three books. The dark landscape and hard-boiled slang of the plots in *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep* were even so powerful that influenced the filmmaking in the 20th century. Rainy streets, gloomy nights, rough detectives and beautiful but dangerous *femme fatales* became characteristic of black and white movies, known as *film noir*.

The aim of this thesis is to discover the influence of increasing crime on literature, its characters and filmmaking in the United States of America during the age of modernism. Dangerous environment created peculiar surrounding to which characters had to adapt their behavior and desires and only those who were strong enough could survive. The pessimistic mood, dark landscape and charismatic detectives of hard-boiled crime fiction became even so powerful that were adapted into films which emphasized the role of crime in modernism.

Historical Background

The United States of America represented a powerful country after the First World War. It experienced a great development in many spheres such as policy trends, economy and culture. Cities grew in size and in their importance. New York, known as the centre of culture, became a very significant place where many artists came to become famous. Joshua Zeitz writes in the book *Flapper*, “if you were smart, if you were ambitious, if you could write, draw, paint, compose a tune, or spin a good story, New York was the place to be in 1919” (83). The post-war mood and events influenced the society of the United States for the next decades.

The first revolutionary event presented an increasing popularity of new music style called Jazz. This style was originally connected with black slaves who expressed their attitude to hard work. Paul Johnson declares in his book *A History of the American People*, that it was the only time when slaves could express themselves and Jazz showed their “mockery, criticism, covert protests against the triumphalism of the white man’s world” (700). However, its catchy rhythm gained an increasing popularity and during the Twenties Jazz extended from the place of its origin in the southern part of America (mainly from New Orleans) to the rest of the country. This kind of music caused a revolution on the dance floors. Jazz also influenced women’s fashion and contributed to creating new literary characters.

Women conformed to that style their views and manners and a new kind of girl so-called flapper appeared. Frederick Lewis Allen writes in the book *Only Yesterday* about the revolution in manners and morals and describes the contemporary woman’s trends:

The flappers wore thin dresses, short-sleeved and occasionally (in the evening) sleeveless; some of the wilder young things rolled their stocking below knees, revealing to the shocked eyes of virtue a fleeting glance of shin-bones and knee-cap; and many of them were visibly using cosmetics.
(77)

Francis Scott Fitzgerald became an expert in those women. His main female literary characters were influenced by flappers and by their manners. They were debauched, careless and spendthrift. They wore short dresses, bobbed their hair, drank alcohol and loved parties. Nevertheless, they only reflected the post-war mood in American society.

The young American generation was searching for amusement and fun. They wanted to be free, to do what they want and to enjoy themselves as flappers did. All those features were expressed by literary characters and careless flappers could be seen not only in society but also in novels and films. Joshua Zeitz claims, that the new female characters were “far more sexual, more wanton, and more dangerous” (231). Those seductive women represented a great danger for many male characters and nasty, disobedient girls became even important villains in romantic and detective stories.

Another event which had a huge impact on society in 1920's was the prohibition. That new law banned making and selling all kinds of liquors in the United States. The government endeavored to eliminate illegal activities, such as prostitution or gambling, and wanted to achieve it by banning alcohol consumption. Nevertheless, the effect was different. Andrew Sinclair says in his book *Prohibition*:

The crimes once charged against liquor were now charged against the prohibition, who was accused of causing the rise of the national syndicates of crooks and murder gangs by making over to them all the profits of the illegal liquor trade. (221)

Furthermore, prohibition did not bring any solutions but it more likely caused new problems. The law made ordinary people criminals. Lots of them became alky cooks and started preparing alcohol by their own at home. The demand for alcohol was so high that in big cities organized criminals such as bootleggers and the mafia flourished. Policy stopped being respected and the law was executed by mafia families and their bosses. Prohibition, however, increased crime but it also became an inspiration for creating new literary characters, bootleggers.

The final and probably the biggest event causing the increase in crime in this period was the stock market crash on the 24th of October, 1929. This day is also called the Black Thursday and it was one of the biggest economical decay in the United States of America. The period after, known as the Great Depression, had fatal impacts on millions of human lives for almost next ten years.

All those events affected literature and contributed to creation of a new and peculiar background in stories to which characters had to confront. While Francis Scott Fitzgerald was an expert in the Jazz Age, Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler became famous writers of the so-called hard-boiled literature. At first, Hammett and Chandler contributed

by their criminal stories to the magazine *Black Mask* but then they became experts in writing detective novels. This kind of literature is famous for its peculiar hard-boiled slang and rather antiheroic characters that conformed to the corrupted society in America. Fitzgerald's *Gatsby* represents a pre-depression hero affected only by carelessness of other people, by their pursuit of fame, fun and money, while Hammett's and Chandler's main characters, which are set in the time of the Great Depression, have to face more dangerous criminals and environment. Probably the most famous detectives were Samuel Spade and Phillip Marlowe in America in 1930's. They adapted to the dangerous surrounding and created their own rules, they to better survive in the society and to better withstand their more dangerous opponents.

Women Criminals

The Great Gatsby, *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep* are connected by common themes. All three depict characters hunting for money and power through illegal alcohol. Also there are bad and dangerous female characters who weave in and out of these criminal enterprises.

Women were considered to be inferior to men, but during the 1920's their role and influence rose in the American society. Feminists struggled for their independence and equality. They wanted to be more respected and free, to have the same rights as men, better job positions and also the suffrage. Women became dangerous for men, because they could intervene in elections and they also started taking on rather male manners such as smoking, drinking alcohol, enjoying parties, gambling and many others. Women were more self-confident and aware of their importance. Their roles changed and women became relatively dangerous and powerful creatures not only in society but also in literature.

The motive of bad women is relatively common in modern literature. On the one hand, female characters are careless, impassible, harmful, aggressive, sometimes cruel and unprincipled. They endeavor to dominate, to take control and to manipulate. Their badness could be also realized not only by certain kind of narcissism and self-centeredness but also by some psychopathy features or even mental disorders. On the other hand, those modern women are aware of their other advantages such as their charm, beauty and vulnerability and they are not afraid to use them. Women had ever endeavored to control men and they learned to use their most effective weapons. They seduce them, pretend crying or fainting. They simply bring men into situations where they do not know which way to behave and to act. Therefore those women, also known as *femme fatales*, represent a trap and potential danger for male characters. Elisabeth Bronfen in her essay "Femme Fatale" describes this kind of women:

She is not only sexually uninhibited, but also unabashedly independent and ruthlessly ambitious, using her seductive charms and her intelligence... She entertains a narcissistic pleasure at the deployment of her own ability to dupe the men who fall for her, even as she is merciless in manipulating them for her own ends. (106)

Beautiful things and especially women do not evoke the impression of being bad, but the reality seems to be rather different. Pretty girls such as Daisy Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*, Brigid O'Shaughnessy in *The Maltese Falcon* and Carmen and Vivian Sternwoods in *The Big Sleep* are ranked among dangerous criminals, murderers and *femme fatales*.

The Great Gatsby records the events of the first part of 1920's. The book deals with the importance of having money and a high social status. It reveals characters that in the pursuit of achieving their desires act carelessly and debauchedly. This is also the reason why one of the main female characters Daisy Buchanan reflects the new modern emancipated woman known as flapper and she also features a character endeavoring to succeed in the careless society. Daisy is used to living in luxury. She is a vain and selfish woman who hates being bored and who seeks for an amusement.

Firstly, the centre of culture life, New York, represents the main source of fun. Characters usually take some bottles of alcohol and slightly drunk drive to have fun in an apartment in New York. Secondly, after meeting Gatsby, Daisy is very interested in his residence and his wealth. And finally, her last pleasure seems to be seducing, dating with men and their subsequent destruction. Jordan Baker narrates, when Daisy was younger "all day long the telephone rang in her house and excited young officers from Camp Taylor demanded the privilege of monopolizing her that night" (Fitzgerald 62). On the other hand, Daisy is aware of the role of a woman in contemporary society in America, when rich girls usually do not marry poor boys and where the marriage with the "right" man with a great reputation is still very important. Daisy explains her attitudes toward women when she is talking to her cousin Nick Caraway about the birth of her daughter:

I woke up out of the ether with an utterly abandoned feeling, and asked the nurse right away if it was a boy or a girl. She told me it was a girl, and so I turned my head away and wept. "All right," I said, "I am glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool – that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool." (Fitzgerald 16)

However, at first Daisy seems to be a poor victim who married a wrong man, but later her real character, which is hidden behind her innocence and beauty, is revealed. Daisy was used to live in a certain social strata and therefore when she had to decide which love to prefer, whether love to a poor lieutenant Gatsby or her love to wealth, power and

fame, she choose the second possibility. Although Gatsby became a rich man, the origin of his money is not as stable as Tom's. Tom's money is more valuable because it is an established wealth and Tom's social status can ensure a carefree life to Daisy which she has been used to and also it affords her bigger chance to survive in the time of the Roaring Twenties.

Daisy Buchanan is an emancipated and clever woman. She is flirtatious, seductive but mainly careless and vain. Her beauty and charm enable her to have power over Jay Gatsby and therefore she is also called a "modern Siren" (Shmoop Editorial Team). Greek Sirens sang lovely to allure and seduce sailors who endeavored to get closer to them and thereupon they died. Glenn Settle illustrates in the essay "Fitzgerald's Daisy: The Siren Voice", that "like the seductive attractiveness in the voices of the Sirens, it is the voice of Daisy, more than any of her other qualities, that most noticeably defines her characterization" (119). Daisy practices the same (like Sirens with sailors) with Jay Gatsby. He is most likely captured by her "charming little laugh, her low, thrilling voice" expressing an excitement (Fitzgerald 9, 10). This is one of the reasons why he blindly and unreservedly falls in love with her. Although Daisy is called the "modern Siren" and could be ranked among the women known as *femme fatales*, she is not actually as calculating as those kinds of women. Daisy is not as dangerous. She is rather careless, spoilt and sometimes she even does not know what she really wants. Daisy does not care about feelings of other people. More than in emotions, Daisy is interested in Gatsby's shirts, in his big, beautiful house and in interesting guests at his parties.

Daisy owns the power to fascinate men. She is beautiful, intelligent but she does not use and destroy men for fun intentionally as a typical *femme fatale*. Daisy is not as independent as fatal women. She is influenced by the environment where she lives and by the social standards of the 1920's. Daisy's existence depends on her husband and on his wealth. Although Daisy is responsible for the death of Myrtle and also partially for Gatsby's death, all her acts were caused due to her carelessness. Nick Caraway demonstrates Daisy's and her husband's characters at the end of the book:

It was all very careless and confused. They both were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made... (Fitzgerald 146)

Daisy destroys lives, kills and is dangerous as typical fatal women, but she is not as calculating and does not do her acts intentionally. Rather than a dangerous *femme fatale*, Daisy represents a careless girl, who devastates the others only due to her recklessness and vanity and because the era of the Roaring Twenties and the Jazz Age enables those people (like Daisy) to realize their acts.

Another destructive woman is called Brigid O'Shaugnessy, who represents the main female character in the book *The Maltese Falcon*. Brigid is very beautiful and also evil murdering fatal woman like Daisy. Nevertheless, the similarity between Daisy and Brigid is not only their charm and beauty, but their hunger for money and power. Meanwhile Daisy was born rich and she is used to live in a high social strata and wealth since her childhood, Brigid is a poor woman endeavoring to reach wealth due to a golden statue of the Maltese falcon, which she attempts to acquire.

Brigid O'Shaugnessy is an independent woman who wants to achieve her aim at any costs. She acts alone, but she seeks for a protection at several men and because she is a poor girl, the only way, she can control them, is to seduce them. Brigid can manipulate men and her main skill (except from seducing) is lying. At first she uses a fictitious name such as Miss Wonderly or Miss Leblanc. Then she makes up a story because she wants to hire a private eye he to protect her and he to dispose her of her previous partner Floyd Thursby. The detective Samuel Spade in the book *The Maltese Falcon* depicts her style of intention, "she's pretty capable of taking care of herself and she knows where to come for help when she thinks she needs it, and when it suits her" (Hammett 157). However, things do not go according to her plans and Brigid determinates to a worse act than just lying and fraud. Ultimately she kills Samuel Spade's partner Miles Archer. *Femme fatales* are known as women who lead their male opponents into danger and also Brigid behaves like that to achieve her aims. Although she is considered to be one of the best *femme fatales*, she is originally soft and her acts are caused by her pursuit of money. As she is a poor woman the only way, she can acquire her aims, seems to be with help of men.

The major difference between Brigid and Daisy is in committing their crimes. Daisy is a relatively naive murderer who kills just incidentally, while Brigid is more calculating and not afraid to use even a gun. Brigid is also more dangerous, she is aware of her sexuality and of the meaning of being a woman, compared to Daisy. James Maxfield emphasizes in his essay "La Belle Dame Sans Merci and the Neurotic Knight", that "Brigid is regarded as dangerous even by those who are dangerous themselves" (257). For instance when she decides to hire a detective to work for her, she does not have enough

money. Therefore she tries to arouse pity over her fate and when it does not work she simply offers herself:

“I’ve given you all the money I have.” Tears glistened in her white-ringed eyes. Her voice was hoarse, vibrant. “I’ve thrown myself on your mercy, told you that without your help I’m utterly lost. What else is there?” She suddenly moved close to him on the settee cried angrily: “Can I buy you with my body?” (Hammett 59, 60)

Nevertheless, Samuel Spade accepts her offer, but he does not succumb to her beauty completely. While she thinks she is using Spade, he is actually using her.

On the one hand, Brigid is a real, dangerous *femme fatale*, a murderer who killed a man without mercy just for profit. On the other hand, she represents a woman that has real feelings and that could be sentimental inside. The only problem is caused by her poorness. If she was originally rich, she would not need to kill a man to achieve an amount of money. At the end of the whole story the truth about the murders is disclosed and she realizes that her primary seduction could probably turn to real love to Samuel Spade. Brigid does not devastate men carelessly just for fun, amusement and from vanity. She only desires for a valuable golden statue of the Maltese falcon which could help her to become a rich and independent woman. During her hunting for wealth she needs help and the only possibility to get some means to seduce, use or even kill a man. Brigid has a dream and she is willing to conform to everything to achieve it.

Carmen Strenwood represents the third and probably the most dangerous kind of a *femme fatale* in the detective story *The Big Sleep*. She is a younger daughter of General Sternwood. And it could be said that this girl should be absolutely satisfied because she could spend the rest of her life by enjoying her father’s money. In comparison with Brigid, Carmen is already rich and does not have to seduce men because she needs them. Nevertheless, Carmen is drug addicted; she is concerned with pornography and suffers from nymphomania. Although she is quite nice and wealthy, she is very dangerous because she is not afraid to kill men who do not accept her offers. Carmen belongs to one of the most spoiled female characters who obtain everything they want including men. Due to her famous and influential father she has the feeling that everyone has to subordinate to her wishes and to do exactly what she requires. Although Carmen is a young girl who comes from a family with a good reputation, she can be ranked among a group of troublemakers

and murderers. As she is spoilt and is used to control other people, her demands grow. And when someone does not want to do everything according to her views, she is even able to kill them.

On the other hand, her sister Vivian could be called the real princess of *femme fatales*. She has elegant behavior, is not drug addicted and does not raise troubles like her younger sister. Vivian evokes the impression that every man should be amazed by her and her beauty and that she does not need to seduce them because everyone should endeavor to win her. For example, her sister Carmen, wants to seduce Philip Marlowe, but when he does not accept her, she breaks into his apartment and waits for him in his bed “in the lamp light, as naked and glistening as a pearl” (Chandler 151). Nevertheless, Vivian also tries to seduce Marlowe, but when he declines her, she can evoke the feeling that she wants him neither and that it is his misfortune because she actually refuses him. Vivian is not as dangerous as her sister. Although Vivian is rich and aware of her beauty, she does not misuse her advantages like Carmen. Vivian does not kill and in the novel *The Big Sleep* she is the girl who tries to put things right. Furthermore, Carmen suffers not only from nymphomania but also from catalepsy, which contributes to her dangerousness and it is also one of the reasons causing her hunger for killing. She is murdering in an affect and after she forgets almost everything:

Her hand holding the empty gun began to shake violently. The gun fell out of it. Her mouth began to shake. Her whole face went to pieces. Then her head screwed towards up her left ear and froth showed on her lips. Her breath made a whining sound. She swayed. (Chandler 211)

Wealth and power rule in the age of modernism. Those who have money have better chance to survive in the difficult decade of the Great Depression. Also Carmen Sternwood is not convicted of her crimes. Instead of being found guilty, she is sent into a sanatorium, “somewhere far off from here where they can handle her type, where they will keep guns and knives and fancy drinks away from her” (Chandler 218). Like Daisy Buchanan, Carmen stays relatively unpunished. Daisy could take all her money and move far away and Carmen instead of being found guilty and going into a prison ends in a sanatorium. The honor of Sternwood’s family plays more important role than the law and on this account Carmen is rather sent out not to destroy family’s reputation. The destiny seems to be cruel just to Brigid O’Shaughnessy. She has no money, no powerful husband or

family with a good reputation and careful sister which give her no chance to survive in the modern society. Even Samuel Spade is not unreservedly fallen in love with her and this is the reason why Brigid is destined to destruction and ends in hands of police.

Those four female characters reflect common desires of modern women which are power, money and control over men. All of them are in their ways dangerous *femme fatales* who take the advantage of being women and are not afraid to use a gun. The main similarity between Daisy and Carmen is their approach to men. They are careless, emotionless and their relationships seem to be without any feelings. It could be said that both of them use men just for fun. Carmen is a dangerous murderer suffering from nymphomania who wants to get them into bed, whereas Daisy uses men for living in comfort and wealth. By contrast to Carmen and Daisy, Brigid O' Shaugnessy is a lonely woman who desires to be rich and this is the reason why she seeks for men's help and protection. She is a flexible woman and thinks about her acts and murders properly. Tom Flinn describes Brigid in his essay "Out of the Past" as a woman who owns the "ability to slip chameleonlike from one guise to another, no matter how incriminating the situation" (70). Vivian Sternwood represents a real lady *femme fatale* who is pleased by seducing men, but she does not actually need them. She is already rich independent and beautiful and she can reach everything she wants by relatively innocent means and not by a gun. Daisy, Brigid and Carmen seem to be naive, compared to Vivian. They expect everyone will do everything according to their views and that they can manipulate men, while men actually manipulate by them. They also suppose that their beauty and charm should enable them to control men, because as James Maxfield declares in the essay "La Belle Dame Sans Merci and the Neurotic Knight", "men typically will do things for women they desire sexually" (259). Nevertheless, hard-boiled detectives are able to reveal the danger which could women cause and do not fall for their charm and beauty. Only Jay Gatsby is too romantic and naive for the time he lives in and therefore he is destroyed.

However, Daisy, Brigid, Vivian and Carmen differ, because something typical of the decades their characters live in dominates in each of them. Daisy expresses the post-war manners when people look for amusement, when they live from day to day and enjoy everything as much as possible. She presents a reckless flapper loving parties and fun during the Jazz music boom at the beginning of 1920's. On the other hand, Brigid and Carmen reflect a relatively different kind of women, because as Frederick Lewis Allen writes in the book *Only Yesterday*, "the red-hot baby had gone out of style" in 1930's (303). Brigid and Vivian are more mature than slightly childish Daisy and Carmen.

Nevertheless, if Carmen was not ill, she would be probably a reasonable young lady worthy of male love like her sister Vivian.

Women became more independent in the age of modernism. They acquired their suffrage and could intervene to previously only male issues. The era of the Jazz Age and the Great Depression show a lot of changes. The time brought not only disclosed women's knees and shoulders, new style of dancing and music, but also a difference in female manners and behavior. That new kind of women seems to be not only more attractive to men, more seductive, wanted and aware of themselves, but also more dangerous and destructive. Women became relatively dangerous for men in society and also in literature. They use their intrigues to control people and in the stories such as *The Great Gatsby*, *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep*, they mainly manipulate with male characters and represent a great danger for some of them.

Romantic and Hard-boiled Heroes

Post-war America does not present a proper place for romantic love. Neither does the days after such as the stock market crash in 1929, subsequent decade of the Great Depression, rising crime, smuggling and illegal business. People lose their jobs, they do not have enough money and to make a living becomes more and more uneasy. Raymond Chandler was also familiar with those difficulties and this was one of the reasons he decided to write and contribute by his stories to the magazine *Black Mask*. In 1939 his first novel *The Big Sleep* was published, where his best known and famous detective Philip Marlowe plays the main and important role. It is said that Chandler was probably inspired and motivated by his predecessor Dashiell Hammett, who had already contributed to *Black Mask* and his character Samuel Spade belonged to one of the most popular private eyes. However, those detectives have some similarities, but they differ a lot and each of them has his own attitude towards women, morality, law and society. They both, Spade and Marlowe came through the so called “hard-boiled school” and therefore they are better prepared for their criminal stories in the time of corrupted American cities of 1930’s.

The best known Francis Scott Fitzgerald’s character Jay Gatsby was not so fortunate. It could be said that he came from the “old school” where men were brought up to behave gentle to women and to do everything to make them happy and satisfied. Even Fitzgerald did not endow Gatsby with qualities necessary for surviving in the post-war American society and therefore Gatsby represents a romantic hero endeavoring to love of his dream girl in the time which is not suitable for romantic love.

Samuel Spade’s character differs from Gatsby’s and Marlowe’s. While they both dream about romantic love to a woman, Samuel Spade hides this feeling and rather shows to the world his emotionless and hard-boiled character. Concerning women, they mean a certain kind of fun and pleasure for him. His sense of love is replaced by sense of caution and suspiciousness. He is probably determined by the way of common life which is characterized by “obsessive pursuit of wealth, or even occasionally of sex”, as mentions Dennis Porter in his essay “The private eye” (100). Nevertheless, Spade acts like a unprincipled person. Even if he works with his partner Miles Archer, he is not ashamed to seduce his wife Iva Archer. She becomes slightly obsessed with Sam and she is even willing to leave her husband due to him. One day Brigid O’Shaughnessy enters his office and she hits his rather emotionless character. At first, Spade is more interested in her money than in her. And even if she makes up a fictitious story he is willing to deal with it,

because as Spade says, “she’s given up seven hundred smacks in two days, and that’s all right” (Hammett 44). Nevertheless, Spade continues protecting Brigid even if he knows about her badness.

After some time it even appears that Spade could be in love with Brigid. But he actually likes her because they both are very similar. Brigid seems to be as manipulative as Spade but although Brigid thinks she is controlling him, he is actually manipulating her. For example, Spade uses Brigid’s presence in his bed and he leaves her alone to go to look through her apartment. James Maxfield in his essay “La Belle Dame Sans Merci and the Neurotic Knight” declares that, Spade “does still have problems with his feelings toward one woman – Brigid” and that “it is important to Spade to achieve dominance over almost everyone he comes in contact with” (254, 256). In the end of the story, when the truth is revealed, Spade has to decide between law and love, whether to give Brigid to police or let her go. He chooses the law because as he adds, “I don’t even like the idea of thinking that there might be one chance in a hundred that you’d played me for a sucker” and also “I won’t play the sap for you” (Hammett 222, 223). Although it looks like Brigid was just a toy for him and an instrument serving to acquire more money, he really likes her in his own way. Even his relatively sarcastic and ironic remark could be understood literally, “if you get a good break you’ll be out of San Quentin in twenty years and you can come back to me then” (Hammett 218).

Samuel Spade owns the character of typical hard-boiled anti-hero who fits the best in the post-war American society. His behavior towards his female opponents is rather rough. He likes women, but he does not fall for their beautiful faces and their sparkling eyes. Sam is not afraid of one-night relationship and he more likely renounces love because of his own profit. Therefore all those features enable him to survive in a dangerous time when everyone can rely only on themselves. People use everything they have. Men threaten with guns and women become dangerous due to their bodies and beautiful faces.

The opposite of Samuel Spade’s character is Jay Gatsby. Their major difference can be seen in their relationship to women. While Sam is prudent and does not want to “play the sap” for Brigid O’Shaughnessy, Jimmy Gatz actually plays the sap for Daisy Buchanan and allows her, she to manipulate him. Gatsby and Sam have also a similar feature, which is their hunger for money. Nevertheless, each of them hunts for it from different reasons. Spade wants to acquire a golden statue of the Maltese falcon to have more comfortable and easier life, while Gatsby becomes a bootlegger to have a lot of money to impress his beloved Daisy.

Jimmy has a dream called Daisy and he devotes everything to this girl, who he met as a young lieutenant. He is willing to give up everything he has and even to die for her. But as time went by society and women changed and Gatsby has to go through many difficulties during the way to achieving his dream. When he was young, he was poor but an honest boy, who endeavored to improve himself. He wrote a diary where he noted his expenses, his behavior, education and many other things. Gatsby wanted to be a better and successful person. But he was influenced by the manners of the decade of the Roaring Twenties and under the pressure of his dream he changed himself and started earning money as a bootlegger. Although Gatsby becomes a criminal, his character does not fit the time he lives in. His main endeavor is not to earn a huge amount of money but he just wants to repeat and fix his past: "Can't repeat the past?" he cried incredulously. "Why of course you can!" "I'm going to fix everything just the way it was before," he said, nodding determinedly. "She'll see."(Fitzgerald 90)

Gatsby becomes a victim of his own dream. He desires for a girl from his youth but that girl changed. She became more careless, dangerous and Jimmy like a blind dreamer cannot see it. The time and people are different and Gatsby has to pay "a high price for living too long with a single dream" (Fitzgerald132). Due to his "self-destroying romantic obsession" as John F. Callahan called Gatsby's dream in the article "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Evolving American Dream", Gatsby does not listen to his only friend Nick and did not leave the country after Daisy ran over Myrtle (376). He simply signs himself the sentence of death. Naive Gatsby is waiting for his dream which is too innocent and romantic for the decade of 1920's and his romantic expectation and desire for unreserved love cause his own destruction.

Jimmy Gatz is not fit for the rough world of modernism. His character was not hard enough to pass through all the difficulties and careless people. Probably if Samuel Spade and Jimmy changed their roles, everything would end differently. Sam would take all the money he has and left. He would not wait for Daisy like Gatsby. Sam would let her confront her own destiny. He would charge her with a murder and Daisy could dream about her fame and money in a jail. On the other hand, Brigid O'Shaughnessy would have her hero Gatsby, who would not let her in the hands of police. Jimmy and Brigid are similar because they both are sentimental and trust other people. Therefore if they ran away, they could live Gatsby's dream happily ever after.

Somewhere between relatively careless Spade's and naive Gatsby's character Philip Marlowe stays. He features both, the qualities of a hard-boiled private eye and a character of an honest gentleman. Unlike Spade, Marlowe is more etic, romantic and has a sense of honor. When his story in *The Big Sleep* starts, the first thing, Marlowe considers, is his help to "a knight in dark armour rescuing a lady who was tied to a tree and didn't have any clothes on but some very long and convenient hair" in the picture of his client General Sternwood (Chandler 9). He also adds, "if I lived in the house, I would sooner or later have to climb up there and help him" (Chandler 9). Nevertheless, he gets the same opportunity a few days later, when he finds Sternwood's daughter Carmen naked and drugged. As it has been already mentioned, this girl is a spoilt and dangerous creature suffering from nymphomania. She has the ability to get herself and people around her into troubles. She represents the main problem for Marlowe and therefore it is more difficult for him to solve his cases. Although Carmen is supposed to be a seductive beautiful *femme fatale*, her charm is not sufficient and Marlowe does not succumb to her intrigues. He is a professional who takes his job seriously and to withstand her is "a question of professional pride" for Marlowe (Chandler 152).

Marlowe cares more for other people's feelings. Denis Porter writes in his essay "The Private Eye" that Marlowe represents "an anti-elitist and even populist hero" (106). Marlowe is not interested in his client's wealth and he always tries to solve cases in the best interest of his customers. As he likes the old General Sternwood, with regards to him, he keeps Carmen's affairs in secret. Marlowe admits, he does it "to protect what little pride a broken and sick old man has left in his blood, in the thought that his blood is not poison, and that although his two little girls are a trifle wild, as many nice girls are these days, they are not perverts or killers" (Chandler 218). Marlowe is an independent, lonely private detective who abides by his feelings. He is able to love but not as unreservedly and mindlessly like Gatsby. For example, his feelings were captured by a woman called Silver-Wig who helped him escape in the story, but he did not become as addicted to her like Jimmy to Daisy. Marlowe can separate his private life and fun from work and he acts in the best interest of people he likes.

In comparison with Gatsby's and Spade's characters, there is a several year gap between them and Marlowe. Raymond Chandler was contributing to *Black Mask* since 1933 and *The Big Sleep* was published in 1939, which means Marlowe's character had enough time to develop and conform to the days of the Great Depression and to the dangerous social climate in the United States. Fitzgerald's Gatsby had no opportunity to

progress himself. Although he is a pre-depression character, Gatsby was thrown into the crazy time of the Jazz Age with qualities that ensures him no chance to survive among careless people. On the other hand, Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* appeared in 1930 at the beginning of the Great Depression and therefore Spade represents a perfect anti-hero who thinks only of himself, of his own profits and therefore can survive in this rough decade. He does not take into account emotions and romantic love, because they could disturb his logic mind and could cause his devastation like in Gatsby's story, where romantic love causes Gatsby's destruction. Nevertheless, as time went by "decorum and romance began to come once more within the range of possibilities" as writes Frederick Lewis Allen in the book *Only Yesterday* (303). Therefore the return of romantic features could be seen in *The Big Sleep*. Marlowe is more romantic than Spade but more adapted to that decade than naive dreamer Jay Gatsby. He has certain feelings to a woman called Silver-Wig, but he is also aware of the danger that this love could bring. Marlowe never tries to find her and for some time he may feel sadness and loneliness, but he succeeds and survives. And that is more important in hard, modern era than love.

Ethics and Morality

The social atmosphere changed standards of morality and ethics in the United States of America in the age of modernism. Increasing crime, prostitution and corruption were connected with the sale of liquor and as Paul Johnson writes in the book *A History of the American People*, “there were many Americans who believed, in the 19th century, that if only the sale of alcohol could be made unlawful, not only alcoholism and drunkenness could be stamped out but the country could be morally improved in countless other distinct ways” (678). Nevertheless, the 18th amendment, the prohibition, does not contribute to improvement in morals and as Jaffrey Louis Decker declares in his essay “Gatsby’s pristine dream”, the Eighteenth Amendment rather “propelled organized gangsterism to new heights and, in doing so, opened opportunities for new arrivals by creating a lucrative trade in illicit alcohol” (60). Demand for more alcohol rise and even authorities such as politicians or civil servants do not follow the law. For example “under the corrupt mayoralty of ‘Big Bill’ Thompson” mafias profit from prohibition and “subvert society” (Johnson 681). This environment contributes to increase in crime and especially money acquired by bootlegging and liquor sale is further used to support other illegal activities such as developing gambling empires, expansion of prostitution and drug-smuggling, which further expand during the era of the Great Depression (Johnson 682).

Morality changes in the whole society including people having high social status and especially low criminals. They become increasingly dangerous and less ethical. In the novel *The Great Gatsby* Fitzgerald presents relatively innocuous bootlegger Jay Gatsby who “operates in the shadows of American violence and power” (Callahan 392). Gatsby is incarcerated in his fragile dream about past during the Great War decade, while Hammett’s and Chandler’s heroes, affected by the Great Depression, have to face not only illegal alcohol sale, but also more dangerous kinds of crime such as prostitution, trade in pornography, blackmailing and especially murders.

Power and fortune are necessary for survival and those who are poor do not fit the society according to a theory of Social Darwinism (“Social Darwinism” 24). Characters in *The Great Gatsby* incline to this idea. They show that originally honest people can change their morality and manners due to their pursuit of possession and fame. Although it seems, that Jimmy Gatz falls for those features and becomes a bootlegger “who associates with unsavory new arrivals and vile members of the underworld”, he stays still the honest gentleman concentrating to his youthful ambitions (Decker 60). He has not intended to

devote his life to illegal activities and smuggling of liquor. He just uses them to attain his modest desire and dream. Gatsby's friends, however, are different. They succumb to the spirit of the Roaring Twenties and Tom and Daisy reveal their real characters in the course of time. Robert Ornstein declares in the essay "Scott Fitzgerald's Fable of East and West" that Daisy and Tom grew into "careless... selfish, destructive" people "capable of anything except human sympathy" and even primarily innocent Daisy's "charming irresponsibility of the flapper has developed into the criminal amorality" (143, 140).

Nevertheless, Gatsby's honesty is a matter of incessant doubts. His origin and possession arise interests in other people. They invent rumors about Gatsby's enigmatic past, which contribute to diminution of his reputation. For instance he was "a German spy or one time he killed a man who had found out that he was nephew to Von Hindenburg and second cousin to the devil" (Fitzgerald 37, 50). They spread those hearsays even though most of the people do not know Gatsby himself and almost no one is really invited at his parties. Even Gatsby's odd acquaintances do not contribute to improvement of his reputation. He becomes suspected especially because of his "illicit business association (indeed, his friendship) with immigrant gangster Mayer Wolfsheim", who "compromises the ethics of our hero's self-made success" (Decker 62). Wolfsheim uses Gatsby, especially his naivety and due to him, Gatsby becomes a bootlegger.

Gatsby could be successful in his business because of the environment of 1920's, which abets to prosperity in his illegal activities. Robert Ornstein declares that, "the successful entrepreneurs of Gatsby's age are the panderers to vulgar tastes, the high pressure salesmen, and, of course, the bootleggers" (140). Easily corruptible police and demand for alcohol contributes to increase in unlawful activities and therefore Gatsby's business can flourish. He himself proves that enterprising people with good connections could become rich and successful and that the powerful ones can easily break the law without being punished. For instance he once did a "favour" for a police commissioner and therefore every year Gatsby obtains a "Christmas card" which enables him to drive as he wants and not to be checked (Fitzgerald 56).

Gatsby, however, is not a typical gangster or gangland boss ruling the underworld such as Al Capone, Lucky Luciano, Giuseppe Morello or Salvatore Maranzano, who organized their illegal activities in the United States during the age of modernism. Gatsby is more likely the "last great folk hero, the Paul Bunyan of an age in which romantic wonder surrounds underworld... instead of raw courage or physical strength" (Ornstein 142). Gatsby acts like a character of Robin Hood. As Robin Hood takes the rich and gives

the poor, the same does Gatsby. He gives people what they demand and what they want, alcohol. Although he acts unlawfully, his behavior is still ethical. All his deeds are caused by his effort to “fix” the past and to win Daisy’s heart. Nevertheless, Daisy cannot be satisfied by illegal property and money and therefore Gatsby’s dream turns to a disaster.

Only those who have a strong character and money are supposed to survive according to the theory of Social Darwinism. Although Gatsby owns a great property and even from the beginning, he finds “himself capable of taking from the world almost anything he wanted, virtually without penalty”, he realizes that his dream is too honest and unreachable for the time he lives in. (Steinbrink 162). Due to the fall for the fatal woman and his inability to conform the careless society Gatsby cannot survive. He does not adapt his ambitions to the period of the Jazz Age, neither to the time of the Great Depression. He is a romantic hero from a previous age whose character and behavior do not fit the Roaring Twenties and therefore he is destined to die.

Gatsby, however, tends to be more ethical than the hard-boiled private eye Samuel Spade. They both do not follow the rules and the law, but Gatsby acts and treat the other people honestly, while Spade just use them to help himself, which is also caused by the time he lives in. It is supposed that “detectives are representatives of law”, but Spade seems to be rather on the opposite side, on the side of criminals and murderers rather than on the side of the law (Chapman). The environment of 1930’s does not contribute to improvement of moral acts. During the depression only those who are individualists and think mainly of themselves have chance to succeed. This is also the reason why detectives adapt themselves and their behavior to corrupted society and create their own new rules. Catherine Nickerson mentions in the essay “Murder as Social Criticism” that Hammett’s protagonists and especially Samuel Spade are rather “strangely unheroic heroes, guys who come to town, stir things up, break the law, and deceive everyone including their own clients” (746).

Spade’s attitude towards his dead partner, Miles Archer, is one of his relatively unethical deeds. As Miles was not the fittest and did not adapt to the society of the Great Depression, he could not survive. According to Social Darwinism only those who are the most adaptable, those who are wealthy and strong enough, can survive (“Social Darwinism” 24). Spade does not look like he really cares about Mile’s murder and the murderer. He just comments it calmly, that they were professionals and they could be aware of their acts, but he is interested in this case and devotes everything to find Mile’s murderer because he is supposed to do it. Nevertheless, Sam benefits of his partner’s death

and even Brigid, the killer of Miles, is surprised that she actually did a favor to him. Spade admits, “I always had an idea that Miles would go off and die somewhere we’d stand a better chance of thriving (Hammett 44). Mile’s death actually makes Spade fitter for the contemporary society, because Spade has learned that he cannot be dependent on someone else. The time and environment are too dangerous and therefore he prefers being independent. Being a private eye enables him to be his own boss, to create his own rules and moral standards.

Spade does not represent a typical brave hero and honest detective who respects the law and punishes criminals. His behavior is unpredictable and it seems that he cooperates with gangsters more than with the police. He does not accept authorities and even though he is supposed to give information to police officers, he does not help them, because as he claims, “my guess might be excellent, or it might be crummy, but Mrs. Spade didn’t raise any children dippy enough to make guesses in front of a district attorney, an assistant district attorney, and a stenographer” (Hammett 149). Corrupted society creates more opportunities for circumventing the law. Samuel Spade, however, works as a detective and therefore he should be honest and moral. Nevertheless, when he obtains the statue of the Maltese falcon, the only thing he is interested in is its value and the profit he can gain. In collaboration with several gangsters, he creates a theory about the crimes and searches for a sufficient victim for police. Spade has already acted like that and therefore he is confident about what he does:

At one time or another I’ve had to tell everybody from the Supreme Court down to go to hell, and I’ve got away with it. I got away with it because I never let myself forget that a day of reckoning was coming. I never forget that when the day of reckoning comes I want to be all set to march into headquarters pushing a victim in front of me, saying: ‘Here, you chumps, is your criminal!’ (Hammett 182)

If his plan was successful, they all, Spade and gangsters, would be rich. But the bird was just a fake and the pursuit of little statue, committed murders and lies emerged to be useless. Even the real character of Samuel Spade remains unrevealed because no one knows exactly what he would do if the bird was real. At the end Spade admits that his dishonest reputation can be useful for his job, because it is easier to cooperate with criminals when he is the bad guy (Hammett 223). Detectives are allowed to do almost

anything. They could be dishonest, could “lie, cheat, steal evidence, break promises, blackmail and manipulate people in order to bring the criminal to justice” (Marling). Although Spade seems to be the bad guy, he reveals the truth about the falcon and his partner’s death and finally he acts according to the law.

The decade of the Great Depression does not ameliorate human ethics and morality, but at its end in 1939 Raymond Chandler presents his honest hero, Philip Marlowe and proves that previous romantic qualities could be re-romantic again. Marlowe demonstrates that it is possible to combine ethical behavior with success. He is a detective, who adapts corrupted police and society but he endeavors to bring things back into order. As Samuel Spade, Marlowe also has to create own rules to survive in contemporary social climate, but he acts more ethical, tries to follow the law and is obliging to do everything in the best interest of his clients. He is also seduced by the vision of wealth and beautiful women, but he withstands and therefore he is able to succeed and survive.

Marlowe’s main quality is his sense for loyalty. Although he would earn more as a policeman, he stays faithful to his job as a private eye and for “twenty-five dollars and expenses” Marlowe is willing “to get pushed around in order to protect a client” (Chandler 111, 112). He is aware of the corrupted policy and of its illegal activities allowing trade with pornography in Hollywood (Chandler 111). This is the reason why he is very proud of his profession, because he can try to reform the society. Marlowe worked as a policeman and he has learned policemen’s tricks and therefore he knows that most of them do not like detectives. Marlowe explains, “cops get very large and emphatic when an outsider tries to hide anything, but they do the same things themselves every other day, to oblige their friends or anybody with a little pull” (Chandler 112). Furthermore, Marlowe sometimes does not obey his clients due to his sense for loyalty. For example, when General Sternwood asks him to solve a case of blackmailing, Marlowe searches further to find the missing Rusty Regan. Even though, he is not supposed to look for Regan, he does not take money for it and he continues searching for Rusty because of his moral conviction and to help the old General.

The fittest and “only those with the strongest moral character” survive. This is the idea of the Social Darwinism, which thereby justify corruption and immoral behavior of powerful people as writes Robert Reich in the article “The Two Darwinisms” (56). The atmosphere of the 1920’s and of the Great Depression creates more opportunities for unethical and criminal acts. Social climate changes and even literary characters are under the pressure of those features. Firstly, Jay Gatsby becomes a rich bootlegger and although

he is a powerful man and therefore he should be one of the “fittest” in the society, he does not survive due to his dream which fits more to the previous time. As he is under the pressure of his romantic view of life, he is destined to destruction, because his dream is too unfit for the decade of the Roaring Twenties. Then, Samuel Spade is more flexible and is able to solve almost every case without being punished. He is hard-boiled and does not care about other people’s feelings. He balances at the edge of the law, but his immoral deeds insure him survival. Finally, Philip Marlowe’s character proves that even though the society and police are corrupted, a poor detective can stay honest, keep moral values, return previous romantic qualities and not let the others devastate him at the same time.

Environment, Language and *Film Noir*

Contemporary events in society are reflected by literary works and the social climate helps to create the background of a particular story. In the age of modernism, the area of cities becomes more important and a new specific atmosphere emerges, one which is peculiar to many books. In the essay “The Private Eye” Dennis Porter maintains, that the emergence of crime fiction depends on “a particular historical, socio-economic and cultural conjuncture” (95). All three books, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep*, are set in real places in the United States and the surrounding represents an important role in those books, but in each of them reflects the environment differently.

Francis Scott Fitzgerald describes the time of the Jazz Age and the Roaring Twenties, but he mainly points at the thoughts, aims and dreams of his characters. He does not use the environment to consolidate the mood and the atmosphere in *The Great Gatsby*, compared to *The Big Sleep* and *The Maltese Falcon*, where the landscape plays a leading role. Fitzgerald is interested in the social differences between people and he uses places to express their inequality. The city of New York, where mainly Tom and Myrtle go to have fun, expresses rather than a corrupt and dangerous place, the post-war mood of carelessness and the pursuit of enjoying life without considering the further consequences. Furthermore, by dividing Long Island into East and West Egg, Fitzgerald creates borders between people who are originally poor and those who have been rich for several generations. Richard Lehan declares in the essay “F. Scott Fitzgerald and Romantic Destiny” the difference in the origin of money. East Egg money compares to “the money of the established rich” while West Egg money is presented as the “money of the new rich” (140). This is the reason why Gatsby’s property, no matter how huge it is, is regarded as less valuable because his residence is situated on the “worse” side of Long Island.

Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler put their heroes into the environment of California, a state generally regarded as sunny. Nevertheless, by the expression of darkness and danger in Los Angeles and San Francisco they created, from this ordinarily romantic landscape, an area ideal for committing crime on dim, dark rainy nights. They show that even this bright country has its underside and that the underworld and criminals can also be found here. On the other hand, New York could be seen as a dark city full of crime, but Fitzgerald describes it as a sunlit place sought by people who want to fulfill their dreams and to become rich and famous. However, cities grow in size and more people create optimal conditions for increasing crime. John Walker admits in the essay “City Jungles and

Expressionist Reifications from Brecht to Hammett” that a modern city is “an arena of anarchic violence” (125). He also declares:

Metropolitan technologies contribute to an atmosphere of noise, light and sudden violence whose obscure origins and unpredictable contentions conjure visions of jungle environments. The arbitrary violence and apparent lawlessness of city life create an atmosphere of anarchy that recalls social configuration of tribal warfare. (Walker 120)

Technologies such as cars play an important role in *The Great Gatsby*. This new and modern instrument represents a means of fun, social status and it can be also a deadly implement. The relationship to cars expresses the carelessness of characters. The gratuitous destruction of a car by drunken people at Gatsby’s party, the careless driving of Jordan or Daisy’s accident causing the death of Myrtle, all those acts would not be possible without this new technology, the car.

Environment and events in society influence human’s behavior. Hammett and Chandler managed to create a surrounding in their books which not only perfectly captures the declining morality and increasing violence of the decade of the Great Depression, but which also creates the effect of a real world in their stories. Although Chandler was criticized for his exaggerated description of crime in his books, he just endeavored to give the right sense of the real atmosphere. Gene D. Phillips mentions in his book *Creatures of Darkness*, that Chandler’s *The Big Sleep* is “true-to life, as evidence by the heavy press coverage of actual crimes committed in 1930s Los Angeles” (54). Hammett’s detective Spade and Chandler’s Philip Marlowe were thrown into dark cities ruled by corrupt police. They are not typical and perfect heroes who behave correctly at all times and know the solution to their cases immediately; however, Spade and Marlowe prove that crime cannot win in their cities if they do their job properly. Furthermore, the surrounding and the places they live in do not make their work easier. The plots develop mostly at night. The atmosphere is gloomy and the darkness and shadows strength the violence of criminal acts. Nevertheless, dangerous cities become more natural areas for life. Crime is, naturally, a common part of detective’s lives and this landscape creates conditions which are more similar to Darwin’s jungle where everyone struggles for preserve their existence. As animals, according to Darwinian Theory, contribute to climate in nature, so do the private

eyes who adapt the conditions, create new rules and fight for survival in their concrete jungles of Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Social climate influences not only the way people behave, but also the language they use. They act and speak according to a place they live in. These features are visible in *The Great Gatsby*, *The Maltese Falcon* and in *The Big Sleep*. Fitzgerald refers to Gatsby's elegant use of vocabulary and polite way of speaking. Gatsby, however, lives on a less accomplished side of Long Island; he endeavors to adapt to the world of the rich by polite behaving and using their refined language. In *The Great Gatsby* the narrator, Nick, notices, that Gatsby's "elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Sometime before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care" (Fitzgerald 41). Nevertheless, Gatsby is not a common dangerous bootlegger and this feature of politeness and careful use of his words is not typical behavior for other villains. Gatsby does not endeavor to conform to the world of criminals. He represents a man who wants to adapt to the environment of educated people with high social status and his speech is a means by which can help him to achieve it. By using the phrase "old sport" Gatsby awakes the impression of being an educated man, the real Oxford man. Gatsby tries to equal people such as Tom who are not only rich but also studied well-known universities. By withholding the information about his place of studies, Gatsby seems to be one of the men who attended Oxford in England. Nevertheless, increasing crime in society does not allow to this elegant kind of language to become popular among criminal circles. It rather contributes to the degradation of literary language and criminals create their new slangs rather than "picking words with care".

Samuel Spade's and Philip Marlowe's stories are set in utterly different landscape in comparison with Gatsby and therefore Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett endowed them with a typical vernacular language which perfectly fit to the surroundings of the big cities where their detectives live. Hard-boiled slang became one of the typical features of the detective stories in 1930's and 1940's. The name of the literary genre itself, "hard-boiled", expresses the hard words which the characters use. For example, when Hammett describes the death of Spade's partner, Miles Archer, Hammett writes that Miles was shot by one bullet into his heart. But instead of bullet and heart, Hammett uses "pill" and "pump" (Hammett 16). Chandler also has a characteristic hard-boiled vocabulary. For example, the word detective Chandler sometimes replaces by a "peeper" and when a girl that needs to disappear and is penniless, Chandler describes as a girl that has to "blow and she's shatting on her uppers" (Chandler 168). Also the name of the book *The Big Sleep*

actually represents a metaphor for death invented by Chandler. Readers can realize its meaning at the end of the book which is concluded by Marlowe's famous description of the place where people lay after their death:

What did it matter where you lay once you were dead? In a dirty sump or in a marble tower on top of a high hill? You were dead, you were sleeping the big sleep, you were not bothered by things like that. Oil and water were the same as wind and air to you. You just slept the big sleep, not caring about the nastiness of how you died or where you fell. (Chandler 220)

Marlowe and Spade have a greater chance to survive in their urban jungles, because their voices help them to keep a certain distance from their opponents. John Hilgart declares in the essay "Philip Marlowe's Labor of Words" that Marlowe's language helps him to "control the boundaries between self and other, between his own combative and often convoluted ethics and the corruption in which his job immerses him" (370). Due to the slang and the vernacular language which Hammett and Chandler used in their books, their detective stories became very popular. The private investigators speak like ordinary people. Their language enables the reader to identify with the characters and the settings and dialogs evoke the impression of reality.

It seems Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler created a unique and remarkable atmosphere in their books *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep*. The hard language, sophisticated dialogues, the environment of darkness, mist, shadows and rainy weather became so powerful and outstanding that those books were adapted into films. Furthermore, their pessimistic mood contributed to extending and enriching the film style known as *film noir* which emerged at that time.

Noir is a French word meaning black and representing dark, pessimistic movies mainly based on literary works of crime fiction. Noir was also influenced by German expressionist films, which are characterized by their silence and therefore are emphasized on the image and visual effects such as surroundings and shadows. Although there is much argument about *noir's* significance and many critics do not recognize it as an individual film genre, *noir* has its own special features and rules which contribute to its uniqueness. Typical *noir* heroes are usually private eyes known from detective stories for example Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe. There are also dangerous, malevolent and seductive women such as Brigid O'Shaughnessy, Carmen or Vivian Sternwoods who represent the main problems

and troubles for detectives. *Noir* films are usually set in big and dark cities which create a peculiar effect. Gene D. Phillips describes the typical noir environment as “a stark night world of dark angles and elongated shadows, where rain glistens on windows and windshields and faces are barred with shadows that suggest some imprisonment of body or soul” (8).

Film noir as a style is mainly connected with films of decades from 1940's to 1960's. Gene D. Phillips states Raymond Chandler as “central to the development of the trend in the American cinema in the 1940s known as film noir” and he also claims that *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) directed by John Huston was “a milestone in the development of film noir” (6, 7). Although *The Maltese Falcon* was already filmed, the adaptation in 1941 is considered to be the best one and the most faithful to the book. Humphrey Bogart and Mary Astor starred in the main roles as Samuel Spade and Brigid O'Shaughnessy, respectively. The main settings are mainly gloomy interiors of hotel rooms, Spade's apartment or office and the dialog is based on the hard-boiled slang, features typical for film noir. Film settings of Chandler's *The Big Sleep* could be regarded as more ambiguous. As Phillips states Chandler's topic of “homosexuality was too strong a subject for motion pictures” and also his expression of “nymphomania, pornography, and drug addiction were likewise taboo subjects for Hollywood films in that period” (62). Nevertheless, this book was also adapted into film *noir*. The taboo scenes were replaced by Oriental decoration or clothes carrying a hidden meaning of unfit topics and Humphrey Bogart could again perform the main role of private eye, Philip Marlowe.

Probably the most visible feature of *film noir* settings is the darkness. Hammett and Chandler captured the pessimistic mood of the Great Depression in their books, but this mood, also influenced by the Second World War events, becomes more pessimistic on the film screens of the 1940's. As Gene D. Phillips declares, “with *Falcon* a new kind of detective film had arrived – leaner, tougher, and darker than the crime movies of the 1930s” (7). Already the dangerous city of the novel seems to be more dangerous and the already hard-boiled detective Sam Spade is even harder on the screens. The major feature contributing to this impression is the contrast between black and white. Dark nights, rainy weather and mist are interfered with only street lamps or neon boards, which represent the main source of light in the movies. These lights create scary shadows, which are sometimes even more frightening and powerful than a person or an object itself. They increase the feeling of danger at night and emphasize the trustworthiness of the surrounding. The gloomy and dim milieu of neon cities of Los Angeles and San Francisco

represents a kind of a real dangerous concrete jungle where just the most adaptable and fittest characters are able to survive.

Environment and especially darkness play one of the main roles in the films *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep*. Shadows create the impression of insecurity and distrustfulness. They contribute to making the surroundings more dangerous where the private eyes, Samuel Spade and Philip Marlowe, can rely only on himself. Shadows either forego or follow the characters everywhere and sometimes it happens that they transform into a real person who threatens the main hero. As Spade and even Marlowe do not have supernatural qualities, they can be hurt very easily. For example, when Marlowe is investigating one of his cases, he is beaten by his enemies in the darkness of malicious streets. In the article “The Double Nihilation of the Neon: Raymond Chandler's Los Angeles“, William Brevda compares the danger of Los Angeles to the danger presented by *femme fatales*. According to Brevda, this city is “the real *femme fatal*... the one that always fools you” (88). Dangerous women tease detectives and represent one of the biggest obstructions of their work as the environment of big cities creates an atmosphere in which nobody can be sure of anything. There can be always something waiting in a corner that “fools you”. On the other hand shadows can be seen first and signalize that somebody or something unexpected or mysterious is going to happen. In *The Maltese Falcon* in the scene where Captain Jacobi brings the statue of the falcon, the scary shadow of his half dead body appears in the door and warns viewers that someone is coming. This contrast between light and shadow, black and white, and good and bad characters is authentic *film noir*.

Films are mainly based on the views, actions and language of characters. *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep* are felicitous for film making due to their characteristic landscape of gloomy apartments, rainy streets and dark nights. It is easier to capture a surrounding or dialogues between characters than it is their thoughts. This is one of the reasons why the book *The Great Gatsby* was not an appropriate source for film adaptation. Although it is considered to be a piece of high literature nowadays, it was not popular at the time of its origin and during the Great Depression. Generally, people prefer easier and funnier reading and especially during that difficult decade, detective books were more popular. *The Great Gatsby* could be considered as too psychological a novel with too deep a meaning while *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep* are common crime stories which gained popularity for their interesting topics, murders. *The Great Gatsby* started being recognized in the 1950's. It was also filmed several times and probably the best-known

adaptation is from the year 1974 with Robert Redford in the main role of Jay Gatsby and directed by Jack Clayton. Although the film was awarded by several prizes it is not considered as a successful adaptation of a book into a film nowadays. The book is mainly focused on the thoughts, dreams and desires rather than on acts and landscape. It is a very psychological novel and therefore unsuitable for film adaptation, which is shown by many critical reviews written about this movie. It is mainly criticized for the length, boring dialogues and too detailed focusing on unimportant things such as Gatsby's house or dancing at parties. However, the film captures the main content of the novel, but it does not express the peculiar spirit and essence of the book. As Gene D. Phillips declares, "the novelist can spend paragraphs describing what is going on in the mind of his hero, but it is difficult for the screenwriter to take the filmgoer inside the mind of a character in the same way that a novelist can" (xx). Even the colorfulness of the movie *The Great Gatsby* does not improve its reputation. While the very darkness of *film noir* creates the effect which makes the films popular, the colorful picture contributes to the effect of artificiality.

The mood of Hammett's and Chandler's detective novels is more influential and powerful than in the book *The Great Gatsby*. The vernacular language, hard-boiled slang and peculiar dark landscape create the impression of a real and more dangerous environment, which fit better to the time of the Great Depression. Those features became typical even for *film noir*. Criminal acts could therefore acquire their forms on the film screens and strengthen the role and meaning of crime in the period of modernism.

Conclusion

The major aim of this thesis was to analyze crime on the modern novel, specifically Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* and Chandler's *The Big Sleep* and on their subsequent film adaptation. If these books are examined, the impact of historical events on the environment as well as on the characters that live in them is revealed. In the age of modernism female characters were generally considered as dangerous *femme fatales*, who represented a new kind of trouble for their male opponents. Nevertheless, beyond their dangerous feminine qualities, the authors show various reasons for these women's dangerous behavior. The examples from *The Great Gatsby*, *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep* prove that every female character was affected by external influences which caused their reasons to kill.

The environment in the Roaring Twenties and the subsequent Great Depression was very powerful. It changed not only female manners, but it also influenced male attitudes toward women, morality and law. Firstly, *The Great Gatsby* was set in the sunny Long Island. This warm and easy environment contributed to the impression that our heroes are naive and innocent. Daisy Buchanan and Jay Gatsby, however, are both criminals; they are not as dangerous and calculating as the characters in the novels set in the Great Depression. Daisy and Gatsby were affected by the post-war mood of that decade and they adapt their behavior to it. Nevertheless, the theory of Social Darwinism says that only strong and fit can survive in society. As Gatsby is too romantic for this decade and does not adapt his dream to other circumstances, he is determined to be destroyed. Daisy is a selfish kind of a *femme fatale* who causes Gatsby's destruction, but she primarily thinks of herself and her desires. Her careless qualities perfectly fit to the post-war era of the Roaring Twenties which is incompatible with romantic love and therefore she can succeed and survive.

Dashiell Hammett was influenced by the increasing crime at beginning of the Great Depression and created ironically a dark environment of California for his literary characters. His criminals are even more dangerous than Fitzgerald's bootleggers. Hammett's main hero Samuel Spade represents an uncompromising, hard-boiled and rough detective in the novel *The Maltese Falcon*. Spade's female opponent Brigid O'Shaughnessy is considered the quintessential *femme fatale*, a woman trying to succeed in the concrete jungle of the Great Depression. Although they both behave unethically, Spade is even meaner than Brigid. She is a dangerous murderer and kills a man only for profit, but she is relatively soft and sentimental inside. Spade as a detective is supposed to respect the rules

and to be an example of right behavior. He, however, does not care about other people's feelings and instead of dealing in the best interests of his clients; he is mainly concerned for himself. He is a kind of an anti-hero, a bad guy who balances on the edge of the law. And readers cannot be sure which side he will finally choose.

At the end of this decade, when conditions in American society were ameliorating, Raymond Chandler shows by his novel *The Big Sleep*, that it is possible to return more romantic features into the crime genre. He also proves that to be the fittest for society does not necessarily mean to be wealthy and unethical. His main hero Philip Marlowe is ranked among hard-boiled private eyes who had to confront corruption and fatal women. But rather than a rough detective, he is a kind of knight having qualities and values of previous age but at the same time he is able to adapt and succeed in the environment of the Great Depression. The characters in *The Big Sleep* show that *femme fatales* were actually worthy of love. Mainly Vivian Sternwood proves that it is possible to have the outward appearance of a *femme fatale* and not to cause other men's destruction.

All the three books were adapted into films. Hammett and Chandler managed to create such a powerful criminal environment in their novels, that *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep* became crucial for development of *film noir* in 1930's and 1940's. Due to the pessimistic mood, darkness, shadows, neon lights and especially their hard-boiled, vernacular slang, those films became some of the most famous of the 20th century. Although *The Great Gatsby* is not a genre of detective novels, the book is undeniably concerned with crime and consequences. Nevertheless, the features of this novel have not been yet successfully adapted into the film. This book is regarded as a piece of high literature. It is very psychologically elaborate and mainly based on dreams, thoughts and dialogues between characters. It has an essence which is too deep to be expressed on screen.

The age of modernism enriched literature and filmmaking with new and eternal characters. The environment of hard-boiled detective novels was not reflected only in *noir* movies of the 20th century, but the pessimistic mood, rainy weather and contrast between darkness and light persist even until nowadays. For example, the film *Sin City* is based on *film noir* features where an uncorrectable hero performed by Bruce Willis struggles against injustice and villains in the inhospitable surrounding of a concrete jungle. Dangerous, seductive and tempting *femme fatales* became also an example even for present characters. Motives of beautiful, bad women leading men into danger appear in many film adaptations such as drug addicted Uma Thurman in *Pulp Fiction*. The age of modernism was very

influential and topics typical for hard-boiled literature became immortal. Even if those novels (*The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep*) which are now almost hundred years old seem timeless. Stories featuring dangerous but beautiful *femme fatales* and men trying to resist their charm in a dark, gritty, corrupt society will never grow old.

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SUMMARY IN CZECH

Cílem této bakalářské práce bylo zachytit význam zločinu v americké společnosti v literárních dílech Velký Gatsby, Maltézský sokol a Hluboký spánek a v jejich následném filmovém zpracování.

Bakalářská práce je rozdělena do pěti částí. První popisuje historické události, které se odehrály ve Spojených Státech Amerických a které se staly inspirací pro vytvoření literárních postav a specifického prostředí v těchto knihách. Druhá a třetí část je zaměřena nato, jakým způsobem toto prostředí ovlivnilo chování jednotlivých postav. Nejprve jsou zde rozebrány ženské hrdinky, které jsou obecně označovány jako *femme fatale*, a které se vyznačují svým zničujícím vlivem na mužské protějšky. Je zde blíže popsán nejen jejich charakter, ale také příčiny jejich chování. Další část je zaměřena na mužské postavy a na způsob jakým reagují na *femme fatale* ve svém okolí. Čtvrtá část vystihuje vliv prostředí a událostí ve společnosti na morálku a etiku hlavních postav. Jsou zde porovnána období bouřlivých dvacátých let zobrazovaných na postavě Jaye Gatsbyho, následně začátek a konec velké hospodářské krize a její odraz na postavách Samuela Spada a Phillipa Marlowa. Pátá část je zaměřena na typický jazyk, na prostředí těchto knih a na jejich zpracování do filmových adaptací spadajících do žánru filmového noiru. Pozornost je zde věnována nejen noiru obecně, ale i konkrétním filmům Maltézský sokol a Hluboký spánek. Je zde zmíněna také filmová adaptace Velkého Gatsbyho a rysy, pro které nebyl zařazen do tohoto žánru.