

The American Flapper

Male Fiction or Real Emancipated Women of the 1920s?

Diplomarbeit

Zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades

einer Magistra der Philosophie

an der Geisteswissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz

vorgelegt von

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Graz, 2013

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Walter Hölbling for his dedicated support, for his time, patience and helpful feedback towards all my questions.

A huge thank you also goes to my parents Barbara and Wolfgang who always supported me emotionally and financially in the actualization of my dreams, as well as to my sisters Petra, Lisa and Kathrin for always motivating me at times when I needed them most.

Thank you also to my best friends Judith and Sophie, for believing in me, offering me loving support and encouragement, and for always making me smile, at least one time a day.

Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to my long-suffering boyfriend Mathias for his unshakable belief in me as well as for his incomparable support during the realization of this thesis. Without you, the completion of this thesis would not have been possible.

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1. Introduction

In the course of my studies I came across various important female characters, such as Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), the anonymous female protagonist in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), and Edna Pontellier in Kate Chopin's novel *The Awakening* (1899). Although these very strong women all inspired me to a great extent and also awakened my interest in women's roles in American literary history, it was the women of the 1920s who excited me most. To be honest, I do not exactly know why characters such as Daisy Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby* (1925) or Lady Brett Ashley in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) have enthralled me so much, as they are not necessarily good or virtuous women. Maybe it was exactly this notable difference in their morals and manners, compared to other women of the 1920s, that attracted my attention.

Today in the 21st century, the 1920s are still depicted as the golden period of the previous epoch. If one thinks of this window of time, images of lavish house parties, as those described in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*, immediately appear. Beneath this superficial glitter and glamor, however, profound changes in American culture and society were taking place, including the roles of women which were transformed during this decade. Young women especially wanted more from life than fulfilling traditional roles as good mothers and housewives and showed their new sense of self particularly in the way they dressed and behaved. A name for this new type of woman that emerged in the 1920s was quickly found: the flapper.

In this thesis I will aim to compare and contrast five very different woman characters of American literature of the 1920s, in order to ascertain if these female protagonists were also representatives of this new type of woman. For this analysis I decided on Daisy Buchanan, Myrtle Wilson and Jordan Baker from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Lady Brett Ashley from Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* and Alabama Beggs, the heroine of Zelda Fitzgerald's semi-autobiographical novel *Save Me the Waltz*. Although these three novels may differ thematically from each other to a great extent, they all portray the lifestyle of upper-middle-class women of the 1920s very clearly and are, thus, the perfect choice for such a comparison.

It is however important to take into account in this analysis that two of the chosen novels were written by male authors, namely *The Great Gatsby* and *The Sun Also Rises*, whereas *Save Me the Waltz* was written by a woman. Furthermore, the female protagonists Daisy Buchanan and Lady Brett Ashley, as portrayed by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, do not have their own voices in the novels. On the contrary, their stories are told by fictitious male narrators who recount the narrative in retrospective. Thus, in this analysis I only have Nick Carraway's, from *The Great Gatsby*, and Jake Barnes,' from *The Sun Also Rises*, opinions and impressions of the major female characters in both novels. Nonetheless, it is still possible to obtain an insight into their lifestyle, behavior and appearance.

The third novel which will be analyzed in this thesis is *Save Me the Waltz*, written by Zelda Fitzgerald. Although her semi-autobiographical novel was published in the 1930s, the content clearly focuses on the time period of the previous decade, an important era for Zelda herself. Not only did she marry the famous novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald, but she also became something as the epitome of the flapper and tried to publish some articles on that matter herself ("Eulogy on the Flapper," "What Became of the Flapper?"), as well as attempting to establish her own career, namely to become a professional ballerina at the late age of 27. Unlike in Hemingway's and Fitzgerald's novels, however, Alabama Beggs, the female protagonist of the story, is presented by an omniscient third person narrator who reveals her most intimate thoughts, her feelings and her emotions of that period of time.

The first part of this thesis will give an overview of the historical as well as social background of the 1920s, with a special focus on women in order to understand the circumstances for why women's roles in general, as well as in literature, changed so significantly. This will be the necessary background information to find out what the flapper was, what she stood for, and whether the writers' depictions of women in the 1920s offer accurate and authentic accounts of real women who lived during this decade.

The second chapter gives a short introduction to general writings of the 1920s. As this rather short period of time was marked by a war and a depression, it is still considered today as a unique and special decade, also in terms of literature. In this

short section the focus lies on what topics writers of that period concentrated on, to what extent they were influenced by World War I and its aftermath, and also on how women were portrayed in literature in this decade. Following this, an introduction to the two male authors, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, as writers of the 1920s will be given, in order to better understand their positions in this period of time. Their personal backgrounds will be investigated, their importance as writers in the 1920s, along with the role which women played in their lives.

The final and most ample part of this thesis will be dedicated to the textual analysis of the three novels *The Great Gatsby*, *The Sun Also Rises* and *Save Me the Waltz*. Before beginning with the text, however, a brief introduction to the novels will be provided. The two novels written by male authors, *The Great Gatsby* and *The Sun Also Rises* will be analyzed first, before continuing with Zelda's semi-autobiographical novel *Save Me the Waltz* which will be accompanied by her biography. At the start of each text, there will be a short summary of the plot, in case the reader is not familiar with the novels. An analysis of the character's lifestyle, independence and sexuality will then be given, as these are the most important factors regarding how flappers differed from women of previous generations. Thus, this thesis will compare and contrast different fictional female characters with real-life American women of the 1920's.

2. Feminization of American Culture

It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire. [...] We were the most powerful nation. Who could tell us any longer what was fashionable and what was fun? (Fitzgerald 1945: 14)

The “pleasure-seeking decade of the 1920s” (Sagert 2010: xi) occurred during the short period between World War I and the Great Depression. Nowadays, it is also referred to as ‘The Roaring Twenties,’ ‘The Jazz Age,’ or ‘The Boom Era.’ Although these very promising terms suggest already the pompous lifestyle of this particular time period, profound changes in American life and culture were taking place beneath the superficial glitter. This not only applied to labor and economy, but also to American women (cf. Braeman, Bremner, and Brody 1968: vii). Within ten years, women not only gained the right to vote, but also transformed their traditional roles from passive, but caring housewives to active ‘flapper women.’ This term is used to describe the style of the New Woman of the twenties that was popular for its short dresses cut just below the knee, short bobbed hair, using slang, smoking, drinking, and dancing wildly (cf. Sagert 2010: xi).

It was also during this time period that for the first time in American history more people lived in cities than on the countryside. With more women entering the workforce than ever before, the United States quickly turned from a rural nation into an urbanized, as well as industrialized society (cf. Zeitz 2006: 29). For women in particular, these changes offered new freedoms as many of them worked and lived outside their homes, which certainly gave them an increased sense of self-sufficiency, independence and self-confidence. Even though most working women were, however, far from being financially independent, they saw themselves as individual human beings equal to men and felt that they were finally the masters of their own destinies (cf. Sagert 2010: xi).

Due to the fact that no one single event or date was responsible for the unprecedented social and cultural changes which occurred in the 1920s, it is important to take a closer look at the preceding decade in order to fully understand the reasons for the drastic change to the traditional role of women (cf. Sagert 2010:

2). The beginning of the twentieth century was not only shaped by the economic troubles of the 1890s, but more importantly, by the troubles of the First World War. It was in the post-war era that women began to experience new freedoms in the way they dressed and styled their hair, as well as in the way they behaved. Especially the young generation of women finally turned their backs on their mother's old-fashioned ideas of morality and instead just did what they felt like doing because it was exciting and it was fun (cf. Sanderson 2007: 145).

The changes in morals, manners and the style of women in the 1920s were precisely mirrored by the media, which were also more powerful and influential than ever before. Almost every day images or stories of young flappers, such as those portrayed by F. Scott Fitzgerald, appeared in advertisements, newspaper articles, movies or on the radio. Naturally, young women who saw these also wanted to shorten their hair, slip into a shapeless flapper dress and dance the Charleston all night. In short, the new type of women did all the things that were unthinkable in the years before the Great War, but which were becoming more and more common during this "feminization of American culture" (Sanderson 2007: 145; cf. Gourley 2008: 10f).

2.1. The Great War

When the United States finally participated in the Great War in 1917, several million men and also a great number of American women went overseas to Europe in order to offer their help either as soldiers or as nurses. As a consequence, men were forced to leave their jobs behind which meant that many women who stayed at home had to take their places on farms, in factories or in offices. Some women were given the possibility to work in fields which they had previously been denied as it was not considered suitable for the weaker sex to work. Unfortunately, however, this newly-discovered equality between women and men was short lived. Armistice was declared, the war in Europe officially ended, soldiers returned home, and everything theoretically could return to normal (cf. Ostrander 1968: 337; Gourley 2008: 33).

Although the United States only participated in the war for a relatively short time and also suffered fewer casualties compared to European nations, American culture

seemed to change significantly during this period of time. Soldiers in particular, who could finally come home and return to their old lives, remained permanently shocked and deeply affected by their traumatic experiences. Consequently, a great number of women were able to keep their jobs and did not have to go back to the previous social structures that had ruled the U.S. before the war (cf. Ostrander 1968: 338; VanSpanckeren n.d.: 60).

One year after World War I, approximately one fourth of the working force in the U.S. was female. This meant that although women were hardly able to contribute to the household budget, men were no longer the sole bread-winners of the families. But even though the war had opened so many doors of opportunity for women in the labor force, compared to men, their possibilities were still limited. Most women still worked as housemaids, cooks, secretaries and nurses, which were all considered to be typical feminine jobs. Careers for women in medicine and law continued to remain far out of reach, also for women of a higher social status (cf. Gourley 2008: 33).

Nonetheless, it was in these first years after the Great War that business in America drastically increased. This period is still known today as the 'Big Boom' and was when the United States became a leader on the global stage, officially entering a modern era. Especially the middle- and the upper-classes profited from this boom, as many of them were known to enjoy the advantages of earning the world's highest national average income. Consequently, many U.S. citizens were able to buy some of the new technological inventions, such as a telephone, a washing machine, a vacuum cleaner or even an automobile (cf. VanSpanckeren n.d.: 60).

2.2. Age of Consumerism

This boom in American economy consequently led to an unprecedented financial situation for working-women of the middle class, as for the first time in American history, they were not totally dependent on their parents and/or husbands anymore. Although women by far did not receive the same wages as men and were unable to finance everything they wished for without external help, they suddenly discovered a greater independence brought on by their earnings.

At the same time, the sacred institutions of the home and the family changed not only for women who worked during this period, but also for those who stayed at home as housewives (cf. Yellis 1969: 53). Whereas earlier generations of women were used to labor in their homes and made most of the items they needed themselves, homes in the twentieth century were transformed by all the new electrical and technological inventions. At the height of the 1920s, a typical American middle-class family was usually in possession of all of the following: electric lights, a radio a telephone, a camera, a typewriter, a sewing machine, etc. This was partly due to the fact that these items were all modern, but mostly due to them being American inventions (cf. VanSpanckeren n.d.: 60; Gourley 2008: 37).

For the American housewife, this new age of consumerism meant that she had more time on her hands as she no longer had to make everything herself. Not only clothes could be ordered ready-made from the Sears or Roebuck catalog, but also frozen or canned food could be bought in stores. This not only saved a great amount of work in the household, but it also significantly increased a woman's leisure time (cf. Gourley 2008: 37).

Due to the fact that space for home production was no longer a great necessity in American homes, many families decided to leave their big houses on the countryside behind, in order to move to smaller houses or apartments in cities or suburbs. Thus, the United States were finally becoming an urban nation, as for the first time in its history, more people lived in urban areas (54.4 million) than on the countryside (51.1 million). This change also implied a considerable shift of values: whereas people living on the countryside were still clinging to their traditional set of values, city dwellers became less conservative and more easily tempted to go to underground bars called speakeasies or to jazz clubs where large amounts of alcohol were consumed in times of prohibition (cf. Sagert 2010: 3).

2.3. The Right to Vote

We have made partners of the women in this war. Shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of right? (President Woodrow Wilson in Sagert 2010: 13)

Whereas women's roles and opportunities had undergone a significant amount of change during the war period, one opportunity of utmost importance was still missing: the right to vote. Suffragists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott in particular, had been fighting since 1848 to finally secure this right for women. Thirty years later, in 1878, a first draft of the suffrage amendment was introduced in Congress, but did not receive all the votes needed for its passage to the Constitution (cf. Sagert 2010: 13).

In 1918, shortly after World War I ended, Carrie Chapman Catt, the head of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, urged that it was time for women to finally receive the right to vote, due to their exceptional help during the war. Both President Woodrow Wilson and members of the Congress agreed. Thus, after a long struggle over many decades, women finally earned the right to vote in the United States through the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution (cf. Sagert 2010: 13f). In the same year, an additional Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor was created in order to support working women in general, as well as to improve their working conditions. Consequently, women of all classes became full of hopes and dreams. They believed they were now finally on equal terms with men, which unquestionably was not true, as they were still a minority in the political field (cf. Gourley 2008: 33f, 116).

However, not only the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution brought change to American society, but also the Eighteenth Amendment, also known as the 'Volstead Act' or 'Prohibition' which was passed to the American Constitution in 1920. This banned "the manufacture, distribution, and sale of alcoholic beverages," (Sagert 2010: 5) and was responsible for certain shifts in American culture and society, especially in terms of morals and manners.

2.4. Morals and Manners

We belonged to a generation of young women, who felt extraordinarily free – free from the demand to marry unless we chose to do so, free to postpone marriage while we did other things, free from the need to bargain and hedge that had burdened and restricted women of earlier generations. (Mead 1972: 108)

Many young women of the United States fully enjoyed and experienced their new rights and as a consequence, their morals were soon about to change. The young generation of women in particular was curious and eager to try out all the things a proper lady before simply did not do: smoking in public, consuming alcoholic beverages in speakeasies, talking slang and using swearwords, kissing men to whom they were not engaged, dancing wildly to new types of music, and attending petting parties without being chaperoned, no matter what their social status was (cf. Gourley 2008: 59f).

Although historians agree that it is quite normal for clashes to occur between generations, they seemed particularly intense during this era, as the younger generation felt that “the morality of the older generation no longer merited respect because that generation had fouled up the world” (Yellis 1969: 47; cf. Sagert 2010: 12). Consequently, young women no longer identified themselves with their mothers and vice versa.

A name for the new type of woman that emerged in this post-war era was found rather quickly: ‘flapper.’ Although it is not exactly clear how or why this term first came to be used in the United States, it usually described a young woman between the ages of 18 and 25 who represented this dramatic break with American values and ethics in terms of clothes, hairdo and behavior. Although of course not every woman of the United States at this time was a flapper, the flapper was beyond any doubt the woman portrayed in movies, literature and in the media in general by celebrities like Clara Bow, Colleen Moore, Louise Brooks or Zelda Fitzgerald (cf. Zeitz 2006: 5, 9).

What the FLAPPER stands for: short skirts, rolled sox, bobbed hair, powder and rouge, no corsets, one-piece bathing suits, deportation of reformers, nonenforcement of Blue Laws, no censorship of movies, stage or the press, vacations with full pay, no chaperons, attractive clothes, the inalienable right to make dates, good dates, honor between both sexes. (Magazine *The Flapper* in Anderson 2010: 13)

Particularly in terms of romance and courtship the flapper distinguished herself from previous generations of women. This was due to the fact that the flapper did not marry the first man she met, but went on several dates simply because it was fun to go to the movies, to the theater or to amusement parks. As she considered herself to be equal to men, she also did not follow the double standard which meant that she did not approve of a society in which men were free to do whatever they liked, whereas women had to be faithful and monogamous to their husbands. On the contrary, the flapper wanted to be an equal partner to her husband and also wanted to be treated as such. This also implied that she wanted to be able to decide if and when she wanted to have children. In order to do so, birth control, as suggested by Margaret Sanger, definitely was an option for many women during this time, even though it was not yet officially legal. As a result, the average size of American families started to decline rapidly (cf. Ostrander 1968: 339).

As previously suggested, not only the 19th Amendment brought change to American society, but also the 18th Amendment, known as 'Prohibition' was likewise responsible for a certain shift of values. Despite a "nationwide ban on the production, transport and sale of alcohol constituted through the 18th Amendment in 1919," (VanSpanckeren n.d.: 60) the consumption of alcoholic beverages did not decrease. On the contrary, underground bars known as speakeasies proliferated as never before (cf. *ibid*: 60). Whereas women of earlier generations generally did not drink alcohol and definitely not in public places where they could be seen, the new type of woman broke with these ethics and tried to keep up with men at speakeasies where "mixed drinking of mixed drinks was the rule" (Ostrander 1968: 339).

It is important to note, however, that not only flappers had different attitudes towards the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Young women of the 1920s who generally did not go to underground bars also felt the urge to school themselves in social

drinking, either in their own homes or in those of their friends (cf. Ostrander 1968: 339).

Due to the prohibition of alcohol, the existence of bootleggers and of the bootlegging industry, which sold alcohol illegally throughout the country, constituted a real problem to the United States. F. Scott Fitzgerald also made use of this topic in his popular novel *The Great Gatsby*. Without prohibition, of course, something like the bootlegging industry and the problems and crimes related to it, would not have existed (cf. Gusfield 1968: 279).

2.5. The Flapper Look

The changes in women's roles, however, were not only seen in the upheaval of traditional morals and manners of young women in particular, but more importantly, also in their looks. Whereas women of the previous generation favored the so-called Gibson Girl style, a style portrayed by Charles Dana Gibson, which was known for women to wear their hair long, emphasize their narrow and precise waists and to conceal their legs with ankle-length dresses, the type of woman that was emerging in the 1920s no longer identified herself with this type of style. Already during the Great War, women chose more practical, comfortable, shirtwaist-style clothes over these Gibson Girl dresses their mothers wore. Consequently, the idea of what was beautiful and acceptable for women to wear was about to change (cf. Yellis 1969: 44, 63).

Very soon this new type of dress was known as the flapper dress. It was low-cut and shortened to just an inch below the knee, thus, for the first time in history, revealing women's bare legs. Whereas before the S and hourglass shapes that were so popular among the Gibson Girls defined fashion, the silhouette of this new flapper dress was rather straight and slim and therefore considered to be boyish, as the dress was shapeless and more like "a sack without a waist" (Gourley 2008: 62; cf. *ibid*: 87).

As skirts were shorter, visual interest was not so much on the breasts and hips anymore, but instead on a woman's legs. The flapper dress was, moreover, much lighter, looser and more comfortable to wear than any dress before, as only about 6

meters of fabric were needed for the fabrication of such a dress instead of the previous 18 meters. Women, consequently, felt more liberated and modern in their appearance than ever before, as this type of clothing offered a greater flexibility in movement (cf. Gourley 2008: 62; Yellis 1969: 49).

If women, however, moved too quickly or went out in windy weather, the dress lifted and revealed their bare knees as the flapper usually rolled her nude-colored or rayon stockings (if she wore any) to just below the knee. This was considered to be quite scandalous, as women of previous generations never had showed that much skin. The flapper, however, simply did not care and enjoyed the freedoms of this new style and even emphasized it by wearing high-heeled, cut-out shoes with straps, which made her legs appear even longer (cf. Gourley 2008: 61f; Yellis 1969: 49).

Underneath her outer-clothes, the typical flapper usually wore as little as possible. Whereas women before wore corsets or petticoats in order to give their bodies a slimmer shape, the flapper wore either a step-in-girdle which hid her curves, or nothing at all, and a brassier-like garment, to flatten the breasts (cf. Yellis 1969: 49).

However, not only clothes defined the flapper, but also hair was an important outward symbol of this type of New Woman. The flapper usually wore her hair short in a 'Ponjola' bob or 'Eton crop' which, for many people of that era, was too revealing just like the clothes she used to wear. Due to the fact that in the course of history women's hair had always been long, the flapper hairstyle was considered to be radical, less feminine and tomboyish. On top of that, the flapper completed her look with a cloche-style hat, and was also not ashamed to pluck her eyebrows and use cosmetic devices on a regular basis such as a lipstick, mascara and blusher (cf. Yellis 1969: 48; Gourley 2008: 62).

With the help of this new appearance, women of that era could also successfully communicate who and what they were, namely individual human beings equal to men who could decide on and control how they looked (cf. Yellis 1969: 63). Even today in the 21st century the flapper style is seen for what it was: an outward symbol of emancipation, but also as a tool which made this emancipation possible in the first place (cf. Yellis 1969: 55).

Nonetheless, at the beginning of the twentieth century the flapper's choice of clothes, which went hand in hand with a conscious abandonment of traditional female aesthetics, was considered to be shocking, as it was the complete opposite of the preceding Victorian-era style which can be seen in the pictures below (cf. Yellis 1969: 44). The changes in fashion, however, can also be compared to the rejections of the traditional morals, as flappers cut their hair and shortened their skirts for the same reasons as they smoked or drank alcoholic beverages: an outward symbol of rebellion, "a way of shunning their parents' old code of moral behavior" (Gourley 2008: 83).



Flapper Girls [p.1]



Well-dressed woman of 1918 [p. 2]

The boyish flapper look with its emphasis on a woman's legs that became fashionable in the 1920s was, however, one reason why so many women could not stop thinking about weight and dieting. Another reason was that standardized sizing was introduced also in that time period. Whereas in the nineteenth and even the early years of the twentieth century women were used to making their clothes themselves, in the post-war era, women's apparel was all of a sudden mass-

produced and as a result, sizing was standardized. For women in particular, this meant that they simply had to fit into one of the standard sized, as they did not want to be embarrassed in the fitting room of one of the fancy department stores (cf. Gourley 2008: 95).

Of course, not every woman of the United States of this particular decade was a flapper, and also the flapper style itself was not uniform throughout the twenties. Rather, it was an ideal to be emulated, as it was the style portrayed in movies, magazines and also in literature. Popular film starlets such as Clara Bow, Colleen Moore and Louise Brooks defined the flapper style for many women, and thus, women throughout the country wanted to dance to the same kind of music, to smoke the same brand of cigarettes, to drink the same kind of liquor and to wear the same kind of clothes as these actresses did in the movies as well as in public life. Mimicking these famous and successful celebrities was, however, possible for all kinds of women, no matter if they lived in cities or in rural areas, because flapper clothes could be ordered ready-made and also at a cheap rate from various catalogs (cf. Zeitz 2006: 8f).

3. Writings of the 1920s

They were a generation in the purest sense, perhaps [...] the first real one in the history of American letters, and they had chosen to be a lost generation, the specially damned and forsaken, 'lost' from all the others and themselves by the unique conviction of their loss, the conviction by which they lived, wrote, and perceived the life of their time. (Aldridge 1971: 3)

The societal as well as cultural changes which the United States underwent in the 1920s were naturally mirrored by the literature written during these ten years. Although today in the 21st century one is easily tempted to view the 1920s only as an age full of glitter, glamor, modernity and material prosperity, American writers of that period of time suffered enormously from the Great War and its aftermath. Particularly the young generation of writers was soon referred to as 'the lost generation,' a term shaped by literary portraitist Gertrude Stein. The term itself expressed the writers' loss of faith in their home country, in their old set of values, in their former belief system and even in their own identities (cf. VanSpencer n.d.: 61). Authors such as Ernest Hemingway, e.e. cummings, or John Dos Passos who themselves had participated in the war either as members of European volunteer transport units or with the Red Cross ambulance sections, also incorporated feelings of loss and disillusionment in their writings (cf. Aldridge 1971: 3). Notable examples of such texts are John Dos Passos' novel *Three Soldiers* (1921), Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), or T.S. Eliot's long poem *The Waste Land* (1922).

After all everybody, that is, everybody who writes is interested in living inside themselves in order to tell what is inside themselves. That is why writers have to have two countries, the one where they belong and the one in which they live really. The second one is romantic, it is separate from themselves, it is not real but it is really there. (Gertrude Stein in Katz 2007: 96)

This particular feeling of loss, which various writers experienced in the United States in the post-war era, was one of the reasons why so many of them left their home country behind and moved to Europe. Very quickly, Paris turned into the new literary and artistic center of the 1920s, and although very few of the American expatriates were able to speak the language, they particularly enjoyed living in the French capital

as it “afforded rich, meaningful experiences in a community that placed art and expression at the center of existence” (Anderson 2010: 19). However, not only American writers such as Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, T. S. Elliot, Ezra Pound or Gertrude Stein resided in Paris (at least temporarily) during the 1920s. Many well-known European artists, like Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró and George Braque, also moved to the French capital, as they felt that compared to their home countries, in Paris they had more freedom to express themselves and their art.

American writers of the Jazz Age generally experimented much more in form, style and topic, than writers had done in any previous decade and, thus, literature of the 1920s, whether it was written in the United States or not, was soon to be known as the first modern literature of America. Among the many types and genres writers produced, Hoffman (1968: 313) states that the four most important were: the expatriate novel, like for example Ernest Hemingway’s first classic novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), the novel of war experiences with Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) as a representative, the nostalgic or retrospective novel, in which writers like Willa Cather or Edith Wharton indicated that the post-war era was inferior to the past, and the parodic novel, like Sinclair Lewis’ novel *Babbitt* (1922), which was usually addressed to the American middle class.

Although, however, the above-mentioned genre types were doubtlessly exemplary kinds of Jazz fiction, it is also necessary to mention the ‘Harlem Renaissance,’ also known as ‘The New Negro Movement,’ when outlining literature of the 1920s. It was in this period of time that the black community of Harlem, Uptown New York, proliferated with passion and creativity, the like of which had never been seen before. African American writers, singers, composers and actors were suddenly acknowledged for their works in which they mainly chronicle the problems that African Americans faced in the United States. Despite the racial segregation and Jim Crow Laws, which made African Americans feel like second-class citizens, jazz music and its influence on the works of Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes, amongst others, made a notable contribution to American literature and culture (cf. Anderson 2010: 21, 27ff).

In addition to the Harlem Renaissance, it is also important to note that the role of women in American literature changed decisively in the post-war era. As women were no longer moral guardians and virtuous housewives, it is not surprising that they were depicted accordingly in literature. In this period of time, not only female writers such as Gertrude Stein, Willa Cather or Edith Wharton, who had already managed to establish themselves as authors before the Great War, incorporated the New Woman in their literature, but also male authors made use of the new image of women in their literature. Yellis (1969: 48)¹ states in his article "Prosperity's Child: Some Thoughts on the Flapper" that whereas women before the Great War were usually portrayed as victims in American literature, like Stephen Crane's Maggie, Theodore Dreiser's Jennie Gerhardt or David Graham Phillip's Susan Lenox, women in the 1920s were depicted quite differently, namely as American Bitches. Examples of the first American Bitch can be seen in the character of Daisy in Fitzgerald, Brett in Hemingway, and Temple Drake in Faulkner.

[...] we find the young woman of 1920 flirting, kissing, viewing life lightly, saying damn without a blush, playing along the danger line in an immature way – a sort of mental baby vamp. [...] Personally I prefer this sort of girl. Indeed, I married the heroine of my stories. I would not be interested in any other sort of woman. (F. Scott Fitzgerald in Smith 1971: 244f)²

F. Scott Fitzgerald, in particular, was fully aware of the changes in women's morals and manners throughout this period of time and, thus, was responsible for incorporating more flappers, the new representative of women in the 1920s, in his stories than any other writer of his time. Already in his first novel *This Side of Paradise* (1921) he presented the public with three young women, Isabelle, Rosalind and Eleanor, who were bold, liberated and modern, because he himself was drawn to this modern type of New Woman (cf. Sanderson 2007: 143-149).

¹ footnote

² the complete interview was originally published as "Fitzgerald, Flappers and Fame," in *Shadowland*, January 1921

3.1. F. Scott Fitzgerald – The Chronicler of the Jazz Age

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born in 1896 on September 24 in St. Paul, Minnesota, to Mollie McQuillan and Edward Fitzgerald, an average middle-class family. From an early age, he knew that when he grew up he wanted to become a professional writer. His first story “The Mystery of the Raymond Mortgage” was published in a school magazine when he was aged only thirteen, and later again, when he was at Princeton his works were met with praise. Despite having enrolled in 1913, he never earned a Princeton degree due to his poor grades. Instead of studying, he dedicated most of his time to writing stories and plays, also for the famous Princeton Triangle Club, such as the *Princeton Tiger* and the *Nassau Literary Magazine* (cf. Sagert 2010: 23).

I spent my entire freshman year writing an operetta for the Triangle Club. I failed in algebra, trigonometry, coordinate geometry and hygiene, but the Triangle Club accepted my show, and by tutoring all through a study August I managed to come back a sophomore and act in it as a chorus girl. A little later I left college to spend the rest of the year recuperating in the West. (F. Scott Fitzgerald in Baldwin 1971: 269)³

Despite already having had a lot of experience in writing, his success as an established writer did not come easily. When he left Princeton in 1917 in order to enter the army as a second lieutenant, he quickly finished his first novel *This Side of Paradise*, which back then was entitled *The Romantic Egotist*, fearing that he might die in the war without having left his mark in the world. The novel, however, was rejected by various publishing agencies and even after revising it several times, it was not accepted for publication.

During his time in the army, whilst being stationed near Montgomery, Alabama, he first met and fell in love with his future wife, Zelda Sayre, at a country club dance. He was immediately fascinated by her, as she was to him the epitome of the New American Woman. Scott and Zelda got engaged in 1919, but she broke off the engagement as she believed their future to be insecure with him having no stable income (cf. Sagert 2010: 24). Consequently, Fitzgerald returned home to his parent’s

³ the complete interview was originally published as “F. Scott Fitzgerald,” in *The Men Who Make Our Novels*, 1924

house in St. Paul, Minnesota, determined to rewrite his novel once again, and in the fall of the same year *This Side of Paradise* was finally accepted to be published. Only a few days after receiving the good news, Scott and Zelda resumed their engagement and they were married in New York. *This Side of Paradise* became an instant success as thousands of readers could identify perfectly either with the protagonist, Amory Blaine, on the quest to find himself, or with the modern and independent young women Isabelle, Rosalind and Eleanor (cf. Leppmann 1992: 174).

All of a sudden, Fitzgerald earned great sums of money, several thousand dollars for one short story alone, and he and Zelda quickly began living the extravagant lifestyle he elaborately depicted in his novels. As soon as he received his money from the publishing agency, he and Zelda spent it irrationally, living only in luxuriously hotels such as the Plaza, the Commodore or the Biltmore, buying fancy clothes for Zelda, and spending great amounts on alcohol and parties. Due to the fact that through this lavish lifestyle their money quickly disappeared, F. Scott Fitzgerald was forced to write simpler stories for popular magazines as they brought in more money, even though he would have preferred to merely focus on writing artistic novels (cf. Sagert 2010: 25).

Nonetheless, at the age of 25, F. Scott Fitzgerald seemed to have everything in life that he had ever wanted: he was a successful writer, he was married to the woman he loved, they were expecting their first child, and they were financially comfortable. More than most writers of that era, however, Fitzgerald was also a strong public figure. The media of the 1920s were very aware of his exuberant lifestyle, and thus, not only his own articles and stories were published in magazines, but more importantly, also articles about him as well as about his wife (cf. Gross, and Gross 1998: 17).

In 1922, his second novel *The Beautiful and Damned*, as well as his second collection of stories *Tales of the Jazz Age* were published, in which he again drew upon the glittering youth culture of the 1920s (cf. Sagert 2010: 23). Shortly after this success, however, the Fitzgeralds decided to permanently move to France due to their ever-increasing financial problems. Whilst in France, he became friends with

other American expatriates such as Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein or T.S. Eliot. Away from his home country, Fitzgerald intended to fully concentrate on his third novel, *The Great Gatsby*, which is still known to be his masterpiece (cf. Anderson 2010: 137).

3.1.1. Women in the Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald

F. Scott Fitzgerald, who came of age in the 1920s, was particularly alert to the societal and cultural changes taking place around him. Due to his fine observations and his particular interest in the opposite sex, he successfully managed to incorporate the gradual shift in status of the new generation of women into his writings, like no other author of that time (cf. Fryer 1988: 1). Consequently, literary critics have paid special attention to his female characters and have also attempted to analyze his personal attitude towards them (cf. Sanderson 2007: 144). According to Rena Sanderson (2007: 144), it is however important to note that despite the fact that Fitzgerald's success was related to the flapper from the beginning of his literary career, his own opinion towards the flapper was always ambivalent. In fact, he was both delighted and confused by them and their influential new role in society which can also, to some extent, be observed in his writings.

His confused attitude towards women can actually be attributed to his childhood, well before the beginning of the 1920s (cf. Fryer 1988: 2). Already as a young boy, Fitzgerald was both ashamed of his mother, due to her careless looks and her eccentricity, as well as extremely fond of her. After having lost two daughters before the birth of her only son, Scott, Fitzgerald's mother, Mollie McQuillan, was fully devoted to him and, thus, he became a spoiled and overindulged child. When his own daughter Scottie, entered adulthood, Fitzgerald confessed to her that "I didn't know till 15 that there was anyone in the world except me ..." (F. Scott Fitzgerald in Mizener 1951: 3)⁴. Consequently, when he went to boarding school in 1911 and found himself alone for the very first time, he realized how little he had been prepared for real life and felt anger towards his mother. Nonetheless, when she died in 1936, at a time when Fitzgerald was physically as well as financially already at his lowest point, he remarked that "she was a defiant old woman, defiant in her love for me in

⁴ taken from a letter to his daughter Frances Fitzgerald Lanahan, ca. August, 1935

spite of my neglect of her and it would have been quite within her character to have died that I might live” (F. Scott Fitzgerald in Mizener 1951: 8)⁵.

It is safe to say that Fitzgerald took the experiences he had made with real women in his life as an inspiration for his female characters in his writings (cf. Fryer 1988: 2). In an interview in 1923 he stated “I had no idea of originating an American flapper when I first began to write. I simply took girls whom I knew very well and, because they interested me as unique human beings, I used them for my heroines” (F. Scott Fitzgerald in Wilson 1971: 265)⁶. Presumably the first woman who fascinated him that much that he would later use her in his fiction, was Ginevra King, a wealthy girl from Chicago whom he met in his first year at Princeton during Christmas vacation in his home town St. Paul, Minnesota. When Fitzgerald first saw her he was immediately fascinated by her beauty and good manners. She was to him the epitome of a dream (cf. Milford 2011: 28). They started an epistolary romance, but their relationship was not meant to last. After several months of writing romantic letters to one another, Ginevra decided to reject him due to his low status in society. Fitzgerald was left devastated by this loss and went on to embed the experiences he then made with his first love in several of his writings. So great had his interest been in her that he used her as a model for his female characters, most importantly as inspiration for Daisy Fay in *The Great Gatsby*, Isabelle in *This Side of Paradise* and Helen in “The Debutante” (cf. Anderson 2010: 136).

The most important woman in the life of Fitzgerald was however, beyond any doubt, his wife Zelda Sayre. They met and fell in love in 1917 at a country club dance in Montgomery, Alabama, and Scott knew from the beginning that Zelda was very different from other girls he had met before. Although she was just as beautiful as Ginevra, she was quite different in her behavior and self-confidence, which is why Scott was not the only man who was attracted to her. Indeed, she was pursued by several young officers who were stationed near her home town, and proudly collected the colorful emblems they gave her as signs of their affection (cf. Milford

⁵ taken from Fitzgerald’s personal introduction to his novel *The Great Gatsby* in 1934

⁶ the complete interview was originally published as “F. Scott Fitzgerald Says: ‘All Women Over Thirty-Five Should Be Murdered,’” in *Metropolitan Magazine*, November 1923

2011: 19). Finally, however, she agreed to marry Scott Fitzgerald who was to her “a dazzling visitor from a place where life was lived on a grand scale” (Milford 2011: 32).

It was during Scott’s first stay in Montgomery when Zelda showed him her carefully written diaries which completely fascinated him. Zelda, who was not necessarily an eager student, was extraordinarily talented with words and letters. Scott, in fact, was so impressed by her writings that he embedded whole parts of her diaries into his fiction, particularly in his first two novels *This Side of Paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned*, as well as in his short story “The Jelly Bean” (cf. Milford 2011: 35, 38). Whether Zelda minded that Scott revealed her most private thoughts and feelings in his stories is not known, but it can be assumed that she did not, at least not at the beginning of their relationship, due to the fact that she lent him her diaries for months on end (cf. Brody 2012: 18).

Yes. I love Scott’s books and heroines. I like the ones that are like me! That’s why I love Rosalind in *This Side of Paradise*. [...] I like their courage, their recklessness and spend-thriftiness. Rosalind was the original American flapper. (Zelda Fitzgerald in Home 1971: 259)⁷

Without a doubt, Zelda was Fitzgerald’s artistic muse. Several of his literary heroines are drawn upon her, such as Rosalind in *This Side of Paradise*, as well as both Rosalind and Gloria in *The Beautiful and Damned*. Due to her own sense of fashion and style, Zelda was soon regarded to be the American flapper and became something like a spokesperson for this new type of woman. She herself began to write stories and articles on this subject matter, such as “Eulogy on the Flapper” or “What Became of the Flappers?” which were published in popular magazines (cf. Zeitz 2006: 61f).

As time progressed, their money problems grew and Scott’s drinking problem became serious, people’s opinions on Zelda began to change. Whereas some thought that she was a true inspiration for Scott and his writings, others, such as Ernest Hemingway in particular, were convinced that she was the destructive force within their relationship (cf. Brody 2012: 30). Be that as it may, “the case of Zelda

⁷ the complete interview was originally published as “What a ‘Flapper Novelist’ Thinks of His Wife,” in *Baltimore Sun*, October 7, 1923

and Scott Fitzgerald and their symbiotic relationship as creator and object of creation may be incomparable in the history of literature – at least in the history of literary married couples” (Gordon 1992: xii).

3.2. Ernest Hemingway – Spokesperson of the Lost Generation

Ernest Miller Hemingway was born in Oak Park, Illinois on July 21, 1899. He was the second child of Dr. Clarence Edmonds Hemingway, a well-respected physician, and Grace Hall Hemingway, a music teacher and singer. Whereas his mother insisted that her children share her passion for music and art, forcing Ernest to play the cello and sing in the school choir, his father taught him to fish and hunt, which he pursued throughout his whole life. Similar to Fitzgerald, Hemingway knew very early on in life that he wanted to become a professional writer and due to his exceptional talent with words, some of his early stories were published in his school’s newspaper and literary magazine (cf. Nagel 1996: 88).

After graduating from high school in 1917, Hemingway did not however go to college like most of his friends, but took a job as a cub reporter on the *Kansas City Star* which at that time was one of the most popular newspapers in the United States (cf. Waldhorn 1973: 7). Although he worked there only briefly, it was a rather important period of his life because he already then began to develop his own unique and plain style of writing, which he is still renown for in the 21st century. One year later, Hemingway sailed to Europe where he volunteered as a Red Cross ambulance driver in Italy. Shortly after his arrival, however, he was shot in the knee when distributing food and cigarettes to troops. Although his wounds were not life-threatening, he was taken to a hospital in Milan for surgery and rehabilitation. It was there that he met and fell in love with the English nurse Agnes von Kurowsky, who was seven years his senior. They got engaged rather quickly, but soon after Ernest Hemingway returned to the United States, Agnes broke off the engagement, as she considered him to be too young. Moreover, she told him that she already promised to marry another man which naturally left Hemingway devastated. Almost ten years later, the importance of this period for Hemingway can be seen in his first two novels, *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*, in which he embedded the experiences he made in Italy (cf. Nagel 1996: 88).

Back in the United States, Hemingway continued to work as a journalist for *The Toronto Star* but simultaneously tried to establish himself as a writer of short fiction (cf. Anderson 2010: 163). During this time, he met his first bride-to-be, Elizabeth Hadley Richardson, called Hadley, who was a beautiful young woman from St. Louis, and they got married in 1921. Due to the fact that Hadley had inherited a great amount of money, the two had the possibility to travel across Europe and eventually moved to Paris. Despite continuing to write for newspapers, Hemingway began to dedicate more and more time to writing fiction. With the help of Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound and other members of the group of American expatriates, Hemingway developed into a serious fiction writer and in 1923 his first book *Three Stories and Ten Poems* was finally published. Only one year later, his literary sketches *In Our Time* appeared which marked the beginning of his Nick Adams stories. It was also in this time period that Hemingway became an *aficionado* of the bullfight. He and his wife Hadley used to spend the summer in Spain where they attended the San Fermin Festival in Pamplona. It was there that he also found the background for his first novel *The Sun Also Rises*, which was published in 1926 (cf. Nagel 1996: 88f).

The goddamest wild time and fun you ever saw. Everybody in the town lit for a week, bulls racing loose through the streets every morning, dancing and fire works all night and this last July us guys practically the guests of the city. [...] there never is anything like it anywhere in the world. Bull fighting is the best damn stuff in the world. (Hemingway 1981a: 131)⁸

With the publication of *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway was no longer merely an aspiring young writer and journalist, but he was all of a sudden considered to be a mature novelist. The book made him almost instantly an international public figure, due to the great number of sold copies. He became something as the spokesperson of an entire generation, 'the lost generation,' as he perfectly incorporated his own traumatic war experiences in his novels like no other author of that era (cf. Nagel 1996: 87).

⁸ taken from a letter to Howell Jenkins, Paris, November 9, 1924

3.2.1. Women in the Life of Ernest Hemingway

The better you treat a man and the more you show you love him, the quicker he gets tired of you. (Hemingway. *To Have and Have Not*: 193)

To this day, Ernest Hemingway, one of the best-known and most appreciated American authors of the 20th century, has often been criticized for having a hostile view towards women, due to the fact that he knows “nothing whatever about them” (Kert 1983: 9). Thus, his fictional female characters are claimed to seldom be real-life accounts of contemporary women, but merely products of Hemingway’s imagination. Be that as it may, his personal world was full of bold, self-sufficient and creative women whom he not only deeply admired, but who also influenced him and his writings to a great extent. His four wives in particular, Hadley Richardson (1921-1927), Pauline Pfeiffer (1927-1939), Martha Gellhorn (1940-1945) and Mary Welsh (1946-1961), all supported him in every way and also “helped to create the kind of environment he needed and demanded,” (Kert 1983: 9) despite the fact that Hemingway often put his own desires and needs over those of his wives.

From early on in life, Hemingway was almost entirely surrounded by females. He had four sisters, Marcelline, eighteen months his senior and raised as his twin, Ursula, Madelaine, and Carol, who were his only playmates at home until his only brother, Leicester Hemingway was born in 1915. His mother, Grace Hall Hemingway, is said to have been a very strong woman who left a mark on her children. Grace, a music teacher and singer, was very different from other women of her generation. Whereas most women usually dedicated their whole love and energy to the upbringing of their children and were in charge of the entire household, Grace was a working mother with an extraordinary passion for music, and earned her own money. Due to the fact that her salary was not added to the household-budget, she could use it for herself and her children to go to music concerts, to go on trips, to buy gifts or throw a party every once in a while. Different to most women at that time, Grace Hall Hemingway also did not show much talent for cooking and cleaning which is why nurses as well as mother’s helpers were always part of the family from early on. Due to being freed from housework and other chores, Hemingway’s mother had more time for her

personal interests and thus can be considered to have had more freedom than the majority of women at that time (cf. Kert 1983: 27, 35).

Although Grace Hall Hemingway may seem like a rather modern and self-sufficient woman, she did not only leave that impression on the mind of her first-born son. On the contrary, she is said to have been very domineering and that she had to be in control of everything, especially concerning her husband. Ernest Hemingway, in fact, detested this trait in his mother so much, that as an adult he said that he hated her, whom he even referred to as being a bitch. In fact, his friend and writer John Dos Passos also had the impression that Ernest not only spoke disapprovingly of his mother, but that he really hated her (cf. Kert 1983: 21).

Apart from his mother, however, who seems to have influenced Hemingway in one way or another, he was, like F. Scott Fitzgerald, also a witness to the societal and cultural changes of the 1920s. In fact, he was not only particularly alert to the changing roles of women of the 1920s, but he also embraced the more boyish and modern qualities in women, which can be seen clearly in his four wives: Hadley Richardson was particularly fond of hiking and skiing; Pauline Pfeiffer enjoyed riding and shooting; Martha Gellhorn was an excellent hunter; and Mary Welsh was an expert in deep-sea fishing (cf. Sanderson 1996: 171ff).

Although, however, Hemingway did not incorporate the New American Woman into his writings the way Fitzgerald did, but instead mainly concentrated on male pursuits such as war, hunting, and fishing, he was deeply affected by the women who surrounded him in real life and consequently used them as models for his female characters. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, he used his personal experience with his first real love, Agnes von Kurowsky, in his first two novels *The Sun Also Rises* and most importantly in *A Farewell to Arms*. Likewise in his first novel, which will be discussed in more depth later on, Hemingway modeled his female protagonist on a real-life character, Duff Twysden. Furthermore, his mother is also incorporated into his fiction not only in his novels *In His Own Time* and *Men Without Women*, but also in the short stories "Soldier's Home", "The Doctor's Wife" and "Now I Lay Me" (cf. Bell 1970: online).

Another important woman in Hemingway's life was undoubtedly the literary portraitist Gertrude Stein. They met in 1922, when Hemingway was trying to find a publisher for his works which experimented with fiction and poetry, whilst living as an expatriate in Paris. Equipped with a letter of introduction written by his friend and writer Sherwood Anderson, he one day turned up at Gertrude Stein's apartment in Rue de Fleurus, which was then the artistic center of expatriates such as Ezra Pound, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ford Madox Ford amongst others. Stein immediately liked the young promising writer with undiscovered talent and became something like his literary mentor. Already from the beginning she advised him to leave journalism behind for good and work on his particular style: "There is a great deal of description in this and not particularly good description. Begin over again and concentrate" (Gertrude Stein in Waldhorn 1973: 10). In fact, with the help of Gertrude Stein, Hemingway's texts were soon to be met with praise:

I've been working hard and have two things done. I've thought a lot about the things you said about working and am starting that way at the beginning. If you think of anything else I wish you'd write it to me. Am working hard about creating and keep my mind going about it all the time. Mind seems to be working better. (Hemingway 1981b: 79)⁹

⁹ taken from a letter to Gertrude Stein, Rapallo, Italy, ca. February 18, 1923

4. *The Great Gatsby* – An Analysis

4.1. An Introduction

With the publication of the novels *This Side of Paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned* at the beginning of the 1920s, Fitzgerald's life was forever altered. He was praised throughout the country for his ability to portray the glittering youth of the 1920s like no other author of that era. For his third novel, which he started to write in 1923 and completed two years later when living on the French Riviera, Fitzgerald had something very different in mind. He agreed with his friend and critic, Edmund Wilson, to leave his earlier writings behind in order to develop new grounds (cf. Berman 2001: 52). He also told his editor and friend, Maxwell Perkins from the publishing agency Charles Scribner's Sons, "I want to write something new – something extraordinary and beautiful and simple and intricately patterned" (F. Scott Fitzgerald in Mizener 1951: 170)¹⁰. In fact, he wanted to make his novel, which he eventually called *The Great Gatsby*, into "the great American novel of his century" (Berman 2001: 52).

Although from today's point of view Fitzgerald's third novel, *The Great Gatsby*, was a success for various reasons, it was nowhere near as popular in his days. This is shown by the fact that only 25, 000 copies were sold in 1925 and even less in the following years. Indeed, the profits made were so small that his financial problems remained unsolved. To make matters worse, the majority of newspaper reviewers were not in the least impressed by Fitzgerald's new novel despite the compliments made by some literary critics (cf. Gross and Gross 1998: xi). H.L. Mencken, a well-known critic of the time called *The Great Gatsby* nothing more than "a glorified anecdote" which is "certainly not to be put on the same shelf with [...] *This Side of Paradise*" (Mencken 1971: 348f)¹¹. Other newspaper reviews likewise gave harsh criticism:

¹⁰ taken from a letter to Maxwell Perkins, July, 1922

¹¹ the complete review was originally published as "As H. L. M. Sees It," in *Baltimore Evening Sun*, May 2, 1925

F. Scott Fitzgerald's new novel confirms the belief that there should be a consolidation of reviewers of average books and the selectors of scenarios. *The Great Gatsby* is another one of the thousands of modern novels which must be approached with the point of view of the average tired person toward the movie-around-the-corner, a deadened intellect, a thankful resigning of the attention, and an aftermath of wonder that such things are produced. (New York 1971: 345)¹²

Only five years after its publication in 1925, *The Great Gatsby* went out of print due to the low number of sold copies. In fact, when Fitzgerald died in 1940 he was not only deep in debt, in bad health and an alcoholic, but also all of his books were out of print and he was working as a scriptwriter in Hollywood. Thus, it seemed very probable at that time that the novel would completely disappear from the American literary canon and also that the once so famous and popular writer F. Scott Fitzgerald would be forever forgotten (cf. Gross, and Gross 1998: xi-xiii). In the 1940s, however, shortly after Fitzgerald's death, editions of *The Great Gatsby* began to be published again and another ten years later, in the 1950s, an unprecedented interest in Fitzgerald's life and his works began, which has continued up to the present day. By 1980, almost 10 million copies of Fitzgerald's novels have been sold, and even today, an enormous number of *The Great Gatsby* is sold every year (cf. Gross, and Gross 1998: xii). In 1974, the first *The Great Gatsby* movie was launched starring Mia Farrow and Robert Redford, followed by a new version of the film in 2013.

Although *The Great Gatsby* is today usually regarded to be one of the greatest American novels of all time and also its characters are met with praise, Fitzgerald himself thought that "the book contains no important woman character" (Fitzgerald 163a: 180)¹³. In fact, he not only thought that he had failed to fully develop Daisy, the female protagonist, as a character, but also that he was unsuccessful in explaining the emotional relationship between her and Gatsby:

¹² the complete review was originally published as "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Latest a Dud," in *New York World*, April 12, 1925

¹³ taken from a letter to Maxwell Perkins, Marseille en route to Paris, ca. April 24, 1925

The worst fault in it, I think is a BIG FAULT: I gave no account (and had no feeling about or knowledge of) the emotional relations between Gatsby and Daisy from the time of their reunion to the catastrophe. (Fitzgerald 163c: 341)¹⁴

Be that as it may, it is however important for an analysis of Daisy and the other female characters to note that Fitzgerald experimented in his third novel with the narrative point of view and presented the characters through a central male consciousness. Thus, everything we learn about her and about the other (female) characters comes from the narrator, Nick Carraway, and is therefore greatly influenced by his own experiences and personality (cf. Sanderson 2007: 154). Furthermore, he does not recount the story in chronological order but presents the events as he chooses to. This does not necessarily make him a reliable narrator (cf. Gross, and Gross 1998: 2). For the analysis of the female characters in *The Great Gatsby*, this means that we as readers have to believe everything we learn from Nick, whether it is true or not, due to the fact that neither Daisy, nor Jordan or Myrtle have their own voices in the novel. Therefore, we will never know for sure whether this is a reliable, true and unbiased account of women in the 1920s.

4.1.1. Summary of the Plot

F. Scott Fitzgerald's third novel, *The Great Gatsby*, takes place in the summer of 1922, in the fictional village of West Egg, Long Island. The narrator of the story, Nick Carraway, a Midwesterner and graduate from New Haven, moves east where he takes a job in New York as a bond salesman. In West Egg, he lives next door to the infamous Jay Gatsby, a self-made millionaire who is known for throwing lavish house parties.

Already at the beginning of the novel, Nick is invited to East Egg to have dinner with his cousin, Daisy Buchanan, and her husband, Tom, a former polo player whom he got to know in college. There, he is introduced to the golf player, Jordan Baker, an attractive woman whom he later assumes a romantic affair with. Jordan reveals to Nick that Tom is having an affair with a woman called Myrtle Wilson, who lives in the Valley of Ashes, a desolate dumping area, with her husband, George Wilson, a car-

¹⁴ taken from a letter to Edmund Wilson, Paris, Spring, 1925

mechanic. The next day, Nick and Tom together drive to New York City where they meet with Myrtle in an apartment that is used for their romantic getaways. There, a party is held and a lot of her friends come to celebrate. However, the fun comes to an abrupt end when Tom punches Myrtle in the face, thus breaking her nose, because she refuses to stop talking about his wife Daisy.

Shortly after this violent episode, Nick finally receives an invitation to one of Gatsby's famous parties. There, he once again encounters Jordan Baker and they even get to know the host himself, Jay Gatsby, when talking about their war experiences. Through Jordan, Nick learns that Gatsby knows Daisy from earlier times and that they actually were deeply in love with each other. In fact, he still is and thus only bought his house on Long Island because Daisy lives just across the bay. Since moving to his new home, Gatsby has been hoping that Daisy would one day accidentally appear at his party. Due to the fact, however, that this has not been the case so far, Gatsby asks Nick to arrange an encounter between himself and Daisy at Nick's house. Consequently, Nick invites Daisy over to have tea with him, without telling her that Gatsby will also be present. Overwhelmed by this surprise, the situation between Daisy and Gatsby is at first awkward, but they finally manage to reconnect and also begin a romantic affair. After a short while, however, Daisy's husband, Tom, becomes more and more suspicious and finally realizes that Gatsby, whom he accuses of being a bootlegger, is in love with his wife. At a luncheon on a hot summer's day at the Buchanan's mansion the situation almost gets out of hand, but the group of people finally decide to go to New York. Although Tom himself is involved in an extramarital affair, he is outraged by his wife's infidelity and confronts her and Gatsby in the Plaza Hotel. Daisy at first admits that she is in love with Gatsby, but ultimately she cannot reject her husband, with whom she seems to have a lot of history together.

Finally, Daisy and Gatsby in one car, and Nick, Jordan and Tom in another all head back to East Egg. Whilst driving through the Valley of Ashes, they discover that Gatsby's car has caused an accident which fatally wounds Myrtle, Tom's mistress. Later, Nick learns that not Gatsby, but Daisy had been driving the car in an attempt to calm her nerves. The next day, Tom tells Myrtle's husband, George, that Gatsby was the driver of the car, and thus, George goes to Gatsby's mansion and eventually

shoots both Gatsby and himself. Nick, who ultimately was very fond of Gatsby, organizes a funeral for his friend, but only a handful of people attended the ceremony. Disillusioned with the moneyed society of the Eastern World, he decides to move back to the Midwest.

4.2. Women's Lifestyle

In *The Great Gatsby*, which F. Scott Fitzgerald initially wanted to call *Gold-Hatted Gatsby* or *The High-Bouncing Lover* amongst other titles, Fitzgerald once again uniquely portrayed the spirit of the upper-middle class of the 1920s with all its superficial glitter and glamor. Fitzgerald, who himself was born into the time of the horse, gaslight and railroad, managed to incorporate all the new technological and electrical inventions such as the car, electricity and telephones into his novel although they only began to appear shortly before the 1920s (cf. Reynolds 2001: vii). In fact, these new and modern discoveries are present throughout the whole novel and seem not only to be of the utmost importance to the characters, but also give way to their upper-class status:

There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler's thumb. (Fitzgerald. *The Great Gatsby*: 26)

Due to the fact that the majority of readers of *The Great Gatsby* were born decades after its first publication, many often fail to comprehend how new and modern these inventions actually were in 1925, and how well Fitzgerald depicted these details in the narrative (cf. Reynolds 2001: vii).

It was also in this time period that brand names became more important than ever. Thus, in the novel the car is called a Dodge or a Ford, and it is presumably also not a coincidence that Jordan Baker, one of the female characters in the novel, is named after two popular makes of car, namely after the Jordan and the Baker motor vehicle. Especially for members of the upper-class, the conspicuous consumption of new and modern items was essential as it emphasized their upper-class status even more (cf. Reynolds 2001: ix).

With the help of three rather different woman characters in the novel, Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker and Myrtle Wilson, it is possible to get at least an idea of what women's lives were like in the 1920s. Readers who are familiar with Fitzgerald's earlier writings will immediately identify Daisy as Fitzgerald's typical golden girl whose "voice is full of money" (GG: 76) and Myrtle as the sexualized woman of lower class who "carried her flesh sensuously, as some woman can" (GG: 18). New, however, is Jordan Baker's role, a famous champion golfer with a thin, rather boyish and athletic figure who is said to have cheated at a golf tournament but gets away with it because "dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply" (GG: 38, cf. Sanderson 2007: 155). Although, however, none of the three female characters has their own voice in the novel, we get an insight into their lives and into their lifestyles through Nick's narration. Already in the first chapter we are introduced to Daisy and Jordan who are described by Nick as follows:

The only completely stationary object in the room was an enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. They were both in white, and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house. (GG: 7)

Completely exhausted by the heat, the two wealthy women lie around on a sofa "completely motionless" (GG: 7) on a hot summer's day in their beautiful white dresses and need not to do worry about anything other than looking beautiful. They clearly do not have to work, and Daisy, although being a mother of a little child whom she refers to as being a "beautiful little fool" (GG: 13) does not need to take care of her, due to the fact that she has a nanny (probably several) who is solely responsible of the upbringing of her only child.

Despite the fact that money and possessions are one of the major topics in the novel, the wealthy upper-class lifestyle cannot, however, only be noticed in Daisy Buchanan or Jordan Baker, who are clearly members of wealthy society, but also in Myrtle Wilson who is Tom's mistress, and her sister Catherine. Although they both belong to the working-class, they get the chance to at least taste the upper-class lifestyle with the help of Tom. Tom provides them with possessions which they simply would not be able to afford themselves: an apartment in New York City, great

amounts of alcohol, a puppy dog only because it is cute, elaborate dresses and anything else they desire. In fact, with Tom's money, Myrtle can be a totally different person and imitate the lifestyle of the women she so much admires in the *Town Tattle* or other scandal magazines she regularly buys:

Mrs Wilson had changed her costume some time before, and was now attired in an elaborate afternoon dress of cream-gold chiffon, which gave out a continual rustle as she swept about the room. With the influence of the dress her personality had also undergone a change. The intense vitality that had been so remarkable in the garage was converted into impressive hauteur. Her laughter, her gestures, her assertions became more violently affected moment by moment, and as she expanded the room grew smaller around her, until she seemed to be revolving on a noisy, creaking pivot through the smoky air. (GG: 21)

In fact, Myrtle is so absorbed with her temporary role as an upper-class woman that she bosses the bellboys around and ultimately refers to them as “you have to keep after them all the time” (GG: 22). Moreover, she brags in front of her friends that she had a “woman up here last week to look at [her] feet,” (GG: 21) something she would never be able to do within her own social class.

Also in terms of looks, it is important to mention that not only Jordan, a “slender, small-breasted girl,” (GG: 9) seems to be a product of the 1920s with her “erect carriage, which she accentuated by throwing her body backward at the shoulders like a cadet” (GG: 9)– a clear indication to her androgynous body – but also Myrtle and her sister Catherine seem to be very aware of the current flapper fashion of the time. In fact, it appears that they intentionally try to mimic this style by wearing their hair in a bob, plucking their eyebrows and wearing make-up on a daily basis:

The sister, Catherine, was a slender, worldly girl of about thirty, with a solid, sticky bob of red hair, and a complexion powdered milky white. Her eyebrows had been plucked and then drawn again at a more rakish angle but the efforts of nature towards restoration of the old alignment gave a blurred air to her face. When she moved about there was an incessant clicking as innumerable pottery bracelets jingled up and down upon her arms. (GG: 20)

At Gatsby's lavish house parties “where champagne was served in glasses bigger than finger-bowls” (GG: 31) in times of Prohibition, we can appreciate the

extravagant upper-class lifestyle at its best. There, men, as well as women could show off with who they were in the company of and what they wore. Whether it is the “two girls in twin yellow dresses” or “Jordan’s slender golden arm” (GG: 28) resting in Nick’s, clothes and colors seem to play an important part in the narrative. One female party guest, whose name is not even known, proudly brags that at the last party she tore her dress and within a week she received a package from Gatsby containing a replacement evening robe with lavender beads on it. Obviously she does not fail to mention that it cost two hundred and sixty-five dollars (cf. GG: 29).

Although, however, Daisy is the central female figure in *The Great Gatsby*, we do not learn much about her physical appearance and style. Only through Jordan’s story do we discover that Daisy Fay had been “by far the most popular of all the young girls in Louisville” (GG: 48) at the age of eighteen and that she already then was pursued by several young officers. But due to the fact that she finally chooses Tom over Gatsby because of his money, it can be assumed that the rich upper-class lifestyle is very important to her (more important than anything else) and that she also dresses accordingly. Indeed, this can be seen in what is probably one of the most well-known scenes in the novel, where Jay Gatsby shows Daisy all his expensive and colorful shirts in his room. Daisy is so overwhelmed by the amount of beautiful shirts that she starts to cry uncontrollably. Looking at the beautiful and expensive shirts in front of her, she can finally see how wealthy Gatsby has become:

He took out a pile of shirts and began throwing them, one by one, before us, shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel, which lost their folds as they fell and covered the table in many-coloured disarray. While we admired he brought more and the soft rich heap mounted higher – shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple-green and lavender and faint orange, with monograms of Indian blue. Suddenly, with a strained sound, Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily. (GG: 59)

4.3. Women’s Independence

Although the new generation of women of the 1920s wanted much more from life than just being good wives and mothers, namely to be equal partners to their husbands and individual beings with the chance to fulfill their own hopes and dreams, for most of them marriage was the only available option. Whereas women

from the lower classes already had to work before as well as during marriage in order to be able to contribute to the house-budget, and to make ends meet, women from the middle and upper classes generally had very limited career opportunities. Thus, for the majority of them marriage was of utmost importance because their social as well as economic status was solely provided by the men they chose to marry (cf. Gross, and Gross 1998: 110f).

Daisy Buchanan from *The Great Gatsby* serves as a perfect example of women's limited options in society. Despite being in love with Gatsby, she agrees to marry the wealthy upper-class beau Tom Buchanan, presumably because he does not only provide her with social security, but also with an upper-class status. Although their wedding has "more pomp and circumstance than Louisville ever knew before," (GG: 49) on her actual wedding day, Daisy feels uncertain about her choice of husband due to a letter she receives from her former lover Gatsby. The letter makes her feel so uneasy that for the first time in her life she gets completely drunk and throws the three hundred and fifty thousand dollar string of pearls, which Tom gave her as a wedding present, into the dust bin:

She groped around in a waste-basket she had with her on the bed and pulled out the string of pearls. 'Take 'em downstairs and give 'em back to whoever they belong to. Tell 'em all Daisy's change her mine. Say: "Daisy's change' her mine!"' She began to cry – she cried and cried. (GG: 49)

Despite this unhappy outburst, however, half an hour later Daisy marries Tom Buchanan "without so much as a shiver" (GG: 49) and happily enters her new life as the wealthy upper class woman Mrs. Tom Buchanan.

At the beginning of the novel, Nick reveals the following information about his second cousin once removed:

Why they came East I don't know. They had spent a year in France for no particular reason, and then drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together. This was a permanent move, said Daisy over the telephone, but I didn't believe it – I had no insight into Daisy's heart, but I felt that Tom would drift on for ever, seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game. (GG: 6)

And also later, we learn that the marriage between Tom and Daisy has not been so happy after all, as it has been shaped from the beginning by Tom's extramarital affairs. In the first year of their marriage, Tom has a car accident whilst in the company of one of the chambermaids who works at Santa Barbara Hotel in which he and Daisy are staying. Later in the novel Daisy herself reveals that the reason why they left Chicago in the first place was Tom's sexual affairs (cf. GG: 50, 84). Nonetheless, Daisy's social status and her limited possibilities in life make her accept the double standard, meaning that she just looks away and acts as if nothing were the matter when Tom's mistress, Myrtle, whom she has never seen, calls in the middle of the day. Daisy is aware that Tom has not stopped having affairs with other women, but when given the opportunity to leave him and escape her miserable situation for good, she decides not to. On the contrary, after the accident in which she accidentally kills Myrtle, she retreats back into her unhappy life with Tom and leaves her fantasy of having a romantic relationship with Gatsby forever behind (cf. Fryer 1988: 55). Surprisingly, it seems that the course of events in the novel brings Tom and Daisy even closer together:

They weren't happy, and neither of them had touched the chicken or the ale – and yet they weren't unhappy either. There was an unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the picture, and anybody would have said that they were conspiring together. (GG: 93)

Although one can only speculate the real reasons why Daisy secretly but predictably chooses to go back to Tom and to resume her old life, due to the lack of information it seems too easy to fully agree with Nick in dismissing Daisy and Tom as "careless people" who "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" (GG: 114). In fact, it seems that Nick who just presents his own point of view, fails, just like Fitzgerald himself, to understand what motivates Daisy in life and what makes her behave the way she does throughout the entire novel. This can already be seen in the first chapter when Nick observes Daisy's unhappy situation with Tom for the first time and Daisy even tells him how miserable she is, but does not do anything about it. On the contrary, he simply recounts (cf. GG: 13, cf Fryer 1988: 43):

I was confused and a little disgusted as I drove away. It seemed to me that the thing for Daisy to do was to rush out of the house, child in arms – but apparently there were no such intentions in her head. (GG: 15)

As opposed to Daisy, to whom the old set of values seem to be more important than her personal happiness, Jordan Baker, who is only two years younger and also from Louisville, manages to become a professional golf player and is, thus totally independent from men. Although not much is revealed about Jordan's personal background, only that she has an aunt "who is about a thousand years old," (GG: 14) it can be assumed that as a professional sportswoman of her time she would have enough money to live on her own without external help, although in the summer she stays with the Buchanans. Due to her social as well as her economic status, she does not have to depend on any man, which is why she can be referred to as the embodiment of the modern American woman. Thus, her rather peculiar relationship with Nick Carraway is not built on money or social status, at least not from her part:

At first I was flattered to go places with her, because she was a golf champion, and everyone knew her name. Then it was something more. I wasn't actually in love, but I felt a sort of tender curiosity. (GG: 38)

After a while, however, Nick suspects that Jordan's "bored haughty face that she turned to the world" hid something and later dismisses her to be "incurably dishonest" as well as "careless," (GG: 38f) not only because she is rumored to have cheated at golf, but also because she was a dangerous driver who relied on others to drive safely and get out of her way.

Despite the reader never really knowing whether Jordan and Nick were ever truly in love, it seems that some aspects of their romance are deliberately concealed by Nick in the narrative. After Myrtle's death, Nick suddenly feels that he has had "enough of all them" (GG: 91) which also includes Jordan. Without actually telling her about how he feels, he ends the relationship and moves on with his own life. Before Nick, however, leaves for the Midwest, he once again meets Jordan and in a final scene between the two she adds:

‘Oh, and do you remember’ – she added – ‘a conversation we had once about a driving car?’ [...] ‘You said a bad driver was only safe until she met another bad driver?’ Well, I met another bad driver, didn’t I? I mean it was careless of me to make such a wrong guess. I thought you were rather an honest, straightforward person. I thought it was your secret pride.’ (GG: 113)

As opposed to Daisy and Jordan, who both manage either through hard work or marriage to climb up the social ladder, Myrtle Wilson is from the working class and, thus, fully dependent on her husband, George Wilson, a car mechanic. They live in the Valley of Ashes, an industrial dumping ground that resembles a waste land, about halfway between West Egg and New York, and live a rather unhappy life due to the fact that Myrtle is convinced that she married beneath her and actually deserves someone better. The reason why Myrtle married Wilson was because she thought he was a gentleman, but it turns out that she was mistaken. For her, the only escape from her unhappy marriage is provided with a liaison with the upper-class beau Tom Buchanan, who gives her an insight into his wealthy world she so much admires in magazines such as *Town Tattle*. Sadly, however, Myrtle is also fully dependent on Tom. As his mistress she is forced to please him in every way and when she does not, he beats her so hard that on one occasion he even breaks her nose. Although she, just like Gatsby, strives for more in life, her personal version of the American Dream turns out to be a nightmare and she is eventually killed in a car accident.

4.4. Female Sexuality

As already mentioned previously, the modern American woman of the 1920s saw herself not only as an individual human being, but also as a sexual human being. Many women of that era experimented in this field before actually being married to one man forever, and therefore not only kissed men to whom they were not engaged, but also frequently attended petting parties, simply because they were curious. Although Fitzgerald indicates his characters’ sexual activities in ambiguous and archaic terms, he doubtlessly addresses the changing morals of women of his era concerning sexuality (cf. Fryer 1988: 12). For example, Daisy allows Gatsby to “[take]” her “one still October night” (GG: 94) before being actually married to Tom

Buchanan and later in the novel, when they resume their love affair, continues to visit him “in the afternoons” (GG: 72).

A further female character who can be considered in touch with her own sexuality definitely is Myrtle Wilson. Not only does she teasingly wet her lips and speak in a soft, coarse voice, but already at the beginning of the novel it is revealed that she has become Tom’s mistress behind her husband’s back and regularly “goes to see” (GG: 18) her sister Catherine in New York where she and Tom actually “[disappear]” (GG: 20) in the apartment, also when Nick is actually present (cf. Fryer 1988: 11). Even Tom, who generally seems to be from the older generation who does not approve of the changing morality of the 1920s as he thinks that “women run around too much these days,” (GG: 66) at one point in the novel declares: “I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife” (GG: 82f). And also Jordan claims to have had “a few beaux” (GG: 48) herself, which may be an indication to her own sexual activity. Whether Nick and Jordan, also have a sexual love affair, like all the other characters of the novel, is, however, not explicitly revealed. The following poem, however, which Nick recounts at one point of the novel when being in company of Jordan may be an indication of their sexual activity:

‘Im the Sheik of Araby.
Your love belongs to me.
At night when you’re asleep
Into your tent I’ll creep-‘
(GG: 50)

5. *The Sun Also Rises* – An Analysis

5.1. An Introduction

During his visit to the festival of San Fermin in Pamplona in 1925, Hemingway found the background for his first novel which he eventually called *The Sun Also Rises*. Hemingway, who at this point was already an *aficionado* of bullfighting, attended the fiesta together with his first wife, Hadley, and a group of their Parisian friends. These were: Donald Ogden Stewart, an American author and screenwriter; Bill Smith, an old friend; Lady Duff Twysden, a beautiful English lady who was in the process of a bitter divorce; Pat Guthrie, Twysden's husband-to-be; and finally Harold Loeb, the editor of a popular magazine called *Broom*. Shortly before the celebrations in Spain began, Loeb and Duff Twysden spent a romantic getaway in St. Jean-de-Luz in southwestern France. This would go on to cause a lot of problems later on.

In Pamplona, the group of friends had a lot of fun and particularly enjoyed the extraordinary bullfighting performance of Cayetano Ordóñez, a young and promising torero who was known by the nickname Niño de la Palma (cf. Nagel 1996: 89). A few days after the fiesta began, tensions began to grow in the group and things between Hemingway and Loeb got out of hand due to jealous fights and heated arguments over Lady Duff, who had started an affair with the young bullfighter. Hemingway, who is said to also have been in love with Duff Twysden, at the time, although actually attended the fiesta with his wife, was responsible for initially introducing Duff to Ordóñez, and thus, was afraid of endangering the career of the very talented matador through his affair with the seductress Twysden (cf. Corral 1999: online). Although Hemingway and Loeb finally shook hands and apologized, too much had happened in this short period of time to go back to how things were before. As a consequence, the fiesta was ruined, as well as friendships between the group and Hemingway's marriage to Hadley, would never be the same. Nonetheless, these events inspired Hemingway and would serve as the background for his first novel (cf. Nagel 1996: 89).

Hemingway began to work on the novel on July 21, 1925, on his twenty-sixth birthday, and completed the first draft only a little more than a month later. In the first

version, he actually used the real names of his friends who had traveled with him from Paris to Pamplona and also included himself as 'Hem' and his wife Hadley as the central characters of the story. However, after revising the opening pages again and again, he changed the names to fictional ones. Thus, the seductive British Lady, Duff Twysden, became Brett Ashley; her Scottish fiancé, Pat Guthrie, became Mike Campbell; Hemingway's fishing partners, Donald Ogden Stewart and Bill Smith, were fused into one character, namely Bill Gorton; and the first Jew of Princeton University, Harold Loeb, initially became Gerald and then Robert Cohn. 'Hem' became the impotent Jake Barnes, and surprisingly, his wife Hadley disappeared from the narrative altogether (cf. Kennedy 1996: 200; Waldhorn 1973: 83).

Although the deletion of his own wife who also took part in the celebrations in Pamplona in 1925 sounds harsh, it gave Hemingway the possibility to intensify the "never-to-be-consummated" (Kennedy 1996: 200) love between the impotent Jake, the narrator, and Lady Brett Ashley. Furthermore, it allowed Hemingway to use a story based on autobiographical events, that still differed from what had actually happened in the summer of 1925 (cf. Kennedy 1996: 201).

Before the novel was finally published, however, Hemingway cut out the entire first chapter which would have served as an introduction to the only major female character, Brett Ashley, and her liaison to Mike Campbell, as well as parts of the second chapter in which Jake Barnes provides an insight into his life in Paris, his work, and his friends. The reason for this deletion so short before its publication was that F. Scott Fitzgerald, then a close friend of Hemingway, advised him to altogether leave out those wordy opening passages (cf. Waldhorn 1973: 93):

Anyhow I think parts of *Sun Also* are careless + ineffectual. As I said yesterday (and, as I recollect, in trying to get you to cut the 1st part of 50 Grand) I find in you the same tendency to envelope or (and as it usually turns out) to *embalm* in mere wordiness an anecdote or joke that's casually appealed to you, that I find in myself in trying to preserve a piece of 'fine writing.' Your first chapter contains about 10 such things and it gives a feeling of condescending casualness. (Fitzgerald 1991: 8)¹⁵

¹⁵ taken from a letter to Ernest Hemingway, June, 1926

5.1.1. Summary of the Plot

Hemingway's first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, is based on real-life events and is divided into three books. It begins with an introduction to the character Robert Cohn, who is a friend of the narrator of the novel, Jake Barnes, and was once a boxing champion as well as the first Jew at Princeton University. The novel is initially set in Paris in 1925, where almost all of the characters live in the aftermath of World War I. There, the narrator meets the female protagonist of the story, Brett Ashley, whom he loves deeply. They meet several times in bars and cafés until Brett says that she has to go away for a while.

In Book Two, it is revealed that Brett went with Robert Cohn to San Sebastian where they had a romantic love affair. Unaware of this, Jake, however, meets his longtime friend Bill Gorton, another war veteran, who has arrived from New York. They travel together to Bayonne, Spain, where they want to go on a fishing trip with Robert Cohn. Cohn, however, does not join them as he desperately awaits Brett. Although Brett is actually engaged to Mike Campbell, a Scottish bankrupt, with whom she will later join the group at the festival of San Fermin in Pamplona, Cohn still thinks that Brett also has feelings for him. Finally, Jake and Bill return to Pamplona, where the group is complete. During the nine days of ceaseless fiesta the characters occupy themselves with eating, drinking, and watching bullfights. After a few days, Brett is introduced to the 19-year-old promising bullfighter, Pedro Romero, with whom she also assumes an affair which leads to trouble amongst the group. Cohn reaches boiling point and first fights with Jake, followed by Romero, whom he beats up almost to unconsciousness.

In the final book, the fiesta is already over and the characters finally leave Pamplona for good. Whereas Bill returns to Paris and Mike to Bayonne, Jake goes alone to San Sebastian in order to rest after some troublesome days. Shortly before he also returns to Paris, he receives a telegram from Brett who asks him for help whilst in Madrid with the young bullfighter Pedro Romero. He picks her up from a hotel and takes her out to dinner. Thus, the novel ends similar to how it began: Brett and Jake are sitting in a taxi, talking about how different everything could have been, were they together.

5.2. Brett's Lifestyle

Due to the fact that Ernest Hemingway decided to leave out the entire first, as well as parts of the second chapter of the original draft of his first classic novel *The Sun Also Rises*, the reader learns much less about the only major female character of the story, Brett Ashley. If they had been included, the first two chapters would have given a thorough introduction to Brett, including her personal background and liaisons with both Jake Barnes and Mike Campbell. Instead, however, the reader is only briefly introduced to Brett, and without much further information, as can be seen in the following extract:

As they went in under the light I saw hands, wavy hair, white faces, grimacing, gesturing, talking. With them was Brett. She looked very lovely, and she was very much with them. (Hemingway. *Fiesta: The Sun Also Rises*: 17)

The 34-year old English woman Brett Ashley enters a bar in Montparnasse, Paris, in the company of a group of male friends, where the narrator of the novel, Jake Barnes, as well as some of his friends such as Robert Cohn and his fiancé Frances Clyne, also spend the night. Although not much is said about Brett, we rather quickly learn that she already knows most of the people present and also that she forms part of the group of American and British expatriates living in the French capital. Furthermore, it seems that she has a very intimate relationship with Jake Barnes, as they leave the bar shortly after Brett's arrival in order to spend some time alone, even though Brett is actually engaged to another man:

The street was dark again and I kissed her. Our lips were tight together and then she turned away and pressed against the corner of the seat, as far away as she could get. Her head was down.
'Don't touch me,' she said. 'Please don't touch me.'
'What's the matter?'
'I can't stand it.'
'Oh, Brett.'
'You mustn't. You must know. I can't stand it, that's all. Oh, darling, please understand!'
'Don't you love me?'
'Love you? I simply turn all to jelly when you touch me.' (SAR: 22)

Although the exact nature of their love affair is never explicitly revealed, it is clear that Brett and Jake, despite being deeply in love with one another, cannot be together for reasons which will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter. Nonetheless, it seems that Brett is the one who decides that she does not want to go “through that hell again” and thus considers it best for both of them to “keep away from each other” (SAR: 23). This, however, turns out to be harder than expected as she again later that night appears unannounced and relatively drunk at Jake’s apartment because she needed to see him once again. At another point later in the novel, when she is actually together with other men, she repeatedly seeks the company of Jake, who not only seems to be something like a safe haven to her, but whom she also refers to as the only person she has left in this world (cf. SAR: 158).

Jake and Brett first met long before the novel opens, in the hospital *Ospedale Maggiore*, Italy, during World War I. Back then, Brett worked there as a nurse’s aid when Jake was hospitalized after he was badly wounded. Although they hardly talk about the traumatic war experiences they both made, the physical and mental wounds which they, as well as other members of their Parisian community received in the Great War, repeatedly appear in the novel. Jake, who presumably has been left impotent, not only admits that for six months he could not sleep without the lights on, but he also bitterly starts to cry at night when he tries “not to think about it” (SAR: 27).

Further traumatized characters are, for example, Bill Gorton, Jake’s longtime friend who lives in New York and tries not to live like an expatriate who has “lost touch with the soil” (SAR: 100). He confesses that he is still “daunted” (SAR: 64) at times. Harvey Stone, another war veteran, suffers from horrors that force him to hide in his room “like a cat” (SAR: 37). Also Count Mippipopolous, whom Brett meets in a bar, is referred to being quite “one of us” (SAR: 53) due to his participation in seven wars and four revolutions, during which he received arrow-wounds all over his back. Not to forget Brett, who loses her one true love in the war to dysentery and still suffers from the aftermath, which Jake notes when he says that “she was afraid of so many things” (SAR: 23; cf. Stephens 1967: 83). The painful experiences all these characters share make them a ‘lost generation’ – Hemingway even embeds the term in the epigraph – which they recognize without having to speak about it. They are in

rebellion against the old set of values of their homelands and thus, in decadent Paris, they try to live a life that is free from the conventions that “hamper their quests” (Stephens 1967: 82). There they can easily deny the traumas from which they still suffer by only concentrating on the present and not thinking too much about the past (cf. Stephens 1967: 82f).

The only major character in the novel who has not been to war and can thus be referred to as an outsider, is Robert Cohn. As opposed to the others, he does not share this feeling of loss and cynicism towards the world and consequently fails to understand what actually motivates the other characters, especially Brett, who seems to wander aimlessly around from one bar to another, from Paris to Pamplona, and from one lover to the next. In fact, whenever we encounter Brett in the novel, she lingers in bars or restaurants, always in the company of men and with an alcoholic drink at hand. Although it was acceptable for women at that time to drink alcoholic beverages in public, Brett not only seems to drink for fun, but she actually needs the alcohol in order to be able to live her life. She usually stays up the whole night drinking absinthe and brandy, and then sleeps till noon due to the fact that she is “tight” (SAR: 18) or even “blind” (SAR: 47) which means that she was in such a state the night before, that she is unable to recall any details the next morning:

‘You don’t remember anything about a date with me at the Crillon?’

‘No. Did we have one? I must have been blind.’

‘You were quite drunk, my dear,’ said the count. (SAR: 47)

Due to her previous marriage to Lord Robert Ashley, Brett still has a title which has given her many advantages in life so far. She knows that it is “damned useful sometimes” (SAR: 50) and that she will miss having a title once the divorce is through. Ironically, however, Brett does not in the least behave or appear like a lady. Although the Count, who is completely fascinated by her, says that she would not need the title because she has “class all over [her],” (SAR: 51) and also Cohn, who mistakenly thinks that Brett was born a lady states that “there’s a certain quality about her, a certain fineness,” (SAR: 33) Brett appears to be the complete opposite of a lady: she smokes, she drinks hard liquor (absinthe and brandy), she constantly has extramarital affairs and she also dresses rather provocatively. These are all traits

which were not necessarily considered to be lady-like in the 1920s. Instead, Brett seems to be the embodiment of the modern and liberated New Woman:

Brett was damned good-looking. She wore a slipover jersey sweater and a tweed skirt, and her hair was brushed back like a boy's. She started all that. She was built with curves like the hull of a racing yacht, and you missed none of it with that wool jersey. (SAR: 19)

Especially in terms of style and appearance, Brett, who is the only female in the group of expatriates, seems to differ quite significantly to other women of that era. In fact, she is not merely fashionable, but she started the trend towards the boyish, androgynous look. Although already 34-years old, she is the utter antithesis of her Victorian precursors who wore their hair long, emphasized their narrow and precise waist and concealed their legs with ankle-length dresses. Brett, on the contrary, is a product of the 1920s. She appears to be aware of the contemporary trend which is portrayed in Hollywood and in the world of advertising, and takes all this even further. She does not wear a bob, like the typical flapper of the 1920s, but wears her hair "brushed back like a boy" (SAR: 19). Brett also abandons the typical cloche-style hat for a more masculine one or even for a bask beret. She also shows off her body beneath her sweater, whilst flappers wore a rather shapeless, sack-like dress in order to conceal their curves and, thus, looked even more tomboyish. In addition, rather than rolling her stockings down to below the knee, Brett omits them altogether when she dances in a bar and drinks alcohol in public (cf. Sanderson 1996: 178; LaCava 2012: online).

Brett's rather unconventional look, however, seems to be very popular with men. In fact, it seems that every male character in the novel is completely stunned by her, by her looks as well as by her behavior. Jake more than once says that he is in love with her, and due to the fact that he is the narrator of the novel, he is the one who describes her to be "damned good-looking" (SAR: 19). When first seeing Brett, Robert Cohn "looked a great deal as his compatriot must have looked when he saw the promised land," (SAR: 18) and Mike Campbell, the man who is going to marry her, is totally excited with his "lovely piece" (SAR: 69). Bill Gorton is also more than impressed by this "beautiful lady" (SAR: 65) and especially Pedro Romero, the young

and promising bullfighter, immediately recognizes that there was a lot of sexual tension between him and the much older Englishwoman.

Brett even arouses a great deal of curiosity with other women, especially in the traditional and conservative world of Spain. Although she generally may have felt very comfortable in the progressive atmosphere of Paris, she is referred to as “a species of woman [...] who’s waked the whole street up” (SAR: 28). Robert Cohn’s fiancé, Frances Clyne, refers to her as “that Brett one,” (SAR: 40) which indicates that she was not like the typical woman of that time. Indeed, Brett could not have been more alien in Spain:

The woman standing in the door of the wine shop looked at us as we passed. She called to someone in the house and three girls came to the window and stared. They were staring at Brett. (SAR: 119f)

There, Brett’s tight sweaters, short hair, bare shoulders, and unwomanly manners astound the Spanish women of Pamplona, and they constantly stare at her throughout the fiesta. Furthermore, when attending the celebrations, Brett is literally forced to play the role of the Circe, the magic goddess who turns men into swine, in Homer’s masterpiece *Odyssey*. Consequently, men dance around her with wreaths of garlic around their necks (cf. Nagel 1996: 96).

5.3. Female Sexuality

Just like in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, in *The Sun Also Rises* Ernest Hemingway also presents the major female character, Brett Ashley, through a central male consciousness, namely through the narrator Jake Barnes. Similar to Nick Carraway, he also tells the story in retrospective, after everything had already happened, and thus influences the story greatly by his own experiences and personality. As already mentioned before, the love story between Jake Barnes and Brett Ashley begins long before the novel opens and continues throughout the whole book, and probably also after its ending. But although they are still in love and actually would make a good couple, they cannot be together because of Jake’s handicap – his impotence (cf. Sanderson 1996: 178).

Probably I never would have had any trouble if I hadn't run into Brett when they shipped me to England. I suppose she only wanted what she couldn't have. (SAR: 27)

Although Jake's war wound is never explicitly defined, it can be assumed that he has been left impotent which is also the reason why Jake and Brett cannot be together. It is, however, not only Jake's inability to produce life that prevents them from actually being and living together: it is more importantly Brett's unwillingness to ignore her own sexual needs and desires, which makes Jake's impotence their final handicap. Back then, women were generally not supposed to seek completion in sex anyway and, thus, Jake's impotence may not have made a difference to a woman who generally did not wish to have children. But Brett, who does not belong to this sort of traditional woman, is not willing to give up her sexual freedom and thus, is not ready to suffer only because of Jake's wound. Therefore, in *The Sun Also Rises* we can clearly see the changing sexual attitude of the New Woman of the 1920s (cf. Sanderson 1996: 178).

'Couldn't we live together, Brett? Couldn't we just live together?'
'I don't think so. I'd just *tromper* you with everybody. You couldn't stand it.'
'I stand it now.'
'That would be different. It's my fault, Jake. It's the way I'm made.'
(SAR: 48f)

Brett is fully aware of her sexual attraction over men and lives it to its fullest. Ever since she lost her one true love in the war, she does not believe in monogamous relationships and thus occupies herself with casual sexual affairs that momentarily give her happiness. In the short period of the novel (in one summer) Brett has various sexual affairs with different men, which may not be unusual today in the 21st century, but definitely was not common for women during the 1920s. Whereas at the beginning of the novel she goes to San Sebastian with Robert Cohn, whom she hardly knows, because she thinks "it would be good for him," (SAR: 73) she later in the novel occupies herself with her fiancé Mike Campbell, a Scottish bankrupt whose family owns a fortune. Her commitment with Mike, however, does not prevent her in the least from starting an affair with the 18-year old matador Pedro Romero. On the contrary, when Brett sees Romero for the first time, she is immediately impressed by

this beautiful young boy and cannot stop staring at his tight green trousers. Although she does not even know him and has never spoken a word to him, she already knows that she wants him badly:

‘I’m a goner. I’m mad about the Romero boy. I’m in love with him, I think.’

‘I wouldn’t be if I were you.’

‘I can’t help it. I’m a goner. It’s tearing me all up inside.’

‘Don’t do it.’

‘I can’t help it. I’ve never been able to help anything.’ (SAR: 159)

It soon becomes clear that her interest in the young bullfighter is sexual and not in the least a case of admiration of his extraordinary bullfighting skills, when he presents her with an ear from the bull he has just killed and Brett carelessly forgets it in a drawer in the hotel (cf. Nagel 1996: 97).

Although, however, all these men satisfy Brett’s needs for a short time, it seems that none of them can give her what she really wants and what she really needs. Whereas Mike Campbell, who knows of her sexual affairs with other men, tries to accept her the way she is, Robert Cohn cannot deal with the fact that their romantic getaway “didn’t mean anything” (SAR: 157) and is therefore lovesick throughout the novel. In fact, Cohn, although clearly rejected by Brett, follows her around “like a steer” (SAR: 123) and when he, a professional boxer, learns from her affair with the young bullfighter Pedro Romero, he first knocks Jake out, due to the fact that he was the one who introduced Brett to Romero in the first place. Afterward, he goes to Romero’s room where he “massacred the poor, bloody bullfighter” (SAR: 174).

Finally, Brett leaves for Madrid with Romero. This, however, turns out to be not the best thing to do. Romero, who is from traditional Spain, seems to be still clinging to the old set of values. Although completely attracted to Brett, he does not know what to do with such a modern, sexually liberated woman. “He wanted me to grow my hair out,” Brett later tells Jake as “he said it would make me more womanly” (SAR: 212). He also wants to marry her, to make an honest woman out of her, so that she won't leave him. But Brett, who is a modern, sexually liberated woman, is not ready to change. She even says herself that it is the way she’s made (cf. SAR: 49). Her sexual liberation and independence are more important to her than being “one of

these bitches that ruins children” (SAR: 213) and for the first time in the novel she does not only feel “miserable” (SAR: 21) or “like hell,” (SAR: 159) but it makes her proud to have decided “not to be a bitch” (SAR: 214).

And again she seeks the comfort of Jake whom she considers to be the only person she has got left in the world. Once again Jake gets her out of her miserable situation, although he will never get from her what he actually deserves. But with him, Brett can at least believe that everything could have been different:

‘Oh, Jake,’ Brett said, ‘we could have had such a damned good time together.’

Ahead was a mounted policeman in khaki directing traffic. He raised his baton. The car slowed suddenly pressing Brett against me.

‘Yes.’ I said. ‘Isn’t it pretty to think so?’ (SAR: 216)

5.4. Female Independence

Although Brett might appear and behave like a truly liberated woman of the 1920s, she is actually more like a transitional figure between the idealized woman men wish to marry and the modern, bold, and self-reliant flapper. Despite the fact that she is sexually liberated and also embraces the style of the New Woman, she has not managed to establish her own financial independence. On the contrary, she seems to have no problem at all about letting men pay for her. Ironically, Jake Barnes, who truly loves her, but who will never really be with her, most often picks her up and pays for her drinks (cf. Sanderson 1996: 178f)

‘She’s a drunk,’ I said. ‘She’s in love with Mike Campbell, and she’s going to marry him. He’s going to be rich as hell some day.’

‘I don’t believe she’ll ever marry him.’

‘Why not?’

[...]

‘I don’t believe she would marry anybody she didn’t love.’

‘Well,’ I said. ‘She’s done it twice.’

‘I don’t believe it.’ (SAR: 34)

In fact, Brett would not be able to finance her lifestyle which includes drinking continuously in bars, sleeping in hotels, and traveling across Europe as she pleases. Thus, she keeps the company of (wealthy) men, who pay for her and in return, she

offers them her body. Although she may seem like a modern, fearless, bold type of woman, she has to marry for money and not for love. According to Jake, she has done so twice (Ashley), although her second husband has treated her rather badly, and she will do it again (Campbell) whose family has a lot of money although she has not thought about her future husband for more than a week (cf. *SAR*: 55). Interestingly, however, Brett turns the count's offer down who would have given her 10, 000 Dollars to go with him to Biarritz.

'Has Brett any money?'

He turned to Mike.

'I shouldn't think so. She put up most of what I gave to old Montoya.'

'She hasn't any money with her?' I asked.

'I shouldn't think so. She never had any money. She gets five hundred quid a year and pays three hundred and fifty of it in interest to Jews.'
(*SAR*: 201)

6. *Save Me the Waltz* – An Analysis

6.1. Zelda Fitzgerald – A Biography

Whenever we read the work of women writers, we are tempted to go to the biography for illumination; when we read Zelda Fitzgerald, we feel the temptation as duty. (Gordon 1992: xv)

Zelda Sayre was born in Montgomery, Alabama, on July 24, 1900. She was the sixth and last child of Minerva ‘Minnie’ Machen and Anthony Sayre, a well-respected justice of the Supreme Court in Alabama. When Zelda was born, Minnie, who was a passionate reader, decided to name her last child after the gypsy queen Zelda she encountered in two of her favorite novels. Due to the fact that Zelda was the last of six children, and also much younger than her five siblings, she was overprotected by her mother and became a very spoiled and overindulged child (cf. Milford 2011: 7). In fact, Zelda, who was called Baby by both her parents throughout her life, was used to getting away with everything, and thus, was not afraid of behaving mischievously. One day she even went as far as to calling the fire department and telling them that a child was trapped on a roof top, unable to get down on her own. Thereafter, she quickly climbed up a ladder to the roof of her parents’ house where she waited to be rescued (cf. Milford 2011: 11).

In High School, which she entered in 1914, Zelda was better known for her pranks and her cheekiness, rather than for being an eager student. Although she was an avid reader and showed a certain talent in English and Math, she was so busy running wild in town that she neither had the time, nor interest for studying or doing homework. Her teachers were always convinced that she could have done much better if she had only cared a little more and had been better supervised by her parents. In her senior year of High School, Zelda, who was then already considered to be strikingly beautiful, was more than ever distracted by extracurricular activities, such as Country Club dances and parties which she frequently attended (cf. Milford 2011: 12-19).

In July 1918, shortly before her 18th birthday, Zelda met and fell in love with the army officer F. Scott Fitzgerald, who then was stationed temporarily in Camp Sheridan,

Montgomery. Although they were mutually attracted to each other, Zelda, who was then considered to be the one of the prettiest and most popular girls of Alabama, still dated other men. Finally, however, she agreed to marry Scott who “represented a world she did not know and could not hope to enter, much less possess, without him” (Milford 2011: 36) even though her parents were not really happy with this decision. They got married rather unceremoniously in New York, only a few days after Scott’s first novel *This Side of Paradise* was published and met with praise. With the publication of Scott’s first novel, however, not only his, but also Zelda’s world was forever altered. They soon became the symbolic couple of their age and were well-known and envied throughout the country due to their extravagant lifestyle which mainly consisted of partying wildly and drinking heavily (cf. Gordon 1992: xvi).

Zelda in particular, was acknowledged for her innovative and extravagant sense of fashion and style and soon became known as the American flapper, a role that she seemed to enjoy tremendously. In fact, the flapper became her alter ego and she was considered to be an expert on the subject matter. Indeed, interest in her was so great that she was even asked to write articles for popular magazines such as *Metropolitan Magazine*, *Esquire* or *Harper’s Bazaar* in which she expressed her own opinion towards this new type of woman to which she obviously belonged. “Where Do Flappers Go,” “Eulogy on the Flapper” and “What Became of the Flappers” are only some of her own writings which she herself produced in the 1920s (cf. Tavernier-Courbin 1979: 26):

The Flapper is deceased. Her outer accoutrements have bequeathed to several hundred girls’ schools throughout the country, to several thousand big-town shopgirls, always imitative of the several hundred girls’ schools, and to several million small-town belles always imitative of the big-town shopgirls via the “novelty shores” of their respective small towns. It is a great bereavement to me, thinking as I do that there will never be another product of circumstance to take the place of the dear departed. (Fitzgerald 1992: 391)

But although Zelda at first fully enjoyed her new life as Mrs. F. Scott Fitzgerald, she rather quickly realized that it was Scott’s world that dictated their lives. Their friends were his friends and their life revolved around the demands of Scott’s work and his success (cf. Tavernier-Courbin 1979: 25). There was not much room for Zelda’s own

ambitions which slowly, but surely, became to be a problem in their relationship. When in 1921 their first and only child, Frances Scott Fitzgerald, called Scottie, was born, Zelda was still unfulfilled with her new role as a mother, probably because Scottie's upbringing was mainly left to a nurse (cf. Milford 2011: 86).

Due to their ever-increasing financial problems, Scott and Zelda decided to permanently move to Europe in 1924. They eventually settled down in the French Riviera where Scott once again intended to fully concentrate on his third novel *The Great Gatsby*. Zelda, however, still did not know what to do with her time and, thus, often went to the beach alone. There, she got to know the French aviator Edouard Jozan with whom she went swimming in the afternoons. At first, nobody seemed to notice how much time they actually spent together, and especially Scott was happy that Zelda had finally found someone to help her pass the time (cf. Milford 2011: 108). But when their friendship became more and more intimate, it was soon assumed that they were in love with each other. They presumably had an affair, but the exact nature of their relationship, whether it was real or only imaginative, has never been revealed. Years later, Scott told a relative that in the summer of 1924 Zelda had informed him that she was in love with him and shortly afterward, asked him for a divorce. Furious, Scott refused to let her go that easily and demanded a confrontation with Jozan himself. However, Jozan never showed up and thus, the subject of the divorce was dropped forever (cf. Milford 2011: 112).

Scott and Zelda left the French Riviera behind and settled down in the French capital. There, Zelda, at the rather late age of twenty-seven, finally decided to build her own career and as a result, attempted to become a professional ballerina. She devoted her full time and energy to dancing, which soon became an unhealthy obsession for her. She trained madly, about ten hours a day, seven days a week and consequently had no time for anything else. Her behavior during this time became increasingly odd. She admitted to Scott that she heard voices talking to her and in 1930 she suffered her first mental breakdown that required professional help (cf. Brody 2012: 40). Zelda was committed to the Malmaison Clinic in the outskirts of Paris where she was eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia. Consequently, she had to stop dancing and from then on was "in and out of mental hospitals, in and

out of lucidity and in and out of crushing misery” (Gordon 1992: xvi) until her death in 1948.

6.2. An Introduction

After Zelda’s first mental breakdown in 1930, she was in and out of psychiatric clinics for the rest of her life. Following her first stay at the Malmaison Clinic in France where she was probably misdiagnosed as being schizophrenic, she was admitted to Prangins Mental Hospital in Switzerland where she seemed to make great progress. After her release in 1931, however, she again suffered from painful eczema as well as from hysteria and checked herself in to the mental health clinic at John Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. It was there that she found the time and energy to work on her first and only novel, an autobiographical account, which she eventually called *Save Me the Waltz* (cf. Brody 2012: 43f). In fact, her doctors encouraged her to write about two hours a day, which Zelda took quite seriously. She worked furiously on her novel in her spare time and after only two months, she finished her first draft and proudly wired it to Scott’s longtime publisher and friend, Maxwell Perkins, before telling Scott about her personal achievement (cf. Milford 2011: 213; Gordon 1992: xx):

“Scott, being absorbed in his own [novel], has not seen it, so I am completely in the dark as to its possible merits, but naturally, terribly anxious that you should like it....As soon as I hear that you have safely received the copy, I want to mail the ms. to Scott, so could you wire?”
(Zelda Fitzgerald in Milford 2011: 216)¹⁶

When Scott, however, learned that Zelda had sent her novel to Perkins without his permission, he became quite furious due to various reasons. Firstly, he felt that Zelda revealed too much of his own personal life as well as of their marriage problems in the novel. Secondly, he was angered because she had used material which he himself had planned to embed into his fourth novel *Tender Is the Night*, which he would go on to complete two years later, in 1934. Consequently, Fitzgerald, who feared that Zelda’s novel would damage his reputation as a serious novelist, wrote to Perkins that he still needed to wait with the publication until the novel was revised by

¹⁶ taken from a letter to Maxwell Perkins, postmarked March 12, 1932

him more carefully (cf. Bruccoli 1992: 3). Consequently, he told his wife that she needed to once again work on her novel, but this time with his assistance. Due to the fact that the original manuscripts of the novel are unable to be found, it is not clear to what extent Scott actually interfered. Nonetheless, it is known that Zelda's original draft was much more personal and drew even more transparently upon their private lives than the novel which ultimately was published. In fact, Zelda initially even named her male protagonist, Amory Blaine, after the semi-autobiographical character of Scott's first novel *This Side of Paradise*. Scott, who felt deeply betrayed by his wife's invasion of his writing territory, forced her to change the name of her protagonist to David Knight (cf. Milford 2011: 217; Bruccoli 1992: 4).

Although Scott sent a letter to Perkins on March 25 telling him that Zelda's novel would only require slight modifications and was in general a fine novel, he three days later informed him that the whole middle part of *Save Me the Waltz* needed to be rewritten. More than a month later, he finally reported that "Zelda's novel is now good, improved in every way. It is new. She had largely eliminated the speak-easy-nights-and-our-trip-to-Paris atmosphere" (Fitzgerald 1963b: 226f)¹⁷. Despite these comments, he also warned Perkins that if he thought the novel was any good, he should not praise Zelda too much as he feared that in the end she might get hurt (cf. Bruccoli 1992: 4).

In October 1932, *Save Me the Waltz* was finally published by Scribner's but it sold rather badly and was also met with mixed criticism by reviewers (cf. Milford 2011: 262). It was only after the publication of Scott's fourth novel in 1934, *Tender Is the Night*, which he finished nine years after the publication of *The Great Gatsby*, that Zelda's novel was of any interest for the critics as it was then, and today still is regarded to be a companion piece to her husband's novel (cf. Tavernier-Courbin 1979: 22). Only in 1953, when an unprecedented interest in the Fitzgeralds' lives and works arose and a new edition of *Save Me the Waltz* appeared in Great Britain, was Zelda's novel finally met with enthusiasm (cf. Moore 2001: Introduction).

It is important to note that Zelda's novel is not in the least a companion piece to F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *Tender Is the Night*. Although they may have drawn upon

¹⁷ taken from a letter to Maxwell Perkins, Baltimore, before May 2, 1932

similar material, namely upon their own lives, Zelda's novel is a revealing portrait written by "the American girl living the American Dream and [who] became made within it" (Milford 2011: xii). Indeed, in her semi-autobiographical novel, Zelda Fitzgerald provides us with a very personal insight into her life, her feelings and what was beneath the superficial glitter of the 1920s, even though she changed certain events for her own good.

6.2.1. Summary of the Plot

Whereas F. Scott Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby*, as well as Ernest Hemingway in *The Sun Also Rises* both chose male narrators for their novels who recount the events of one summer in retrospective, Zelda Fitzgerald chose a rather different approach for telling her semi-autobiographical novel, *Save Me the Waltz*. An omniscient third person narrator takes the reader chronologically from the childhood and marriage of the female heroine Alabama Beggs through her life as the wife of a famous artist who eventually tries to build her own career as a professional dancer. The novel is divided into four chapters, each of which recounts one important episode of her life.

In the first chapter we are already introduced to Alabama Beggs, Zelda Fitzgerald's fictional counterpart, who lives with her parents Mille and 'Judge' Beggs, as well as with her two older sisters Dixie and Joan in the American South. Due to the fact that Alabama, just like Zelda, is the youngest child of the family, she is, after both her sisters get engaged, the last to live in the house with her parents. One day, however, she meets and falls in love with twenty-two year old military officer David Knight, who attempts to be a professional painter. They finally get married and she moves to New York, where David enjoys an extraordinary degree of success. After their first and only child Bonnie is born, they permanently move to France, where the major part of the novel, the whole second chapter, takes place. At first, they settle down in the French Riviera where Alabama spends a lot of time alone on the beach due to the fact that David tries to fully concentrate on his work. She eventually gets to know the French aviator Jacques Chevre-Feuille with whom Alabama, just like Zelda, presumably has an affair.

In the third chapter, Alabama and David are living in Paris where they are constantly invited to lavish parties, and David starts an affair with a famous actress. Unhappy with her life, Alabama tries to be the master of her own destiny and starts to take ballet classes in the hope of becoming a professional dancer. Although no one seems to believe in her talent as she is already 27 years old, she devotes herself completely to ballet, eventually achieving success. For approximately three years she does nothing but train, and is finally offered to dance her solo debut in the opera *Faust* in Naples.

Whereas Zelda turned down a once in a lifetime opportunity to dance in Italy for unknown reasons, her fictional heroine embraces her luck and moves to Naples. Thus, in the last chapter of the novel we are provided with an insight into Alabama's life as a professional dancer in Italy, where she lives alone in poverty without David and Bonnie, who in the meantime have moved to Switzerland. When Bonnie goes to visit Alabama, she falls ill and is disgusted by Alabama's poor living conditions, and thus returns early to her father. When David is informed that Alabama's father is dying, he tries to get in touch with his wife but learns that she has fallen seriously ill with blood poisoning. He immediately leaves for Naples, where he stands by her side whilst she is operated on. Although the doctors manage to save her foot, they inform her that she will never be able to dance again. As soon as Alabama is well, they leave for America where they arrive just in time before her father dies.

6.3. Alabama's Lifestyle

Although Zelda Fitzgerald wrote and completed her only novel *Save Me the Waltz* in 1932, she mainly portrayed her life as it was in the 1920s, undertaking only minor changes concerning her dancing career. However, due to the fact that her husband himself helped to revise her novel and also deleted entire sections that he considered to be too revealing of their troublesome marriage, we do not get such a full insight into Alabama's and thus Zelda's life as we might have done if her husband had not interfered to such a great extent. Thus, their speakeasy nights, Scott's increasing alcohol addiction, as well as their growing financial problems hardly appear in the novel at all, and therefore cannot be analyzed thoroughly in this chapter. Despite these limitations however, Zelda's semi-autobiographical novel provides a picture of

what life was like in the 1920s for a woman who was married to a famous artist, but ultimately tried to establish her own identity. *Save Me the Waltz* is thus a good choice for an analysis of women's lives during the 1920s.

Interestingly the novel, which takes us chronologically from Alabama's childhood in the American South, through adulthood and her career as a ballerina and physical illness, begins and ends with her father, Austin 'Judge' Beggs, who to Alabama is like a "living fortress," (Fitzgerald. *Save Me the Waltz*: 1) a safe haven who protects her and takes care of her. He is a strict, traditional Southern man, who, although he has not an enormous amount of money, enjoys an outstanding reputation due to his profession as a judge. When his only son dies at a rather early age, he does not know how to pay for the funeral, but still tries to provide all his children with what they need in life as long as they respect his name, because "it's all they will have in the world" (*SMW*: 13). Alabama, however, who as a child is considered to be the "wildest of the Beggs" and a "thoroughbred," (*SMW*: 28) does not yet appreciate her father's world and thus, often messes with his reputation. As the youngest member of the Beggs family, Alabama is particularly spoiled by her mother, Millie, and is therefore used to having her own way without having to deal with any consequences. She is rebellious, often gets into trouble, wants to wear shorter dresses than her sisters, and does not always respect her father's orders. As a child, she wants to be liberated from her father's strains because "her father didn't know what she really was like, she thought" (*SMW*: 20) something she will later regret deeply.

By the age of fourteen, Alabama clearly differs from other girls her age, as she already uses rouge and make-up on a daily basis, which she borrows secretly from her older sisters Dixie and Joan. She even spends the little money she has on perfume, which costs "six dollars an ounce" (*SMW*: 24) and thus, draws a lot of attention to herself. At the age of 17, Alabama is considered to be a beautiful southern belle, which she is very much aware of. Pursued by several young officers who are stationed near her hometown in Alabama, she enjoys her reputation as being the most popular girl in town and goes out on dates with several different men at a time, including a married man:

‘Little lady, do you think you could live on five thousand a year?’ [...] ‘I could, but I don’t want to.’ ‘Then why did you kiss me?’ ‘I had never kissed a man with a moustache before.’ ‘That’s hardly a reason – ‘ ‘No. But it’s as good a reason as many people would have to offer for going into convents.’ (SMW: 29)

Although her father obviously disapproves of her unladylike behavior, Alabama is wild, full of life, and eager to experiment with things unknown, which is why she is rather rapidly considered to be vulgar and indecent, compared to other girls. Like trophies, she proudly collects the colorful insignia officers give her from their uniforms and because of her popularity, she has far more than any other girl in town. As time progresses, Alabama feels more and more trapped in the traditional old Southern world and thus, is eager to finally leave it behind when she meets and falls in love with the officer David Knight, an aspiring painter from the North, whom she eventually marries. They first move to New York where Alabama is completely fascinated with her new life as Mrs. David Knight. There, David enjoys a remarkable degree of success and thus, they rather quickly live an extravagant life that includes staying at fancy hotels or rented apartments, going to lavish parties, and traveling across Europe and America, never staying anywhere for long. David and Alabama (The Knights) belong to the upper-class and are celebrated and adored throughout the country – “It says in the paper we’re famous” (SMW: 43) – Alabama proudly says to David and still cannot believe her own luck.

It was the biggest bed that both of them together could imagine. It was broader than it was long, and included all the exaggerated qualities of their combined disrespect for tradition in beds. There were shining black knobs and white enamel swoops like cradle rockers, and specially made covers trailing in disarray off one side on to the floor. (SMW: 43)

All of a sudden, Alabama, the former southern belle, can buy everything she ever wished for, which she clearly enjoys. Whereas before, Alabama’s clothes were carefully sewn by her mother, she can now buy the most elaborate and beautiful dresses, which she likes to show off at parties. Money and ways of spending it become a major part of her life, which also leads to several disputes with her parents

and sisters. However, due to her and David's enormous expenditures, the Knight's money disappears as quickly as it arrives and they repeatedly have to borrow money from David's art dealer. When Alabama's parents come to visit their youngest daughter in their new home in Connecticut, David does not even have enough money to pay for the taxi, of which the Judge naturally takes care of. As soon as her parents learn about their extravagant lifestyle that includes drinking, partying and spending money irrationally on things they do not need, they cannot conceal their disappointment in their daughter and of what has become of her. Consequently, they angrily decide to leave earlier than expected. Alabama knows that "it will never be the same" (*SMW*: 56) and regretfully longs for the protective shelter her father provided her with, which she no longer has.

Shortly before this incident, however, Alabama discovered that she is pregnant, but seems to be completely overwhelmed with the situation. "We should ask somebody," (*SMW*: 46) David suggests, but due to the fact that Alabama is neither on good terms with her sisters, nor with her parents, she for the first time is completely on her own. Furthermore, all their famous artist friends seem to know nothing about that subject matter:

Almost everybody had theories: that the Longacre Pharmacies carried the best gin in town; that anchovies sobered you up; that you could tell wood alcohol by the smell. Everybody knew where to find the blank verse in Cabell and how to get seats for the Yale game, that Mr. Fish inhabited the aquarium, and that there were others besides the sergeant ensconced in the Central Park Police Station – but nobody knew how to have a baby. (*SMW*: 46)

Without giving much further information about the birth of the child, the novel continues when their child, Bonnie, is already two years old. The young family, as well as Bonnie's nanny, leave for France where they for the first time try to start over. However, their life on the French Riviera does not seem to differ greatly from their old life in the United States. David and Alabama still spend an irrationally enormous amount of money on things they do not need, like "a cardboard baby-nurse for Bonnie, a second-hand Marmon, a Picasso etching, a white satin dress to house a beaded parrot, a yellow chiffon dress to snare a field of ragged-robins" (*SMW*: 58) and much more. Due to the fact that David seems to be having difficulties returning

to his former success, he spends more and more time working on his paintings and Alabama grows increasingly bored. Slowly but surely, she realizes that although she may live the life many girls dream of, she misses having something of her own in life that satisfies her needs.

6.4. Female Sexuality

Just like in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, the changing attitudes and morals of women in the 1920s towards sexuality can also be witnessed in *Save Me the Waltz*. Already in her youth, Alabama Beggs is not afraid of kissing men to whom she is not engaged, and also later as a married woman, she still likes to flirt extensively with other men and eventually starts a love affair with a French aviator. However, it is never mentioned how far Alabama actually goes with the young officers stationed near her hometown when she is about 17 years old. Due to the fact that she generally was a very bold and curious girl who liked to be rebellious and explore unknown things, it can be assumed that she may also have experimented in terms of sex.

He told Alabama about the girl in the Hotel Astor the night he had been so drunk. 'Oh, God!' She said to herself. 'Well, I can't help it.' She thought of the dead mechanic, of Felix, of the faithful dog-lieutenant. She hadn't been too good herself. She said to David that it didn't matter: that she believed that one person should only be faithful to another when they felt it. She said it was probably her fault for not making him care more. (SMW: 40)

Likewise, later in the novel when Alabama gets to know the French aviator Jacques Chevre-Feuille with whom she assumes a love affair, the exact nature of their liaison remains a mystery which may, however, be due to F. Scott Fitzgerald's interference in his wife's novel. What is, however, known for sure is that Alabama and Jacques are deeply in love and also feel sexually attracted to each other which is shown when he "[draws] her body against him till she felt the blades of his bones carving her own" and "she [feels] him naked underneath the starched linen" (SMW: 91). When David, however, becomes aware of his wife's doings, he is furious and threatens to leave her for good. Alabama even considers to "tell him" (SMW: 96) of her feelings for the French aviator but before she can do so, Jacques, who regards this to be "unwise"

(SMW: 96) departs for Indo-China, leaving behind only a photograph and a letter written in French which Alabama cannot read, and which she instead tears into a thousand pieces. Similar to Daisy Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*, Alabama consequently retreats back into her unhappy life with David but “whatever it was that she wanted from Jacques, Jacques took it with him to squander on the Chinese” (SMW: 101). After this incident, Alabama and David decide move to Paris, turning their back on the French Riviera and on what happened there. From then on, however, it seems that their marriage will never be the same.

In the French capital, David and Alabama become part of the group of British and American expatriates and hop from one party to the next. There, David starts having a sexual affair with the famous actress Gabrielle Gibbs, due to the fact that he needs “new emotional stimulus” (SMW: 104). Although Alabama acts like she does not care, she gets furious when she overhears her husband saying to Gabrielle that he heard that she has “the most beautiful blue veins all over [her] body” (SMW: 112) and that her breasts “were like marble dessert – a sort of blancmange” (SMW: 113). In fact, she is so angered that she cannot stop looking or thinking about them, and is still crying when David comes home the next day.

‘Poor girl,’ he said, ‘I understand. It must be awful to just waiting around eternally.’

‘Aw, shut up!’ she answered ungratefully. She lay silent for a long time.

‘David,’ she said sharply.

‘Yes.’

‘I am going to be as famous a dancer as there are blue veins over the white marble of Miss Gibbs.’

‘Yes, dear,’ agreed David noncommittally. (SMW: 121f.)

6.5. Female Independence

Already as a young girl, Alabama, the youngest of the Beggs children, dreams of being totally independent herself one day in this “man’s world” (SMW: 82). When her older sister Dixie, a society editor of the town paper, travels to New York completely on her own after finding out about her former fiancé’s death, Alabama starts planning her own future:

'I want to go to New York, Mama,' said Alabama as they read Dixie's letter.

'What on earth for?'

'To be my own boss.' (SMW: 14f)

Whereas her older sister already has a job before getting married, from the start of her liaison to David Knight, Alabama is nothing more than the partner of a famous painter, an appendage to his success and already then is referred to as "Miss Alabama Nobody" (SMW: 36). Although she may have enjoyed being David's princess at the beginning of their relationship, David wishes to "keep [her] shut forever in an ivory tower" (SMW: 39) for his private delectation, she, as time progresses increasingly attempts to establish something of her own.

Especially when living in France where David dedicates most of his time on working on his frescoes, leaving Alabama by herself, she does not know what to do with herself or how to make time pass. Due to the fact, however, that she was raised in a traditional Southern family where women were not necessarily expected to work in the household, or to raise children on their own without external help, Alabama does not have many skills she can rely on. Thus, when she one day tries to make a dress but completely fails at the task, she realizes that she needs to have something of her own which she is actually good at and slowly but surely, Alabama begins to blame David for the monotony in her life (cf. SMW: 93).

In Paris, Alabama's situation begins to deteriorate. Although she initially likes going to fancy parties in her beautiful dresses where almost everyone is famous, she suddenly no longer feels comfortable in the company of people who only seem to talk about their work and their success. Thus, due to her lack of accomplishment, Alabama increasingly feels excluded:

"Comparing herself with Miss Axton's elegance, she hated her body – her arms reminded her of a Siberian branch railroad. Compared to Miss Douglas' elimination, her Patou dress felt too big along the seams. Miss Douglas made her feel that there was a cold cream deposit at the neckline. (SMW: 109)

She is fed up with being a 'nobody' in this glamorous world and when she hears people talking about a famous dancing instructor in Paris, she finally decides to take

matters into her own hands and goes to the dancing studio. She wants to become a professional dancer, a passion she already discovered as a child. But when she actually appears for the first time in the studio, the Russian dance instructor called Madame disdainfully says:

‘So my friends tell me you want to dance? Why? You have friends and money already.’ The black eyes moved in frank childish inspection over Alabama’s body, loose and angular as those silver triangles in an orchestra – over her broad shoulder blades and the imperceptible concavity of her long legs, fused together and controlled by the resilient strength of her thick neck. Alabama’s body was like a quill.[...] ‘You are too old. [...] Why have you come to me so late?’ ‘I didn’t know before. I was too busy living.’ (SMW: 125f)

No one seems to understand why a woman of Alabama’s social status wants to do something like that when she “already [has] a husband” (SMW: 146). Alabama, however, for the first time in her life feels that she has the chance to actually accomplish something on her own, and wants to “drive the devils that had driven her” (SMW: 128). Thus, although having no one who supports her, she clings on to her dream and obsessively trains long hours every day, seven days a week, pushing her body beyond its limits.

Whereas David at first seems to be glad of Alabama’s absorption at the studio as it means that he can work more thoroughly on his paintings, he eventually cannot deal with the fact that his wife neglects everything else in life, most importantly him. He does not take her, nor her work seriously and thus, not only tries to persuade her to go to parties with him, although for Alabama this would mean that she could not dance the next day, but he also smokes when watching her performing at the studio:

‘You’re so thin,’ said David patronizingly. ‘There’s no use killing yourself. I hope that you realize that the biggest difference in the world is between the amateur and the professional in the arts.’ ‘You might mean yourself and me –’ she said thoughtfully. (SMW: 153)

As time in Paris progresses, and the Knight’s marriage deteriorates, it seems that David and Alabama live in two different worlds. In fact, they drift apart even more when Alabama accepts the offer to go to Naples to dance her debut in the opera *Faust*. Completely on her own, without David and Bonnie, and without the

advantages of being married to a famous artist, Alabama leaves for Naples, where she lives in rather poor living conditions. The bath is dirty and smells of “damp and urine,” (*SMW*: 183) her only meals are cabbage three times a day and a glass of Amalfi wine. There is almost no furniture in her room, but this does not seem to bother her. In fact, whereas money and ways of spending it used to be the most important aspect in her life, she now, for the first time, seems to have something more essential to cling to.

In fact, when her daughter Bonnie comes to visit her and complains about the poor living conditions, there is no car, but only “a flea bitten horse-cab,” (*SMW*: 181) Alabama gets quite angry at her spoiled daughter and tries to explain to her to “get things like that out of [her] head” because she “will have to work” to finally get what she wants (*SMW*: 182) – something her own mother used to say to her. Presumably, Alabama reacts this way because she wants to protect her own child from what happened to her. It seems that Alabama, who was once referred to as a princess, can no longer identify with her former lifestyle.

At the height of her dancing career, however, Alabama is forced to stop living her dream due to a blood infection caused by a dancing shoe. As a consequence, Alabama’s dream is ultimately shattered. Not only is her marriage left in pieces, but also her quest for significance in life is aborted. When her father dies, she, David and their daughter Bonnie once again return to the South as a family and try to rescue “what’s left” (*SMW*: 202) of their marriage although there seems to be little hope to a better future.

Conclusion

The 1920s, the golden era that was shaped by a World War and the Great Depression, were doubtlessly an age of momentous change. In these ten years, particularly women's lives and rights changed like never before. Not only did women join the American workforce which had previously been unheard of, but they also gained the right to vote and thus, for the first time in American history, they were officially equal to men. Young women in particular wanted much more from life than merely to fulfill traditional roles as good mothers and housewives. This led them to demonstrate their new sense of self through the way in which they dressed and behaved. A name for this new type of woman that emerged in the 1920s and represented a dramatic break with American values and ethics was found: the flapper.

The flapper was usually a young woman between the ages of 18 and 25 who distinguished herself significantly from women of previous generations in terms of clothes, hairdo and behavior: she smoked, consumed alcoholic beverages in public, talked in slang or used swearwords, kissed men she was not engaged to, and generally experimented in fields which a proper lady before simply did not do.

As discussed in the second chapter, American literature of the 1920s also underwent an enormous amount of change, due to the fact that writers experimented much more in viewpoint, topic, theme, and style than writers of previous generations had done. Furthermore, most writers witnessed the societal as well as cultural changes of this post-war era and thus, incorporated what they perceived into their works. Writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway in particular, but also ethnic and political minorities such as African Americans as well as women, were unprecedentedly acknowledged for their works in that short window of time.

Thus, the aim of this thesis was to give an insight into this feminization of American culture and simultaneously analyze three different novels which are all set in the Roaring Twenties in order to ascertain whether their fictional female characters also belonged to this new type of woman or whether they were merely products of the

(male) writer's imagination. In order to do so, the chosen novels, namely F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, as well as Zelda Fitzgerald's *Save Me the Waltz*, were analyzed in terms of female lifestyle, independence and sexuality because flappers mainly differed in these categories from her Victorian predecessors.

Already in the first novel that was analyzed, *The Great Gatsby*, we are presented with three rather different woman characters: Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker and Myrtle Wilson, who all seem to be products of the 1920s, at least to some extent. However, Daisy Buchanan, the female protagonist of the novel, is the least representative of this new generation of women because although she may have dressed like a flapper, and also drank alcohol and smoked, she does not have the courage to be bold and self-sufficient, and finally retreats back into her unhappy life with her unfaithful husband Tom Buchanan. Although she could have chosen to be happy in life by being together with the man she loves, namely Jay Gatsby, she instead decides to stay with her rich and powerful husband who provides her with financial status and security.

As opposed to Daisy, Myrtle Wilson, the working-class sexualized woman, can be referred to as a 'wanna-be flapper' due to the fact that she tries to mimic the flappers she admires in magazines such as *Town Tattle*, but does not actually have the possibility to be one. For Myrtle, the only escape from her unhappy marriage is provided through a liaison with the upper-class beau Tom Buchanan, who gives her at least an insight into the wealthy world which her own husband cannot allow her. Needless to say, she is fully dependent on him and has no possibility to establish an identity of her own.

Whereas Daisy's, as well as Myrtle's social and economic status is solely provided by the men they choose to marry, Jordan Baker, the professional golf champion, manages to establish a career of her own and is, thus, completely independent from men. In fact, Jordan, with her boyish, athletic looks is the only woman in the three novels who actually is financially independent. As a successful sportswoman, she does not need a man who provides her with money or status, but is a self-sufficient, modern woman and thus, can be considered a flapper.

Brett Ashley, the *femme-fatale* in Ernest Hemingway's first novel *The Sun Also Rises* also embraces the qualities of a bold, modern and daring woman: she smokes, drinks enormous amounts of alcohol, has extramarital affairs and also dresses rather provocatively. However, she does not seem to be merely a flapper, but she takes the trend even further. Instead of wearing typical flapper clothes that were fashionable in the 1920s like a short, waistless dress, a cloche-hat and a bob, Brett rather favors an even more boyish and androgynous look that includes wearing a man's haircut and a man's hat, but also emphasizes her womanly curves. Although her looks and behavior were very popular with men, she arouses a great deal of curiosity with other women because she clearly differed from the typical woman of that time.

More importantly, however, Brett significantly distinguishes herself from the other female characters analyzed in this thesis particularly in terms of sexuality. Whereas Daisy, Myrtle and Alabama also engage in extramarital affairs with another man, Brett assumes several affairs at a time, also with a man half her age, as she is unwilling to ignore her own sexual needs and desires ever since her first love cruelly perished in the Great War. But although, however, Brett might appear and behave like a truly liberated woman of the 1920s, she has not managed to establish her own financial independence, but rather has to marry for money in order to be able to finance her extravagant lifestyle.

Alabama Beggs, the fictional counterpart of the American flapper herself, Zelda Fitzgerald, probably had the looks and behavior of a flapper, although it is not explicitly revealed in the novel. On the contrary, Zelda, in her semi-autobiographical novel *Save Me the Waltz* which is the only novel that was written by a woman, rather successfully displays the quest of an American flapper who, despite living a comfortable life as the wife of a famous artist that includes spending money, partying and having fun, ultimately tries to have an identity of her own, but similar to the author, she fails in doing so.

After having analyzed five different (semi-) fictional woman characters of the 1920s, I personally conclude that something as the flapper definitely existed not only in real life but also in literature. However, I agree with Zelda Fitzgerald when she describes in her article "Eulogy on the Flapper" that the flapper was actually a code for living

well that most importantly was based on having fun (cf. Fitzgerald 1992: 392). It was an idea to be emulated throughout the 1920s and thousands of women tried hard to imitate what they saw in movies and magazines, and also in literature. They cut their hair short, wore short, sack-like flapper dresses, rolled down their stockings, smoked, drank alcohol, and most importantly enjoyed life. Thus, although in the novel the only 'real' flapper was Jordan and maybe Alabama, which is hard to tell due to the lack of information, they all seem to have been aware of the current flapper fashion, just like their authors were who brilliantly drew upon what they perceived in real life. Thus, it can be concluded that the flapper was real, not merely a male fiction, but she was rather a concept that all the characters that were analyzed in this thesis try to imitate, at least to some extent.

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- p. 1 Living life on the edge, two young flappers demonstrate the Charleston on the roof of Chicago's Sherman Hotel, December 11, 1926. found in (Zeitiz 2006: xii). © Underwood & Underwood/CORBIS.
- p. 2 The well-dressed women of 1918. found in (Gourley 2008: 8). Library of Congress.

List of Abbreviations

- GG *The Great Gatsby*
- SAR *Fiesta: The Sun Also Rises*
- SMW *Save Me The Waltz*