FASHIONABLE FLAPPERS: CONSTRUCTING FEMININITY IN FRANCIS SCOTT FITZGERALD'S *THE OFFSHORE PIRATE* AND *THE ICE PALACE*

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Abstract

Transition, dynamism, prosperity, freedom, and youth characterize the Roaring Twenties. Women experienced some of the most radical changes in all areas of life, private and public, and fashion reflected this newly gained freedom: shorter dresses, short hair, make-up, deep necklines, and a boyish charm. Francis Scott Fitzgerald's writings mirror this world of contradictions: its enthusiasm and frivolity, its freedom and failures. This article analyzes two of Fitzgerald's earliest short stories, *The Offshore Pirate* and *The Ice Palace*, in order to point out the writer's ambiguous way of representing the flapper, positioned at the crossroads between rebellion and conventionality, emancipation and superficiality. The analysis is mainly based on an evaluation of fashion imagery, a tool into decoding Fitzgerald's manner of constructing femininity.

Keywords: Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Roaring Twenties, femininity, flapper, fashion.

CHICAS A LA MODA: LA CONSTRUCCION DE LA FEMINIDAD EN *THE OFFSHORE PIRATE* Y *THE ICE PALACE* DE FRANCIS SCOTT FITZGERALD

Resumen

Transición, dinamismo, prosperidad, libertad y juventud son características de los Locos años veinte. Las mujeres experimentaron algunos de los cambios más radicales en todas las áreas de su vida, tanto privada como pública, y la moda reflejó la nueva libertad que alcanzaron: vestidos más cortos, pelo corto, maquillaje, profundos escotes y un aire masculino encantador. Los escritos de Francis Scott Fitzgerald reflejan este mundo contradictorio: su entusiasmo y frivolidad, su libertad y fracasos. Este artículo analiza dos de los primeros relatos breves, *The Offshore Pirate* y *The Ice Palace*, con el objetivo de señalar la ambigüedad del autor al representar a la chica moderna, situada en una encrucijada entre la rebelión y el convencionalismo, la emancipación y la superficialidad. Este estudio se basa fundamentalmente en la evaluación de la imágines sobre moda para descodificar la forma en que Fitzgerald construye la feminidad.

Palabras clave: Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Locos años veinte, feminidad, chica a la moda, moda.

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The "Roaring Twenties," the most common name for the third decade of the twentieth century, describes a brief but intense period of contradictions when the glamour and flamboyance displayed by a restless generation was counterbalanced by racial inequalities, violence, and conflict. This period remains in the world's imagination as an age of extravagance, freedom, arts and culture, youthful exuberance and an easy-going existence, consumerism and wealth, an age bordered by the Great War and the Great Depression, appearing to modern eyes as elusive and hard to grasp as a dream, or a fantasy. Americans, the victors of the Great War, now living in an economically booming society, thought that they were caught in the midst of a series of natural, technological, social, personal, and moral transformations. This awareness "was based on the extraordinarily rapid accumulation of both new knowledge and new experiences" (Susman 2003, 106). A larger number of people than before were engaged in the adventure of "knowing" more about themselves and the world in various manners: artistic, social, technological, psychological, etc. In such an age suitably characterized by these key-words: "abundance-leisure-consumer-pleasure" (112), both men and women started paying more attention to entertainment, gratification of personal needs and indulgence in pleasures of different kinds. These manifestations of curiosity, freedom, and excess were, without any doubt, the result of a longer process of modernization, industrialization, scientific and economic development that had started in the nineteenth century. However, some of the more radical changes in fashion, entertainment, gender roles and social behavior, in the 1920s, made people mistakenly believe that modernity was born in this period and the previous generations were just too traditional and conservative to be taken into consideration. This is one of the reasons why the third decade of the twentieth century is usually seen as a departure from the traditional Victorian mores, decorum, decency, patriarchal values, and work-ethics, which were gradually replaced by consumerism, materialism, liberation, a laissez-faire attitude, and nonconformity to traditional behaviors.

Some of the most visible changes of the 1920s regarded women's appearance and behavior, creating the impression of a break from the previous ages and a huge step towards freedom. In fact, already in the nineteenth century industrialization and urban development had contributed to women's emancipation. Feminist movements became more active as women left their domestic circles, took jobs outside the house, contributed to the financial support of the family, were more educated, and started militating for political and social rights. The right to vote was the outcome of a long fight and women eventually participated in the American presidential elections in 1920. Another step in the process of enfranchisement was women's effort to keep the economy going while men were fighting in the Great War. This active involvement in the social and economic life also contributed to women's growing awareness of their importance and worth in the public sphere, which led to a change in their behavior, attitude and expectations.

The New Woman reflected these changes that started after the Civil War. She was the woman who wanted to be more independent, self-reliant and educated, she was willing to participate in the social and political life and be unencumbered by child-rearing and household chores. Urbanization, industrialization and the rise of

the consumerist culture contributed to women's emancipation. Statistics are clear in this respect "increasing rates of higher education (in 1870, 21 percent of American college students were female, by 1910, 40 percent); changes in workplace, particularly in burgeoning white-collar fields such as clerical work (2.5 percent female in 1870; dominated by women by 1930); and, in the home, trends toward smaller families, later marriages or even lifelong singlehood, and an increasing acceptability of divorce" (Fleissner 2007, 37-38). The New Woman, therefore, "was more independent than her mother's generation, less reliant on men, and less willing to follow social rules. She rejected domesticity and demanded the same right as men to combine career with family" (Gendzel 2004, 29).

This emancipating environment fomented the appearance of the 1920s woman, defiant and free, who rejected her grandmother's and mother's values and customs. She dressed according to the new fashion, wore short skirts, comfortable clothes, discarded corsets and complicated attires, bobbed her hair, smoked, drank, and danced on the new rhythms of charleston and jazz, drove cars, played sports, and followed the life of the celebrities and movie stars. This new type of woman, the "flapper", replaced the "New Woman" in the post-war years of abundance, consumerism, and entertainment. The name –comical and exotic at the same time– is difficult to define. According to Kenneth Yellis, "the term 'flapper' originated in England as a description of girls of the awkward age, the mid-teens. The awkwardness was meant literally, and a girl who flapped had not yet reached mature, dignified womanhood" (1969, 49). The 1920s woman, embodied in the flapper, was an idealization of youth, energy and change, a symbol of America's modernity, challenging the "Victorian-American conception of sexuality and of the roles of men and women with respect to each other and to society" (47).

During the next decades the flapper benefited from a mixed reception and her emancipation was interpreted in various, sometimes contradictory manners, either as a symbol of women's freedom, or as a representation of further stereotyping and gender discrimination. The women in the 1920s definitely took advantage both of the economic prosperity of their times and the fight for emancipation led by their predecessors, whose behavior and mentalities they now challenged. On the other hand, the flapper was often disregarded by feminists, being considered materialistic and shallow. She was accused of worshipping the "god of entertainment", as she emulated the appearance and behavior of movie stars, taking advantage of a booming fashion and cosmetics market, with cheaper products available to more categories of women. Though winds of change and freedom were in the air, it seems that "during the 1920s, and in spite of the flapper image, the feminist movement weakened. The vote made very little difference to the majority of women. And it certainly did not transform politics as some feminists expected" (Juan Rubio and García Conesa n.p., 6). For working women, the reconciliation between belonging to the private or to the public sphere was strenuous and trying to overcome poverty was a more important issue than gaining more rights. The young generation of the 1920s had different concerns from the previous generation, namely suffragettes. Their interests lay in fashion, pleasure, sexual liberation, automobiles, dancing, smoking, and speakeasies. Since their predecessors had already carried out the difficult fight for

rights, researchers argue that young women had the freedom they wanted and they saw no need to continue fighting: "If young women wanted power and influence over men," Lois Banner contends, "they could get it by playing standard female roles –by being a temptress on the dance floor or a companion on the gold course. They could drink, they could smoke, they could enjoy sex. Why choose the difficult paths that Susan Anthony and Alice Paul had followed?" (1984, 158).

If the relationship between feminist activism and the new type of woman embodied by the flapper is often contradictory, it cannot be denied that, visually, at least, the flapper is more striking than her predecessors. Therefore, rather than dissecting her qualities or flaws, her involvement in the feminist movement or her rejection of activism, it could be more useful to take her for what she was: an ideal representation of her contradictory and elusive age. The flapper is the first female modern type, just as the Gibson girl[1], her predecessor, is the last of the Victorian types, and both were emulated to a greater or lesser degree by many women. Connected to economic prosperity, the flapper is also an artificial creation of a growing advertising industry that takes advantage of the increasing number of professional women who have their own income, and are willing to spend money for themselves. The flapper's dress and make-up also signal another change. Women may decide if they want to marry or not and they have fewer children than their mothers and grandmothers. They spend money on comfortable and fashionable clothes that can be purchased from shops, they love entertainment, and they are, in general, more daring and free. Consequently, is the flapper's image promoted by various media a form of liberation, or of conformity?

Jane Hunter refers to the contradictory representation of women in the 1920s oscillating between symbols of emancipation and superficial dolls: "Historians have differed on how to interpret these various 'female spectacles,' with some seeing objectification, others empowerment" (2008, 335). Lois Banner suggests that the growth of the fashion industry damaged women's newly-acquired freedom transforming them into shallow beings, avid for luxury and concerned about their beauty. "As the clothing and cosmetic industries began their phenomenal growth in the 1920s (a growth that was largely the product of advertising), women were shown as beings for whom fashion, beauty, and sex appeal were the most important concerns in life" (1984, 150). Carolyn Kitch's approach is more drastic. She considers that

[1] The Gibson girl represents the ideal of feminine beauty in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century America. The name comes from Charles Dana Gibson (1867-1944), an illustrator for the famous American publications of that time. The women from Gibson's illustrations were fragile and sensuous at the same time, suggesting delicacy but also sex-appeal, though not in a vulgar way. The Gibson girl had a large bust and large hips, small waists, long, curly hair, and fashionable attire. These illustrations were meant to depict the beauty of the middle-class American girl and were contemporary with the emergence of the athletic, independent, and rebellious New Woman. The Gibson girl was a delicate blending of health and independence, domesticity and decency. She "was elegant yet approachable and charming, intelligent and capable without making demands of equality" (Boyer Sagert 2010, 2).

"through the flapper image, the new freedom of American women was symbolically reduced to flirting and touching, to exhibitionistic fun" (2001, 131).

The flapper's fashion, therefore, becomes the focal point of appraisal and criticism, putting forward a conflicting representation of women's status and identity constructions in the 1920s. Thus, a study of the multiple implications of fashion in gender construction could lead to a better understanding of women's role and status in the 1920s. The role of clothes in the process of identification is complex and important. According to Elizabeth Wilson, "in all societies the body is 'dressed', and everywhere dress and adornment play symbolic, communicative and aesthetic roles" (2003, 3). Clothes transmit information about class, religion, gender, as well as about personal preferences, they may modify the appearance of body[2], embellish it, correct its flaws, or hide it. By choosing the way in which they dress, people generally comply with the rules and customs of their times, but they also send subtle messages about aspects of their personality that distinguish them from the others: "for both men and women, appearance is a primary mark of identification, a signal of what they consider themselves to be" (Banner 1983, 3). As a social phenomenon, fashion is submitted to the transformations and interests of a particular age, to everything that is modern and new by opposition to the stability and durability of tradition and custom (see Blumer 1968, 342).

Fashion plays an important role in gender construction. Being connected to ornament and ways of embellishing the body, as well as to novelty and change, fashion is more often linked to femininity than to masculinity: "Fashion, like femininity, is marked as the context of the other. Masculinity (especially hegemonic masculinity), by way of contrast, is more serious, changes in slower and subtler ways, and eschews elaborate ornamentation. Masculinity, in Euromodern terms, is unmarked" (Kaiser 2015, 125). In the nineteenth century, for instance, Thornstein Veblen saw women's fashion as an ornament that complemented man. Woman's sphere "is within the household, which she should 'beautify,' and of which she should be the 'chief ornament'" (2007, 119). This attitude shows that fashion has often been connected to women's objectification and obedience to codes that render them sexual objects for men. On the other hand, though, there is also the possibility to transform this "oppressing patriarchal tool" into a weapon, "part of feminist combat for more than 200 years" (Marzel and Dahan-Kalev 2015, 171). It is in this context that the flapper's costume has often been seen as the most conspicuous symbol of women's emancipation and desire to construct femininity on bases very different from the previous generations. Women's fashion in the 1920s promotes a new type of women, unwilling to be constricted or limited in any way:

> First and foremost, underwear, whose purpose had been for centuries to design the female body, was left to promote a "natural" body: the corset was discarded and replaced by a chemise or camisole and bloomers. For the first time, women's

[2] For instance, corsets and high heels.

> legs were seen, with hemlines rising to the knee as dresses became shorter and more fitted. A kind of masculine look, including flattened breasts and hips and short hairstyles, such as the bob cut, was adopted. Thus, abstract feminist ideas of freedom and equality of rights were translated into concrete forms and objects, as women first liberated themselves from constricting fashions and began to wear comfortable clothes. (Marzel and Dahan-Kalev 2015, 177)

Fashion may be seen as a form of liberation, but its association to consumption undermines much of these liberating claims: "For fashion, the child of capitalism, has, like capitalism, a double face" (Wilson 2003, 13). In the 1920s, the rebellion against the restrictive, prim, and proper Victorian dress is clear. Shorter dresses, colorful stockings, lower waistlines, and minimized breasts are in fashion. They contrast with the hourglass figure of the earlier decades. However, as Lois Banner points out, it was also "the decade in which hairdressing and cosmetic industries fully came into their own. Increased liberation had occurred, but only at the cost of the further commercialization of beauty" (1983, 16). Advertisements, as well as movies and movie stars, promoted the representation of a woman who was sexually freed, athletic, sensuous, and daring. She wore comfortable clothes which celebrated a life of consumption, pleasure and superficiality. The problem is that this representation is elusive, ambiguous, and conflicting. Undoubtedly, it remains the embodiment of rebellion and audacity, beauty and sensuality, health and youth, but, at the same time, it became a symbol of consumption and superficiality. It reminds one of a short-lived butterfly, looking for immediate pleasure and satisfaction, but secretly desiring stability through a good marriage. Interestingly enough, the great figures of the age, the stars of silent movies –from the childish Mary Pickford to Theda Barra, or Gloria Swanson, the vamps and the "femmes fatales" of the time– were idolized and imitated by other women because of the femininity types they re-presented. Nowadays, a new dimension can be added to our understanding of what exactly they symbolized. Molly Haskell suggests that the stars of silent movies remain fictional constructs forever elusive and muted: "by definition, silent film is a medium in which women can be seen but not heard. The conversational nuances of an intelligent woman can hardly be conveyed in a one-sentence title; an emancipation proclamation cannot be delivered in pantomime" (1974, 76). This can be extended to the manner in which women saw themselves, were seen and were represented in other 1920s media. The woman of this decade is the first modern feminine type, but like the women from previous ages she remains a voiceless and mysterious figure who transmits contrasting messages and is seen primarily through men's eyes.

Literature was one of those media that made use of the image of the liberated woman, but the women writers of the time were less celebrated than the female characters depicted by more famous male writers. Though the presence of women on the literary market of the time was not negligible, "when it came to serious women's fiction, the decade, according to literary historians, left us with little to celebrate" (Lutes 2012, 422). The novels written by women writers enjoyed public success, but "Pulitzer Prizes and blockbuster sales created contemporary buzz but did not guarantee literary staying power; indeed, women writers' ability to attract

publicity could be and was turned against them, cited as a sign of their lack of artistic integrity. The enshrinement of high literary modernism as the most important literary movement of the early twentieth century helped to make women's novels of the 1920s seem unimportant" (422-423). The woman remains in the reader's mind as a reflection mediated by the gaze of the acclaimed male writers of the Roaring Twenties, while real women did not have so many opportunities to become free and emancipated in a world still dominated by men.

Such mediated reflections are the female characters in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's writings. They are reflections of the writer's imagination whom most readers and critics take as epitomes of their age. Rena Sanderson highlights Fitzgerald's role in promoting the flapper as a symbol of the Roaring Twenties:

> F. Scott Fitzgerald is best known as a chronicler of the 1920s and as the writer who, more than any other, identified, delineated, and popularized the female representative of that era, the flapper. Though it is an overstatement to say that Fitzgerald created the flapper, he did, with considerable assistance from his wife Zelda, offer the public an image of a modern young woman who was spoiled, sexually liberated, self-centered, fun-loving, and magnetic. In Fitzgerald's mind, this young woman represented a new philosophy of romantic individualism, rebellion, and liberation, and his earliest writings enthusiastically present her as an embodiment of these new values. (2002, 143)

Many of his female characters are inspired by his wife, Zelda, who, just like the flapper, remains a contradictory image in the memory of posterity. Flamboyant and rebellious, Zelda is, at once, the muse and the nuisance, the wife and the mother, the flapper and the mad woman, embodying a series of more or less conventional female types. Although she was a remarkable woman and a talented artist, she is remembered more as Fitzgerald's wife, always a second fiddle, or a pretty ornament.

Just like Zelda, the characters of Fitzgerald's fiction reflect the difficult situation of the Roaring Twenties' women. It is undeniable that the writer promoted the image of the modern woman, his young flappers becoming mirrors of the age. "Throughout many of his earliest stories –read by thousands of women– many golden girls, popular daughters, and debutantes adopt the deportment, fashions, and attitudes of the flapper and sprinkle the magic dust of their high spirits. In spreading these images, Fitzgerald helped to guide women's modernization" (Sanderson 2002, 146). On the other hand, the flappers' rebellion is rarely successful, either disillusionment or conventional marriage being the outcome of most of their adventures, which reveals Fitzgerald's ambivalence towards women's emancipation. This contradiction has been noticed by Sanderson: "the public mistakenly assumed that Fitzgerald, whose early success was tied to the flapper, necessarily endorsed her" (143). If the flappers are to be seen as the symbol of modernity, it means that this modernity stirs uneasiness and conflict in a society still too conventional to fully embrace it.

The Offshore Pirate and *The Ice Palace*, two short stories included in *Flappers and Philosophers*, Fitzgerald's first collection was published in 1920, at the dawn of the Roaring Twenties. The stories focus on the initiating adventures of Ardita

Farnam and Sally Carrol, two very young flappers, only nineteen years old. After a brief period of rebellion, their romantic illusions make them adopt a conventional life style.

Based on the opposition North / South, industrialization and modernism / tradition and nostalgia, masculine / feminine, *The Ice Palace* is apparently a failed romance. It presents the infatuation of Sally Carrol, a very young Southern woman, whose dream is to marry a Northerner and leave the lazy South for a life of adventure. Her prospective marriage with the Northerner Harry Bellamy is preceded by a visit to his home, an unnamed Northern town, where her dreams and illusions are shattered by cold attitudes and freezing weather. After getting lost and almost dying in an Ice Palace, she decides to go back home, reappraising the tranquility of the Southern life.

The two commanding symbols of the short story are the Southern cemetery and the Ice Palace, an audacious wonder of modern technology, the pride of Henry Bellamy and his townsfolk. The former is often visited by Sally Carrol who is drawn to the tomb of Margery Lee, a pre-Civil War belle, and that of the unknown and unnamed Confederate soldiers. The story is organized around these two symbols which create the contrast between the traditional, warm (in terms of weather and human contact), easy-going, nostalgic, relying on local mythologies and identity South and the masculine, modern, cold and impersonal North. Sally Carrol feels attached to the myths and traditions of her home, secure and rooted as she is in her sense of identity and belonging. The Southern cemetery and the two images that it evokes – the tomb of Margery Lee, a Southern belle, and the tomb of the unknown Confederate soldiers, become sites of memory, or "memorials" which "encouraged in her a loyalty to the idealized, collective and provincial mythologies expressed within these constructs" (Ullrich 1999, 420). Opposed to the values represented by the Southern cemetery, the Ice Palace is "an impressive example of Gilded Age can-do work ethic. ... a sign of the community's enterprising commitment to technology and science" (424).

Fashion images, though not extremely numerous, subtly complement these two poles and suggest women's complicated situation in the 1920s, mesmerized as they were by the fresh promises of the modern age, dreaming of change, but still imprisoned by a conservative mentality. Through small details connected to clothes and appearance, more profound implications regarding the construction of femininity in the Old and the New South are suggested. Sally Carrol is a young woman who wants to embrace modernity, but who is also drawn to the past and to what it represents for her region. The two Southern ladies, Sally Carrol and Margery Lee, actually embody two feminine types of a particular age: Sally Carrol is the modern "flapper" and Margery Lee is the Old South "belle". Sally Carrol is a young woman with "bob corn-colored hair" (Fitzgerald 1998, 36), her "fluffy curls" rippling in the "savory breeze" (38). Just like her friends, she wears make-up, smokes, and enjoys "being swum with, and danced with and made love to in the flower-filled summery evenings" (36). The other woman, Margery Lee, is portrayed only as a figment of Sally Carrol's imagination: "She was dark, I think; and she always wore her hair with a ribbon in it, and gorgeous hoop-skirts of alice blue

and old rose" (40). By imagining Margery dark haired and wearing hoop skirts, the blonde and modern Sally Carrol tries to differentiate herself from the belle of old. Thus, there is an apparent contrast between the young flapper and the belle of the past which illustrates the old/new, the traditional/ modern dichotomies. The connections are more telling than the differences, which raises the question whether women were (allowed to be) really emancipated in the 1920s. More precisely, the rose color, which appears in the description of both women –Margery's "old rose" dress complementing Sally Carrol's "rose-littered sunbonnet" (36)– becomes a sort of universal, feminine, delicate ground, bringing these two feminine types closer than expected. Sally Carroll has a very vague representation of Margery Lee, whom she associates with the traditional images of the Southern belle: beautiful, delicate, and elegant. But both women are also extremely feminine, sensitive, and benevolent. The past and the present, hopeful expectations for the future and a sense of rootedness and identity are made obvious by frequent references to the contrast between the old and the new: the energy and the youth of the nineteen-year old Sally versus the fifty-two year old sill on which she rests her chin, the "ancient Ford" (35), and the old cemetery opposed to the new Ice Palace, "the battered old library at home, with her father's huge medical books, and the oilpaintings of her three great-uncles, and the old couch that had been mended up for forty-five years" (44). They all contrast, in Sally Carrol's mind, with the library in Harry Bellamy's home: "simply a room with a lot of fairly expensive things in it that all looked about fifteen years old" (44).

Margery Lee is an image of the past, a feminine ideal of the mid-nineteenth century known as the "Southern belle," an idealized representation of Southern womanhood, symbol of purity, whiteness and domesticity gravitating around the white plantation owner, "adorning" his household, and functioning as an "angel in the house," the only domain of her limited authority. These Southern women's "hopes, dreams, and fantasies center on men and the family. If unmarried, they dream about the man they will marry. If married with children, they encourage their daughters to dream those dreams of love and marriage" (Tracy 1995, 51). The "belle" was a literary symbol, created by pro-slavery supporters and surviving in the post-Civil War period in order to reinforce the authority of the white man: "the existence of the belle was a tribute to the power, and the self-conceit, of the higher classes within the South: it reaffirmed patriarchy" (Wagner-Martin 2004, 2). Sally Carrol is nostalgically fond of this image of womanhood, but she tries to detach herself from this traditional representation by dreaming to marry a Northerner because, in her mind, such a marriage would allow her to "go to places and see people. I want my mind to grow. I want to live where things happen on a big scale" (Fitzgerald 1998, 38). Her desire to leave the safety of her home is an attempt to distance herself from what Margery Lee actually represents in terms of gender roles. She wants to have a modern, urban life, and more freedom.

In the second part of the story, Sally's dreams come true. She travels north to visit her fiancée, but she is dismayed by the terrible cold –a constant torment for a girl born in a warmer climate– and also by the cold behavior of the Northerners whom she cannot understand. Upon her arrival, the first woman she meets is her future sister-in-law, Myra, "a listless lady with flaxen hair under a fur automobile

cap. Almost immediately Sally Carrol thought of her as vaguely Scandinavian" (43). This first impression places Myra in a sort of opposition that will be enhanced later: Sally Carrol, whose fluffy curls are covered with a rose bonnet, and Myra, another blonde, but with flaxen hair covered by a fur cap. One is delicate and elegant and the other is dull and comfortably dressed. They appear to be almost mirror-representations of summer and winter. This contrast is later emphasized when Sally Carrol comes to know Myra better. The latter "seemed the essence of spiritless conventionality. Her conversation was so utterly devoid of personality that Sally Carrol, who came from a country where a certain amount of charm and assurance could be taken for granted in the women, was inclined to despise her" (49). Sally expected urban sophistication and a more modern attitude in women, but she sees a starker gender division and less liberty than in her provincial, Southern town: "'If those women aren't beautiful,' she thought, 'they're nothing. They just fade out when you look at them. They're glorified domestics. Men are the center of every mixed group'" (49). Sally Carrol feels out of place in this male-centered society. She even feels marginalized by her future family and her behavior is snubbed: "She knew also that Harry's mother disapproved of her bobbed hair; and she had never dared smoke down-stairs after that first day when Mrs. Bellamy had come into the library sniffing violently" (50). This obviously leads to a change in her behavior, as she tries to comply with the attitudes of the majority feeling that she is expected to play a part rather than be herself.

Dress and accessories subtly underline the Northerners' cold attitudes and Sally Carrol's disappointment. Welcomed by a "faintly familiar ice-cold face" (42) instead of the warm kisses shared with Harry when he visited her back home, Sally Carrol's physical connection to her fiancé is almost always hampered by heavy, thick clothes that function as a sort of barrier underlining the stiffness and the frigid attitudes of her Northern family-to-be. One can talk about fur coats, complicated flannel caps, people bundled in sheepskin, undistinguishable from one another, mittens and gloves that prevent hands from touching, muffled figures communicating with difficulty. The barrier formed by clothes is an indication of the emotional barrier between the Southern woman and the Northerners she meets, her fiancée included. This limit is also a subtle way of undermining the Northerners' claims at modernity. They are depicted as more conventional and less modern, despite their adoration of modernity and their appraisal that they live in a new town, which goes back only three generations since its foundation.

When Sally gets lost in the Ice Palace and almost freezes to death, she hallucinates that Margery Lee comes to rescue her: "'Why, it's Margery Lee,' she crooned softly to herself. 'I knew you'd come.' It really was Margery Lee, and she was just as Sally Carrol had known she would be, with a young, white brow, and wide, welcoming eyes, and a hoop-skirt of some soft material that was quite comforting to rest on" (57). The return to a familiar representation is comforting, just as the soft material she imagines is soothing in comparison to the thick furs, sheepskin, and flannels. The belle, initially a blurred representation of an old world on which Sally ponders with nostalgia though not with yearning, becomes a more vivid image of Sally's future marked by the need to return home and discard the search for

modernity and the North. In fact, when saved by Margery Lee, Sally Carrol finally accepts who she is, a Southern belle, part of a "tradition that stretched back before the confederacy, and that enchanted and hypnotized men for a century, permanent embodiments of a dream of beauty and youth and the romantic aspiration of the aggressive male" (Holman 1982, 61). Feminine, but resilient and determined, Sally Carrol becomes a "reincarnation of an archetypal predecessor," suggesting that, "the South achieves perpetuity through empathy, a sharp contrast to the North's preservation through refrigeration. As concomitant, Southern life-in death represented by Sally Carrol, the resurrected antebellum woman opposes Northern death-in life represented by Harry Bellamy, the kiss of death" (Kuehl 1982, 178). Sally Carrol rejects the control that Harry wants to exert on her and returns home, choosing freedom and tradition.

A foreshadowing of this outcome is the lovers' first serious quarrel about an unknown man's clothes, which generate Harry's mean comments about the Southerners. At first, they are both instantly amused when they see a man with baggy trousers: "'Reckon that's one of us,' she laughed. 'He must be a Southerner, judging by those trousers,' suggested Harry mischievously" (Fitzgerald 1998, 51). The humorous atmosphere is soon destroyed by an unexpected outburst from Harry: "Those damn Southerners!" (51). He continues with another disrespectful, racist remark: "'I'm sorry, dear,' said Harry, malignantly apologetic, 'but you know what I think of them. They're sort of –sort of degenerates– not at all like the old Southerners. They've lived so long down there with all the colored people that they've gotten lazy and shiftless. ... 'Oh, I know. They're all right when they come North to college, but of all the hangdog, ill-dressed, slovenly lot I ever saw, a hunch of small-town Southerners are the worst!" (51).

Harry proves to be not just "insecure about his own background" (Taniyama 311) as he "still feels the conqueror's contempt for the South" (Taniyama 311), but also a racist whose "disapproval of the South is not a critique of the stark racism that has prevailed there in the form of extrajudicial lynchings of African-Americans or legal segregation, but, rather, of what he perceives as the South's degeneracy" (Taniyama 2015, 311), namely the closeness to the black population. It is strange, though, that Harry makes such comments in front of the woman he loves, a Southerner herself. Taniyama analyzes Harry's possible reasons: "Is Harry's anger indirectly aimed at Sally or has he accepted her as someone who has renounced the South, having agreed to marry him and come North, and therefore someone he can share his intimate views with?" (311-312). According to Taniyama, both suppositions may be true. Clearly, for Harry, appearance seems to be of utmost importance while Sally Carrol, a warmer and kinder spirit, does not want to mock or criticize people based on appearances, she observes them with no trace of malice. Ullrich goes even further and considers Harry's "vitriolic and over-determined reaction" a form of self-destruction. "His preoccupation with ethnic origins and social acceptance generates profound self-doubt, an affliction that corrodes even his vision of his prospective spouse" (1999, 430).

Sally Carrol's return to her Southern hometown should not be seen as a renunciation of modernity in order to embrace a more traditional role. Her desire

to break free and experience new adventures is not a critique of the South, but a typical attitude of the Jazz Age flapper who wants to break from "the tribe" (Fleissner 2007, 49), separate herself from the traditions of her community, and discard the conventional gender roles. Sally Carrol's journey North becomes an initiating quest into a more profound understanding of what the world in which she lives is capable of offering her in terms of emancipation and personal development. The idea of initiation is underlined by her symbolic death in the Ice Palace: "It was an icy breath of death; it was rolling down low across the land to clutch her" (Fitzgerald 1998, 56), after she got lost in the labyrinth of corridors. At this point the question arises whether the initiation is indeed fulfilled. Edwin Moses, who sees Sally Carrol as essentially passive, conditioned by the places in which she finds herself (1974, 12), considers that her quest failed: "But the fact that Sally Carrol (or anyone else) has to reject the Ice Palace to save herself does not mean that the South represents an ideal existence. At the end of the story she has not grown: the concluding scene is a carefully fashioned recapitulation of the opening one" (13). She left the South because she considered it a place stuck in time, where nothing happens, but eventually returns to that place, accepting this passivity because there are no other choices. Moses adds: "although the South is the wiser choice if one has to choose, what is really needed is a synthesis of the feminine qualities of the South and the masculine ones of the North. But Sally Carrol is hardly the girl to achieve such a synthesis. It is an ideal, after all, which better Fitzgerald characters than she never achieved" (13-14).

On the other hand, though, the light, warm and tranquil atmosphere of the ending is hardly a sign of total failure. Indeed, the ending repeats, to a certain extent, the beginning, with the provision that Sally Carrol is calmer and more peaceful after her return. Though she dreamt about emancipation and adventure, she tried to achieve this goal by following a traditional path. She considers marriage a form of advancement. The failure of the romance is a subtle suggestion that marriage should not be considered a step towards liberation, and marrying Bellamy would have given Sally Carrol even less freedom.

A different reading of the ending is offered by David Ullrich, who does not see her quest as a failed one: "Sally Carrol's final position portrays a modernist woman isolated from every society she has inhabited. Within this no-win situation she flatly states 'Expect to die any minute'" (1999, 433). Sally Carrol's deliberate and concluding self-appraisal –"'Hate to move. But I reckon so'– indicates an existential awareness that real growth is inevitable and painful (433).

I would go even further and consider the ending a critique of the limiting possibilities women had in the 1920s (as well as in the previous ages, for that matter). Sally Carrol becomes the symbol of the Roaring Twenties, an age of emancipation, more rights and a wider array of choices. Margery Lee, the Confederate belle, is a token of women's resilience during the Civil War. They both suggest that women demonstrated, time and again, their worth and strengths. Their hopes and dreams were constantly scorned and devalued, as men considered that all women wanted and needed was a comfortable life and superficial pleasures. The choices women had as active social actors remained limited in a world dominated by men, therefore women were still stuck in old conventions and traditional patterns of behavior. This

is the reason why, at the end of the story, Sally Carrol does nothing because there is nothing she can actually do. Her failure is not caused by her weakness, or flaws, but by society, at large.

Sally Carrol embodies, to a certain extent, Zelda Fitzgerald's high expectations from her marriage to Fitzgerald and moving up North. Obsessed with Zelda, Fitzgerald seems to have created in his mind "some *Saturday Evening Post* image of the smiling, modest housewife" (Wagner-Martin 2004, 43), while Zelda refused this role being, instead, a vivacious, fun-loving, flirting woman. Both for Zelda and for Sally Carrol, the character in this short story, marrying a famous Northerner was not only the chance to marry the man she loved, but also the hope of climbing the stairs of celebrity:

> Of the men who pressed her to marry, and there was at least one suitor who was sure he could convince her to marry him rather than Fitzgerald, Scott was the most glamorous in that he could take her away from her history and her home. There was no question that she loved him, but she had loved other men. Marrying Scott had another advantage: he might also provide a route to some kind of fame and career for her. She had a better chance of being discovered, of finding a way to the stage or to film, living in New York than she did in sleepy Montgomery. And she had no idea how much she would miss her home place. (44)

But just like Sally Carrol's hopes, Zelda's expectations of the North and marriage, as a step towards emancipation and advancement, remained unfulfilled and her romantic illusions were shattered.

Another story centered on a flapper's strange love story is *The Offshore Pirate.* The young and rebellious Ardita Farnam rejects any form of limitation, any piece of advice, and any suggestion from her old uncle, adopting the typical behavior of an unrestrained and spoiled child. Her youth, however, is not only the source of her rebellion, but also her weakness, because she is easily tricked by her uncle to fall in love with the suitor he chose for her –a man of their own social class, disguised as a poor jazz player who acts as a pirate. The uncle uses to his advantage Ardita's youth and lack of experience, knowing full well that his niece will never accept to meet a respectable and rich American, but will be drawn to a poor man, a criminal, simply because he is not acceptable for her family. In fact, he uses Ardita's rebellion against her and subtly draws her to conform to the expectations of her class and race.

Just like the protagonist of *The Ice Palace,* Ardita has a certain representation of love, which will be dismantled at the end of the story. "It is ironic that the vehicle through which romantic disillusion is expressed is a young girl for, if ever there is a happy, golden time of life in Fitzgerald's fiction, it is childhood and adolescence" (Elstein 1979, 70). Sally Carrol goes through a process of initiation, at the end of which the hopeful serenity of the beginning is replaced by an acceptance of failure and the impossibility to fulfill her dreams. Ardita's rebellion is stifled not by force, but by a ruse through which her uncle makes her conform to his expectations. Her rebellion is undermined by the innocence and inexperience of youth, and her final conformity enhances the fact that society is not as modern and open-minded as it

appears. Restrictions of class, race and gender still operate. According to Jared Griffin, "Ardita Farnam, the heroine, reflects the anxiety for independence that many of Fitzgerald's characters feel in this Lost Generation" (2011, 323). Griffin acknowledges the fact that there is more to this short story than amusement, which is also the main element characterizing the Jazz Age. The focus on amusement cannot be denied: a fairy-tale environment, sailing the blue tropical sea on a private yacht, stopping on a desert island-paradise, Jazz music and dancing, fun and joy and no real danger. Even the hijacking of Ardita's yacht and her kidnapping by Curtis Carlyle and the six African-American jazz players turned into pirates is a mere trick, Carlyle being, in fact, the rich Toby Moreland, the man she had refused to meet simply because he was chosen by her uncle. Unlike *The Ice Palace,* the ending is happy as Ardita, already in love with Curtis-Toby, is not enraged by the trick played on her, she kisses her lover and accepts the ruse.

However, a closer reading reveals more than a light romance and Ardita's rebellion highlights her desire to break free from conventions, enjoy the emancipating times and the air of modernity, and cross the boundaries of class and conventionality. The happy-ending is, in a way, a failure to fully embrace modernity and rebellion as Ardita succumbs to romance. As young as Sally Carrol (nineteen years old), Ardita does not have the experience to avoid the trap set by older, more experienced men and, probably, not even the courage to give up a comfortable life. Just like in the previously analyzed story, the fashion imagery points to the difficulty of constructing modern femininity, torn between rebellion and conformity, emancipation and obedience.

The story begins with a series of metaphors that foreshadow a young feminine presence:

> This unlikely story begins on a sea that was a blue dream, as colorful as blue-silk stockings, and beneath a sky as blue as the irises of children. From the western half of the sky the sun was shying little golden disks at the sea–if you gazed intently enough you could see them skip from wave tip to wave tip until they joined a broad collar of golden coin that was collecting half a mile out and would eventually be a dazzling sunset. (Fitzgerald 1998, 5)

The color of the sky is later repeated in the "blue satin slippers" worn by Ardita, the children's irises foreshadow Ardita's youth, innocence, and childish behavior, and the golden collar of the sunset is reflected in her yellow hair. Not a very common way of describing the skies and seas, the fashion imagery is an urban, intellectual manner of characterizing nature and reflects the way in which educated, rich, townsfolk might look at it. The rich fabrics and materials (silk, satin, gold) intensify the urban outlook, turning nature into a luxury commodity. Ardita, whose description corresponds chromatically to nature, becomes a luxury commodity herself, an object transacted between two men: an older caretaker (her uncle) and a younger suitor. Ardita is kept away from this secret business transaction, in a safe and comfortable space, out of harm's way, reduced to the traditional gender role of ornament. Her carelessness, suggested by her first appearance in the story, indicates her marginalized position as a woman: "Her feet, stockingless, and adorned rather

than clad in blue-satin slippers which swung nonchalantly from her ties, were perched on the arm of a setee adjoining the one she occupied" (5). The America of the 1920s, despite its flappers and working women displaying a freedom of behavior unheard of before, is not, Fitzgerald subtly implies, as far from the traditional view of women (especially rich women). Women are still their husbands' ornaments.

Men's authorities over Ardita, the rebellious child, and, by extension, the still limited emancipation of women in the 1920s, are also suggested by the imagery connected to dress and appearance. Commenting on the color scheme at the beginning of the story, Jared Griffin foregrounds the importance of whiteness and masculinity that undermine the modern spirit brought in by Ardita's attitude:

> Consider again Fitzgerald's opening paragraphs, scripted to contrast romantic imagery and the modern American woman. The colors that Fitzgerald uses and their anatomical counterparts that he ascribes them–blue and eyes, yellow and hair, white and an epidermal layer (paint, cloth, and skin)–illuminate the conventional features of an idealized white race. These images denote physical characteristics of what were thought of as the purest of whites–ivory-skinned, blue-eyed, blond-haired Aryans. Despite, then, the modernistic literary and sexual revolutions taking place with the representation of a seemingly liberated Ardita, the whiteness of the conservative, elder Farnam is maintained. (2011, 327)

Griffin's assertion is also supported by the manner in which the two rich white men, the uncle and Toby, are depicted. Old Farnam has "orderly gray hair" and is "clad in a white-flannel suit" (Fitzgerald 1998, 5), these elements are in accordance with the image of a man of authority and means. Curtis Carlyle –Toby Moreland's portrait seems a combination between a classical statue and an American athlete: "he was a young man with a scornful mouth and the bright blue eyes of a healthy baby set in a dark sensitive face. His hair was pitch black, damp and curly –the hair of a Grecian statue gone brunette. He was trimly built, trimly dressed, and graceful as an agile quarter-back" (10). Curtis –Toby's appeal is enhanced by the tinge of danger and non-conformity underlined by his pirate persona and the heartfelt story about poverty and hardships he tells Ardita who is drawn to both his attractiveness and the rebellious, unconventional role he temporarily plays. The two men's elegance is highlighted by the contrast to the six African-Americans: "They seemed to be uniformly dressed in some sort of blue costume ornamented with dust, mud, and tatters; over the shoulder of each was slung a small, heavy-looking white sack, and under their arms they carried large black cases apparently containing musical instruments" (11). These three male images: the elderly wise caretaker, the Prince Charming, and the funny, lower class (often racially distinct) foils to the hero seem to be taken out of a fairytale romance. But this should not make anyone forget that the authority of the patriarchal system and white supremacy depend on a strict and conservative separation of masculine and feminine gender roles, as well as on stark divisions of class and race, clearly suggested in the story by the chromatic elements, costumes, and physical depictions.

Ardita's behavior, deemed "unbearable," "selfish, spoiled, uncontrolled, disagreeable, impossible" (8) by her uncle, can also be seen as a form of self-protection

and survival. In her account to Carlyle, some stories from the past are revealed. Ardita's rebellion is the result of a form of depression caused by her family who tried to marry her off. After going through a phase in which she thought that life was not worth living, she discovered "courage," which, for her, meant "just to live as I liked always and to die in my own way" (24). Ardita's aggressive attitude towards her family can be translated into an attempt to take control of her life and avoid the dullness of conventional gender roles and proper living imposed on her by her family. Her attitude is not a superficial whim of a rich kid, but a desperate attempt to remain young and free, to avoid limitations and escape control: "courage to me meant ploughing through that dull gray mist that comes down on life –not only over-riding people and circumstances but over-riding the bleakness of living. A sort of insistence on the value of life and the worth of transient things" (24).

When Ardita invites Carlyle to dance on the jazz music played by the band of African-Americans, the readers witness a rare moment of synergy and union across gender, class, and race:

> Over across the silver lake the figures of the negroes writhed and squirmed in the moonlight, like acrobats who, having been too long inactive, must go through their tricks from sheer surplus energy. In single file they marched, weaving in concentric circles, now with their heads thrown back, now bent over their instruments like piping fauns. And from trombone and saxophone ceaselessly whined a blended melody, sometimes riotous and jubilant, sometimes haunting and plaintive as a death–dance from the Congo's heart. 'Let's dance!' cried Ardita. 'I can't sit still with that perfect jazz going on.' Taking her hand he led her out into a broad stretch of hard sandy soil that the moon flooded with great splendor. (28)

This union is prompted by the black musicians who start playing the instruments, not by the white lovers. Jazz music, which gave its name to the Roaring Twenties, was, at that time, a novelty. Linda De Roche characterizes the Roaring Twenties using jazz as a symbol of modernity:

> Some called it the Roaring Twenties, but "jazz," evoking both a type of modern music that meshed African-American with European traditions and a slang term, probably derived from Creole patois referring to strenuous activity, to quick-paced excitement, especially connected to sexual activity, captured precisely the era's tone. Used as a verb –"to jazz up" or "to jazz around"– or as a noun–"all that jazz," bright young things were right on trend. The word flouted conventions and expressed all the self-conscious indifference of a new generation to tired, outmoded standards that a world war and advances in technology had made to seem irrelevant. It was new, it was modern, and to its syncopated rhythms and improvised riffs, the twentieth century would finally spring to life. (2015, xvii)

The band's music is riotous, jubilant, haunting and plaintiff at the same time and the reference to the "death-dance from the Congo's heart" is loaded with the memory of the slave past of America and the racism and segregation that were still plaguing the twentieth century. Jazz brings everyone together, but it is a dream of union that dissipates when the music stops:

> They floated out like drifting moths under the rich hazy light, and as the fantastic symphony wept and exulted and wavered and despaired Ardita's last sense of reality dropped away, and she abandoned her imagination to the dreamy summer scents of tropical flowers and the infinite starry spaces overhead, feeling that if she opened her eyes it would be to find herself dancing with a ghost in a land created by her own fancy. (Fitzgerald 1998, 28)

Jared Griffin connects the dance moment with the conciliating ending, but even if the dance appears to unite the old and the young, the white and the nonwhite, submission/obedience and rebellion, a real union of spheres is not possible: "Her temptation by the jazz music calls on a union between these spheres, but they cannot ultimately be joined because racial discourse will not allow it" (2011, 331).

The ending of the short story is as conventional as any fairy tale: the truth is revealed and the young woman kisses her Prince Charming. Conventions and rules are reinforced, races and classes separated, men and women confined to their prescribed roles. As in any fairytale, we do not know what lies beyond that kiss, how their married life will be and what will become of Ardita's courage and rebellion.

The exploration of dress and fashion imagery in the two short stories, *The Ice Palace* and *The Offshore Pirate*, reveals challenging constructions of femininity at the crossroads between modernity and conventionality. Both Sally Carrol and Ardita Farnam are identified as flappers, they are courageous, rebellious and self-assertive, but their initiating journeys lead them to outcomes they did not expect. While Sally Carrol is disillusioned after her contact with the modern North, Ardita ends up in a conventional relationship she had tried so hard to shun. Are they simple-minded, superficial rich children or are they women in search of emancipation and defeated by a conventional society? The answer is ambiguous because the flapper, a symbol of youth, is also ambiguous. The flapper's association with youth is both a mirror of liberation and modernity and a weakness connected to the transience of innocence and youth. Similarly, initiation is a necessary stage, but it implies growing up and confronting failure, pain, or resignation. In other words, the flapper is either expected to remain forever young, which is an impossible dream, or grow old and become conventional. "Flapperdom," therefore, is just a brief period in which emancipation and rebellion are tolerated simply because they are seen as mere whims of capricious children. However, women are expected to grow more conventional with age. Zelda, often represented in Fitzgerald's fiction, was such a flapper who turned into a mother and wife. "Zelda is for her public the new flapper grown up. ... One of the popular essays published under Fitzgerald's name, but written by Zelda, states that flapperdom is a necessary brief period in a young woman's development that will better prepare her to be safely settled as wife and mother" (Prigozy 2002, 7). Zelda's words are not a dismissal of the importance of the flapper, but a bitter reflection on the still difficult situation of women who, after having tasted freedom, are forced into conformity.

The transformations in women's fashion in the 1920s, mainly reflected in the length of the dress, the manner in which they outlined the body, hairstyles and make-up, had such a great visual impact that they seemed to suggest a great

breakthrough in women's status and roles in society. Behavior and aspect, however, should not be confused with rights and freedom. Indeed, the women of the 1920s benefited from the emancipation strife of their predecessors, they had more rights, were educated in larger numbers and joined the workforce to a greater extent. On the other hand, though, the age was frayed with contradictions and the rebellious flapper eventually fell into the old stereotype connecting women with sensuality and eroticism. She was often objectified as a beautiful ornament and her dreams still seemed to be associated to marriage and domesticity. The fact that the number of married women in the workforce almost doubled from the beginning of the century (5.6%) to 1930 (11.7%) (see Banner 1984, 160) did not mean that the conflict between career and marriage was easily managed by women. Discrimination against women at the workplace or lack of support for their careers from their own husbands still existed.

In this context, the flapper appears more as a dream of freedom, an illusion of youth, and Fitzgerald's works underline the ambiguity of this representation which also reflects Fitzgerald's own conflicting ideas about women and their roles in society. Though he is one of those writers whose psychological exploration of women is remarkable, he was "both fascinated and disturbed by women and by the changing distribution of power between the sexes" (Sanderson 2002, 144). His writings encapsulate the duality transmitted by the flapper's image, the fascination and the conflict, the rebellion and the sweetness involved in it, allowing for multiple and nuanced interpretations of a fascinating decade in American culture.

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