All American Girls: Geographical Implications and the Quest for Female Autonomy in Zelda Fitzgerald's Girl Series

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In Woody Allen's 2011 film, *Midnight in Paris*, Zelda Fitzgerald is portrayed as a 'vivacious, charming, and charismatic socialite ready to take on the world. The bubbly interpretation of the 1920s icon in Allen's movie captures the way in which pop culture encapsulates and essentializes Fitzgerald's identity. Throughout her historical depictions, Fitzgerald receives the titles of flapper, socialite, and wife of the writer, F. Scott Fitzgerald. However, the infamous Jazz Age icon was largely ignored as an esteemed writer herself. In 1929, the magazine *College Humor* commissioned a deal with her husband, that she would write six short stories, consisting of around 5,000 words each, about the lives of young women in the US (Anderson 24). The literary magazine asked that each story "evoke" a certain archetypal woman such as a Southern Belle or a New York socialite (Anderson 24). In a matter of months, Fitzgerald brought these women to life through her words in what became known as the "Girl" series.

Despite these literary pieces making up a significant portion of Fitzgerald's work, they did not receive a great deal of literary merit. The fact that all the stories were either published as being co-written with Scott or published under her husband's name entirely, even though he had little to do with the project, primarily explains this lack of credit. For years Fitzgerald's short stories were relegated to the background, and the writer remained a side note as Scott's interesting yet mentally ill wife throughout most of the late 20th century. It wasn't until Nancy Milford's moving dissertation and biography, *Zelda*, in 1970 that Fitzgerald began to earn the credit for her literature that she rightly deserved. The research on Fitzgerald as a sophisticated writer lulled for the rest of the 20th century. However, the beginning of the 21st century brought a resurgence of research around Fitzgerald's stories, vindicating her literary talent and providing the writer a place in the literary timeline of the Jazz Age.

Throughout the scholarly research on Fitzgerald's literature, many choose to focus on the flapper's 1932 novel, *Save Me the Waltz*, yet I find that Fitzgerald's Girl series best showcases the multifaceted talent of Fitzgerald as a writer. The collection consists of six short stories: "The Original Follies Girl," "Southern Girl," "The Girl the Prince Liked," "The Girl with Talent," "A Millionaire's Girl," and "Poor Working Girl." In each tale, Fitzgerald offers a window into the lives of modern day women who break societal norms in order to gain agency over their own lives. In addition to telling the stories of women fighting to gain personal autonomy, Fitzgerald uses her stories as a reflection of the intense social contrast between the North and South in the US. Through her setting and characters, Fitzgerald skillfully reveals the geographical implications of a feminine South and masculine North that heavily influence the lives and choices of her female characters, as well as providing a narrative for the modern, American woman in the 21st century.

Geographical Implications: The Feminine South vs. Masculine North

Fitzgerald's gendered geographical implications first arise in her short story "Southern Girl." A Southerner herself, the story closely relates to Fitzgerald's adolescence in Montgomery, Alabama. Biographer Linda Wagner-Martin believes the story to be Fitzgerald's "apologia" or defense of the South against the harsh notes of criticisms she received in the North (111). Fitzgerald opens the story by dreamily describing the landscape of a small, fictional town in Alabama called Jeffersonville. In rich detail, the Southern native describes how "Wistaria meets over the warm asphalt in summer [...] The drugstores are bright at night with the organdy balloons of girls' dresses under the big electric fans [...] and the lacy blackness under the trees disgorges young girls in white and pink" (Fitzgerald 299). Fitzgerald emphasis on pastel colors

and soft imagery through words such as “lacey” create a romantic and seductive mood that elicits the image of a delicate, feminine South.

The flapper’s soft imagery of pastel colors and delicate features sharply contrasts with her description of the North. Instead of pleasant, light colors, Fitzgerald counters her dreamy Southern setting with the rigid, dirty cityscape of New York City in “A Millionaire’s Girl.” She opens the narrative by describing how twilight “hung above New York like indigo wash, forming themselves from asphalt dust and sooty shadows [...] The faraway lights from buildings high in the sky burned hazily through the blue, like golden objects lost in deep grass” (Fitzgerald 327). Opposed to the soft lavender of wisteria, Fitzgerald paints New York City in hues of dark blue with glimmers of gold, exhibiting the masculine qualities of darkness and possibly even wealth. Through her distinct imagery, Fitzgerald immediately displays a striking difference between the North and South.

Fitzgerald makes her geographical implications even more explicit through her characters Harriet and Louise in “Southern Girl.” Harriet is characterized as the quintessential Southern Belle. In her book, *Reconstructing Dixie,* Tara McPherson explains how the Southern Belle archetype in pop culture is someone who is feminine, gentle, innocent, and pure (3-4). Essayist Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin extends McPherson’s attributes of a Southern Belle, defining the role as a woman who is “charming, witty, [and] entertaining, to rule the household but to leave to men careers and intellectual pursuits” (25). Harriet meets McPherson and Tavernier-Courbin’s ideas of a genial Southern hostess, yet she still has multiple ways in which she exemplifies a modern woman. In a family of only a single mother and younger sister, Harriet is characterized as the sole breadwinner for her family. She takes care of the boarding house her mother owns as well as working as a school teacher (Fitzgerald 300). Fitzgerald describes

Harriet as free-spirited woman whose known for her Southern charms and informal manner that puts her guests at ease. Her nonchalant behavior goes so far that she even answers the door in nothing but "a pair of blue bloomers and a huge bath towel" (Fitzgerald 301) while getting ready to go out for the evening. When Harriet first meets Louise, she suddenly becomes aware and embarrassed by her informal manner. Fitzgerald establishes Louise as an outsider to the South, remarking that "even in the dark, Harriet knew [Louise] was not Southern" (301). She further instills the contrast between the two characters through Louise's appearance. Louise is said to have "black hair [...] too sleek to have known the muddy water of summer creeks, and her dark clothes cut with a precision and directness which could not have been interrupted by frequent half-hour respites from the heat" (Fitzgerald 301). Fitzgerald later addresses the Northern figure as "Louise of the indigo hair and aquamarine eyes" (303), alluding to indigo color of the Northern sky in "A Millionaire's Girl." Through this minute detail, Fitzgerald makes it clear that Louise is a symbol of Northern customs and manners. Even though it is clear that Louise is the outsider in the Southern backdrop, it is significant that Harriet is the one who is embarrassed about her appearance at the contact of something new (Fitzgerald 301).

Later in the story, Harriet makes a pilgrimage up North to see her fiancé, Dan Stone. As soon as she steps out into the station, the Southern Belle immediately feels "a sense of alarm [arise] out of the back of her neck" (Fitzgerald 304) when she realizes the harsh difference of the North to her comforting Southern home. She meets her fiancé's mother which the narrator describes as "concise and formal and as black and white as a printed page" (Fitzgerald 304), sharply juxtaposing Harriet's informal and carefree temperament. Fitzgerald explains how in the North Harriet "was surprised at the robustness of her Southern manner. She felt foreign to herself in finding herself so foreign to others" (305). The protagonist quickly comes to the realization

that she does not fit in this masculine Northern setting, and retreats back to her Southern roots. Ironically, when Harriet returns home, she begins to adapt to Northern customs, searching for "a bigger sophistication" than her rural Southern town could offer her. In the end, Harriet rejects her feminine Southern roots of nonchalance and informality to achieve social mobility that would keep her from future humiliation.

Fitzgerald's stark juxtaposition of Harriet and Louise in "Southern Girl" extends into a larger conversation on the Southern Inferiority complex and Northern disapproval that arose in the early 20th century. Angie Maxwell, a professor at the University of Arkansas, classifies the Southern Inferiority complex as a notion that spurred during the post-Reconstructionist era when the South was left impoverished and brutally stereotyped (2). McPherson dives deeper into the connotations that came out of Southern Inferiority, citing that the main stereotype that originated during this time was the feminization of the South to make the region seem weaker opposed to the wealthier, industrialized North (19). This notion of regional superiority led to a backlash from the South in which white Southerners felt the persistent need to defend their way of life and resist the weakened, feminized image imposed from the North. Fitzgerald particularly picks up on this complex in "Southern Girl" through Harriet's newfound awareness and embarrassment of Southern mannerisms. After initially fleeing from the Northern disapproval she receives in Ohio, Harriet redeems herself through education in Northern mannerisms to ensure she never faces a complex of inferiority again.

Another significant point in which Fitzgerald uses her characters as an extension of the masculine North is through her main character, Helena in "The Girl The Prince Liked." The narrator first introduces Helena through the remark that she has a "driving, restless ambition" from her father and the need to establish social dominance by intensely staring people down.

Fitzgerald makes it clear in the opening pages that Helena was relegated to the Midwest due to her marriage and not on her own accord. The narrator notes that Helena "had always thought of herself as an Easterner" and never quite adapted to the somberness of Midwestern life which she exudes through her interest in elaborate parties and various love affairs. Helena eventually achieves full agency over her own life by moving from the Midwest to New York City which she finally has her momentous affair with the prince of England. The main character of "The Girl The Prince Liked" has a striking relationship between her personality and setting. Unlike her initial imagery in "Southern Girl" and "A Millionaire's Girl," Fitzgerald does not take as much care in expositing a landscape for Helena's story to take place, but rather has Helena react to the mundane setting that she has been given. The simplistic, neutral background of the Midwest allows Fitzgerald to exemplify Helena's abrasive personality, and deeply examine the traits of Northern masculinity as a sense of regional superiority.

Not only does Fitzgerald use her setting and characters to portray the gendered cultural divide between North and South, but the writer further exemplifies these differences between the North and South through the character's friendships and relationships. In "Southern Girl," Harriet is surrounded by adoring female confidantes and does not have a male presence in her home. Along with the absence of a male figure, Harriet spends most of her days socializing with her tightly knit friend group that consists completely of women (Fitzgerald 302). The only significant male characters in Harriet's life are Dan, her romantic interest for the first part of the story (Fitzgerald 304), and later on her husband, Charles (Fitzgerald 306-307). When Louise comes into the picture, the narrator does not mention her having any female friends at home and completely omits Louise's social life when Harriet sees her again in Ohio (Fitzgerald 305). In Jeffersonville, Harriet quickly initiates Louise into her social group and attempts to make her feel

at home among her social circle, yet Harriet does not receive the same treatment from Louise in the North.

The lack of female friendships for Fitzgerald's Northern characters plays a notable role in the rest of Girl Series. For example in "A Millionaire's Girl," the protagonist Caroline has a private conversation with the narrator in which she admits that she is only dispersing information to her because she "[hasn't] any friends" to confide in (Fitzgerald 334). The presence of female friends within the Girl Series specifically plays a larger role in how the female characters are associated and identified. In "The Girl The Prince Liked," Fitzgerald specifically highlights that Helena grew up in a motherless home with no significant female figures. This significant detail explains the abrasive masculinity Helena exudes throughout the story. Despite carrying an air of masculine qualities throughout the narrative, Helena is still largely defined by the types of men she dates. Caroline is similarly identified by her relationship with the wealthy heir, Barry in "A Millionaire's Girl." The same male association occurs yet again in "The Girl with Talent" when despite her remarkable dancing career, the main character Lou becomes notorious for her scandalous affairs with men while performing in Paris. Fitzgerald's persistent defining of her Northern characters through the men they are associated with displays the downfall of Northern masculinity in which women are not given the freedom to identify themselves through other aspects of their lives.

Fitzgerald's use of geographical implications in the Girl Series plays a significant role in exposing the social climate between the North and the South in the early 20th century. Through her use of short stories and archetypal characters such as the Southern Belle, Fitzgerald achieves a way to express the treatment of women from different cultural norms in the US. Additionally, her use of characters as an extension of region projects the larger social conflict of Southern

Inferiority and Northern disapproval. More specifically, Fitzgerald's use of regional implications in her short stories is essential to understanding her more as a writer. A Southerner herself, I believe that Fitzgerald uses the experiences of her characters to express her similar struggle of assimilating to Northern customs when she originally moved to New York City. Overall, Fitzgerald's subtle use of personal experience and strategic use of characters to express the conflict of regional superiority, speaks heavily of how gender shaped the way groups were treated in the early 20th century on a broad scale.

Narrative Perspective and the Quest for Female Autonomy

As well as using geographical implications to expose the treatment of regions within the US in the early 20th century, all of Fitzgerald's stories holistically examine modern, American women striving to achieve agency over their lives in a harsh patriarchal society. Fitzgerald's sketches were suiting yet progressive for her time. As a result of World War I and the passage the 19th amendment, more women began to reject the traditional role of housewife and joined the workforce to earn money for themselves (Gourley 33). Fitzgerald was one of the many women who loosely followed suit in this manner, using her commissions from the Girl series to pay for her dance lessons and gain independence from her abusive husband (Cline 238). In biography on Fitzgerald and her husband titled *Invented Lives*, James R. Mellow observes that all of Fitzgerald's protagonists in the Girl Series have "the desperate ambition to be something, to be someone other than 'Miss Alabama Nobody'"(292). Speaking to the societal shift occurring in the US, each of Fitzgerald's short stories features an independent woman who either works for a living or has a sustainable income from another source that allows her to enjoy life outside of the home. Through these stories, Fitzgerald is able to tell multiple narratives of American embracing a new, progressive way of life.

The first prominent way Fitzgerald provides a unique perspective into the lives of women is through her narration. In her biography *Zelda*, Milford initially describes that Fitzgerald's stories are told "by a detached and omniscient narrator about whom we know nothing" including the narrator's gender (151). In her 2015 article on Fitzgerald's short stories, Grogan agrees with Milford's thoughts on the narrator's ambiguity, and even asserts that Fitzgerald's undeveloped speaker makes the stories hard to discern from Scott's literary work. Even though the narrator of the Girl Series remains largely unknown, I believe that each of the stories is told through a limited, female first-person perspective narrator that knows the characters intimately as friends and confidantes. I classify the narrator as limited because she admits to not knowing the present whereabouts of the characters on multiple occasions. For example, the speaker in "The Girl The Prince Liked" admits that Helena's visit to see the prince in London is "the last news [she] had" of the main character. Even though, the narrator does not insert herself into the plot of the earlier tales in the Girl Series such as "The Original Follies Girl" and "Poor Working Girl," Fitzgerald establishes that the speaker personally knows the women on a social level and therefore is not completely detached from her characters.

In addition to my belief that the narrator is female, I surmise that the narrator of the Girl Series is Fitzgerald herself. The author reveals her identity to the audience through subtle hints she leaves throughout the short stories. Biographer Sally Cline analyzes Fitzgerald's small clues in her book *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*. The first hint Cline cites is when Caroline enters the narrator's home in "A Millionaire's Girl" asking "'Is this Fitzgerald's roadhouse?'" (Fitzgerald 329). From this line, Cline deduces that the narrator must be either Scott or Fitzgerald. The biographer finally comes to the conclusion that Fitzgerald must be the sole narrator of the series based on her reading of "Southern Girl," remarking that "it becomes

obvious the narrator, too, is a Southern Girl: Zelda" (Cline 238). Through my own personal close reading of the text, it is clear that the narrator is indeed Southern and female based on the collective "we" she uses to describe all-female group outings with Harriet (Fitzgerald 302), leading me to the same conclusion as Cline that Fitzgerald is the narrator of the Girl Series.

Identifying Fitzgerald as the narrator of the Girl Series plays a significant role in influencing the perspective in which the stories are told. Fitzgerald acting as a narrator ensures that the series is told from a female perspective, eliminating the male gaze that plagues the lives of the main characters. Through a female gaze, Fitzgerald aims to tell the stories of her women as accurately as possible. However, the stories are riddled with Fitzgerald's personal opinions. In her first story, "The Original Follies Girl," Fitzgerald tells the story of Gay, a young divorced woman who has achieved an independent life for herself on her ex-husband's alimony. Fitzgerald immediately describes Gay in luscious imagery, recalling how the flapper would wear her clothing "'on the surface,' as superficially as a Christmas tree supports its ornaments" (293). The speaker goes on to assert Gay was "so airy, as if she had a long time ago dismissed herself as something decorative and amusing, and not to be confused with the vital elements of American life" (Fitzgerald 293). Fitzgerald makes it clear to her audience that Gay purely lives her life for the purpose of entertainment since she does not have to worry about money, and emulates her lifestyle through her personality. While Gay appears to have a glamorous life of luxurious apartments and elaborate parties (Fitzgerald 294), she does not have everything she wants in life. Fitzgerald explains how Gay:

> was making an awful struggle to hang onto something that had never crystallized for her- it was the past. She wanted to get her hands on something tangible, to be able to say, "This is real, that is part of my experience [...] She could not correlate the events that had

> made up her life, so now when was beginning to feel time passing she felt as though she had just been born; born without a family, without a friendly house about her, without any scheme to settle into or to rebel against. (295)

Despite her lavish lifestyle, Gay desires to have a sense of belonging that is more than superficial in her life. Attempting to grasp something "tangible," the flapper decides to have a baby, only to die during childbirth (Fitzgerald 297). The speaker informs readers that news falsely documents Gay's death as a bad case of pneumonia, taking away Gay's agency in even having her story told properly. The narrator ends the storying with her own personal sentiments of disapproval on Gay's life choices, uttering that "Gay was too good of a companion and too pretty to go dying like that for a romanticism that she was always half afraid would slip away from her" (Fitzgerald 297). The narrator bluntly shows disdain for Gay's death in her final lines, believing that her infatuated dreams of having a family were not worth her life.

Through the details granted by the narrator, Gay had skillfully achieved monetary agency for herself by divorcing her husband. Even though Gay achieves the economic freedom to do whatever she pleases, she remains unfulfilled in her life since she does not have a family unit of her own. Milford describes Fitzgerald's use of a family unit in the Girl series "as proof of certain adequacy- that the girls have passed through a phase of life successfully" (151). Despite marrying and divorcing wealthy, Gay feels inadequate since she does not have a "tangible" family to display that she successfully fulfilled this unit in her life. Enthralled in the idea of successfully achieving motherhood, Gay incidentally sacrifices her life of freedom to meet society's fickle standard of having a family unit. Gay's desire to independently raise a child on her own can be seen as progressive for her time, but it is clear that the narrator does not find Gay's actions a progressive step for women. In her remark that "Gay was too good a companion

and too pretty to go dying like that" (297), the speaker is expressing that Gay already had a fulfilling life that she should not have given up to appease the societal standard of motherhood.

"The Original Follies Girl" by far has one of the most tragic endings in the Girl Series in which the main female character loses her life for the thing she wants most in life. Another character in Fitzgerald's Girl Series fails to obtain her desires for life, however, her story ends on an oddly empowering note. In the story "Poor Working Girl," Eloise Elkins dreams of moving to the city and becoming a Broadway star. Fitzgerald describes Eloise as a young women with a handful of talents that is "carefully protected but unprovided for" (337). The narrator reveals that Eloise believes that she is better than her peers in her small suburban town, remarking that all the local men were "limping along on a salary that she thought she thought she could have earned herself" (Fitzgerald 337), foreshadowing the protagonist's future as a working woman. Rejecting her option of becoming a wife to a working-class man in the Northeastern suburbs, Eloise takes a job as a governess to earn funds so she can move to New York City and fulfill her dreams. However, saving the money for her dream becomes much more challenging than Eloise originally anticipates. She succumbs her first paychecks to fashionable clothing and decadent items such as chocolates (Fitzgerald 340). In addition to her extravagant purchases, Eloise stays out almost every night which causes her to neglect her duties as a nanny and ultimately lose her job (341). Still stinging from the loss of her career, Eloise begins to question "whether or not she was as wonderful as she thought she was" (Fitzgerald 341). The ego-wounded protagonist decides against her dream of moving to New York City and stays in town, acquiring a job at the local power company to support herself (Fitzgerald 342).

When Fitzgerald originally sent "Poor Working Girl" to *College Humor*, the publishers did not appreciate that Fitzgerald showed "no effort to create reader sympathy for Eloise"

(Anderson 28). Unlike the ending of "The Original Follies Girl," the narrator does not pity Eloise's failure of achieving her dreams. Fitzgerald comes to the conclusion that "perhaps there are lovely faces whose real place is in the power company; perhaps Eloise wasn't destined for Broadway after all" (342). Instead of viewing Eloise's outcome as a tragedy, Fitzgerald seems to come to the realization that not all working women are destined for fame and greatness. Even though Eloise does not achieve her dreams, she gains agency over her own life by getting another career to support herself and rejecting the traditional narrative of marriage in her community. Fitzgerald's new idea of the common woman from the end of "Poor Working Girl" shapes the identities of her short stories that follow afterward.

In "Southern Girl," Harriet embodies the common working woman Fitzgerald develops at the end of "Poor Working Girl" by running her mother's boarding house and working as a school teacher (300). At the beginning of the story, Harriet is satisfied with her simple life of parties and informalities, showing no desire for marriage or to acquiesce to the mannerisms of high society. The speaker even notes that Harriet has a "big horselaugh she gave any pretentiousness" (Fitzgerald 300), showing that the Southern Belle did not take formality seriously. It is not until Harriet returns to the South that she begins to search for "a bigger sophistication than Jeffersonville had to offer" (Fitzgerald 306). After a failed engagement to Dan, Harriet shows no desire to achieve a familial unit, but expresses the desire for social mobility by becoming knowledgeable about Northeastern American culture. Opposed to the brutal failures of Gay and Eloise, Harriet achieves her desire becoming accustomed to Northern social standards which eventually lead her to a "perfectly happy" marriage and a child which she ironically names Dan because "'it's the only name that really suits him" (Fitzgerald 307). Through "Southern Girl"

Fitzgerald alters her female narrative of autonomy by displaying it is possible for women to take control of their lives without a tragic ending.

Fitzgerald persists in her theme of female narratives that do not end in tragic death with her stories "The Girl The Prince Liked" and "The Girl with Talent." In comparison to her first three stories, the two stories focus on women who are attempting to escape the dullness and oppression of marriage (Anderson 31). In "The Girl the Prince Liked," the main character, Helena is stuck in an unhappy marriage that has banished her to the Midwest, a setting Fitzgerald pulls from her memories of living in Minnesota for a brief period of time with Scott (Kendall 111). Helena attempts to gain control over her life by making herself the "center" of her Midwestern social circle (Fitzgerald 313). On personal level, Fitzgerald describes how Helena establishes social dominance over others, saying that she "would sit and watch [the person] until she frightened them, and then suddenly be friendly and free and just as charming as she had been formidable" (310). When social hierarchy fails to satisfy the bored housewife, Helena decides to have a string of affairs which eventually lead up to her momentous affair with the prince of England. The narrator discloses to the audience how Helena could "[change] a likely candidate for the diplomatic corps into a hopeless gigolo who would speak his lines for life like a person talking a jazz ballad" (Fitzgerald 311), showing that the protagonist has just as devastating power on her romantic interests as she does her friends. Despite exuding social authority through friendship and relationships, Helena does not truly establish agency over her own life until she moves to New York which "made her feel safe and secure" to be around flashing signs and a setting familiar to her. Despite the title of the story, Helena's climatic affair is not her main of achieving autonomy for herself nor the most striking affair that Helena has. After the affair is done and both individuals continue on with their lives, Helena goes to a pawn shop to have a

bracelet the prince gave her appraised. Through this simple scene, the narrator shows how little the affair truly meant to Helena, except to be a fantastic tale she can tell in her older years. By making light of Helena's momentous affair with the prince, Fitzgerald establishes the little weight she gives romantic relationships in her narratives of women achieving agency.

Similar to Helena, the main character of "The Girl with Talent," Lou, is attempting to escape an unhappy marriage. Paralleling Fitzgerald's personal life, Lou throws herself into dancing as her first means of escape. Defying the nasty comments of her peers that "she's built like a beef-eating beer bottle" (Fitzgerald 318), Lou makes a career for herself on the New York stage. However, Lou's career in New York leaves her little room for reprieve from her disapproving husband as shown through a fight she has with her husband when she comes home after drinking with her colleagues (Fitzgerald 320). Finally fed up with her oppressive home life, Lou takes her life in her own hands by accepting job at a Paris nightclub, leaving her husband and infant child behind. In Paris, Lou finds freedom in her ability to focus on her dance career, going so far to make the declaration that "[she is] going to work so hard that [her] spirit will be broken, and [she is] going to be a very fine dancer" (Fitzgerald 325). Eventually, Lou has to come to terms with her marriage when she disappears for five days with a man she met at a nightclub. The affair finally gives Lou the courage to file for divorce and officially free herself from her oppressive husband. Fitzgerald ends the story on fairytale-like note, saying that Lou "ran off to China with a tall blond Englishman. Now, I believe, they have a beautiful baby almost big enough to eat carrot soup from a spoon" (325), showing that Lou finally decided to return to married life on her own terms. In his 1977 article on Fitzgerald's short stories, W. R. Anderson comments that "The Girl with Talent" had an ending "more appropriate" for *College Humor* readers in which the protagonist ends up happily remarried at the end of the story. The ending

may have been “appropriate” for the readers at the time, but Anderson does not take notice that Lou’s second marriage is an act of personal autonomy after achieving a successful career as a dancer.

Fitzgerald’s final story in the Girl Series, “A Millionaire’s Girl,” receives the most scholarly attention. Grogan argues that the story receives so much attention due to its similarities in theme to Scott’s work. She goes on to say that the short story shows that Fitzgerald was “still very much under her husband’s influence and direction when she composed the story and struggled with independence for herself and for her female protagonist” (118). Grogan’s claims hold up as the story centers around themes of disillusionment. The story focuses on a young protagonist named Caroline who is engaged to a wealthy young man named Barry. Fitzgerald immediately addresses the advantageous dynamic between Caroline and Barry, remarking “you could see that he was rich and that he liked her, and you could see that she was poor and that she knew he did” (Fitzgerald 328). The couple’s relationship quickly shatters after Barry’s parents disapprove of Caroline and attempt to buy her off, leading to messy and public break up (Fitzgerald 331). After parting with Barry, Caroline heads out West to become a movie star, a plan that seems to follow Fitzgerald’s progressive narrative of women achieving autonomy through a successful career. However, Fitzgerald reveals that Caroline does not want independence from Barry. During a luncheon, Caroline admits her undying love for the millionaire, saying “everything I do or that happens to me has seemed because of him. Now I am going to make a hit so that I can choose him again” (Fitzgerald 333). Even though Caroline does not follow a more progressive narrative, she still follows Fitzgerald’s storyline of gaining agency through attempting to win Barry’s affections again through her movie. However, Caroline’s plan backfires when she’s informed that Barry is engaged to another woman. In her final desperate

attempt of getting what she most desires in life, Caroline attempts suicide on the night of her movie premiere. The attempt successfully grabs Barry's attention and he immediately proposes to Caroline (Fitzgerald 336). Fitzgerald ends the story on a dismal note, stating

> She married him of course, and since she left the films on that occasion, they have both had much to reproach each other for. That was three years ago, and so far they have kept their quarrels out of the divorce courts, but I somehow think you can't go on forever protecting quarrels, and that romances born in violence and suspicion will end themselves on the same note; though, of course, I am a cynical person and, perhaps, no competent judge of idyllic young love affairs (336).

Through her final remarks, Fitzgerald makes a bold statement of disapproval of Caroline's choice to marry Barry, and subtly alludes to her abusive and stormy marriage to Scott. The narrator makes her opinion clear to her audience that she believes it is better to live an autonomous life rather than a life in which a woman must be dependent on a man.

Fitzgerald masterfully uses the Girl Series as a sounding board to current political issues in the US. Through her use of characters as an extension to her setting in her works such as "Southern Girl" and "The Girl The Prince Liked" to express the cultural tension between the North and South in the US. As well as expressing the relationship between the North and South in the early 20th century, Fitzgerald uses her stories to advocate for women to strive to be economically autonomous from their spouses. Additionally, Fitzgerald uses her stories of women striving for autonomy to advocate for women to not enter into abusive relationships. Fitzgerald's Girl Series stands as a series of feminist texts that emphasize the importance of modern American women achieving autonomy for themselves.

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