

FITZGERALD'S FLAPPER HEROINE AND THEIR MOMENTS IN HISTORY

Dr. Anubha Ray, Asst. Professor, Birla Global University, Bhubaneswar

Abstract:

*F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote in an age of momentous social change. He had an uncanny knack for recording social histories in his stories which reflect the slowly shifting status of women during the two decades between World War I and II. He wrote mostly about upper middle class American women and was empathetically alert to the revolution taking place. His five novels and short stories afford a compelling vision of the social, sexual, political and economic milestones hurdled by American women in their quest for emancipation from the control of patriarchal tradition following the First World War. The Flapper, whose antics were immortalized in the cartoons of John Held was the heroine of the Jazz Age. She wore short hair and short skirt and who was a rebel. No longer confined to home and tradition, the typical flapper was a young woman who was often thought as a little fast and maybe even little brazen. The flapper was 'modern'. However, flapper did more than symbolize a revolution in fashion and mores. She embodied the modern spirit of the Jazz Age. With the publication of Fitzgerald's first novel *This Side of Paradise*, Jazz Age ushered and as Shain captures it 'haunted a decade like a song, popular but perfect'. The new social climate brought the women sexual liberation and she enjoyed her new found freedom but still had to face discriminations in all spheres and succumbed to social pressures. Although these jazz age heroines were lovely, unconventional and rebelliously progressive, they had their shares of struggles in the history of America.*

Keywords: *Flapper, Jazz Age, Women, Social status.*

In the post-Civil War years, emerged a modern, urban and industrial America, experiencing profound changes. There were drastic and far reaching socio-economic changes personified in 'Big Business' and at the turn of the century, America emerged as the materialistic business civilization. Like his great contemporary, Darwin, Marx saw human society as being shaped by vast, impersonal forces and all social evolution as the result of the struggle for existence under adverse conditions. In the acquisition of big money in big business, American lost its innocence yielding to experience and enhanced adult responsibilities; as Henry May said, 'our times had been separated from a completely vanished world' (May ix). A cultural revolution was imminent, and it accompanied the intellectual and social discontents that exploded in the 1890s and reverberated till the 1940s. The old world and culture were naturally overtaken by the emerging socio-economic order ushering in a new era; values and ideals too underwent a change. The new urban culture had vitality and excitement of change. The new frontiers of opportunity created a climate of materialism and moral cynicism, and a new breed of men and women for ambition, power and freedom. Out of the post-war disturbance was emerging a new civilization with its new men and women soon to plunge into disillusionment and disintegration. F. Scott Fitzgerald lived and wrote in this age of momentous social change. The Twenties found the nation full of swinging ebullience, afraid of nothing, but in spite of the booming prosperity and economic profit, the mood of the Twenties was one of disenchantment and discontent. The changes were so dramatic that it often seemed to violate the sense of decency and decorum and what replaced these mores and manners was a deliberate hedonistic pleasureseeking, blind cynicism and crass materialism. It seemed all fun on the surface. The sentimental

nostalgia has enshrined the Twenties as the good old days. The attitude seemed fashionable but in reality the period presented a rather sad spectacle of irresponsible youth having its last fling. In its confident new economic maturity, the United States of the Twenties was like the young man who was passing through his adolescences.

Fitzgerald was particularly aware about the upper middle class American woman and was empathetically alert to the revolution taking place all around him. As Fitzgerald had an uncanny knack for recording social histories in his hundreds of short stories and novels which reflect the slowly shifting status of women during the two decades between World War I and World War II. His five novels afford a compelling vision of the social, sexual, political and economic milestones hurdled by American women in their quest for emancipation from the control of patriarchal tradition following the First World War. Throughout his career, he was keenly aware of the changing values, life-styles, and aspirations of the women of his generation. Not only has he chronicled his observations in his fiction, but very painstakingly depicted the interplay between man and woman and preserved an impressive array of gender-related concerns characteristic of his era.

Another important dominant feature of the Twenties was the myth of Jazz Age which found its suitable expression in American indulgences, orgies of irresponsible behaviour, cruel disregard for past tradition and inordinate freedom in speech and manners. The American Twenties have been described differently as the 'Roaring Twenties', the 'New Business Epoch', the 'Age of Leisure', the 'Great Spree', the 'Age of Flapper', the 'Lawless Times', the 'Jazz Age' connoting various aspects of its excessiveness, be it money, youthful abandon or indulgence in strange fads and fashions. The historic Christian standards of morality of idealized family relationship, premarital chastity and marital fidelity were eroded. The new attitude to sexuality made pleasure an integral part of the pursuit of happiness. With the breakdown of moral barriers under wartime excitement, new sexual freedom for women, the widespread teachings of Freud's ideas on free expression of libido, all led to shedding of inhibitions. Fitzgerald observed in 'The Crack Up':

'A whole race going hedonistic deciding on pleasure. The precocious intimacies of the younger generation would have come about with or without Prohibition.'
(The Crack Up 15)

The availability of leisure had led to a sexual revolution, which was glamorized and natural, and it was a revolution against the outmoded and impractical morality of the earlier generation. The youth was eager to desert the culture not because something was wrong with the culture but because the youth was more fascinated by what was imaginative, adventurous, thrilling and artistically more creative. With the Great Crash, came the economic disaster and the financial crisis shook the nation. The Boom turned into a sense of devastating experience and Americans were reduced to destitution and despair. The average American seemed 'lost' and was beginning to realize that his country had traveled far from the America he had known in his youth. The war generation had become cynical and disillusioned. But it did seem alienated from the prevailing order for the whole generation was in a state of nervous stimulation. Maxwell Geismar said:

The year 1919 was a breaking point in American life. It marked the end of an epoch of social reform, which had sprung from the Populist and Progressive Movement at the turn of the century. It opened a decade of social anarchy under the mark of normalcy of pleasure seeking and private gain, of material success and trivial moral values. (Geismar 68)

The leading writers of the Twenties felt as stunned as John Andrews, the defeated aesthete in Dos-Passos' *Three Soldiers*, as rootless as Hemingway's wandering alcoholics in *The Sun Also Rises*. Besides them, there were Ezra Pound, Sherwood Anderson, Matthew Josephson, T.S. Eliot, E.E Cummings, Malcolm Cowley, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, Hart Crane, Thomas Wolfe and

innumerable others who produced works ripened by the tempering of the then society. The war became the historical hiatus for imaginative literature and the artists and writers responded to the agony of the war with much intensity:

The intellectuals of the Twenties, the '*Sad Young Men*', as F. Scott Fitzgerald called them, cursed their luck but didn't die, escaped but voluntarily returned; flayed the Babbitt but loved their country and is so doing gave the nation the liveliest, freshest, most stimulating writing in its literally experience. (Horton and Edwards 322)

But they were artists and writers first, and if as Malcolm Cowley claimed, 'one might say the Ambulance corps and French Military transport were college extension courses for a generation of writers' Then France was the haven for Americans who had escaped from the 'cultural wasteland' to seek in European cities the meaning and purpose of their exile:

We dreamed of escape into European cities with crooked streets into Eastern Island. We felt a bashful veneration for everything illicit, whether it was the prostitute living in the next block or the crimes of Nero or the bottle of blackberry cordial... we felt a certain humility in the face of life, a disinclination to make demands on the world around us. Art and life were two realms; art was looked down upon by the ordinary public, the life-lings and justly so, since it could never have any effect on them. Art was un-commercial, almost secret, and we hoped to become artists. (Cowley 16-17)

College atmosphere was projected everywhere by newspapers, magazines, motion pictures, the radio, and their styles, speech, mannerism, and conventional immoralities of the college students were described everywhere after the publication of Fitzgerald's first novel *This Side of Paradise* which drew our attention to the post world war sophistication, particularly such phenomena as petting parties youthful love-affairs. No aspect of life in the Twenties has been more commented upon and sensationally romanticized than the so-called revolt of the younger generation. The young America escaped its responsibilities and retreated behind an air of naughty alcoholic sophistication and Bohemian immorality. The fad, the wild spending of money, the air of gaiety, the experimentation in sex, drugs, alcohol, and perversions were all an escape pattern. Prohibition led the younger generation to make their pleasure illicit. There was one thing that united all young characters in *This Side of Paradise*; they wanted to have fun and united against the ancestors. Victorians were a nemesis and so their prudishness. Jeffrey Meyers characterized *This Side of Paradise* as "a direct and deliberate assault on Woodrow Wilson's staunch Presbyterian values" (Meyers 62). To the Jazz Age generation, the time of the previous generation had ended and with that their values. It valued the moment being built upon the concepts of self-fulfillment and freedom. He concludes "Echoes of the Jazz Age" on a nostalgic note that lets shine the hopes of the generation that claimed to have none and decided to party instead: "It seemed only a question of a few years before the older people would step aside and let the world be run by those who saw things as they were and it all seems rosy and romantic to us who were young then, because we will never feel quite so intensely about our surroundings any more (338). As Jeffrey Meyers notes, "The originality of *This Side of Paradise* lies in its attitude toward sex rather than in its descriptions of sexual behavior" (Meyers 59). It is attitude that lets its readers identify with the book's ideas just like the women in the novel like Isabelle and Eleanor who thought that love was meant to be fun.

The continuing social revolution had a still deeper significance in the changed role of woman. She enjoyed social and sexual freedom to a great extent but her economic status remained the same for a long time. The woman was free and had energies and emotions to burn, She had the maturity and had the Freudian libidinal knowledge of a free sexual life. She was still dependent. To make her presence felt, she smoked and drank in public. Arthur S. Link rightfully observes:

The first causality of feminine independence was the traditional dress that covered the neck and arms and assiduously hid the ankle from masculine view. The average skirt was about six inches from the ground in 1919. From this time on the ascent was spectacular, until the skirt had reached the knees or above by 1927. At the same time women discarded their corsets and de-emphasized the upper reaches of their anatomy usually with fearful results. Finally to complete the defeminisation, women shaped their tresses and wore their hair straight and short. But there was no curious exception to this trend. The shorter the skirts and hair became the more women used cosmetics lipstick, rouge and mascara. It seemed as if the face had become the last refuge of the femininity. (Link 274)

Fitzgerald's personal life influenced him to portray his women characters. His mother's family belonged to a sound merchant class of that small province. Fitzgerald's 'Scrapbook' gives evidence of the family's position in St. Paul. The plays which he wrote and played received good coverage in the society pages of the daily newspaper. At Princeton, his activities received a lot of attention. His maternal grandfather left a fortune, which was ample to support the whole family. The wealth and prestige of his mother's family, however, was balanced against his father's inability to support a family by his own career. By the time Fitzgerald had reached the keenly sensitive years of adolescence, both the parents were above fifty; the father who had no job and the mother, a woman of odd appearance and manner, was obsessively devoted to her only son. Fitzgerald's sense of tragedy may also have developed out of his parent's past. Their life, observed by a sensitive boy, contributed its share of pain, which prefigured Fitzgerald's life and work. Because of the wealth of his mother's family, because of that family's deeper roots in St. Paul, because of his mother's excessive devotion towards her only son, and because, of his father's failure, Fitzgerald's early life was dominated by his mother and her family. Fitzgerald spent two years at Newman Academy, New Jersey that gave him the first chance to visit New York and where his literary ambition solidified which kept him closely tied to the stage. Simultaneously, his young mind was filled with thoughts of girls at Princeton and what they thought of him. His most memorable crush of his young life was with a Chicago girl called Ginevra King who enjoyed the wealth and social position to which Fitzgerald's was always drawn towards. Fitzgerald's interest in women was complemented by his interest in history. It seems likely that his own tendency towards women may have contributed to the unusual awareness of the status and behavior of women in the 1920's. As Scott Donaldson in *Fool For love* characterizes Fitzgerald's interaction with women:

In groups, Fitzgerald may have preferred men, but he was very much a ladies man himself. He talked their language. He was sensitive to shades of meaning and half-concealed feelings. He knew how to flatter. He paid attention when women talked. He treated them with the courtly manners of an earlier age. And of course they responded. (Donaldson 59)

It is interesting to note that Fitzgerald's 1931 essays entitled *Echoes of the Jazz Age* include a brief, satirical literary history of the 1920's. Fitzgerald recognized sooner than anyone else, that the nature of women's advance had changed radically with the coming of Jazz Age. In his book, Fitzgerald seeks to trace some of the revelation of the decade. These revelations concern social and sexual situations which he deems both harmless and familiar to his generation:

We begin with the suggestion that Don Juan leads an interesting, life (Jurgen, 1919), then we learn that there's a lot of sex if we only knew it (Winesburg, Ohio, 1920) that adolescents lead a very amorous lives (**This Side of Paradise**, 1920) that there are a lot of neglected Anglo Saxon words (Ulysses, 1921), that older people don't always resist sudden temptation (Cytherea, 1922) that girls are sometimes seduced without being ruined (Flaming Youth, 1922) that glamorous English Ladies are often promiscuous. (The Green

Hat, 1924) that in fact they devote most of their time to it (the Vortex, 1926), that it's a damn good thing too (Lady Chatterley's Lover, 1928) and finally there are abnormal variation (The Well of Loneliness, 1928 and Sodom and Gomorrah, 1929)(Crack Up 16-17)

Fitzgerald was learning about women from his exposure to real women which influenced his development of female characters in his fiction. In fact, James Mellow attributes the 'vitality' of Fitzgerald's heroines in least in part to his 'sharp-eyed' observations, regarding their style, their clothes, their conversation, and even 'their techniques with men' (Mellow 11). But Fitzgerald's perception regarding the changing status of women may actually be rooted in his childhood, well before the onset of the decade of the 1920s. His notes reflect a poignant memory of his mother 'always waiting in waiting rooms an hour early pulled forward by an 'irresistible urge of boredom and vitality' (The Crack Up 73). In much the same way, his female characters - Rosalind in **This Side of Paradise**, Gloria in **The Beautiful and Damned**, and Daisy in **The Great Gatsby** - are often affected by an 'irresistible urge of boredom and vitality'. Moreover, according to Fitzgerald, the changing attitude during the Victorian era resulted in dignity under suffering, becoming a quality a woman is supposed to show in life or fiction. Daisy in **The Great Gatsby** and Kathleen in **The Last Tycoon** also exhibit the same Victorian age behavior borne out of their energy and boredom and show 'dignity under suffering', an important aspect of the lives of women in his era.

F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda were part of the roaring Twenties and his women symbolized the emancipated American Women - the Flapper. The Flapper, whose antics were immortalized in the cartoons of John Held was the heroine of the Jazz Age, wore short hair and short skirt, with turned - down hose, the flapper must have seemed to her mother, the gentle Gibson girl of an earlier generation like a rebel. No longer confined to home and tradition, the typical flapper was a young woman who was often thought as a little fast and may be even little brazen. Mostly, the flapper offended the old generation because she defied conventions of acceptable feminine behaviour. The flapper was 'modern'. Traditionally, women hair had always been worn long. The flapper wore it short or bobbed. She used make up (which she might apply in public) and the flapper wore boggy dresses which often exposed her arms as well as her legs from her knee down. However, flapper did more than symbolize a revolution in fashion and mores. Sexual liberation was one of the clear cut victories of the New Woman of Fitzgerald's generation. He embodied the modern spirit of the Jazz Age. One writer most identified with the roaring twenties, is F. Scott Fitzgerald. A handsome and gregarious man, Fitzgerald became famous with the publication of his first novel, **This Side of Paradise** (1920). Amory Blain, the hero of **This Side of Paradise** talks like a cultural reporter from inside his time, 'None of the Victorian mothers and most of the mothers were Victorian had any idea how casually their daughters were accustomed to be kissed' and again. The 'bele' had become the 'flirt' and the 'flirt' had become 'baby vamp'. Fitzgerald describes the scene:

Amory saw girls doing this that even in his memory would have been impossible, eating three o'clock, after dance supper in impossible cafes, talking of every side of life with an air half of earnestness, half of mockery, yet with a furtive excitement that Amory considered stood for a real moral let-down. (This Side 365)

The moral freedom enjoyed by the postwar generation has given the work 'its reputation for scandal as well as for social realism' (Shain 21). What Fitzgerald is really showing in **This Side of Paradise** is how a young American of his generation discovers what sort of figure he wants to be. The flapper and her boyfriend do not actually pet behind the closed doors of the smoking room. They talk and each one asks another, not convinced about himself or herself. With the publication of his first book, Fitzgerald became a kind of king to American youth, his queen was his beautiful, witty wife Zelda.

Protected by the respectability and prestige of her family, Zelda was known for her striking beauty and unconventional behaviour and her sexual promiscuity. Fitzgerald fell in love with her instantly much as he had with Ginevra, the first love of his young life. Their meeting on a sultry July evening in 1918 in Montgomery, Alabama was the birth of that fabulous era known as the Jazz Age, for that was the time and place in which the future laureate of that golden decade met the girl who was to help him celebrate it. It was a meeting, about which there was something magical. Zelda spoke for herself in her essay *Eulogy of the Flapper* when she said that the flapper:

'...flirted because it was fun to flirt and wore a one piece bathing suit because she had a good figure, she covered her face with paint and powder because she didn't need it and she refused to be bored because she was not boring. She was conscious that the things she did were things she had always wanted to do'. (Milford 282)

In Zelda, Scott apparently found a 'soul mate', because her American Dream for Woman coincided with the American Dream of Scott. They were both driven by the same motivating forces the desire to have it all. More than any girl he had known, Zelda shared his romantic egotism. She and Fitzgerald wanted the same thing metropolitan glamour, success, and fame. Her refusal to marry Scott until he was successful financially to make their common dream a reality produced in Scott ambivalent feelings. While he respected her tenacity, she was wise enough to be reluctant holding steadfastly onto her conditions. He resented what he considered her mercenary motives for marriage. Once again, it appeared that he had been rejected for being 'a poor boy' when the girls of his dreams wanted a 'rich boy'. Ginevra is mostly Daisy Buchanan in **The Great Gatsby**; much of Nicole Diver in **Tender is the Night**. She was modeled for Josephine Perry in his Josephine stories. But the wound would not heal. Characters based on her showed up in his other writings as well. Scott writes to his sister Annabel with a feeling of cynicism that in their society nine out of ten girls marry for money and 'nine out of ten men are fools' (Brucoli 559). Years later, after he became successful, Scott wrote in his confessional essays. *The Crack Up*:

'It was one of those tragic loves, doomed for lack of money, and one day the girl closed it out on the basis of common sense, the man with the jungle of money in his pocket who married the girl a year later would always cherish an abiding distrust, an animosity toward the leisure class.' (Crack up 73)

At the turn of the century, as a Southern Belle, Zelda had been socialized to aspire for a life of prosperity which could be made possible by marrying a high-salaried husband i.e. the American Dream for Women. Girls like Zelda were raised to believe that their fate depended upon their ability to attract a prosperous husband to guarantee economic security. Even Zelda's mother Minnie Sayre stressed the importance of this achievement, which precluded the development of a girl's talents or of furthering of her education. Zelda looked forward to her marriage to a promising young writer as an opportunity to be launched into an even more sensational setting than Montgomery had afforded her. As she had written in her diary on April, 24, 1919:

'Marriage was created not as a backdrop but to need one....

Mine is going to be outstanding. It can't be, shan't be the setting it's going to be the performance, the live, lovely, glamorous performance and the world shall be the setting'. (Milford 301)

The flamboyant couple with their extravagant behaviour epitomized the Jazz Age. The inspiration for many novels and short stores, Zelda represented the flapper. Scott's admiration of Zelda's beauty and personality led him to base many of his female characters on her. Irresistibly charming, recklessly brilliant,

Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald epitomized everything that was beautiful and damned about the Jazz Age and everyone was fascinated with Zelda, the ravishing young wife of Scott, known as the model for the flapper heroines.

If we go by the early description of her in his fiction, she was above all ambitious, like the southern girl in *'The Ice Palace'* who was planning to live where things happen on a big scale. The flappers in the early stories valued spontaneity and self-expression before those duller virtues that required self-control. Zelda Sayre like the flapper was daring and had a local reputation for recklessness and unconventionality. She was led by her own will; in addition, she had great confidence which added to her beauty. For Zelda, marriage represented a new lease on life, the only way out of her small town existence as some one's daughter, without any rights of her own. As Scott's wife, she embarked on a new life as a flapper, a free thinking woman with the world at her disposal. She had a huge influence on his writing providing much of the material for his novels and short stories throughout the engagement and marriage. Scott frequently quoted her and her letters directly, using her words as the voice for several of his female characters.

The Twentieth Century was interpreted, among other things, as the century of women, constructing new myths for themselves. "Dissatisfied at being confined to the purely domestic role of wife and mother, this new generation of women started to demand equal opportunities for education and participation in the workforce.... They also rebelled against social conventions, breaking taboos, as they demanded not only professional but also sexual independence (Cruea 200, 201). As Tammy Kaye rightfully says; "unabashed, assertive and emancipated the New Woman bore little resemblance to the piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity of traditional true womanhood" (Welter 3). Fitzgerald's **This Side of Paradise** acknowledges the birth of the flapper, whose innocence is masked by over-flirtatiousness and an insatiable desire for 'fun'. Indeed, her swarms of admirers and rivals, so confused her highspirited adventurousness with sexual liberation that she frequently faced moral condemnation and was ostracized socially for joining in the uninhibited dances that displayed her body, staying late at parties, flirting openly, engaging in mild necking and smoking in public. Fitzgerald's flapper was created and became the symbol of the changing female consciousness. Fitzgerald's 'Flappers' were matching with Hemingway's 'Bitches' and Dreiser's heroines and most certainly were the harbinger of change and became the voice of the 'New Woman'. Of all the three novelists, Scott Fitzgerald's works caught the mood of the youth.

The "New Woman" arrived to demand her rights of equality. Her powerful passivity gave her a distinctive individuality which silently but forcefully commanded the attention of the American novelists. Norman Mailer regards his flappers to be 'conceivably as interesting in the emancipation of women as any other ten years since the decline of Rome' (Mailer 22). As Mailer puts it again, 'from sexless angels in the skies to the most sexy flapper ... this descent was called the fall of women' (Mailer 23). To Fitzgerald goes the credit of recognizing this new morals and the female had the unconscious urge to communicate uninhibitedly with the other sex. The men in his fiction are often as he was, astonished by the fearlessness and recklessness of women. They are sometimes made aware of the deceitfulness and moral complacency of some women. The overtone of male chauvinism was also clearly noticeable in the relationship of Cowper Wood with Aileen and Mitter with Angela in Dreiser; the 'romantic egoists', with their women in Fitzgerald's novel, Henry with Catherine and Jordan with Marie in Hemingway's novels.

The first collection of Fitzgerald's stories in 1921 was called *Flappers and Philosophers*. A second collection, *Tales of the Jazz Age*, was published a year later, in the wake of his second novel, **The Beautiful and Damned**. In 1922, we catch a glimpse of Fitzgerald imagining his relation to his Jazz Age public when he writes his editor about, the second book of stories' will be bought by his own 'personal public'- by the countless flappers and college kids who think he is a sort of oracle. *The Jelly Bean* and *Bernice Bobs Her Hair* follow conventional formulas of popular fiction. The man known as *the Jelly Bean* is a good natured garage mechanic in a sleepy Georgia town. He has been awakened to his true responsibility in life

by the kiss of a young flapper, *the belle without merci*, named Nancy Lamar. Nancy is the story's true excitement. She drinks corn liquor, shoots with the men after a country club dance, and in the story's best scene wades through a pool of gasoline tapped from a car to remove a wad of chewing gum from the sole of her dancing slipper. Bernice who bobbed her hair on a dare, comes from another American Forest of Arden, Eau Claire, Wisconsin. She is innocent who has to learn by rote a 'line' for attracting boy the same line that Fitzgerald taught his sister Annabel once when he despaired of her chances of becoming the Lady Diana Manners of St. Paul. In *The Ice Palace*, the southern flapper was portrayed after Zelda and Fitzgerald used their own situation to imagine the shocks that might be in store for a lively southern girl among the likeable Babbitts of Minnesota. All these stories, as well as, *The Off-shore Pirate* were imagined from a young girl's dream of a glamorous life. Two of the stories in the first collections are important, *May Day* for what it wants to say. *The Diamond as Big as the Ritz* for what it achieves. *May Day* (1919) was the exact day, Fitzgerald later said, when the Jazz Age began.

In addition to being a keen observer of the events and lives that surrounded him, Fitzgerald was also an avid reader and inspired by their women characters. He rated Willa Cather and particularly the works of Edith Wharton, whose aging debutant Lily Bart in *The House of Mirth* (1905) has much in common with his own bright but insolvent women characters like Eleanor in **This Side of Paradise**, who feels sorry for the fact that she is 'tied to the sinking ship of future matrimony' despite her awareness that she has 'the brains to do everything' (This Side 218). Jordan Baker in *The Great Gatsby* would appear at first, to be the quintessential New Woman. She is not only financially independent; she also seems to have found a fulfilling career being a golf champion. Being a famous athlete, she has better social situations and is in a position of power. She was more successful than Nick who admits himself that he "was flattered to go places with her because she was a golf champion and everyone knew her name" (Fitzgerald 63). As Tammy Kaye rightfully claims about Jordan, "A rebel against the conventional concept of sweet, innocent femininity, independent Jordan should be the very consummation of the liberated ideal feminists had envisioned, now made flesh.... the emancipated "New Woman" was just an ideal not necessarily a lived reality" (Kaye 4). Sarah Beebe Fryer summarizes:

The Post World War era was indeed a confusing time for women in American. They are a curious blend of confidence and uncertainty, for they live on the thresh-hold of a new era and still feel the influence of the old order, which stubbornly insists on subordinating them to men. They crave the unconditional acceptance that is everychild's birthright, but the society they live in judges them harshly for daring to view themselves as separate from and equal to men (Fryer 4).

Even though the woman in Fitzgerald's novels recognized her need for work and economic independence but had no idea how to have them. She might have had the social liberties like smoking, drinking but she still remained economically dependent on men. The women of his first three novels married mostly for security, selected their prospective husbands upon their partner's financial prospects but secretly dreamt of a greater degree of financial freedom than was actually within their reach. In his later novels **Tender is the Night** and **The Last Tycoon**, Fitzgerald portrays working for a living as a genuine possibility for women of his generation, but like the author himself expected an unquestioning, self-effacing surrender from his wife, his heroes expected no less from theirs. Biographers like Turnbull, Bruccoli and Mellow have always pointed out the shortcomings of Fitzgerald's fictional women which run parallel to what Fitzgerald perceived as Zelda's limitations; poor housekeeping skills, vanity, material acquisitiveness, stubbornness, restlessness, purposelessness, boredom and attention-getting traits which are often cited in reference to Zelda and so also for the women in his fiction. Not surprisingly the typical social condition of Fitzgerald's heroines strongly resembles the primary conflict of his wife Zelda's life,

summarized by Phyllis Chesler in *Women and Madness*:

The combination of nurturance deprivation and restriction upon their uniqueness or heroism is deadly. They cannot survive as just 'women', and they are not allowed to survive as human or creative beings (Chesler 31).

Fitzgerald was himself ambivalent in his expectations from women, both in real life and his novels. While he considered it shocking for women to be so 'utterly useless' as to have no accomplishments of their own, he at the same time, regarded a woman's main purpose in life as 'being in love' with a man and was of the view that women who channelize their energies into intellectual or professional rather than social or domestic pursuits are at the risk of losing their femininity and suffer the consequences of loneliness and mental illness. Money in the name of security was a matter of concern for them. It was a concern for Fitzgerald himself as Scott Donaldson notes, 'love and money became almost inextricably entangled' in the minds and works of Fitzgerald (Donaldson 75). Women were divided as either 'bitches' or 'goddesses' in the modern American literature (Fiedler 314). Mary A. McCay points out Fitzgerald's depiction of women more precisely:

Towards his women Fitzgerald has a highly critical attitude that often leaves them stripped to a core that is finally lacking in enduring values. He is harder on them than he is on his men. He judges them more severely, as if he secretly expected more of them at the outset but put them in a world that allowed them no theater for growth. They are stunted from the start by Fitzgerald's expectation on the one hand and by the world they live in on the other (McCay 311).

For most women in Fitzgerald's novels 'the job' at least remains primarily in the realm of 'possibility' not reality. Yet, many of these principal women characters express their interest for economic independence. In **This Side of Paradise**, Rosalind cynically describes her social life as a business enterprise as 'Rosalind Unlimited', with marriage as the ultimate deal she expects to close. Clara intimates to Amory that she is intensely relieved to have inherited enough money not be obliged to remarry following the death of her husband; and Eleanor is angry on herself over her misfortune to be a born a girl and consequently fated to spend her life with a man almost certain to patronize her despite her superior intelligence. In **The Beautiful and Damned**, Gloria aspires to act in films but sets aside her interest on career in order to make her husband happy. In **Tender is the Night**, the wealthy Nicole looks for a challenge for her intellectual pursuits even while she is a patient to Dr. Dohlmer with the hope of working as a translator someday. In **Tender is the Night**, Fitzgerald presents another woman Rosemary who, as her mother proclaims was brought up to work and for whom marriage was not the ultimate end. Even in his last work **The Last Tycoon**, Fitzgerald's tone for economic independence for women changes and he displays his awareness that economic and intellectual independence or the lack thereof clearly shapes women's interaction with others. He summarizes the appeal of Kathleen to Stahr, in his notes, 'This girl had a life it was very seldom he met anyone whose life did not depend in some way on him or hope to depend on him (Tycoon 855). *Although they were dreaming of a career of their own, they were actually frustrated due to the lack of it.* The majority of women characters in Fitzgerald's novels opt for marriage instead of seeking economic independence. The promise of emotional support and social securities in marriage very often prove empty. *As Fryer rightfully captures, their potentials are thwarted by the high expectations of those around them and of course they lacked of confidence in themselves. Fryer wrote:*

Over and over again Fitzgerald's principal female characters demonstrate that they are recipients of mixed messages about their roles and rights in life. They behave selfishly, impulsively, and inconsistently as a direct result of their fundamental uncertainty about their purpose in life or, indeed, whether they have real purpose at all. (Fryer 6-7)

Fitzgerald's flapper heroines are lively, progressive and ambitious. They desire many things from life and critics and early scholars of Fitzgerald's works are all too focused on their material wants, rather than their intellectual and emotional un-fulfillments. They are treated as backgrounds and their individual identities were far too long denied. The fictional women were drawn after the real women he knew, almost invariably find their illusion of liberation overshadowed by the reality of their economic and emotional dependence on men. They were torn between their longing for autonomy but their financial condition and social pressures prescribe subservience and fill them with a sense of inadequacy which often trigger symptoms of madness. In their quest for independence, these 'Women' are out of rhythm with their civilization. They were the victims of man's fanciful imagination and obviously fell short of their high expectations. They were also viewed in terms of the roles they played in men's lives. In the face of all harshness, 'Fitzgerald's young heroines not only learnt, but assert their independent wills exploited their sexual attractiveness with complete impunity (Way 11). Fitzgerald's flapper heroines and other women characters in later novels are the finest creations of his times. Today, they can be understood better than they were then.

References

1. Bruccoli, Mathew J. and Margaret M. Duggan. Ed. *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. New York: Random House, 1980.
2. Bruccoli, Mathew J. and Jackson R. Bryer. eds. *F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time: A Miscellany*. Kent, Ohio: The Kent University Press, 1971.
3. Chesler, Phyllis. *Woman and Madness*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1972.
4. Cowley, Malcolm. *A Second Flowering: Works and Days of the Lost Generation*. New York: Viking Press, 1973.
5. Cruca, Susan M. "Changing Ideals of Womanhood During the Nineteenth-Century Woman Movement." General Studies Writing Faculty Publications, Bowling Green State University. 19.3 (2005): 200-201.
6. Donaldson, Scott. *Fool for Love: F. Scott Fitzgerald*. New York: Congdon and Weed, Inc, 1983.
7. Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *This Side of Paradise*. London: Penguin Classics, 2000.
8. _____. *The Crack Up*. Ed. Edmund Wilson. New York: New Direction, 1956.
9. _____. *Flappers and Philosophers*. New York: Scribner, 1922.
10. Fryer, Sarah. Beebe. *Fitzgerald's New Women: Harbinger of Change*. Ann Arbor, Mich: Umi Research Press, 1988.
11. Geismar, Max Well. *American Modern: From Rebellion to Conformity*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1958.
12. Horton, Rod W. and Herbet W. Edwards. *Backgrounds of American Literary Thought*. Englewood Cliffs: New Jersey, 1974.
13. Kaye, Tammy. Dealing in Subterfuges Jordan Baker and the State of woman's Liberation in 1920's Society. Online. <https://www.academia.edu/>
14. Link, Arthur S. *American Epoch*. New York: Princeton University Press, 1967.
15. Mailer, Norman. *The Prisoner of Sex*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971.
16. May, Henry P. *The End of American Innocence*. New York: Quadrangle Paperback, 1964
17. Mayfield, Sara. *Exile from Paradise: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1971.

18. Meyers, Jeffrey. *Scott Fitzgerald: A Biography*. London: Macmillan London Limited, 1994.
19. McCay, Mary. "Fitzgerald's Women: Beyond Winter Dreams." *American Novelist Revisited: Essays in Feminist Criticism*. Fritz Fleishmann, ed. Boston: G.K. Hall and Company, 1982.
20. Shain, Charles E. This Side of Paradise. In: Mizener, Arthur [ed]. *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963.