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**Literary Work of Zelda Fitzgerald
as a Way of Self-Expression:
Autobiographical Aspects in Her Work**

Literární tvorba Zeldy Fitzgerald jako způsob
sebevyjádření: autobiografické prvky v jejím díle

Diplomová práce

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INTRODUCTION

The American literary colossus Francis Scott Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda astounded contemporary New York society, became the icons of the Jazz Age, and have continued to symbolize the boisterous decade up to now. Literary scholars paid great attention to the figure of Scott Fitzgerald, with regard to his personality, private life, and literary work. Contrarily, Zelda Fitzgerald remained to be perceived as a “complement” to her more famous husband. Not only was her status underrated as the one of a writer’s muse, but she has also been blamed for giving rise to Scott Fitzgerald’s excessive use of alcohol, the reckless frittering away, and his general decline for a long time.

It was not until the 1970s when the approach of literary scholars, and probably of the public as well, to Zelda began to transform thanks to the publication of bibliographies centring right on Zelda and not primarily on her husband. In the thesis, I drew especially on the influential biography of Zelda by Nancy Milford and the biographies by Kendall Taylor, Sally Cline, and Linda Wagner-Martin. Several biographical novels about Zelda’s life were written during the past few years, too, the most famous of those being probably Gilles Leroy’s *Alabama Song* (2007) and Therese Anne Fowler’s *Z: A Novel of Zelda Fitzgerald* (2013). As a result of the increased attention to Zelda, her literary work began to arouse the interest of scholars as well.

Though there is still a gap in the scholarly research on Zelda’s writings, several articles about them have been published over the past decades, especially in *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*. The scholars have especially been interested in the way in which Zelda’s writings reflect her private life. For much as Scott Fitzgerald insisted on keeping the autobiographical material for himself, Zelda was inspired by their common experience when writing to a great extent as well. This thesis aims to explore these autobiographical aspects and seeks to indicate that it was crucial for Zelda to express herself via art.

The first part of the thesis delineates Zelda’s family background, her growing up in the American South, and her volatile life with Scott Fitzgerald. The contrast between the environment in which Zelda was born and the one she moved into with Scott has always been significant for her—on one hand, Zelda used to dream of living in a pulsating city and becoming a celebrity there, on the other hand, she missed her hometown and was

aware of the fact she did not quite fit into the Northern society, at least at the beginning. The nostalgic mood stemming from her childhood memories and later from the happy memories of her life with Scott importantly manifests itself in her writings.

The second chapter focuses on the influence Zelda had on Scott's writings and on her own literary ambitions. Trapped in the status of Scott's muse and the label "amateur," she was forced to vindicate her writing and the autobiographical material which she intended to incorporate into her work. It should be noted that the influence on literary work in the case of Scott and Zelda was mutual. Even though their relationship deteriorated throughout the years, perhaps to the point that they eventually "ruined themselves," as Scott once noted,¹ they mutually enriched each other in a way that continues to fascinate readers and scholars alike.

The next part of the thesis constitutes a theoretical background for the key terms. I present the definitions of "autobiography" and "autobiographical novel" and describe the crucial characteristics and the main differences between the terms. I also outline the significant autobiographical works throughout the history of American literature, in which autobiographical writing has a long tradition.

The central part of the thesis analyses Zelda's only finished novel *Save Me the Waltz*. The novel is deeply based on Zelda's personal experience, as it reflects her attitude, feelings of both happiness and frustration during her life with Scott, and her views on the relationship with her husband and her daughter. Written in a frantic effort during approximately two months, the novel depicts Zelda's immense endeavour to utilise her artistic talent and become a professional ballerina at a later age. It seems that after the breakdown when ballet was passé, Zelda shifted her artistic ambitions towards a different direction and yearned for expressing herself through literature.

The chapter about Zelda's short stories intends to outline a way in which the stories reflect Zelda's ideas of flapperdom and the role of women in the society. Once again the stories draw on her life with Scott. Having been the embodiment of a flapper, Zelda was in the right position to comment on the behaviour of contemporary flappers and the

¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald to Zelda Fitzgerald, Summer 1930, in *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Kathy W. Barks (New York: Scribner, 2019), 84.

inauthentic “pseudoflappers” and to point out the reasons that might have led women to lifelong frustration, or even doom.

The last but one chapter focuses on Zelda’s play *Scandalabra*, which did not achieve great success at the time of its publication. It reflects the stage of Zelda’s life in which she began to be disillusioned with the lavish lifestyle and realized that fame is very fleeting. For that reason, she decided to write “a farce fantasy” that would comment on the superficiality of people with high social status and the flaws of the rich.

Finally, the last chapter addresses Zelda’s unfinished novel *Caesar’s Things*, which has never been published and exists only in the form of a manuscript deposited at Princeton University Library. I contacted the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections and managed to access the manuscript of the novel. It might serve as a useful material when investigating Zelda’s religious devotion during the last stage of her life, as it centres around the abandonment of superficial matters and aligning oneself with God and the things that are truly important in life. I try to suggest a way in which the novel reflects Zelda’s contemplation of her private life.

1. ZELDA FITZGERALD'S BIOGRAPHY

1.1 Family background

Zelda (Sayre) Fitzgerald was born in Montgomery, Alabama on July 24 in 1900 as the sixth child of Minerva Buckner "Minnie" (Machen) Sayre and Anthony Dickinson Sayre, both of whom came from the Southern background.²

Apparently, Zelda's mother was the one from whom Zelda inherited her artistic talents. In her teenage years, Minnie Machen was known to be a keen reader of fiction, poetry, and also encyclopedias. She produced fine poems and short sketches which were frequently published in the local newspapers, she sang soprano, played the piano, and organized small performances in the community theatre. Her ambitions and dreams were directed especially at theatre and studying elocution was supposed to help Minnie on her way upon the stage. Zelda's mother was even offered a role in a theatre company. However, her father's discovery tore the dream up. Since Machen resolutely disapproved of Minnie's ambitions, he furiously told her that he would rather see her dead than on the stage.³

Not surprisingly, Minnie never forgot this grievance. As Minnie told Zelda years later, her disappointment got even bigger when a Kentucky publisher suggested her writing a novel at a time when it was too late for Minnie, for by then she was looking after five children and had enough free time to write some poems or short stories at best. Overall, Minnie's artistic ambitions were replaced by the role of a wife of the respectable Judge Anthony Sayre and a mother of several children.⁴

Anthony Sayre was an honourable, formidable man with a lot of wit. His intelligence came through already when he was a student. After graduation from Roanoke College in Virginia, he began teaching but eventually decided to pursue law and became a judge. He married Minnie Sayre in 1884. At that time, Anthony did not have many possessions, and thus he probably married above himself economically, although he may not have married above himself socially. Despite their very different personalities,

² See Nancy Milford, *Zelda: A Biography* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2011), 7.

³ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 5.

⁴ See Sally Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2003), 19.

the couple seemed to get on well. Minnie's exuberance was balanced out by Judge's calmness and dignity and vice versa.⁵

Minnie Sayre gave birth to six children. Thirteen months after the wedding, Sayres' first child, Marjorie, was born. The following year Daniel was born, unfortunately, the child suffered from spinal meningitis and died at eighteen months. Minnie Sayre experienced an emotional breakdown; she shut herself away in a room and refused to speak to anyone or eat. Ultimately, the doctor persuaded her to pull herself together and take care of her small daughter. Two more daughters were born to the Sayres, Rosalind, and Clothilde, and a son Anthony, Jr. The household grew in size even more as Anthony's mother Musidora, his bachelor brother Reid, and Minnie's sister Marjorie came to live with them. Minnie got tired of household duties and necessities of daily life, moreover, she was very often ill during the pregnancies.⁶

When Zelda was born in 1900 at home on South Street as Sayres' sixth child; Minnie was nearly forty years old and Anthony was forty-two. At that time, Zelda's oldest sister Marjorie was fourteen, Rosalind ten, Clothilde nine, and Anthony (Tony), Jr. seven. Zelda got her name after a gypsy queen in a novel—Minnie Sayre was still interested in literature a lot. Zelda was her mother's darling from the very beginning. In fact, she was called "Baby" by both her parents her whole life. She took after the Machen side of the family and looked like an angel with her golden hair and blue eyes, especially in contrast to the other children who had dark hair. Having been the youngest child, Minnie tolerated her almost everything and pardoned her all the time. Allegedly, she nursed her until Zelda was four years old.⁷

The household must have been lively for the children's upbringing was indulgent. Judge Sayre was more concerned about Minnie's expenses than about Minnie's decisions regarding children, partially because most of them were girls. He mostly did not interfere, as long as the children behaved well at church and did not disturb during mealtimes. He probably thought that Minnie's methods could not do any major harm.⁸

⁵ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 6.

⁶ See Linda Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman's Life* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 5-7.

⁷ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 7-8.

⁸ See Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman's Life*, 8.

Whether Minnie's upbringing had harmful effects or not, it certainly influenced Zelda's personality to a large extent. Zelda's mother manifestly made clear that she believed Zelda could accomplish anything, which must have boosted Zelda's self-confidence. Zelda's siblings, friends, and neighbours remember her as a reckless, courageous, cheerful child. Determined to handle anything, she fearlessly embarked on every activity with vigour and competitiveness. She was attracted to danger and excitement; she boldly climbed high trees and teased boys mercilessly.⁹ Zelda's siblings were too old to be her playmates, so they would just take a glimpse of Zelda running with a dog, racing on roller skates impetuously, flying on a swing in the back yard of Sayres' house, swimming, diving, dancing, or just showing off.¹⁰

Years later, Zelda was asked by a doctor to describe herself as a child. According to herself, she was "independent, courageous, without thought for anyone else," also "dreamy—a sensualist." "I was a very active child and never tired, always running with no hat or coat even in the Negro district and far from my house. I liked houses under construction and often I walked on the open roofs; I liked to jump from high places." Zelda admitted that she had not been a disciplined child. "When I was a little girl, I had great confidence in myself, even to the extent, of walking by myself against life as it was then. I did not have a single feeling of inferiority, or shyness, or doubt, and no moral principles."¹¹

According to Sally Cline, Zelda's attitude and characteristics, as mentioned above, allowed her not to be restricted by the repressive Southern ideology at the turn of the century. Even though the position of women in the society improved a lot when compared to former eras, Southern ideology still proclaimed that domesticity should be women's primary concern and that women should behave in a "ladylike" manner. Zelda would break these unwritten rules by all means; she did not bother to wear gloves or cross her legs at the ankle, she swung on the chairs, ran with bare feet, and pretended to be a circus trapeze artist as she climbed the backyard swing.¹²

⁹ See Kendall Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001), 18.

¹⁰ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 8.

¹¹ Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 8.

¹² See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 23-25.

When Zelda was six years old, she was sent to Chilton Grammar School. Nevertheless, the tomboy girl once came home, refused to return, and told her parents it was worse than a prison. Her mother hesitated a bit but eventually agreed to postpone Zelda's beginning of school attendance for a year. In 1914, Zelda entered Sidney Lanier High School. Her teachers soon found out that Zelda's parents did not supervise her very much as Zelda was naughty and restless all the time. Apt though Zelda was, she lacked discipline. It also did not escape her classmates' notice that she had much more freedom than them; she would often buy ice-cream after school and did not have to report to her parents where she was going.¹³ Yet it should be noted that Zelda regretted her inattention at school when she was in her late twenties.¹⁴ Understandably, she reconsidered some issues and perhaps began to value education more.

1.2 Southern Belle and the first American flapper

Years have passed and Zelda grew up into a beautiful young woman. But who F. Scott Fitzgerald's dream girl really was? What was she like? Some people labelled her as a "Southern Belle," others associate her with F. Scott Fitzgerald's frequently used term "flapper." Zelda definitely had a spark in her as her friends' and acquaintances' comments prove, that much is clear.

The figure of a Southern Belle was supposed to be a flamboyant and flirtatious local celebrity. Belle was a construct of her culture, prestigious, admired by others. Those who were seen with her gained a respectable status. A certain shallowness necessarily accompanied this institution because Belle was defined by her external beauty in the first place. She was supposed to use her beauty and verbal charm to enchant a young man, then marry him, and become a decent wife.¹⁵

That might have been the case of Zelda's mother Minnie but surely not the case of Zelda, whose artistic talents, wit and extraordinary observation, and expressive language skills gave rise to her rejection of the conformist role of a wife and a mother. On the contrary, her mother, though reluctantly, accepted the expected role. She used to have artistic ambitions that were never fulfilled. The model of Zelda's parents'

¹³ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 9, 12.

¹⁴ See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 25.

¹⁵ See Kathryn Lee Seidel, Alexis Wang and Alvin Y. Wang, "Performing Art: Zelda Fitzgerald's Art and the Role of the Artist," *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 5 (2006): 136-137. <https://jstor.org/stable/41583116>.

relationship displayed a seemingly submissive wife who shades the truth, omits the details, and lies a bit if necessary and a slightly withdrawn husband who embodies security and support for the family but for whom material issues matter more than the establishment of intimate relationships with his children.¹⁶

Although Zelda may not have been a proper Southern Belle, there is no doubt she was a “belle”—a very beautiful girl. Surprisingly, her sister Rosalind, as well as several classmates, claimed that Zelda had no sense of style. Moreover, she seemed just not to care. Her skirts were uneven, and a slip was often peeping out of them; her blouses and skirts were ordinary. At night, though, Zelda impressed the vicinity with her mother’s dress creations. She gradually became a well-known beauty in Montgomery, for her skin was flawless and soft, her hair resembled those of an angel, and she used to highlight her beauty with borrowed mascara and lipstick.¹⁷

Zelda rose to fame, especially after her first solo dance at the ballet recital followed by community ballroom dancing. These privately organized dances formed a significant centre of social life in Montgomery at that time—and Zelda shone at them, dazzling others with her appearance and graceful moves during her ballet performances. Her innocent face, fair curled hair, and pink tutu enraptured everyone who caught sight of her.¹⁸ After all, F. Scott Fitzgerald was no exception.

Many descriptions of Zelda from years later explain why she is often referred to as a Southern Belle. Several people described her unique piercing gaze and appearance that no photographer supposedly ever captured. “I have never seen a photograph of her that conveyed any real sense of what she looked like, or at least the way she looked to me. A camera recorder the imperfections of her face, missing the colouring and vitality that transcended them so absolutely,”¹⁹ a screenwriter Ring Lardner Jr. said.

Others might propound that Zelda’s friends and neighbours were not mesmerized by her image of Belle, but by her penetrating flapperdom. A flapper represented a new modern American woman in the 1920s, chic, independent, and boisterous. As Zelda writes in her article “Eulogy on the Flapper”: “The Flapper awoke from her lethargy of sub-deb-

¹⁶ See Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman’s Life*, 9.

¹⁷ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 13.

¹⁸ See Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman’s Life*, 19.

¹⁹ Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 26.

ism, bobbed her hair, put on her choicest pair of earrings and a great deal of audacity and rouge, and went into the battle. She flirted because it was fun to flirt and wore a one-piece bathing suit because she had a good figure; she covered her face with powder and paint because she didn't need it and she refused to be bored chiefly because she wasn't boring. She was conscious that the things she did were the things she had always wanted to do."²⁰

According to F. Scott Fitzgerald, it was "Mrs F. Scott Fitzgerald who started the flapper movement in this country."²¹ Whether Zelda actually started the movement in America, as her husband suggested, or not, she definitely became an iconic flapper of the Roaring Twenties. As a true flapper, she bobbed her hair, wore short shirts, listened to loud jazz music, drove a car, smoke cigarettes, and drank a lot of alcohol. She wanted to take full advantage of the opportunities that life offered, have a good time, party, and enjoy freedom. Scott was captivated by Zelda's beauty and spirit from the very beginning. Her flapperdom was an inspiration for most of his characters; in the end, he lived with a character from his books.

Despite Zelda's obvious flapper characteristics, she deviated from other aspects associated with flapperdom. First of all, contrary to Zelda's desire for independence, she wanted and expected to be protected as well. She has not agreed to marry Scott until he proved to be worthy of it; she had to be sure he had potential and would be able to take care of her. Zelda was used to all the comforts at home; Judge Anthony Sayre and Minnie Sayre have procured a safe environment throughout her whole childhood and adolescence. However, a prototypical flapper was not supposed to be as dependent on her husband.

The question remains if Zelda has ever achieved a balance between independence and protection. Much as she wanted to be secure, it did not suffice for her to be her husband's muse, "the wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald." After all, she had to find a way of self-expression despite Scott, rather than with him or through him. Obviously, she did

²⁰ Zelda Fitzgerald, "Eulogy on the Flapper," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Matthew Bruccoli (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 391.

²¹ Deborah Pike, "Masquerading as Herself: The Flapper and the Modern Girl in the Journalism and Short Fiction of Zelda Fitzgerald," *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 15 (2017): 132. <https://jstor.org/stable/10.5325/fscotfitzrevi.15.1.0130>.

not know that yet when she met the young handsome lieutenant at the country club in 1918.

1.3 A volatile life with F. Scott Fitzgerald

The crucial meeting which determined Zelda's and Scott's lives happened at the Country Club in Montgomery. It seems a bit like a kitschy situation in a romance. A young lieutenant F. Scott Key Fitzgerald, whose military Yankee unit has just come to Camp Sheridan nearby Montgomery, was looking around the hall. And there she was, a beautiful, fragile ballerina performing "Dance of the Hours." The young well-groomed officer could not take his eyes off her; he was watching her attentively, devouring her every move. He immediately asked if anyone knew her and could introduce him to her.²²

The sympathies were apparently mutual. Zelda was enchanted by Scott's classically regular features, bright heavily lashed green eyes, thick eyebrows, and neat hair with a parting in the middle. His demeanour revealed to her that he was a figure from a completely different world than the one she grew up in. Scott soon comprehended that Zelda was a local celebrity, courted by many young men, desired, self-confident and courageous.²³ Impressed by her distinctive personality, he firmly decided not to yield her to somebody else. He even invited her on a midnight date which Zelda rebuffed: "I never make late dates with fast workers."²⁴

Scott was soon to realize that Zelda would not be such an easy catch. He called her the next day only to find out that her schedule was full; she was booked weeks in advance. Yet he was determined not to give up that easily. It did not deter him to see Zelda kissing a man under an overhanging gas lamp of a telephone booth a few days later. Eventually, Scott convinced Zelda to meet him and tried to win her heart by organizing a celebration of her eighteenth birthday in a club. Zelda never forgot that magical night. From then on, Zelda and Scott began to spend more time together.²⁵

²² See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 24.

²³ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 25.

²⁴ Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 34.

²⁵ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 34.

Others must have perceived them as a divine couple—both fair-haired, angel-like, full of inexhaustible stamina, faith in grandiose dreams, and a promising future. Believing in becoming legends, enjoying life to the fullest. It might seem they were a perfect match.

It must be noted that although Zelda favoured Scott, she continued to see other suitors as well. Scott promised her an exciting future alongside a renowned writer but that was still just a promise without certitude. He finished his debut novel *Romantic Egotist* (later renamed *This Side of Paradise*) and sent it to several publishers, hoping especially for Scribner's to accept it. Unfortunately, in August 1918 the novel was rejected by Scribner's, though praised by the editor Maxwell Perkins. A huge disappointment flooded Scott, yet he decided to revise the novel and send it again later.²⁶

In March 1919, Scott proved that he took the relationship with Zelda seriously when he sent her his mother's engagement ring: "Darling: I am sending this just the way—I hope it fits and I wish I were there to put it on. I love you so much, much, much that it just hurts every minute I'm without you."²⁷ Zelda was thrilled, proudly wore the ring, and showed it to her friends. However, waiting for Scott to succeed in New York, where he went after the end of World War I and his release from military service, began to exhaust her: "It's dreadfully hard to write so very much—and so many of your letters sound forced—I know you love me, Darling, and I love you more than anything in the world, but if it's going to be so much longer, we just can't keep up this frantic writing."²⁸ A twist in the relationship came in the summer when Zelda, intentionally or not, sent Scott a letter intended for another suitor. Scott got furious. Uncertain whether he was losing Zelda or not, he came to Montgomery and urged Zelda to marry him immediately which Zelda refused and broke up with him in tears.²⁹

Devastated Scott resolved to come back to his hometown, St. Paul in Minnesota, and continued revising his first novel. Scribner's finally accepted *This Side of Paradise* in September 1919. Scott did not hesitate for a moment and wrote Zelda about his success. As he visited her in Montgomery, the couple renewed their engagement.³⁰ Many of

²⁶ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 32.

²⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald to Zelda Fitzgerald, March 24, 1919, in *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Kathy W. Barks, 42.

²⁸ Zelda Fitzgerald to F. Scott Fitzgerald, May, 1919, in *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Kathy W. Barks, 51-52.

²⁹ See Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman's Life*, 31.

³⁰ See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 71.

Scott's biographers later argued that Zelda was eagerly waiting for Scott to get rich so she could marry him, but this view has been disclaimed. It is far more likely that Zelda wanted to be sure of Scott himself as a man and his literary abilities. Money was not the priority, although Zelda was not prepared and willing to lead an ordinary, modest life either. As she wrote Scott: "Scott—there's nothing in all the world I want but you—and your precious love. All the material things are nothing. I'd just hate to live a sordid, colorless existence—because you'd soon love me less—and less—and I'd do anything—anything—to keep your heart for my own."³¹

The couple got married on 3 April 1920 in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. Neither Zelda's nor Scott's parents arrived. What is more, Zelda's sister Clothilde and her husband missed the wedding because Scott got nervous and impatient and insisted to start the ceremony earlier.³² And so the bride and the groom embarked on a boisterous, dazzling life journey to become the most famous couple of the Roaring Twenties.

Scott's debut novel was a huge success, and the newlywed soon became celebrities enjoying their youth and fame at parties all the time. They clearly were not able to manage their finances—regardless Scott's rising income, his diary records document that the expenses on alcohol, parties, and clothing were huge. Because they were often drunk and troublesome, they were expelled from several hotels.

In February 1921 Zelda discovered she was pregnant. At that time, Scott still tried to pursue his literary ambitions; he nearly completed his second novel *The Beautiful and Damned*. Zelda was increasingly inspiring him, she became a role model for numerous of his characters. In addition, Scott was using excerpts from Zelda's letters and diaries. The couple decided to take a trip to Europe before the baby was born. They headed to England, France, and Italy.³³

Back in the USA, the baby was born. Scott and Zelda named their daughter Patricia but almost immediately changed the name to Frances Scott Fitzgerald and called her Scottie. Zelda did not seem to know what to do with her new role of a mother;

³¹ Zelda Fitzgerald to F. Scott Fitzgerald, March, 1919, in *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Kathy W. Barks, 40.

³² See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 75.

³³ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 81.

motherhood did not really change her or at least calmed her a bit. From the beginning, the child was taken care of mainly by a nanny.³⁴

Nearly three years later, the Fitzgeralds decided to sail for France again. Their main destination was the French Riviera where they could rent cheap accommodation and enjoy swimming and sunbathing with friends, especially the Murphys. Scott hoped to find there peace to work on his third novel; moreover, both Scott and Zelda probably wanted to change the environment as serious rifts began to harm their relationship. Debts started to emerge, Scott's problems with alcohol came to the surface and became more apparent, and Zelda felt more and more unfulfilled. During their stay on Riviera, she even had an affair with a French aviator Edouard Jozan and supposedly tried to commit suicide. Surprisingly, the Fitzgeralds' relationship survived, even though it suffered and was damaged a lot.³⁵

To Scott's disappointment, *The Great Gatsby*, which was published in 1925, was not such a huge financial success. The reviews were mostly positive, but he hoped to earn more money to pay off the ever-increasing debts.³⁶ Zelda's personality transformed a lot during their stay in France. She lost much of her erstwhile energy and changed into a weary woman. Scott's friendship with Ernest Hemingway contributed to that quite a lot. There was an overt rivalry between her and Hemingway; Hemingway encouraged Scott to leave Zelda as he thought Zelda was jealous of Scott's talent and was responsible for Scott's alcoholism; Zelda, in return, considered him an ill-mannered boor and blamed him for Scott's drinking excesses, since Scott got drunk more easily than Hemingway.³⁷

Shortly after the publication of his third novel, Scott began to work on the next novel called *Tender Is the Night*, drawing on the relationship between his and Zelda's friends the Murphys and his own relationship with Zelda. He would be writing the novel for eight long years.³⁸ Zelda tiredly followed her husband everywhere and drowned in despair since she realized how unfulfilled life in the shadow of a famous writer was. Although she tried to write by herself and painted quite a lot, she felt her own ambitions

³⁴ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 84-86.

³⁵ See Kyra Stormbergová, *Zelda a Scott Fitzgeraldovi: Americký sen* (Praha: H&H, 1999), 73.

³⁶ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 115.

³⁷ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 167-168.

³⁸ See Stormbergová, *Zelda a Scott Fitzgeraldovi: Americký sen*, 87.

were put aside and thus decided to take a bold step and take dancing lessons again when she was almost twenty-eight years old.

Her determination was immense. She was resolute to become “a Pavlova, nothing less.”³⁹ When Gerald Murphy introduced her to Madame Lubov Egorova, the famous ballerina became Zelda’s paragon. Zelda was very appreciative of Egorova’s consent to teach her. At first, Scott was pleased that Zelda found a way to entertain herself, however, when Zelda became antisocial and devoted unconditionally to ballet, it started to irritate him.⁴⁰

Even Zelda’s and Scott’s friends noticed that Zelda sank deeply into her private life, hiding from everyone else, drowning in her toil. Contrary to Zelda’s belief, her husband and friends did not think she could succeed—she was just too old to break through. The Murphys once came to watch her dance and described her vast efforts and the artificiality of her moves: “There was something dreadfully grotesque in her intensity—one could see the muscles individually stretch and pull; her legs looked muscular and ugly. It was really terrible... When I watched Zelda that afternoon in Paris, I thought to myself, she’s going to try to hold on to her youth. You know, there’s nothing worse; it ruins a woman.”⁴¹ Zelda felt that life was slipping through her fingers and clung to it at all costs. The forfeit came, indeed.

Zelda’s first breakdown happened in the Fitzgeralds’ apartment during a luncheon with friends. Worried she would miss her ballet lesson, Zelda called a taxi, and when it got caught in traffic, she jumped out of it and started running between the cars. When she threw herself at Madame Egorova’s feet, her teacher sensed there was something very wrong with her.⁴²

Since April 23, 1930, Zelda has been hospitalized in several clinics. Firstly, she entered a private hospital called Malmaison. She stayed there just for a short time—back in Paris she tried to resume dance lessons but became afflicted by psychosomatic eczema, experienced hallucinations, and attempted suicide. In May, she headed to Valmont Clinic in Switzerland and was treated there by Dr. Oscar Forel and a Swiss psychiatrist

³⁹ Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 135.

⁴⁰ See Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman’s Life*, 102, 104.

⁴¹ Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 143.

⁴² See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 158.

Eugen Bleuler. Bleuler diagnosed Zelda with acute schizophrenia and recommended her relocation to Dr. Forel's private sanatorium Prangins, where Zelda went in June 1930.⁴³

She fell into a deep depression, was not able to cope with the end of her ballet career, and begged Scott to ask Egorova if it was still possible for her to become a first-rate ballerina. Egorova acknowledged Zelda's effort and talent but soberly refused such a possibility. Zelda, shattered by the letter, finally gave up on her dream. When her mental condition got better a bit, she was allowed to take short trips. She was released from Prangins in September 1931. The Fitzgeralds headed back to France, not knowing it would be their last stay in Europe.⁴⁴

After the trip to Europe and a very brief stay in New York, the family headed for Zelda's hometown. Zelda hoped to find peace in the familiar environment of Montgomery; nevertheless, she found there the very opposite and began to feel uncomfortable. Her old friends sensed she withered; she was no longer the enthusiastic local celebrity. Notwithstanding, she decided on writing her own novel. At that time, Scott announced his plans to go to Hollywood as he got an offer to work on a film script. Zelda planned the novel and worked hard on some short stories. Her condition understandably deteriorated again as she was dealing with autobiographical material for her planned novel and mourned for her father's death.⁴⁵

In February 1932, she entered Phipps Clinic under the care of Dr. Meyer who viewed the treatment comprehensively; he understood that Scott's detrimental alcoholism and an affair with a young actress Lois Moran in Hollywood are not beneficial for Zelda's recovery. It was at Phipps Clinic where Zelda secretly finished her novel *Save Me the Waltz* and sent it to Scribner's without Scott knowing about it. The Fitzgeralds then stayed in a rented house in La Paix. Shaken due to the publication of Scott's novel *Tender Is the Night* dealing with her mental illness, Zelda relapsed and returned to Phipps Clinic two times. In March 1934, she was transferred to Craig House in Beacon, New York. Although Scott reproached her for many things, and they were generally angry with each other, he organized an exhibition of her paintings. Zelda really appreciated Scott taking care of her; she knew how much money the clinics cost him.

⁴³ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 224-228.

⁴⁴ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 233-247.

⁴⁵ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 248-251.

After all, Zelda moved to Sheppard-Pratt hospital for financial reasons and later was taken to Highland Hospital in Asheville where she stayed for four years.⁴⁶

Believing Montgomery would do her good, Zelda came to live with her mother. Meanwhile, Scott transformed into a tired, decrepit man. He was working on screenplays in Hollywood, tried to write his next novel, spent time with a young reporter Sheila Graham, and was exchanging kind letters with Zelda who never ceased to be his priority. Suffering from the consequences of his alcoholism, his health seriously deteriorated. He suffered two cardiac spasms, the second of which was fatal. On 21 December 1940, F. Scott Fitzgerald died. Zelda grieved very much and could not imagine a world without him. She re-entered the Highland Hospital in Asheville three times, in 1947 for the last time. On March 10, 1948, a fire broke out in the kitchen of the main building where Zelda was sleeping. There was no automatic fire-alarm system, and the heavy windows were shackled with chains. Nine women, including Zelda, died.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 304-306, 315, 337-368.

⁴⁷ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 341-350, 370-383.

2. AN AMATEUR AND THE PROFESSIONAL

2.1 The role of F. Scott Fitzgerald's muse

There is no doubt that without Zelda's influence Scott's literary work would be far from what we know it to be these days. That is why it became so difficult for the public, and especially for Scott's readership, to perceive the two prominent figures as separate, talented individuals. For a long time, a conventional notion of a muse and an artist has been imposed on Zelda and Scott, which deprived them of their own original personalities without relation to each other. Much as their experiences and creative work were intertwined, we should be able to strike a balance in our judgement and not to give Zelda a restrictive label of "the wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald." In fact, in most early biographies of Scott, Zelda plays a secondary role of a self-seeking, harmful wife. It was not until the 1970s—thanks to the biographies of Zelda by Nancy Milford and Sara Mayfield—that the distorted notion of her began to disappear.

It is true that the glamorous couple has been associated with a lot of labels, sometimes capturing a phase of their life, such as musedom, apprenticeship, collaboration, or appropriation. However, according to Ashley Lawson, the whole matter is far more complicated: "By trying to define the couple as 'collaborators or competitors', we have reinforced an either/or schematic that erases the subtler, yet still meaningful elements of their relationship."⁴⁸ On several counts, the reciprocal nature of Zelda's and Scott's relationship just cannot be denied, while still acknowledging the indisputable inspiration Scott drew from Zelda.

As Scott himself once declared: "I married the heroine of my stories."⁴⁹ It can be said that most of Scott's female protagonists were based on Zelda as his daring flapper fascinated him very much from the very beginning. She was beautiful, smart, witty, and unwilling to lead an ordinary life, which entirely suited Scott who had an inferiority complex due to the social decline of his family that happened during his childhood. It comes as no surprise that Scott began to draw from the tumultuous relationship with Zelda and their mutual experiences in his literary work—and maybe was sometimes

⁴⁸ Ashley Lawson, "The Muse and the Maker: Gender, Collaboration, and Appropriation in the Life and Work of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald," *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 13 (2015): 78. <https://jstor.org/stable/10.5325/fscotfitzrevi.13.1.0076>.

⁴⁹ Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 11.

engulfed by it too much. In his diary, Scott's college friend Alexander McKaig states Scott's own interesting remark—Scott supposedly mentioned that he could not depict how anyone thinks except for himself and Zelda, his characters simply always began to resemble the two of them.⁵⁰

Scott was impressed not only by Zelda's personality but also by her power of observation and her expressive language skills. She was able to come up with highly original figures of speech and verbal associations. When she and Scott got married, they often engaged in long night conversations. Early on, Scott started to memorize and note down things Zelda said in order to use them in his literary work.⁵¹

At first, Zelda was flattered by that, as she had no serious literary ambitions of her own. In a letter to Scott she described her attempt to write her own story: "I'm much too lazy to care whether it's done or not—And I don't want to be famous and fêted—all I want is to be very young always and very irresponsible and to feel that my life is my own—to live and be happy and die in my own way to please myself."⁵² She trusted Scott, showed him her diaries, and did not mind that he used some of her writings in *This Side of Paradise*.

When George Jean Nathan, the editor of *The Smart Set*, was shown Zelda's diaries, he became greatly interested in them and immediately offered Zelda to publish them as "Diary of A Popular Girl." Later he recalled that Scott's answer was a "resounding no." They inspired him to a great extent and he planned to use them for his other novels and short stories, for example, "The Jelly Bean" or "Ice Palace," which he actually did. Zelda did not oppose her husband, yet the whole situation left mixed feelings inside her and a seed of doubt in her mind.⁵³

After the publication of Scott's *Beautiful and Damned*, Zelda started to realize that Scott had not been using her words as a mere inspiration; he directly borrowed her lines without permission and became very possessive about her diaries and letters. In her article "Friend Husband's Latest" she bitterly wrote: "On one page I recognized a portion of an old diary of mine which mysteriously disappeared shortly after my

⁵⁰ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 79.

⁵¹ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 49.

⁵² Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 59.

⁵³ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 73.

marriage, and also scraps of letters, which, though considerably edited, sound to me vaguely familiar. In fact, Mr. Fitzgerald... seems to believe that plagiarism begins at home.”⁵⁴ Clearly, she began to be slightly vigilant and agitated.

Scott was proud of having such a bright wife but he did not like when she dabbled in his domain—literary work—too much. Like many biographers, he placed a dividing line between himself and Zelda by labelling himself a “professional” and Zelda an “amateur.” He wanted Zelda to be his source of inspiration, consultant, editor, helping hand, and there her role ended. He intelligibly expressed his view on the day of their wedding in an interview with a reporter: “I think just being in love—doing it well, you know—is work enough for a woman. If she keeps her house the way it should be kept, and make herself look pretty when her husband comes home in the evening, and loves him and helps him with his work and encourages him—oh, I think that’s the sort of work that will save her.”⁵⁵ If Scott really believed Zelda would be content with such a destiny, he miscalculated her personality and ambitions very much.

Ashley Lawson argues that Scott’s approach stemmed not only from his nature but also from him having been influenced by the modernist ideology of the period. The modernist discourse associated “bad” writing with banality, popular appeal, and femininity; “good” writing, in contrast, was a masculine domain.⁵⁶ In this context, the view of Scott’s idea of a true artist changes considerably. The cultural assumption about fine art and a respectable artist was determined by gender ideology, thus we cannot attribute his disparagement of Zelda’s role and literary work only to his proud character.

Yet Scott indeed made it very clear he did not want Zelda to disrupt his creative activity and a career as a successful writer by using the same autobiographical material for her literary work. This emerged especially later in their lives in response to the publication of Zelda’s novel *Save Me the Waltz*. The couple sat down with a stenographer and Zelda’s doctor as a moderator. During the discussion, Scott furiously asserted Zelda was a “third-rate writer,” “useless society woman” who “had essentially nothing to say,” he, on the other hand, was “a professional writer with a huge following” and everything

⁵⁴ Fitzgerald, “Friend Husband’s Latest,” in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 388.

⁵⁵ Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 65.

⁵⁶ See Lawson, “The Muse and the Maker: Gender, Collaboration, and Appropriation in the Life and Work of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald,” 86.

was “his material.”⁵⁷ He could not understand why Zelda was so desperate to use her talent, fulfill her potential and free herself from the role of a writer’s muse.

2.2 Zelda Fitzgerald’s own ambitions and literary work

The fact that Zelda devoted herself to three artistic fields during her life indicates that art was close to her heart. Namely, she attempted literary work in which she could utilize her language skills, she danced ballet as a child and returned to it at the age of 27, and last but not least, she tried to find solace in painting. As a matter of fact, her artistic ambitions varied very much during her life. Initially, Zelda perceived art only as a way of entertainment; she enjoyed writing, dancing, and painting and liked to be active in general. She didn’t need to consider earning a living by art because as a prolific writer, her husband maintained both of them.

Zelda expressed her attitude clearly when Scott asked her if she was ambitious during an interview for *Baltimore Sun*. Her reply was: “Not especially, but I’ve plenty of hope.”⁵⁸ She asserted her main goal was to have fun. Yet she was well aware of her artistic endowment and when she was asked what she would do if she had to make her own living, she answered: “I’ve studied ballet. I’d try and get a place in the Follies... If I wasn’t successful, I’d try to write.”⁵⁹ At that time Zelda did not know yet that later she will begin to take art seriously not so much because of finances, but rather because of her search for an independent identity.

At first, Zelda’s writing was commenced as writing by “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s wife,” she was supposed to comment on her husband’s work and write some articles capturing the atmosphere of the time and introducing the notion of flapperdom. The first article published under her name was the previously mentioned satiric review of *Beautiful and Damned* called “Friend Husband’s Latest” written in 1922 for the *New York Herald Tribune*. Zelda was quite surprised that writing worked like a charm and the positive feedback pleased her very much. *Metropolitan Magazine* and *McCall’s* were even so impressed by Zelda’s review that they suggested her to write articles on the flappers for

⁵⁷ Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 324-326.

⁵⁸ Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 135.

⁵⁹ Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 135.

them. Eventually, “Eulogy on the Flapper,” “Does a Moment of Revolt Come Sometime to Every Married Man?” and “What Became of the Flappers?” were published.⁶⁰

Zelda produced other articles for magazines, Matthew Bruccoli included eight more in her *Collected Writings*. The more known of those are four articles written in 1927, “The Changing Beauty of Park Avenue,” “Looking Back Eight Years,” “Who Can Fall in Love After Thirty?” and “Paint and Powder.” The first three of them were credited to both Scott and Zelda, the last one only to Scott.⁶¹

Although this was mainly because of marketing as Scott’s name naturally meant more money for the publication, Zelda was not quite reconciled with Scott taking credit for her work. When her first serious short story “Our Own Movie Queen” was published under Scott’s name, although he admitted he had just added a climax and revised it, Zelda crossed out his name in a copy and inscribed “ZELDA” in bold.⁶² The same situation repeated between 1929-1931 with the publication of Zelda’s “Girl stories” in *College Humor* when five of Zelda’s stories were published under joint by-lines and one of them was attributed only to Scott.⁶³ Scott did not hide Zelda’s authorship but it did not change the fact that Zelda still lived in her husband’s shadow.

Except for one play, a farce fantasy called *Scandalabra* written in 1932, Zelda completed only one longer literary work—a peak of her literary ambitions came with the autobiographical novel *Save Me the Waltz*. The novel written during a few weeks in Montgomery and at Phipps Clinic in the spring of 1932 captures her enormous effort to become a professional ballerina.

At the age of 27, Zelda’s despair caused by a total dissatisfaction with her being culminated. She felt her life was slipping through her fingers, it was unfulfilled and empty. The parties were no longer so entertaining and dazzling, Scott devoted himself more to literature and alcohol than to her, and the relationship with her daughter Scottie was not exactly a close one. Zelda remembered the happy days back in Montgomery when she was a local beauty admired by everyone. Back then her dancing performances

⁶⁰ See Bruccoli, *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, 387, 391, 395, 397.

⁶¹ See Bruccoli, *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, 403, 407, 411, 415.

⁶² See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 135.

⁶³ See Bruccoli, *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, 293, 299, 309, 317, 327, 337.

captivated the whole town and aroused a liberating feeling inside her, therefore, she decided to pursue ballet again.

She took dancing lessons again as a student of Catherine Littlefield in Philadelphia. When Gerald Murphy introduced her to Madame Lubov Egorova, the head of the ballet school for the Diaghilev troupe replaced Catherine Littlefield in the position of Zelda's teacher. Zelda's endeavour was huge, she worked intensively, practised eight or more hours a day spending much time in a studio and also training at home in front of a mirror in a room she had practically transformed into a dance studio.⁶⁴ Zelda commented it as follows: "I worked constantly and was terribly superstitious and moody about my work; full of presentiments... I lived in a quiet, ghostly, hypersensitized world of my own. Scott drank."⁶⁵ For three years Zelda has been dancing feverishly and then, instead of artistic fulfillment, the break came. Zelda entered a hospital and gave up dancing for good.

A search for self-expression and contentment began again. Zelda was not able to dance anymore and her husband disapproved of her writing because he felt she interfered with his domain. The only thing that did not seem to bother anyone was her painting and drawing which eventually became the means towards peace and refreshment. Zelda always liked to use her creativity for painting, and especially in the last decade of her life; she came into her own with it.

The paintings demonstrate Zelda had a fairly good knowledge of artistic movements, such as cubism or surrealism. They also reflect her transition and change in her view of herself, the role of an artist, and life in general.⁶⁶ As a true artist, Zelda finally exchanged hedonism and reckless living for a quest for an authentic self.

It is difficult to say whether Zelda actually fulfilled her artistic ambitions but she strove for it, in three different ways. Each of them brought her closer to self-expression and finding her own voice.

⁶⁴ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 135, 140, 141.

⁶⁵ Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 147.

⁶⁶ See Seidel, Wang and Wang, "Performing Art: Zelda Fitzgerald's Art and the Role of the Artist," 135, 161.

3. THE DEFINITION OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL

To properly examine Zelda's writing, especially her only published novel *Save Me the Waltz*, it is necessary to define what autobiographical writing is. Furthermore, I would like to discriminate between autobiography and autobiographical novel.

Dictionaries coincide in the basic definition of autobiography, for example, they state the following:

“An account of a person's life by him- or herself.”⁶⁷

“A biography written by the subject about himself or herself.”⁶⁸

“A narrative account typically written by an individual that purports to depict his or her life and character.”⁶⁹

They also agree that, unlike diaries or journals, autobiographies are written for public audience, not for private use and satisfaction. In contrast to memoirs, autobiographies provide detailed introspection and reflection; they do not focus that much on the description of people and events the author has known and witnessed.⁷⁰ Written in the fourth century, St. Augustine's *Confessions* is considered to be the first autobiography, being a deeply personal account of a spiritual experience.⁷¹

In autobiographical fiction, including autobiographical novel, “the author passes off as inventions events that actually occurred.”⁷² But where exactly is the line between autobiography and autobiographical novel? Since the middle of the 20th century, the traditional distinction has become more and more blurred. Childs and Fowler refer to the approach of the writers in African countries and in Negro American circles which makes the difference between autobiography and autobiographical novel almost meaningless. For these authors, autobiographical art is mainly a means of defining

⁶⁷ J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 63.

⁶⁸ M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Wadsworth: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012), 27.

⁶⁹ Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018), 103.

⁷⁰ See Abrams and Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 27; Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 63; Murfin and Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, 103.

⁷¹ See Abrams and Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 27.

⁷² Murfin and Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, 356.

identity; its main purpose is not to summarize lifelong wisdom and experience.⁷³ However noteworthy their approach is, it is generally possible to impart the differences between the two terms.

Bhattacharya believes that the relationship between autobiography and autobiographical novel is very intriguing. He supposes that when a reviewer comments on an autobiography and writes “it reads like a novel” in his review, it is a great compliment to the book as it emphasizes its readability. On the other hand, when an autobiographical novel “reads like an autobiography,” it is considered an inferior work of art.⁷⁴ So what do we expect from the two literary forms and what must they be like to satisfy us?

The autobiographer’s aim should be to present the reader with a comprehensive image of himself. He is supposed to give a complex account of his life and try to illuminate his personality without adjustments.⁷⁵ Needless to say, it is not an easy task. First of all, author’s memory may be unreliable. All of us tend to forget the details, alter the past, remember what we want to, and forget the unpleasant things. Some bits are suppressed, others are added. Even though the author tries to present objective facts about his life, he might unintentionally deceive the reader.⁷⁶ Furthermore, what does it actually mean to tell the whole truth to present the complex picture of an author’s life? The autobiographer just has to select the information and arrange it into periods and chapters forming a meaningful whole.⁷⁷ Some things are then considered relevant and worthy, others must be rejected.

A novelist selects and rejects material for his work as well, however, he has a much looser scope. He is not obliged to strictly stick to the facts as in an autobiographical novel the events and characters may be altered. The author is supposed to be original, inventive, and imaginative and he is allowed to write about things that might or should

⁷³ See Peter Childs and Roger Fowler, *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 21.

⁷⁴ See Ramkrishna Bhattacharya, “The Autobiography, the Novel and the Autobiographical Novel” (Kolkata, 2008), 2-3.

https://academia.edu/11431653/The_Autobiography_the_Novel_and_the_Autobiographical_Novel.

⁷⁵ See Roy Pascal, “The Autobiographical Novel and the Autobiography,” *Essays in Criticism* IX (1959): 134. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eic/IX.2.134>.

⁷⁶ See Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 63.

⁷⁷ See Pascal, “The Autobiographical Novel and the Autobiography,” 134.

have happened which is forbidden to the autobiographer for whom “invention” is a taboo word.⁷⁸

There are other advantages of the novel form over a straight autobiography. A novelist can draw on circumstances outside the range of the author’s direct experience; he can reconstruct conversations he does not remember or conversations in which he did not take part; he can make use of the unexpressed thoughts of the others or describe situations he did not personally experience. This may be, of course, misleading, and the novelist can get carried away by his imagination too far from the facts. A novelist’s position is rather different than the one of an autobiographer—an autobiographer cannot pretend the early experiences have not influenced him and have not changed his personality, whereas a novelist is more anonymous, he can depict his childhood without anticipating the future and his current self. Thanks to that, the description gains in freshness and vividness.⁷⁹ Generally, although an autobiographer usually tries to make his book readable, he primarily takes an oath to capture the true experience as distinct from a novelist who draws on true experience but unleashes his imagination.

Roy Pascal claims in his article that the autobiographical novel “centres in experiences which transform and mould a character” and does not “merely revolves around a single outstanding real experience.”⁸⁰ This characteristic definitely applies to Zelda’s novel which portrays significant milestones both in her heroine’s and her own life. Albeit the pivotal passage in the novel is the one capturing heroine’s devotion to the ballet and the demanding exercise, all the previous experiences influenced her and contributed to this very culmination.

⁷⁸ See Bhattacharya, “The Autobiography, the Novel and the Autobiographical Novel,” 4-5.

⁷⁹ See Pascal, “The Autobiographical Novel and the Autobiography,” 136.

⁸⁰ Pascal, “The Autobiographical Novel and the Autobiography,” 137.

4. SIGNIFICANT AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WORKS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Autobiographical writing has a long tradition in American literature, and thus it is of great importance for the American background. It seems to be tied to the history of the American nation very closely.⁸¹ Autobiographies enable the reader to get into more direct contact with the American experience, which may be very enriching, all the more so because autobiographical writing has been so diverse in America, having been written for various reasons by people with different social statuses, born in different backgrounds in different parts of the country.

This diversity results in the variety of genres and subject matters within autobiographical writing; some of them are more conventional, others stand out. Therefore, it is sometimes quite difficult to determine what texts belong to the category of autobiographies or autobiographical novels; the accurate list of American autobiographies is certainly not possible to make. Perhaps because the matter is so complex, there has been a disdain for this kind of literature for some time. In the 1950s and early 1960, the English departments considered autobiographical writing an inferior kind of literature for the lack of artistic imagination; the history departments reproached the works for their subjectivity.⁸² Yet since then, the interest in autobiographical writing has increased a lot, and many texts thus have received more attention.

The earliest forms of autobiography in America can be traced back to the discovery of America and the birth of the American nation. Currently, we know that even the Native Americans had their forms of autobiography, such as coup stories and visions. Later, the white collectors recorded them and made stories out of them.⁸³ The Indian autobiographical writing is described for example in Lynne Woods O'Brien's *Plain Indian Autobiographies* (1973) or L. L. Langness' *The Life History in Anthropological Science* (1965).

⁸¹ See James Olney, "The Autobiography of America," *American Literary History* 3 (1991): 377. <https://jstor.org/stable/490058>.

⁸² See Robert F. Sayre, "The Proper Study: Autobiographies in American Studies," *American Quarterly* 29 (1997): 242. <https://jstor.org/stable/2712417>.

⁸³ See Sayre, "The Proper Study: Autobiographies in American Studies," 249.

The early American exploration narratives and travellers' tales described the new land and also included autobiographical observations and reflections.⁸⁴ The seventeenth century colonial experience was captured in several memoirs, diaries, and autobiographies, especially by the authors from the Puritan background who very often wrote spiritual autobiographies. The self-reflections come from the pens of Thomas Shepard, William Byrd, Samuel Sewall, Increase Mather, or Cotton Mather.⁸⁵ *The Journal of John Winthrop* (1630-1649) and William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* (1651) belong to the genre of colonial chronicles and settlers' narratives and represent autobiographical writing as well.⁸⁶

The eighteenth century significant autobiographical writings include for example Jonathan Edwards' *Personal Narrative* (1740), *The Journal of John Woolman* (1774), or J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782).⁸⁷ Yet the crucial autobiography from the eighteenth century is definitely *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1791) or *Memoirs*, as he used to call it. The book speaks about Franklin's way to become a self-made man; it was supposed to inspire the generations of Americans to come. It has a clear didactic national purpose and it was necessary for the making of America.⁸⁸ In his *Memoirs*, Franklin presented an archetype of a successful American.

The early nineteenth century autobiographical writing moved a bit from Crèvecoeur's question "What is an American?" to "Who am I?" The answer to the question was looked for in epistles, travel narratives, or pastoral eclogues. Autobiographical writing in America flourished in the 1840s and 1850s. Out of that, slave narratives protrude. Stephen Butterfield even considers them a significant centre in American autobiographical literature.⁸⁹ Slave narrative, as the narrative written by the oppressed ones, enables its writer to break free. It is a tool for the discovery of self and a way to reach out the others and testify about a personal experience. *Narrative of the Life of*

⁸⁴ See Robert F. Sayre, "Autobiography and the Making of America," *The Iowa Review* 9 (1978): 1. <https://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2338&context=iowareview>.

⁸⁵ See Susan Balée, "From the Outside In: A History of American Autobiography," *The Hudson Review* 51 (1998): 53. <https://jstor.org/stable/3853119>.

⁸⁶ See Sayre, "Autobiography and the Making of America," 1.

⁸⁷ See Sayre, "Autobiography and the Making of America," 1.

⁸⁸ See Sayre, "Autobiography and the Making of America," 9-10.

⁸⁹ See Sayre, "The Proper Study: Autobiographies in American Studies," 250-251.

Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (1845) or *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) by Harriet Jacobs denote that very well.

The autobiographical work of white writers of the American Renaissance is much more idiosyncratic and difficult to describe as a whole. The old forms suited neither Emerson, nor Whitman, Thoreau, or Melville, thus they adjusted them. Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855) focuses on nature, the individual's role in it, and celebrates the bodily experience. The poems do not depict a personal experience that much, they rather address the general ideas as a kind of indirect national autobiography. In "Song of Myself," Whitman stresses out his American origins and becomes "the bard of the American people." The later *Specimen Days* (1882) is then a more factual autobiographical account of Whitman's life.⁹⁰ Meanwhile, Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854) reflects upon the author's personal experience of living a simple life surrounded by nature.⁹¹ It is a genuine account of Thoreau's social experiment and spiritual discovery of self.

One's perception of the oncoming end of one century and the dawn of another one is reflected in *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907). There has been a growing interest in the book, and it began to be studied in detail in the context of American autobiographies. According to Sayre, the contribution of Henry Adams' book lies mainly in a new conception of self which is no longer defined by religion or nature, but by family, history, and civilization. In fact, Sayre claims that in America, the concept of self has been very closely related to civilization from about 1900 onwards in general as the modern civilization brought both hope for improvements and potential pitfalls.⁹²

According to Robert F. Sayre, twentieth century autobiographers can be divided into three generations. The first generation was born in the 1860s and 1870s. The active period of the authors' careers was between 1895 and 1920. This generation of writers can be represented for example by Edith Wharton, Teddy Roosevelt, Frederic C. Howe, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Upton Sinclair, or Booker T. Washington. The writers came from various social backgrounds and had various political beliefs but as they had something in common, their autobiographies are somehow alike. The writers

⁹⁰ See Sayre, "Autobiography and the Making of America," 12-13.

⁹¹ See Sayre, "The Proper Study: Autobiographies in American Studies," 252.

⁹² See Sayre, "The Proper Study: Autobiographies in American Studies," 253-254.

experienced a newly industrialized society. They often wrote for newspapers and commented on the transformation of the newly industrialized civilization which promisingly offered fresh opportunities but also had many problems.⁹³

The second generation came of age in the 1920s and 1930s. They belonged to America's "Lost Generation," as Gertrude Stein called it. These autobiographers were for example Eugene O'Neill, Gertrude Stein, Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, John Dos Passos, F. Scott Fitzgerald, or Ernest Hemingway. The generation felt alienated, disillusioned, and shocked. World War I shattered all the solid certainties and irreversibly changed everything. The writers rebelled against the newly established values of the mainstream culture and wrote thinly disguised autobiographical fiction, coming-of-age autobiographies, and memoirs.⁹⁴ Their most traditional genre was perhaps Bildungsroman which enabled them to describe their growing up in small towns and Eastern colleges and also to depict the clash of children and adult worlds.⁹⁵ Needed to add that their position as artists was quite detached. They did not intend to change anything; the writers rather watched, noticed, and recorded.

The third generation of the 20th century autobiographers, as described by Robert F. Sayre, is a diverse one and includes for example Norman Mailer, Alex Haley, Malcolm X, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Sylvia Plath, Mary McCarthy, or Lillian Hellman. The writers were influenced a lot by the preceding Lost Generation as can be seen in Norman Mailer's *Advertisements for Myself* (1959) or in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965).⁹⁶

The writers of the Cold War generation tried to find the source of self-identity inside themselves. They were interested in family's influence rather than in historical forces, as Mary McCarthy's *Memoirs of a Catholic Girlhood* (1957), Loren Eiseley's *The Unexpected Universe* (1964), or Vivian Gornick's *Fierce Attachments* (1987) show. The readers were no longer shocked by personal confessions in autobiographies, thus the autobiographical writing became even more open and outrageous in order to catch readers' attention. In her memoir *The Kiss* (1997), Kathryn Harrison overtly dealt with familial sexual abuse. The drug-induced memoirs appeared, for example, Tom Wolfe's

⁹³ See Sayre, "The Proper Study: Autobiographies in American Studies," 254.

⁹⁴ See Balée, "From the Outside In: A History of American Autobiography," 41.

⁹⁵ See Sayre, "The Proper Study: Autobiographies in American Studies," 255.

⁹⁶ See Sayre, "The Proper Study: Autobiographies in American Studies," 256-257.

The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test (1968). In the 1970s and 1980s, autobiographies of ill-health emerged, and writers captured their experience and struggle with AIDS or cancer. Some of them also wrote about realization of their (homo)sexuality. Paul Monette's *Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir* (1988) is an important book of the period. Memoirs of madness in the 1990s psychologically probed writers' inner world. William Styron's *Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness* (1990) remains a classic of this type of autobiographical writing.⁹⁷

Finally, contemporary autobiographical writing examines individual doubts about oneself and modern society in general. The writers dig deep inside and try to render their unstable identity.

⁹⁷ See Balée, "From the Outside In: A History of American Autobiography," 42-51.

5. *SAVE ME THE WALTZ* (1932)

5.1 A genesis of the novel

It has already been mentioned earlier that Zelda's only published novel saw the light of the day in 1932. The genesis of the novel was a hasty one. Zelda began to work on her novel while staying in her hometown Montgomery in January and February 1932. She continued writing even after her hospitalization at Phipps Clinic.⁹⁸ She was treated by Dr. Meyer whom she was not very fond of. He seemed rather rigid and humourless to her, in contrast to Dr. Mildred Taylor Squires who immediately gained Zelda's trust. Dr. Squires worked as the assistant resident psychiatrist at Phipps Clinic. Only four years older than Zelda, she was able to establish a close relationship with Dr. Meyer's patient. In fact, Zelda even dedicated her novel to Dr. Squires. Dr. Squires recognized and admired Zelda's way of thinking and artistic talent and supported her literary work.⁹⁹

Although Scott has been informed about Zelda's writing and her frantic efforts by Dr. Squires, he probably did not take it that seriously. He thought Zelda "isn't a 'natural story-teller' in the sense that I am, and unless a story comes to her fully developed and crying to be told she's liable to flounder around rather unsuccessfully among problems of construction."¹⁰⁰ Dr. Squires wrote Scott that Zelda's mental health had improved a lot; Zelda managed to complete the second chapter of her novel. The doctor believed the chapter was even better than the first one and predicted the novel to be a success.¹⁰¹ Zelda herself wrote Scott: "I am proud of my novel, but I can hardly restrain myself enough to get it written. You will like it—It is distinctly École Fitzgerald, though more ecstatic than yours..."¹⁰² Scott assumed he would be sent a final version of the novel before it was published and he would read and revise it. However, the opposite was true.¹⁰³

On March 9, 1932, Zelda finished her novel and sent a copy to Scott's publisher Maxwell Perkins. She also sent a letter to Scott and explained she did not want to bother

⁹⁸ See Bruccoli, *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, 3.

⁹⁹ See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 304.

¹⁰⁰ Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 215-216.

¹⁰¹ See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 306.

¹⁰² Zelda Fitzgerald to F. Scott Fitzgerald, early March, 1932, in *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Kathy W. Barks, 169.

¹⁰³ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 220.

him and disturb him at work and that Scribner's publishing house would not want to publish her novel anyway. It did not take long for Scott's furious reaction to emerge as he had received Zelda's manuscript a few days later. Surprisingly, Scott did not write to Zelda but to Dr. Squires instead. She received his letter on March 14. Scott made clear he was very indignant. As could be expected, he felt betrayed by Zelda whom he was taking care of by paying for her hospitalization. He reproached the staff at the clinic for allowing Zelda to send the manuscript without him knowing about it.¹⁰⁴ In the next letter from Zelda to Scott, she timidly apologized. She insisted she had no intention of making him angry. "Scott, I love you more than anything on earth and if you were offended I am miserable... So, Dear, my own, please realize that it was not from any sense of not turning first to you..."¹⁰⁵ Whether Zelda was actually just afraid of Scott's opinion about her novel and did not want to interrupt his work or she rather wished to reduce the dependence on her husband and started to rebel is not possible to assert for sure.

Nevertheless, one thing is certain—for the first time Zelda crossed the boundary and invaded Scott's territory. Scott sensed that and, as a result, he felt his positions as both husband and writer were endangered. He claimed the right to the autobiographical material; he planned on using it in his novel *Tender Is the Night*, and thus insisted on specific changes in *Save Me the Waltz*—the middle section was to be "radically rewritten"¹⁰⁶ and the protagonist's name "Amory Blaine," identical to Scott's protagonist's name in his novel *This Side of Paradise*, was to be changed.¹⁰⁷ The whole matter irritated him, he could not forgive Zelda he had been left out and insinuated about through the character of David Knight. "Do you think that his turning up in a novel signed by my wife as a somewhat anaemic portrait painter... could pass unnoticed? In short, it puts me in an absurd position and Zelda in a ridiculous position... this mixture of fact and fiction is simply calculated to ruin us both, or what is

¹⁰⁴ See Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman's Life*, 156.

¹⁰⁵ Zelda Fitzgerald to F. Scott Fitzgerald, late March, 1932, in *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Kathy W. Barks, 176.

¹⁰⁶ F. Scott Fitzgerald to Maxwell Perkins, March 28, 1932, in *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Kathy W. Barks, 178.

¹⁰⁷ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 259.

left of us, and I can't let it stand... My God, my books made her a legend and her single intention in this somewhat thin portrait is to make me a non-entity."¹⁰⁸

Initially, Zelda's answer suggests she had not intended to displease her husband, she bitterly regretted having offended him and was prepared to rectify the situation: "Of course, I glad[ly] submit to anything you want about the book or anything else. I felt myself the thing was too crammed with material upon which I had not the time to dwell and consequently lost any story continuity."¹⁰⁹ Yet a few lines later she made it very clear that it was not only Scott who had an exclusive right to the autobiographical material and that she did not acquiesce to be pushed into the corner as a mere wife of a famous writer. "However, I would like you to thoroughly understand that my revision will be made on an aesthetic basis: that the other material which I will elect is nevertheless legitimate stuff which had cost me a pretty emotional penny to amass and which I intend to use when I can get the tranquility of spirit necessary to write the story of myself versus myself... I am your irritated Zelda."¹¹⁰ It was an obvious message from Zelda to Scott who was not very soothed by that.

Scott carefully supervised Zelda's revision of the novel and insisted on major changes. He considered the middle section a mendacious portrayal of himself as an impulsive, arrogant alcoholic, so the section had to be completely rewritten. There were probably quite drastic cuts of some passages—although we cannot say for sure because the original version has been lost—thus the final version of the book was far less coherent than the original manuscript.¹¹¹ When Scott was satisfied with the result, he wrote to Perkins: "Zelda's novel is now good, improved in every way. It is new... I am too close to it to judge it but it may be even better than I think."¹¹² Then he added that Zelda should not be exposed to a shock that might be caused by the potential fame and an influx of money due to her mental state. Two weeks later, he wrote: "Here is Zelda's novel. It is a good novel now, perhaps a very good novel—I am too close to tell. It has the faults and virtues of a first novel... It should interest the many thousands interested

¹⁰⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald to Dr. Squires, March 14, 1932, in *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Kathy W. Barks, 177-178.

¹⁰⁹ Zelda Fitzgerald to F. Scott Fitzgerald, April, 1932, in *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Kathy W. Barks, 178.

¹¹⁰ Zelda Fitzgerald to F. Scott Fitzgerald, April, 1932, in *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Kathy W. Barks, 179.

¹¹¹ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 260.

¹¹² Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 225.

in dancing. It is about something and absolutely new, and should sell.”¹¹³ Unfortunately, Scott’s surmise did not exactly come out to be true.

5.2 Reviews and critique of the novel

Zelda’s novel arrived at bookstores on October 7, 1932. It was printed on cheap paper, had no publicity or distribution plan and it had not been arranged for proofreading which many reviewers criticized her for. Only 1,392 copies from a printing of 3,010 were sold and the total earnings were a paltry £120.73. The financial failure shattered both Scott and Zelda and did not set their relationship right.¹¹⁴

Reviews of the book were mixed, some praising Zelda’s freshness and talent, others criticizing her idiosyncratic style. Some reviews held back and rather than evaluating Zelda’s literary abilities, they only informed the readers that the wife of the famous F. Scott Fitzgerald published her first novel.

“Zelda Fitzgerald herein steps from the obscurity of being simply Mrs. F. Scott Fitzgerald to become a novelist in her own name.”¹¹⁵

“Today Zelda Fitzgerald makes her bow with her first novel, *Save Me the Waltz*. It is inevitable that we record that Zelda is the wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald, that she shared his triumphs and appeared often in the social notices from Paris, London, New York, and Hollywood. If anyone knows what the gay, brilliant life of young Americans was like in the first years after the war she should know and be able to tell it.”¹¹⁶

“Zelda Fitzgerald, the wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald... in distinctive style tells the story of a woman who early decided never to regret anything.”¹¹⁷

Those who were fond of Zelda’s novel pointed out her depiction of the atmosphere of the time and the way in which the writer captured the protagonist’s intense experience.

“More than delightful it is to encounter anyone who can treat contemporary life with such a gift; and the talented wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald has obviously a sensitive talent of this sort.”¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 225.

¹¹⁴ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 263.

¹¹⁵ B. V., “Reviewing the latest contributions in the Book World,” review of *Save Me the Waltz*, by Zelda Fitzgerald, *Evanston (Ill.) News-Index*, October 11, 1932.

¹¹⁶ Harry Hansen, “The First Reader,” review of *Save Me the Waltz*, by Zelda Fitzgerald, *San Francisco News*, October 19, 1932.

¹¹⁷ “Talented Wife,” review of *Save Me the Waltz*, by Zelda Fitzgerald, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sec. D, November 6, 1932.

“It’s all very well to be known as the ‘talented wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald’, but when an author has written a book constructive in thought, clever in execution, individual, fascinating, and brisk, she deserves to shine in her own light rather than to bask in the reflection of another, even though that other is a gifted husband... Her style is succinct and refreshing, clear, and under perfect control. Sincere and distinctive, author and novel can well stand on their own merits, receiving well-earned applause.”¹¹⁹

However, the critics usually objected to at least some aspects of the book.

“It is a good enough, plausibly told little story. As to the manner of its writing, it is an odd combination of good and bad. Mrs. Fitzgerald has moments of easy naturalness which make her seem a born storyteller, but she is also guilty of a good deal of awkward, clumsy overwriting.”¹²⁰

“Mrs. Fitzgerald, wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald, has written this novel in charming style although her plot is not extremely new.”¹²¹

Most of the negative critiques reproached Zelda for insufficient proofreading, lack of integrity of the book, and the language and style of the book which was allegedly too ornate. According to Mary E. Wood, the criticism stemmed from F. Scott Fitzgerald’s readers’ expectations. Scott’s readers wanted the story and the characters to be “realistic” and their assessment was based on the conventional assumptions about what the woman might want and what she might be like. As a result, they were not able to appreciate Zelda’s literary style which differed quite a lot.¹²²

“This, on at least two counts, is one of the most exasperating books I have finished in years... Mrs. Fitzgerald’s weird vocabulary, coupled with a penchant for narrative incoherence, made *Save Me the Waltz* anything but a pleasant literary morsel for this correspondent.”¹²³

¹¹⁸ Charlotte Becker, “A Stormy Passage from Youth’s Urge to Days of Reason,” review of *Save Me the Waltz*, by Zelda Fitzgerald, *Buffalo Evening News*, “Saturday Magazine,” October 8, 1932.

¹¹⁹ C. F. R., “Review of *Save Me the Waltz*,” review of *Save Me the Waltz*, by Zelda Fitzgerald, *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 15, 1932.

¹²⁰ Joseph Henry Jackson, “A Book a Day,” review of *Save Me the Waltz*, by Zelda Fitzgerald, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sec. A, October 24, 1932.

¹²¹ “Alabama Steps Fast in Europe,” review of *Save Me the Waltz*, by Zelda Fitzgerald, *Sacramento Union*, January 8, 1933.

¹²² See Mary E. Wood, “A Wizard Cultivator: Zelda Fitzgerald’s *Save Me the Waltz* as Asylum Autobiography,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 11 (1992): 259-260. <https://jstor.org/stable/464300>.

¹²³ H. R. Pinckard, “Fitzgerald’s Wife Presents Her First Book,” review of *Save Me the Waltz*, by Zelda Fitzgerald, *Huntington [W. V.] Advertiser*, October 30, 1932.

“*Save Me the Waltz*—the title typifies the book, in its shallowness and lack of meaning, in its overstraining for effect, and a marked appeal to the ultramodern readers of the world... The action is slow, the events drawn out over a surprising quantity of paper.”¹²⁴

“It is not only that her publishers have not seen fit to curb and almost ludicrous lushness of writing... but they have not given the book the elementary services of a literate proofreader.”¹²⁵

Maxwell Perkins, Zelda’s publisher, tried to support her: “You should go on writing because everything you do has an individual quality that comes from yourself, and no one else can duplicate it. And each thing you do, it seems, shows a growing skill in expression.”¹²⁶ He calmed her down and wrote her she should not be too disappointed. After all, it was her first novel, moreover, published during the Great Depression. Still, the harsh reviews and the financial failure affected Zelda to a great extent. She had hoped to be given more recognition for her work.¹²⁷

I am convinced that the objections to the ornate style of the book are unfounded. It is this unconventional play with language and the use of unexpected metaphors and images that should be appreciated. All things considered, since Zelda’s adolescence, people have noticed and admired her expressive abilities and language skills. They were the ones that were fully manifested in the novel. However, it must be admitted that incoherence sometimes does harm the novel. Given Zelda’s mental state and the pace at which she wrote the book, one cannot be surprised the novel might not always be consistent.

¹²⁴ Jane Morrison, “Modern Story By Fitzgerald Seems Unreal,” review of *Save Me the Waltz*, by Zelda Fitzgerald, *Charlotte [N. C.] News*, Sec. B, November 27, 1932.

¹²⁵ Dorothea Brande, “Review of *Save Me the Waltz*,” review of *Save Me the Waltz*, by Zelda Fitzgerald, *Bookman* V. 75, November 1932.

¹²⁶ Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 265.

¹²⁷ See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 321.

6. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS IN *SAVE ME THE WALTZ*

6.1 Characters in the novel

There is no doubt that *Save Me the Waltz* is highly autobiographical as Zelda did not try to hide her source of inspiration at all. The life story of her heroine Alabama Beggs is very similar to hers and the names of the characters in the novel do not differ much from their factual counterparts. Scott was using their life together as an inspiration for his work all the time; it was finally time for Zelda to tell her version of their story and make use of everything she and Scott have experienced.

The protagonist of *Save Me the Waltz* resembles Zelda immensely. Alabama Beggs is an angelically beautiful smart young woman who desires to shine. She yearns to impress the vicinity, enjoy life to the fullest, and never get bored. "...she already planned to escape on the world's reversals from the sense of suffocation that seemed to her to be eclipsing her family, her sisters, and mother. She, she told herself, would move brightly along high places and stop to trespass and admire, and if the fine was a heavy one—well, there was no good in saving up beforehand to pay it."¹²⁸ She comes from a Southern background as her name overtly indicates. This origin plays a significant role in her life. When she marries a famous handsome painter David Knight and moves with him to New York, she soon begins to perceive the differences between the American North and the South, and as a wife of a well-known artist, she has to deal with the expectations that David's friends and acquaintances have about her.

Alabama gives birth to a child, travels with David and her daughter around the world but gradually begins to feel more and more unfulfilled as David is the productive one who earns the money, has a decisive voice, and takes care of family matters. Much as she loves her husband, their relationship becomes very oppressive and tumultuous and Alabama cannot stand it anymore. She gets involved in an affair with a French aviator Jacques just like Zelda did with Edouard Jozan. Yet the contentment still does not come, and therefore Alabama clings to a single goal—she is firmly determined to become a professional ballerina. Zelda's fictional counterpart practises to exhaustion, becomes consumed with ballet and nothing but ballet. Eventually, Zelda's and

¹²⁸ Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 32.

Alabama's paths diverge. While Zelda suffered from a mental breakdown, Alabama gets an infection in her leg and thus is forced to quit dancing.

As mentioned above, Scott was strictly opposed to the portrayal of himself through the character of Alabama's husband, David Knight. He considered the character a bland wimp with little artistic potential and unsympathetic nature. It is understandable that if Zelda had been inspired by their real-life story and Scott had problems with alcohol, so did David Knight, to Scott's displeasure. Although David does not make his living by writing like Scott, he is still an artist. The character was originally named Amory Blaine, like Scott's protagonist in *This Side of Paradise*, but due to Scott's resolute disapproval, Zelda renamed it. Ironically, the new name did not appeal to Scott either as the character's first name had probably been taken from Van Vechten's novel *Parties* (1930) in which the character of a jealous, unstable David Westlake appears, and David Knight's surname had probably been inspired by a New York lawyer Richard "Dick" Knight whose admiration towards Zelda was undeniable and whom Scott disliked very much. Zelda's second choice of her character's name thus might be seen as a subtle protest against her husband's interference in her literary work.¹²⁹

Alabama's parents are just like Zelda's as well. Zelda adjusted their names very little; the protagonist's mother is Millie, which seems like a combination of Zelda's mother's name Minnie and Scott's mother's name Mollie, and her father is Judge Austin Beggs while Zelda's father was Judge Anthony Sayre. The couple in the novel is also reminiscent of Zelda's parents in terms of personality traits. Judge Beggs is described as "a living fortress"¹³⁰. For Alabama, he represents an embodiment of certainty, stability, and determination. The character gives the same impression as Zelda's father must have given. As the head of the family, he was an important figure in Zelda's life, especially during her childhood and adolescence. When he died, it certainly affected her a lot—it might not be a coincidence that Zelda wrote her novel shortly after Judge Sayre's death. As the anchor incarnate by her father disappeared from her life, she was probably more prone to pluck up the courage to stand on her own two feet and plunged into writing. And like Zelda, Alabama suffers and mourns when her father dies at the end of the novel as well because with her father's death she loses some kind of protection.

¹²⁹ See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 311.

¹³⁰ Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 9.

Although Judge Beggs, as well as Judge Sayre, is often described as reserved, withdrawn, or even cold, Alabama and her sisters, or Zelda and her sisters, have always known they can rely on him. “‘Those girls,’ people said, ‘think they can do anything and get away with it.’ That was because of the sense of security they felt in their father.”¹³¹

The atmosphere of the household which Alabama grew up in is depicted vividly in the novel. “The house is a vacuum for the culture of Austin Begg’s integrity. Like a shining sword it sleeps at night in the sheath of his tired nobility.”¹³² Even Zelda’s sister Rosalind later acknowledged that *Save Me the Waltz* testifies about their family credibly. “The figures in her story whom I knew, are drawn with keen perception, particularly those of our parents. To be with them again I have only to read the book.”¹³³ Thanks to the novel, it is thus possible to gain a deeper insight into how Zelda perceived her parents.

If Alabama’s—and Zelda’s—father is the detached one in the family, her mother is, by contrast, a soft harmonizer. Being an antipole of the Judge, she is often confided in about relationships by her daughters. In return, she advises them on how to work things out to avoid confrontation with their father. “‘Why do you bother your father? You could make your arrangements outside,’ she said placatingly. The wide and lawless generosity of their mother was nourished from many years of living faced with the irrefutable logic of the Judge’s fine mind.”¹³⁴ Like her fictional counterpart, Minnie Sayre knew her husband very well and was able to neatly handle him. She was a loving mother who tended to spoil her children¹³⁵—without her, Zelda might not have been so confidently enchanting others with her indomitable boldness.

Other characters bear a significant resemblance to Zelda’s close relatives. Alabama’s sister Dixie is much like Zelda’s sister Rosalind. She is eleven years older than her sister and works as a society editor, just like Rosalind did in Montgomery.¹³⁶ When Alabama gives birth to a child, the little girl is named Bonnie, similarly to Zelda’s daughter who used to be called Scottie. She even wears a blue ski suit which can also be

¹³¹ Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 9.

¹³² Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 12.

¹³³ Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 260.

¹³⁴ Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 16.

¹³⁵ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 8.

¹³⁶ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 228.

seen in the photos of Scottie.¹³⁷ Overall, Zelda makes it clear by whom the characters have been inspired.

6.2 The relation to *Tender Is the Night* (1934)

About one year and a half after the release of *Save Me the Waltz* (1932) and nine years after the publication of Scott's latest novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Scott's final completed novel *Tender Is the Night* (1934) was published. A lot has changed for Scott since the publication of *The Great Gatsby*—his relationship with Zelda has suffered, Zelda's mental health has deteriorated, Scott himself had an affair, he has become alienated from many of his friends, and has been constantly drowning in alcohol.¹³⁸

There was no question about the fact that the conditions in America have generally declined—the Roaring Twenties and the hopeful expectations for a bright future were over, on the contrary, the Great Depression emerged and hit the country very hard. The American society decayed, and the characters of Nicole Warren and Dick Diver in *Tender Is the Night* reflect it.

Scott's novel tells a story of a glamorous American couple—Nicole Warren, a beautiful young lady diagnosed with schizophrenia, and Dick Diver, a psychiatrist, Nicole's doctor, and subsequently her husband. At first, the couple has a good time and lives a turbulent life in Europe, however, the rifts in the relationship later begin to appear and after Dick's affair with a young actress Rosemary Hoyt, the whole marriage falls apart, as well as Dick's psychiatric career.

We have to bear in mind that both Scott's and Zelda's novels are not autobiographies, thus they enabled their authors to partially liberate themselves from the material and allow the reader a looser interpretation. *Tender Is the Night* is probably less conspicuously autobiographical than Zelda's *Save Me the Waltz* which strikingly recounts a considerable part of Zelda's life. Yet the inspiration for *Tender Is the Night* cannot be denied.

¹³⁷ Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 260.

¹³⁸ Sarah Malfait, "Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald, Partners or Rivals? Autobiografiction, the Madness Narrative and Gender in *Save Me the Waltz* and *Tender Is the Night*" (master's diploma thesis, Ghent University, 2013), 32.

The life of the Divers draws upon Scott's and Zelda's experiences but also upon the life of Fitzgeralds' close friends Sara and Gerald Murphys to whom Scott dedicated the novel and who never came to terms with the fact that they were supposed to be a partial model for Scott's characters.¹³⁹ Anyway, Scott was unsparing in the characterization of Nicole Diver which reveals Zelda blatantly. He used Zelda's mental illness as an inspiration to depict Nicole's feelings and her way of thinking—he even directly drew upon private letters Zelda had sent him and quoted the exact phrases, for example:

“At any rate one thing has been achieved: I am thoroughly and completely humiliated and broken if that was what you wanted.”¹⁴⁰ (from Zelda's letter)

“The mental trouble is all over and besides that I am completely broken and humiliated, if that was what they wanted.”¹⁴¹ (from *Tender Is the Night*)

When Zelda re-entered Phipps clinic in February 1934, she had probably already read at least the first half of the novel which suggests that reading it definitely did not help her mental state.¹⁴² She knew what Scott had been working on but seeing the words on the paper was a very different thing. Zelda was deeply affected by the private aspects Scott had used in his novel, probably even more than she admitted aloud. She said that she was “a little upset about it... But a person has a right to interpret—But it really doesn't matter. What made me mad was that he made the girl so awful and kept on reiterating how she had ruined his life and I couldn't help identifying myself with her because she had so many of my experiences.”¹⁴³

Indeed, Scott used the real experiences as an inspiration to portray Nicole's mental instability. One of the examples in the novel is the scene in which Dick and Nicole drive in the car and suddenly, Nicole grabs the steering wheel and attempts to push the car down the cliff—Zelda did the same thing when the Fitzgeralds left Riviera in 1929.¹⁴⁴ Zelda felt undermined by such exposure and could not bear being a model for the

¹³⁹ See Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman's Life*, 177.

¹⁴⁰ Zelda Fitzgerald to F. Scott Fitzgerald, summer, 1930, in *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Kathy W. Barks, 100.

¹⁴¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender Is the Night* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 138.

¹⁴² Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 284.

¹⁴³ Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 286.

¹⁴⁴ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 156.

character of Nicole as the one who ravages Dick's (Scott's life)—she did not believe things happened as described in the novel.¹⁴⁵

As if that was not enough for Zelda, there was another issue related to the character of Nicole which concerned her. Nicole was sexually abused by her father. If Nicole resembled Zelda in several ways, the incest was a defamation of Zelda's beloved father Judge Sayre. Even though Scott acknowledged he had made the situation up, Zelda's friends were irritated. It was clear that if Scott used the exact phrases from Zelda's letters, the readers might assume this part of Nicole's story was inspired by Zelda's life as well.¹⁴⁶ Unintentional as the denigration was, Scott hurt Zelda by attacking a crucial male figure in her life.

Scott was well aware that the publication of his novel might emotionally affect Zelda. As Sarah Malfait aptly points out: "For the Fitzgeralds, their lives did not only influence their fiction, their fiction also affected their lives in some ways."¹⁴⁷ In the letters to Zelda, Scott urged her not to be too occupied with the novel and not to take the matter too personally: "Let me reiterate that I don't want you to have too much traffic with my book, which is a melancholy work and seems to have haunted most of the reviewers. I feel very strongly about your re-reading it. It represents certain phases of life that are now over."¹⁴⁸ With "phases of life that are now over," Scott alluded, among other things, to his romance with a young Hollywood actress Lois Moran¹⁴⁹ who most probably inspired the character of Rosemary. Although Scott did try to reassure her, he must have expected the impact of the novel on Zelda's mental health. Ironically, when *Save Me the Waltz* was published, Scott was indignant and demanded various changes in the novel, but after the publication of *Tender Is the Night* there was no one to defend Zelda's privacy and her rights.

There are several reasons why *Save Me the Waltz* and *Tender Is the Night* demand to be compared. Both of the novels focus on American womanhood during a decade of significant economic and social changes. However, while Zelda is more receptive to the

¹⁴⁵ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 286.

¹⁴⁶ See Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman's Life*, 177.

¹⁴⁷ Malfait, "Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald, Partners or Rivals? Autobiography, the Madness Narrative and Gender in *Save Me the Waltz* and *Tender Is the Night*," 35.

¹⁴⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald to Zelda Fitzgerald, April 26, 1934, in *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Kathy W. Barks, 204.

¹⁴⁹ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 129.

oncoming changes allowing women to express themselves via work as can be seen in the character of Alabama, Scott holds to more traditional values and position of men and women in the society.

Although both novels are concerned with a breakdown of a woman, they treat it very differently. Through her novel, *Zelda* challenges the expected description and definition of a mentally ill woman as she substitutes a story of mental illness (schizophrenia story) with a story of an intense bodily experience (ballet story), and thus subverts the expected narrative of an asylum autobiography which would constrict her writing.¹⁵⁰ Alabama Beggs breaks down due to a physical injury.

Scott, in contrast, demonstrates a very different representation of *Zelda's* struggle with mental illness—not only through the character of Nicole Diver. There is another female character in *Tender Is the Night* that mediates Scott's opinions about artistic rights and the position of women in the society. The character is referred to as Dick Diver's "most interesting case."¹⁵¹ Her name is not mentioned, she is rather defined by her medical symptoms, especially by nervous eczema which took away her former beauty and which currently covers her whole body and forces her to be wrapped in bandages as "the Iron Maiden."¹⁵² The reference to *Zelda* is obvious as she had eczema during her illness and suffered a lot from it.¹⁵³ Importantly, Dick Diver attributes the illness to the fact that the "Iron Maiden" invaded "men's world"—she wanted to engage in art but as a woman, she was too fragile to handle it. Dick does not appreciate the woman's struggle at all:

"I am here as a symbol of something. I thought perhaps you would know what it was."

'You are sick,' he said mechanically.

'Then what was it I had almost found?'

'A greater sickness.'

'That's all?'

'That's all.'"¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ See Wood, "A Wizard Cultivator: *Zelda Fitzgerald's Save Me the Waltz* as Asylum Autobiography," 247-248.

¹⁵¹ Fitzgerald, *Tender Is the Night*, 201.

¹⁵² Fitzgerald, *Tender Is the Night*, 202.

¹⁵³ See Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman's Life*, 132.

¹⁵⁴ Fitzgerald, *Tender Is the Night*, 203.

She broke the social norms which consider art a male domain and think of women as of dependant creatures. That implies the causes of the “Iron Maiden’s” breakdown differ from the ones of Alabama’s breakdown a lot.

Sarah Beebe Fryer suggests that the character of Rosemary, a young actress with whom Dick gets involved, embodies Scott’s conservative view and disapproval of career women as well.¹⁵⁵ Although Rosemary succeeds in her career and becomes famous and sought after as an actress, she fails to find true love. She falls in love with Dick who succumbs to her but decides to preserve his marriage, which, in the end, does not work out anyway.

Despite the different treatment of womanhood, the two novels evince substantial similarities. Both protagonists are beautiful, smart young ladies who get married to a successful man, have a child (children), and eventually get tired of living in their husband’s shadow. Both of them enjoy spending time with their friends on Riviera but eventually suffer from a breakdown. The two novels contain the death of a father (Alabama’s father in Zelda’s novel and Dick’s father in Scott’s novel) which affects the child deeply. Both incorporate an extramarital affair (Alabama’s affair with Jacques referring to Edouard Jozan and Dick’s affair with Rosemary referring to Lois Moran). Although they are novels with autobiographical aspects and not literature of fact, they serve as a significant source for learning about Zelda’s and Scott’s points of view and their feelings about common real-life experiences when we compare them.

6.3 Finding one’s own voice

Both Zelda and her heroine Alabama Beggs dreamed of an exciting, cheerful life, and both gradually began to feel a bitter disillusionment with the path their life had taken. For both of them, it was not enough to be the wife of a famous artist because the parties soon start to pall, shiny things fade, and all that is left is a tormenting emptiness and a sense of unfulfilled potential.

Literary theoreticians agree that even the title of Zelda’s novel refers to its central concern—the quest for one’s own identity and fulfillment and the exploration of the true self. According to Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin, there is an obvious irony in the title of

¹⁵⁵ See Sarah Beebe Fryer, “Nicole Warren Diver and Alabama Beggs Knight: Women on the Threshold of Freedom,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 31 (1985): 324. <https://jstor.org/stable/26281498>.

the book. She points out that “save me the waltz” is a common remark by a man at a ball, thus the title refers to the difference between the expected social roles of women and men. While men were supposed to be the active ones who choose with whom they would dance and then ask a woman to dance, women were supposed to passively wait for a man to come.¹⁵⁶

Another irony is that during the only scene in which Alabama and David are literally situations dancing waltz together, David is constantly stepping on Alabama’s feet. However, when Alabama engages in solo dancing and becomes a ballerina, the dance is far more liberating. It somehow includes all that she needs. “‘I have been to the Russian ballet,’ Alabama tried to explain herself, ‘and it seemed to me—Oh, I don’t know! As if it held all the things I’ve always tried to find in everything else.’”¹⁵⁷ All of a sudden, it is just about herself and her body, about the immense effort to achieve something and surpass herself. Dancing becomes a way of breaking free and finally owning her life. Through dance, Alabama expresses herself and looks for an independent identity without the dependence on her husband. Dancing seems to be a new world which David cannot step in.

Although at first, David impresses Alabama very much and appears to be a knight on a white horse, Alabama slowly realizes her position in the relationship is not a prominent one. There is an infamous scene in the novel which precisely depicts how Zelda often must have been feeling. In the scene, David carves “David, David, Knight, Knight, Knight and Miss Alabama Nobody”¹⁵⁸ in the doorpost of the country club where he and Alabama have met for the first time. Alabama feels frustrated because of that but she does not protest much. The message of the scene is, nevertheless, clear—a woman is “Nobody” without a man. In reality, Scott actually carved his and Zelda’s names in the doorpost of the country club in Montgomery.¹⁵⁹ Although it did not state “Zelda Nobody,” it was a moment Zelda apparently never forgot because Scott irritated her the whole time by boasting about his forthcoming fame, not thinking about her wishes and dreams.

¹⁵⁶ See Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin, “Art as Woman’s Response and Search: Zelda Fitzgerald’s *Save Me the Waltz*,” *The Southern Literary Journal* 11 (1979): 32. <https://jstor.org/stable/20077612>.

¹⁵⁷ Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 115.

¹⁵⁸ Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 39.

¹⁵⁹ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 33.

Even though Alabama is mostly presented independently with her own name without a reference to her husband's full name, Valdine Clemens emphasizes that the few situations in which Alabama is subsumed under her husband's name are significant. When Alabama and David move to New York, the gossips refer to them as "the Knights" and later in Paris there are references to "the David Knights." When Alabama starts to pursue ballet, only once is she called "Mrs. David Knight." "The David Knights" label does not reappear until Alabama collapses and returns to America with David.¹⁶⁰ Once again there is a hint of Zelda's feelings about her subordinate position.

The social position of women in 1920s' America was quite treacherous in general. As Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin highlights, women gained just a superficial form of emancipation—they were smoking, bobbing their hair, swearing, and flirting, but they mostly did not get rid of the dependence on their husbands.¹⁶¹ Ultimately, the description of Alabama's parents exactly epitomizes the social setting of a still patriarchally organized society. "Millie did not seem to notice about her own life, that there would be nothing left when her husband died. He was the father of her children, who were girls, and who had left her for the families of other men."¹⁶² That was the conformity that Zelda was accustomed to in her own family.

Zelda was encountering views that confirmed the patriarchal setting of the society and these views and opinions speak through some characters in the novel: "'You need somebody to take care of you,' he said seriously. 'You're a man's woman and need to be bossed. No, I mean it,' he insisted when Alabama began to laugh."¹⁶³ Several characters in the novel consider Alabama's dancing to be just an entertaining distraction: "'... I do think dancing would be an asset if you're going to care anyhow. If the party got dull you could do a few whirlygigs."¹⁶⁴ They cannot understand her motivation and aim: "'So my friend tells me you want to dance? Why? You have friends and money already."¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ See Valdine Clemens, "Zelda Fitzgerald's *Save Me the Waltz*: A Critical Reappraisal" (master's diploma thesis, The University of Manitoba, 1985), 58.

¹⁶¹ See Tavernier-Courbin, "Art as Woman's Response and Search: Zelda Fitzgerald's *Save Me the Waltz*," 33.

¹⁶² Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 186.

¹⁶³ Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 109.

¹⁶⁴ Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 108.

¹⁶⁵ Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 115.

Yet Zelda did not regret her ballet efforts and her attempt to find a field that would be just hers, where Scott did not intervene. When Alabama's daughter sums up what her mother has been telling her in the novel, she demonstrates it plainly. "She said—let me see—I don't know what Mummy said, Daddy, only she said her piece of advice that she had to give me was not to be a backseat driver about life."¹⁶⁶

6.4 Artistry and artist's resolution

It has already been mentioned that Zelda had talents in several artistic fields and art played an important role in her life. In relation to that, *Save Me the Waltz* can be a useful material for a better understanding of Zelda's view on art and her concept of the role of an artist. Zelda explores the true definition of an artist in the novel through Alabama's and David's diverse standpoints towards art. By making the character of Alabama's husband David Knight a professional artist, she allowed herself to gain a deeper insight into artist's mind. I am convinced that paradoxically, it turns out it is actually Alabama who has a genuine artistic sense.

The major themes in the novel concerning art involve "comment on art's relationship to hedonism, on the definition of the artist, on creating the self, and on Alabama's attempt to make her body her canvas."¹⁶⁷ In my opinion, the list could certainly be extended—the novel further comments on the effort to balance the role of a wife and the role of an artist, on the struggles to adopt a healthy, convenient approach towards art which would not be too overdemanding or on coping with the forced abandonment of a passionate artistic avocation. The development of Zelda's approach to art is reflected in the character of Alabama. At first, Alabama is, just like Zelda, a hedonistic materialist who recklessly does not think about the potential consequences of her behaviour. She hopes to have a life filled with amusement with David and when the lavish lifestyle begins to fade and wither, she clings to David even more. Yet the contentment is not there and Alabama takes off the rose-tinted glasses. She realizes that David is too overconfident and perceives art superficially. He is not able to support Alabama when she practises hard and treats her like a likeable object, not grasping the emotions Alabama embraces in her dance. "There's no use killing yourself. I hope that you realize that the biggest difference in the world is between the amateur and the

¹⁶⁶ Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 176.

¹⁶⁷ Seidel, Wang and Wang, "Performing Art: Zelda Fitzgerald's Art and the Role of the Artist," 139.

professional in the arts... You're not the first person who's ever tried to dance,' David said. 'You don't need to be so sanctimonious about it.'"¹⁶⁸ This captures Zelda's grievance about Scott's approach to her—he just could not understand that parties were no longer enough for her. She had the potential not to just stand in his shadow, and when Scott still discriminated between “a professional,” meaning himself, and “an amateur,” meaning her, he harmed her a lot.

Finally, Alabama's body becomes her unique medium of self-expression. She focuses on the solitary self and comprehends that the realm of art is lonely. Her body seems to be grotesque; it is distorted and it hurts. Zelda depicted this perspective in some of her paintings as well—the figures in her paintings are not beautiful at all; they appear to be defined just by their flesh and bones as mere puppets, their limbs are exaggerated and the paintings generally render strain and suffering rather than elegance or beauty.¹⁶⁹ In the novel, Alabama discusses the matter with her father: “I thought you could tell me if our bodies are given to us as counterirritants to the soul. I thought you'd know why when our bodies ought to bring surcease from our tortured minds, they fail and collapse; and why, when we are tormented in our bodies, does our soul desert us as a refuge?”¹⁷⁰

It is not the case that Alabama feels only liberated and satisfied when she pursues dance. Not only is she physically exhausted by toiling hard, but she also hesitates to balance the role of an artist, a wife, and a mother. She tries to escape the domestic through the dance and perches between conformity and rebellion as other women did at that time.¹⁷¹ David is gradually more and more frustrated by Alabama's neglect of duties as she comes back home from the ballet studio completely worn out.

She does not have enough strength to entertain their friends, moreover, she spends no time with her daughter. “She hadn't realized how much fuller life was with Bonnie there. She was sorry she hadn't sat more with her child when she was sick in bed. Maybe she could have missed rehearsals.”¹⁷² “‘Oh, God!’ thought Alabama. She had almost forgotten about Bonnie's mind going on and on, growing. Bonnie was proud of her parents the same way Alabama had been of her own as a child, imagining into them

¹⁶⁸ Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 138.

¹⁶⁹ See Seidel, Wang and Wang, “Performing Art: Zelda Fitzgerald's Art and the Role of the Artist,” 142.

¹⁷⁰ Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 185.

¹⁷¹ See Rickie-Ann Legleitner, “The Cult of Artistry in Zelda Fitzgerald's *Save Me the Waltz*,” *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 12 (2014): 125. <https://jstor.org/stable/10.5325/fscotfzrevi.12.1.0124>.

¹⁷² Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 167.

whatever perfections she wanted to believe in.”¹⁷³ Just as Alabama feels sorry for not having a closer relationship with her daughter, Zelda probably regretted it as well and felt a failure as a mother. Scottie has always been more taken care of by a nanny just like Bonnie was in the novel.¹⁷⁴

Alabama eventually gets an offer to dance in Naples and accepts it, in contrast to Zelda who was invited to join there a ballet school as well but rejected the offer. Although eventually, the ballet career of both of them ends prematurely, it has been a crucial chapter in the search for themselves.

¹⁷³ Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 151.

¹⁷⁴ See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 364.

7. THE SHORT STORIES OF ZELDA FITZGERALD

If Zelda's only published novel has not received as much scholarly attention as it deserves, it is doubly true for Zelda's short stories, most of which were written at the turn of the 20s and 30s. It is very important to read the stories in the context of Zelda's journalism. In her articles on modern flappers, Zelda criticizes the "new type" of a flapper which is very inauthentic: "Flapperdom has become a game; it is no longer a philosophy."¹⁷⁵ She remarks that the new flappers were engulfed by consumerism and the capitalist machinery: "Flapperdom is... making the youth of the country cynical. It is making them intelligent and teaching them to capitalize their natural resources and get their money's worth. They are merely applying business methods to being young."¹⁷⁶ The new generation was supposedly "blasé,"¹⁷⁷ while the genuine flappers got married, had children, and disappeared in boredom and conventions. In the short stories, Zelda points out the hollowness and superficiality of the imitators of true flappers. In addition to that, she deals with the position of women in society at that time in general and examines their fatal flaws and the treacherous paths to satisfaction and happiness. Much of these examinations are inspired by her life experiences.

7.1 "The Iceberg"

Regardless of Matthew Bruccoli's statement that "apart from a high school poem, 'Over the Top with Pershing,' written in collaboration with her mother, there is no evidence that Zelda Sayre had literary ambitions before her marriage at the age of twenty"¹⁷⁸ from 2013, we currently know Zelda had written some fiction before she met Scott. "The Iceberg," released in 2013 by *The New Yorker* as "a recently unearthed story," is a solid proof of that. Zelda wrote the story at the age of seventeen or eighteen, published it in *Sidney Lanier High School Literary Journal*, and won a prize for it.¹⁷⁹ The story impressively foreshadows Zelda's subsequent literary work as it suggests Zelda's early awareness of social expectations from women at that time.

¹⁷⁵ Fitzgerald, "Eulogy on the Flapper," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 392.

¹⁷⁶ Fitzgerald, "Eulogy on the Flapper," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 393.

¹⁷⁷ Fitzgerald, "Eulogy on the Flapper," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 392.

¹⁷⁸ Bruccoli, *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, xi.

¹⁷⁹ See "The Iceberg: A Story by Zelda Fitzgerald," *The New Yorker*, December 20, 2013.

<https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-iceberg-a-story-by-zelda-fitzgerald>.

I believe this inconspicuous, neglected story can serve as a fundamental key to understanding Zelda's approach to marriage and her idea about a fulfilled Self, which she was apparently clear of at a young age already.

The protagonist of the short story, 30-year-old Cornelia, is a Southerner as Zelda was herself. Zelda knew the social background of the American South very well, and thus it is only authentic that Cornelia's family endures her indifferent approach to marriage with a heavy heart. The primary goal of the protagonist is not to get married, which seems incomprehensible to her relatives. When Cornelia's brother comments on her attitude towards men, he critically remarks "A fellow might as well try to tackle an iceberg."¹⁸⁰ However, in Zelda's view, Cornelia is not aloof at all—she expresses that lust for self-sufficiency, a satisfying career, and personal growth should not condemn a woman as an ungrateful, cold-hearted individual who looks down on others. The effort to assert oneself is in an individual's nature.

At this time already, during her adolescence, Zelda emphasizes the importance of professional work and independence for women and refers to the social pressure demanding women to get married. It seems likely she was well aware of her mother's wasted artistic talents and did not intend to reconcile herself to the idea that women were supposed to abandon their professional ambitions and be content with the roles of wives and mothers. In her story, the protagonist Cornelia secretly takes a course at business college and becomes a successful stenographer, not taking into account her family's disapproval.

Ironically, Cornelia marries her manager. The tone of the story is surprisingly mild and humorous for such a serious matter, in contrast to Zelda's later work. It seems Zelda wanted to make her point about women's need for independence, yet she did not aim to pressurise or moralise. Still, the message of the story is straightforward and evident in Cornelia's opinions on marriage which reflect Zelda's view: "Mother,' she would say, 'is marriage the end and aim of life? Is there nothing else on which a woman might spend her energy?'"¹⁸¹ Zelda plainly suggests Cornelia does not want to compete with men but rather she desires to find herself. The same approach echoes in Zelda's future, her relationship with Scott, and her literary career: "Perhaps, after all, a social equation

¹⁸⁰ "The Iceberg: A Story by Zelda Fitzgerald," *The New Yorker*.

¹⁸¹ "The Iceberg: A Story by Zelda Fitzgerald," *The New Yorker*.

in trousers had not been just what Cornelia craved. Perhaps, after all, Cornelia was seeking self-expression.”¹⁸²

7.2 “Our Own Movie Queen”

Zelda’s first serious short story was written in 1923 and published two years later in *Chicago Sunday Tribune*.¹⁸³ It reflects the new stage in Zelda’s life when she married Scott, left the American South far behind, and entered a very different milieu. Her story warns of the emptiness and transience of celebrity life, with which she had much of her own experience, and mocks the partiality and hypocrisy present in the Hollywood industry. According to Cline, “its satirical underlying message is that Hollywood stardom does not require brains or talent.”¹⁸⁴ That is certainly true as the story revolves around an ordinary, small-town girl who accidentally experiences her fifteen minutes of fame.

Gracie Axelrod lives in the south of the town and just as Zelda used to hear the rumours about the lavishness of the North, she hears the rumours about the more exciting part of the town—“the gaiety of the dwellers on the upper riverbank.”¹⁸⁵ She fries chicken in her father’s “tumbledown shanty”¹⁸⁶ but gets an unexpected offer to work in the fancy Blue Ribbon department store. While working in Blue Ribbon, Gracie has more luck than sense and wins a popularity contest, just because her colleagues do not believe she could win and all of them vote for her. Gracie is not popular and she has no obvious talents, thus there are no good reasons why she should win the contest, yet she does. “She quietly expected great things to happen to her, and no doubt that’s one of the reasons why they did.”¹⁸⁷ Evidently, Zelda believed that the path to fame is very unpredictable, sometimes even ironical. She could definitely identify herself with the figure of a small-town girl with grandiose dreams about fame and a very different, exciting life.

¹⁸² “The Iceberg: A Story by Zelda Fitzgerald,” *The New Yorker*.

¹⁸³ See Christine Grogan, “Authorship and Artistry: Zelda Fitzgerald’s ‘A Millionaire’s Girl’ and ‘Miss Ella,’” *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 13 (2015): 113.
<https://jstor.org/stable/10.5325/fscotfitzrevi.13.1.0110>.

¹⁸⁴ Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 137.

¹⁸⁵ Fitzgerald, “Our Own Movie Queen,” in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 274.

¹⁸⁶ Fitzgerald, “Our Own Movie Queen,” in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 273.

¹⁸⁷ Fitzgerald, “Our Own Movie Queen,” in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 274.

Gracie is awarded the opportunity to star in a movie and becomes a local celebrity. In Gracie's sudden fame, Zelda reflects her approach and her worries about the fleeting celebrity lifestyle. She was aware that such life, as the one Scott and she were living, could collapse anytime. Gracie's coronation is described as follows: "Behind Gracie a blue pole arose, balancing over her head a bright, insecure star."¹⁸⁸ Kemry H. Farthing also accurately emphasizes the fact that after the coronation, Gracie is no longer referred to by her name, but as "the queen" instead. However, the title is lost when the movie is over.¹⁸⁹ Similarly, Zelda was often referred to as "the first flapper" and she was worried that she would be lost, too, when the society ceases to be interested in flapperdom. Who would she be without the title that defined her among other people?

Eventually, the director cuts most of Gracie's scenes and replaces them with the ones with the store owner's daughter, which cannot be understood by the naïve Gracie: "When they go out and elect somebody queen they ought to make her queen of something except an old broken-down wagon."¹⁹⁰ Such were at times, according to Zelda, practices in the film industry. However, Gracie does not give up, takes revenge, and with the help of an assistant director Joe Murphy, she remakes the movie into a farcical comedy in which she stars. She goes against conventions, just as Zelda's other characters, stops longing for success and fame, and finds happiness and love with Joe. The story suggests Zelda's awareness of the fact that fame is very unpredictable and cannot ensure long-lasting happiness.

7.3 The Girl stories

During Zelda's frantic dancing efforts, she was given the opportunity to utilize her literary talent in the series called "the Girl stories." H. L. Swanson, the editor of *College Humor*, suggested Zelda to write about female types. Zelda got down to work vigorously. Eventually, the stories were published between 1929 and 1931—five of them in *College Humor* and one of them in *Saturday Evening Post*. Later, Zelda acknowledged she was determined to write the stories because she did not want to be

¹⁸⁸Fitzgerald, "Our Own Movie Queen," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 279.

¹⁸⁹ See Kemry H. Farthing, "The Best Story: Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald's Return to the South Revealed Through the Analysis of her Articles and Fiction Published Between 1920 and 1932" (master's diploma thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2018), 23.

¹⁹⁰ Fitzgerald, "Our Own Movie Queen," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 286.

dependent on Scott's money and wanted to pay for her ballet lessons herself.¹⁹¹ Similarly, all the heroines in her "Girl stories" desperately yearn for an autonomous self. To gain independence, they usually break social norms but fail to achieve a balance between work and marriage. They are beautiful, ambitious, sometimes a bit selfish, and not willing to lead an ordinary, conventional life, just like Zelda was not. She emphasizes women's need to work professionally to fulfill their potential.

Gay, the protagonist of "The Original Follies Girl," receives the alimony from her ex-husband and sets out for New York with a dream to become a theatre actress. Zelda may have sympathized with her heroine's desire to shine and enjoy the glamour of a big city—after all, she experienced this enchantment as well when she moved from her hometown to New York with Scott. Yet she made it clear that she did not approve of Gay's superficial approach. Gay is the inauthentic modern flapper whom Zelda was writing about in her essays. "The thing that made you first notice Gay was the manner she had, as though she was masquerading as herself."¹⁹² Everything she does is for a purpose of bewitching the others and showing them what she can afford: "She knew she didn't like the apartment, but the vanity of taking her friends there made her stick for quite a while. It has so obviously cost a lot."¹⁹³ But as Zelda already expressed in "Our Own Movie Queen," the fame is fleeting; and when the gilt is gone, New York quickly forgets about Gay. All the pretence and the lack of meaningful work lead her to loneliness and alcoholism. Her dream does not come true and she eventually dies during childbirth.

Unlike Gay, Harriet in "Southern Girl" finds her happiness, in the end, although the path towards it is thorny. She comes from Jeffersonville, a city modelled on Zelda's hometown Montgomery. She falls in love with a Northerner called Dan who breaks his engagement because of her and takes her to the North. However, just like Zelda did when she moved to New York, Harriet feels she does not belong there. She comes back home but is not happy there either because "Nothing seems ever to happen in Jeffersonville..."¹⁹⁴ I believe that of all Zelda's heroines, it is just Harriet who reflects

¹⁹¹ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 198.

¹⁹² Fitzgerald, "The Original Follies Girl," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 293.

¹⁹³ Fitzgerald, "The Original Follies Girl," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 294.

¹⁹⁴ Fitzgerald, "Southern Girl," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 299.

Zelda's feelings and insecurities about her Southern origin and life in New York the most. Zelda herself never fully accustomed to the North. Maybe just like Harriet, she "was surprised at the robustness of her own laugh and distressed by the freeness of her Southern manner. She felt foreign to herself in finding herself so foreign to the others"¹⁹⁵ when she moved from Montgomery.

According to Madeline Herron, Zelda reveals the geographical implications of a feminine South and masculine North in "the Girl stories." Through the usage of soft imagery and the nostalgic mood, she elicits the image of a delicate South, whereas New York is described as rigid and detached.¹⁹⁶ I agree that the story can be seen as a defence of the South against northern criticism, yet it is obvious that even in the homely South Zelda was unfulfilled. At the end of her story, Harriet ironically marries a man from Ohio, moves there, and finally feels happy: "She was determined to find for herself a bigger sophistication that Jeffersonville had to offer."¹⁹⁷ Thus, on one hand, Zelda highlights the contrast between the North and the South and one's difficulties to accustom oneself to a different environment, yet on the other hand, she ambiguously concludes her Southern protagonist finds happiness in the North as if it was only a matter of adaptation after all—that might have been Zelda's wish for her own case.

Helena in "The Girl the Prince Liked" provides us, just like Gay in "The Original Follies Girl," with Zelda's comments on "fake" flapperdom in the 1920s, as she is another prototypical inauthentic modern flapper whom Zelda criticized. She inherited her father's ambitions and his eight million dollars with which she tries to impress the others. She identifies with her possessions and indulges in a sense of superiority over others: "...she liked using other people's things, not for what she got out of them but for the sense of power it gave her to have somebody doing things for her."¹⁹⁸

She has an affair with a Prince of Wales who later goes away and leaves her with a memory and a nice bracelet. Ultimately, it turns out that more than connections, money, and power, Helena needs a meaningful occupation to gain satisfaction. With this story,

¹⁹⁵ Fitzgerald, "Southern Girl," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 305.

¹⁹⁶ See Madeline Herron, "All American Girls: Geographical Implications and the Quest for Female Autonomy in Zelda Fitzgerald's Girl Series" (bachelor's diploma thesis, The University of North Carolina in Asheville, 2017), 2.

¹⁹⁷ Fitzgerald, "Southern Girl," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 306.

¹⁹⁸ Fitzgerald, "The Girl the Prince Liked," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 311.

Zelda seeks to demonstrate that true flapperdom is not about frivolity, boasting, and squandering money; it is not a game one plays with the others. Though this lifestyle is provocative, it requires an idiosyncratic style and grace. Moreover, flapperdom does not imply that it is possible to gain satisfaction without meaningful efforts.

Lou in “The Girl With Talent” is much closer to the satisfaction gained through work than Helena is; still, she does not reach it. The story served Zelda as a means of coping with her decision to turn down the offer to dance the debut in *Aida* in Naples. Lou is a talented dancer who has a handsome husband and a baby, just like Zelda, who seems to speak through Lou’s mouth when Lou asserts: “I am going to work so hard that my spirit will be completely broken, and I am going to be a very fine dancer.”¹⁹⁹ A bit surprisingly, in the middle of the promising career, Lou runs off to China with a congenial Englishman. Similarly, Zelda did not make use of the opportunity either which might have been a great regret of hers years later when she was discontented with her life. It is worth noticing that while in this story, the protagonist does not accomplish a successful dancing career, as Zelda did not herself, the protagonist in the novel *Save Me the Waltz* accepts the offer, as if Zelda was compensating herself for her own decision.

“A Millionaire’s Girl” is considered one of Zelda’s best short stories. It reflects her opinions about the importance of the right motives behind one’s actions—the effort should be driven by the desire to achieve something for oneself, not for the sake of the others. Caroline, a girl with a dubious past, gets engaged to a wealthy young man called Barry. From the very beginning, it is insinuated to the reader that the marriage is doomed; at Caroline’s and Barry’s first meeting, there was “an aura of tragedy whirling above their two young heads.”²⁰⁰ Barry’s father disapproves of the marriage and tries to bribe Caroline so that she leaves Barry. Caroline accepts the money and later claims to Barry she misunderstood—if that was the case, the reader cannot know. Caroline heads West, resolved to become a movie star, in order to impress Barry, which is exactly the wrong motive Zelda criticizes.

As in “Southern Girl,” Zelda mediates her feelings after she left Montgomery and moved to New York with Scott through Caroline—for Caroline, the new world is “a

¹⁹⁹ Fitzgerald, “The Girl With Talent,” in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 325.

²⁰⁰ Fitzgerald, “A Millionaire’s Girl,” in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 328.

world that she knew, but that didn't know her."²⁰¹ In New York, Caroline is unable to fully develop her talent and get rid of the tension mainly because she does exactly what Zelda criticized—her pursuit of work is not motivated by herself—her own desire and ambition, but by her determination to attract Barry's attention again: "Ever since I met him everything I do or happens to me has seemed because of him. Now I am going to make a hit so that I can choose him again, because I'm going to have him somehow."²⁰² The escalation is dramatic; when Caroline hears a rumour about Barry being engaged to another girl, she decides to commit suicide during the movie premiere. The desperate and unsuccessful attempt actually attracts Barry who then proposes to Caroline. Nevertheless, Zelda implies her disapproval of the outcome and ends her story with a bitter statement: "She married him, of course, and since she left the films on that occasion, they have both had much to reproach each other for."²⁰³ Zelda's opinion is suggested via the narrator—it is better for a woman to remain autonomous and follow her ambitions than to suppress herself and be dependent on her husband. That is exactly what Zelda did not want herself and why she decisively embarked on ballet and took it very seriously.

Grogan further writes about the recurring theme of suicide in "A Millionaire's Girl" and also "Miss Ella." She asserts the theme in Zelda's stories is related to an incident in Zelda's and Scott's lives nicknamed "The Big Crisis." Scott's and Zelda's friends, the Murphys, recalled that Zelda tried to overdose when Scott confronted her about her affair with Edouard Jozan in 1924, although it is not certain if they did not confuse it with another event. Moreover, Zelda's family had a history of suicides—Zelda's maternal grandmother, aunt, and brother committed suicide, thus it is not surprising she implemented the subject into her fiction.²⁰⁴

Cline believes the story to be Zelda's witty response to Scott's affair with a Hollywood actress Lois Moran, whereas Grogan claims Zelda rather identified, at least at times, with the protagonist Caroline.²⁰⁵ I cannot wholly agree with either. I believe the story does not directly refer to Lois Moran as it does not quite criticize the film industry and

²⁰¹ Fitzgerald, "A Millionaire's Girl," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 331.

²⁰² Fitzgerald, "A Millionaire's Girl," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 333-334.

²⁰³ Fitzgerald, "A Millionaire's Girl," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 336.

²⁰⁴ See Grogan, "Authorship and Artistry: Zelda Fitzgerald's 'A Millionaire's Girl' and 'Miss Ella,'" 110-111, 115.

²⁰⁵ See Grogan, "Authorship and Artistry: Zelda Fitzgerald's 'A Millionaire's Girl' and 'Miss Ella,'" 122.

the acting profession, and there is no link to extramarital affairs. Yet I agree that generally, Zelda is ironic about the acting career throughout her stories, which is most likely not a coincidence. Regarding Grogan's claim, there are some similarities between Zelda and Caroline—for example their feelings after entering a big city, or the torn between love and work, yet I am not convinced they constitute the crucial aspect. I would rather say Caroline is a warning example of a woman who acts out of the wrong motives.

The last story of the "Girl series," "Poor Working Girl," deals with the acting career as well. Cline again views the story as a tart attack on Lois Moran.²⁰⁶ The talented protagonist, Eloise Elkins, dreams of becoming an actress in New York, therefore accepts an offer to work as a nanny and tries to save money for the future. Despite her original goal, the money is spent soon, Eloise loses her job, and ends up working at the local power company. She realizes she might have overestimated the situation and that her dream is too unattainable: "She couldn't decide whether or not she was as wonderful as she thought she was, and New York seemed awfully far from the yellow frame house full of the sweetness of big Sunday meals..."²⁰⁷ Maybe a bit surprisingly, the narrator ends the story with a suggestion that "perhaps there are lovely faces whose real place is in the power company; perhaps Eloise wasn't destined for Broadway after all."²⁰⁸ Zelda seems to refuse to view the story as a tragic one; she believes that even though Eloise does not reach her dream, she gets a job and stands on her own two feet, and that is a stability Zelda approves of.

7.4 "Miss Ella"

Since 1930, when Zelda entered a psychiatric clinic for the first time, her fiction has undergone significant changes. While a patient, she was reading psychological case studies and works by William Faulkner a lot which affected her writing and shifted it towards a more contemplative mood.²⁰⁹ "Miss Ella," originally called "Miss Bessie,"²¹⁰ is a proof of that due to the serene images and the reminiscence of "old times": "Bitter things dried behind the eyes of Miss Ella like garlic on a string before an open fire. The

²⁰⁶ See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 231.

²⁰⁷ Fitzgerald, "Poor Working Girl," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 341.

²⁰⁸ Fitzgerald, "Poor Working Girl," in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 342.

²⁰⁹ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 205.

²¹⁰ See Grogan, "Authorship and Artistry: Zelda Fitzgerald's 'A Millionaire's Girl' and 'Miss Ella,'" 114.

acid fumes of sweet memories had gradually reddened their rims until at times they shone like the used places in copper saucepans.”²¹¹ Zelda utilized her language skills in the story in an impressive way—she applies unexpected similes and metaphors and captures the atmosphere accurately. It is no longer a story about a young belle or a flapper; “Miss Ella” is flooded with nostalgia, recalls the South in the Victorian era and its protagonist represents Zelda’s mother’s generation. The setting is crucial to the story, as well as in “Southern Girl”; it is deeply affected by Zelda’s Southern background.

The protagonist of the story, Miss Ella, is engaged to the decent Mr. Hendrix but decides to marry the charming Andy Bronson instead. The hopeless Mr. Hendrix shoots himself on Miss Ella’s wedding way. From that day, Miss Ella has rejected love and retreated. The narrator evidently sympathizes with the protagonist, or even identifies with her, and mournfully points out that in those days, women were sometimes forced to repress themselves or spend their lives feeling guilty.²¹² According to Grogan, the whole story can be read as Zelda’s attempt to understand what happens to women like Miss Ella who follow their desires. She links this understanding of the story with Zelda’s relationship with Edouard Jozan.²¹³ The relation appears likely—the story might have served Zelda as a means of thinking about women’s feelings and desires, and as a means of wondering if they are to be so severely punished for their unintended affections.

7.5 “The Continental Angle”

“The Continental Angle” is a very short story, usually omitted by the scholars who analyse Zelda’s short story work. It first appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1932.²¹⁴ Four months before the publication, Zelda experienced her second mental breakdown and headed for the Phipps Clinic. Kemry H. Fathing claims that in many ways, Zelda’s stories, including “The Continental Angle,” reveal her mental state, although most of her biographers miss this relation out when they deal with Zelda’s stays in psychiatric clinics.²¹⁵ From my point of view, Zelda’s frame of mind is, indeed, perceptible in her stories. The stories written after her first mental breakdown differ a lot from the ones

²¹¹ Fitzgerald, “Miss Ella,” in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 343.

²¹² See Grogan, “Authorship and Artistry: Zelda Fitzgerald’s ‘A Millionaire’s Girl’ and ‘Miss Ella,’” 124.

²¹³ See Grogan, “Authorship and Artistry: Zelda Fitzgerald’s ‘A Millionaire’s Girl’ and ‘Miss Ella,’” 126.

²¹⁴ Fitzgerald, “The Continental Angle,” in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 351.

²¹⁵ See Farthing, “The Best Story: Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald’s Return to the South Revealed Through the Analysis of her Articles and Fiction Published Between 1920 and 1932,” 54.

written earlier. “The Continental Angle” resembles “Miss Ella” in terms of the nostalgic atmosphere and contemplative mood which pervade the story. I would say they aim for something else than the previous stories; they wish to evoke different emotions.

In “The Continental Angle,” an unnamed couple casts their minds back to the American restaurants while sitting in a restaurant in France. They might be suggestive of Scott and Zelda, as they used to spend much time in France as well. It seems Zelda reminisced about the old times and remembered what her relationship with Scott used to be like when writing the story. Her father has recently died, she was no longer on the same wavelength with Scott, and did not have a close relationship with Scottie. Her story is full of remembering as well. The imagery is miscellaneous and detailed: “‘Do you remember,’ she said, ‘the Ducoed chairs of Southern tearooms and the leftover look of the Sunday gingerbread that goes with a dollar dinner, the mustardy linen and the waiters’ spotted dinner coats of a Broadway chophouse, the smell of a mayonnaise you get with a meal in the shopping district...?’”²¹⁶ She makes the description more dream-like by mentioning the characters from *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and makes use of her language skills again: “The hot, acrid sauce and the spring air disputed and wept together, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, over the June down that floated here and there before their vision like frayed places in a tapestry.”²¹⁷ By using rich vocabulary and constituting unexpected images, Zelda is able to capture everything she intended to on a few pages.

7.6 “A Couple of Nuts”

Along with “A Millionaire’s Girl,” “A Couple of Nuts,” published in *Scribner’s Magazine* in 1932,²¹⁸ belongs to one of Zelda’s more recognized stories. It delineates the lives of the young couple Larry and Lola, who become famous musicians in Paris. However, the glamour does not last forever. Lola has an affair with a promoter Jeff Daugherty, whose ex-wife becomes Larry’s mistress. The stardom falls apart and the story comes to a tragic end when Larry and his mistress drown in a yacht accident caused by a hurricane. The American dream is destroyed—again, Zelda adverts to the transience of the celebrity lifestyle in the story.

²¹⁶ Fitzgerald, “The Continental Angle,” in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 351.

²¹⁷ Fitzgerald, “The Continental Angle,” in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 351.

²¹⁸ See Bruccoli, *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, 353.

Farthing points out the interpretation of time in the story and the effect it has on the lives of the characters. According to her, the story focuses on the possible inaccuracy of memory as the reader sometimes cannot be sure whether everything the narrator tells is true. Furthermore, the characters themselves do not seem to know how to behave authentically anymore: “Afterwards, when unhappiness used up the unexplored regions in their laughter and hardened their gestured into remembered mimicry, they got to love telling people about the hard time they had had getting started.”²¹⁹ Farthing declares Zelda herself perceived her life with Scott as “remembered mimicry”—they mimicked who they used to be.²²⁰ And who she really was? A Southern belle, flapper, or the wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald? A writer, painter, or ballet dancer? That was exactly what Zelda was not sure about when the opulent lifestyle ended and she came back to her hometown, Montgomery.

7.7 “Other Names for Roses”

The last Zelda’s story I would like to shortly discuss is “Other Names for Roses.” Matthew Bruccoli includes it in the collected writings of Zelda, states it has been edited from the undated typescript and supposes it is probably a later work.²²¹ Once and again, the story focuses on infidelity issues and draws a lot on Zelda’s own experience, especially on the time when she and Scott were staying in France and had to cope with the first serious issue as a couple.

The story centres around a stage in the life of a married couple called Fedora and Jayce Jones who move from New York to southern France, just as Zelda and Scott did. Zelda’s and Scott’s relationship cooled there and began to break, partially due to the entrance of Edouard Jozan, similarly, Fedora’s and Jayce’s relationship breaks in France, too. Fedora is enraptured by a charming poet called Tillyium Brown-Bones, whereas Jayce meets a beautiful ballet dancer Belanova and leaves for Paris where she stays. However, Brown-Bones is bored with Fedora and rejects her saying she’s “nothing but a little tin reflection of Jayce,”²²² while Belanova pays less and less

²¹⁹ Fitzgerald, “A Couple of Nuts,” in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 355.

²²⁰ See Farthing, “The Best Story: Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald’s Return to the South Revealed Through the Analysis of her Articles and Fiction Published Between 1920 and 1932,” 55.

²²¹ See Bruccoli, *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, 365.

²²² Fitzgerald, “Other Names for Roses,” in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 376.

attention to Jayce. Eventually, the couple reunites. French Riviera, extramarital affairs, ballet—all these elements present in the story played a role in Zelda's life as well.

In general, all the short stories are infused with bits and pieces from Zelda's personal experience. Within the scope of this thesis, it is not possible to analyse each of the short stories in depth, yet I am convinced this outline exposes that significant autobiographical aspects can be traced there, and these interestingly indicate what stage of life Zelda was going through, and in what state of mind she just was while writing a particular story.

8. SCANDALABRA, A FARCE FANTASY

Despite the failure of Zelda's first novel, she remained determined to pursue writing to utilise her artistic talent and maybe more importantly, to be defined as an individual, regardless of her husband's fame. After the completion of *Save Me the Waltz*, Zelda soon began to work on another novel. However, it seems Scott still could not forgive her sending the manuscript of her first novel to the publisher without him being aware of it. He perceived the whole situation as an act of betrayal and was deeply convinced Zelda had stolen "his" autobiographical material which he had intended to use for the upcoming novel *Tender Is the Night*. In relation to that, he insisted that Zelda cease to work on her new novel, at least until he publishes *Tender Is the Night*. Initially, Zelda did not submit and continued writing. Scott was becoming more and more exasperated, and he even threatened Zelda to destroy any page from the manuscript of the novel he finds. As a consequence, Zelda hid the manuscript from him and installed a double lock on her study door.²²³

Yet eventually, she agreed to put the novel aside temporarily as she did not want to disrupt Scott's writing career. It seemed Zelda was still allowed to write shorter fiction, thus she decided to write a drama instead of a novel. Throughout the summer and fall of 1932, she worked on her play named *Scandalabra* and subtitled *A Farce Fantasy In a Prologue and Three Acts*. Zelda took the work very seriously and read many plays to learn from them how to write a decent drama, yet none of the New York producers was interested in putting the play on.²²⁴ Ultimately the Vagabond Junior Players—a group of university students from Baltimore—agreed to produce Zelda's play. *Scandalabra* was performed from June 26 to July 1 in 1933, and a young actor Zack Maccubbin starred in the play, portraying the protagonist Andrew Messogyny.²²⁵

Zelda devoted herself to the production of the play; she painted the curtain and designed the sets and stage screens. Scott, on the contrary, knew almost nothing about the play until a dress rehearsal. It seems Zelda did not want Scott to get involved in her work much but when the rehearsal lasting about five hours revealed the play might be too long and chaotic, she agreed with Scott it needs to be revised and let him adjust it. Yet

²²³ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 276-277.

²²⁴ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 265.

²²⁵ See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 334.

even though Scott rewrote the script, the play was a great failure. The audiences were apparently bored with it and the critics commented on the excessive length of the play and the incoherence of the storyline. According to Taylor, the failure of the play afflicted Zelda whose fears that she might never succeed in anything only strengthened.²²⁶

Though Zelda wrote the play to achieve something on her own, it seems she could not be free of Scott's example and influence. Milford, Cline, and Wagner-Martin agree that the plot of Zelda's play is related to Scott's novel *The Beautiful and Damned*—Cline suggests it is “a comic inversion”²²⁷ of the novel, Milford claims “it was like a funhouse mirror's reflection of the plot of *The Beautiful and Damned*.”²²⁸ Wagner-Martin even calls Zelda's play “an effective parody of Scott's *The Beautiful and Damned*.”²²⁹ In Scott's novel, Anthony Patch's grandfather is not willing to will his money to Anthony and his wife Gloria because they lead a lavish lifestyle. In Zelda's play, the situation is quite the opposite—the protagonist's uncle consents to will his money to the protagonist as long as he recklessly revels and succumbs to debauchery.

Scandalabra includes a prologue and is further divided into three acts. In *Collected Writings*, Brucoli mentions there are two versions of the play but it is possible that none of these versions is the play as it was performed. The shorter version, which he republishes in his collection, is almost certainly a later, shortened revision of the original longer text.²³⁰ In the prologue, the protagonist's old uncle leads a cynical conversation with his butler Baffles. The uncle is reluctant to will his money to his nephew, a farm boy Andrew Messogony, for he fears Andrew is not very experienced and has not resisted temptations yet. When Baffles agrees Andrew is weak but points out he is also kind-hearted, the uncle frustratedly notes: “That's enough to incapacitate him for a living! If I could think of some way to develop him—but there's so little time left.... I'd like to have had him a strong character, able to stand on his own feet.”²³¹ In response to that, Baffles promptly remarks: “The young people don't seem to know how

²²⁶ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 277.

²²⁷ Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 334.

²²⁸ Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 278.

²²⁹ Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman's Life*, 162.

²³⁰ See Brucoli, Preface to *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, 199.

²³¹ Fitzgerald, *Scandalabra*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Brucoli, 204.

to misbehave anymore—except by accident.”²³² Zelda adds a frisky fantasy element to the prologue by including a leprechaun in her play, which is pulled out of a hat instead of a rabbit by Baffles when he is doing some tricks to amuse and calm the uncle. The leprechaun reappears at the end of the play when it supposedly jumps down to the audience.

In the first act, the reader finds out Andrew desperately tries to meet his uncle’s requirements; he married a showgirl named Flower who ironically proves to be a decent woman who is actually in love with him. Both Andrew and Flower struggle to misbehave; they would rather lead a quiet life but do not want to be deprived of the money. Baffles, a doctor, and a lawyer urge the couple to become prodigal. They are dismayed that Andrew refuses caviar and requests eggs instead, he does not gamble or go to the clubs and Flower seems to have domestic proclivities and “hope that things may be blacker than they look.”²³³ The doctor’s advice to Andrew is “Just say to yourself, ‘All life is a play.’”²³⁴ The despairing Flower wishes to help Andrew, thus she arranges for the newspaper to write about her fictional affair with Mr. Peter Consequential whose name she accidentally finds in a telephone directory.

In the second act, it is revealed that Peter’s marriage with his wife Connie is rather drained and the alleged affair might consolidate their relationship. When the two couples accidentally meet on a beach outing, it becomes clear Flower and Peter do not know each other at all. The conversation becomes comic as Flower and Peter try to convince their partners of the plausibility of their affair, for example when Flower suggests Peter to express his feelings for her quickly, while Peter compliments on her nose and calls her by her surname.

In the final act, Andrew and Connie find themselves in a prison by mistake. When Baffles meets the couples, he informs Andrew that exactly what his uncle had intended happened—Andrew was supposed to taste the allurements, and as he experienced it, he might profit from it and resist it now.

The characters’ names have an obviously deeper meaning. In their biographies, Milford and Cline note both misogamy and misogyny are sources for the protagonist’s

²³² Fitzgerald, *Scandalabra*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 204.

²³³ Fitzgerald, *Scandalabra*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 219.

²³⁴ Fitzgerald, *Scandalabra*, in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. Bruccoli, 218.

surname.²³⁵ Milford further suggests Flower's name stems from her transformation from a showgirl to a decent wife, and the name of Peter's wife, Anaconda (Connie) Consequential, conveys an accurate idea of the play, too.²³⁶ I would add that the butler named Baffles patently "baffles" the protagonist to a great extent and spurs him to squander his money, thus his name is allegorical as well.

Scandalabra can be read as a neat satire on caprices, flaws, and aims of the rich. It comments on the veneer among people with high social status and on the superficiality of their behaviour. In this respect, Zelda drew inspiration from her experience—being a celebrity, she would meet many people, observe them, and form an opinion about their approach to social conventions. It cannot be said that Andrew and Flower are based on Scott and Zelda, however, the play is heavily influenced by Zelda's own experience concerning her social intercourse. Moreover, Zelda's personal life seems to have a significant impact on the play. At the time Zelda was writing *Scandalabra*, her relationship with Scott was deeply afflicted by their disagreements and rivalry. They both felt affronted, and Scott even seriously considered divorcing Zelda for the first time.²³⁷ It is not surprising that the audiences and the critics considered the play disjointed, bearing in mind the fact she was emotionally unstable and wrote the play in a hurry.

²³⁵ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 279.

See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 334.

²³⁶ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 279.

²³⁷ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 275.

9. AN UNFINISHED NOVEL *CAESAR'S THINGS*

In the 1940s, after Scott's death, Zelda was working on a new novel named *Caesar's Things*, which she never finished. The original manuscript consisting of 135 pages divided into 7 chapters and some fragments can currently be found at the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections at Princeton University Library. I contacted the department and managed to get digital copies of the original manuscript. It includes many scribbled notes, sketches and is generally quite disorderly which is understandable considering Zelda's mental state and the fact that it was a work in progress.

It is assumed that this novel is actually the one Zelda wanted to write already after the publication of *Save Me the Waltz*.²³⁸ Back then, she was prevented from doing so by Scott who feared Zelda would use the autobiographical material he intended to use for his *Tender Is the Night*, as has already been mentioned. After the publication of Scott's novel, Zelda hoped to renew the work on her novel, however, both her doctors and Scott were opposed to that idea and thought her mental health might suffer from such an excessive effort. Ironically, Zelda's condition deteriorated after the restriction; she began experiencing auditory hallucinations.²³⁹

The novel *Caesar's Things* is religious in nature, which stems from Zelda's deep religious devotion during the 1930s. Her religious commitment combined with delirium caused by her mental issues are clearly reflected in the book. In Sheppard-Pratt clinic, she claimed she was "under the control of God and was working with Him to teach mankind certain things He had ordained to her. The end of the world was coming and she wanted to leave to preach this doctrine."²⁴⁰ Scott wrote the Murphys about his wife: "... Zelda now claims to be in direct contact with Christ, William the Conqueror, Mary Stuart, Apollo and all the stock paraphernalia of insane-asylum jokes. Of course, it isn't a bit funny but after the awful strangulation episode of last spring I sometimes take refuge in an unsmiling irony about the present exterior phases of her illness."²⁴¹ Back in Montgomery in the 1940s when Zelda was staying with her mother, she would attend a

²³⁸ See Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman's Life*, 203.

²³⁹ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 292-293.

²⁴⁰ Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 307.

²⁴¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald to the Murphys, March, 1936, in Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 308.

church, pray, and read the Bible regularly. She even wrote religious tracts to her friends, including Gertrude Stein, Edmund Wilson, or Carl Van Vechten,²⁴² insisting they should pray and redeem themselves.²⁴³

Importantly, Kim points to the fact that currently, there are very few analyses of *Caesar's Things*, and that Zelda's deteriorating mental state complicates the reception of her novel a lot. Most scholars tend to view Zelda's religion as inherent to her insanity, considering Zelda's faith to have been a religious mania. They assert the novel as incoherent and chaotic. Scott disparaged Zelda's religious devotion as well, as his letters to their daughter Scottie prove—he saw it as nothing more but a psychosis.²⁴⁴ Many episodes from Zelda's life indicate her faith and insanity were interconnected, indeed—for example when she visited Scott's friend John Biggs and his wife, saw some berries on the table, and claimed they had a crown of thorns as Christ would have.²⁴⁵ Taylor is convinced that when Scott died and Zelda's father and brother were gone as well, Zelda formed an attachment to God to fill her need for the male strength upon which she had always depended.²⁴⁶ I agree Scott's death might have boosted Zelda's faith in the 1940s, but her religious devotion had appeared much earlier, thus I would assume it was rather related to Zelda's personal contemplation of life and the true values.

In contrast to Scott's beliefs, Cline thinks Zelda's religious preoccupations can be viewed as a way of optimistically dealing with tragedies of the previous decade, not as a mere symptom of mental illness.²⁴⁷ Similarly, Wagner-Martin believes the last seven years of Zelda's life accrue in her unfinished novel.²⁴⁸ The title of the novel distinctly suggests Zelda was truly meditating on her lifestyle in the previous decades, the things that really matter in life, and the way in which she could redeem herself and find peace in her soul while writing the book. The title comes from the words of Jesus in the Bible:

²⁴² See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 372.

²⁴³ See Sharon Kim, "The Brokenness of *Caesar's Things*: On the Unfinished Religious Novel by Zelda Fitzgerald," *Christianity & Literature* 68 (2019): 233. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0148333118757552>.

²⁴⁴ See Kim, "The Brokenness of *Caesar's Things*: On the Unfinished Religious Novel by Zelda Fitzgerald," 234.

²⁴⁵ See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 375.

²⁴⁶ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 352.

²⁴⁷ See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 390.

²⁴⁸ See Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman's Life*, 204.

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”²⁴⁹ The statement refers to two contrasting worlds—one is fleeting and materialistically based, the other one is spiritual.²⁵⁰ The novel served Zelda as a confession that she had given to Caesar what she should have given to God in the past, that she had harmed herself by ignoring God. It seems Zelda began to find deeper meaning in the spiritual world in the hope of finding her Self again, and changed her attitude towards the bohemian lifestyle she used to lead together with Scott.²⁵¹

The theme of the novel changed greatly from Zelda’s initial ideas—originally, the novel was supposed to deal with the life of Vaslav Nijinsky, a member of Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes, and his mental illness, which would allow Zelda to deal with ballet and mental illness issues, drawing on her own experience, yet in disguise, through the character of a famous male dancer. Nevertheless, the theme of madness had already been employed in *Tender Is the Night*, and Zelda probably felt she could not surpass it with her novel, thus she changed her mind.²⁵² Eventually, *Caesar’s Things* was to be “... a book about the social structure being only manifestations of the Christian precepts to show how every deed we do is included within some principle of Christ.”²⁵³ The biographers agree the novel became a combination of autobiographical writing, fantasy, and religious doctrine.²⁵⁴ It combines modernist literary experimentation with narrative structures derived from the Bible.²⁵⁵

Although the manuscript of the novel is rather chaotic and the novel itself is unfinished and would require a heavy proofreading, Kim claims *Caesar’s Things* reveals a coherent theme and structure; supposedly, it is even more carefully designed than *Save Me the Waltz*. She asserts the structure of the novel follows a pattern derived from the Bible. As the title suggests, the novel incorporates the idea of the differentiation between “Caesar’s things” and “God’s things”—while the first half of the book focuses

²⁴⁹ Mark 12:17, in Kim, “The Brokenness of *Caesar’s Things*: On the Unfinished Religious Novel by Zelda Fitzgerald,” 233-234.

²⁵⁰ See Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman’s Life*, 204.

²⁵¹ See Kim, “The Brokenness of *Caesar’s Things*: On the Unfinished Religious Novel by Zelda Fitzgerald,” 235-236.

²⁵² See Wagner-Martin, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman’s Life*, 203-204.

²⁵³ Zelda Fitzgerald to John Biggs, July/August, 1942, in Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 389.

²⁵⁴ See Taylor, *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*, 352. See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 355.

²⁵⁵ See Kim, “The Brokenness of *Caesar’s Things*: On the Unfinished Religious Novel by Zelda Fitzgerald,” 233.

on material property, the second one deals with relationships, human love and one's inner world. Furthermore, Kim believes both halves follow an arc of creation, fall, and redemption. Whether the central sin lies in the misuse of property or the misuse of human relationships, the redemption comes with signs of God's existence and love.²⁵⁶ Zelda's religious devotion is apparent in many passages in the novel: "The Christian doctrine is a blessing which grants the right to live in peace and good will with one's fellow man."²⁵⁷ "What people are happy, anyway? Those which walk in the way of the Lord."²⁵⁸ "...the greatest poetry is the Bible, and the only true significance of the world is told herein..."²⁵⁹

The structure of the novel is, indeed, quite clear and symmetrical. The first three chapters contain episodes from the protagonist's childhood, the fourth chapter is about her youth, and the following three chapters deal with her adult life, especially marriage. Originally, the narrative was supposed to be written in first person, but the "I" was crossed out and changed to "she" or "Janno," the protagonist's name, throughout the book. This might suggest that Zelda did not want the novel to appear autobiographical so openly and tried to distance herself from the protagonist a bit. However, even without the first person narrative, it is quite clear that Janno is the narrator of the novel, and there is a significant resemblance between her and Zelda's life.

It seems Janno has been committed to an asylum, thinks back to the past, and reappraises her attitudes as she recollects the memories and narrates her life story. Through Janno's words, Zelda revealed remarkably how she perceived her reminiscence: "So then, the values of retrospect change dependent upon the value of the orientation from which one surveys. A successful life is able to summon to memory few episodes from of the past save the contributing factors to success, but a soul fallen into the hands of psychiatrists finds the seeds of nervous disorder and even aberration scattered plentifully over the past."²⁶⁰ She subtly suggests that when she looks back to the past, she is able to spot the roots of her mental illness. However, she is also aware that memories are vague and unstable as they depend on person's perspective.

²⁵⁶ See Kim, "The Brokenness of *Caesar's Things*: On the Unfinished Religious Novel by Zelda Fitzgerald," 235.

²⁵⁷ Zelda Fitzgerald, *Caesar's Things*, ch. II, CO183, Box2A, Princeton University Library.

²⁵⁸ Fitzgerald, *Caesar's Things*, ch. IV.

²⁵⁹ Fitzgerald, *Caesar's Things*, ch. III.

²⁶⁰ Fitzgerald, *Caesar's Things*, ch. I.

Other evidence can be traced which prove that Janno represents Zelda in the novel. Janno grows up in a small Southern town which is not named, yet it is quite indisputable that it was modelled on Zelda's hometown, Montgomery. Similarly to Zelda's father, Janno's father is a judge. The girl has several siblings but the novel concentrates more just on her older brother nicknamed "Monsieur," whose depiction draws mostly upon Zelda's older brother Anthony (Tony) Sayre. Though Janno looks up to her brother to some extent, there is a noticeable rivalry between these two—Janno is jealous that her brother is given more freedom than her. Likewise, as a child Zelda contested Tony's rights and the two were competitors.²⁶¹ Interestingly, the character of Janno's brother might have been partially based on Scott as well. Milford mentions that "Monsieur" was one of Zelda's nicknames for Scott, while her brother Tony was nicknamed "Mister" instead.²⁶² Considering this, the disturbing incident at the beginning of the first chapter of the novel might gain in a significant prominence, as I will explain shortly.

Janno's family moves into a house nearby a hospital which is just being built. Janno's father forbids her and her brother to come close to the hospital without giving them a reason for it but it is revealed in the novel that a new wing for psychiatrists to practice in is being built there. Clearly, the fact that the environment of psychiatric institution is related to something sinister and disturbing in the novel stems from Zelda's personal experience, as it was in the psychiatric clinics where she went through a difficult period of her life and struggled with her mental problems.

Janno's brother immediately decides to disobey his father and runs off to the hospital. Janno hesitates, as she is very anxious even about the prospect of disobeying her father's order. Eventually, she follows her brother to the hospital. She spots her brother playing with something which looks like a scarecrow, and soon has a sense of foreboding. Though she tries to stop her brother, he wouldn't listen. "Keeping her eyes on the horizon with her heart fixed on her faith she said courageously: 'Stop that!' 'What right have you got to stop me?' The boy was angry at his rights being contested. He had found the thing. It was his—or more his than hers anyway. Maybe she didn't have a right."²⁶³ The episode explains well Janno's relationship with male authorities. She is scared to disobey her father and hesitant to defy her brother. Moreover, she feels

²⁶¹ See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 19-20.

²⁶² See Milford, *Zelda: A Biography*, 355.

²⁶³ Fitzgerald, *Caesar's Things*, ch. I.

obliged to follow God's wishes even in minor matters—when she forgets to wash her feet in the evening, she apologizes to God about it in bed. This could indicate Zelda's fear of disobedience towards male authorities, specifically her father and Scott, as "Monsieur" in the novel is partially based on Scott.

The thing Janno's brother is playing with, the alleged scarecrow, turns out to be a human corpse. Janno is horrified when she sees her brother with it, and she cannot understand how God could allow something like that. "That God would let this happen had broken her heart forever and that was the way she would live."²⁶⁴ Janno's faith is disrupted in this moment and is not fully restored until several signs of God's grace. However, it is also true that Janno broke the ban, abused the material property. As in Eden, the surrender to temptation brings an inauspicious consequence—after the horrifying scene with the corpse Janno faints, or in Zelda's words "dies," and only after she has religious visions and is visited by God, she "reborns" again. Men from the hospital take care of her and bring her home, but both her father and brother symbolizing the male authority reject her.

The second and the third chapter continue to depict Janno's childhood. Janno is described as "an adventurous and an imaginative child, and well able to take care of herself"²⁶⁵ which would match the description of Zelda as a child as well. Her brother, on the other hand, is rather superficial and arrogant: "Convinced that he knew better than most people about things much easier unargued about, he adopted torturous evasion of dealing with truths, which provoked frustration and injustice, confusion and the enforced courtesy of ignoring the real values of many situations deeply relevant to the little girl."²⁶⁶ Whether this pointed portrayal was inspired by Zelda's brother or Scott's behaviour is uncertain. Similarly to Zelda, Janno further enjoys painting and considers school boring and useless, which leads to the postponement of her school attendance for a year. As she grows up, Janno gains Zelda's confidence and expresses her opinions boldly: "If there was a choice between right and wrong, she preferred to do the right thing unless the wrong thing was right."²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Fitzgerald, *Caesar's Things*, ch. I.

²⁶⁵ Fitzgerald, *Caesar's Things*, ch. II.

²⁶⁶ Fitzgerald, *Caesar's Things*, ch. II.

²⁶⁷ Fitzgerald, *Caesar's Things*, ch. III.

The chapters also proceed with the focus on the abuse of material property. There is a boy who steals money and is not punished and Negro man with money who is on the run. Zelda questions the material world, stating: “This surely could not be of God: the pointed shoes, the premium on corsets and the significance of material values.”²⁶⁸

The fourth, transitional chapter introduces Janno’s first romantic experiences and early relationships. However, Zelda’s version of Montgomery in the novel is rather dark, menacing, and full of potential danger and sexual violence which lurks in the dark corners of the town. There is a distinct scene in which Janno is being intimidated by two boys, Dan and Anton, who seem to be modelled on John Sellers and Peyton Mathis who courted Zelda for several years.²⁶⁹ Though the reader cannot know for sure what happens when Janno agrees to follow the boys to the school-yard, it is implied that she is sexually abused. “It’s not right! I don’t want to go!’ ‘... if you don’t want to go with us, nobody will have anything further to do with you.’ ... So she looked out over the threat of doom and misinterpreted its impervious absence of comment and followed the judgement of men. They went up to the haunted school-yard so deep in shadows and creaking with felicities of murder to the splintery old swing, and she was so miserable and trusting that her heart broke and for many years after she didn’t want to live: but it was better to keep on going.”²⁷⁰ It cannot be confirmed for sure if the incident was based on real experience or not. It seems autobiographically accurate to Cline, but she also believes it was influenced by Zelda’s later clinical traumas. Still she emphasizes most significant incidents in Zelda’s fiction do have autobiographical triggers.²⁷¹

The true romance comes in the novel when soldiers settle in Montgomery and Janno meets Jacob, her future husband based on Scott. The manuscript suggests the character was originally supposed to be named “Harold,” but the name is sometimes also confused with “Jacques,” the name of a French aviator in both *Save Me the Waltz* and the later part of *Caesar’s Things*. I would assume the confusion was rather unintentional though one could suspect a deeper meaning in the play with the names. With Jacob’s arrival, Montgomery is suddenly no longer haunted. On the contrary, it is romantically mysterious: “One had to be in love. There wasn’t much use in all this playing around

²⁶⁸ Fitzgerald, *Caesar’s Things*, ch. IV.

²⁶⁹ See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 39-42.

²⁷⁰ Fitzgerald, *Caesar’s Things*, ch. IV.

²⁷¹ See Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, 41-42.

but there wasn't any use at all without it, so the city staggered with the impact of love, and the streets were like a garden-party and nights were hushed with secrets."²⁷² Jacob is both proud and jealous of Janno's desirability to boys, just as Scott was of Zelda's popularity. The young lieutenant soon proposes, and after Janno's initial hesitation and rejecting, the couple gets married.

They move to New York and enjoy a boisterous life at first, but the recklessness does not last long. Just as David in *Save Me the Waltz*, Jacob makes a living by painting. Janno finds herself in an inferior position, as Jacob "was more important than Janno; she always felt as if she should be helpful about his tinkering; they were intricate enough to need an assistant."²⁷³ Janno is supposed to occupy herself with trivial matters and not to stay in Jacob's way; only if they attend social events, she should represent him decently. "He owned her; bundled her up and sat her in taxis beside him, danced her around the gilded edges of many fashionable hours, showed her off to an inclusive set of college friends..."²⁷⁴ Zelda reveals her own lifelong frustration when the disgruntled Janno despairs over their superficial lifestyle and lack of purpose in her life. "Janno didn't learn until many years later that there is no use pleasing a person by adopting their tastes and criteria: that such appeal is a house which is built on the sand: that the storms of individual necessity and the exigencies of survival wash these houses into the stream with time; and trouble."²⁷⁵ Retrospectively, Zelda regrets that she did not realize the emptiness in her life earlier.

Zelda criticizes the superficial and materially oriented society of her era in general. She writes about "selfishness and the individual paramount right to stardom," and even suggests about America that it is likely "this land has been spoiled and head-strong from the beginning."²⁷⁶ It is indicated that the corruption of the society could be rectified by faith and humility but in the society with such false ideals, there is no room for God.

Janno's and Jacob's decay of marriage follows the course of the decay of Zelda's and Scott's relationship. Jacob begins to drink alcohol excessively and makes Janno jealous when he flirts with other women. Moving house to France is supposed to save the

²⁷² Fitzgerald, *Caesar's Things*, ch. IV.

²⁷³ Fitzgerald, *Caesar's Things*, ch. V.

²⁷⁴ Fitzgerald, *Caesar's Things*, ch. V.

²⁷⁵ Fitzgerald, *Caesar's Things*, ch. V.

²⁷⁶ Fitzgerald, *Caesar's Things*, ch. V.

marriage, but Janno's affair with a charming Frenchman named Jacques modelled on Zelda's affair with Edouard Jozan disrupts the marriage even more. Zelda describes her love for the French aviator in more detail than in *Save Me the Waltz*; she expresses her deep feelings for the man openly. Eventually, the affair ends when Janno confesses to her husband she is in love with another man, and he locks her up in a villa.

The last complete chapter ends with Janno and Jacob attending the Cornings' party. It is most likely Zelda fictionalized her and Scott's friends the Murphys as the Cornings, a rich American couple who hold spectacular parties. Strikingly, the depiction of the couple is quite ironic and bitter—their behaviour seems artificial and their values distorted. It is quite surprising that the portrayal of the Murphys in the novel is so critical and unflattering. The manuscript then ends with Janno and Jacob heading back home and leaves it unclear what happens with the couple next.

Apart from the seven chapters, the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections at Princeton University Library keeps four other fragments. One of them seems to take place at the time when Janno and Jacob are not married yet; they are having a dinner and getting know each other more. The most interesting fragment is probably the one named "The Big Top" which depicts Janno's mourning over Jacob's death. Through Janno's words, it reveals Zelda's conciliatory feelings and her deep love for Scott. "He never forgot to make life seem useful and promising..."²⁷⁷ Zelda's unfinished novel exposes the repentant side of a woman who contemplates and regrets her previous lifestyle and her yearn for glittering material possession which is contrasted with faith and genuine Christian values. Yet Zelda's writing also proves that her relationship with Scott was a strong and caring one, regardless of the difficulties rooted in the differences between them, their diverse expectations from private life and their professional careers.

²⁷⁷ Zelda Fitzgerald, "The Big Top," CO183, Box2A, Princeton University Library.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was mainly to explore the relation between Zelda Fitzgerald's private life and her literary work. I deem it beneficial to examine Zelda's writings in more detail in general, as they still have not received adequate scholarly attention and have not undergone sufficient scrutiny. Although it is now possible to find a decent number of articles dealing with Zelda's novel *Save Me the Waltz*, and some of Zelda's biographers devoted a part of their book to the novel or at least summarized it briefly, there is still room for a deeper analysis. Moreover, Zelda's short stories, her play, and the unfinished novel would merit even more attention.

In the thesis, I tried to outline the intricacy of Scott's and Zelda's relationship and the impact it had on their writings. I believe they both were very prominent figures in American literary history, and rather than comparing them, judging whose influence on the other person was detrimental, and standing on someone's side, which many scholars did in the past, we should praise their writings for the indisputable literary qualities and attempt to resolve their literary work in terms of the rich private experience the couple drew upon.

The analysis of the autobiographical aspects in Zelda's writings clarifies to what extent Zelda's personal life influenced her work. *Save Me the Waltz* overtly exposes Zelda's feelings and her immense efforts when she decided to become a professional ballerina. The novel suggests she longed for a means of self-expression that would not be dependent on her husband. Even though these efforts were thwarted, Zelda attempted to find satisfaction and fulfilment at least through capturing her experience in a novel.

The short stories and the play *Scandalabra* reflect Zelda's attitudes towards contemporary society, with a special focus on the social position of women. Through these literary feats, she asserts meaningful occupation is crucial in women's lives. For though the flapper is supposed to have fun and enjoy the glitter of life, she also needs to be able to stand on her own feet—which Zelda apparently realized soon after she got married.

The mental illness Zelda suffered from at the end of her life makes it more difficult to interpret her final, unfinished novel *Caesar's Things*. The religious devotion expressed in the novel is intertwined with irrational hallucinations Zelda experienced.

Nevertheless, the novel indicates that while writing it, Zelda was contemplating the past and reassessed her value system and priorities in life.

Overall, Zelda's writings enable us to take a look into her private experience and comprehend her point of view. They introduce an inspiring figure who struggled to find herself and get satisfaction through a meaningful occupation during a tumultuous life with a famous husband by her side.

RESUMÉ

Tato diplomová práce si stanovila za cíl prozkoumat spojitost mezi osobním životem Zeldy Fitzgerald a její literární tvorbou. Zelda Fitzgerald byla po dlouhou dobu vnímána pouze ve spojitosti se svým slavným manželem, spisovatelem Francisem Scottem Fitzgeraldem, přičemž Fitzgeraldovi životopisci často zdůrazňovali negativní vliv, který Zelda Fitzgerald dle nich měla na spisovatelův psychický stav. Teprve v 70. letech se začaly objevovat biografie věnované přímo Zeldě Fitzgerald, jež se snažily nahlížet na turbulentní vztah hvězdného páru 20. let objektivněji – ačkoli i tyto biografie mohou být někdy vnímány jako zaujaté a straníci naopak Fitzgeraldově manželce.

Postupem času se tak v literárněvědném prostředí začala odbourávat dogmatická představa o Zeldě Fitzgerald jakožto spisovatelově „múze“ a objevily se články pojednávající o její vlastní literární tvorbě. Články se většinou zaměřují na jediný vydaný román autorky s názvem *Save Me the Waltz (Věnujte mi valčík/Poslední valčík je můj)*, případně na její povídkovou tvorbu. Divadelní hře *Scandalabra* a nedokončenému románu *Caesar's Things* se věnuje jen několik článků. Obecně lze říci, že literární tvorba autorky je stále nedostatečně prozkoumaná, a právě z tohoto důvodu jsem se na ni zaměřila ve své práci. Stejně tak jako F. Scott Fitzgerald i Zelda Fitzgerald v literární tvorbě do značné míry čerpala z vlastních zkušeností a zážitků, proto se tato práce zabývá zejména autobiografickými prvky v její tvorbě.

První část diplomové práce si klade za cíl představit rodinné zázemí, z něhož Zelda Fitzgerald pocházela a nastínit zásadní momenty z jejího soužití se slavným spisovatelem. Jižanský původ autorky zásadně ovlivnil její dojmy z newyorského prostředí a společnosti na americkém Severu. Ačkoli nejdříve toužila po vzrušujícím životě celebrity plném bouřlivých večírků, postupně začala pociťovat silnou deziluzi jak z New Yorku, tak ze vztahu s ambiciózním spisovatelem. Zejména ke konci života se pak autorka v textech nostalgicky vrací k prostředí rodného Montgomery.

Je nesporné, že Zelda Fitzgerald byla celoživotní inspirací pro literární tvorbu svého manžela. F. Scott Fitzgerald si vážil jejích vyjadřovacích schopností, využíval citace z jejích dopisů a deníku ve svých románech. Ačkoli zájem spisovatele Zeldě Fitzgerald nejdříve lichotil, brzy pocítila, že její manžel staví ostrou hranici mezi své „profesionální“ umění a její „amatérské“ umělecké snahy a dělá si výhradní nárok na

autobiografický materiál, jenž využívá ve své literární tvorbě. Z dnešního pohledu je patrné, že se manželé obohacovali a inspirovali navzájem. Přestože literární tvorba Fitzgeralda je známější a úspěšnější, i tvorba jeho manželky má nesporné kvality a zaslouží si hlubší analýzu.

Další část práce tvoří teoretické pozadí pro pozdější praktickou analýzu. Představuje definice základních termínů, tedy autobiografie a autobiografického románu, předkládá jejich charakteristiky a oba termíny porovnává. Rovněž zmiňuje významná autobiografická díla v americké literatuře.

Hlavní část práce se zaměřuje na analýzu románu *Save Me the Waltz*. Zelda Fitzgerald román napsala během prvního pobytu v soukromé klinice poté, co se zhroutila z psychického i fyzického vyčerpání. Román je silně autobiografický, založený na osobní zkušenosti autorky, která se v pozdějším věku rozhodla zužitkovat svůj umělecký potenciál, částečně se osamostatnit a stát se profesionální balerínou. Skrze postavu Alabamy Beggs autorka nastiňuje vlastní pocity deziluze, odhodlání a zklamání.

Povídková tvorba Zeldy Fitzgerald odráží zejména pohled autorky na osobnost správného „žabce“ (flapper), tedy moderní, odvážné ženy 20. let, jejímž ztělesněním sama autorka byla. Většina povídek naráží na problematiku role ženy v soudobé společnosti a naznačuje, že zadostiučinění mohou ženy dosáhnout, jen pokud se věnují smysluplné činnosti.

Divadelní hra *Scandalabra* nastiňuje fázi života Zeldy Fitzgerald, v níž pochopila, že materiálně založený životní styl plný zábavy a skandálů ji dlouhodobě neuspokojuje. Autorka poukazuje na to, že sláva může být velice pomíjivá. Hra rovněž kritizuje povrchnost a nedostatky lidí, kteří se nacházejí vysoko na společenském žebříčku.

Poslední kapitola práce je věnovaná nedokončenému románu *Caesar's Things*, který dosud nebyl publikován a existuje pouze ve formě chaotického rukopisu uloženého v Princetonské univerzitní knihovně. V diplomové práci jsem se snažila nastítnit, jakým způsobem román odráží poslední období v životě autorky, věnované rozjímání nad životem po boku F. Scotta Fitzgeralda a plné náboženského zanícení. Ačkoli provázanost psychických problémů autorky s její náboženskou oddaností komplikuje analýzu románu, je zřejmé, že je dílo opět postaveno na autobiografickém základě.

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ANNOTATION

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Department, faculty: Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts UP

Title: Literary Work of Zelda Fitzgerald as a Way of Self-Expression: Autobiographical Aspects in Her Work

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Number of pages: 89 pages

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Characteristics: This diploma thesis deals with the autobiographical aspects in the literary work of Zelda Fitzgerald, especially in her novel *Save Me the Waltz*. As Zelda Fitzgerald lived her whole life in the shadow of her more famous husband, in a certain sense, the tempestuous marriage influenced her writing a lot. The thesis focuses on the troubled relationship between the two icons of the Jazz Age, on the way in which it shaped Zelda Fitzgerald's writings. It tries to point out that Zelda Fitzgerald captured the era in which she lived briskly and credibly in her work, thanks to her big literary talent.

ANOTACE

Jméno a příjmení: Lenka Lahnerová

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Název práce: Literární tvorba Zeldy Fitzgerald jako způsob sebevyjádření: autobiografické prvky v jejím díle

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Charakteristika: Tato diplomová práce se zabývá autobiografickými prvky v literární tvorbě Zeldy Fitzgerald, zejména v jejím románu *Věnujte mi valčík/Poslední valčík je můj*. Jelikož Zelda Fitzgerald v jistém smyslu žila celý život ve stínu slavnějšího manžela, divoké manželství do značné míry ovlivnilo její tvorbu. Diplomová práce se zaměřuje na bouřlivý vztah dvou ikon jazzového věku, na způsob, jakým zformoval dílo Zeldy Fitzgerald. Práce se snaží poukázat na to, že Zelda Fitzgerald energicky a věrohodně zachytila éru, v níž žila, díky velkému literárnímu talentu.