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The Best Story: Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald's Return to the South Revealed Through the Analysis of
her Articles and Fiction Published Between 1920 and 1932

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of English
at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald's writing published between 1920 and 1932. To date, biographers and scholars have largely failed to carefully examine and understand Zelda's publications. During this period Zelda critiques the materialism and generational lack of respect she finds in the North in her articles, while using her imagination to discuss the possibilities of the South in her short stories.* All of her works during these years culminate in her novel, *Save Me the Waltz*, in which much of her life and return to the South is mirrored by her heroine, Alabama Knight. This thesis examines Zelda's publications in this 1920 to 1932 period in order to reveal her perception of the society she had become a part of when she married F. Scott Fitzgerald and to understand the transition in her desire to at first fit in to the Northern society that expected her to be the flapper and celebrity wife, and then later to find success and self-expression in a return to the South.

* Through this thesis I use the terms "North" and "South" loosely. In a strict sense, "South" refers to anything south of the Mason-Dixon line. In this thesis "the South" typically is referring to Montgomery, Alabama; "the North" is referring in a general way to New York and the area around the city, though it also would refer to places north of the Mason-Dixon line where the Fitzgeralds lived—St. Paul, Minnesota, for example. Further, I use "North" and "South" to identify two different realms of Zelda's life experience, that of her home and youth in the South and her married and adult life in the North. As such, these two terms do not always denote a specific geographic location.

Introduction

Virtually all of the seven book-length biographical studies of Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald rely heavily on secondary observations about Zelda for their information, even resorting in some cases to inventions created by F. Scott Fitzgerald in his fictional renderings of characters he and others maintained were based on Zelda. Similarly, the few articles in scholarly journals devoted to Zelda build their constructions of Zelda on what others have said about her rather than on what Zelda admits about herself through her own writings—specifically her essays and her fiction. Through a study of her own writing, most of it available in *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, readers find a much more accurate and authentic picture of Zelda—one in which she reveals her actual self rather than the mythical Zelda that has been constructed by others. Contrary to the socially constructed Zelda, the Zelda that has been created and appropriated by biographers and the popular culture—the quintessential flapper, the jealous wife, the insane and frustrated dancer—the Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald of her own writings reveals herself, through her writing, to be an individual who is driven on some level from the time she left Alabama to travel the world with her famous-author husband by a compelling desire to return to the place of her formative years. The Zelda who writes herself is indeed, as one could never deny, a complex human being. However, her works are unified by tropes of return—by subtexts that indicate a driving force in her world, and one largely overlooked by her biographers, remains an impulse to go back to a place where she feels at last at home: Montgomery, Alabama—the South of her youth.

The first biography to note is *Zelda: A Biography*, seen by many as the most important look into the life of Zelda Fitzgerald. Written by Nancy Milford and published in 1970, the

biography was the first focused study of Zelda and as such was essential to gaining a basic understanding of Zelda. Milford describes the genealogy of the Sayre family, their significance in the South, and descriptions of the Sayre's marriage and how each of these things affected Zelda's life. Milford's emphasis on Zelda's Southern upbringing is another important aspect. As the first major biography focused on Zelda, this work influenced every biography that follows.

One aspect that differentiates this biography from others is that Milford includes entries from Zelda's diary. This is an additional source of Zelda's writing not included in the major collection of her work, nor in Jackson R. Bryer and Cathy W. Barks' *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda*, containing many of her letters. Milford devotes a great deal of her book to the inclusion of entries from the diaries of Ludlow Fowler and Alexander McKaig, Scott's Princeton friends. These entries, while allowing friendly insight, make it impossible to rely solely on this biography as Fowler and McKaig support the image of the stereotypical flighty girl. This enforces a negative image of Zelda that is not equally balanced by her own documentation of events and her emotions. Milford creates an image of Zelda completely constructed through the interpretations of others, instead of one revealed by Zelda herself in her fiction and article.

A biography that begins with a similar basis of proving the impact of the South on Zelda is Sara Mayfield's *Exiles from Paradise*, published in 1974. Mayfield, who knew Zelda in youth, uses a great deal of dialogue throughout her biography. Much of the biography is written as if Mayfield was present for the conversations, which is impossible to confirm. Though the way Mayfield writes Zelda's dialogue matches Zelda's writing exceptionally well, the inability to confirm some of her stories makes this biography as a whole impossible to rely on without the support of other biographies. Mayfield's biography is useful as it is more forgiving toward Zelda's character than others, which is why even with its weakness in reliability, it is important.

Exiles from Paradise begins with stories of Zelda's youth. When Mayfield adds stories from sources other than her own observations she prefaces them with "according to," and they are shared cautiously. For example Mayfield writes, "After Scott's story for Constance Talmadge was rejected, he piled all the furniture in the bungalow into a pyramid in the middle of the floor, stuck his unpaid bills on top of it, and he and Zelda departed for the East" (Mayfield 119). This whimsical interpretation of what happened supports the mythology of the Fitzgeralds but lacks any primary evidence to support the scene. Because of this kind of whimsicality Mayfield's biography is not fully reliable.

Mayfield discusses Zelda's conflicts with her husband's newfound friends, such as Ernest Hemingway, whom Zelda detested (Mayfield 93). In fact, Hemingway appears throughout the entire biography (Mayfield 277), even to be mentioned in the last letter from Scott when Ernest sends Scott *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Mentioning this is unnecessary and shows a fault of Mayfield: focusing on secondary perception of the Fitzgeralds' lives. Analysis of Zelda's fiction and articles uncovers her desire to first escape to the North and then return to the South. Mayfield's *Exiles from Paradise* cannot be relied on solely as there is too much speculation, instead of the solid support from Zelda's writing needed to legitimize Mayfield's quotations from Zelda as further primary material.

A decade after Mayfield's biography, James R. Mellow published the biography *Invented Lives* (1984), focusing on both of the Fitzgeralds and taking a step back from the progression the previous biographers had been making on exploring Zelda's life specifically. In *Invented Lives* Mellow explains, "Fiction became a method of discourse about their marriage" (xvii). Mellow approaches the Fitzgeralds as if they were literal characters in their own story. This work strengthens the mythos surrounding Zelda, opposing the analysis in this thesis of Zelda's own

writing allowing her to uncover the truth of herself. Zelda's own voice is rarely heard in Mellow's biography, even masked by secondary sources and opinions from friends like Stephen Parrott after reading Zelda's diary. Instead of allowing Zelda to speak for herself in the words of her diary, Mellow refers to Scott's friend Parrott who calls Zelda's diary, "a very human document, but somehow I cannot altogether understand it" (64). The humanness and legitimacy of Zelda is essential in this thesis and *Invented Lives* supports the mythos of the Fitzgeralds, just as the title suggests.

While Zelda's own writing reveals her desire at first to escape to the North and then her nostalgic wish to find respite in the South, Mellow creates the foundation of *Invented Lives* on letters and journal entries from friends and acquaintances of the Fitzgeralds. When Mellow quotes Lawton Campbell, Scott's Princeton classmate, as saying "Zelda was the dominant influence on Fitzgerald's writing" it is done with the intention of providing an objective observation of the Fitzgeralds' marriage (118). Instead, it allows secondary observations to overpower the legitimate emotions expressed in Zelda's writing about the same situations. The lack of Zelda's point of view is detrimental, as Scott's accomplishments further overpower Zelda's, which Mellow chooses to summarize instead of discuss.

Understanding Zelda Fitzgerald through her own writing allows readers to remove the stereotype of the iconic flapper or the mythos surrounding the Fitzgeralds' lives. Instead of using Zelda's writing to understand her emotions, *Invented Lives* condenses Zelda's life into the summary: "Her life was rather like the marquee on a theater that has closed down...the cleverness had gone awry and the mind wandered" (489). This view, one reflected in other biographies such as Kendall Taylor's *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom* (2001), is confined to biased observations of those who heard of Zelda's time spent in clinics, rather than based on

available primary sources. It does not allow the firsthand account that Zelda provides in her fiction, especially her novel, *Save Me the Waltz*. Mellow traps Zelda in the accounts of others.

In *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom*, published in 2001, Kendall Taylor literally uses the word trapped to describe Zelda, showing how biographies were still very limiting even recently. Taylor describes her as trapped in her marriage, by her lack of success, and more importantly inside her mental illness. This continues to emphasize the mythos of the once glamorous flapper girl turned into made woman. Taylor's biography contains many helpful and interesting insights into Zelda's character. An example is his reference to *The Salamander* and the influence of the heroine, Dore Baxter, on Zelda as a strong woman. Taylor even claims that this heroine "is the key to understanding Zelda's personality and ultimate downfall" (5) but only spends four pages discussing the connection he has found. In this example Taylor finds a connection between Dore and Zelda when Baxter states, "I am in the world to do something unusual, extraordinary...It's such fun to go dashing along the edges, leaning up against the wind that tries to throw you over" (5). This sounds so much like Zelda's own words that a reader is anxious for a comparison that Taylor never provides.

The helpless, even hopeless perspective on Zelda provided in *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom* renders Taylor's biography biased negatively, and stereotypically, on Zelda making it impossible to rely on solely. Taylor writes observations such as, "the only way out [of her trapped life] was through the insanity to which her family was prone" (373) and "Zelda never saw any of her talents brought to fruition" (371-72). His first claim that insanity was her way out is damning, while analysis of Zelda's writing shows her desire to return to the South where, also supported by her writing, she finds peace. Ignoring Zelda's writing proves detrimental to Taylor as his biography misses the success in Zelda's return to Montgomery, Alabama. Secondly,

Taylor's claim of Zelda never seeing the fruit of her talents is also inaccurate, as she saw much of her work published from the early 1920's forward, and the tone of her writing proves her awareness of her talents. This does not even mention galleries her paintings were shown at or the production of her unsuccessful play *Scandalabra*. Without the firsthand account provided in Zelda's writing, Taylor misses the journey Zelda takes to the North and back to her home in the South.

A more focused approach to Zelda Fitzgerald is an ideal starting place for this thesis, and Sally Cline provides this focus in her biography, *Her Voice in Paradise*. Published in 2002, readers begin to see a transition in biographies to focus on the actual Zelda and the important moments in her life. Cline even takes the time to go through family genealogy to discuss the Sayre connection to the South, providing excellent background for understanding Zelda's connection to the South. Cline explains to readers in the beginning of her world what sets her biography apart from other biographies. She writes, "Previous writers have focused a spectacular white spotlight on this particular literary controversy [that of Zelda's inability to write for herself while supporting Scott]. I aimed to view it within the context of the whole of Zelda's art and life" (7). This focus on Zelda's art and life together is helpful for understanding a more intimate Zelda.

Understanding Zelda's journey to the North and back to the South, including Zelda's reasons for undertaking this journey, is supported in the structure of *Her Voice in Paradise* as Cline discusses Zelda's life in segments, allowing the reader to see the influence of the South. The remainder of Cline's biography portions Zelda's life into her "voices" influenced by living in the north, traveling abroad, her voice in her stories and art, and finally "Her Own Voice." By title the last section of the biography would seem most helpful for understanding Zelda but it

only contains one chapter to describe Zelda's life after Scott's death, implying Zelda's "Own Voice" doesn't appear until after Scott's death. For this reason *Her Voice in Paradise* cannot be a fully reliable source as the majority of it contains reference to few of Zelda's own works, instead using secondary stories that allow readers to gain a range of interpretation about Zelda's life, ignoring what is clearly offered by Zelda in her writing. Cline's work is more of an interpretation of Zelda's feelings based on what others have said about her, rather than a collection of Zelda's own available thoughts about her feeling of being lost in the North and her journey back to the South.

The last chapter of Cline's book, though too short and lacking reference to Zelda's writing, does attempt to deconstruct the myth of a frail and religiously crazed Zelda. Cline admits that during these years Zelda's art and writing flourished, proving the influence of the South on Zelda. She writes that in Zelda's art, "her most tormented scenes are infused with reassuring symbols of hope" (386). This would be an essential insight if only Cline elaborated and supported this with evidence from Zelda's work. Without support provided in Zelda's own writing, her journey from the North back to the South seems inconsequential.

While the biographies described so far attempt to provide an intimate understanding of Zelda Fitzgerald's life, they are rather interpretations with little focus on her own writing. In *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda*, edited by Jackson R. Bryer and Cathy W. Barks, some of Scott's and many of Zelda's letters are displayed allowing the readers to draw their own conclusions about the Fitzgeralds' lives through the included letters. Published in 2002, this collection presents the lives of the Fitzgeralds from 1918 to 1940 and is broken down first in parts one through four: Courtship and Marriage: 1918-1920, The Years Together: 1920-1929, Breaking Down: 1930-

1938, and The Final Years: 1939-1940. The Breaking Down section, covering the years from 1930 to 1938, is divided into three sections by Zelda's breakdowns.

At the beginning of each section of *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda* a short summary is provided detailing what takes place during those years and what the letters are in reaction to. These summaries are clear and objective. This collection is invaluable in obtaining work from Zelda's own hand. It is a firsthand account of many of her reactions to her life with Scott and the strength or instability of their relationship. Zelda's perception of these things is essential as they provide deeper insight when compared to the short stories and articles she was writing at specific times. Many of Zelda's letters are more revealing than her stories regarding her desire to return home to the South at specific times because they show Zelda's desperation while living in mental clinics. There are very few letters though from the decade between 1920 and 1930, as the Fitzgeralds were nearly always together. This is unfortunate as a great number of Zelda's articles and stories were written during this time. *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda* provides important context for Zelda's life but cannot be relied on heavily as it contains few additional writings by Zelda during the decade when much of her fiction and many of her articles were written.

Over the years since Nancy Milford's *Zelda* biography, the first major biographical effort on Zelda Fitzgerald, biographers have made an effort to focus more on Zelda individually. Some were not progressive, such as Kendall Taylor's focus on the mythical Zelda, and others, such as Sally Cline, refocused their study on Zelda. Linda Wagner-Martin has done similarly. Published in 2004, Wagner-Martin's biography *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald; An American Woman's Life* is one of the most recent biographies on Zelda's life and explores Zelda's life as a woman and as a writer. Additionally, it explores the Fitzgeralds' frequent travels and interest in new places, hinting that while Scott was searching for inspiration elsewhere, Zelda was searching for home.

Wagner-Martin emphasizes the influence of Zelda as a woman of strong opinion who was able to express her desires and hopes in her writing. From dissecting *The Beautiful and Damned* to writing her own critiques on flapper life, Zelda was far from timid and far from home. She became a critic, and this biography allows Zelda's opinions to shine forth. Wagner-Martin even reprimands previous biographers who thought little of Zelda's work with the startling claim, "Zelda's letters were as much fiction as *Save Me the Waltz*" (148). This argues that through her fiction Zelda reveals her true self. If, as according to Wagner-Martin, Zelda's letters and novel are just as much truth or fiction as the other, then certainly Zelda's articles and short stories both uncover major elements of truth in Zelda's life. This reliance on Zelda's written work is essential when understanding what Zelda reveals in her writing, for example her perception of the faults of the North and her growing need to return home to the South.

A final, and important difference in this biography than others is Wagner-Martin's choice of words like "accomplishment" in response to Zelda's talents (156). This differs from other biographies, such as Kendall Taylor's *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom*, where word choice is negative and "hopeless." This makes *An American Woman's Life* stand out from other biographies as it takes seriously Zelda's attitude in her writing when discussing her desire to first escape to the excitement of New York and then the comfort found in returning to Montgomery. Wagner-Martin recognized that previous biographies failed to present an accurate depiction of Zelda because they focused so heavily on secondary observations to create who Zelda was. While *An American Woman's Life* has a more positive attitude toward Zelda, it still cannot be relied on completely as it contains very little of Zelda's own writing in which she explains herself.

Because analyzing Zelda Fitzgerald's writing is such an intimate reflection of her life, a final note should be given to *The Romantic Egoists*, a pictorial autobiography edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli, Scottie Fitzgerald Smith, and Joan P. Kerr. While published in 1974, this collection of newspaper articles, pictures, and journal entries piece together a history of the Fitzgeralds' lives that provides a different understanding than can be provided in any biography. It is a mixture of primary and secondary evidence. The scrapbook autobiography is a gathering of evidence about the Fitzgeralds' lives. For the purpose of understanding Zelda through her own eyes, it is helpful to have such a large number of pictures, articles, and notes collected in one place. Unfortunately, it is biased toward the success of Scott's work and illustrates Zelda's life as following behind Scott rather than focusing on how her work reveals her journey and desire to return to the South.

Scholars have begun building from previous biographers in an attempt to bring Zelda's work into literary discussion. Nine critical articles that discuss aspects of, and motivations for, Zelda's writing have been published. Three of these articles stand out as particularly helpful, including Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin's "Art as Woman's Response and Search" (1979), Mary E. Wood's "A Wizard Cultivator" (1992), and Deborah Pike's "Masquerading as Herself" (2017). These works aim at revealing Zelda's life as reflected in her work as well as understanding Zelda's point of view revealed through her writing. Tavernier-Courbin discusses the impact of "self-doubt, reduced self-respect, and loss of identity" that had such a major influence on all of Zelda's life, work, and art (29). Pike amplifies the importance of Zelda's loss of identity in "Masquerading as Herself." Additionally, Tavernier-Courbin analyzes women as a possession of men, found in Zelda's work—especially *Save Me the Waltz*. This discussion of Zelda's life, including her work and her illness, influenced by men is further studied in Wood's

article, as she explores gender and class related social controls throughout Zelda's narrative (Wood 258). While limited in the work of Zelda that these articles analyze, these scholars advance the discussion of Zelda, and provide a more focused effort at understanding Zelda's work for the purpose of understanding Zelda, and not merely to reveal additional aspects of the time period or her husband's life.

Zelda has written her life, and scholars have too long ignored what her writing reveals about that life, choosing instead to piece together her life by drawing on external observation and often on misleading generalizations offered by her husband, as well as unreliable observers such as Ernest Hemingway.

Zelda, stripped away from the mythology of the "Jazz Age" and the biographers who have written her life over the decades is, contrary to the conventional wisdom, full of hope from the beginning of her life away from her childhood home—hope of the promise of the North and potential success in her own right. Through Zelda's writing it is revealed that this hope changes focus from her potential in the North to a desire for self-expression that she identifies with the South. Zelda's published works from 1920 to 1932, depict the change from a focused desire in the North to a desire to return to the South. She does this by critiquing aspects of Northern culture such as materialism, the respect of one generation toward another, and a drive for success in the youth of the North. Zelda mirrors these aspects with the concurrent experiences of her own life. Each published piece of Zelda's articles and fiction offer an honest lens to reconstruct her life, showing her progression from acceptance of Northern society to a passionate need to return to her Southern home and her true identity. Zelda's writing returns her to her Southern home after so many years of biographers keeping her captive in New York society.

Chapter 1: Disenchantment with the Flapper

The most popular biographies documenting Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald's life portray Zelda as a wild Southern youth who fell in love with Scott Fitzgerald because of the celebrity life he could give her in the North. The legend these biographers construct misrepresents the true and more complex identity of Zelda. Through the short story and six articles she published between 1920 and 1928, Zelda reveals discontent with Northern society and expresses a growing desire to return to her Southern home. This period began soon after Zelda's move from Montgomery to New York, continues through her first travels to Europe, and her return to America. In these seven works Zelda reveals two things; first, she describes her initial hopes for the promise that the North holds for her. Second, her tone changes and she becomes disillusioned with aspects of Northern society, especially with the image of the flapper, and she reminisces on what she left behind in the South. When she first moves to New York in 1920, Zelda is eager to be part of Northern society where success for both her and Scott seemed inevitable. After four years of living in the North—moving around in the vicinity of New York City and even for a time moving to Minnesota—the Fitzgeralds moved to Paris, even farther away from her Southern heritage. During this time farther away from the South, Zelda published pieces that begin to favor the South over the North. After four more years away from her Montgomery roots, Zelda began in her articles to mock celebrity life, doubt her place in her new society, and even hint at a desire to return to the South she knew before.

Zelda as Flapper

The first two years of Zelda's life as a newly married woman in the North were full of hopeful expectations to fit in to the new celebrity lifestyle and Northern culture that New York society expected her to adopt. After Scott's success with *This Side of Paradise* (1920) and *Flappers and Philosophers* (1920), Zelda was asked by multiple newspapers and magazines, including the *New York Tribune* and *Harper's Bazaar*, to contribute her own writing. Originally these contributions, like Zelda's "Friend Husband's Latest" (1922) published in the *New York Tribune*, were regarded as celebrity pieces by the magazine editors. What many biographers fail to emphasize is that during this time Zelda was more than a flapper or wife, but also a young writer and social critic.

After Scott's socialite friend Marie Hersey helped Zelda purchase a new wardrobe that met standards of Northern fashions, and with Scott's continued fame and financial success, Zelda appeared to be the epitome of the Northern socialite, the flapper (Milford 65). In "Art as Woman's Response" Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin adds that these changes and the success of Scott, "placed on Zelda's shoulders a burden of performance which, at first, she did not seem to mind, one which she apparently embraced wholeheartedly for a while, or pretended to" (26). Even her projected, or as Tavernier-Courbin suggests, pretended attitude fulfilled the role of the flapper. In 1922, an interviewer for the *Baltimore Sun* asked Zelda if she, as the wife of a celebrity author, was ambitious. She replied, "Not especially, but I've plenty of hope... Just be myself and enjoy living" (Milford 101). This quotation shows Zelda's attitude during the first two years of her marriage. Still full of hope to fit in with the North and with her husband's society, she became the celebrity wife she was expected to be. Zelda soon learned though that the hope to "just be myself and enjoy living" did not come naturally to her in the North. She began

to feel that her true self did not align with the flapper. Her articles that follow show her attempts to maintain that hope of fitting in to Northern society, while they also describe her emerging worries and confusion.

With an attitude of muddled hope, Zelda published an article in the *New York Tribune* on April 2, 1922, under the heading “Mrs. F. Scott Fitzgerald Reviews ‘The Beautiful and Damned,’ Friend Husband’s Latest.” While intended to be a celebrity piece, Zelda writes the article in her voice, with a tone that the *New York Tribune* probably didn’t expect. The article is comical, as it mocks Scott, his book, and the materialistic life they were living. Zelda sarcastically begins the article by justifying her right to discuss her husband’s novel due to “my brilliant critical insight, my tremendous erudition, and my vast impressive partiality” (*Collected Writings* 387). With prior knowledge of Zelda’s letters to Scott while they courted, a reader finds this article to read very similarly to Zelda’s letters. They are excitable and childish. Readers of the *New York Tribune* understand Zelda’s confidence in this letter to be literal, focused on the material success of her husband. If read with the knowledge of Zelda’s Southern heritage, her article contains a great deal of sarcasm and wit. This is clear as Zelda argues for people to buy the book so that she can then purchase a platinum ring and a three-hundred-dollar dress. While this directly states a desire to “enjoy living,” it actually emphasizes her criticism of Northern materialism.

A change in attitude occurs in the second half of “Friend Husband’s Latest.” Zelda writes, “It seems to me that on one page I recognized a portion of an old diary of mine which mysteriously disappeared shortly after my marriage” (*Collected Writings* 388). The importance of this passage is found not in the act of Scott’s plagiarism, but from where the passage found in *The Beautiful and Damned* originated. First, Scott pulled descriptions from Zelda’s diary. Her diary was very important to her while in the South and once she married it was taken. This was

reflective of her situation in life, and early hint of troubles to come. Scott takes her diary away, her personal history with the South, and she is forced into the North. In response, Zelda begins writing articles as a new type of diary. Because Scott used her original diary for his novel, Zelda begins to use the publication of her articles to express what she would in a diary. As the tone alters slightly in this passage, Zelda reveals her sadness that Scott has taken the South from her.

Zelda concludes “Friend Husband’s Latest” with Gloria’s purchase of a coat. She describes her reaction to the ending of *The Beautiful and Damned* and Gloria’s “tragic” decision “with thirty million to spend, buys a sable coat instead of a kolinsky coat” (*Collected Writings* 389). This wit, tainted with sarcasm, emphasizes Zelda’s hopeful attitude toward her New York life. After this comical piece, Zelda’s longer articles adopt a serious tone that shows her beginning to question her discomfort as a Southerner in New York and her critiques of Northern society. She does all of this by targeting the flapper.

Zelda’s essay “Eulogy on the Flapper,” published in June of 1922 in *Metropolitan Magazine* contains great insight into Zelda’s perception of the flapper icon. Zelda determines that there is an old and new flapper, and she discusses the differences between the two. Further, Zelda recognizes that these qualities are reflective of characteristics of the North and the South. In her article she reveals discrepancies in the flapper image.

In “Eulogy on the Flapper” Zelda uses personal experiences while describing the flapper. She writes, “The Flapper awoke from her lethargy of sub-deb-ism, bobbed her hair, put on her choicest pair of earrings and a great deal of audacity and rogue, and went into battle” (*Collected Writings* 391). The description of youth, the flapper’s “lethargy of sub-deb-ism,” reflects Zelda’s memories of her own youth. She is suggesting that living in the South presented nothing exciting, not even as a debutant introduced to society. Zelda-as-flapper was asleep until she

arrived in the North. The flapper then changes her appearance and amends her personality in such a way to appear vicious in this “battle” of life. Zelda describes the flapper as dressing herself in preparation for battle, her violent word choice reflecting her feelings toward Northern society. The armor that Zelda dressed in was the image of the flapper, hiding her Southern-ness in order to be accepted.

While writing “Eulogy on the Flapper” Zelda finds similar qualities in the crowds of New York City as she knew in the South. The mentality of youthfulness and success were so prominent during this time in history because of the mass of young people moving to New York after the war. Zelda claims the flapper would not exist were it not for an audience to encourage it. Because of this, Zelda states half way through this article that “Flapperdom has become a game; it is no longer a philosophy” (*Collected Writings* 392). This is the first time she draws a direct distinction between what the flapper is and what it used to be, and her tone is regretful. Zelda feels she is being used as a pawn in this “game,” but decides that if she must be the flapper character then she had a new right in life. That is to say, if becoming the flapper meant changing who she was then Zelda was determined to get something back for herself. She explains, “I refer to the right to experiment with [myself] as a transient, poignant figure who will be dead tomorrow” (392). In this she reinforces the title of the piece. Zelda claims the flapper, possibly herself, may be “dead tomorrow.” Her choice to use such a damnable descriptor leads readers to wonder how much Zelda was enjoying this lifestyle. The truth is revealed in her conclusion.

In the conclusion of “Eulogy on the Flapper” Zelda uncovers a kind of prison in Northern society. Readers question her sincerity as Zelda determines,

Older people...simply throw up their hands, heave a great many heart-rending sighs and moan to themselves something about what a hard thing life is—and then, of course, turn to their children and wonder why they don't believe in...the tale that they will be happy if they are good and obedient. And yet the strongest cry against Flapperdom is that it is making the youth of the century cynical. It is making them intelligent and teaching them to capitalize their natural resources and get their money's worth. They are merely applying business methods to being young. (*Collected Writings* 393)

This passage contains Zelda's final comparison of generations. She finds hypocrisy in the older generation complaining about the harshness of life while questioning the hopelessness of their children. Zelda has an interesting view of this, both because she has lived in the South and North and also because she is aged between the generations she is discussing. The greatest criticism she identifies of the flapper is the flapper's critical approach on life. The flapper lifestyle encourages chaos and fame because life may be short. In fact, Zelda has found that the "end" they are afraid of is the maturity into the working class of the older generation. Instead of contributing to this condemnation, Zelda offers her unique view from someone thrust into "Flapperdom." Zelda sees that the youth have begun to outsmart their situation and created their own working society inside of their world. While they appear productive, Zelda knows the lifestyle of the current generation cannot last as it will always be controlled by the youth.

“Our Own Movie Queen” (1925)

While Zelda’s articles show her deep connection to Northern society, it is her fiction that grants a look into her imagination and her intimate feelings. Much of Zelda’s tension is found in her stories, as she tries to resolve her confusion through her characters’ situations. In *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* article “Masquerading as Herself,” Deborah Pike emphasizes Zelda’s caution. While Zelda celebrates many aspects of the flapper lifestyle, Pike claims that Zelda’s short stories are cautionary tales of the futility of that life. Zelda recognized the, “masquerade performed at the expense of an authentic self. [She] challenges and critiques this notion of the modern woman in the very magazines that were endorsing it” (Pike 131).

In her story “Our Own Movie Queen,” published in the *Chicago Sunday Tribune* in June 1925, though written in November 1923, Zelda hints at the futility of her celebrity life. From the beginning the heroine, Gracie Axelrod, reflects Zelda’s youthful attitude. Though stuck in her town, “even Gracie had heard tales about the gaiety of the dwellers on the upper riverbank” (*Collected Writings* 274). The “upper riverbank” is comparable to the North. Just as Zelda heard rumors of the excitement found in New York, Gracie heard “tales about the gaiety” of those north of her town. This secures in Gracie a desire to be more than a simple girl stuck in her town. Zelda grants her heroine’s wish by writing, “Gracie who backed into local publicity a short year since as ‘our movie queen’” (273). The phrasing of “backed into local publicity” details Zelda’s feelings about her own move to New York and into the spotlight of Scott’s publicity and Zelda’s “flapperdom.” Zelda felt forced into it, and she continues to explain the similar effects on Gracie in the position of “Our Movie Queen.”

Gracie wins a Grand Popularity contest with a prize of starring in a movie. During her coronation Zelda describes, “Behind Gracie a blue pole arose, balancing over her head a bright,

insecure star” (*Collected Writings* 279). The star reflects Zelda’s feelings toward her celebrity life. The star over Gracie’s head draws attention to her, but it is insecure and could fall at any moment. This is how Zelda feels about the life she and Scott were living. She worries that at any moment it could collapse and the hope and excitement that she thought were promised in the North would be lost. Additionally, after Gracie wins the contest Zelda no longer uses Gracie’s name in the dialogue, instead referring to her as “the queen.” This is similar to Zelda being called the first flapper. The title of queen though, is only deserved so long as the movie is in production. As soon as the movie is over, the title is lost. Zelda feels the same way about the title of the flapper that was forced on her. She worries that once society is done with the flapper, she will also be lost.

The conclusion of “Our Own Movie Queen” comes when Gracie teams up with Joe Murphy, the young assistant director, to produce their own version of the movie by placing Gracie in a lead role. What appears to be Gracie’s success in the tale, her marriage to Joe and the admiration from her town, comes only after she chooses to go against the regulations of the contest. This change from the expectations of society is a choice that is repeated in Zelda’s later stories. Zelda’s character found success in going against expectations, an attitude echoing the attitude of youthful Zelda in Montgomery.

“Does a Moment of Revolt Come Sometime to Every Married Man?” (1924)

While society’s image of Zelda during the 1920s was that of the flapper, her focus and life revolved around her family. These may seem separate subjects, but it was her husband who originally made her a flapper and whose success drove her into celebrity life. Magazine readers expected Zelda’s description of her celebrity family but instead found Zelda’s interpretation of

familial situations and, due to the life-style of the Fitzgeralds, many of these situations were problematic. Zelda's article "Does a Moment of Revolt Come Sometime to Every Married Man?" was published in *McCall's* in March of 1924 and reflects the attitude of sarcasm and wit that is familiar to her style of writing, which is also found in her 1922 article "Friend Husband's Latest." Her article is comical on the surface, though contains underlying hints of Zelda questioning her place in her marriage as well as critiquing the materialism of Northern culture.

"Does a Moment of Revolt Come Sometime to Every Married Man?" begins with a short list of activities that Zelda has done incorrectly as a wife, including spending too much on a dress. Zelda explains the repercussions of such things and her worry that "after ever washday when his woolen socks come up from the laundry two inches smaller because I forgot to buy stretchers for them...I suspect my husband of instantaneous and insuppressible revolt" (*Collected Writings* 395). This passage is padded with wit, creating a tone both comical and cautious. As a wife she constantly performs mundane tasks incorrectly which elicits more extreme responses from her husband. The comical and cautious tone is balanced in the description that she suspects an insuppressible act, with the first hinting at a hidden response and the latter describing an erratic reaction. Zelda's own response to her husband's actions includes, "Making rash and frantic promises to sew all the buttons on all his pajamas and to rub his back for an hour if he will please not revolt just this once" (395). Once again, Zelda balances between controlled wit and teetering worry. In each of these passages the emotional conclusion is in reaction to materialistic things. First it is Zelda spending money on a dress or shrinking Scott's socks. In the following passage her "rash and frantic promises" are limited to pajama buttons. The happiness and success of Zelda's husband is in direct accordance with her ability to keep their home materially in order.

Zelda continues to sarcastically use the materialistic mentality to further decipher her husband's need for revolt. Zelda explains that she has bookshelves full of "charming male characters who are bent upon insidious and incomprehensible revolt. From modern fiction I have learned that even a perfect husband may leave home without a moment's notice in search of gin or the Holy Grail" (*Collected Writings* 395). Using these images of books and fictional characters is important because though they are material objects, they are essential to the Fitzgeralds' lives. Both Scott and Zelda were writing fiction and Scott was supporting his family by it. Additionally, Zelda takes advantage of the public's view of her as the iconic flapper with a celebrity family. To the public the Fitzgeralds were seen as fictional characters themselves, living to entertain magazine readers. In this passage Zelda questions her position in her marriage. She finds herself constantly deciding to be a mother, wife, celebrity, or flapper but she is never able to identify herself clearly in any of these roles. Her final comparison between gin and the Holy Grail solidifies the image of the Fitzgeralds as fictional characters. Zelda sees Scott's need for alcohol or inspiration for his work as comparable to his search for the Holy Grail.

The combination of these particular passages shows how Zelda critiqued home life in Northern society in addition to critiquing the younger generations and the flapper girls. This article also shows Zelda's first worries about her place in her marriage. Under her wit and sarcasm hides worries about her relationship with Scott. Biographers neglect Zelda's writing as a source for understanding the problems in their relationship. Since Scott is the reason for her moving away from the South, a faltering marriage would be devastating to her and remove what little sense of security in the North she felt.

“Breakfast” (1925) and More Flappers

The final three articles Zelda published during this time change in tone, uncovering a discomfort in her current life. While “Breakfast,” published in 1925 and her shortest article, echoes her comical approach to the materialistic lifestyle she finds in the North and abroad, her second article “What Became of the Flapper?” is a more serious critique providing additional analysis on the generation of the flapper. Zelda’s last article of this time period, “The Changing Beauty of Park Avenue” published in 1928, combines the tone of both articles with the imagery of her fiction. This is Zelda’s first firm attempt to retrieve her Southern roots in her writing. The remaining three pieces published in this time period show Zelda on the verge of change.

In April of 1924 the Fitzgerald family sailed for France and spent the following two years traveling abroad in Europe. During these years Zelda published two articles with topics that echo the celebrity pieces she wrote in the first two years of her marriage. The tone in these articles differs though, in that Zelda’s critiques in the previous years is strengthened by her discomfort with the culture of Northern society that she also found in Europe. Simply titled “Breakfast,” her first article appeared in Florence Stratton’s book *Favorite Recipes of Famous Women* in 1925 under the by-line “Mrs. F. Scott Fitzgerald, Wife of the author of ‘The Beautiful and Damned,’ ‘The jazz Age,’ etc.” The full article is as follows:

See if there is any bacon, and if there is, ask the cook which pan to fry it in. Then ask if there are any eggs, and if so try and persuade the cook to poach two of them. It is better not to attempt toast, as it burns very easily. Also in the case of bacon, do not turn the fire too high, or you will have to get out of the house for a

week. Serve preferably on china plates, though gold or wood will do if handy.
(*Collected Writings* 401)

Zelda, aware of how her recipe would be received by the women of 1920s New York society, created a recipe both serious in topic and comical in tone. Each aspect of the recipe begins with the instruction that immediately falls to the cook to perform. While hidden under the mask of a celebrity wife, Zelda warns readers “not to attempt toast.” Her mocking is written as if it is imparted wisdom, an example of Zelda’s particular idiosyncrasies in her work.

The recipe concludes with the proper serving of this dish. Zelda suggests to “Serve preferably on china plates, though gold or wood will do if handy.” The first option, china plates, is good quality though likely owned by many, especially the woman purchasing Florence Stratton’s *Favorite Recipes of Famous Women*. This dish choice does not stand out considerably. The remaining suggestions do. As china plates are listed first, it is peculiar that gold plates are offered as a remaining option. This is another example of Zelda mocking the outside perception of her celebrity lifestyle, as if every successful household has the option to eat breakfast on gold dishes. Additionally, Zelda combines the gold and wood plates at the end of the recipe saying that they “will do if handy,” implying that the true quality or appearance of these opposites are similar. The most important part of this entire article is found in its last sentence describing the plates, though it was likely seen as comical by Florence Stratton’s readers. Zelda is imparting reality onto those reading her recipe, claiming that each of these dishes are used in the same way and so it doesn’t matter if they were made from gold, china, or wood. An extension of this is Zelda’s observation that there is also no difference in who is eating off of the plate because everyone is human, no matter their social class or where they were born. This is most important

as Zelda's Southern connections were seen as negative and replaced by characteristics of the flapper when she originally moved to the North. She recognizes that though there is no true difference in people of Northern and Southern societies, there is a major difference in what is important to those cultures. In response, Zelda emphasizes the materialism of the North.

Zelda explores the divide between gold, china, and wood plates in another part of society. She changes her focus again to the separation in generations. This divide continues to be revealed in "What Became of the Flapper?" an article Zelda wrote for *McCall's* magazine, published in October of 1925. This article was a joint piece titled "What Became of Our Flappers and Our Sheiks?" conjoining her article with Scott's essay "Our Young Rich Boys." In a portion of her article, Zelda discusses the differences in the ways new generations express themselves. Her observations are important as they grow from her previous observations between the old and new flappers discussed in her 1922 article "Eulogy on the Flapper." Zelda maintains that society as a whole evolves through these expressions, and she sees materialism most prominently in Northern society. By the time Zelda wrote "What Became of the Flapper?" though, she was literally asking herself that question.

On October 26, 1921, Zelda gave birth to her daughter Scottie. By the time Zelda wrote "What Became of the Flapper?" age and motherhood disqualified her to fill the role of the flapper girl, even though she was still expected to. This article reveals her final thoughts on first, the real purpose of the flapper and second, how she was not what Northern society wanted her to be. This shows the slow progress toward the greater transition for Zelda, her ability to find truer self-expression as she writes about the South.

In "What Became of the Flapper?" Zelda says that the flapper "is reticent emotionally and courageous morally. You always know what she thinks, but she does all her feeling alone"

(*Collected Writings* 398). Here Zelda reveals how she felt while playing the role of the flapper character Northern society expected her to be. She finds a connection with the old or original flapper, as the old flapper is morally courageous and expressive. She also felt lost and alone during this time but felt that she must do “all of her feeling alone.” She reveals that the true feelings of the flapper, of herself, were hidden. The reality was hidden inside an artful drive for expression, but she had not yet found a way to do that. She had the opportunity to act as someone new in the North, but soon discovered the reality of herself disappeared while hiding behind the flapper character.

One passage from “What Became of the Flapper?” is valuable as it dives deeper into Zelda’s mentality during this time. In this passage Zelda summarizes the flapper as well as the long-term influence of the flapper on society. Also, while Zelda is identified in literary history as a flapper, she writes in this passage as if she is only a member of the society admiring the flapper but does not actually consider herself a flapper:

The flappers that I am writing this article about are a very different and intriguing lot of people who are perhaps unstable, but who are giving us the first evidence of youth asserting itself out of the cradle. They are not originating new ideas or new customs or new moral standards. They are simply endowing the old ones that we are used to with a vitality that we are not used to. (*Collected Writings* 397)

Zelda writes that the flappers “are giving us” something, placing herself apart from the flapper generation, as she has literally grown out of it by this time. Instead of criticizing this generation though, as many in the older generation were doing—which inspired Zelda’s response

to it—she claims that the flappers and their generation are doing good for the society which they are part of. Just as any new generation evolves the society they are in, Zelda claims there are more good than negative aspects of this young generation. The growth that takes place in this passage shows a progression of time. Zelda recognizes that the flapper girls will eventually age out of the flapper generation, just as Zelda herself has done. But, according to Zelda, these girls will continue to have influence in society as their ideas and customs can continue to be experienced with “vitality” as they age. This is the connection Zelda still finds between herself and the flapper. Zelda’s growth from the South to the North shows how the flapper was “not originating new ideas or . . . moral standards.” Since her introduction to Northern society, so different from the Southern society of her childhood, she has tried to fit in. With this article, Zelda concludes that there is no fault in her Southern heritage, containing important characteristics of who Zelda is. Instead of continuing to cover her Southern characteristics by acting as a Northern flapper, Zelda begins to focus on the South and it slowly enters her fiction.

In the conclusion of “What Became of the Flapper?” Zelda decides that when flappers grow “old” they merely fade away into another stage of life. They do not end in a grotesque way as society may expect, they simply fall into “the young married set, into boredom and gathering conventions and the pleasure of having children” (*Collected Writings* 399). The first thing to address in this passage from Zelda is the divide in how she describes first, married life and second, having children. She makes a firm separation between these two. To Zelda, married life is a state of “boredom and gathering conventions.” In contrast, having children is a “pleasure.” One may wonder if this is the influence of being raised with South traditions, emphasizing the importance of a large family compared to the North, which had a more modern institution of a focus on career goals. Instead, it shows Zelda removing herself from the flapper generation and

her personal life as a wife. She admits boredom in her marriage, understandably as she has been forced into a new society and into the character of the flapper. But she also finds joy in recently having a child. Zelda feels that she can act more like herself in the role of the mother.

After returning to America in December of 1926 Zelda wrote a third article that uncovers more than the faults she found in Northern society, and hints at a newly discovered desire to not only focus on her Southern roots but return to them. The tension caused by the North's rejection of Zelda's past and her responding rejection of Northern culture begins to draw out beauty in her writing. The last article of this time period that shows this is titled "The Changing Beauty of Park Avenue," published in January of 1928 in *Harper's Bazaar*. This article contains themes of the natural world and use of imagery when discussing growth, comparing the natural world to the man-made world. Both of these things prominently hearken back to Zelda's youth in the South with gardens in front of every house and the mentality of possibility and growth in youth.

In "The Changing Beauty of Park Avenue" Southern growth meets urban architecture. Zelda writes, "Windows and prim greenery and tall, graceful, white facades rise up from either side of the asphalt stream" (*Collected Writings* 403). The images in this scene are linked in such a way that it seems to grow right out of the article. First notice how each aspect of the passage is perfectly balanced between the South and the North. Windows, on buildings as if they were the cold trees of the city, are next to "prim greenery" which seems like a contradiction. Next, tall is balanced by graceful and even asphalt is used to construct Zelda's stream. She transforms the North, the harsh and man-made city, into the South, where nature is more prominently in control. Zelda also uses the description of a façade, an image used frequently throughout her writing in the form of masks and makeup. By placing this urban landscape into nature Zelda reveals the façade around her. She sees another mask, something she feels she has been hiding behind by

being forced into the flapper image. Already Zelda is retreating back to the South through her writing.

The image of nature is strengthened in “The Changing Beauty of Park Avenue” with a reference to fictional literature. Zelda writes, “a thin series of watercolor squares of grass—suggesting the Queen’s Croquet Ground in *Alice in Wonderland*” (*Collected Writings* 403). Zelda draws a connection between her world and a fictional world by the use of “watercolor squares.” She builds the reality of her new Northern world by associating it with a fictional one she is familiar with. Mentioning *Alice in Wonderland* is something else that Zelda also mentions multiple times through various works. This stands out when readers remember that Zelda also painted scenes from this story, proving that it was an imaginative world very important to her. The particular wonder of this world connects the fictional world that she wrote in and the natural world of flowers and gardens that Zelda had been raised in. She found comfort in a fiction that was similar to her home in the South. She affirms this strange balance with a final observation of, “High in the air float green-blue copper roofs, like the tips of castles rising from the clouds in fairy tales and cigarette advertisements” (404). She focuses on nature again by using the color green and placing her image in the sky. She alludes to a fictional world by describing a castle and a fairy tale setting. This is a perfect example of, as Tavernier-Courbin explains, Zelda’s continual desire “to transcend the limits of physical reality” (39). Zelda stretched past the expected. She concludes her article by blatantly explaining that she has been describing a cigarette advertisement. This quickly brings the reader back to the reality of a man-made city. Zelda draws her reader through this article with related images that show how Zelda found connections between her surroundings. It also shows her focus returning to the South, as her Northern, urban setting is slowly overrun with natural aspects she associates with the South.

Zelda's constant use of connections in her short story and articles published between 1920 and 1928 mimic the desire for her own connection to her environment. Moving to New York as the newly married wife of a celebrity author, Zelda was thrust into a society that expected her to strip away her Southern roots and celebrate the mask of the flapper that society, and her husband, placed on her. While behind his mask for a time, Zelda continued to search for self-expression, which lead her to recognize discrepancies between herself and Northern society. In 1920 Zelda began her new life accepting Northern society and excited for the possibilities it seemed to hold for her. By January of 1928 Zelda had inserted herself into the discussion of the influence of generations and she began critiquing her perceived fictional life of the flapper. Entering 1928 Zelda found it increasingly more difficult to hide her change in desire to return to her Southern roots, as is evident in her final article. In the years that follow, Zelda's tone changes from expectation and hope, to a more realistic and matured woman. Her focus on the South is most prominently featured in her fiction.

Chapter 2: Reality and Revelations

The few years between 1928 and 1930 were crucial in the evolution of Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald's writing. The Zelda of these years was shaped by travel, married life, and a desire to write. While in the early years of Zelda's marriage she was hopeful of the potential that the North held for her, the following years were a period of reflection over her marriage and family life. Zelda's writing no longer focused on the potential of the flapper or on her celebrity life. Instead, Zelda's publications from 1928 to 1930 are reminiscent of her first eight years of marriage and nostalgic for her Southern roots. Her articles are more realistic and honest. She also begins to write more fiction, publishing only three articles and four short stories from 1928 to 1930. The attention of her writing alters significantly from a focus on the flapper to creating stories about relatable, and at times Southern, girls. This shows Zelda's attempt to leave the flapper in her past, to rid herself of the flapper character as well as other preconceived notions from Northern society. She no longer limits the female identity to the specific Northern socialite that was the flapper. Zelda's writing displays the change in her desire to regain the simplicity, sense of self, and hope she identifies with the South. Her articles show the truth and reality she is searching for while her fiction shows her focus on the South.

Articles

During this time Zelda reflected over the first eight years of her marriage and, while she was more connected to the Northern society and life-style than ever before, her writing shows a transition to becoming direct and honest about her life. Her articles are more realistic in tone and content, and less focused on the glamorous celebrity marriage that society supposed she had.

Zelda's previous articles, like "Friend Husband's Latest" (1922) or "Eulogy on the Flapper" (1922), were comical and critiqued the materialism of Northern society as well as the influence of "flapperdom." After a few years of marriage and traveling abroad, Zelda published articles like "What Became of the Flappers?" in 1925. She began to transition away from the possibilities and successes of Northern culture. Zelda deliberated on what the invented world of the flapper held for her and what her life was really like. This reflection is driven through the center of her writing over the following two years. Zelda published three articles from June of 1928 to May of 1929. Each article is a more focused and realistic critique on Northern culture than Zelda had previously given. The honest critiques in her articles show Zelda removed herself completely from the flapper icon and began her removal from Northern society as well.

The first article that Zelda wrote during this period is titled "Looking Back Eight Years" and was published in 1928 in *College Humor*. She opens with the observation, "In those years of panic during and immediately after the war, age became a sort of caste system...perhaps it was because the days were so full around that time that each additional year of age seemed like an added century of emotional experience" (*Collected Writings* 407). After the war, the separation between generations stood out more than ever before. Time itself had changed. It no longer simply dictated meals and the passing of seasons; it began to dictate the worth of a human being. When Zelda moved to New York at the young age of twenty she observed the repercussions of this change in time. If someone was not in the right place at the right age in his or her life, opportunities were lost. For example, her husband Scott's literary success would have been nowhere near as great if not for publishing immediately after the war when the youth of the world were thrust into adulthood and the artistic world was exploding. Zelda not only saw the "added century of emotional experience" on friends, she experienced it herself. The war ended in

1918 and Zelda married Scott in 1920. In October of 1921 their daughter, Scottie, was born. Zelda transformed from a youth to a wife and a mother while boys were transitioning from soldiers to businessmen. Young soldiers who had been victorious in war felt the same need to be successful in the aspects of their lives that dictated their place in society. Zelda lived in this “sort of caste system” that placed her and her husband at the top. Previous biographers have failed to identify the advantage Zelda’s place in society gave her to critique these different generations.

Zelda addresses this caste system in “Looking Back Eight Years,” by exploring the differences between generations and their influences on each other. She identifies that each generation has special ties to its particular historical time. Zelda explains that the younger generation’s desire for immediate success was “a sort of debonair desperation—a necessity for forcing the moments of life into an adequacy to the emotions of ten years ago” (*Collected Writings* 408). The younger generation, which contains the flapper and the soldier, felt a great desire for success, as if their success could bring back feelings of life before the war. They attempted to take the comfort of the past and drag it into a new age of constant and uncertain change. Zelda observes that this act of forcing memories of the past into modern life created strain and confusion in society.

Young men returning from war entered adulthood with a continued desire for victory. Their triumph in war transitioned into triumph in business, and Zelda explains that the major motivation on the youth of society was success. Zelda claims, “Success was the goal for this generation and to a startling extent they have attained it, and now...nine in ten would confess that success is only a decoration they wished to wear” (*Collected Writings* 408). Achieving their desired success that transferred from the battlefield to a career was ultimately unfulfilling. Zelda expresses the immense disappointment that resulted from knowing that “life moved in poetic

gestures when they were younger and has now settled back into buffoonery” (409). Zelda’s word choice here is very important because it places an emphasis on the magic and creativity of youth, emotions with a firm link to her past in the South. She is warning against forced nostalgia and the negative effects of trying to implant the past onto the present.

The article “Looking Back Eight Years” concludes by Zelda directly claiming a strong connection between herself and the society she is critiquing. Zelda states that with the pressure of the younger generation to be the “finest and richest” in history, it is no wonder that they are “haunted and harassed by a sense of unfilled destiny and grope about between the ages of twenty-five and forty with a baffled feeling of frustration” (*Collected Writings* 409). The age group that Zelda describes, ages twenty-five through forty, includes Zelda. As a nearly twenty-eight-year-old woman, Zelda admits that she also feels she has an unfulfilled destiny. She searches for self-expression and begins ballet lessons during this time in an attempt to find it. Serious in her search, Zelda had up to four lessons of ballet a day (Cline 214), she helped pay for her dance lessons by publishing articles and short stories.

Zelda’s decisive drive shown through her dancing and writing seems in contrast to her passage, “The philosophy with which most of the adolescents were equipped implied that life was a truncated affair ceasing abruptly with the twenty-first birthday” (*Collected Writings* 409). Again, she is referring to the flapper lifestyle that confuses her. If life ended at twenty-one, her age only a year after moving to New York, then the excitement of her life should have ended before it actually began. This solidifies Zelda’s constant personal disharmony with the North, as she never completely fit in and was only accepted when she acted the role of the flapper. Her writing became an avenue for self-expression and success, standing independent of her husband’s success. As Zelda discussed in “Looking Back Eight Years,” she recognized that this

self-expression or success may be impossible within Northern society. Thus, she turns her search southward.

Following her discussion of success in society, Zelda critiques society's perception of love and success in a relationship. She published "Who Can Fall in Love After Thirty?" in *College Humor* in October of 1928. Zelda, only twenty-eight at the time, was married to Scott who was thirty-two. She discusses the ways in which society's perception of love alters as a relationship ages. Zelda emphasizes the reality of relationships, including her own. Instead of glorifying her celebrity marriage, Zelda steps away from society's expectations of her life. Additionally, she focuses on the reality of love as opposed to society's fictional perception of it.

Zelda answers the title question of her article "Who Can Fall in Love After Thirty?" by, once again, comparing differences in generations. She begins by saying, "boys of twenty and girls of eighteen have little to brood about except each other and can, with admirable dexterity, fit any name into a popular song, any photograph into their favorite frame" (*Collected Writings* 412). These ages are very close to the ages Zelda and Scott were while they were courting. She is not mocking the infatuation of youth, rather she is celebrating the "admirable dexterity" of young love. Though any name can fit into any song, the emotion behind the song is just as strong. Zelda continues to describe this expression of passion by comparing it to that of the older generation. When love is constantly present, for example the Fitzgeralds' eight-year marriage, expression of that love appears less frequently as it is assumed that the love is constant. Zelda is speaking from experience, just as she has done in previous articles.

In "Who Can Fall in Love After Thirty?" Zelda continues, stating love changes but continues throughout maturity. As further support Zelda writes, "Nevertheless it is the loves over thirty that have, as proof of their vitality, led to operas and Anna Karenina and the recent recipes

in the *Daily News* for cooking Ruth Snyder” (*Collected Writings* 413). Her first piece of evidence, operas, is vague but clearly shows love present at any age. Second, *Anna Karenina* is a more specific example that limits the number of readers who will understand the reference to the story of passionate love gained and lost between multiple characters. The last reference of Ruth Snyder is even more specific. Snyder, executed in New York with her lover for the 1927 murder of her husband, was a recent headline in the news and Snyder’s imprisonment took place geographically close to those reading the article (*Collected Writings* 413). Zelda chooses a wide range of examples, covering grand infatuation to unjustified passion, though all three examples show that love appears differently at different times in life. She had seen similar varieties of love in her own social life. The Fitzgeralds were great friends with the devoted Murphys (Mellow 203) whose relationship was immensely different from the chaotic marriage of Ernest Hemingway and his first wife Hadley Richardson, who had divorced a year previous.

In the final passage of “Who Can Fall in Love After Thirty?” Zelda warns that the form and expression of the older generation’s love appears weaker than the younger generation’s. Because of the busier scheduling of life, work, and family responsibilities, mature couples’ love has to fit into its own cramped category. This feels different from the younger generation to which love can be the all-encompassing structure of life. Zelda claims that, in contrast to the perception of the younger generation, all forms of love are the same. Zelda writes, “The fact that mature emotional response soon reduces itself to essentials does not mean that it is of a different quality from youthful enthusiasm in a like direction—it simply means that the means of expression are different” (*Collected Writings* 413). These means are not further discussed by Zelda, but this passage shows her realization that the quality of love can be the same whether it is expressed in the enthusiasm of youth or in the bare essentials of a mature generation.

While “Who Can Fall in Love After Thirty?” critiques relationships in society, further significance of this piece comes from its use in reconstructing Zelda through the lens of her own writing. This piece reveals how she felt in response to aging and changing from youthful passion to a marriage full of love shown in new ways. This piece works like a diary entry, as previously mentioned in regard to Zelda’s writing. It reveals Zelda’s understanding of how her love, one of the most intimate parts of her life, has changed since moving to the North. Zelda supports her final passage with an additional piece of evidence. She concludes, “One’s vocabulary changes much more than what one has to say” (*Collected Writings* 413). This stands out especially due to Scott’s profession as a writer and Zelda’s own publications. By the end of the first decade of her marriage she recognized that the expression of her own love had adopted a more mature form. Zelda’s perception of young love mimicked the fast and passionate atmosphere of the North while mature love reflected the calm and constant state of the South. Zelda changes from desiring passionate young love to understanding the validity of mature love. This change mirrors her desire to reclaim her Southern heritage after leaving it for the North nearly a decade before.

“Paint and Powder” (1929)

The last article that Zelda published from 1928 to 1929 echoes her discussions of the materialistic lifestyle of the North found in her earliest articles, including “Friend Husband’s Latest” and “Breakfast.” “Paint and Powder,” published in *The Smart Set* in May of 1929, reflects a more forgiving side of Zelda’s attitude. This article displays Zelda’s internal debate—deciding whether or not something as simple as makeup is truly useless. This is a transition in Zelda’s writing and life, built on her previous article “Who Can Fall in Love After Thirty?” Both articles focus on specific things that influence society on a massive scale. She does not add to the

hyperbole of the attitude surrounding them though. Instead, she discusses love and now makeup in a realistic way. Her attitude toward materialism in previous articles has been one of foreboding, but “Paint and Powder” shows a turning point in Zelda’s attitude. She has spent so much time in the culture of the North that she has begun to see the advantages, no matter how frivolous, to simple items such as makeup.

In response to those who claim that makeup and decoration for a girl are a waste of money and time, Zelda offers her reader a broader picture, or a purpose, for makeup. She writes, “with prosperity and power, comes art, the desire for beauty, the taste for the decorative” (*Collected Writings* 415). Zelda originally saw the North as a place full of prosperity, power, and success. To show off this prosperity, society uses art and fashion. This is what Zelda refers to as a “taste for the decorative.” She explains that it is the success of Northern culture that is to blame for women’s growing desire for makeup. She supports this with, “Almost all the superfluous wealth of America goes into display” (416). She justifies makeup and fashion by claiming it does the same thing as any other type of display that might be used in the business world. She soon follows this claim with a change of tone. Zelda claims that these displays of wealth in America are spent on “doodads, jimcracks, fads, fashions, fooleries, and fripperies” (416). With this list Zelda makes the tone of the piece comical and light. She is not making firm and impressive claims as she did in previous articles, such as “Eulogy on the Flapper.” Instead Zelda is showing the triviality of what has become such a major discussion in Northern society. She finds that these “doodads” or “fripperies” are avenues for a “desire for beauty” that comes after success.

One passage stands out in “Paint and Powder” more than any other. In this passage Zelda focuses on the woman behind makeup and decoration by comparing them to objects. This encourages reflection in the reader over the topic of the article. The passage is as follows:

Rouge means that women want to choose their man...Paint and powder...are a refinement, a choice element of the stark sex factor. If we like veils, better a rosy one than a black! Why not bright cheeks and varicolored clothes as a sign that the women are as vital and vivid as the billboards, the beach parasols, the one hundred-story buildings, the gasoline stations, and the prosperous skies...in tune with their atmosphere. (*Collected Writings* 415-16)

Zelda does something very important with elements of makeup in this passage. She chooses rouge, paint, and powder to represent the active advancement of women in society. The image of a woman choosing a man makes the woman superior, giving her power over men. This stands out at this time in history as women had only just received the right to vote less than a decade before. Zelda also connects the act of refinement, a very female action, to the “stark sex factor,” which again places power into the hands of a woman. Zelda shows the evolution of the power of women with imagery of a veil, choosing a colorful one instead of a black veil worn to conceal a woman or appear in mourning over a loss or even just her station in society.

The veil becomes more significant because it is also described as “rosy,” implying that the rouge a woman wears is not all that different from a black veil as it conceals her true face. Zelda builds on this potential problem by comparing female vitality to billboards, parasols, and even gas stations. While all useful, they are constructed by men, which implies a problematic situation in the progress of women. Zelda’s perception on women’s place in society is exceptionally useful because she understands both the view of a woman of a lower class, a Southerner in the North, and upper-class, as a celebrity. Biographers and academics focus so

frequently on Zelda as the flapper that they neglect her critiques on vast types of women in society. Under the falsely constructed stereotype as Zelda the First Flapper, biographers have neglected Zelda's Southern wisdom.

“The Original Follies Girl” (1929)

From 1928 to 1930 Zelda published four short stories that show a strict change in direction in her writing and life. These stories were commissioned by *College Humor* with the goal that each would be about archetypal, or stereotypical as Zelda saw them, female characters, such as the Northern socialite shown in “The Original Follies Girl” or the Southern Belle in “Southern Girl” (Anderson 24). She was no longer bound to the image of the flapper and she started to search for self-expression through fictional characters that allowed the familiarity of the South into her life. The publications of these stories lead up to her first mental breakdown that occurred in April of 1930 (*Romantic Egoists* 172). These works of fiction have stronger allusions to the South than any of her previous pieces. The first story, appearing in *College Humor* in July of 1929, “The Original Follies Girl” is similar to Zelda's life as the heroine, Gay, is a young woman living in the city for the first time. The story opens with the line, “The thing that made you first notice Gay was that manner she had, as though she was masquerading as herself...[she] was awfully good quality and had nothing to conceal except her past” (*Collected Writings* 293). The phrase “masquerading as herself” is curious as a mask is used to disguise an identity while the truth remains hidden, the very idea Pike focuses on in her article in *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*. Pike uses the phrase “Self-created, performed self” (138) to illustrate Zelda's experience of putting on a mask, the flapper image, hiding her true self. Just like Gay, Zelda felt she had to conceal her Southern roots and become someone new.

Zelda continues to describe Gay as prudent, saying that the more discrete Gay was the freer she felt. Conforming to expectations can stifle the individuality of a person though. Zelda admits that, “Those first years she came quite near destroying her value...But she learned to like absinthe cocktails and to want a serious stage career, which turned her toward successful people...She was very kaleidoscopic” (*Collected Writings* 294). The image of the kaleidoscope is brilliant, showing no lack of excitement but also suggesting confusion of self and purpose. Zelda projects her own emotion onto Gay. Zelda refuses to hide her personal connection to the story and expresses realistic emotion through Gay. Zelda changes from wanting to appease everyone, an attitude she initially had when she moved North, to wanting to express herself honestly which includes her Southern background.

Further, this image creates a balanced tension between Gay’s true self and how she acted in front of others. Even though Gay seems like a free woman, “she is trapped within her own mask, utterly dependent on the public’s demand for her image and thus imprisoned in her own system of self-surveillance...the masquerade is ultimately destructive, a denial of self” (Pike 139). Here Pike explains how Gay’s desire to be needed or successful impedes true self-expression, what Zelda also desired. This is a perfect illustration of what Zelda was feeling when she first started writing “What Became of the Flappers” and “Our Own Movie Queen.” Zelda wanted to be perceived as the exciting muse of her husband’s work, but by wearing the flapper mask Zelda forced her true self into hiding. The description of Gay in “The Original Follies Girl” shows Zelda breaking away from her initial desire to appease Northern society.

“Southern Girl” (1929)

In July of 1929 *College Humor* published Zelda’s short story “Southern Girl,” about Harriet, who has a desire similar to Gay in that they both have an initial desire to be part of a place they find more foreign than accepting. “Southern Girl” shows the change in Zelda’s writing to use imagery to portray emotion. This style will play a major role in her novel. While Zelda has used nature as a comparison in previous works, this story relies heavily on natural descriptions for setting and tone. Zelda’s attitude about these descriptions is noticeably more peaceful and nostalgic than before. An example follows:

Wisteria meets over the warm asphalt in summer, and the young people swim in the lukewarm creeks...The house was an apologetic one for sheltering big families that had grown faster than the family income in that way obligations have of increasing their proportions more rapidly than the hopes and abilities that begot them. (*Collected Writings* 299)

The flowering wisteria is personified as it becomes human-like and gathers. The asphalt is not confining as it may be described in a city setting. It is a warm meeting place. The second image is the personification of a house. Zelda makes the house a nurse that takes care of all who are inside it. This strongly alludes to Zelda’s youth as she had four living siblings in her home and constantly entertained friends. While the Sayre family managed to live comfortably, her father was not wealthy (Milford 7). Zelda shows this meek comfort in her description, showing how her youth influenced her outlook on life.

“The Girl the Prince Liked” (1930) and “The Girl with Talent” (1930)

The last two short stories that Zelda published during this time are even more positive and progressive than before. “The Girl the Prince Liked” and “The Girl with Talent” show Zelda’s continued desire to break away from her former subjection to Northern society. These stories continue to show Zelda’s outlook on life, which was more realistic than when she wrote about the flapper and her celebrity life. Additionally, “The Girl the Prince Liked” and “The Girl with Talent” further show her attempt to realistically describe her experiences in Northern society, and she began to actively replace her Northern life. Zelda searches for self-expression and confidence. This is difficult because she had relied on the perception of Northern society to dictate her actions for the past eight years.

The first story, “The Girl the Prince Liked,” was published in February of 1930 in *College Humor*. There are two particular passages in this story that reflect Zelda most prominently. The first of these passages helps define the appearance and characteristics of the main character, Helena. Zelda writes that anyone immediately knew Helena by her actions. If you are rich or handsome, “she will annex you and give you a good time and hurt your feelings” (*Collected Writings* 316). If you meet Helena by chance “she will simply hurt your feelings and you will never be part of that fine group of Helena’s intimates all over the world whose insides fit their outsides as they should.” In both situations Helena hurts those she comes in contact with. This is because in the first case Helena gets whatever she wants, whether that be excitement or comfort, and in the second case the opposing individual showed no interest in understanding Helena.

This passage shows Zelda’s ability to include personal perception in her writing. Zelda writes that Helena’s intimates have insides that “fit their outsides as they should” (*Collected*

Writings 316). She believes people should not act one way to the public but truly be a different person. This belief gives Zelda confidence to stop playing the flapper role. Zelda's description of the inside and outside of a person emits an image of a mask, an image familiar to Zelda's readers. Zelda is known for having acted more exuberant around her husband's friends, even called crazy by acquaintances before she was diagnosed by any doctor (Cline 131). Through her story Zelda claims she was adapting to her Northern environment the way she thought was best.

In "The Girl the Prince Liked" Zelda reveals her hope that if she could adequately adapt to her environment then, eventually, she would feel comfortable there. When Helena is done "disturbing the susceptible, making susceptible the disturbing, perhaps you will find her one day enveloped in Venetian shawls, hugging the most elaborate heating system that money can buy and ending her tales with, 'Of course it's true; it happened to me'" (*Collected Writings* 316). As many of Zelda's other characters do, Helena identifies herself with her possessions. Pike explains that these types of characters "become commodity-selves, signified through the objects they display, created and maintained through commodity relations" (143). As soon as any value dissipates from the possessions, the value will also leave the girl who owns them. This description shows growth from Zelda's letters to Scott before their marriage when she described herself as an object for him to own. It also shows a change from the articles she wrote when she first moved to the North. While her first articles, like "Breakfast" (1925), recognize materialism as a problem in the North, Zelda describes the repercussions of that way of life in her short stories. In a way, Zelda has become a mother over the flapper and is warning the flapper, the younger generation, against the problems she faced in Northern society.

This feeling of a lost past is comparable to the attitude of the female character, Lou, in Zelda's last story published during this time period, "The Girl with Talent." This story appeared

in *College Humor* in April of 1930. While there are many passages in this story that reflect the attitude of Helena, there is one particular passage in the conclusion of this tale that stands out as it is shockingly reflective of Zelda's current situation. Zelda writes, "I am going to work so hard that my spirit will be completely broken, and I am going to be a very fine dancer," she answered, trying to look as if she saw visions" (*Collected Writings* 325). Zelda hints at possible consequences due to the decisions of this strong female character. She doesn't dwell on imagery here, instead stating clearly that Lou is determined to break her own spirit.

This claim is followed by the resolve to be a "very fine dancer," as if Lou knows she cannot ever be a truly great dancer. This is reflective of Zelda as she took up dancing once again in adulthood though could not be the prima ballerina she dreamed of. Additionally, it alludes to Zelda's fear of only ever being "fine" at anything, from family life to a career, and never great. Finally, Lou is described as "trying to look as if she saw visions." Zelda entered a clinic for the first time just months after the publication of this story. In later clinics she would claim to have visions, including speaking to God or even predicting her own death (Milford 382). It is interesting that Zelda chooses to describe Lou in a way that would later condemn Zelda. Zelda resolves to take control in her situation. While she may still live in the North or be traveling abroad, she has decided to continue writing and dancing to become who she truly was rather than who society expected her to be. By writing of Lou though, she has already predicted how this may break her own spirit and, possibly, her mind.

The publications during the time leading up to Zelda's first mental breakdown build the momentum Zelda needed to refocus herself and redirect her writing. From 1928 to 1930 Zelda transitioned from articles that honestly offered her realistic understanding of the Northern society she had been part of for nearly a decade. Her transition to short stories also mirrors a transition in

herself, showing a renewed desire to no longer hide who she truly was. Zelda's short stories contain imagery of the South and at times, like in "Southern Girl," take place in the South. This shows Zelda's identification of the importance of the South. It also shows a separation from her true self that occurred when she moved North. For the few years remaining, until 1934, Zelda continued to write only fiction, including two more "Girl" stories. Finally, her novel, *Save Me the Waltz*, provides a type of summary of Zelda's life and reveals her final return to her Southern home.

Chapter 3: Returning Home

Between April 1930 and October 1932, Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald published five short stories and a novel while traveling between continents, states, and hospitals. The most important transitional event for Zelda during these three years was the return to the Southern roots of her Montgomery home. She began these years on April 23, 1930, in Malmaison Clinic outside of Paris after experiencing her first mental breakdown. Scott quickly moved Zelda to Valmont Clinic in Switzerland where Zelda told the staff she was not sick and had been forced into the clinic (Cline 260). After her breakdown, Zelda wrote almost frantically and produced work at a greater frequency than ever before, as if she was writing to retrieve her mind or to find a way back home. Most biographers characterize Zelda's writing of this time as chaotic and filled with non-sequiturs. It was a period of rushed and messy expression. Much of her writing during these years, including her novel *Save Me the Waltz*, has been neglected by biographers and scholars alike. But it is in these works that Zelda retells her own story, explaining her search for self and the South. In five short stories and one novel, Zelda shows a complete removal from Northern culture and a decided effort to return to the South. When at last she did return to the South Zelda fulfilled her desire for self-expression and reclaimed the sense of belonging she had searched for in all of her previous pieces.

“A Millionaire’s Girl” (1930) and “Poor Working Girl” (1931)

Soon after Zelda's stay at Valmont Clinic in Switzerland, her short story “A Millionaire’s Girl” appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* on May 7, 1930. On June 5 of 1930, Zelda entered Prangins Clinic near Geneva, Switzerland. Seven months later her story “Poor Working Girl”

appeared in *College Humor* in January of 1931.* Both stories detail the lives of two young women who choose to leave New York in search for what they truly desire. Zelda mirrors her similar desire more clearly in these two stories than ever before. The repercussions of this desire, and acting on it, are extreme in the case of the first tale.

Zelda uses the first-person viewpoint in “A Millionaire’s Girl” in order to be both the narrator and a character in the story. This creates a feeling of intimacy. Further, many aspects of Zelda’s life are reflected in the main heroine, Caroline. Caroline lives what Zelda’s life may have been had she left Scott after moving to New York. Zelda prefaces Caroline’s character, explaining her history was, “short and hysterical—a runaway marriage—annulled immediately—a year in small parts on the New York stage, and the scandalous journalism...she started out empty-handed, equipped with only the love and despair in her father’s vague eyes” (*Collected Writings* 328). Mentioning Caroline’s father is an act of looking back to the beginning, to where Caroline originated. The love and despair that Caroline’s father experienced is similar to how biographers describe the reaction of Zelda’s father, Judge Anthony Sayre, to Zelda and Scott’s marriage (Mayfield 52). Biographers miss an important opportunity to gain insight into Zelda’s life by neglecting the recurrence of father figures in Zelda’s stories. Nearly all of Zelda’s “Girl” stories include a relationship between a child and a father, showing that as Zelda matured and spent more time away from home, her father was frequently on her mind. Judge Sayre had come to represent the South and a sense of self she had left there.

As “A Millionaire’s Girl” continues, Caroline enters a relationship with Barry, a millionaire who later leaves her and moves to Paris. In response, Caroline moves to California to become an actress. After Zelda in the role of the narrator meets Caroline on the train to

* It is difficult to establish the composition dates of the stories. This assumes that, for purposes of establishing chronological sequence, the publication dates reflect the sequence of their composition dates.

California, Zelda wonders, “what determination had sent her scurrying from a world that she knew, but that didn’t know her, across a continent to a world that knew her from her escapades, but that she didn’t know” (*Collected Writings* 331). The impact that moving to the North had on Zelda is clear once again. The world that “she knew, but that didn’t know her” represents Zelda having left her Southern roots and the world of Montgomery that, at the time of her youth, didn’t understand her desire for success. The world that “knew her from her escapades, but that she didn’t know” represents Northern society that presumed to know Zelda as a celebrity wife and flapper. Zelda though, never felt that she truly belonged in the North. In this passage she reminisces, wondering what her own “determination” was to leave home. This contrast from her previous stories is poignant as she has never before discussed her feelings about leaving her home so directly.

Zelda continued this discussion of leaving and returning home in her following story “Poor Working Girl.” Published in January of 1931, less than a year after the publication of “A Millionaire’s Girl” and her move to Prangins Clinic, Zelda’s mind was focused on a transition to her Southern home. She completely removed herself from the culture of Northern life and these stories allow her to formulate stories of other women in similar situations. In these stories Zelda deliberated between the life she had come to know and the life she had left behind, the one she was searching for. In “Poor Working Girl” Zelda’s heroine, Eloise, considers:

But to Eloise, all motivating power was of divine origin and people waited for its coming like a prisoner for a trial, with the expectation of release or a sense of black misgiving. Both these sensations were merged in her when she found herself at home again...and New York seemed awfully far from the yellow frame

house full of the sweetness of big Sunday meals and the noise of the cleaning in the mornings and black shadows from an open fire. (*Collected Writings* 341)

Zelda's description of Eloise's "expectation of release or a sense of black misgiving" mirrors Zelda's own thoughts about returning to the South. She had not yet returned to Montgomery, or even America, by this time. Even through this deliberation it is clear which option Zelda was drawn to. New York is only described as far away while the home Eloise returns to is a "yellow frame house full of the sweetness of big Sunday meals," with noises and shadows that emit memory. New York no longer held any promise for Zelda. She had experienced a misunderstood celebrity life and critiqued the materialistic success of the North. The South was inviting her back with memory and promise of allowing her to be herself.

Following the publications of Zelda's seven "Girl" stories, she was released from Prangins Clinic on September 15, 1931. The Fitzgeralds then returned to America permanently. They rented a house in Montgomery until the spring of the following year so that Zelda could be close to her family while her father was ill. Scott traveled to Hollywood alone for work with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (*Romantic Egoists* 172). Zelda's father, Judge Anthony Dickinson Sayre, died November 17, 1931. The death of the Judge had a greater impact on Zelda than nearly anything else in her life, as her novel *Save Me the Waltz* verifies. Further, it solidified Zelda's desire to live in the South and, apart from some time in Phipps Clinic in Baltimore after a second breakdown, she never again lived in the North.

“Miss Ella” (1931) and “The Continental Angle” (1932)

The first story in the period from 1930 to 1932 was published in *Scribner’s Magazine* in December of 1931, shortly after Judge Sayre’s death, though it was likely written while he was still alive. “Miss Ella” is full of nostalgia for aunt Ella who represents any elderly Southern woman. The story is filled with descriptions of gardens and relies on the use of similes to blend images through multiple scenes. There are only three passages of dialogue in the entire text. While a seemingly common story of love and loss, Zelda’s narration feels as if the story is part of the reader’s own memory. One such passage reads, “They poured the plans for their life together into the molds of the thick tree shadows and turned them out on the midnight air marked with the delicate tracings of the leaves” (*Collected Writings* 346). With lingering and exaggerated images, a reader experiences the misty memory the South holds in Zelda’s mind.

The most powerful example of Zelda’s use of imagery that stands out in this piece is her allusion to the fictional *Alice in Wonderland*. She alluded to this novel previously in “The Changing Beauty of Park Avenue (1928). Zelda writes, “Love is for most people as elusive as the jam in *Alice in Wonderland*—jam yesterday, jam tomorrow, but no jam today” (*Collected Writings* 345). Her claim that love is elusive echoes both a desire for love and self-expression. She had experienced love, but Scott was away in Hollywood during the publication of this piece and she hoped she would find love again either with Scott or by returning to her Southern home. This also echoes Zelda’s desire for self-expression, which she feels she had as a youth in the South. Finally, the allusion to Lewis Carroll’s novel is blatant. She doesn’t want her reader to miss the connection she finds with *Alice in Wonderland* and the South. Additionally, Carroll’s novel is a children’s piece, which linked Zelda’s childhood hope of possibility to the South.

Zelda alludes to Carroll's novel once again in "The Continental Angle," published in *The New Yorker*, on June 4, 1932. "The Continental Angle" is another nostalgic, train-of-thought-style story full of beautiful memory. Zelda's line, "The hot, acrid sauce and the spring air disputed and wept together, Tweedledum and Tweedledee" (*Collected Writings* 351). There is a severity in Zelda's imagery at the beginning, but she softens it with characters from *Alice in Wonderland*, characters unintelligent and playful. This creates an association of child-like whimsy to an otherwise serious story about love. In the stories between 1930 and 1932, Zelda presented love in a more allusive way than ever before. The absence of her husband combined with the recent death of her father made her view of love less stable and more fictional. This is supported by the literary associations that Zelda has always connected with descriptions of the South. Additionally, the allusiveness that Zelda experienced may have been more literal. In many ways Zelda's stories reveal Zelda's mental state, though most biographers neglect her fiction when discussing her visits to clinics. In February of 1932, just four months before the publication of "The Continental Angle," Zelda experienced her second mental breakdown and entered Phipps Psychiatric Clinic of Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. Her life began to feel like the Carroll novel she referred so often to, as evidenced by her work.

"A Couple of Nuts" (1932)

The last short story that Zelda wrote in the time between 1930 and 1932 is titled "A Couple of Nuts" and appeared in *Scribner's Magazine* in August 1932. Many biographers regard it as her best (*Collected Writings* 271). Just like the pieces leading up to this, "A Couple of Nuts" tells a story constructed by memories, using simile to create a feeling of nostalgia. She begins the story, "I bounced my youth upon my knee as if it had been a lusty grandchild instead of a string

of intangible memories” (*Collected Writings* 353). Similar to the way in which Zelda realistically described the North in her articles published between 1928 and 1930, this story *rejects* reality and focuses on the possible inaccuracy of memory. Zelda admits that her memories are not all clear, but this story is as truthful and realistic as her memories.

Zelda focuses on the narrator’s relationship with the character Jeff as well as their friendship with the characters Larry and Lola. What really stands out in “A Couple of Nuts” is Zelda’s interpretation of time and its effect on the lives of her characters. Just like the passage above that describes the possible falsehood in memory, the following passage discusses the influence time has on relationships. This mirrors Zelda’s discussion of the influence of time on generations and on love in her publications from 1928 to 1930. When speaking of the relationship between Larry and Lola, Zelda observes, “Afterwards, when unhappiness used up the unexplored regions in their laughter and hardened their gestures into remembered mimicry, they got to love telling people about the hard time they had getting started” (*Collected Writings* 355). Beginning her sentence with “Afterwards,” Zelda creates characters with past lives that the reader does not know about. The reader, an outside observer, has already missed so much that he or she could not know what is true or false memory. The couple is unhappy and hard, only acting the way they do because of “remembered mimicry,” mimicking who they used to be or the society they are in. In August 1932, Zelda perceived her life with Scott in the same way. After returning to the South she also experienced “remembered mimicry.” She became a combination of the person she remembered being as a youth in the South and the person she appeared to be—her performative self—in the North.

The conclusion of “A Couple of Nuts” continues to describe the implications of the passing of time. Zelda writes, “It takes time a good thirty years to batter down a woman’s looks

and crumple the charm she acquires from moving in a world she finds rich in that fantastic quality” (*Collected Writings* 363). At the time of the publication of this piece Zelda was thirty-two years old. She is explaining that time takes the length of time that she has lived, nearly 32 years, to “batter down” and “crumple” a woman. Zelda’s own feelings are on display. She left home at nearly twenty years old, full of promise and hope for what the North had to offer. After writing, dancing, and traveling abroad it seemed as if time itself was fighting Zelda. To a point it succeeded, and Zelda found herself in Phipps Psychiatric Clinic. She constructed stories as proof of her journey to the North and back home to the South.

***Save Me the Waltz* (1932)**

During January and February of 1932, at the Phipps Clinic of Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald wrote her novel, *Save Me the Waltz*.^{*} She sent it to Maxwell Perkin at Scribner’s in March of the same year without Scott’s approval and without his even having looked at the manuscript. Perkins refused to publish it until Scott had read it. After initially learning of and reading Zelda’s novel Scott was furious, claimed she had stolen from him, and felt threatened (Milford 216). Eventually, Scott conceded and sent his revisions to Perkins in May and it was published in October 1932. While the size of the initial printing is unknown, it is assumed to have been a Depression run of around three thousand copies. It is predicted that only 1,392 copies sold on its initial run (*Collected Writings* 5).

Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald’s novel is full of hope and contains the essence of everything Zelda became over the previous twelve years of marriage, motherhood, “flapperdom,” and travel.

^{*} In this discussion of *Save Me the Waltz* I should address the fiction to life fallacy that is present. Though Alabama is not Zelda, there are so many instances in Alabama’s fictional life that mirror Zelda’s own experience that a reader cannot separate the woman completely. In this thesis I am not using Alabama’s life to describe Zelda’s, but rather analyzing Alabama’s responses and experiences to uncover Zelda’s interpretations and imaginings of times in her own life.

Through her heroine Alabama, Zelda depicts a life nearly identical to her own in many ways. Many biographers refer to the novel as an exaggerated autobiography (Milford 224). Zelda tells the story of a young woman, Alabama Beggs, who grew up in the South and meets an Army Officer and painter, David Knight, during World War I. After the war, the couple is married and moves North, living in Connecticut and New York. They become celebrities overnight and after reading the morning paper, Alabama exclaims, “Awfully silly. Isn’t it fun—well, I’m glad we’re famous anyway” (*Collected Writings* 45). The likeness between Zelda and Alabama is striking. The couple travels abroad to France and Switzerland, during which time Alabama has a romance with a French Aviator Jacques Chevre-Feuilles, the fictional counterpart to Edouard Jozan, and dedicates herself to ballet, determined to find self-expression and her own success. After an infection leaves her unable to dance ever again, the couple returns to the South where Alabama’s father, Judge Beggs, is dying.

Alabama’s story in *Save Me the Waltz* bears a striking resemblance to Zelda’s own life. The speed at which she wrote her novel, during only two months while at Phipps Clinic, implies a sense of realism and honesty that has become ever more present in Zelda’s work. Biographers have neglected *Save Me the Waltz* as an accurate depiction of Zelda’s life and feelings because it was published as a fictional piece and written while she was institutionalized. This fault of biographers allowed the myth of Zelda to grow, creating a constructed depiction of Zelda. Using *Save Me the Waltz* as a lens for understanding Zelda’s life allows the reader to observe Zelda as she reconstructs her life more directly than in any of her other fictional pieces.

In addition to telling the story of Alabama’s life, *Save Me the Waltz* includes the different aspects of Northern culture that stand out in Zelda’s articles and stories. These aspects include focusing on the flapper, the influence of generations on each other, and Zelda’s own desire for

self-expression and success. Zelda intermingles each of these aspects into Alabama's story, creating a summary of all of the pieces she previously published. Zelda constructs her story against the two backdrops that were most important in her own life. First, she describes the setting of the South saying, "June bugs covered the moist fruit in the fig trees with motionless activity of clustering flies...The bareness of the dry Bermuda grass about the pecan trees crawled imperceptibly with tawny caterpillars" (*Collected Writings* 34). This passage evokes a feeling of growth. The fruit is moist and the grass is crawling with caterpillars. She associates the South with natural growth, nature that man does not infringe upon. This contrasts her description of the North, which is harsh and man-made. Zelda describes a scene with musical notes hanging, "above the city like an indigo wash, forming themselves from asphalt dust and sooty shadows under the cornices and limp gusts of air exhaled from closing windows. They lay above the streets like a white fog off a swamp. Through the gloom, the whole world went to tea" (47). This image emits a sense of artificial creation instead of growth. Cornices, lamps, and windows have been built and are used as opposed to the pecan trees merely existing. The personification of air being "exhaled from closing windows" and the music lying "above the streets like a white fog" creates a feeling of an overbearing pressure and of control. Society exists in this Northern world to do mundane things, such as going to tea, while stuck in gloom. This comparison shows Zelda's feelings toward the North and the South more clearly than her other works because she can describe both in one piece, as her character experiences a transition similar to her own.

Zelda transitions from heavy imagery to hinting at the influence of the flapper on her own life. While Alabama is not described as a flapper, she experiences a loss of self, similar to the loss Zelda felt due to the celebrity life from David's success. After some time living in the North Alabama "had known that no individual can force other people forever to sustain their own

versions of that individual's character—that sooner or later they will stumble across the person's own conception of themselves" (*Collected Writings* 56). First, this passage is an example of the non-sequitur style of writing that biographers associate with Zelda (Cline 86). While not completely clear, the construction of this sentence reveals an intimate quality in Zelda's writing and stream of consciousness style that was shown in "Miss Ella" (1931) and "The Continental Angle" (1932). Zelda reveals a daunting awareness that one day society will realize that Alabama does not fulfill the role society expects her to play. "The person's own conception of themselves" cannot be forever hidden and society will be disappointed. Zelda experienced this herself as she initially tried to fulfill the role of the flapper and later, because of a combination of her own search for self-expression and her mental breakdowns, she could no longer be the flapper that society expected the wife of author F. Scott Fitzgerald to be. This emotion was especially poignant during January and February of 1932, when Zelda wrote *Save Me the Waltz*, as she was in Phipps Clinic and not able to be with her husband in Hollywood.

Two passages add additional evidence of Zelda's identification with the flapper image with which she had been associated. After being in the celebrity light for some time, Alabama tells David, "It's very difficult to be two simple people at once, one who wants to have a law to itself and the other who wants to keep all the nice old things and be loved and safe and protected" (*Collected Writings* 56). In this passage Zelda differentiates between the two types of women she has been. The first is the flapper who "wants to have a law to itself," to create and experience life in her own way. The second type of woman is one who "wants to keep all the nice old things and be loved and safe." This woman echoes Zelda and Alabama's Southern heritages. The "nice old things" refer to traditions of the South and memories of feeling love and protection as a child. Alabama is searching, but her husband has begun to view her as society

does. David tells Alabama, “You’ve become nothing but an aesthetic theory” (50). This quotation is a summation of how Zelda assumes all of society viewed her. As the flapper, Zelda felt like she was fulfilling the role of a fictional character. Zelda discusses her change in desires through Alabama.

After traveling abroad with David and friends, Alabama begins to focus on herself. She throws herself into dancing and it becomes a driving force in her life. Zelda writes, “It seemed to Alabama that, reaching her goal...in proving herself, she would achieve that peace which she imagined went only in surety of one’s self” (*Collected Writings* 118). To Alabama, dancing was the one way she thought she would find self-expression and “surety” in who she was. After leaving home she had become such a part of the Northern culture, and the celebrity life of her husband, that she was no longer sure of who she was. Like Zelda, Alabama hoped to find surety by practicing a talent special to her and hoped to be successful in her own right. Although, after constant practice, the dancing has major repercussions. Zelda reveals that Alabama’s body “was so full of static from the constant whip of her work that she could get no clear communication with herself” (161). This hints at Zelda’s experience in clinics when she was prohibited from dancing or writing. The constant drive to perfect her dancing, combined with the chaotic life of her marriage, ended with major consequences for both Alabama and Zelda. When Alabama’s toe gets infected and she can no longer dance, Zelda suffered a mental breakdown.

The youthful tone of the novel shifts as the story comes to a conclusion; tensions ease and a sense of peace is apparent in Zelda’s writing as Alabama returns home. Alabama’s desire changes from thinking she can find expression in the North to finding it in the South, specifically where her father is. Alabama doesn’t realize how much of an influence her father had been on her early life until she returns home while he is dying. This reflects Zelda’s return to

Montgomery for the same reason. In her novel, *Zelda* reveals how great an influence her father had been and how important he was to her. Alabama realizes her father's importance as *Zelda* writes, "Without her father the world would be without its last resource. 'But,' she remembered with a sudden sobering shock, 'it will be me who is the last resource when my father is dead'" (*Collected Writings* 181). The word choice is interesting in this passage as Alabama does not clarify what she will be the last resource for. Is she the last resource for the world, just as her father was? Or will she be the last resource for herself? Both of these options show Alabama's growth since she first left home expecting David to provide for her. In her article "A Wizard Cultivator," Mary Wood provides additional insight that "Alabama is released from the patriarchal world" with the death of her father and her "creativity is no longer ruled in the same way by the interlocking ideologies of submissive daughterhood, wifehood, mental illness...[and] appropriate feminine art forms" (259). Additionally, this explains *Zelda*'s feeling of achieving her own success with the completion of her novel and return to the South. The self-expression *Zelda* experienced through her writing, especially her novel, only came after she moved away from Northern culture and experienced the death of her father. Soon after this passage Alabama remembers her father telling her, "If you want to choose, you must be a goddess." Alabama responds, "It wasn't easy to be a goddess away from Olympus" (189). Her Olympus was home, the South she had grown up in. At this point, Alabama realizes that her own success and self-expression only comes from finding success within herself, being who she truly is, instead of searching out into the world for success that may or may not come back to her. This is all reflected in Alabama's literally returning home in the conclusion of the novel.

In previous works, like "Eulogy on the Flapper" (1922) and "Looking Back Eight Years" (1928), *Zelda* discusses differences in generations to illustrate problems and changes in society.

In *Save Me the Waltz*, she uses generations to suggest the importance of returning to home and family. In doing this, Zelda shows her respect for older generations and a hope in allowing generations to come together instead of forcing the separation of them. When David and Alabama return to her Southern home they are accompanied by their daughter, Bonnie, and Mademoiselle, the nanny. As they leave the train station Alabama observes, “The wide square, masked in velvet shadows, drowned in the lull of the South, spread like soft blotting paper under man and his heritage” (*Collected Writings* 181). She describes the South as a backdrop for the heritage of a man, encompassing everything a man has been and everything he will be. Zelda experienced this when she finally returned to Montgomery. She continues with Mademoiselle explaining to Bonnie, “You’re safer here than you’ve ever been in your life. This is where your mother was little” (182). This need for safety echoes back to Alabama’s confusion being torn between two women, one of whom “wants to keep all the nice old things and be loved and safe and protected” (56). By associating safety with a return to family, the South “where your mother was little,” shows Zelda’s feeling of peace and security after her return to the South. Zelda returned to her youth, where she had always felt secure before, and she revealed her belief that she would always be safe in the South.

Zelda reveals a final comparison between generations in an interaction between Millie, Alabama’s mother, and her granddaughter Bonnie. By this clear separation in generations, Zelda presents a coming together and harmony between generations. This is very different compared to the discontent between generations that Zelda discussed in articles such as “Paint and Powder” (1929). Zelda writes, “The old lady laughed. She was very proud of her grandchildren...It was very pretty to see her with Bonnie, both of them pretending great wisdom about things, both of them eternally pretending” (*Collected Writings* 192). The description of Millie being “very

proud” of Bonnie is very different from Zelda’s previous descriptions of older generations not understanding the younger ones. Zelda combines the two generations, showing a more important connection of family between them. They are “pretending great wisdom...eternally pretending.” Zelda does not determine one generation to be superior to another, or one correct while the other is wrong. Instead, Zelda claims that they are both pretending because that is how they can come together to create harmony. This resonates with Zelda as she is pretending by using her imagination and experience to create a fictionalized retelling of her life in *Save Me the Waltz*. Zelda reveals that there is very little difference in generations, just as there is very little difference in her fiction and her life.

Zelda concludes *Save Me the Waltz* with two passages. In the first Alabama makes a final connection between herself and the South. Alabama reflects, “we will have to seek some perspective on ourselves, some link between ourselves and all the values more permanent than us of which we have felt the existence by placing ourselves in our father’s setting” (*Collected Writings* 196). She realizes that who she has become is a combination of her experience and the values that are instilled in someone as a child. She only realizes this, though, by returning to the South and placing herself “in our father’s setting.” Zelda recognized that the values and influences of youth had more of an influence on her than she had ever before recognized. By returning to the South, her “father’s setting” and where her “mother was little,” Zelda also returned to her true self.

The second passage that Zelda concludes her novel with takes place after guests leave the house the Knights are renting while in the South, and David tells Alabama that she shouldn’t clean the ashtrays out before the company has left. To this Alabama explains, “It’s very expressive of myself. I just lump everything in a great heap which I have labeled ‘the past,’ and,

having thus emptied this deep reservoir that was once myself, I am ready to continue” (*Collected Writings* 196). In “A Wizard Cultivator,” Wood adds that this passage reveals “Alabama’s conflicting impulses regarding form: her engrained habit of finding rules in all things and her desire to ‘just lump everything in a great heap’” (259). The “engrained habit of finding rules in all things” is found in Alabama’s drive to perfect her dancing, mirrored by Zelda’s similar desire. This “habit of finding rules” is additionally vibrant in Zelda’s early articles in which she critiqued Northern culture and discussed the purpose of the flapper and whether or not the younger generation was finding true success. The act of lumping “everything in a great heap” is what Zelda did in *Save Me the Waltz*. She wrote the novel in two months during her time in Phipps Clinic in Baltimore, Maryland. She had returned to her Southern home after moving North and traveling abroad. After taking on the role of the flapper she searched for true self-expression in her own writing, painting, and dancing. It wasn’t until returning home to her Southern roots that she found comfort in the heritage that her father’s death had brought to her attention. Reading *Save Me the Waltz* as an extension of Zelda’s diary, and her own retelling of her life, allows Zelda to reconstruct herself through her own words. The misconceptions and mythos surrounding Zelda, composed by biographers and years of ignoring Zelda’s writing, are ‘the past,’ and the true Zelda is now ready to continue.

Conclusion

Most of Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald's published writing comes from the 1920 to 1932 years that have been the focus of this study. To date, critics and scholars have largely failed to carefully examine Zelda's published work for what it reveals about her, choosing instead to rely more often for their representations of her on secondary sources, including those offered by F. Scott Fitzgerald, who often presented her in reductive terms as the model for the creation of many of his fictional characters. Even recent biographers have often relied heavily on constructions of Zelda that are anchored in stereotypes that originated in the popular culture—constructions that have emphasized her role as the archetypal flapper. A more accurate portrait of Zelda, as this study has suggested, can be drawn by examining her through the lens of her own writing, and, in particular, by understanding her evolving feelings about living in the North after she had left Montgomery in the wake of her marriage to Scott—and, after her absence from the home of her youth, about her desire to return to the South, expressed most directly in her fiction leading up to and including *Save Me the Waltz*. Also, contrary to many misrepresentations of Zelda, which depict her finally as a despairing and broken person, a study of her own writing reveals her to be from beginning to end an individual for whom hope remained a deeply ingrained aspect of her character.

When Zelda moved to New York in 1920 to marry F. Scott Fitzgerald she was interested in the promises and possibilities offered by life in the North. In the beginning she very much wanted to fit in, and she attempted at first to become the person that the popular culture wished her to be: the glamorous figure who danced in the Pulitzer Fountain outside the Plaza hotel and the carefree flapper who rode down Fifth Avenue on the top of taxi cabs. In this period, she

wrote about the life she was living, and in her articles she seemed to glorify a lifestyle that included extravagant shopping sprees, constant partying, and outrageous behavior. Initially her articles appeared in popular magazines like *Metropolitan* and *McCall's*, and they include commentaries on the flapper that reveal at least on their surface Zelda's desire for acceptance by the culture that had begun to embrace her. Among the articles published between 1920 and 1928 are these: "Friend Husband's Latest," "Eulogy on the Flapper," "Does a Moment of Revolt Come Sometime to Every Married Man?" "Breakfast," "What Became of the Flappers?" and "The Changing Beauty of Park Avenue." In these articles her desire to experience the promise and glamor of the North seems apparent.

However, while initially trying to fulfill the role of the flapper and celebrity wife, she began to recognize and critique aspects of popular culture, including many of those things that she had previously seemed to celebrate. By 1928 Zelda had experienced disillusionment with the popular culture of Northern society that she had been a part of for the past eight years, and she began expressing her reservations more than she had before—and she also began alluding to positive qualities related to her past life in the South. One example is specifically found in "Our Own Movie Queen," a short story she wrote during this time in which she expresses her initial desire to find success and acceptance in the North and hints at her nostalgia for the Southern home she left behind. From 1928 to 1930 Zelda wrote a total of three articles and four short stories that suggest a major turning point in her thinking. Her articles, including "Looking Back Eight Years," "Who Can Fall in Love After Thirty?" and "Paint and Powder" reveal her to be still caught within society's expectations of her, but these articles and stories also offer at least veiled criticism of Northern culture, pointing particularly to generational issues related to the treatment of the younger generation by the older one. These articles and stories also reveal

Zelda's greater desire to find self-expression in her own success, instead of continuing to be forced into the role of the flapper and celebrity wife. In effect, she rejected the role of flapper that she had been urged to assume and began to remove the mask she had put on when she first moved to New York.

After traveling abroad between 1928 and 1930, Zelda began to publish short stories as an avenue for expression through characters and descriptions that reflect her affection for the South. These stories include "The Original Follies Girl," "Southern Girl," "The Girl the Prince Liked," and "The Girl with Talent." These reveal Zelda's search for fulfillment and expression, with touches of heavy nostalgia for the home of her youth. These stories are part of a collection of seven "Girl" stories that display a turning away from Northern culture, and this is reflected in every story in which the heroine leaves the North. The genre of fiction allowed Zelda to be more freely imaginative, using her publications as a type of diary to express emotion. Her short stories reveal a rediscovered attachment to the South and calmness and magic that she associated with it.

From 1930 to 1932 Zelda wrote fewer stories, but each story reflected her desire for self-expression and each included a firm resolve to return to the South, using imagery that created a feeling of the South as home. These stories include "A Millionaire's Girl," "Poor Working Girl," "Miss Ella," "The Continental Angle," and "A Couple of Nuts," and they all exhibit a form of stream of consciousness that points ahead to the style and substance of her final publication of the 1920-1932 period: her novel, *Save Me the Waltz*. In this her heroine, Alabama Knight, finds the kind of self-fulfillment and individuation in the South that Zelda had been looking for after leaving the Northern culture in which she had never felt at home—and this even after experiencing the death of her father and after experiencing emotional breakdowns. Reading Zelda's published work leading up to and including *Save Me the Waltz* allows the reader to see

Zelda construct and reconstruct herself as a woman who has gained a measure of success in her return to the South. Though Zelda's own side of the story has been neglected for much too long, reading it closely reveals finally a woman who has experienced and continues to the end of her life to experience perhaps more than her share of difficulties. Through it all, however, she has maintained hope; and she has managed to tell her story through her own writing, which merits close analysis because it is the best story. Zelda always understood well how others viewed her and reveals prophetically, as Alabama Knight observes in *Save Me the Waltz*, that, in the end, "People always believe the best story" (*Collected Writings* 55).

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