Gender Revolution of the Jazz Age: The Source of Disillusionment in the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway

Mary Killeen
Central Washington University, killeenm@cwu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/etd

Part of the American Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/etd/669

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses at ScholarWorks@CWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@CWU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@cwu.edu.
GENDER REVOLUTION OF THE JAZZ AGE: THE SOURCE OF DISILLUSIONMENT
IN THE WORKS OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD AND ERNEST HEMINGWAY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

English Literature

by

Mary Katherine Killeen

June 2017
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

We hereby approve the thesis of

Mary Katherine Killeen

Candidate for the degree of Master of Arts

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

__________________________
Dr. Christopher Schedler, Committee Chair

__________________________
Dr. Laila Abdalla

__________________________
Dr. Christine Sutphin

__________________________
Dean of Graduate Studies
ABSTRACT


by

Mary Katherine Killeen

June 2017

The Lost Generation was forced to develop their own principles regarding gender identity in an environment of ever-shifting cultural norms, which called into question all of their predetermined ideas on femininity, masculinity, and the ways in which members of the opposite sex should interact with one another. Although much of their writing is set amid and seems to embrace the evolving social culture of the early twentieth-century, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway largely criticize the gender revolution of the 1920s and blame evolving gender roles for the collapse of their generation. Nevertheless, I argue that Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s cultural critique ironically contributed to the growing popularity of the same transgressive gender roles that they sought to criticize.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is a product of the affirmation and assistance of many people. I am especially indebted to Christopher Schedler for his expert advice and patient editing. Thanks also to Laila Abdalla, who has advised me throughout the graduate program and helped me to refine my argument; Christine Sutphin, who has encouraged me since my first literary conference; and Lila Harper, who has been irreplaceable in my seemingly endless archival research. I would also like to thank my cohort of postmodern Flappers, who were essential to my writing and research process; they continually inspired and supported me in every setting from the classroom to my living room floor.

I must also express my sincerest gratitude to my family and friends, whose constant assurances enabled me to pursue a graduate degree and develop an expertise in my favorite area of study. Finally, thanks most of all to Ryan for listening to every draft, making endless pots of tea, and for never being threatened by my own transgressive femininity.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Historical Context</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope of Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter Analysis</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>THE SMOKING WEAPON: TRANSGRESSIVE FEMININITY AS THE SOURCE OF SOCIAL DESTRUCTION</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Destruction of Fraternity</th>
<th>25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manipulation of Social Groups</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perpetuation of an Image</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>FITZGERALD’S LOST BOYS: AMBIGUOUS MASCULINITY AS THE SOURCE OF GENDERED CONFLICT</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Effete Dandy Fashioning</th>
<th>64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Withdrawn and Forgotten</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>HEMINGWAY’S MASCULINE PERFORMANCE: FAILED MACHISMO AS THE SOURCE OF EMASCULATION IN AMERICAN MEN</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Failed American Masculinity Abroad</th>
<th>96</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign Male Superiority</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>CONCLUSION</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sharper Criticism</th>
<th>128</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fruition of the New Ideal</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| WORKS CITED |                                      | 136   |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Bee Jackson,” photo portrait, Piccadilly Cabaret and Kit Kat Club performance, 1925.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>“Where There’s Smoke There’s Fire,” color illustration by Russell Patterson, 1920.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>“Eenie Meenie Minie Mo,” black and white illustration by Charles Dana Gibson, 1926.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>48</td>
<td><em>Irene</em>, theatrical release poster by <em>Warner Bros Studios</em>, 1926.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>“Enlist: On Which Side of the Window are You?” propaganda poster by Laura Brey, 1917.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>“Will You be a Free Man or Chained,” hygiene poster, 1918.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>“He’s Good Enough for Me,” cartoon by C. R. Macauley, 1912.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>“We Men Must Grow a Mustache,” sheet music cover, Speed Langworthy, 1922.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>97</td>
<td><em>Blood and Sand</em>, theatrical release poster, 1922.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>“Kitty Doner,” photo portrait, Strauss-Peyton Studio, 1923.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

“The world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts...”
– Willa Cather, Not Under Forty

"It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple: one must be a woman manly, or a man womanly" – Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own

Figure 1: “Bee Jackson,” photo portrait, Piccadilly Cabaret and Kit Kat Club performance, 1925.
In her Paris home, during a casual conversation among literary friends, Gertrude Stein coined a term that would come to encompass a coeval of young expatriate artists, who were living and working far from the culture that formed them, and who were disillusioned by their own generation. Reflecting on the disenchantment of several American authors, Stein told her young, literary friends, “you are all a lost generation.” Although her admonishment suggests insult, one of the authors at whom the quote was directed, Ernest Hemingway, evoked Stein’s statement in two of his literary texts.¹ Similarly, F. Scott Fitzgerald expressed in his debut novel that his generation grew up to find “all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faith in men shaken” (This Side of Paradise 213). Malcom Cowley explains that Fitzgerald and Hemingway’s generation was lost because it “belonged to a period of transition from values already fixed to values that had yet to be created“ (9). What should have been a reproach became a slogan and an eventual identity for young Americans born around the year 1900, who experienced their frivolous youth and encountered their eventual collapse in parallel with the Jazz Age and the Great Depression of the early twentieth-century in the United States.

The period of evolving values to which Cowley is referring affected not only American literary celebrities, such as Fitzgerald and Hemingway, but also their entire generation; this confraternity of individuals had been subject to massive cultural shifts, including sociopolitical upheaval and the rise of mass consumerism, but especially a

¹ Hemingway has used Stein’s statement as both an epigraph in The Sun Also Rises and in the character dialogue of A Moveable Feast.
revolution in gender norms. The Lost Generation was forced to develop their own principles regarding gender identity in an environment of ever-shifting cultural norms, which called into question all of their predetermined ideas on femininity, masculinity, and the ways in which members of the opposite sex should interact with one another. Although much of their writing is set amid and seems to embrace the evolving social culture of the early twentieth-century, Fitzgerald and Hemingway largely criticize the gender revolution of the 1920s and blame evolving gender mores for the collapse of their generation. Nevertheless, I argue that Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s cultural critique ironically contributed to the growing popularity of the same transgressive gender roles that they sought to criticize.

I. Historical Context

No cultural event was a more popular source of blame for America’s shift in social norms than World War I. Lynn Dumenil claims that the phrase “since the war” became a “persistent refrain that people evoked to describe a wide range of changes in daily life and cultural values” during the 1920s (10). The Lost Generation was coming of age and entering adulthood when the war began and many young people had been affected by the war even before the United States officially entered in April 1917. The Gilded Age\(^2\) cultural norms of late nineteenth-century America were all but forgotten in

\(^2\) America’s Gilded Age was the period immediately preceding the turn of the twentieth-century marked by a greatly expanding economy, population growth, and immense influence of high society and wealthy individuals. The Gilded Age was influenced by Victorian morals and standards for behavior that dictated sociocultural norms.
the sudden need for militarization, patriotism, and wartime heroism. Cowley explains that the ideals preached in university settings began to shift, and young college men were asked to exchange their “uniforms of culture for military uniforms” (36). At the start of the war, young men of the Lost Generation began to willingly enlist under different flags and foreign armies, especially French and Italian, in search of adventure. Fitzgerald and Hemingway too rode the tide mounting against their newly adopted enemies in Germany and Austria-Hungary with boyish expectations of a good time. However, the Great War, being neither easily won nor an adventurous good time, left the young soldiers bereft and largely directionless at its conclusion. The men of the Lost Generation returned to their homes or drifted abroad more calloused yet uncertain in their adulthood. In his 1920 novel, *This Side of Paradise*, Fitzgerald represents the growing rift between generations and the increasingly popular concern over the detachment of young veterans. Fitzgerald’s old-world, affluent character Monsignor Darcy, expresses this concern to his young veteran acolyte: “never will we meet again as we have met, because your generation is growing hard, much harder than mine ever grew” (*Paradise* 117). Although they had barely entered into their adulthood at the conclusion of the war, the infamous generation had already experienced an aspect of inhumanity that divided them from their parents’ generation creating in the young a sense of premature authority and a sense of entitlement to leisure. In a 1920 edition of the *Atlantic* John F. Carter Jr., a self-described member of the Lost Generation, accused the older generation of creating the world which had disillusioned its youth: “we have
been forced to live in an atmosphere of ‘tomorrow we die,’ and so, naturally, we drank and were merry” (qtd. in Dumenil 307).

Largely due to their sense of entitlement, the youth of the Lost Generation began to engage in raucous behavior and excessive leisure after the war, shocking the older generation into extending their conservative influence. Paula S. Fass explains that the evolving gender ideals and sexual mores of the Lost Generation were perceived by older generations as alarming threats to American society: “Sexuality symbolized both disorder and rebellion: disorder because it meant energy unrestrained, and rebellion because it was the most obvious line of attack in the onslaught against the pretensions of prewar morality” (21). Traditionalists³ of the older generation were overwhelmed by the magnitude of what they considered the social disorder resulting from the fast, sexual lifestyles of the younger generation and sought to curb what they believed to be the source of misbehavior and sexual promiscuity: alcoholic beverages. The US government, led by conservative President Woodrow Wilson, attempted a national intervention in the form of the 18th Amendment, commonly known as Prohibition, which banned the sale of alcoholic beverages. This well documented generational conflict naturally led to an industry of lucrative underground crime and a growing disregard for the law among young people. However, Prohibition largely served to further ignite reckless youth rather than to curb them. Indeed, the Lost Generation

³ Paula S. Fass explains that the older generations of the 1920s could largely be divided into two groups: traditionalists and progressives. Traditionalists viewed the cultural changes enacted by young people as the downfall of society, whereas progressives viewed cultural change as a positive force (15).
began to more vehemently reject the traditional rules and norms of their parents and instead favor progress in all aspects of culture, including gender. Amid this rising conflict of conservative government versus liberal youth, traditionally marginalized social movements, especially women’s suffrage, began to grow in strength and popularity. Passed by Congress on June 4, 1919, and ratified on August 18, 1920, the 19th amendment awarded American women the right to vote. The newly established equal voting rights paired with modern technological advances like the washing machine, vacuum cleaner, and even the diaphragm, gave women more leisure time and empowerment to establish their own identities. Women naturally began to take up social and professional space that had traditionally only been occupied by men, creating gender competition and rivalry that had never existed before. Women’s role in the work place began to not only evolve, but actually grow in popularity. The stigma of “working girl” went from being a family embarrassment to a staple for the cosmopolitan girl.

According to William H. Chafe, there was a massive growth of women’s employment in the lower ranking positions of white collar work, as opposed to factory work, at the turn of the twentieth-century. In 1910 just 17% of working women occupied positions in clerical sales, but by 1920 the percentage nearly doubled to 30% of working women in similar fashionable positions (67-71).

\[4\] Not all women were immediately granted equal opportunity voting rights and identity markers such as age, race, ethnicity, and economic status significantly affected women’s access to empowerment. Wealthy white women faced the fewest constraints and benefited most from early suffrage activity.
Growing female influence did not stay within professional spheres, but rather permeated into every aspect of American culture. The term “New Woman” became a popular signifier for those females who embraced and took advantage of the social changes in the postwar era. New Women types across the country began to appropriate greater personal freedoms which transgressed upon Victorian standards of womanhood and created a divide between the older conservative generation and extremely liberal youth. This massive evolution of female gender roles within the span of a decade created a generational divide: suddenly, mothers could not remotely relate to the fashion, social behavior, and sexual experimentation of their daughters. Among many others, both Fitzgerald and cartoonist John R. Held have attempted to claim credit for coining the term Flapper, which refers to a type of fashionable, young, New Woman figure made iconic in the 1920s for flouting conservative standards of feminine behavior. She may owe her existence to the work of suffragettes, but the glamorous Flapper, for all her sparkle, was essential to the rise of the gender revolution of the Jazz Age.

The Flapper figure popularized a transgressive femininity that was focused as much on evolving fashions as it was on women’s progress in a professional fields. According to Angela J. Latham, the Flapper image was essential to the identity of the

---

5 America’s Victorian period was, of course, a complex cultural framework that pertained to various aspects of culture, society, and politics, but here I will focus only on Victorian standards of gender. Victorian standards of womanhood dictated that a woman’s influence only extend within her home environment and that she set a civilizing example for her husband and children.
modern woman, and her newfound autonomy in clothing and behavior directly contributed to larger scale social change by making progressive femininity fashionable rather than merely political (7-8). In film, literature, and theater of the 1920s, the ideal woman began to shift from the Victorian eternal mother to the modern, transgressive Flapper. Latham cites Larry May, a historian and cultural analyst of the post-World War I period, in his discussion of the changing female ideal: “Motherhood as an ideal which had lasted for a century, virtually disappeared from films as the main aspiration for women. Now heroines became Flappers or erotic wives” (qtd. in Latham 10). Latham’s examination of the Flapper and her recognizable image suggests that many of the dominant heroines featured in the literature of Lost Generation authors epitomize the New Woman persona, despite the lack of information provided in these texts on their employment or political activity.\(^6\) In Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s 1920s novels, the fashion and manners of the heroines are often the first and foremost details described, making it clear that these figures belong to a specific category of women. Allusions to their clothing, hair styles, and behavior make it clear that many of Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s women are in fact New Women embracing the image of the Flapper and all the qualities that would have been instantly recognizable to their contemporary audience, who encountered the Flapper in every mode of popular media from cartoons

\(^6\) The Fitzgerald and Hemingway heroines that I will explore are not depicted as having particular professional or political zeal, but their image alone was so transgressive against the norms of Victorian American womanhood that they would have been viewed by contemporary audiences as New Woman types.
and commercials to film and theater. The general American public was inundated with these examples of gender revolution largely because the growth in mass consumerism made it nearly unavoidable.

The mass production practices of the 1920s led to major technological advancements in printing and advertising, which helped to distribute popular products and messages to a wider audience than ever before. Fass explains that at the conclusion of the war, society magazines and periodicals began to replace wartime campaigns as America’s favored reading material (19). This mass consumerism led to a wider distribution of the progressive ideals indicative of the Lost Generation. Previously unknown authors, like Fitzgerald and Hemingway, were able to become instant sensations due to those technological advances, but those advances in printing technology also enabled the widespread consumption of relatively homogeneous products and messages, as well. Kirk Curnutt argues that “consumerist fascinations” are evident throughout the literature of the 1920s and that Fitzgerald’s literature especially reveals a commodity fetishism that was growing in popularity. He claims that the rise in technological advancements and product advertisement permeated into literature, and that American consumerism “provided no autonomous space outside of the closed circuit of buying and selling for the literary arts to flower” (88). Despite literary efforts to resist commodification, American literature of the 1920s became yet another product of consumerism. Mass production practices became the means by which those groups who transgressed upon traditional standards of behavior enjoyed ever greater infamy. The
morals of the Lost Generation were debated or defended in every magazine, and consequently, the behavior of young men and women was constantly in the purview of American audiences. Rather than speaking from a place of artistic autonomy, Fitzgerald and Hemingway contributed their literature to this field of constant discussion on the evolving sensibilities of their generation. When placed in context with other social commentary of the 1920s, the cultural criticism present in their literature was indicative of, rather than contrary to, popular critical practices.

II. Scope of Study

The political conflict, social change, and mass consumerism of the 1920s complicated and intensified the need for a redefinition of gender. These revolutions were recorded by American authors Fitzgerald and Hemingway, who were especially connected to and affected by these changes. This thesis will focus primarily on American novels written by Fitzgerald and Hemingway during the Lost Generation’s peak period, which began in 1918 with the end of WWI and was punctuated by the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929. Fitzgerald and Hemingway are especially significant because they were not only artistic commentators on the cultural upheaval of this period, but also members of the Lost Generation, which reached its peak during this span of eleven years. In much of their literature, Fitzgerald and Hemingway portray the fast-paced lifestyles epitomized by the 1920s but foreshadow the eventual demise of this generation due to transgressive gender roles.
The stories that best represent the climate of changing gender ideals during this great, gaudy, and confusing spree include Fitzgerald’s novels *This Side of Paradise*, *The Beautiful and Damned*, and *The Great Gatsby*, and Hemingway’s novels, *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*. The representations of gender in these texts reveal Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s criticism of the empowered woman and her growing prominence in American society. Additionally, I will explore popular culture representations of American consumerism, including period-specific illustrations, periodicals, jazz lyrics, women’s and men’s product advertisements, sociopolitical cartoons, and films, which epitomize the cultural climate surrounding issues of gender in the 1920s. By analyzing these popular culture texts alongside the 1920s literature of Fitzgerald and Hemingway, I will be able to expose not only the motivations behind the cultural criticism present within their literature, but also the actual effect of their publications on the consumerist American public. Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s novels fed into the public fascination with transgressive gender, and while the authors may have been criticizing the gender revolution, their characters served as paradigms for modern definitions of gender.

As two of the most prominent American modernist authors, Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s literature has been critically analyzed for both its break with the literary styles of the past and its unavoidable connections with the historicity of American culture. While some critics have argued that Fitzgerald and Hemingway severed all ties with the literature of their past and introduced neoteric ideas to the twentieth-century,
still others have claimed that Fitzgerald and Hemingway remained intimately connected to the American ideals of their childhood, but regardless of these differing opinions, critics concur that Fitzgerald and Hemingway were disillusioned with the progress of American culture. As a member of the Lost generation himself, Malcom Cowley saw the 1920s as a break with not only American tradition but with everything culturally known and accepted before World War I. Throughout his 1934 critical text, *Exile’s Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* Cowley claims that the literature of modernist authors, like Fitzgerald and Hemingway, best articulated the rift between traditional and modern America and the resultant anxiety. Similarly, in his critical text 1963 *F. Scott Fitzgerald and his Contemporaries*, William Goldhurst argues that Fitzgerald and his coeval are an inseparable part of their cultural moment and that modernist authors’ disillusionment was intimately connected to their era; “The literature of the 1920s... is so closely bound to its era that all efforts to separate the two even by the most obstinate of the pure critics, will forever be incomplete, if not entirely futile” (13). In stark contrast, Marc Dolan argues that it is an outdated and unprofitable practice to read the literature and the attitudes of the Lost Generation as truly disconnected from any other period in his 1992 critical text *Modern Lives: A Cultural Re-reading of “The Lost Generation.”* Dolan argues that American authors in the 1920s were merely a “constituent rather than a representative part of early-twentieth-century America” and that they are intimately connected to other eras of American culture (7). Carol H. Smith also explores Hemingway’s connection to bygone eras in her exploration of his nostalgia for past
constructions of romantic relationships in her 1984 critical article “Women and the Loss of Eden in Hemingway’s Mythology.” Smith’s evaluation of the romantic relationships present across Hemingway’s literature highlights the author’s criticism of the evolving gender ideals and his desire for a return to Victorian femininity.

These critics may disagree on the level of connection between modernist authors and their time, but they all discuss Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s disillusionment with the progressive lifestyles of the American 1920s. Goldhurst also argues that Fitzgerald was outspoken against the popular social trends of the American majority and that he often portrayed “cynical interpretations” of 1920s American habits and attitudes in his literature (32). Similarly, in his critical text Hemingway and His Critics, Carlos Baker claims that Hemingway felt disillusioned by the early twentieth-century because he had lost much of the traditional society and values he had come to love in his youth and that Hemingway “was often rueful over places he had liked and lost – or seen wrested from him by what we sometimes refer to as progress” (8). I will not disagree that Fitzgerald and Hemingway often display nihilistic tendencies when reflecting on American ideals, culture, and values, but I will argue against the notion that these authors found fault with American culture as a whole; I seek to explore the root of their prejudice and expose the motivations behind the cultural criticism present in their 1920s works.

Despite their cynicism for the rapid transformation of their own country and their increasing preference for European society, Fitzgerald and Hemingway continually portray American characters, either at home or abroad, and they largely marketed their
written works for American audiences. Additionally, Fitzgerald and Hemingway never sought to change their national identities, despite their expatriate lifestyles. Fitzgerald and Hemingway portray the fast lives of American characters belonging to the Lost Generation throughout their early novels, but their continual tones of disenchantment and even reproach expose the root of their underlying criticism for the real and fictional members of their coeval. Throughout their canonical works of literature, Fitzgerald and Hemingway depict Lost Generation characters who engage in disastrous excess, exhibit progressive behavior, and maintain a notable disregard for traditional gender norms, which almost always didactically results in their ruin. Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s disillusionment with the changing social mores of America in the 1920s may be widely documented, but these expatriate authors do more than simply bemoan the fall of their generation and hanker for days past. In the manner of feminist theorist Judith Fetterley, I seek to resist the traditional patriarchal interpretations for these texts and propose a new reading, which reveals the inherent, gendered prejudices driving the plots of their 1920s novels: I argue that Fitzgerald and Hemingway fault the gender revolution as the source of modern disillusionment.

By examining the inherent role of gender in these early 1920s works, I can reveal the critical commentary of male authors, who sought to support rather than contradict the culturally-determined modes of gender. Fetterley’s critical feminist approach to American literature exposes the inherent patriarchal structures that permeate American fiction, and she assigns feminist readers with the task of resisting rather than assenting
to the male prerogative of literature in order to reveal new roles for feminine subjectivity in opposition to the male universality of past criticism. My refusal to adhere to the traditional readings of the novels that I have chosen for this thesis is perhaps why I associate so strongly with Fetterley’s agenda; she too finds the female plight in *The Great Gatsby* as well as *A Farewell to Arms* to be the more culturally significant story, and her paradigm for resisting, revisiting, and re-envisioning American literature is exactly the model that I seek to follow in my own literary critique of the five Fitzgerald and Hemingway novels that I have chosen for this project.

Resisting the traditional, patriarchal readings of canonical texts also requires breaking with powers of hegemonic discourses. In “Critically Queer” Judith Butler argues that Western historicity is the source of the power for gender restrictions because it is cited as an accumulation of authorities repeated to oppose otherness; hegemonic and heteronormative discourses are given the dominant authority through their ability to claim precedence for their repeated modalities of historical power. Butler argues that ritualized repetition of those culturally-accepted modes of gender serve to restrict individual identities and gender representations: “To the extent that this repetition creates an effect of gender uniformity, a stable effect of masculinity or femininity, it produces and destabilizes the notion of the subject as well, for the subject only comes into intelligibility through the matrix of gender” (22). Fitzgerald and Hemingway attempted to participate in the cultural restriction of gender identities in the 1920s by adding their literary voices to the ritualized repetition of gender norms, which
supported a traditional uniformity of gender, especially femininity. My analysis of their 1920s texts will reveal that throughout much of their popular literature, Fitzgerald and Hemingway share a common thread of blame for the collapse of American society: the rise of the empowered woman, her transgression of traditional femininity, and her destruction of male gender roles. However, I argue that their repeated criticism of the 1920s gender revolution served to popularize, rather than restrict, transgressive femininity.

III. Chapter Analysis

Through my analysis of these 1920s novels, I will reveal Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s agenda of representing the ruinous capabilities of the gender revolution. Fitzgerald was an avid participant in what he describes as “the greatest, gaudiest spree in history” (*The Crack Up* 87), and he too rose and fell with the best of his generation, consequently becoming disillusioned with the rapidly changing social standards. Nearly all of his stories communicate the tragic demise of inflated people after an undeserved spree of frivolity, but specifically, Fitzgerald tends to detail the demise of men who succumb to the siren song of the Flapper. As another member of the Lost Generation, Hemingway also draws a connection between evolving gender roles and the ruin of characters within his novels. Hemingway details the ways in which empowered and sexually autonomous women are able to negatively influence men and social settings both in America and abroad. In much the same way as Fitzgerald, Hemingway also portrays the ruinous effects of female dominance in romantic affairs and repeatedly
details the failings of modern relationships. Throughout the five novels I will explore, Fitzgerald and Hemingway feature Lost Generation men who have destructive, moth-like attractions to luminescent Flappers, and they detail disastrous results.

The first chapter will explore the transgressive heroines who are alleged to be the source of all conflict. In each of the novels that I will explore, Fitzgerald and Hemingway present a version of the New Woman. In fact, the innumerable modern women represented in the novels of Fitzgerald and Hemingway are often the most memorable characters and are likely responsible for much of the popularity of their stories.

Although they may seem to criticize the whole of their frivolous generation in these texts, Fitzgerald and Hemingway repeatedly trace the marks of their disillusionment back to an ever-smoking weapon, the Flapper. Despite their aversion to her growing dominance, both Fitzgerald and Hemingway seem to fetishize the New Woman, and they appear to be incapable of barring her from their stories. The women depicted in these Fitzgerald and Hemingway novels may range in age and marital status, but they all manage to exact some sense of control over social gatherings and manipulate the people around them. Their continual representation of this New Woman could suggest that, like much of the consumerist American public, Fitzgerald and Hemingway also admire her, but in reality they only create these heroines in order to critique them.

Fitzgerald and Hemingway repeatedly depict modern women entering social settings, creating competition among men and destroying fraternal camaraderie, manipulating
the structure of social groups, and becoming disastrously popular, thereby perpetuating their image and progressive behavior.

The second chapter of my project will deal with the ways in which empowered women have displaced Fitzgerald’s romantic heroes. Fitzgerald characterizes his male characters as having one of two major reactions to socially dominant females: engagement or withdrawal. Fitzgerald tends to characterize his heroes as “Dandies,” who have manners and expectations more akin to Victorian standards of masculinity. Fitzgerald’s heroes tend to fall in love with empowered New Women, engage in some form of relationship, and eventually become dominated or displaced by the women they love. The genteel male figures prized by Fitzgerald were still popular in some spheres of American culture in the 1920s, but the image was becoming antiquated with the growing preference for war veterans. New Women, as personifications of the gender revolution, especially confused and complicated the cultural expectations for masculinity by infringing on typical male roles. Fitzgerald sympathizes with his Dandy types, who are generally characterized as victims to both the irresistible draw of the Flapper and ambiguous masculine standards. In Fitzgerald’s early novels, only men who abstain from the influences of Flappers and withdraw from society manage to find long term success and happiness. Fitzgerald’s commentary is especially evident in the mutually miserable fates for all of his male characters: the gender revolution has created a world in which only lonely and withdrawn men are safe from ruin.
The third chapter of my project will examine Hemingway’s criticism of American men and their susceptibilities to New Women. Unlike Fitzgerald, Hemingway does not sympathize with ill-fated romantic figures but instead calls for a hyper-masculine performance to establish male identity. Hemingway places his American men in adventurous settings abroad and tests them with the influences of New Women in order to measure their masculinity. Although Hemingway’s American heroes generally maintain masculine occupations, such as soldiers, explorers, or sportsmen, they are still fundamentally incapable of performing traditional male gender roles in the face of empowered women because of their cultural restraints. Regardless of their masculine occupations, Hemingway’s American men eventually become displaced by empowered women as easily as Fitzgerald’s Dandies. Hemingway posits the empowered woman as a vehicle of progressive America, which destabilizes the masculinity of even the most virile war soldiers; nevertheless, there are some men who are capable of resisting the gender revolution. The foreign men featured in Hemingway’s novels encounter the same tests as his American men but manage to evade emasculation. The Latin male image was growing in popularity in American film culture during this period, and Hemingway used the trope as an alternative to what he saw as the increasingly effeminate American man. Hemingway’s criticism of 1920s gender is especially evident in his obvious admiration of foreign men: Hemingway believed that only men who were not beholden to the flaccidity of American culture could maintain hyper-masculine performances.
Literary authors and American consumers alike contributed to the growing prominence of the New Woman and the growth of the gender revolution. Fitzgerald and Hemingway continually depict the type of woman who they believed was the source of their generation’s social destruction, while consumerist America obsessed over the Flapper image they were given, loving and perpetuating her infamy. Through my analysis of Fitzgerald and Hemingway novels in which they portray the downfall of men from the Lost Generation, I will establish that these authors allege the evolving gender roles of the 1920s were the driving cause for the collapse of American society. Additionally, I aim to prove that in their continual representation of the New Woman, Fitzgerald and Hemingway ironically perpetuate and popularize that which they are attempting to criticize.
CHAPTER II. THE SMOKING WEAPON:
TRANSGRESSIVE FEMININITY AS THE SOURCE OF SOCIAL DESTRUCTION

Figure 2: “Where There’s Smoke There’s Fire,” color illustration by Russell Patterson, 1920.
Standing on the shoulders of first wave feminists, Flappers challenged culturally-determined concepts of femininity and simultaneously brought sex appeal to social disobedience. In the post-World War I era, images of provocative femininity were featured across popular culture in a diverse range of representations from product advertisements and lifestyle magazines to films and literature. Nevertheless, the sexualized popularity of the New Woman, who flouted conservative Victorian gender standards of behavior and shortened her hemlines as well as her hair, was not universally accepted by the general American public: the Flapper was viewed not only as a fashion symbol but a potential threat to the patriarchal traditions of pre-World War I America. Russel Patterson’s 1920 color illustration “Where There’s Smoke There’s Fire” [Figure 2] articulates some of the fear and fascination felt by the American public concerning this transgressive New Woman. Patterson expertly captures the Flapper’s bare skinned style and her unconcerned expression, but he devotes the majority of the frame to her smoke trail, signaling the burning remains of Victorian decorum.

Cultural critics, in the form of moralists, fashion specialists, and health experts began to draw attention to the New Woman’s transgressions upon standards of traditional femininity just after the turn of the century. Angela J. Latham explains that cultural critics of the 1920s largely sought to exact some sense of control over women’s choices in clothing and behavior. Even those critics who were more accepting of the evolution in femininity sought to explain away and trivialize the progressive changes occurring in the 1920s. Latham explains that the New Woman was met with both
constant attention and incessant criticism: “From silk stockings to bobbed hair, women were tediously inspected, frequently condemned.... Any rhetorical weapon, reasonable or illogical was deployed” (54). While there may have been diverse cultural critiques on the New Woman, perhaps the most notable commentary is that of celebrity authors who captivated the attention of American audiences.

Due to their ability to compose literature that became sensationally popular almost the instant it was released,¹ Lost Generation authors F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway were able to develop an arsenal of rhetorical tools making them powerful sociocultural critics. Like the aforementioned cultural critics of the 1920s, Fitzgerald and Hemingway noticed the evolution of the popular perception of the ideal female, and they sought to exact some sense of control over her image through their literature. However, rather than creating a representation that was contrary to popular messages of consumerist America, Fitzgerald and Hemingway merely contributed to the infamy surrounding transgressive femininity by fetishizing Flappers in their literature. Kirk Curnutt claims that American consumerism influenced the ways in which young men and women constructed their concepts of self: “The changes wrought by consumerism in the early twentieth-century were writ visibly in conceptions of identity” (91). Consumerist icons were at the forefront of young people’s attention, so the

¹ Previously unknown authors, like Fitzgerald and Hemingway, were able to become instant sensations due to technological advances in printing technology, but this gave a relatively small group dominant control over the products and messages released to the general American populace.
famous, or infamous, popular culture figures became models for youthful style and behavior.

Many theorists praise Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s handling of progressive female characters and champion the ways in which they create multi-dimensional characters who violate traditional representations of femininity. Sarah Beebe Fryer argues that Fitzgerald’s heroines embody the struggle felt by many New Women of the early twentieth-century to attain independence without cultural ostracism: “In their quest for autonomy, these New Women are out of syncopation with their civilization. The healthier they grow, the sicker they may appear” (16). Nancy R. Comely and Robert Scholes argue that despite Hemingway’s often archetypal portrayal of his female characters as either mothers, nurses, bitches, girls, or devils, he often violates those boundaries to display complex female characters. Indeed, in the complex characterization of their heroines, Fitzgerald and Hemingway seem to represent the evolution of the New Woman; however, I argue that rather than supporting the progressive culture that enables New Women to develop and gain autonomy, Fitzgerald and Hemingway side with the conservative American culture that seeks to ostracize independent women who have grown too empowered. Although the progressive woman is incarnated throughout the works of Fitzgerald and Hemingway and often appears as a trophy or symbol of masculine achievement, she ultimately becomes a fatal woman, wreaking destruction upon all who succeed in attaining her affection. Furthermore, when Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s modern women enter a social setting,
they create competition among men and destroy fraternal camaraderie, manipulate the structure of social groups, and become disastrously popular, thereby perpetuating their infamous image and progressive behavior.

I. Destruction of Fraternity

In the 1920s, the New Woman began to appear in professional and political venues, but she especially began to exercise her newfound sense of autonomy in social settings. Although Victorian women would have enjoyed a certain amount of control over social gatherings in America's pre-war period, New Women began to take control of group dynamics and even influence the ways in which men interacted with one another in social settings. Flappers inverted traditional social hierarchies and restructured the nature of relationships between men and women of the 1920s. This gendered phenomenon was the subject of much social commentary and representation in popular culture of the 1920s. In Charles Dana Gibson’s 1926 illustration *Eenie, Meenie, Minie, Mo*, [Figure 3] a Flapper is pictured as the central object of attention of four richly-attired suitors.²

Gibson communicates through his sketch that this Flapper encourages rivalry among her suitors in order to remain dominant over the setting. Significantly, none of the men pictured regard one another or engage in any masculine conversation but

---
² Although the “Gibson Girl” is usually known as an image of idealized Victorian beauty, Gibson’s depictions of women evolved along with American progress. Gibson’s 1920s depictions of aloof or even cruel Flappers signify America’s growing fascination with the New Woman as a replacement for Victorian womanhood.
instead focus their gaze entirely on their female subject with expressions of extreme consternation in some cases. The Flapper’s lackadaisical wave of her hand and slouching posture suggest that holding their attention is no great effort and that she may in fact hold social gatherings of this nature on a regular basis. Her ability to hold the attention of all four men depends on the Flapper’s capacity to simultaneously encourage all and discourage none. Any trace of patriarchal control or dominance is absent in the face of the Flapper’s disinterested supremacy. She does not directly make eye contact with any of her suitors, but leaves them to believe that she has not yet definitively decided on any one of them. Through these illustrated details, Gibson conveys the Flapper’s control over the social scene and ability to interrupt traditionally masculine settings.
Like Gibson, Fitzgerald and Hemingway also depict the revolution in gender roles at the turn of the century, but the authors especially portray the destructive influence that Flappers and “society vamps” could exact on male fraternity groups. Judith Fetterley argues that Fitzgerald and Hemingway, as well as other American male authors, have the tendency to employ female characters as scapegoats for the conflicts and hostility inherent within romantic stories (73). While it is not uncommon for women to be a locus of competition among men, Fitzgerald and Hemingway depict transgressive women, who purposefully play on the dissent they create among men for their own advantages. In the novels that I will explore, Fitzgerald and Hemingway portray social situations almost exclusively, and they intentionally create stages on which their Flappers create fraternal rivalry in order to sabotage male dominance. In detailing ruined social gatherings and instances of devastating competition, Fitzgerald and Hemingway allude to the ways in which socially-empowered females disrupt what conservative American culture viewed as positive fraternal interactions.

Fitzgerald’s debut novel *This Side of Paradise* (1920) is primarily a coming of age story featuring protagonist Amory Blaine, who is spurned and manipulated by empowered women throughout his young life. Fitzgerald details several Flappers who disrupt masculine spheres throughout the novel, but the first girl who influences Amory’s life is Isabelle Borgé. As a burgeoning Flapper, Isabelle already possesses the ability to attract the attention of an entire social gathering. Isabelle is obsessed with her own image, and her primary concern is collecting beaux that she believes are equal to
her charm. However, rather than painting her simply as a self-obsessed sixteen-and-a-half-year-old, Fitzgerald portrays her as an already skilled society vamp, who is cognizant of her growing reputation and her effect on young men: “she was quite capable of staging her own romances, with or without advance advertising” (Paradise 45). Isabelle’s reference to her assets as a commodity especially recalls Curnutt’s discussion of Fitzgerald’s focus on the influences exacted by American consumerism on the identities of young people in the 1920s (91). For Isabelle, her sexual identity is tied to her ability to exact social control by socially manipulative means. During the party at which Amory and Isabelle are supposed to meet, Amory, Froggy Parker, and other young men get on amicably until Isabelle joins the party and creates a sense of “dim confusion” among the young men gathered (Paradise 48). Exercising her own preference for Amory, she literally sits herself between Amory and Froggy at dinner causing the latter to nervously commit a series of social faux pas.

Fitzgerald further demonstrates Isabelle’s destruction of male camaraderie by detailing the events of the after-dinner dance, in which Isabelle sets every boy on guard and against one another: “boys cut in on Isabelle every few feet and then squabbled in the corners with: ‘you might let me get more than an inch’ and ‘she didn’t like it either – she told me so next time I cut in.’ It was true – she told everyone so, and gave every hand a parting pressure that said: ‘you know that your dances are making my evening’” (Paradise 49). Isabelle, for whom this chapter is titled, is clearly the dominant presence with the greatest amount of control over the social gathering. Fitzgerald’s criticism of
the young Flapper is evident in his depiction of the ways in which the fraternity at a social gathering is ruined due to her female influence. When Isabelle enters the social setting, she takes command over the group and almost simultaneously, sets the young men against one another. Fitzgerald seems to leave unanswered the question of whether or not the male group would have gotten on better in a setting into which Isabelle, a dominant female, had not appeared.

Not unlike young Isabelle, twenty-two-year-old Gloria Gilbert from Fitzgerald’s *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922) uses her captivating social presence to ensure her own constant entertainment. Mrs. Catherine Gilbert, a quintessential Victorian matron, disconcertedly confides to her nephew Richard Caramel that her daughter treats men in the most off-handed manner and purposefully makes them miserable. Gloria, like a personified version of the illustrated Gibson girl, seems to inspire young men to turn upon one another in competition for her attention and focus upon her at every social gathering: “Scenes! Young men walking up and down the library like caged tigers! Young men glaring at each other in the hall as one came and the other left! Young men calling up on the telephone and being hung up upon in desperation” (*Beautiful* 65). The scenic quality of Gloria’s transgressive feminine performances become even more pronounced as she grows in confidence and experience. When Gloria ultimately chooses to marry Anthony Patch, it is more because he satisfies her image of how a lover should appear, rather than any strong feelings of affection she has for him.
On Gloria and Anthony’s wedding day, Fitzgerald shifts into stage direction styled prose as if to emphasize the theatrical quality that Mrs. Gilbert had used to describe the scenes in which Gloria’s suitors were at odds with one another. In the chapter titled “Ushers,” six young, at first nameless, men sit companionably in the library discussing literature, employment, and other neutral topics while they await Gloria’s arrival (Beautiful 123). Like the interchangeable and unidentifiable men in Gibson’s Eenie Meenie Minie Mo, Anthony’s fraternal group lacks any individuality except as a background for a Flapper. It is significant that Fitzgerald generically introduces the young men in this scene as “The First Young Man,” “The Second Young Man,” etc., rather than with their actual names, because these young men are in fact significant characters throughout the story, and their names and identities have been previously introduced. Once their dialogue turns to their relationships with the bride and the identities of the young men become obvious, their actual names replace their anonymous signifiers, but their companionship also evaporates. Even Gloria’s rhetorical appearance incites competition and disrupts the pre-nuptial fraternal setting of the library. Fitzgerald uses this situation to demonstrate the ways in which a dominant female presence can terminate a natural social grouping of men by creating competition, and therefore destroying fraternal camaraderie. Fitzgerald’s depiction of the ways in which Gloria destroys male social environments suggests that he sides with the conservative American culture in opposition to the progressive gender evolution that would allow Gloria to attain such dominance. Fitzgerald not only critiques the ways
in which young, unmarried Flappers disrupt male dominance, but he also demonstrates how the destructive influence of empowered women can permeate into a marital union.

Daisy Buchanan from Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925) inconspicuously intervenes in male relationships from the moment she is introduced in the novel. Initially, the narrator Nick Carraway introduces Daisy only as his cousin and as the wife of hyper-masculine Tom Buchannan; however, when Nick is brought into the Buchanans’ glamorous home and encounters Daisy in person, he is almost “surprised into murmuring an apology” simply for disturbing Daisy and her companion Jordan Baker. Daisy’s overt sexual draw allows her to establish dominance over the social environment through passive control of the men present: “That was a way she had... I’ve heard it said that Daisy’s murmur was only to make people lean toward her; an irrelevant criticism that made it no less charming (*Gatsby* 9). Fetterley argues that Daisy holds a seat of dominance due to her status as the ultimate trophy for masculine achievement within the story: “It is she for whom men compete, and possessing her is the clearest sign that one has made it into that magical world” (75). Despite Tom’s brutish behavior in his attempts to exact control over the topics of dinner discussion, Daisy easily dismisses her husband through light mockery and mastery of conversation with her companion Jordan that was “as cool as their white dresses and their impersonal eyes in the absence of all desire” (*Gatsby* 12). Later in the story, after Nick develops a regard for his extravagant neighbor Jay Gatsby, the mere memory of Daisy interrupts their burgeoning male friendship. Gatsby convinces Nick to facilitate his
reunion with Daisy, but their romantic relationship leaves Nick as an outsider: “They had forgotten me...; Gatsby didn’t know me now at all. I looked once more at them and they looked back at me, remotely, possessed by intense life. Then I went out of the room and down the marble steps into the rain, leaving them there together” (96).

Gatsby and Daisy’s affair not only displaces Nick’s homosocial relationship with Gatsby, but also destroys any form of honest communication between Nick and Tom, as the former is continually forced to act as Daisy’s alibi in her extra marital affair. Perhaps out of a sense of guilt, Gatsby offers to employ Nick in a mysterious enterprise, but Nick refuses because “the offer was obviously and tactlessly for a service to be rendered” (Gatsby 83). Fitzgerald uses these instances of ruined relationships due to male competition over women to demonstrate the disastrous effects of female empowerment and sexual autonomy. Fitzgerald’s intent is made most obvious during the scene in which Daisy admits to her affair with Gatsby, flees the social gathering with him, and kills Myrtle Wilson with Gatsby’s car, setting in motion the events that will lead to Gatsby’s eventual murder. Fetterley claims that Daisy’s elaborate undoing ensures that she will receive no sympathy and that “Nick has seen to it that no tears will be shed over her” (85). Nick, as the male narrator of this story, describes Daisy’s actions as an outsider, observing as she continually interrupts masculine settings. His male

---

3 Nick and Gatsby’s homosocial relationship is telling of many aspects of early twentieth-century masculinity that will be better explored in the second chapter of this thesis project.
perspective provides biased observations but rarely understanding and never sympathy for Daisy.

Hemingway also employs male first person narrators in his early 1920s novels, and that masculine “I” allows Hemingway to describe the intrusion of sexually autonomous women into male settings. Like Fitzgerald, Hemingway prioritizes male dominance in public spheres, but he especially likes to set his narratives amid masculine activities, such as wartime battles, bull fights, hunting, and fishing. Hemingway’s settings often appear as an idyllic prelapsarian environment before the disastrous influence of Eve. Carol H. Smith argues that Hemingway creates transgressive women to interrupt these male environments and that Hemingway’s bad women “use sexual power to tempt men and to disrupt the often fragile stability of the male world” (130).

Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) contains an almost entirely male cast who participate in several of those distinctly masculine activities, but the preexisting relationships among those men are continually disrupted by a single dominant woman, Lady Brett Ashley. In the first two chapters of the novel, the narrator, Jake Barnes, almost exclusively describes his amicable, but clueless, friend Robert Cohn. However, once she appears in the novel, Brett assuredly captivates the attention of all the men around her and Jake’s positive commentary about Robert evaporates. Due to a war injury, Jake is incapable of entering into a sexual relationship with Brett,⁴ so he is apt to

⁴ Jake and Brett’s complicated relationship and the role of Jake’s compromised masculinity will be explored further in the third chapter of this thesis project.
become violently jealous of her many admirers. Nevertheless, Brett effortlessly moves among circles of men from her initial introduction in the novel; she arrives at a social event amid a group of gay men unfamiliar to Jake, and then immediately inserts herself into Jake’s gathering of male expatriate acquaintances. Jake scornfully remarks that when Robert saw Brett for the first time that night, he “looked a great deal as his compatriot must have looked when he saw the promised land” (Sun 29). Jake’s reference to Moses as an obviously snide jibe at Robert’s Jewish heritage seems out of place when compared to his previously friendly description and light mockery of the younger man.

Like many of Fitzgerald’s heroines, Brett uses her social dominance to firmly set Jake and Robert against one another: when Robert asks her to dance, Brett answers immediately and untruthfully that she has already promised to dance with Jake. Jake observes as he is looking over Brett’s shoulder during their dance that Robert remains “standing at the bar, still watching her” (Sun 30). Later in the story when Jake, Brett, and Brett’s fiancé Michael meet up to go to Pamplona, Brett casually reveals that she had a fleeting sexual relationship with Robert: “Who do you think I went to San Sebastian with?” (Sun 89). Jake rudely compares her romantic activity with Robert to social service, and he is evidently bitter, but not until he is again forced to spend an extended amount of time with Robert does Jake reveal his altered feelings. While Jake and Robert await Brett and Michael’s delayed arrival at Pamplona, Jake begins to take every opportunity to “devil” Robert, and Jake reveals his changed feeling toward Robert; Jake
is “blind, unforgivingly jealous of what had happened to him” and “certainly did hate him” (Sun 105). The fatal blow to Jake and Robert’s relationship occurs when Jake escorts Brett to Pedro Romero, a young bull fighter for whom Brett has developed an intense desire. When Robert discovers that Jake has endorsed and enabled Brett’s new sexual relationship, Robert calls Jake a “damned pimp” and physically attacks him (Sun 195). Like Nick Caraway, Jake is forced to observe and facilitate the transgressions of a New Woman, and his first-person account colors her destructive presences among the friendships of men. Hemingway clearly posits Brett’s promiscuity as the source of destruction for Jake and Robert’s relationship. Although Brett, appears to be a trophy or symbol of masculine achievement like Daisy Buchanan, she actively wreaks destruction upon male friendships by purposefully creating disastrous competition among them.

Catherine Barkley from Hemingway’s Farewell to Arms (1929) is considerably more subdued than Brett Ashley, but the former is perhaps the most successful in employing her sexuality to separate her lover from his male environment. Fredric Henry is an American ambulance operator in the Italian army for no greater reason than being fluent in Italian and having a desire to join the war effort. At the beginning of the story, Fredric exists in an almost entirely masculine world of the war front, and the only women he interacts with are prostitutes, but even the act of visiting those women is a group activity among the men. Catherine, a young Voluntary Aid Detachment Nurse, is

---

5 The VAD developed with WWI and employed women, who were not professionally trained as nurses, to aid in the war effort. Military authorities were famously distrustful of VADs at the front line due to their lack of training. Catherine’s involvement in VAD is significant because it demonstrates her steadfast...
initially introduced to the cast of characters by Fredric’s closest friend Lieutenant Rinaldi, who wants to marry her. Upon meeting Fredric, Catherine quickly exercises her preference for him, and Rinaldi is forced to concede, “Miss Barkley prefers you to me. That is very clear” (Farewell 21). After Catherine and Fredric spend an evening outing together, Rinaldi jealously comments, “You have that pleasant air of a dog in heat” (Farewell 27). Fredric and Rinaldi do not allow their competition to escalate to the level of animosity displayed between Jake and Robert, but the separation between the friends is a direct result of Catherine’s influence.

As their relationship evolves, Catherine pulls Fredric further away from the other men, first at meal times, and then later in group social outings by asking Fredric “Don’t you like it better when we’re alone?” (Farewell 132) After Fredric sustains a shrapnel injury at the war front, he becomes bedridden and completely under Catherine’s care. After this period of near isolation from his male comrades, in which he also engages in a sexual relationship with Catherine, Fredric returns to the barracks to visit Rinaldi, but their relationship is missing the easy camaraderie that it once had. Rinaldi questions Fredric about the change: “‘You act like a married man,’ he said. ‘what’s the matter with you?’” (Farewell 167). Fredric’s injury heals and he eventually returns to the front, but he ultimately defects from the war and journeys undercover to find Catherine in Stresa. Shortly after their reunion, Catherine teases Fredric that he is “Othello with his occupation gone,” to which Fredric responds “I’m just so in love with you that there isn’t independence to pursue a dangerous position without any real experience.”
anything else” (Farewell 257). Coming from a man who sought to join a war effort that did not personally involve him and who used to enact his every activity in the company of other men, Fredric’s comment is especially pivotal. Hemingway posits sexually-autonomous women like Catherine as disruptions to even the most secure male environments.

II. Manipulation of Social Groups

Before the turn of the century, debutantes and other young women still dependent upon their families would not traditionally have enjoyed any control over social gatherings, but would have more likely been passive participants in events hosted by their families or extended acquaintances. However, Lynn Dumenil argues that New Women of the 1920s dramatically shifted the gendered norms of the late nineteenth-century and that their “entry into the public arena through participation in politics and an expanded presence in the workplace challenged older assumptions about women’s proper sphere. Changing sexual mores also set the stage for new conceptions of womanhood” (98). These evolving standards of femininity were largely inflated by what Curnutt labels “consumerist fascinations” or a fetishism for commodity that was growing in popularity 1920s and naturally became evident in the literature of that era. Fitzgerald’s literature especially reveals an obsession with consumerism in his depiction of young women who use their attractive qualities for advancement in the social sphere. Due to the rise of progressive femininity, young women were also able to utilize the public’s obsession with commodity to establish autonomy in the social sphere. This
trend towards public displays of female autonomy became a popular subject of sociocultural conversation.

In John R. Held’s comic illustrations for the theatrical release poster of *Wise Girls* [Figure 4], a 1929 “talkie” starring Elliot Nugent and Norma Lee, two cartoon Flappers are decidedly rejecting two formally dressed men, who are trying to entice the women with traditional gifts, such as a wedding ring, possibly a deed to a house, and a bouquet of flowers. The scorn evident on the faces and up-turned noses of the cartoon Flappers indicates that they are not unaccustomed to being the center of attention or male affections. The comedy for which these sketches were designed is also the story of a willful young Flapper taking control over both her father and two of her suitors. Norma
Lee plays Kate Bence, a quintessential bob-haired Flapper (pictured in film still), who defies her father’s wishes and marries a poor plumber; however, Kate chooses her young plumber not for love, but in order to make another suitor jealous. This depiction of Kate’s comical, though manipulative, control over both her social environment and the men in her life suggests that the American public was growing accustomed to growing female dominance in social settings. Although they may vary in age and marital status, the heroines of Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s novels exact a considerable amount of control over social gatherings and manipulate the people around them with an “infinite guile that would have horrified [their] parents” (Paradise 49). The Flappers featured in these novels are regularly able to manipulate their parents, siblings, friends, suitors, and eventually even their husbands. These New Women characters exact control either through passive manipulation with their wiles or by direct application of their social dominance. However, rather than characterizing these young women as capable, independent figures, Fitzgerald and Hemingway usually characterize New Women as vain, spoiled, and likely to use their social dominance for selfish ends.

Rosalind Connage from This Side of Paradise is perhaps the most spoiled of Fitzgerald’s women, with the fewest redeeming qualities. In fact, her golden hair, gray eyes and small mouth are some of the only positive aspects attributed to her, yet the circle of people in which she moves is subject to her every whim. As a representation of the female commodity that has become a new obsession in the social sphere, Rosalind has the relative freedom to fashionably scorn those around her like the haughty
Flappers pictured in Held’s illustration. Though she continually caters to Rosalind, plain Cecilia Connage describes her older sister in a most unflattering way: “she treats men terribly. She abuses them and cuts them and breaks dates with them and yawns in their faces – and they come back for more...she’s a sort of vampire, I think – and she can make girls do what she wants usually – only she hates girls” (Paradise 125). Rosalind certainly can make women, including her mother, sister, and friends do what she wants simply by exacting her manipulative charm. However, Rosalind’s true charm seems vulgar when described as a business for ensuing her future stability and comfort in the form of a rich husband: “Oh, it’s not a corporation – it’s just ‘Rosalind, Unlimited.’ Fifty-one shares, name and goodwill, and everything goes at $25,000 a year” (Paradise 128). Fryer claims that Rosalind’s casual reference to her social charm as a business reflects that her studied grace is in fact her life’s work; Rosalind may not hold the upper hand in all public spheres, but she owns the social domain (24). Fitzgerald undoubtedly acknowledges the power of her social charm as a Flapper, but he degrades and cheapens her appeal with references to American consumerism.

Men, including Amory, are unwitting pawns with which Rosalind entertains herself temporarily, and she seems likely to continue exchanging one man for the next indefinitely, inverting the traditional structure of gendered commodity, until Fitzgerald introduces monetary necessities through the voice of Rosalind’s mother, who makes it evident that Amory’s “little income” isn’t sufficient enough to even keep her in clothes. Though Rosalind may appear to originally disregard her mother’s advice, she later tells
Amory that he cannot afford to keep her happy: “You’d hate me in a narrow atmosphere. I’d make you hate me” (*Paradise* 144). Fitzgerald seems to mock her social dominance and the personal autonomy that she has enjoyed in her young social life by making it clear that she is not economically self-sufficient, but indeed a slave to finery. Rosalind must conclude her period of social dominion and employ “the stuff that she was selling now once and for all” to buy a man who can provide for her, rather than someone who matches her social charm (*Paradise* 190).

Unlike Rosalind, Gloria Gilbert from *The Beautiful and Damned* enjoys a relative amount of romantic freedom, despite still living in her father’s home. They may disapprove of Gloria, but her parents are either unwilling or unable to curb the outings of their socialite daughter or influence her marital prospects. Like the girls featured in Held’s comic, Gloria exacts a surprising amount of control within social groups, and she selects and spurns suitors based on her preference, rather than any real parental pressure. Additionally, Gloria seems to manipulate her suitors in a way that would suggest far more worldly experience with members of the opposite sex. In fact, she requires no parental guidance or protection from the unwanted advances of young men. On a particular instance of their courtship in which Gloria dismisses him from her presence, Anthony reflects on his powerlessness in the face of Gloria’s dominance: “instead of seizing the girl and holding her by sheer strength until she became passive to his desire, instead of beating down her will by the force of his own, he had walked, defeated and powerless, from her door, with the corners of his mouth drooping and
what force there might have been in his grief hidden behind the manner of a whipped schoolboy” (Beautiful 94). However, Gloria’s ability to subordinate unruly men to the status of penitent schoolboys is alleged as more of an impending threat rather than a positive step towards female empowerment. After her superior behavior towards Anthony, the male voices within the story cease to glorify Gloria as they had in the beginning of her courtship with Anthony; in fact, within the first six months of their marriage, Anthony reveals that Gloria has “tremendous nervous tension” and “high-handed selfishness” (Beautiful 128). Fitzgerald may be willing to characterize his women as independent, but he will not allow their displays of social dominance to be admired.

Although Daisy Buchanan from The Great Gatsby is often read as superficial and erratic, she also exercises her social dominance to satisfy her own ends on several occasions. Daisy uses her beauty and social charm to subtly dominate social situations and control those around her. Especially in her extra-marital relationship with Gatsby, Daisy clearly has the upper hand; rather than exhibiting a conventional belief in female dependence on a male provider, Gatsby feels indebted to Daisy for bestowing her beauty, charm, and sexual attentions upon him. Like Rosalind Connage from This Side of Paradise, Daisy makes use of the commodity value of her charms to alter the ways in which she is received in social settings. Gatsby reveals to Nick that “He felt married to her, that was all” (Gatsby 149), but Daisy obviously does not reciprocate his monogamous feelings. In reflecting on their girlhood, Jordan reveals that Daisy was briefly devastated over her separation from young Gatsby, but “[b]y the next autumn
she was gay again, gay as ever” (*Gatsby* 75). Compared to Gatsby’s five years of pining and planning for his next interaction with Daisy, her seasonal period of depression before choosing to marry Tom Buchanan seems cold-hearted when described by Nick Caraway. Daisy does reveal her lingering feelings for Gatsby when they are reunited, but she never seems to lose the economic pragmatism which pushed her to marry Tom in the first place. Once their reunion becomes an official affair, Daisy puts a stop to Gatsby’s extravagant Saturday night parties and even dismisses his staff. Far from being swept away in romance, Daisy’s practical nature helps to preserve her reputation and keep her extra-marital liaison a secret. Andre Le Vot examines the ways in which the kisses or other representations of sexuality from highly idealized female characters like Daisy reflect their roles within romantic relationships. The sexual attentions granted by these types of women are “dilatory” and “deliberate” rather than powerful exhibitions of passion (92). Additionally, women like Daisy are expected to live up to the archetypes that their admirers have concocted. Le Vot argues that men with unrealistic expectations, like Gatsby, are “in love with an icon, a product of their nostalgia and imagination” (96). Similarly, Fetterley asserts that Gatsby’s sense of betrayal is that of an explorer promised unearthly bounty but given a barren desert: “the golden girl is revealed to be a common weed and the fresh green breast of the new world turns pander to men’s dreams feeding them not on the milk of wonder but on the foul dust of bootleg liquor” (73). By repeatedly using her physical charms, Daisy is able to economically provide for herself, much in the way that Rosalind advertises her
attributes as “Rosalind Unlimited.” But once again, Fitzgerald cannot allow a Flapper to remain dominant, and he creates a didactic end even more perilous for Daisy than Rosalind’s ill-fated marriage.

Hemingway also portrays his socially dominant heroines as destructive forces, but he generally characterizes them in one of two ways: active assailants or passive antagonists. While Brett Ashley actively asserts her dominance in social spheres and manipulates the affections of men publicly, Catherine Barkley uses seduction and accommodating guiles to reach her own ends. According to Jamie Barlowe, Hemingway’s female characterization alternates between the “True Woman” of the Victorian era and the “New Woman” of the twentieth-century, meaning that Hemingway’s female characters are “either stereotyped versions of the absence of male traits or stereotyped versions of masculinized women” (130). However, in his 1920s novels, I argue that both of Hemingway’s dissimilar heroines behave manipulatively: Catherine is a more traditional feminine figure, who at first appears to behave as a True Woman, and Brett is clearly a masculinized New Woman, but both heroines succeed in pursuing their own desires and manipulating social environments.

Despite her position in the British aristocracy, Brett Ashley actively rejects traditional standards of propriety and is unapologetic for her sexual experimentation. When she and Jake are discussing the reasons that they cannot live together despite their obvious affection for one another, Brett insists that she must have a sexual relationship, which Jake cannot provide. Though Brett may be revealing a sense of
regret that she cannot maintain a relationship with Jake, she is not in any way ashamed of her physical needs: “It’s my fault, Jake. It’s the way I’m made” (Sun 62). In her relationship with her fiancé, Brett not only violates the traditional roles of women within a social setting, but she inverts the power structure of male and female relationships. Like a Victorian woman being forced to wordlessly accept the extramarital affairs of her husband, Michael is remarkably laissez-faire about Brett’s sexual activity with other men. Michael accuses Robert of following Brett around “like a steer” and acting downtrodden when she will not pay attention to him, even after their sexual encounter (Sun 146). Michael is unconcerned that Brett has been intimate with Robert and insinuates that his hurt feelings are unfounded: “What if Brett did sleep with you? She’s slept with lots of better people than you” (Sun 146). This kind of sexual power she exerts in social settings is especially relevant since she has actively subverted the control that was previously imposed upon her by men. When reflecting on Brett’s behavior, Michael reveals that Lord Ashley was a ninth baronet sailor who seriously abused Brett, and that he used to sleep with a loaded service revolver and threaten to kill her: “She hasn’t had an absolutely happy life, Brett” (207). Brett’s sexually autonomous behavior then is especially significant since she has taken the steps to ensure her personal freedom and happiness despite her previous subjugation by dominant men, but the lasting image of Brett, as conveyed by the male narrator, is that of a tragic woman, forever anchorless. Hemingway’s heroines are allowed to be independent but memorable for their manipulations rather than their impressive displays of autonomy.
There is little to no mention of Catherine Barkley’s family in *A Farewell to Arms*, and she is clearly responsible for her own well-being on the Italian war front. Before she becomes entrenched in her relationship with Fredric, Catherine exacts a considerable amount of control over her career and personal pursuits. Catherine reveals to Fredric that she has been a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) nurse “since the end of ‘fifteen” and that she even resisted marrying her childhood sweetheart, to whom she had been engaged for eight years (*Farewell* 19-20). Her original intention for entering the VAD was to be near her enlisted fiancé, but she remains in her voluntary position even after his death. When they first meet, Catherine displays her willful independence by slapping Fredric the first time he tries to kiss her without her permission, and she explains that she could not abide the “nurse’s-evening-off aspect of it,” meaning that she did not appreciate the social connotations of a brief or insincere romance (*Farewell* 26). Despite this show of early independence, Catherine undergoes a considerable change of personality later in the same scene and in their developing relationship, and she becomes famously self-deprecating for Fredric’s benefit, but she never entirely loses her sense of autonomy. Significantly, when Catherine becomes pregnant, she repeatedly tells Fredric that he is “not to worry” that she will “look after” everything to do with preparation for the baby (*Farewell* 138). Even in her near servile position to Fredric, Catherine still retains a surprising amount of autonomy and handles her personal affairs without any help. It is also significant that in her submissive behavior towards Fredric, Catherine appears to be transitioning into a more traditional female role, but she is
actually engaging in transgressive behavior by becoming his mistress and controlling him with her sexuality. Catherine becomes a threat to male dominance as a passive antagonist through her efforts to care-take, mother, and self-deprecate, rather than through her fast, selfish, or promiscuous behavior, like Brett Ashley. Additionally, in her actions to become Fredric’s “good girl,” she takes him away from the environment of the military camp and forces him to take on a more mature role throughout her pregnancy. Catherine’s sexual manipulation of Fredric less obtrusively but most assuredly upends the traditional hierarchy within traditional male and female roles. Like Daisy Buchanan, Catherine has established her social dominance through a passive control over the men in her life.

IV. Perpetuation of an Image

Unlike the sensitive reputation of the Victorian Woman, the image of the New Woman is not easily subject to blemish; in fact, the more gossip and infamy surrounding a Flapper, the greater her popularity grows. Bruce Bliven exemplifies some of the popular cultural criticism in his article, “Flapper Jane,” published in the September 9, 1925, edition of *The New Republic*, in which he criticizes popular Flapper fashion: “This year’s styles have gone quite a long step toward genuine nudity. Nor is this merely the sensible half of the population dressing as everyone ought to, in hot weather. Last winter’s styles weren’t so dissimilar, except that they were covered up by fur coats...Next year’s styles, from all one hears, will be, as they already are on the continent, even More So” (Bliven 4). Although his article is intended as harsh criticism
for the skimpy costumes that Flappers wore, Bliven’s tone has a discernable note of obsession over the Flapper. Bliven, along with many other cultural critics, may have sought to degrade the Flapper image, but their fixation on the New Woman merely contributed to her popularity.

Ruth Prigozy claims that only Fitzgerald’s stories featuring the “exploits and character of the new woman, the flapper” were adapted for the big screen because the public had come to associate his stories with that type of modern woman (131). Additionally, Prigozy argues that the Flapper image became so popularized in the public mind by the mid-1920s that the “youthful rebellion had become the expected behavior of young women” (136). She also claims that Fitzgerald became cognizant of the effect of his Flappers when they were adapted on screen, but he often critically distinguished between his Flappers and the movie actresses who played them, implying that the on-screen actresses could not accurately capture his heroines. One of those on-screen Flappers, Colleen Moore, was featured in numerous Flapper roles based on Fitzgerald’s
own heroines. Moore’s iconic image is recognizable even in an illustrated form of her role as Irene in a *Warner Bros Pictures* film of the same title [Figure 5]. Moore had a remarkable insight on the influence of the New Woman, and she was famously quoted in her admiration of the Flapper figures who she often portrayed:

> They were smart and sophisticated, with an air of independence about them, and so casual about their looks and clothes and manners as to be almost slapdash. I don’t know if I realized as soon as I began seeing them that they represented the wave of the future, but I do know I was drawn to them. I shared their restlessness, understood their determination to free themselves of the Victorian shackles of the pre-World War I era and find out for themselves what life was all about. (qtd. in Zeitz 220)

Moore understood the contagious power of a Flapper’s image and she hinted at the influence that the fashion symbol of New Womanhood would come to have on young women coming of age. Though they may not have seen it as a positive force, Fitzgerald and Hemingway too were cognizant of the fact that a reputation regularly followed popular Flappers, and the authors often introduce stories surrounding the heroines before the women themselves appear; in fact, some of the first information presented for Isabelle, Gloria, Daisy, and Brett are stories of their misbehavior. Fitzgerald and Hemingway also tend to depict minor female characters who attempt to imitate the destructive and reckless behavior of their disastrously popular heroines.
In a chapter of *This Side of Paradise* simply titled “Petting,” Fitzgerald seems to step outside of his narrative in order to provide context about the “Popular Daughter,” who he describes as a “New Girl” or a prelude to the New Woman (*Paradise* 43-4). He describes the ways in which the Popular Daughter has replaced the Victorian Belle of their mothers’ age as well as the evolution in behavior for the ideal girl. By his lack of reference to any specific girl, Fitzgerald implies that the presence of misbehaved Popular Daughters is not an anomaly but may in fact exist in many youthful social groups: “the Popular Daughter becomes engaged every six months between sixteen and twenty-two, when she arranges a match with young Hambell, of Cambell & Hambell, who fatuously considers himself her first love, and between engagements the P.D. ... has other sentimental last kisses in the moonlight, or the firelight, or the outer darkness” (*Paradise* 43). Like Bliven, Fitzgerald’s haughty tone during this description suggests a certain level of scorn and not a small hint of fascination regarding the behavior of these popular girls. After Fitzgerald’s informative break from the narrative, the story resumes with Amory preparing to meet Isabelle, who is evidently a Popular Daughter, for the first time. Amory is excited to meet her and, most likely due to his own arrogance, is undisturbed by the stories about her: “Amory found it rather fascinating to feel that any popular girl he had met before eight he might possibly kiss before twelve” (*Paradise* 44). In this way, Popular Daughters and Flappers are not fettered by their reputations for immoral behavior, but in fact buoyed up by the gossip and widespread criticism. While this Popular Daughter discussion is clearly aimed at characterizing Isabelle, the
descriptors for the “young society vamp” could easily apply to any of Fitzgerald’s young heroines who use their popularity, and eventual infamy, to their own social advantage.

When Gloria Gilbert was young and unmarried, she attracted the same social following of the Popular Daughters described in *This Side of Paradise*. Mrs. Gilbert privately admits that in her daughter’s romantic affairs, Gloria treats love-sick young men with not only contempt, but aggression: “Gloria it seemed, struck to kill” (*Beautiful* 65). The ways in which Gloria’s behavior is described is significant when compared to the girls who follow her around and seek to imitate her every movement. Gloria seems to associate herself with girls who are obviously inferior, most likely to highlight her own charm and beauty, but Muriel Kane and Rachael Jerryl nonetheless seek to embody Gloria’s persona and imitate her behavior. In a chapter titled “Two Young Women,” Muriel and Rachael typify the infectious nature of Gloria’s behavior by attempting to reproduce her witty banter and mannerisms, but Richard Caramel privately observes that Rachael Jerryl “was attempting to imitate Gloria – he wondered that people invariably chose inimitable people to imitate” (*Beautiful* 68).

At a social gathering prior to Gloria and Anthony’s wedding, all three girls arrive fashionably late and interrupt masculine conversation, but it is Muriel who appears in a “state of elaborate undress” (*Beautiful* 77). Muriel is apparently “got up to the best of her ability as a siren, more popularly a “vamp” – a picker up and a thrower away of men, an unscrupulous and fundamentally unmoved toyer with affections” (*Beautiful* 77), a description not far removed from that of Gloria’s mother about her own daughter’s
behavior. Although Rachael and Muriel may miss the target when they strike to kill, their
desire to imitate a highly-destructive figure is especially significant. Fitzgerald depicts
these minor female characters in order to demonstrate the ways in which the New
Woman persona is disseminated; the greatest danger of a single Flapper is not actually
the influence she will individually exact on the men around her, but the ripple effect of
her popularity on the women around her.

Jordan Baker may be a more accomplished actress than Rachael or Muriel, but
nonetheless, Jordan is able to successfully imitate her mentor’s behaviors. In a
recollection about her childhood, Jordan reveals that her relationship to Daisy has always
been that of an admiring follower: “I was flattered that she wanted to speak to me,
because of all the older girls I admired her most” (Gatsby 75). As an adult, Jordan still
seems to model her behavior after Daisy, and their social behavior is critiqued in
significantly similar ways. When Tom first introduces Nick to Jordan, he mentions the
offhanded critique, “They oughtn’t to let her run around the country this way” (Gatsby
18). Ironically, Jordan learned the scorned behavior from Tom’s own wife. Later in the
story, Gatsby reveals to Tom and a couple by the surname of Sloane that he knows
Daisy; a slightly shocked Mr. Sloane unknowingly echoes Tom’s words, but this time in
regard to Daisy: “I may be old-fashioned in my ideas, but women run around too much
these days to suit me” (Gatsby 103). Jordan not only mirrors Daisy’s tendency to “run
around” but also reproduces her apathetic treatment of men.
Jordan and Nick’s romantic relationship is alluded to several times throughout the story, and they spend a considerable amount of time together in the background of Daisy’s love triangle. Additionally, both Nick and Jordan are present for, and marginally participate in, the novel’s culminating disaster. When their relationship begins to dissolve, Nick feels obligated to provide Jordan with some sort of explanation, but Jordan, rather than holding onto any sentimental feelings for Nick, casually dismisses him and claims to be engaged to another man (Gatsby 177). It is especially significant that Jordan still imitates the behavior of a woman who became victim to such tragedy. With Jordan’s thoughtless dismissal, Fitzgerald seems to highlight the ways in which progressive female behavior perpetuates in an endless cycle: any one of the beaux that she casts off could potentially become a Gatsby, and any man who she marries for her own convenience may become a Tom. Social destruction is perpetuated by the infamy of empowered women.

Although Brett does not share her spotlight with another woman in her story, her disastrous reputation and subsequent imitation is implied on several occasions. When Jake first describes Brett, he speaks almost exclusively of her style and presence: “Brett was damned good looking. She wore a slipover jersey sweater and a tweed skirt, and her hair was brushed back like a boy’s. She started all that” (Sun 30). While “all that” could simply refer to the bobbed hair style, Jake is likely referring to the iconic Flapper image. To imply that Brett initiated the fashion which revolutionized female style and social presence assigns her incredible power. Throughout the novel, Brett’s
social dominance is evident, but the reactions of other women are especially significant. The female concierge at Jake’s apartment feels the need to comment on Brett’s appearance: “last night I formed another idea of her. But listen to what I tell you. She is très, très gentile. She is of a very good family. It is a thing you can see” (Sun 59). The only other woman besides Brett who enjoys the company of the prominent male characters of the story is a girl named Edna, who joins the company after Brett has gone off with Pedro Romero. Edna does not clearly belong with either Bill or Michael, but her familiarity with both implies that she may have established a relationship with one or both men. Edna is a side character at best, and perhaps only a female substitute for the period in which Brett is otherwise occupied, but her presence and fascination with the fist fight between Jake and Robert is especially significant. Edna is not only present when the altercation takes place, but she also offers rapt commentary on the fight over Brett: “It was quite a thing to watch” (Sun 195). After Jake recovers from his fight and before the conclusion of the fiesta, Bill and Jake briefly discuss Edna’s absence (Sun 225-26). Mentioning the disappearance of a minimally involved character is oddly significant coming from two men who have considerably more important things to discuss. However, when the comment is put in the larger context of their conversation about Brett’s behavior, the comment suggests something further. In depicting first Edna’s fascination with the fight inspired by Brett and second her disappearance from her new circle of male friends, Hemingway suggests that Brett’s behavior initiates a cycle. Brett’s popularity is indeed disastrous because she has the power to not only influence the men
who fall in love with her, but also young women who will go on to imitate her actions in every social setting they encounter.

In contemporary American consciousness, the 1920s Flapper has come to symbolize glamour, fashion, and progressive behavior. The enduring notions of her image are not derision towards her transgression of conservative values, but rather the ways in which she embodied the 1920s. Nonetheless, at the time when Flappers were revolutionary figures, they were seen as neither symbolic nor quaint, but in fact a real threat to the American Victorian way of life. Despite mixed reviews on the New Woman, cultural critics, authors, and artists continued to evoke her and keep her in the collective minds of early twentieth-century Americans. The 1920s art work of Patterson, Gibson, and Held, based on the progressive New Woman ideal, closely resembles the portrayal of Flappers in the literary works of Fitzgerald and Hemingway. The artists and authors alike contributed to the growing prominence of the New Woman because they continually depicted her throughout their works, even though Fitzgerald and Hemingway sought only to criticize her.

Fitzgerald and Hemingway critique the New Women in their stories by detailing the ways in which the women disrupt male relationships, manipulate social environments, and perpetuate their own images, but the author’s commentary becomes even more pronounced in their descriptions of the ways in which the gender revolution of the progressive era affects their heroes. Fitzgerald and Hemingway may champion entirely different male paradigms, but they seem to agree that New Women
destroy masculine figures. In each of their 1920s novels, Fitzgerald and Hemingway
describe the plights of men, who are forced to redefine their identities or face personal
ruin. The eternally smoking weapon may be the immortal Flapper, but Fitzgerald and
Hemingway posit their heroes as the enduring victims.
CHAPTER III. FITZGERALD’S LOST BOYS:

AMBIGUOUS MASCULINITY AS THE SOURCE OF GENDERED CONFLICT

Figure 6: “Enlist: On Which Side of the Window are You?” propaganda poster by Laura Brey, 1917.
The task of defining culturally-regulated concepts of masculinity at any given period of history is complicated by varying societal and categorical constraints. Defining American masculinity amid the massive cultural shifts and revolution of gender roles at the turn of the twentieth-century inaugurated by The First World War is especially problematic. In the 1920s, masculinity and femininity underwent a period of rapid transformation, but the shift in masculinity was much less dramatic than the evolution of femininity. Women began their ascension from positions of subjugation to a new sense of empowerment, and the evidence of that progression is shown in their political activism, fashion, and behavior. Conversely, men underwent an ambiguous alteration of responsibilities and were asked to exchange their Gilded Age postures of leisure for positions of wartime heroism just after the turn of the century. Laura Brey’s 1917 World War I propaganda poster [Figure 6] shows the juxtaposition of a genteel man standing by the window against the backdrop of assembled American soldiers outside. The gentleman’s position of domesticated safety, framed by the glass window, is placed in sharp contrast to the uniformed soldiers’ open air march, blessed by an American flag waving overhead. The war-dominated years of the early twentieth-century would seem to have definitively shifted American masculine ideals, but the abrupt conclusion of the Great War left many young men coming of age into a period of intense gender conflict. At the start of the 1920s, lingering ideals of both Victorian manhood\(^1\) and wartime

---

\(^1\) American Victorian concepts of masculinity were based primarily around the pillars of wealth and ownership, industry, and patriarchal dominance, influenced by western Christianity and the biblical view of male supremacy.
heroism were not only still present in American consciousness, but were also inconsistently applied to define American masculinity.

The conflict between socially-accepted masculine roles was represented not only in war propaganda, but also in popular cultural representations, including jazz lyrics, product advertisements, films, and popular literature of the 1920s. Throughout his early novels, Fitzgerald criticizes the conflicting masculine images generated by the gender revolution, and he details the resultant gender confusion felt by many young American men belonging to the Lost Generation. Since Americanness is a condition in and of itself complicated by notions of patriotism, identity, and culture, defining what it is to be an American man depends on the preexisting conditions of national identity. In Our America, Walter Benn Michaels explores the reoccurring concepts of nativism, modernism, and pluralism as they pertained to American identity in early twentieth-century literature. He especially emphasizes that nativism in the post-World War I era played a crucial role in defining the distinction between what it meant to be American, or conversely, un-American. The nativist concept of a supposedly essential American identity affects my discussion of 1920s gender roles, as represented in the works of Fitzgerald, because it underlines the pervasive impact of the cultural constructs that would have been in place to define all aspects of American cultural life, including sexual norms and gender roles, during this time period. Michaels discusses the ways in which a collective national identity began to develop in the American 1920s and came to signify “a central position on American culture, which is to say, first, in the idea of what an
American was and, second, in the idea of what a culture was” (6). The rigid quality of culturally-maintained American identity leaves little room for those persons unable to conform to sociocultural ideals. In his 1920s novels, Fitzgerald depicts the plights of young men who are unable to conform to a specific American archetype of masculinity because of the conflicting nature of those cultural ideals. The American public was inundated with contradictory ideals of masculinity: fashionable dandies, who danced around major cities with Flappers in their arms, were most popular among collegiate men, while the ideal of virile masculinity represented by the military veteran dominated conservative America. Fitzgerald largely sympathizes with the fashionable dandy figures, and many of his heroes are displaced romantics, who cannot adapt to the realities imposed by the 1920s gender revolution and New Women.

The male gender identities of the 1920s were, of course, more complicated than the simple divide between Victorian dandy and wartime hero as pictured in Brey’s propaganda poster. There were men coming of age at the turn of the century, who were unable to fit into a predetermined cultural identity, and those lost boys are largely depicted in Fitzgerald’s novels. In Gender Trouble, Judith Butler challenges the cultural notion that gender identity as a “normative ideal” is a more useful descriptor of personhood than experience (16). Butler argues that persons who do not or cannot meet cultural standards are often viewed as fundamental failures: “precisely because certain kinds of ‘gender identities’ fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities from
within that domain” (17). While Butler may use her discussion of regulatory practices of
gender formation to explore the multiplicity of gender identities existing outside of
hegemonic, heterosexual cultural norms and the artificial binary between women and
men, her argument both supports and enables my own exploration of a more specific
category of male gender identity confusion as a result of ambiguous cultural definitions.
Through the characterization of his lost heroes, Fitzgerald demonstrates the ways in
which the ambiguous cultural standards and the gender revolution of the time period
caused masculine identity confusion. In this chapter, I will explore male characters from
Fitzgerald’s novels, who exist outside of the rapidly evolving socially-maintained norms
of gender intelligibility of the American 1920s.

As both a member and critic of the Lost Generation, Fitzgerald was privy to the
ways in which lingering Victorian ideals of masculinity and imposed standards of
postwar manhood complicated male gender identity as the twentieth-century entered
its second decade. Young men coming of age in the 1920s were inundated with
conflicting examples of manhood through popular culture and the explosion of
American consumerism, making the journey through adolescence disorienting at best.
Like Brey, Fitzgerald perceives a tangible divide between old-world gentlemen and
twentieth-century soldiers, but he challenges the popular notion that men could easily
transition between those two culturally-determined masculine roles. Consequently,
Fitzgerald develops his own male archetypes, but his dividing factor between those
archetypes is their level of engagement with the modern era and the gender revolution.
In all of his early 1920s novels, Fitzgerald crafts fashionable heroes, who embrace the evolving culture of the 1920s and fall to ruin, but he also designs minor characters, who withdraw from society and become successful, to serve as foils to his failed protagonists.

One popular figure that bears a strong resemblance to Fitzgerald’s fashionable heroes was termed the “cake eater.” Unlike Fitzgerald’s socially-withdrawn men, the cake eater engages in all of the frivolity, drunken revels, and progressive behavior that has come to be associated with the 1920s. A popular 1922 novelty song by Edwin H. Underhill titled “I’m a Cake Eating Man” [Figure 7] describes the cake eater, who is often seen sporting the latest in men’s fashions and in the company of Flappers. The cake eater’s main tenets are outlined in Underhill’s lyrics: “I’m a cake eating man/ Eat my cake when I can/ I like a dapper flapper that shows a naughty knee/ who dances to naughty jazz and shakes a naughty lingerie/ I’m there with my shoe polish hair/ For I’m a mama loving, cookie chewing, cake eating man” (4-5). The illustrated cover for the sheet music and cover illustration, Edwin H. Underhill.
music portrays a cake eater admired from afar by two bob-haired, short-skirted Flappers, and he epitomizes all of the qualities of one type of popularized masculinity in the 1920s. The cake eater’s relative domesticity and “mama loving” tendencies are especially significant when compared to the genteel figure in Brey’s propaganda poster: dandies may make for dashing figures, but their popularity was limited. All of Fitzgerald’s protagonists in This Side of Paradise, The Beautiful and Damned and The Great Gatsby, display qualities consistent with Underhill’s cake eater, especially in their tendency to chase speedy Flappers; however, the conflicting nature of masculinity in modern culture complicates the identities of these Fitzgeraldian heroes. Fitzgerald’s Jazz Age dandies are unable to attain success in life and love because the gender revolution has complicated the meaning of American masculinity. These protagonists each undergo personal transformations in hopes of attaining a socially-accepted male gender identity and acquiring the love of a New Woman, but they are all destroyed in the process. In contrast, Fitzgerald also creates minor male characters, who disconnect from society or abstain from the temptation of New Women, and it is only these socially-withdrawn men who manage to attain personal success.

Fitzgerald’s second archetype acts as a foil for his hapless heroes: as his dandies spiral into gendered confusion, his withdrawn men maintain efficacious reticence. Fitzgerald’s criticism of the gender revolution is especially clear in these didactic tales in which his disoriented heroes are destroyed by the seductive power of New Women and progressive America, while men who either remove themselves from society or abstain...
from the temptation of modern women emerge from the chaos of the 1920s unblemished. Though his dandy heroes fail as men and as individuals, Fitzgerald’s reticent, minor characters withdraw from society and become successful but sad, implying that there is no happy ending for men living amid the gender revolution.

I. Effete Dandy Fashioning

Although the public eye was largely fixed on the clothes and behavior of New Women in the American 1920s, men’s fashion was not entirely exempt from social attention. Fitzgerald’s heroes, Amory Blaine, Anthony Patch, and Jay Gatsby, especially epitomize cake eater fashion with their extreme focus on grooming and formal dress. This youthful fashion trend was especially popular on Ivy League campuses, and as a result, the college dandy image developed into a style that was nearly as recognizable to the American public as the Flapper. A product advertisement for Stacomb brand hair pomade [Figure 8] published in the May 1927 edition of Popular Science features a college-aged young man modeling a perfectly coiffed hair style. The title of the ad boasts that “college men” specifically prefer Stacomb brand for maintaining their pristine appearances. Of course, the dandy existed outside of

Figure 8: “Ask Ay 10 College Men,” Stacomb men’s product advertisement, Popular Science, 1927.
college campuses, but the root of his image in America resided in higher education and
the appearance of old-world affluence. However, this dapper style of male dress was
not universally accepted, and it was often criticized for promoting a certain feminization
of male style across the country.

While New Women were receiving negative public attention for their brazen
style of dress and masculine haircuts, Dandies began to reap criticism for their
“womanly” fashion sense. Paula Fass claims that in youthful, co-ed settings of the 1920s,
the strictly gendered modes of dress began to evaporate along with other traditional
gender norms. This trend away from gendered dress could not go unnoticed by
conservative cultural critics, and Fass explains that while “women were accused of
borrowing from men in their boyish styles, men were said to be effeminate in their
attention to appearance” (286). An article in the October 1925 edition of Louisiana
State’s Reveille accused young college men of paying as much attention to appearance
as women: “The only difference was that the girls do it in pubic and the boys are
ashamed to” (qtd. in Fass 287). Fass explains that in the most extreme forms of self-
attentiveness, these college Dandies “verged on the effete” in their attention to
appearance (287). Many of Fitzgerald’s heroes share not only a similar collegiate
background, but also the same sense of Victorian style and manner that cultural critics
considered effeminate.

Fitzgeraldian heroes often yearn for pre-World War I gender norms, which
permitted men to be scholarly gentlemen and required women to be delicate
homemakers. As Victorian dandies, Fitzgerald’s characters also have a distorted impression of femininity and the roles of women in society. E. Anthony Rotundo claims that nineteenth-century men often used contrasting Angel or Eve analogies to classify or explain women: “Men used religious imagery to describe women because their feelings about them were transcendentally powerful, and the mixture of good and evil in their imagery shows how deeply ambivalent their feelings were,” like much of conservative America (104). Rotundo explains that “Youthful men feared the shrewdness of the opposite sex and they were frightened by the ability of women to exploit their attractiveness to men” (104). Fitzgerald’s heroes especially feared the empowerment of modern women and often became victims to the whims of their powerful paramours. Largely as a result of their early failures, Fitzgeraldian heroes attempt to alter themselves to become more conventionally masculine. Though many of his heroes enter the war effort and attempt to enact the masculine transition called for by conservative cultural critics, they are still unable to attain a normative sense of masculinity because the culturally-maintained gender ideals are too ambiguous. By detailing the ruin of his Dandies, Fitzgerald communicates that New Women and the gender revolution are devastatingly emasculating forces. In his early novels, a man’s ability to possess a New Woman is simultaneously a symbol of success and a mark of impending defeat. When Flappers are present in Fitzgerald’s literature, they displace his heroes and denigrate them into alcoholism, self-destruction and depression. Fitzgerald’s dandies are especially indicative of the Lost Generation because they are rooted in the
fixed cultural values of the Victorian period, but they must alter themselves in order to live in an era in which both New Women and American society have upset the accepted definitions of manhood. Throughout his early 1920s novels, Fitzgerald continually portrays the tragedy of romantic American men, who lose their dignity and identities, while New Women become empowered and the gender revolution progresses around them.

In his debut novel, Fitzgerald creates a character who is a quintessential dandy in all aspects of manner and style. Amory Blaine from *This Side of Paradise* was raised to be delicate, gentle, and entirely idle by Beatrice Blaine, his famously beautiful Victorian mother. Beatrice’s doting tendencies toward her son recall the unwanted attention that many of Fitzgerald’s Popular Daughters receive from their own mothers and suggest that Beatrice’s antiquated child-rearing is serving to feminize her son. Additionally, Amory’s “mama loving” habits are similar to the cake eater from Underhill’s song, whose popularity is limited. When Amory enters college at Princeton, he happily discovers that his dated concepts of manhood are not necessarily out of place on the Ivy League campus. Like the male model in the Stacomb advertisement, Amory was able to embrace the effeminate Dandy identity and still find acceptance in a collegiate environment. Despite the growing international conflicts that arise during his college years, Amory is able to temporarily avoid the impending war for a time and remain safe in his collegiate identity: “The war began in the summer following his freshman year. Beyond a sporting interest in the German dash for Paris the whole affair failed to either
thrill or interest him” (*Paradise* 40). His security in his Victorian identity remains largely unchecked as long as he remains in the male-dominated Ivy League environment, but when New Women force Amory into the new age, his way of life and sense of manhood are threatened.

Amory’s romantic proclivities make him irresistibly attracted to fashionable Flappers, and he seeks out Isabelle Borgé in spite of, or perhaps because of, her growing reputation. Upon meeting him, Isabelle reflects that he has a “romantic profile; the effect set off by a close-fitting dress suit and a silk ruffled shirt of the kind that women still delight to see men wear, but men were just beginning to get tired of” (*Paradise* 47). Amory’s aplomb is effective in that it intrigues New Women types like Isabelle, but his pomp is quickly becoming obsolete as men’s roles in society begin to alter with the beginning of World War I. Pearl James explores the complex issues surrounding masculinity and male sexuality during the 1920s and how it was affected by wartime cultural change. James argues that the post-WWI era had conflicting standards for masculinity which idealized an arbitrary mix of the war hero and the feminized Victorian Dandy. Especially in *This Side of Paradise*, James argues that Fitzgerald demonstrates the difficulty of becoming a man in a society that had such conflicting ideals: “from this fallen side of paradise, becoming a man seems a difficult prospect” (2). Amory’s struggles with becoming an American man and keeping a New Woman are rooted in the

---

2 While James argues that the conflicting standards of masculinity in *This Side of Paradise* were caused by complicated male relationships in the postwar era, I argue that New Women and the gender revolution were the causes of ambiguous masculine ideals during this period.
conflicting ideals of masculinity perpetuated by mass consumerism and wartime propaganda.

Amory’s struggles with maintaining romantic relationships with New Women especially highlight his obsolete sense of masculinity. When Isabelle ends their relationship, Amory struggles to cope with his masculine identity. Isabelle’s easy dismissal and refusal to kiss him alters his perceptions about his role as a man: “if he didn’t kiss her it would worry him… It would interfere vaguely with his idea of himself as a conqueror” (Paradise 68). Due largely to his ensuing depression and confusion regarding his own masculine identity, Amory enters the war effort and becomes a second lieutenant in the 171st infantry (Paradise 117). However, his wartime experiences do little to alter his character, and Amory is still unable to develop a conventional American male identity. Amory exemplifies the cultural ambiguity surrounding masculinity during the early twentieth-century because he begins life as a Victorian Dandy and becomes a soldier all without fully fitting into societal standards of masculinity. Each time a New Woman contradicts what Amory believes to be the proper subservient feminine role, he struggles with the meaning of his own masculinity. In his subsequent period of depression, after his relationship with Rosalind ends, Amory subsides into alcoholism, drunkenly reminisces on his wartime experiences, and repeatedly announces that he is a “physcal [sic] animal” (Paradise 148). Despite Amory’s

---

3 As mentioned in the previous chapter, Isabelle ends her relationship with Amory largely because he is incapable of providing the kind of lifestyle she desires.
own misguided assumptions and injudicious decisions that led to his diminished state, New Women are still alleged as the source of Amory’s struggles.

The last of Amory’s love affairs Fitzgerald details in this novel is a brief romance with a girl named Eleanor, who is described in the exaggerated biblical manner Rotundo associates with nineteenth-century men: “Eleanor was, say, the last time that evil crept close to Amory under the mask of beauty” (Paradise 166). Each time he is displaced by the gender revolution, Amory questions or alters his concepts of masculinity. Amory’s successive failures with Flappers also embody the conservative American fear that transgressive New Women will gain social dominance if men are not “man enough” to handle them. Disastrous as they are for Amory, his interactions with Flappers are confined to courtship, and therefore the control of the New Woman is limited.

However, when Fitzgerald’s Flappers enter into marriage, they truly wreak havoc on his romantic heroes.

Anthony Patch from The Beautiful and Damned is another Fitzgeraldian Dandy set amid the evolving gender roles of the 1920s, and his moth-like attraction to a luminescent Flapper results not only in his ruin, but also his eventual descent into madness. At the beginning of the story, before meeting his future wife, Anthony is entirely “clean” in personal appearance, and “his friends declared that they had never seen his hair rumpled” (Beautiful 8). Young Anthony pays incredible attention to the details of his toilette and he obsesses over the quality of his bathroom, in which he spends a considerable amount of time: “Anthony dressed there, arranged his
immaculate hair there, in fact did everything but sleep and eat there” (*Beautiful* 10). Anthony’s identity is inseparably linked with his bravura and sense of fashion, which is perhaps the reason that he is drawn to stylish Flappers. Upon first hearing the reputation of his future wife, Gloria Gilbert, Anthony reflects that “any girl who made a living directly on her prettiness interested him enormously” (*Beautiful* 29). When he meets Gloria for the first time, he is struck by her ability to entertain and control an entire room, and he is in equal parts afraid of her and fascinated by her. As Gloria casually reflects on her continual chastisement for her smoking and fast social life, Anthony finds that he “agreed emphatically while he wondered who had had the temerity to speak thus to such a personage” (*Beautiful* 49). Unsurprisingly, the courtship between Anthony and Gloria is largely controlled by the latter, and from the beginning, she maintains the upper hand over her dandy admirer. Early in their courtship, after a querulous lovers’ argument, Anthony despairingly reflects that “he had become a thing of indifference to her, an insolent and efficiently humiliated man” (*Beautiful* 94). Like Amory Blaine worrying about his role as a male conqueror, Anthony is confused about his masculine role in the face of female empowerment.

Anthony’s Victorian ideals are not merely restricted to physical appearance, and when his marriage does not automatically fall into the traditional patriarchal hierarchy, he vindictively attempts to establish masculine superiority. At one point he privately assures himself that Gloria’s more condescending behaviors toward him are “the result of her ‘female’ education, and partly because of her beauty, and he was inclined to
include her with her entire sex as curiously and definitely limited” (Beautiful 137).

Anthony himself has no marketable skills, though he confidently expects a substantial inheritance from his wealthy, prohibitionist grandfather, Adam Patch, but while Anthony and Gloria impatiently wait for Old Patch to die, Anthony is unable to fulfil the traditional masculine role and provide the kind of life Gloria had envisaged for herself. As a result, they do not endeavor to live within the means of their monthly allowances, but often host drunken, opulent parties, one of which is discovered by Old Patch himself (Beautiful 224). The alcoholic antics of the party result in Anthony’s disinheritance, and his idle, gentleman lifestyle is made into a ridiculous façade, which sends Anthony into violent, gendered confusion.

At the height of his identity crisis, Anthony is drafted into the Great War. Anthony’s contingent is ordered to Camp Hooker, where Anthony alternates between hiding from the other men and spastically showing off in front of the officers. After a period of removal from Gloria and their frivolous lifestyle, Anthony does begin to develop a sense of pride in the physicality of the military exercises led by the virile Lieutenant Kretching, who Anthony views as a model soldier: “Anthony followed his movements faithfully, with a feeling that he was doing something of positive value to himself” (Beautiful 260). In an attempt to further assert his newfound manliness, Amory also enters into a sexual affair with a simple, homespun girl named Dot, who poses no challenge to his delusions of his own superiority: “he did not fall before a personality more vital, more compelling than his own, as he had done with Gloria four years before”
(Beautiful 264). However, just as Anthony has established a secure sense of masculinity, Fitzgerald tosses Anthony back to New York and into Gloria’s domain with the conclusion of the war, highlighting yet another contradictory period of Anthony’s life. Upon his return, the fragile relationship between Gloria and Anthony crumbles, and Anthony subsides into crippling alcoholism and eventually, mental delusions. At his lowest point, Anthony reflects that “all the distress that he had ever known, the sorrow and the pain, had been because of women” (Beautiful 362). Like Amory Blaine, believing that evil crept into his life under a beautiful mask, Anthony does not see his own conflicted sense of manhood as the source of his failure, but instead blames the New Woman, who highlights the antiquity of his masculinity in the modern era. By detailing the contradictory forces in Anthony’s life, Fitzgerald alleges the gender revolution as the root of Anthony’s masculine identity crisis. Fitzgerald’s criticism becomes even more pronounced in his following novel in which he details not only the rise and fall of a paradigmatic romantic hero, but also his dramatic demise as a direct result of the gender revolution.

Unlike Amory Blaine and Anthony Patch, Jay Gatsby, from Fitzgerald’s masterpiece, The Great Gatsby, was not born into a genteel lifestyle, but created an affluent identity for himself out of his determination to belong to a fickle upper-class society. Driven by his desire to attain the beautiful young Flapper Daisy, Gatsby built an empire around a quickly antiquated image of prewar American success, but after the war and amid the gender revolution of the 1920s, Gatsby’s manner and personal
charade becomes outlandish. Gatsby's constructed masculinity is especially conflicted because he has sought to embody both prominent masculine roles, soldier and dandy, at different times in his life without successfully maintaining the love of a Flapper.

Gatsby’s character and personal details are imparted exclusively by the narrator, Nick Carraway, who has the ultimate sympathy for displaced, romantic men. Nick introduces Gatsby as having “a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person,” and he goes on to insinuate that Gatsby himself had no real flaws, but that he became a victim to ominous outside dangers; Nick believes that the blame for Gatsby’s ruin lies in “what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams” (Gatsby 2).

After meeting Gatsby for the first time, Nick describes Gatsby as an “elegant young roughneck,” a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd” (Gatsby 48). Not only does Gatsby’s language verge on absurdity, but his elaborate personal story marks him as a pretender putting on airs. After Gatsby informs Nick that he is an American educated in Oxford and that he came into an inheritance after the death of his whole family, he proceeds to regale Nick with stories of his expensive adventures abroad: “I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe” (Gatsby 65). However, Nick eventually learns that Gatsby’s adopted dandy identity is not

---

4 In 1920s American vernacular, “roughneck” was a euphemism for labor workers, soldiers, or sometimes even criminals. It is significant that Nick pairs “elegant” with “roughneck” since the terms should be mutually exclusive, but it is telling of Gatsby’s attempt to embody both prevalent masculine ideals: soldier and dandy.
for his own benefit, but for Nick’s famously beautiful cousin, Daisy, for whom Gatsby has built his entire image.

Gatsby’s constructed identity and sense of cake-eater style imitates what he had perceived to be the mark of masculine achievement while he was courting Daisy Faye. Gatsby acquired wealth, possessions, and a mansion to rival any of her conventionally masculine suitors, who were born into wealth, with the express intent of eventually attaining Daisy as his final mark of masculine arrival. After Gatsby and Daisy’s reunion inevitably moves to Gatsby’s mansion, Nick remarks that Gatsby “revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-beloved eyes” (Gatsby 91). Seemingly unable to trust his own judgements about finery and dandy fashion, Gatsby looks to Daisy, the symbol of New Womanhood and the modern era. When Daisy shows interest in the fine shirts he has collected, Gatsby performs a manic display of commodity fetishism before Daisy: “he took out a pile of shirts and began throwing them, one by one, before us, shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel, which lost their folds as they fell and covered the table in many-colored disarray” (Gatsby 92). While it is no doubt popular to read Gatsby’s behavior as a lovesick admirer, it is Daisy as a symbol of social success in the progressive era that Gatsby seeks to achieve rather than her as a person. Every aspect of Gatsby’s manner was made to satisfy a fleeting definition of successful Victorian manhood in the prewar era. Furthermore, Gatsby’s adopted identity is not only too late to win Daisy, but his dandy image itself has arrived too late due to the rapid progress of the country. The genteel
Victorian dandy identity that Gatsby spent years constructing was made effete by the
time it was completed, a fact made obvious by Tom’s derision: “An Oxford man!” [Tom]
was incredulous. “Like Hell he is! He wears a pink suit” (Gatsby 122). Regardless of
Gatsby’s efforts to follow the ambiguous ideals of masculinity in the progressive era, he
is still a “Mr. Nobody from Nowhere” (Gatsby 130), and his humiliation and eventual
ruin expose Fitzgerald’s warning of the potential danger of the gender revolution and
ambiguous cultural expectations. Fitzgerald portrays this tragedy of an idealistically
romantic American man, who lost his identity in the quest to attain a masculine symbol
of success, in order to highlight the destructive capacity of a capricious society and
didactically demonstrate that only men who withdraw from the gender revolution can
attain success as men and individuals.

II. Withdrawn and Forgotten

In the unpropitious plots of Fitzgerald’s romantic heroes, only reticent, minor
male characters escape the ruinous influence of the gender revolution and the modern
woman. In contrast to his romantically-doomed male protagonists, Fitzgerald creates
minor male characters who are successful, though not entirely happy. These minor
characters may not conform to a singular archetype in the manner of profession, age, or
family background, but they share the singular quality of withdrawal. These withdrawn
men not only elude New Women, but they also avoid the frivolous life-styles of
Fitzgerald’s ill-fated dandies. Elizabeth H. Pleck and Joseph H. Pleck discuss the
recurring theme of reserve perpetuated during and after World War I that called for
American men to forego fashion and materialism in favor of thrift and abstinence. This trend was largely based on the mandated rationing associated with the war, but the idea pervaded images of masculinity nonetheless. The Plecks argue that thrift began to be extolled as a new American value that “would save the American soul from ‘the leprosy of materialism,’ end the mad ‘extravagance and luxury’ that had contaminated civilization” (323). Furthermore, conservative America was desirous of moderation and abstinence because they believed that “the economic sacrifices would produce contrition and purification after an era of materialism” (323). With the conclusion of the war, conservative America especially began to fear the increased spread of infectious diseases, but especially venereal disease. This 1918 hygiene poster [Figure 9] is one of many examples of public propaganda used by social hygienists to discourage promiscuous sexual behavior. Social reformers often linked alcohol and loose women together as “enslaving habits” that led

Figure 9: “Will You Be a Free Man or Chained,” hygiene poster, 1918.
irreversibly to venereal disease and personal ruin. Though the severe warnings of reformers and prohibitionists alike were largely ignored by the fashionable youth of the 1920s, mandates like this hygiene poster would have been as common as many product advertisements.

Despite the efforts of reformers and prohibitionists, in the era between the two world wars, the virtues of frugality and abstinence were over-shadowed by the rise of American materialism and consumerism. Fitzgerald was cognizant and perhaps scornful of the lingering conservative desires for prudence, but he was able to see the sense in withdrawing from a materialistic society that perpetuated impossible cultural ideals of male gender roles. Fitzgerald personifies the wisdom of abstinence in his minor, withdrawn male characters. This secondary archetypal group of Fitzgerald’s male characters largely remain efficacious, but only due to their often pathetic removal from high culture. Though he may sympathize with his frivolously-flawed romantic heroes, Fitzgerald could not allow his dandies to be successful alongside his withdrawn men, who wisely abstain from the ruinous influence of New Women and progressive society.

Fitzgerald’s minor characters also become telling foils for his condemned heroes, who only fall further into ruin as their conflicted lives progress. When compared to his dandy protagonists, Fitzgerald’s withdrawn men are initially made to appear ridiculous, but their misfortunes in love or style eventually become advantageous. Continually displaced, Amory Blaine often looks to Monsignor Darcy, a dismissed suitor of Amory’s mother, or Dick Humbird, Amory’s deceased Princetonian peer, for examples of
efficacious masculinity. Over the arc of his failed marriage, Anthony Patch becomes increasingly jealous of Joseph “Blockhead” Bloeckman, Gloria’s previously scorned suitor, who after having met with comical defeat in courtship becomes a highly successful film industry leader. Jay Gatsby pays with his life for the crime of tangling with a Flapper, but his reticent friend and neighbor, Nick Caraway, remains unscathed. Fitzgerald poses these often pitifully withdrawn men alongside his Dandy heroes to demonstrate that New Women, as disciples of the gender revolution, are the downfall of even the best men, and only those who remain solitary and unchallenged in their masculine identities are safe.

Monsignor Darcy is initially described only as a “pagan Swinburnian young man in Asheville” (Paradise 4), who Amory’s mother spurned after a brief romance for the wealthier Stephan Blaine. However, this initial experience removed him from society for the better. After a brief period of heartbreak, Darcy subsequently entered the Catholic Church and became respected and wealthy without the hindrance of a wife, though he remained in contact with both Beatrice and her son. As a celibate priest and author of religious literature, Darcy could not be further removed from the evolving era and the gender revolution of the early twentieth-century, so he is therefore comfortable and unchallenged in his Victorian masculine identity. As a mentor figure, he encourages Amory to maintain antiquated ideas and behaviors, and Darcy fully supports Amory’s desire to attend Princeton for no greater reason than that the youth imagines Princeton to be “lazy, good-looking, and aristocratic” (Paradise 17). As Amory ages and
experiences misfortunes with evolving American culture and New Women, Darcy remains content, unaltered, and readily available to reassure Amory that they two are superior men and not simply “personalities,” as Amory’s virile peers are, but “personages” of greater cultural value (Paradise 77). However, Darcy is not entirely unaware of the evolving culture, and when Amory enters the war, Darcy wisely reflects that the wartime experience will alter Amory’s generation and create a divide between them: “This is the end of one thing: for better or worse you will never again be quite the Amory Blaine that I knew, never again will we meet as we have met, because your generation is growing hard, much harder than mine ever grew, nourished as they were on the stuff of the nineties” (Paradise 117). Indeed, Amory was changed by the war, but his experiences did not sufficiently alter his masculine identity enough to transform him into a revolutionized twentieth-century man. Amory has too seriously adopted Darcy’s ideals, but without also maintaining Darcy’s lifestyle, Amory is left truly lost. Neither fully belonging to Darcy’s generation nor his own, Amory is unable to develop a definite type of masculinity, and he therefore cannot be successful in his relationships with the Flappers to whom he is fatally attracted. Although Amory continually returns to Darcy to reassure himself in the success of Victorian masculinity, Amory never comprehends that the greatest difference between Darcy and him is their engagement with the new era, and specifically the New Woman.

Like Monsignor Darcy, Dick Humbird also avoids the evolving era and entanglement with New Women, but not by any willful removal; Dick dies in a car crash
after a youthful excursion to New York with Amory and other Princeton peers. To Amory, Dick would become forever immortalized as the perfect example of a young man, untouched by the changing times or the displacement induced by empowered women. Amory describes Dick as a “perfect type of aristocrat” and “eternal example of what the upper class tried to be” (*Paradise* 57). Though Dick had displayed virility and athleticism on the football field, Amory thought that he differed from the “healthy type that was essentially middle class” because “he never seemed to perspire” (*Paradise* 57). The only error Amory was able to find in Dick’s character was that, in truth, Dick’s father was a grocery clerk. Nonetheless, Amory continues to hold Dick in his mind as an ideal balance of aristocratic manhood and virile masculinity. Just minutes after Dick’s vehicular demise, Amory’s car arrives at the scene, and a woman informs the rest of the boys that “one of you is killed here” (*Paradise* 63). At the moment when he sees Dick’s corpse, Amory becomes fixated on Dick’s shoes because “He had tied them – and now he was this heavy white mass” (*Paradise* 64). Long after Dick’s death, Amory imagines Dick’s face in times of depression or confusion, as if Dick is the angel of manhood past. Later in his Princeton years, on an excursion to Broadway, Amory is presented with an opportunity for casual sexual relations with a young Flapper named Axia. However, in the midst of pouring her a drink, Amory hallucinates the image of an unidentified middle class man, who had “a sort of virile pallor... like a strong man who’d worked in a mine and done night shifts in a damp climate” and who has hands that “weren’t fine at all, but they had versatility and a tenuous strength...” (*Paradise* 83). Amory is so insecure in
the presence of sexually-autonomous Axia that he envisages this example of a virile and versatile American man, but he then feels effete and impotent beside his own conjured image. Amory is so shaken by his hallucination that he flees the apartment, runs into an alley, and cries out that he wants “someone stupid” (*Paradise* 85). Amory internally reflects that “‘stupid’ and ‘good’ had become somehow intermingled through previous association” (*Paradise* 85), and then before his eyes flashed “a face pale and distorted...it was the face of Dick Humbird” (*Paradise* 86). Amory’s masculine identity has become so confused that he cannot function as a modern, young man ought, and so he clings to the only examples of masculinity to which he can connect. Fitzgerald leaves unanswered what would have become of Dick and whether or not he would have been successful in life, but he nonetheless becomes an uncompromised model of masculinity because he never had a chance to be displaced by the gender revolution.

Joseph Bloeckman from *The Beautiful and Damned* was scorned by a Flapper, but like Monsignor Darcy, Bloeckman’s early downfall became the making of his success. In her youth, famously beautiful Gloria Gilbert attracted a multitude of suitors who ranged in age and personal accomplishments, and Anthony and Bloeckman could not have been less alike; however, in the beginning Anthony sees himself as having a distinct advantage due to his youth and good looks. He is, however, slightly worried over Bloeckman’s supposed monetary worth, so he asks Gloria about Bloeckman. Gloria, sensing Amory’s jealousy, brags that Joseph Bloeckman is “the moving picture man” at Films Par Excellence and that he does business with her father (*Beautiful* 69). Likely to
inspire further competition, Gloria arranges for Bloekman to join their group of friends for a dinner-dance, and when Anthony meets Bloekman for the first time he describes the older man unkindly as a “stoutening, ruddy Jew of about thirty-five” and seems to disregard his person entirely (Beautiful 76). However, as the relationship between Anthony and Gloria progresses into marriage, Bloekman does not disappear but comes to symbolize the monetary success that Gloria desires and which Anthony cannot attain. Bloekman reenters Anthony’s life and marriage to underscore each of Anthony’s failings as a provider and as a man. The first time Anthony encounters Bloekman after marrying Gloria, Anthony reflects that “during the last year Bloekman had grown tremendously in dignity” (Beautiful 168). Bloekman, however, is still the same man in the same movie company, Films Par Excellence, and Anthony is beginning to desire economic security and realize that his and Gloria’s fashionable idleness is not easily sustainable. Later, Bloekman visits Gloria and Anthony in his impressive foreign car and offers to use his film industry connections to get Gloria a movie audition, but Anthony, obviously threatened by Bloekman’s capabilities, threatens to take up a dangerous position as a war correspondent if Gloria accepts: “If you go to the movies I’m going to Europe” (Beautiful 176).

After his alcohol-induced revelry results in Anthony’s sudden disinheritance, and Anthony is forced to reconsider his genteel existence, Bloekman appears yet again to offer Gloria assistance with entering the movie industry. Anthony’s antiquated sense of manhood will not allow him to live on the income of his wife, no matter how badly he
needs money: Anthony angrily asks Gloria, “What am I supposed to do? Chase you all over the country? Live on your money?” to which Gloria responds, “Then make some yourself” (Beautiful 249)! However, Anthony possesses no skills other than drinking heavily and dressing fashionably, both of which he can no longer afford to do. In the last interaction between the men, Bloeckman is not only superior in income, but also in class. In a fit of alcoholic rage, Anthony interrupts Bloeckman’s dinner party at the Boul’ Mich’ and physically accosts him. Bloeckman reproaches Anthony for his lack of respect toward Gloria to which Anthony replies “Never you min’ how I expect my wife. One thing – you leave her alone. You go to hell” (Beautiful 356). Anthony makes a drunken swing, but Bloeckman now described as a “well-conditioned man of forty-five” easily strikes Anthony down (Beautiful 357). The disparity between the men at the end of the story is remarkable when compared with their descriptions at the beginning of the story. Although Bloeckman is not necessarily withdrawn from modern society, the absence of an empowered woman as a dominant force in his life allows Bloeckman to reach a level of success that is unattainable for Anthony. Fitzgerald demonstrates the ways in which ambiguous male gender roles and empowered women can reduce a romantic figure like Amory to a lower status than a dowdy, common man. Fitzgerald designs his withdrawn men to highlight the greatest weakness or insufficiency of his romantic heroes. Bloeckman may only appear sporadically throughout the novel to sharpen Anthony’s defeats, but Fitzgerald later creates a withdrawn character who is a constant companion for his most fantastically doomed hero.
Nick Carraway from *The Great Gatsby* is not only a point of comparison for Gatsby as his friend and the cousin of his paramour, but Nick is literally next to Gatsby in physical proximity throughout the course of the novel: Nick lives in a small, self-described “eyesore” in the direct shadow of Gatsby’s opulent mansion. From the beginning, Gatsby’s adopted pomp and circumstance is compared with Nick’s innate moderation. Nick lives in the “consoling proximity of millionaires – all for eighty dollars a month” (*Gatsby* 5), and is privy to their plights and misadventures without ever seriously risking entanglement or ruin; however, Fitzgerald does not allow Nick to fully be Gatsby’s superior. As a withdrawn figure, Nick is safe from ruin, but he is continually forced to be an outsider and observer of the adventures of more exciting people. When attending his first party at Gatsby’s mansion, Nick is unable to locate Gatsby, so he pitifully seeks a solitary cocktail table because he says it is “the only place in the garden where a single man could linger without looking purposeless and alone” (*Gatsby* 42).

Unlike many of Fitzgerald’s other withdrawn men, Nick is not entirely alone on the side lines. Daisy’s intimate friend, Jordan Baker, remains Nick’s constant companion in witnessing Gatsby’s tragedy, but as a sensible man, Nick avoids serious entanglement with the Flapper. Nick initially shows interest in Jordan, but he harbors no dangerously passionate feelings: “I wasn’t actually in love, but I felt a sort of tender curiosity” (*Gatsby* 57). Nick errs on the side of reticence because his observations have revealed that “Jordan Baker instinctively avoided clever, shrewd men” due to her tendency to be untruthful (*Gatsby* 57). Nick’s habit of watching and judging the women in his
acquaintance prevents him from falling victim to dangerous women as so many Fitzgeraldian romantic heroes are apt to do: “I am slow-thinking and full of interior rules that act as brakes on my desires” (Gatsby 58). The “brakes” that Nick uses to maintain his safely withdrawn status are placed in sharp relief alongside the reckless speed with which Gatsby loves and loses Daisy.

When the affair between Gatsby and Daisy comes out into the open, Nick and Jordan attempt to remove themselves, but their presence is necessary for comparison: “At this point Jordan and I tried to go, but Tom and Gatsby insisted with competitive firmness that we remain – as though neither of them had anything to conceal and it would be a privilege to partake vicariously of their emotions” (Gatsby 131). Fitzgerald keeps his foil character continually in Gatsby’s shadow in order to highlight the contrast between frivolity and withdrawal. However, after the treacherous return to East Egg and the Buchanan residence, Nick can no longer stand to be in the proximity of his millionaire friends: “I’d had enough of them for one day, and suddenly that included Jordan too” (Gatsby 142). It is significant that by the conclusion of the story, Nick includes Jordan with the reckless others and that he seems to sense the cyclic quality of the tragedy set in motion by the gender revolution. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Jordan displays all the signs of perpetuating the tragedy that Daisy has set in motion with her husband and lover. Fitzgerald’s sympathetic treatment of Gatsby does not end with the hero’s death, but Gatsby’s funeral sharpens Fitzgerald’s didactic
message. As Gatsby’s corpse lies nearly alone in his elaborate home, Nick stands by to eulogize but ultimately walks away alone and unharmed.

Fitzgerald did not merely seek to describe the downfall of the ideal hero in the modern era; he intended to reprehend the source of masculine identity conflict. 1920s popular culture, which had remarkable influence on young men coming of age and constructing masculine identities, especially reveals the ambiguous nature of masculine gender roles. Post-war propaganda may have contradicted liberal youth culture, and war veteran masculinity may have opposed dandy fashion, but both images were in constant circulation, creating conflicting cultural models of masculinity. Perhaps Fitzgerald, as a young man living in post-war American culture, felt similar confusion regarding masculinity, or perhaps he simply witnessed the men of the Lost Generation spiraling into ruin as a result of cultural contradictions, but regardless of his motivations, Fitzgerald found a source of blame. In each of his early novels, Fitzgerald alleges the contradictions of the gender revolution as the source of masculine confusion. Fitzgerald uses his male characters to didactically demonstrate that only men who abstain from New Women and withdraw from the gender revolution stand a chance at solitarily surviving the 1920s. No Fitzgeraldian hero finds lasting happiness because he must either ostracize himself from culture or fall victim to the gender revolution.

Fitzgerald is not alone in his criticism of the 1920s masculine gender roles, and many of his objections are reiterated in Hemingway’s early novels. Though his heroes may perform more conventionally masculine roles than Fitzgerald’s dandies,
Hemingway also faults the gender revolution for complicating modern definitions of masculinity. Significantly, neither Fitzgerald nor Hemingway portray an infallible manly hero in their early novels, and nearly every male protagonist is fundamentally flawed in some essential aspect of conventional masculinity. Theodore L. Gross argues that Fitzgerald and Hemingway, as modernists, are disillusioned with the heroic image simply as an idealistic falsehood: “There is a finality in the finest fiction of Hemingway and Fitzgerald, as they write a farewell to the heroic ideal” (194). However, rather than simply describing the decline of the masculine paragon in the postwar era, Fitzgerald and Hemingway actually impute the gender revolution of the period as the source of crippling masculine identity confusion. In each of their 1920s novels, the gender revolution, as personified by the New Woman, enters into the lives of the young heroes and confuses their concepts of manhood and sense of self. Although both authors depict different types of male reactions to the modern era, they display remarkably similar outcomes for their heroes who engage with empowered women in the modern era: men who take part in the spoils of the gender revolution will fall to ruin.
CHAPTER IV. HEMINGWAY’S MASCULINE PERFORMANCE:

FAILED MACHISMO AS THE SOURCE OF EMASCULATION IN AMERICAN MEN

Figure 10: “He’s Good Enough for Me,” Cartoon by C. R. Macauley, 1912.
Culturally-determined expectations of gender are not only frequently restrictive, but they are also highly permutable modes of identity that are influenced by nationalistic ideals. American masculinity, as a function of national culture, is subject to radical transformations with each societal shift. The performative aspects of masculinity are likewise subject to revision and revolution. American gender as a performance in the 1920s was influenced by examples in popular culture ideals and public images that displayed across available media, such as popular songs, cartoons, Hollywood films, and literature. Josep M. Armengol argues for a reexamination of supposedly universal aspects of culture to reveal “how masculinity ideals affect, and often restrict and complicate, men’s lives in American culture and literature” (79). These explorations into the complexities of masculine standards as controlled by a dominant culture can reveal the pressures imposed by a national identity. For American male studies to be successful, Armengol argues that literature must be revisited to reveal the fictional masculinities which pervade American culture: “this revision entails analyzing both traditional and alternative literary models of manhood” (80). American male authors writing about the male experience have the potential to reveal those cultural pressures, but also to deeply complicate and modify them. As a noted author and member of the Lost Generation, Hemingway contributed culturally-influential male paradigms to the popular images of masculinity in the American 1920s. Additionally, Nancy R. Comely and Robert Scholes claim that Hemingway showed “extraordinary strength in choosing and rejecting what his culture offered him” (4). In developing his own concepts of masculine
performance, Hemingway may have begun with the known concepts of American masculinity, but he frequently borrowed gender concepts from cultures of Europe and warfare when he found American masculinity lacking in machismo.¹

Hemingway feared the feminization of American culture during the gender revolution of the 1920s, and he sought to create hyper-masculine male figures in his early 1920s literature. Marylyn Elkins introduces the idea of a “Hemingwaysque” image that came to symbolize not only American masculinity, but also an identity which resisted what many Americans felt was the feminization of culture in the 1920s (93). Hemingway and other young men coming of age at the turn of the century began resisting the persona of the Victorian gentleman, often pictured in suits, collars, and ties, because that image was seen as effeminate when compared to the robust images of recent war veterans returning from World War I. In the postwar culture of the new twentieth-century, Americans also began to view art and other aspects of culture as “effeminate and unimportant to the ‘real’ world” (95). Hemingway, to whom both masculinity and authorship were essential aspects of identity, sought to rise above that limited persona of masculinity. Elkins explains that in his youth, Hemingway idolized President Theodore Roosevelt for his physical prowess, assertions of maleness, and most importantly, his presence as a man’s man even in the white-collar field of politics.

¹ Machismo in the Hemingway novel is a quality marked by a heightened male virility and an unquestionably masculine persona established by various physical pursuits. In the Latin American culture, machismo especially refers to a sexually dominant masculinity that Hemingway valued as a prime example of masculine performance.
Hemingway viewed Roosevelt’s style and “masculine stance as a means of reestablishing what increasingly seemed to be a collapsed sexual binary” (97). C.R. Macauley’s 1912 political cartoon [Figure 10] represents the two popular personas of America’s twenty-sixth president as both Rough Rider and statesman. In Macauley’s illustration, Roosevelt appears as both a stoic, formally dressed politician and a good-timing, khaki-clad sportsman and soldier. Roosevelt’s personas are not mutually exclusive, and the American public perceived him as being capable of performing machismo in both roles.

Hemingway idolized Roosevelt as a prime example of masculinity, and he criticized modern American men who did not rise to the former president’s example. Hemingway was not alone in this critique, and many patriarchal-minded Americans desired more examples of virile masculinity after the conclusion of the war and the growth of the woman’s suffrage movement.

In reaction to the boyish styles of the New Woman, Hemingway sought to create male characters who enacted behaviors that even the most newly empowered women could not, such as soldiering and bull-fighting. According to Elkins, New Woman fashion was not only perceived by many Americans as a threat to the patriarchy, but winning the right to vote made their “masculine power official” (97). In response, many men began to wear facial hair and military style clothing in order to “re-confirm their power

---

2 As the former Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Roosevelt led the 1st United States Volunteer Cavalry, which was later christened the “Rough Riders.” Roosevelt’s Rough Riders were volunteers with backgrounds in athletics, horsemanship, and other outdoor pursuits. The men of Roosevelt’s regiment shared common traits of bravery, virility, and intense patriotism.
and control” over the women who threatened patriarchal rule (97). As the New Woman image shifted women’s fashion trends towards loose fitting clothes, short hair, and other decidedly “unfeminine” trends, some American men felt the necessity to compete with their own shift in style. Speed Langworthy’s song “We Men Must Grow a Mustache” [Figure 11] comically reflects one public desire for more manly men. The cartoon man depicted on the sheet music cover is especially relevant because he highlights the performative nature of the masculine image. The illustrated character is depicted with his chest so inflated that his posture has hollowed his back, and his overly groomed manner of dress and style satirize the attempts of a Dandy affecting a more masculine image by growing a mustache. Hemingway was cognizant of the growing desire for hyper-masculinity, but in his growing disillusionment, Hemingway did not believe in the possibility of a true man’s man in the post-war American culture of gender redefinition.

Figure 11: “We Men Must Grow a Mustache,” Sheet music cover, 1922.
Like Fitzgerald, Hemingway saw the New Woman as an emasculating force of the gender revolution, but Hemingway’s reaction to the threat imposed by the androgynous New Woman was to create macho characters, who perform in a manner even more masculine than the empowered women in his novels. Hemingway not only promotes the virile masculinity popularized by WWI, but he also sought to perpetuate the image of hyper-masculinity after the conclusion of the war. Hemingway develops male characters who perform quintessentially manly behaviors like exploring, soldiering, and bull fighting in order to establish their manly identities. George Monteiro explores the motif of adventure, which is present in much of popular 1920s literature, and he argues that the construction of masculinity in the early twentieth-century was closely tied to exploration and battle. Monteiro claims that there is a stark contrast between Hemingway’s archetypal adventure epics and the comparatively tame settings of Fitzgerald’s ivy league stories: “For Hemingway, as he wrote about a young man’s initiation into the ways of the world, the literature of tramping would provide a harsh corrective to the prep school and Ivy League educations of Owen Johnson’s or F. Scott Fitzgerald’s adolescent protagonists” (62). Indeed, the adventurous, foreign environments in which Hemingway’s stories take place are essential for his archetypal portrayals of masculinity and the juxtaposition of American men alongside foreign men. Decades of literary critics have identified what is popularly known as Hemingway’s “code hero” or a male character remarkable for his virile masculinity, heavy drinking, frequent love affairs, and participation in a variety of manly activities ranging from
wartime battles to hunting and fishing. While many critics claim that Hemingway put himself into the characterization of his code heroes, still others argue that Hemingway was attempting to reestablish a courageous masculinity in an era of rapid gender change. Among the latter group, Theodore L. Gross claims that “Hemingway creates a personal code for the hero that celebrates two persistent American virtues – work and love – which lead inevitably to self-respect, survival, and human dignity” (199). Similarly, Arthur Waldhorn argues that Hemingway’s code “insists that [a hero] discipline and control his dread and, above all, that he behave with unobtrusive though unmistakable dignity” (26). While I acknowledge Hemingway’s tendency to design some of his male characters after a certain admirable masculine archetype, I argue that in his early novels, Hemingway more often details the failures of men who cannot maintain conventionally heroic or masculine identities. Furthermore, Hemingway juxtaposes the struggles of American men abroad alongside foreign born men with less questionably masculine personas. In his two earliest novels, Hemingway creates a spectrum of male character types, but it is their masculine performances that Hemingway uses to determine their true value as men.

Hemingway’s plots in both *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* follow American male protagonists who live abroad and encounter foreign men and adventures, which challenge their American concepts of masculinity. Additionally, all of the male characters in these novels are faced with the effects of the gender revolution, and their reactions ultimately define them as men. Like Fitzgerald, Hemingway largely
creates two main categories of male characters, but while Fitzgerald sympathizes with his romantically-tragic heroes, Hemingway callously details the ruin of men who fall victim to empowered women, and rather than portraying his single men as sad and alone, Hemingway champions the sagacity of men who resist the modern era and New Women. In both novels, Hemingway creates adventurous stages on which his male characters must perform, and their ability to display masculinity in those settings either highlights their insufficiency or exhibits their masculinity. Hemingway’s criticism of the American gender revolution is especially apparent in his early novels because he details the ways in which only American men struggle to maintain conventionally masculine identities. While all of Hemingway’s men may strive to perform machismo in adventurous settings, only Hemingway’s foreign-born men succeed in consistently performing his version of proper masculinity.

I. Failed American Masculinity Abroad

Although the picturesque European settings of both *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* may seem especially romantic to post-modern readers, foreign settings were quite common in the American popular culture of the 1920s. With the conclusion of the war, young American men returned home with rose-colored tales of travel, or they simply remained expatriates and did not return home at all, feeding further into the growing American fascination with the continent across the Atlantic. In both of his early novels, Hemingway employs foreign elements of setting that would have been instantly recognizable to his readers as symbols of masculine achievement,
such as European frontline warfare and bull fights. The Pamplona bull fights in *The Sun Also Rises* especially function to challenge the masculine identities of both matadors and spectators, but Hemingway was not the first author to bring Spanish bull fights to collective American attention. The 1922 *Paramount Pictures* film *Blood and Sand* [Figure 12] starring Rudolph Valentino and Lila Lee, based on the 1909 novel *Blood and Sand* by Vicente Blasco Ibáñez and the play of the same title by Thomas Cushing, is set amidst the increasingly popular Spanish bull fighting scene and features a hyper-masculine hero. In the 1920s, bull fights were, if not actually popular with many Americans, at least widely regarded as highly dangerous and exciting events of blood and danger. This American film, which predates Hemingway’s own bull fighting novel by four years, directed by Fred Niblo, follows the plight of Juan Gallardo, a Hemingwaysque young

![Figure 12: Blood and Sand, Theatrical Release Poster, Paramount Pictures, 1922.](image-url)
matador who becomes entrenched in woman-related drama due to his extra-marital affair with a fast woman. The matador eventually dies in a bull fight because of his female distraction, but he is redeemed in the last moments of the film and remembered as a hero. Significantly, the matador seems to exemplify all of the elements crucial to the popular definition of Hemingway’s hero, but for one major difference: Hemingway does not allow his weak-willed men to be immortalized.

Hemingway’s American men, who travel abroad, are not only confronted with adventurous environments on foreign soil, but also dangerous women who test their masculine resolve. As a personification of the gender revolution, the New Woman enters Hemingway’s stories to destabilize performances of masculinity. Hemingway’s American men are unable to consistently enact machismo because they are too easily distracted by the progressive woman of the modern era. Carol H. Smith argues that the loss of love is the greatest threat to happiness in Hemingway’s early novels, and that the love offered by the “good women” and the “bad women” has the power to influence Hemingway’s heroes. Hemingway’s good women serve men with their devotion and their sexual attentions, but bad women use their loose sexuality as a weapon of control. Hemingway’s transgressive women may indeed increase the threat of lost love because of their willingness to wander and experiment, but Hemingway characterizes his men based on their reactions to those New Women and the gender revolution. While the threat of lost love and infidelity imposed by women is surely a prominent fear for Hemingway’s American men, the consequences for American men extend beyond
feelings of rejection: Hemingway’s transgressive women destabilize the masculine performances of his would-be heroes and highlight the ways in which a conventional masculine identity is unattainable for American men.

Hemingway’s most ill-fated American male characters are Robert Cohn and Jake Barnes from The Sun Also Rises and Fredric Henry from A Farewell to Arms. The three men have very little in common other than that they are Americans traveling abroad, and that they fail to maintain sufficient macho identities. The American men’s failure in their masculine performances results either from their inability to perform machismo consistently in adventurous settings or from their weakness for transgressive women. In The Sun Also Rises, Hemingway details the wild experiences of Lost Generation expatriates first in Parisian cafes and then in Spanish fiestas and bull fighting arenas. Although Robert Cohn participates in the travels abroad and believes he holds a superior position over his friends for having had a sexual relationship with the illustrious Lady Brett Ashley, the gender revolution has normalized Brett’s loose sexual behavior, and she and the other men dismiss any claims that Robert believes he holds over Brett. Because of Brett’s dismissal, Robert, unable to adjust his masculine persona to fit the new gender relations of the modern era, subsides into social isolation. Conversely, Jake Barnes steadily maintains friendships with nearly all his traveling companions and the object of his affection, who is also Lady Brett Ashley, but like the castrated steers in the Pamplona bullfights, Jake is a permanent peace keeper who is unable to sexually perform as a man. In A Farewell to Arms, Hemingway creates an American hero who
seems able to perform machismo as naturally on the battle field as he does in the company of women, but by the conclusion of the story, Fredric Henry is as lonely as Robert Cohn and can neither perform as a soldier nor as a lover.

Unlike many of Hemingway’s hyper-masculine characters, Robert Cohn seems to have had a conflicted journey into manhood similar to the ill-fated Fitzgeraldian heroes. From his initial introduction, Robert is presented as a kind but easily-influenced man, who has not met with great success in his romantic life: “He was a nice boy, a friendly boy, and very shy, and it made him bitter” (Sun 12). Despite his relative success as a writer and magazine editor, Robert had the shameful experience of being governed by first his wife and then later by his mistress, an interfering New Woman, who controlled most aspects of his life: “He had been taken in hand by a lady who hoped to rise with the magazine. She was very forceful, and Cohn never had a chance of not being taken in hand” (Sun 13). Like Fitzgerald’s Amory Blaine and Anthony Patch, Robert Cohn allows himself to be formed by his environment: “Externally he had been formed at Princeton. Internally he had been moulded [sic] by the two women who had trained him” (Sun 52).

At the beginning of the novel, Hemingway clearly intends to color Robert as the kind of hapless, but good-natured character who, for all of his manly flaws, is generally well-liked; however, after Robert enters into a brief relationship with a truly formidable Flapper, he is ruined in the eyes of both Brett and his male friends. After he has met and fallen haplessly in love with Brett Ashley, Hemingway details the ways in which Robert loses grasp on his already limited performance of masculinity.
In a typical Hemingwayesque setting of adventure, Robert, Jake, and Bill plan to remove from society for a time to go fishing in Burguete before a week of fiestas in Pamplona; however, Robert decides to wait for the arrival of Brett and her fiancé rather than accompany Jake and Bill on the trip (Sun 109-10). Jake and Bill’s trout-fishing experience on the Irati River is not only one of the few periods of tranquility in the fast-paced novel, but it is also one of the only times of male camaraderie undisturbed by female intrusion, and Robert’s absence suggests his waning hold on his already limited grasp of machismo. After the fishing trip, when the group of expatriate friends is reunited in Pamplona, Robert begins to anemically shadow Brett’s every movement, despite her lack of interest and the presence of her fiancé, Michael. The entire group knows of Brett and Robert’s brief affair, but their disregard for the matter and Michael’s permissiveness with the sexually-empowered Brett confuse Robert into behaving petulantly. After a day of Robert’s constant and unnecessary attentions, Michael humiliates Robert in front of the group by likening him to a castrated steer, whose only purpose is to placate and serve Brett as the bull: “Is Robert Cohn going to follow Brett around like a steer all the time?” (Sun 146). Jake condescendingly remarks that Robert’s only enjoyment from their travels comes from his carnal knowledge of Brett, which the other men largely disregard: “It must have been pleasant for him to see her looking so lovely, and know he had been away with her and that everyone knew it” (Sun 150). Though at first Jake merely details Robert’s pitifully polite behavior toward Brett and the
other men of the group, Jake begins to describe Robert’s shift in behavior as he attempts to falsely affect a more virile masculinity in hopes of attracting Brett’s notice.³

The Pamplona bull fights become the central symbol of masculinity in this novel as they not only display animalistic aggression, but also the macho bull fighters, who place themselves repeatedly in dangerous situations. When the group prepares to attend the bull fights, Jake and Bill attempt to caution the others about the intense scenes of animal violence that they will witness during the fights, but Robert adopts a false sense of jocular masculinity and disregards their warnings: “I’m not worried about how I’ll stand it. I’m only afraid I may be bored” (Sun 165). Rather than attaining his intended effect, Robert’s comment only highlights his artificial nature, and his green countenance during the violent scenes later becomes a source of hilarity for the group.

Robert’s frail grasp on masculine composure in the face of Brett’s transgressive behavior is finally lost when he learns that Brett has engaged in a sexual encounter with a virile, young bull fighter named Pedro Romero, and that Jake has enabled the relationship to take place. Robert calls Jake a “damned pimp” (Sun 194), and the two get in a physical fight, which Robert wins easily in his fit of rage. However, Robert’s fleeting performance of masculinity is short lived, for he subsides into frustrated tears born out of his deep gender role confusion after his altercation with Jake: “Cohn was crying. There he was, face down on the bed, crying” (Sun 197). In another last-ditch effort to rekindle his

³ As both the narrator and a deeply jealous character, Jake has the power to slant Robert’s actions in a particularly damaging manner; however, Jake’s narrative commentary does reflect the opinions of the other characters in the story, so Jake’s derisive criticism of Robert is largely normative in their group.
relationship with Brett, Robert attempts to rescue Brett from her young beaux and to forcibly remove Pedro from her company. Michael imparts to Jake that Robert ultimately humiliated himself by attempting to rescue the reputation of a New Woman, who has no regard for decorum: “He nearly killed the poor, bloody bull-fighter. Then Cohn wanted to take Brett away. Wanted to make an honest woman of her, I imagine” (Sun 205). Robert’s flawed masculinity is highlighted first by his inability to perform like the other men in their travels abroad and second by his failure to comprehend the sexual autonomy enabled by the gender revolution of the era. While the milieu of the bull fights and the threat of a New Woman serves to provoke Robert’s erratic masculine behavior, the same stimuli work to highlight the diminished male performance of his American compatriot.

Jake Barnes largely exemplifies what Hemingway champions in a male hero, but his physical limitations and sexual impotence resulting from a war injury he sustained in the Italian army prevent him from embodying all the characteristics of the typical code hero. Jake may be a veteran, who drinks heavily and participates in a variety of manly activities, but his impotence prevents him from sexually participating in the modern era. In a flashback, Jake reveals that immediately after his battle injury, an Italian liaison colonel had commended Jake for his sacrifice and remarked that Jake had “given more than [his] life” (Sun 39). Although Jake’s injury prevents him from maintaining an amorous relationship with Brett, the plights and cuckoldry of the other men, who do temporarily enjoy her company, demonstrate that Jake is likely the more fortunate for
his distance; however, Jake’s injury does not prevent him from seeking a relationship with Brett: “Couldn’t we live together, Brett? Couldn’t we just live together” (Sun 62). Brett is considerably kinder to Jake than the other men of their group, and Jake does escape much embarrassment for his forced abstinence, but the constant tones of regret in his narration interrupt his performance as a stoic, unattached man. After observing Jake and Brett interact in an obviously familiar way, Count Mippipopolous, another admirer of Brett, asks why they will not marry, to which Jake responds “[w]e want to lead our own lives” (Sun 69). Though his comment is not entirely truthful, Jake’s injury and Brett’s need for an able-bodied man does force them to live their own lives, but Jake makes considerable, personal sacrifices to keep her happy.

At two different times throughout the novel, Jake exhibits proper Hemingwayesque stoicism by retreating into rural, masculine settings, but during both periods of removal, Jake allows his excursions to be interrupted by Brett. He first retreats for fishing in Burguete, where he is able to leisurely read and smoke in bed at night and fish in the Irati during the day (Sun 116). While they are away, Jake takes Bill’s advice to not discuss such complicated matters as failed sexual relationships: “Never mention that, . . . That’s the sort of thing that can’t be spoken of” (Sun 120). With his removal from the group and the sexual pressures imposed by Brett, Jake exhibits more performative aspects of masculinity, and he is able to talk about Brett with detachment, remarking to Bill that he has been in love with Brett “[o]ff and on for a hell of a long time” (Sun 128). This removal reestablishes a sense of the masculine domain since their
trip is largely spent drinking, comparing the size of the fish they caught, playing three-handed bridge, and recalling the men back to their time at the war front: “I’ve not had this much fun since the war” (Sun 134). However, upon returning to the group dynamic, Jake loses his impartiality and refocuses his attentions on Brett, seeing to her comfort and even arranging her romantic liaison with Pedro Romero. After the dramatic conclusion of the fiesta and Robert’s violent outbursts, Jake retreats to San Sebastian to relax, read, and swim (Sun 236). Jake’s time alone is peaceful and uninterrupted until a telegram from Brett arrives asking him to return to Hotel Montana and collect her from where she has been staying with Pedro Romero (Sun 242). Jake immediately writes back that he will do as she wishes, but he is aware of the irony of his situation: “Send a girl off with one man. Introduce her to another to go off with him. Now go and bring her back. And sign the wire with love” (Sun 243). By detailing Jake’s steer-like behavior in constantly acting as a sexual intermediary for Brett and never fully performing his masculine role, Hemingway suggests that the war, as a vehicle of the modern era, has gelded Jake. As an American man in the post-war era, Jake cannot consistently enact conventional masculinity any more than Robert because they have both fallen prey to New Women. Robert obviously lacks many of the social characteristics of a manly hero, and Jake is physically limited in his ability to perform as man, but Hemingway later in his writing career creates a capable, American war-hero who is still unable to ultimately perform masculinity.
From the beginning of *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway establishes the masculine setting of a war front; the first prevalent image is that of Italian troops, uniformly clad in capes and carrying rifles, marching through heavy mist (*Farewell* 4). Hemingway introduces his characters, initially all male, in the context of the Gorizia bawdy houses and the mess hall, in which the men socialize and eat together. Much like Fitzgerald’s pre-nuptial, all-male scene in *The Beautiful and Damned* in which the men remain unnamed, Hemingway creates an all-male scene of camaraderie in the mess hall by leaving the men identified only by a descriptive title: “the lieutenant,” “the captain,” “the priest,” and “my friend” (*Farewell* 6-7). The unnamed men joke about religion, war, and women in amiable company while they coexist in their uniformed maleness. Not until after a period of leave and travel is the protagonist and narrator, Fredric Henry, named along with his friend, Lieutenant Rinaldi. Significantly, the newly-identified men immediately venture out to meet the recently arrived “beautiful English girls” at the Gorizia hospital, one of which is the heroine Catherine Barkley (*Farewell* 12). However, Fredric is not immediately taken in by Catherine and her erratic behavior, and he initially remains indifferent; even while anticipating Catherine’s arrival one evening, Fredric dwells on his military uniform from his cap and helmet to his “Astra 7.65 caliber pistol,” which all of the men wear on their bodies at all times (*Farewell* 29). At the early stage of their relationship, Fredric only views Catherine as a slightly better alternative to the prostitutes shared among the men at the front: “I thought [Catherine] was probably a little crazy. It was alright if she was. I did not care what I was getting into. This was
better than going every evening to the house for officers where the girls climbed all over you and put your cap on backwards as a sign of affection between their trips upstairs with brother officers” (Farewell 30). Fredric seems to embody all the necessary qualifications for a Hemingway hero at the beginning of the story, but after Catherine’s uninterrupted influence in a hospital setting, he loses his grasp on his masculine performance.

Fredric becomes seriously injured in the line of duty by a trench mortar shell, and though he initially maintains a stoic countenance, he does become dependent on others to take care of him (Farewell 58-9). During his recovery, Fredric is shuttled to different hospitals and handled by numerous medical staff, but he continually asks for Catherine and expects her to find him. When she does inevitably locate him, Fredric falls fully and dutifully in love with her: “When I saw her I was in love with her. Everything turned over inside of me (Farewell 91). Fredric’s feelings of love stem from a sense of gratefulness and dependence, which begin to subtly shift his role away from that of a self-sufficient soldier and into a position of dependence on a woman. Beginning with Fredric’s removal from the front, Hemingway communicates that Fredric’s physical incapacity allows Catherine a dangerous upper hand and permits her a disproportionate amount of control over the pace of their relationship. Though Fredric initially only viewed Catherine as a preferable alternative to frontline prostitutes, she soon convinces him of the permanence of their relationship, and in his narration Fredric seems to be parroting Catherine’s words and ideas: “We said to each other that we were married the
first day she had come to the hospital and we counted the months from our wedding
day” (Farewell 114). Though Fredric’s injuries heal relatively quickly, he largely loses
touch with the war and remarks only that “there were many victories in the papers”
(Farewell 117). Fredric becomes further removed from the war when his affair results in
Catherine’s pregnancy, and his identity further shifts away from that of a soldier: “I
know where I stand. I’ve been out long enough to know. I’m like a ball-player that bats
two hundred and thirty and knows he’s no better” (Farewell 140). Fredric eventually
returns to Gorizia, but he sees the soldier-populated town as lonely and desolate. In
response to Fredric’s subdued demeanor and impersonal behavior toward the other
men, Rinaldi gently scolds Fredric: “You act like a married man” (Farewell 167). After
briefly returning to the waning front, Fredric and his men are forced to retreat to Udine,
but as German planes fly overhead and bombs sound in the distance, Fredric’s men
begin to defect. Though he is initially disgusted by their cowardly behavior and actually
fires on their deserting backs (Farewell 204), Fredric’s altered identity wins out, and he
eventually sees the appeal of defection.

After the initial desertion, Fredric and his remaining men discuss the potential of
being taken as prisoners of war, and Fredric remarks, “I should think a married man
would want to get back to his wife” (Farewell 221). Soon after this conversation, Fredric
and his men are stopped and restrained by the carabiniere,⁴ who are deeply suspicious

⁴ Carabiniere are Italian paramilitary police. In A Farewell to Arms, the carabiniere are largely uninformed
but dutiful pawns.
of all officers without troops. Fredric listens to the brief questioning and execution of a lieutenant-colonel ahead of him, and decides to defect rather than risk the carabiniere’s questioning. Hemingway posits Fredric’s decision so soon after his comment about married men to demonstrate Catherine’s far reaching influence on Fredric’s masculine performance. Even the description of Fredric’s dangerous escape is ripe with details of his cowardice: “I ducked down, pushed between two men, and ran for the river, my head down. I tripped at the edge and went in with a splash (Farewell 225). Fredric physically transitions from a position of authority to a position of vulnerability by way of his harrowing, water-logged journey along the river. After Fredric emerges from the water and wrings out his clothing, he observes, “I had lost my cap” (Farewell 227), an article of clothing that recalls his earlier focus on the details of his uniform in the moments before an evening with Catherine. Furthermore, Fredric further severs his lasting ties to the military when he amputates his last symbols of militarism: “Before I put on my coat I cut the cloth stars off my sleeves and put them in the inside pocket with my money” (Farewell 228). Fredric jumps a train to Mestre and must hide in a cargo compartment under a canvas, ironically filled with military-grade guns: “there was a little light came through and I lay and looked at the guns” (Farewell 230). In Mestre, Fredric learns that Catherine is in Stresa, an ideal place to escape from Italy to Switzerland. On his journey to reunite with Catherine, Fredric reflects on his altered state: “The war was a long way away. Maybe there wasn’t any war. There was no war here. Then I realized it was over for me” (Farewell 245). After a brief period of respite in
Switzerland and Catherine’s remaining months of pregnancy, Fredric is again forced to confront things outside of his control. As Catherine enters and then begins to lose her battle with childbirth, Fredric regrets his choices that led him to this moment of defeat: “this is the end of the trap... you never got away with anything” (*Farewell* 320). The “trap” to which Fredric is referring seems to be a metaphor for his social isolation. Fredric sees himself as the wild animal who was baited into a fatal trap of lost love and paternity by the irresistible lure of Catherine. After the death of his lover and child, Fredric walks out into the rain with nothing. Fredric’s didactic farewell to the armed forces ultimately leaves him with neither brothers-in-arms, nor wife and child. Despite his virile performances on the Italian war front, Fredric is not redeemed in the last moments of his story like Juan Gallardo from *Blood and Sand*, because Hemingway makes cautionary tales out of the failed performances of his American men.

II. Foreign Male Superiority

The only heroes permitted to be successful in Hemingway’s early novels are men who not only resist modern women and the gender revolution, but also the American culture as a whole. Hemingway not only demonstrates how the gender revolution destroys American men abroad, like Robert, Jake, and Fredric, but he also intensifies his criticism by demonstrating that only men who are outside of American society can consistently exhibit masculine performance: Hemingway’s successful heroes are those who cannot be swayed by the gender revolution because they belong to a foreign nationality. In his early novels, Hemingway’s foreign-born men tangle with the same
Flappers as the failed American men, but only the foreigners remain unchanged after the conclusion of their relationships and continue to successfully perform as men.

Hemingway’s foreign heroes do not act merely as foils for his tragic Americans but as actual corrections for traditional masculine behavior. Hemingway’s preference for Spanish and Italian masculinity was not actually out of place in the popular culture of the American 1920s because the American public was already becoming inundated with images of Latin men in film.

Clara E. Rodriguez explores the representations of Latinos across early American film. Rodriguez mentions the phenomenon of “Latin stars,” a popular term in the era of silent films, and explains that Latinos “were regularly celebrated as the ideal in beauty and physique” (4). Additionally, some non-Latino stars adopted Latin names and identities to increase their public popularity. Though he was born as Joe Page, the newly re-christened actor Don Alvarado was able to star in Rio Rita, Captain Thunder, and The Battle of the Sexes alongside other remarkable female screen personalities of the time including Bebe

Figure 13: “Don Alvarado,” Photo Portrait, Photoplay Fan Magazine April, 1928.
Daniels, Fay Wray, and Phyllis Haver because of his newly adopted Latin identity. The photo portrait of Don Alvarado [Figure 13] appearing in the April 1928 edition of *Photoplay* fan magazine epitomizes the image of a “Latin lover,” which was growing in popularity in the American 1920s. Significantly, Don Alvarado also became popularly known as a look-alike for Rudolph Valentino, star of *Blood and Sand*. Hemingway clearly admired the supposed bravery and stoicism attributed to Latin men, and he used that image as a paradigm of masculine identity in his early novels.

The growing popular belief that Latinos represented the ideal physical man supported and enabled Hemingway’s characterization of his Spanish and Italian men in their performances of machismo. Thomas Strychacz explores the Hemingway heroes’ performances of masculinity and argues that their “potency as men depends on their ability to transfigure space into spectacle” (246). Strychacz refers specifically to arenas and stages in which exhibitions of masculinity are conducted across Hemingway’s stories, and he argues that a defined space is essential for trials of manliness in front of spectators: “Mastery of the arena bestows power on him, failure invites humiliation: in either case the process implies a loss of authority to the audience (247). While witnesses may be essential for the machismo performance, displays of masculinity in Hemingway’s early novels are not restricted to literal stages. Hemingway tests his characters’ masculine identities on a variety of platforms, including bull fighting pens and front line battles, but also intimate settings involving only men and women. Hemingway’s American men may fail to consistently maintain masculine identities, but
his foreign men can equally perform in private scenes or in glorious public spectacles. Pedro Romero is a Spanish bull fighter who can maintain his stoic persona as easily in the face of Brett Ashley as he can in the face of wild bulls, whose dominant behaviors she emulates throughout the story. Pedro is briefly troubled by the chaos bought on by the expatriates, but he is able to walk away from his experience beaten but unbroken.

Lieutenant Rinaldi is a skilled Italian battle surgeon who never places women above either his work or his friendships. Rinaldi enjoys the company of women, but unlike his American counterpart Fredric, Rinaldi never allows his affection for women to alter his commitment to his duties.

Pedro Romero is an exceptional young bull fighter whose displays of stoicism in scenes of intense danger regularly draw admiration from those around him. From the beginning of the novel, bull fighters are established as the prime example of virile masculinity; before arriving in Spain, Cohn complains to Jake about not living his life fully, and Jake simply remarks that “[n]obody lives their life all the way up except bull-fighters” (Sun 18). Even before Pedro appears in the novel, Hemingway is preparing for him a reputation of true machismo. Montoya, the owner of the hotel in which the bullfighters as well as the expatriates reside while in Pamplona, is a critic of the most famous matadors, but even he credits Pedro with being an “aficionado,” a singular quality used to describe men who have true passion for bull fighting, either as matadors or as spectators (Sun 136). Jake, as a good friend to the hotel owner, remarks that “Montoya could forgive anything of a bull-fighter who had aficion” (Sun 137).
Significantly, Jake is also credited with having aficion, though only in the spectatorial position. Hemingway draws a continuous metaphor between Pedro and the bulls, as the true stars of the show, and between Jake and the steers, as the supporting elements to accompany the performances of real virility. Just as Pedro and the bulls share the role of creating a spectacle, Jake and the steers share the same supplementary role, which is to “quiet down the bulls and keep them from breaking their horns against the stone walls or goring each other” (Sun 138). Indeed, Jake in his impotent state makes the ideal spectator to Pedro’s performance, aid to Pedro’s romantic endeavors, and foil to Pedro’s obvious machismo.

Hemingway imposes the same masculine threats to Pedro that he does to his American men, but Pedro’s reactions to the same stimuli highlight his male superiority: Pedro encounters both adventurous settings and modern women without losing grasp on his masculine performance. In the bull ring, Pedro regularly exhibits stoicism and an absence of fear, despite his considerable personal danger: “Romero’s bull-fighting gave real emotion, because he kept the absolute purity of line in his movements and always quietly and calmly let the horns pass him close each time” (Sun 171). Even outside of the arena, Pedro continues to focus on his role as a matador: “He talked of his work as something altogether apart from himself. There was nothing conceited or braggartly [sic] about him” (Sun 178). When Pedro’s displays of machismo ultimately catch the notice of Brett Ashley, he reciprocates her attention, but does not change his persona: “He seated himself asking Brett’s permission without saying anything. He had very nice
manners. But he kept on smoking his cigar” (Sun 188). Even as Brett begins to seduce him, Pedro does not lose his composure; she pretends to read his palm, but he confidently tells her: “I’m never going to die” (Sun 189). Pedro’s jocular response seems to contradict Jake’s earlier evaluation that there was nothing conceited in his behavior, but his comment foreshadows his enduring performances in his altercation with Robert, his bull fight the following morning, and the conclusion of his relationship with Brett.

When Robert uses his considerable boxing prowess to physically harm Pedro in his hotel room, the young bull fighter maintains his stoicism even in defeat: “The bull-fighter fellow was rather good. He didn’t say much, but he kept getting up and getting knocked down again. Cohn couldn’t knock him out” (Sun 205). The day after the fight with Robert, Pedro has a bull fight that he will not miss even though Brett believes he should still be in bed recovering; Pedro arrives at the arena considerably “discolored and swollen” but still ready to play the matador (Sun 217). Despite his injuries and Brett’s presence as a female distraction in the audience, Pedro manages to perform valiantly: “Never once did he look up. He made it stronger that way, and did it for himself, too, as well as for her. Because he did not look up to ask if it pleased he did it all for himself inside, and it strengthened him, and yet he did it for her, too. But he did not do it for her at any loss to himself” (Sun 220). Unlike Juan Gallardo in Blood and Sand and the Americans in his company, Pedro is able to rise above the complications of female distraction. Hemingway not only idolizes Pedro’s performances in the physical altercations with the bulls and with Robert, but also in his fortitude after Brett leaves.
him. By the conclusion of the story, Brett is no more capable of diminishing Pedro’s machismo than were his physical challenges of mortal danger. When Jake comes to collect Brett from the hotel in which she has been staying with Pedro, Jake finds that Pedro has already graciously paid for their hotel stay and left. Even Brett remarks, “I don’t think I hurt him any” (Sun 245). Since Pedro is not mentioned in the remaining pages of the novel, the last impression Hemingway has created for him is that of an unalterable Spanish man, whose machismo endures through physical altercations and transgressive women alike. Hemingway later replicates Pedro’s resolve and easy abdication from American women in a minor but memorable character whose identity is inseparable from his career.

In A Farewell to Arms, Hemingway introduces a character of different age and nationality than Pedro Romero, but one who is similarly committed to his career and masculine performance. The Italian Lieutenant Rinaldi is a battle surgeon, whose great affection for the protagonist, Fredric Henry, is consistent throughout the course of the novel, despite Fredric’s all-consuming relationship with Catherine. Although Fredric is considerably more reserved and stoic in nature than his Italian friend, Rinaldi is less affected and more truly confident in his masculine identity. Rinaldi is not only openly affectionate towards his comrades, but he is also shamelessly theatrical in his personal carriage and duties: “Rinaldi saluted. I saluted too but more moderately” (Farewell 18). Rinaldi is initially introduced as one of the many unnamed men in the opening scenes of male camaraderie; he is identified as only “the Lieutenant” or “my friend”
interchangeably until Fredric returns to the front from his vacation (Farewell 6-7). Upon his return, Fredric learns from his friend that there are more guns in the town, but also more British men and women, and Rinaldi is officially named during their conversation about a British nurse (Farewell 11). While Fredric was away, Rinaldi reports that he has fallen in love with the story’s heroine: “in the town we have beautiful English girls. I am now in love with Miss Barkley” (Farewell 12). However, Rinaldi’s professions of love are neither profound nor long lasting, and by the end of an evening outing with Catherine and her friend Helen, Rinaldi easily observes, “Miss Barkley prefers you to me. That is very clear. But the little Scotch one is very nice” (Farewell 21). From Rinaldi’s early exhibition of easy renunciation, Hemingway has set the Italian man above Fredric, who has already begun to fall under Catherine’s power.

The greatest separation in the performances of the two men occurs during the period in which Fredric is nursed by Catherine and Rinaldi remains at the male-dominated front. When Fredric inevitably returns to Gorizia, the differences between the two friends are especially pronounced, and Hemingway juxtaposes Fredric’s detached behavior alongside Rinaldi’s consistently honest and open manner. As mentioned earlier, Rinaldi accuses Fredric of acting like a “married man” because of his reservation and lack of concern over the condition of the front. Conversely, Rinaldi is elated with the return of his friend, and immediately asks to examine Fredric’s injured knee: “Take off your pants, baby. We’re all friends here. I want to see what kind of a job
they did” (Farewell 166). In his pained state, Fredric tries to affect indifference and insists that his knee has at least partially healed. Rinaldi, mildly annoyed with Fredric’s act, responds, “I see that, baby. This is something I know more about than you” (Farewell 167). The conversation between the friends may be strained, but Rinaldi continues to share with Fredric the details that he has missed during his recovery. Hemingway makes it clear that while Fredric has been nursed and controlled by Catherine, Rinaldi has avidly practiced and begun to perfect his craft: “By God, baby, I am becoming a lovely surgeon. ... I never think. No, by God, I don’t think; I operate” (Farewell 167). Since Fredric has largely lost any passion he had for his position as an ambulance driver, Rinaldi’s career focus makes Fredric appear especially effete.

Through his juxtaposition of the friends, Hemingway communicates that Fredric, in his monogamous and paternal state, can no longer relate as easily to single, career-focused Rinaldi. Perhaps inferring more about Fredric’s condition than he lets on, Rinaldi asks Fredric “[h]ave you any married friends?” (Farewell 170). When Fredric responds in the affirmative, Rinaldi says that he does not have married friends “[n]ot if they love each other. ... I am the snake. I am the snake of reason” (Farewell 170). Indeed, if anyone were able to interrupt the manipulative relationship between Fredric and Catherine, Rinaldi would be best suited. Hemingway clearly sides with the prelapsarian snake, who continues to exist in his unaltered state even after Adam’s fall from grace.

---

5 Rinaldi’s nickname “Baby” as a term of endearment for Fredric especially highlights the differences in masculinity between the two men in this scene. Rinaldi as a competent, Italian battle surgeon is juxtaposed with Fredric as an infantilized, American pining for his lover.
When Fredric returns to battle and eventually defects, he sets into motion the events which will lead to his ruin, but Rinaldi’s story is left unfinished. Fredric may leave Rinaldi behind to his surgery and his prostitutes, but Fredric also leaves Rinaldi in a state of memorable machismo as a single, battle surgeon in the Italian army.

Although both Pedro Romero and Lieutenant Rinaldi exit their narratives alone, Hemingway allows them to be remembered admirably. Hemingway’s foreign men each encounter real danger and the chaos caused by the gender revolution, but neither man loses his grasp on his manly identity. On the contrary, the same foreign adventures and transgressive women highlight the insufficiency of Hemingway’s American men. By the conclusions of their stories, each American man has failed in his masculine performance: Robert Cohn is friendless and pathetic, Jake Barnes is forever susceptible to the beck and call of a woman whom he can never physically possess, and Fredric Henry is bereft of occupation, friends, and the family for whom he gave everything up. Hemingway may tend to similarly characterize his male heroes, but his commentary is more significant than simply defining what constitutes a man: Hemingway demonstrates that the gender revolution makes conventional American masculinity impossible. Although they maintain similar expatriate lifestyles and share a tendency to overdrink, the strongest trait shared among Hemingway’s American men is failed masculinity.

Hemingway was not alone in his criticism of American men, and other cultural critics called for a resurgence of masculinity in the 1920s. Correctives for effete cake-eaters were scattered across popular culture, calling for everything from masculine
posturing to facial hair, but foreign men emerged as a popular answer to the American gender problem. In this way, Hemingway’s gender criticism supports rather than opposes the agendas of the conservative critics of the 1920s. Hemingway details the decline of the American man alongside the masculine success of the “foreign other” to imply that distance from American culture is essential for true performances of machismo. Through the juxtaposition of his failed American characters alongside his superior foreign men, Hemingway alleges that the 1920’s New Woman and the American gender revolution was the source of emasculation in Lost Generation men.
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION

Figure 14: “Kitty Doner,” Photo Portrait, Strauss-Peyton Studio, 1923.
Although I have identified Fitzgerald and Hemingway as literary authors of the Lost Generation throughout this project, I do not mean to paint both authors and their considerable bodies of written works with the same limited pallet as their adjectival modifiers may suggest. These authors may have shared some commonalities unique to the periods of American history in which they were born and raised, but they shared little to no similarities on the matters of writing style, literary goals, or personal pursuits during their lifetimes. Fitzgerald and Hemingway were both part of an informal literary school of expatriate American artists, who contributed diverse works to both the canon and American consciousness, but Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s correspondence over their lengthy friendship reveals that they often argued and regularly disagreed with one another. In his biography Hemingway vs. Fitzgerald, Scott Donaldson explores the complicated relationship between the two Lost Generation friends and details their correspondence and interactions with one another until Fitzgerald’s death. Donaldson describes a specific instance in which Hemingway invited Fitzgerald to join him on a fishing trip in a truly Hemingwayesque adventure setting, but naturally Fitzgerald, true to his dandy fashioning, refused: “It was the first of several invitations for Fitzgerald to join Hemingway in male camaraderie and the pursuit of large creatures of the deep. Scott accepted none of them. He was no more and out-doorsman than Ernest was a croquet player” (122). Nevertheless, their marked differences make their occasional similarities all the more significant. The two dissimilar, literary geniuses shared little other than their disillusionment with the modern era, and as I have argued, the source
of that disillusionment. The gender revolution of the jazz age united Fitzgerald and
Hemingway in a way that no personal endeavor could, and the authors found common
ground in their criticism of the evolution of gender ideals occurring in the modern era.

Fitzgerald and Hemingway, along with other cultural critics of the 1920s sought
to regulate and restrict the American modes of gender expression. All manner of
cultural critics used gender ideals as measurements to champion individuals, who
emulated the popular ideal, or destabilize others, who could not easily mimic gender
norms. Those who transgressed upon the historically established creed of gender
definition were questioned and criticized across popular forms of media. In “Critically
Queer” Judith Butler argues that the ritualized repetition of social restraints can limit
expressions of identity, which vary from cultural norms: “Social constraints, taboos,
prohibitions, threats of punishment operate in the ritualized repetition of norm, and the
repetition constitutes the temporalized scene of gender construction and
destabilization” (22). Social norms, especially those regarding concepts of gender
identity, are not easily demolished because of the hegemonic desire for gender stability
and uniformity, which is created by ritualized repetition of gender ideals by the general
populace. Fitzgerald and Hemingway attempted to contribute to that regulation of
 gender by repeating the failures of their characters who violate traditional gender
ideals; however, their repetition took on an unexpected life of its own when the air of
infamy surrounding Flappers was adopted and promoted by popular culture. Instead of
restricting gender norms, Fitzgerald and Hemingway’s repeated gender criticism served
to increase the infamy of transgressive femininity and their destabilization of traditional
gender intelligibility ironically promoted the revolution of gender roles during that
period. Their literary works, together with America’s commodity fetishism and popular
culture, inverted the power of ritualized repetition to promulgate the ideal of the New
Woman.

Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s sensational 1920s literature, which captured the
disillusionment of the Lost Generation and captivated American audiences with smart
social commentary and rapt attention to the detail of the modern era youth, supported
rather than contradicted the traditional constructions of gender identity. The
empowered women, effete dandies, and subjugated soldiers featured in the 1920s
literature of Fitzgerald and Hemingway may violate the popular cultural constraints
surrounding gender roles, but the consequences for their social transgressions reveal
the authors’ deeply-biased agenda. Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s derision for those who
challenge traditional gender norms is evident in their depiction of the failures for those
who engage in the social changes of the modern era. Fitzgerald and Hemingway posit
the New Woman as a vehicle for the gender revolution of that era, which complicated
the definition of modern gender ideals. The emergence of first the politicized New
Woman and then the Flapper, who made social transgressions fashionable, complicated
not only popular female ideals, but also male gender identity. The gender revolution
displaced many men who were unused to competing for social dominance and caused
them to question their personal conceptions of masculinity.
Flappers in Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s literature are beautifully dangerous creatures that cause the destruction of the men hapless enough to fall for the sex appeal of social disobedience. Though she may at first appear as a trophy for successful American manhood, the Fitzgerald and Hemingway Flapper eventually becomes the ruin of the men, who allow her to manipulate the rigor of traditional social hierarchy. Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s modern women cause confusion by creating competition among men, destroying fraternal camaraderie, manipulating the structure of social groups, and perpetuating their infamous image and behavior. Men are clearly posited as the victims across Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s 1920s literature, and while the two authors cannot agree on an ideal masculine image, they do concur that New Women and the gender revolution are the source of American masculine failures. Fitzgerald nostalgically portrays romantic heroes, who are displaced in the modern era and who are maltreated by women that have become too empowered. Fitzgerald demonstrates the conflicting nature of masculine ideals in the post-war culture, which alternately champions a fashionable dandy or a virile war veteran. The tragically-doomed protagonists in Fitzgerald’s fiction embody the gender confusion of the progressive era because they are unable to attain conventional masculine identities. Hemingway too perceived the impossibility faced by American men to maintain successful masculine identities, so he turned abroad for examples of successful male performance. While Hemingway’s American men flaccidly placate more dominant women, his foreign men escape the consequences of the American gender revolution and are able to perform
machismo even in the face of empowered women. The poisonous relationships that form between empowered women and displaced American men across Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s 1920s literature reveal the authors’ derision for the inversion of gender hierarchy caused by the gender revolution.

Fitzgerald and Hemingway not only document the consequences of progressive gender roles in social settings, but they also detail the struggles of modern women and men in forming lasting romantic relationships. Fitzgerald and Hemingway demonstrate failed relationships at all levels of intimacy, from youthful courtship, to sexual affairs, to marital unions. Both authors communicate the irreconcilability of differences between empowered women and displaced men in the modern era by detailing the many ways in which Flappers can destroy the men around them. Fitzgerald and Hemingway criticize the sociocultural changes that enabled the gender revolution because they believe that such a social climate makes functional male-female relationships impossible. Fitzgerald and Hemingway sided with conservative critics, who called for a return to traditional gender ideals. These critics perceived the evolving popular opinion surrounding gender and sought to reprehend the source of cultural change: the modern woman. Ironically, such derisive commentary only fed into the Flapper image that was growing in popularity in the 1920s. Like the many cultural critics of the time, Fitzgerald and Hemingway sought to degrade the Flapper image, but in their continual repetition of her transgressive behavior, they did not participate in what Butler calls ritualized repetition, but inadvertently contributed to the infamy repetition of transgressive femininity.
The growth in mass consumerism of the 1920s enabled the Flapper image to spread across various social platforms and permeate into constructions of gender. As Butler explains, ritualized *repetition* has the incredible power to determine modes of gender intelligibility, and the *repetition* of the Flapper image across popular culture and throughout the commodified literature of Fitzgerald and Hemingway created a new mode of feminine representation. Kirk Curnutt explains that marketing especially affected concepts of youthful identity in the 1920s because it provided new opportunities for social expression and identification: “the explosions of consumable goods provided individuals with new tools for packaging their personalities in vibrant and captivating ways, which fell under the general rubric of *style*” (91). Gendered marketing appeared in product advertisements, lifestyle magazines, propaganda, jazz lyrics, cartoons, and films, both repeating and reiterating often differing modes gender intelligibility. American mass consumerism was the greatest publicizing tool of the gender revolution because it allowed for the spread of progressive ideals that would have otherwise been prevented by the dominant institution of patriarchal gender roles. Regardless of their intentions to criticize New Women and the revolution that created them, Fitzgerald and Hemingway contributed to the popularity of modern gender ideals by repeating their criticism over and over in their increasingly popular literature. Perhaps because they began to realize the unexpected social results of their commentary, Fitzgerald and Hemingway intensified their criticism of transgressive gender ideals later in their writing careers. In their literature of the 1930s and beyond,
Fitzgerald and Hemingway raised the stakes for their characters who pushed the boundaries of traditional gender roles.

I. Sharper Criticism

The historical scope of this project was limited to a brief epoch of time, which began with the conclusion of WWI in 1918 and ended with the stock market crash of 1929 and the start of the Great Depression. This period of American history saw not only a great period of cultural change, but also the peak years for members of the Lost Generation. I chose this period because of the fascinating redefinition of gender ideals and the surprising literary reactions by those individuals who chose to write about it. I was intrigued to study the criticism of those authors who inadvertently helped to popularize transgressive gender performances while attempting to deprecate it, but perhaps what makes this period especially interesting is that Fitzgerald and Hemingway were participating in the frivolity of the 1920s while simultaneously degrading it in their literature. All of these concurrent issues made for an interesting study, but the fiction of Fitzgerald and Hemingway that arrived after the greatest, gaudies spree is no less significant; in fact, Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s criticism of gender revolution becomes even more pronounced in their literature of the 1930s because it details more of the consequences for those who transgress upon traditional modes of gender and relationships. Their darker 1930s novels and short stories detail the miserable lives of men and women dealing with the consequences of their actions and the devastation surrounding mortality. Although this project focused on a narrow window of time and
limited number of texts, my study of the gendered criticism in the works of Fitzgerald and Hemingway can be extended to include their 1930s works, which further reveal their agenda for demeaning transgressive gender identities. Perhaps because they were even more disillusioned after the stock market crash, Fitzgerald and Hemingway did not shy away from creating harsh punishments and deadly outcomes for modern men and women.

Consequences seem to be the greatest focus of Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s 1930s works. Misfortune in their 1920s novels occurs didactically after women and men have behaved badly enough to appear to deserve it, but tragedy appears earlier and more regularly in their 1930s works, often with only allusions to the progressive behavior which led various characters to ruin. Additionally, actual mortality only briefly figured into Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s 1920s fiction, and the deaths that did occur took place at the conclusions of stories, allowing the implications of those deaths to remain unexplored. In The Great Gatsby, Myrtle and Gatsby die in the culminating climax of the novel, but the grief shown by Myrtle’s husband and Nick Carraway does not greatly interrupt either the flow of narration or the lives of the living characters. In A Farewell to Arms, Catherine’s death serves as the conclusion of the story and Fredric leaves the hospital with no sign of real incapacitation due to grief. However, in several of their 1930s works, Fitzgerald and Hemingway use tragedy and death as regular consequences for indiscretions. Two of Fitzgerald’s 1930s short stories, “Babylon Revisited” and “Crazy Sunday,” especially reveal his intensified criticism because they
show the grisly consequences for those who participated in the loose sexuality of the 1920s and transgressed upon traditional gender roles. Fitzgerald’s fourth and final completed novel, *Tender is the Night*, also forewarns the sufferings of ill-fated unions between modern men and women. Hemingway too sharpens his criticism by imposing threats of mortality, but he also refines his characterization to make his characters appear more deserving of their failures. Two of Hemingway’s 1930s short stories, “The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber” and “The Snows of Kilimanjaro,” that take place abroad in Africa feature the deaths of men who are killed either directly or indirectly by their empowered wives. These stories and others could potentially be included in a more comprehensive study of Fitzgerald’s and Hemingway’s criticism of twentieth-century gender roles, especially since their criticism becomes more pronounced as they observe the failings of real-life Americans in the modern era.

In two of Fitzgerald’s 1930s short stories, he especially highlights the potential for tragedy resulting from transgressive behavior. “Babylon Revisited” (1930) is a story of regret and repentance in which Charlie, a widowed, recovering alcoholic attempts to attain custody of his young daughter from his late wife’s sister and her husband. The numerous flashbacks throughout the short story reveal that Charlie and his wife Helen, while she lived, maintained a perilously drunken, expatriate existence throughout the 1920s, which resulted in their infidelity to one another and Helen’s untimely death. After it becomes clear that Charlie will not be able to attain custody of his daughter, he sits in a bar and reflects to a bartender that while he may have lost money in the crash
of 1929, he had lost the important things in the 1920s: “I lost everything I wanted in the boom” (“Babylon Revisited” 229). Similarly, “Crazy Sunday” (1932) contains an abrupt and tragic demise, seemingly resulting from infidelity. The story follows Joel, a young screenwriter, as he becomes involved in the adulterous marriage of a successful American director. Joel falls in love with scorned Mrs. Calman, the director’s wife, who uses Joel’s affections to spite her husband. On a night when Mr. Calman is traveling, Joel and Mrs. Calman finally have sexual relations, but immediately after their affair, Mrs. Calman receives a telegram that her husband’s plane has crashed and that he has been confirmed dead. The consequences in these stories are abrupt due to the brevity of the plot, but in his fourth and final completed novel, Fitzgerald shows the slow progression of failure over the course of a relationship between two ill-matched modern people.

*Tender is the Night* (1934) is most often read as a semi-autobiographical account of Fitzgerald’s own relationship with his wife Zelda, but like his other 1930s fiction, this novel too follows the failure of a modern relationship due to infidelity and alcoholism. Dick and Nicole Diver are too easily tempted to stray outside of their marital union, and at different times throughout the story, they each take lovers, who fulfill a neglected need: Dick develops a brief sexual relationship with a young actress, who worships him in a way that his wife does not, and Nicole takes a more capable and conventionally masculine man as first a lover and then an eventual second husband when Dick subsides into substance abuse and can no longer take care of her. Fitzgerald’s criticism of modern gender roles and relationships is especially pronounced in this story because he details
the rise and fall of a union originally doomed to fail due to the irreconcilable differences between the two characters. Hemingway too focuses on the fundamental incompatibilities of modern women and men, and in some of his 1930s works he shows the potential for fatality in such unions.

Hemingway’s “The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber” (1936) features the violent tragedy of a marriage between Francis, a weak American man, and Margot, his unfaithful wife. Set halfway through an African safari hunt, the short story further reveals Hemingway’s continued criticism of modern American men and their lack of masculinity. His criticism is further evident in his juxtaposition of affluent, American Francis and the virile safari guide; however, Margot, rather than the safari guide, plays a more significant role in emasculating her husband. Throughout the story, Margot is both braver in the face of danger and often a better shot than her husband, and Francis is seen as increasingly more ineffectual. When Margot has a sexual encounter with Wilson, the safari guide, it would seem that Hemingway has fully articulated his criticism, but he takes the ruin of their marriage one step further by depicting Margot’s ambiguously accidental murder of her husband. Hemingway intensifies his later criticism so that, unlike Brett, Margot cannot become beloved for her act of cuckoldry. Hemingway casts Margot as potentially villainous so that there can be no question over the worth of empowered women.

Similarly, in “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” (1938), an empowered American woman less directly, but just as assuredly causes the death of her husband while abroad in
Africa. The short story is written as the stream of consciousness of a dying American man named Harry, who is being nursed by his wife Helen. As he lays suffering from gangrene, Harry reflects on all of his virile adventures as a young man, which seem to all occur prior to his meeting and marrying rich Helen, who both finances his adventures and simultaneously domesticates him. Harry does not want her near him because he seems to conflate the death of his adventures and the death of his body as one in the same, and naturally, the fault of Helen. Harry dies while reflecting on things he will never do and the stories he will never write, and Hemingway leaves little doubt that Helen’s control is the reason that Harry never attained all his desires. Like Fitzgerald, Hemingway used mortality as a real outcome for men and women who violated traditional gender roles. In the 1930s, both authors hardened their criticism and seemed determined to write tragedies, which better communicated their agendas than did their 1920s literature, which merely served to ignite the popularity of transgression.

II. Fruition of the New Ideal

Considering the incredible opposition that New Women faced in the post-war era, it is truly remarkable that the image survived at all. Cultural critics, in the various forms of moralists and fashion experts, film producers and literary authors, all sought to censure or exact control over this new ideal of womanhood. In a decade where women’s rights were newly awarded but not widely accepted, the Flapper image served to popularize a new feminine ideal, which before had seemed overly political and unattractive to much of the American public; in fact, without the emergence of the
fashionable Flapper, American feminism may not have survived to reach its second wave. Mass consumerism publicized the Flapper and gave her controversial space in the public sphere, which allowed her image to firmly take root in modern consciousness. Most importantly, popular culture and public criticism perpetuated an image that young women desired to emulate. Once real-life Flappers began to take up real space, the new feminine ideal came to fruition. The true power of the fictional Flappers, depicted in product advertisements, songs, films, and novels, was to inspire real American women to take up the cause. When women like Bee Jackson, Colleen Moore, and Kitty Doner began to publicly embrace the new and dangerously challenged ideal, they became real-life versions of Daisy, Gloria, and Brett by challenging male environments, manipulating social hierarchies, and further perpetuating their own transgressive behavior.

Although Fitzgerald and Hemingway sought to degrade the Flapper image and the transgressions she encouraged, the authors merely fed into the popularity of the gender revolution through their repeated focus on modern people. They created heroines who now permanently exist in collective American minds as symbols of a sparkling era of American history. Even the most morally indefensible characters are remembered for their aura of beauty and style rather than their mistakes and misadventures. Daisy, Gloria, and Brett especially evoke an ephemeral quality of beauty that is all the more memorable for its brevity. Fitzgerald’s tragically romantic heroes pale beside the vibrancy of the women who displace them. Hemingway’s foreign male solution to the New Woman problem is overshadowed by his extraordinary heroines. By
repeating their criticism of the modern era gender revolution, Fitzgerald and Hemingway did not restrict gender expression as they intended, but instead helped to define an unforgettable incarnation of American womanhood. As Angela J. Latham argues, the modern femininity of the 1920s is inextricably linked with American history and modernity: “the strategic performance of transgressive femininity, immeasurably enriched the era of history that is often recognized as the very threshold of American modernity” (5). Consequently, Fitzgerald and Hemingway supplemented both an image and an era, which they sought to criticize, and ironically contributed empowered symbols of transgressive womanhood to the mass consumerism of gender marketing.

The American public fetishized the Fitzgerald and Hemingway Flapper, who inverted traditional gender roles and denigrated American men to flaccid shadows of masculinity, and brought her into the spotlight. Furthermore, these New Women types, the fictional and real, enabled the progression of gender equality and representation, which still continues today. As a young woman reading about these transgressive characters for the first time, I worried not about the propriety of their behavior but how I could be more like them: bold, fearless, and unforgettable. Daisy’s chilly practicality, Gloria’s successful manipulations, and Brett’s empowered sexuality take eminence over the men displaced by the gender revolution. Perhaps Fitzgerald and Hemingway would scoff at my identification of these New Woman as the most memorable characters across their 1920s literature, or maybe they would simply nod and acknowledge the fruition of that which they predicted nearly one-hundred years ago.
Works Cited


- - -. *Tender is the Night.* (1933) New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1982. Print.


