

Reflections: The Search for Identity in Save Me the Waltz

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This thesis examines Zelda Fitzgerald's novel Save Me the Waltz. While there is interest in Fitzgerald life due to her status as F. Scott Fitzgerald's wife, there has been little serious critical analysis of her writing. With the opening of the canon to a more diverse field of authors, it seems only right to include Zelda Fitzgerald's work. Alabama's search for identity reflects in the mirror motif, in her relationships with both her father and husband, and, in addition, Zelda Fitzgerald's own search for identity is reflected in her adaptation of the surrealist writing style. The search for identity includes an exploration of the mirror motif which runs throughout the novel, the relationship between Alabama and her father, and her relationship with her husband, the references to anorexia nervosa found in the novel and the use of the surrealist writing style by Fitzgerald. Materials used to analyze the novel include critical texts, peer reviewed journals, and a collection of reviews of the novel. This thesis finds that Alabama's search for identity is reflected in the mirror motif, as well in the relationship with both her father and husband. Fitzgerald's use of anorexia references and Alabama's study of ballet are both metaphors for the writing process. Surrealist techniques and imagery allow Fitzgerald to establish an artistic identity separate from her husband.

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Mirrors.....	3
3. Anorexia.....	10
4. Daughters, Fathers, and Husbands.....	18
5. Surrealism.....	30
6. Conclusion.....	39
7. Works Cited.....	41

Introduction

When the name Zelda Fitzgerald is mentioned, most people recall her as the tragic wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald. Zelda Fitzgerald is also remembered as the mental patient who died in a horrific hospital fire. Occasionally, someone recalls that Zelda is the inspiration for many of Scott Fitzgerald's female characters and that she is also considered by some to be the original flapper. Zelda is mainly remembered as the wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald. Most individuals are surprised to learn that Zelda Fitzgerald is also a painter, dancer, playwright, and writer. She wrote numerous essays and short stories. Fitzgerald also authored at least one play and her paintings were exhibited after her death. Fitzgerald wrote the autobiographical novel Save Me the Waltz in 1932 while she was in a mental hospital. These accomplishments are often ignored by most literary historians and critics.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in writers ignored by the critics and the literary canon. Zelda Fitzgerald's writing certainly has been ignored and is often viewed as nothing more than an interesting side note to her husband F. Scott Fitzgerald's literary career. Recently, literary critics have begun to examine Zelda Fitzgerald's writing in its own right. Most of the literary critics focus on the autobiographical characteristics of her writing, especially in the novel Save Me the Waltz. While biographical criticism of Fitzgerald's writing is important, it is now time for critics to analyze Fitzgerald's writing from additional critical points of view.

Save Me the Waltz, while undeniably autobiographical, also lends itself to other feminist critical analysis. Save Me the Waltz can help fill gaps in recent feminist critical theory. For instance, there has been little attention paid to the mirror motif in literature. Fitzgerald uses the mirror motif in Save Me the Waltz and it can be analyzed to suggest the search for identity by Alabama Beggs. In addition, far too little attention has been paid by feminist literary critics to

the relationship between daughters and fathers in literature. The relationship between Alabama and her father Judge Beggs in Save Me the Waltz and its consequences could trigger interest in analyzing other daughter father relationships in literature. Recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in anorexia nervosa. As other critics have noted, Save Me the Waltz does contain anorexia nervosa as a subtext. Save Me the Waltz should be added to the growing list of texts written by women that can be analyzed as anorexic. Surrealism, particularly during the twenties, did not consider women active participants of the movement. Recently, female writers are being added to surrealism genre. Fitzgerald's embrace of surrealism due to the imagery used in Save Me the Waltz should cause the novel to be included as a surrealist text.

Because there is not a large amount of research on Zelda Fitzgerald and her writing, the limitations I placed on my thesis are few. I focused my thesis on the novel Save Me the Waltz and excluded other works of fiction written by Fitzgerald. I did not focus on insanity as a subtext of the novel. I did not focus attention on the mother-daughter relationship between the fictional mother and daughter pair, Alabama and Bonnie, or Fitzgerald and her daughter, Scottie. Instead, I analyze the father-daughter relationship and its implications which seem to be underrepresented in current feminist research. In addition, I did not use any fiction written by F. Scott Fitzgerald as a part of my thesis. I did not want to turn this into a comparison/contrast thesis. I also did not use any biographies of F. Scott Fitzgerald as a part of my research. I wanted to focus as much as possible on Zelda Fitzgerald's novel Save Me the Waltz and not her famous husband.

Zelda Fitzgerald is overlooked by most critics and scholars because she is overshadowed by her husband and her notoriety. Her work as an artist and writer are only now beginning to be studied, and more serious critical analysis should be done. With the opening of the canon to a

more diverse field of authors, it seems only right to include Zelda Fitzgerald's work. This essay critically examines Alabama's search for identity reflects in the mirror motif, in her relationships with both her father and husband, and, in addition, Zelda Fitzgerald's own search for identity as reflected in her adaptation of the surrealist writing style.

Mirrors

As a metaphor for Fitzgerald's writing the motif which threads its way through the novel is mirrors. Mirrors reflect back someone's identity in the same way that writing can reflect identity. Alabama is gazing into mirrors trying to "see" herself, and perhaps find her identity, in them. Fitzgerald parallels this idea by writing to establish her identity. During the ballet section of the novel Alabama studies dance in a room lined with floor-to-ceiling mirrors. Occasionally, one of the ballerinas leaves a can of open shrimp behind the mirrors in the studio causing a horrible odor to emanate from behind the mirrors. When the ballet studio is moved into another building Alabama stays to clean up the studio. Behind the mirrors all that she finds are rusted bobby pins. These passages indicate that Fitzgerald feared that behind the images she projected that there was either something rotten or nothing at all.

Fitzgerald uses mirrors and reflection as motifs throughout Save Me the Waltz. Alabama gazes at herself in mirrors as a young girl and as an adolescent. She also spends hours in front of mirrors preparing herself to go out in public as a young adult. The most grueling and painful training to become a ballerina is done in front of large mirrors in ballet studios and mirrors installed in Alabama and David's Paris apartment. Reflections of different people and places in drinking glasses are scattered through the text. In only one scene in the entire novel does David, Alabama's husband, gaze at himself in a mirror (39-40). Fitzgerald writes, "He verified himself

in the mirror . . . as if he had taken inventory of himself before leaving and was pleased to find himself complete” (39-40). Interestingly, David views himself as being complete and without need of improvement or change. Alabama, on the other hand, uses mirrors throughout her life to search for self and her identity.

During her childhood Alabama spends a large amount of time gazing at herself in a mirror. But what is it that she sees? She sees a young girl who both parents deny exists. Alabama asks if as a child she was wild and uncontrollable. Her mother answers, ““No, all my children were good children”” (11). Obviously, Alabama knows this is a lie. She knows that she is wild and incorrigible. She likes being incorrigible and just wants her mother to confirm this fact. Instead, her mother lies to her and denies what Alabama knows about herself. The image she sees and the image her mother denies are one and the same: the image of a wild and out-of-control child. In other words, Alabama is taught by her mother to ignore the reality of what she sees in the mirror and embrace the unreality of the fiction her mother creates.

Judge Beggs comments about the time Alabama spends in front of the mirror saying, ““She’s always looking in the glass at herself”” (30). Her father teases her at a time when Alabama is navigating through the transition between childhood and adolescence. The Judge’s remarks also seem to imply that Alabama’s motivation to look at herself is narcissistic. In another scene, Millie’s lengthening of one of Alabama’s dresses in the novel is a ritual for the transition which indicates that girls are passing from childhood into adolescence. Alabama, in a temper, cries, “I won’t have it! I really won’t—how can I run or anything?” (22). Alabama has apparently come to the age when girls are required to lengthen their dresses and begin acting like young ladies. This time can be extremely awkward and confusing for the child to go through. A girl’s body is changing and she may not understand all that she is experiencing. As Kim Chernin

states in The Obsession, "Every woman recalls the first time—the first embarrassed, fascinated confrontation with the new self one is becoming" (58). It can be surmised that Alabama is changing both mentally and physically. The first significant and visible change for girls is the development of breasts. Alabama touches her breast pocket perhaps wondering and acknowledging the physical change her body is beginning to make. Gazing at herself in the mirror allows the adolescent Alabama to become familiar with the changes which her body is making as it becomes more adult.

After her marriage to David and his subsequent success as an artist in New York, Alabama again gazes into a mirror. The narrator observes, "David inspected her face minutely. 'What's the matter with your face?' 'Nothing,'" Alabama replies, "'only I've been picking at it so much I can't go to the tea.' 'Well,' said David blankly, 'we've got to go to the tea—it's because of your face that they're having it.'" Alabama says, "'If there'd been anything else to do, I wouldn't have done the damage'" (58). It seems that out of boredom and unhappiness Alabama is beginning to focus on her blemishes. This is to be the beginning of Alabama's negative experiences with her reflection. Alabama does not, in fact, recognize parts of herself: "She ran her fingers tentatively inside the breast pocket, staring pessimistically at her reflection. 'The feet look as if they were somebody else's' [Alabama] said" (23). The person Alabama sees reflected in the mirror seems to have become someone who needs to be punished and someone who she does not even recognize.

Later in the novel Alabama again directly relates negative experiences with her reflection in the mirror in front of which she practices ballet exercises. She spends hours and hours practicing in front of a large mirror in the ballet studio in order to become a ballerina. But she is never satisfied with her achievements in dance reflected in the ballet studio's large mirror. Once,

one of the other ballerinas hides an open can of shrimp behind the mirror. Fitzgerald writes, "Stella hid a half-eaten can of shrimp behind the mirror, where it slowly soured.... 'Polissonne!' they said to Stella. 'It is bad enough to eat shrimp at home without bringing it here like a stink bomb'" (131). From behind the mirror the shrimp filled the studio with the ammonia-laced smell of rotted seafood. Later, when the ballet studio is forced to move, Alabama searches behind the mirror looking for something. All that she finds is a few old rusted hairpins and dust bunnies.

The narrator observes:

Alabama searched behind the dismantled segments of the mirror for lost pirouettes, for the ends of a thousand arabesques. There was nothing but thick dust, and the traces of hairpins rusted to the wall where the frame had hung. "I thought I would find something" she explained shyly, when she saw Madame looking at her curiously. "And you see there is nothing!" said the Russian. (140)

This passage reflects Alabama's fear that there is nothing behind the reflection in the mirror or that the mirror reflects nothing of substance.

Feminist critics have many interesting points of view concerning women and mirrors in literature. Women are often associated negatively with mirrors in literature. Patricia Meyer Spacks notes in The Female Imagination that "In satire and moral commentary since classical times, the looking glass has been associated with women, used by male writers as an emblem of the narcissism which, long before Freud, men felt to be the dominate trait of women" (13). If these male authors are to be believed, women gaze in mirrors because they are vain creatures who need the constant reassurance of their beauty. While it is true some women do look into mirrors to check their appearance (not necessarily a narcissistic act confined to women), and there are women (not to mention men: after all Narcissus is male) who gaze at their reflections to

fulfill a narcissistic need, not all women in literature who gaze into mirrors can be classified as narcissists.

According to more recent male and female critics there are other reasons women gaze into mirrors. The reason that a woman gazes in mirrors, according to Simon De Beauvoir, author of The Second Sex, is to look for her *self* to look for her identity. De Beauvoir writes, "all her life the woman is to find the magic of her mirror a tremendous help in her effort to project herself and attain self-identification . . . while woman, knowing and making herself object, believes she sees *herself* in the glass" (631). I would argue that self-identification and identity are the same thing. Alabama searches for her identity in the mirrors into which she gazes. At every stage of the novel, Alabama spends time in front of a mirror trying to define her self and find her identity.

In addition to the search for identity, according to De Beauvoir, a mirror allows a young woman to objectify herself. While gazing at herself in the mirror, the adolescent girl can indulge in narcissistic appreciation of herself. It is in these adolescent years that a girl first sees herself as an object to be desired. De Beauvoir writes, "the young girl loves also in the carnal actuality that is this body which enchants her like that of another. . . . In the adolescent there is opposition between the love of herself and the erotic urge that sends her to be possessed" (338). She can imagine that the reflection of self in the mirror is what another can see and desire. Alabama watches herself in the mirror as if gazing at someone or something else; she "pulled out the full, flowing silk to see how it would blow in a breeze, how it would have looked in a museum on the 'Venus de Milo'" (30). Alabama sees herself for the first time as an object of love and beauty. She sees herself as Venus de Milo, the ultimate mythical object of desire. For the first time the mirror has turned Alabama into an object. Alabama has in effect turned herself into an object.

De Beauvoir writes, "woman, knowing and making herself object, believes she really sees herself in the glass. A passive and given fact, the reflection is, like herself, a thing" (631). So, the mirror has changed the women in the mirror into a passive, inanimate object because she views what she sees in the mirror as a reflection of herself. She is what she sees in the mirror. Now, the role of the figure in the mirror is that of object and not that of subject.

A more recent critic who investigates the use of mirrors in literature extensively is Jenijoy La Belle, author of Herself Beheld: The Literature of the Looking Glass. She explores the ways in which women and mirrors are portrayed in the literature of the nineteenth and twentieth century. According to La Belle, "the mirror is intimately connected with self-realization and self-creation" (72). Like De Beauvoir and Spacks, La Belle argues that women utilize mirrors differently than men. La Belle writes that a man "looking at himself in the glass can offer a way of checking on the physiognomic record of the history through which [he] has come into present being, but is not itself part of the process of self-production" (21). In other words, looking into a mirror is a way for a man to take stock of himself and his achievements, but he does not define self by what he sees in the mirror. In only one scene in the novel does David gaze into a mirror. While gazing in the mirror, he takes stock of himself and is "pleased to find himself complete" (39-40). Unlike men, women use the mirror to identify self. La Belle contends that "many women at transitional or transformational points in their lives use mirrors as tools for understanding the change, controlling the change, making the change" (102). Looking at the changes in the mirror allows girls to become familiar with their new and changing bodies and selves. However, it is interesting, and troubling, that Alabama does not recognize her own feet. This lack of recognition for a part of her body can indicate a psychological condition. La Belle states that "a failure to recognize any similarity between self and visual image often

indicates a deep disturbance in a women's self-conception" (113). This may be a foreshadowing of Alabama's later disconnection between herself and her reflection and of Fitzgerald's own psychological breakdown.

Spacks, De Beauvoir, and La Belle can trace their theories about mirrors to Jacques Lacan and his theories regarding the mirror stage. Although Lacan is a part of the Freudian school, he does differentiate himself from Freud by basing his theories regarding human development on language. Lacan argues that children develop at different rates. According to Lacan it is not until she or he is about 18 months old that the child realizes she or he is a separate being from the mother. Peter G. Beidler describes Lacan's theory of the mirror stage as a time when, "the child comes to view itself and its mother . . . as independent selves. This is the stage in which the child is first able to fear the aggressions of another, to desire what is recognizably beyond the self (initially the mother), and . . . to want to compete with another for the same, desired object" (215). The child also begins to empathize or sympathize with others. With this new awareness of self and of desire the child begins to compete with others for the objects of desire including her or his mother.

The mirror stage is also called by Lacan the imaginary stage. Mary Klages, an Associate Professor of English at the University of Colorado, Boulder, on her webpage describes this stage: "The child takes that image in the mirror as the summation of its entire being, its 'self.' This process, of misrecognizing one's self in the image in the mirror, creates the EGO, the thing that says 'I' To Lacan, ego, or self, or "I"identity, is always on some level a FANTASY, an identification with an external image, and not an internal sense of separate whole identity." The child recognizes herself or himself in the mirror and the mother reinforces that belief by telling the child that it is herself or himself. The reflection in the mirror is of course not the child, but is

instead a reflection, an image which is not “real.” Seeing the self in the mirror allows the child to begin building his or her identity. But it is based on a reflection and not upon the internal self. This identity is false in the sense that the child is building an identity based on something which is not real; it is just a reflection in the mirror.

For Lacan the mirror stage happens at one isolated stage in a child’s development at around eighteen months of age. According to Spacks, De Beauvoir, and La Belle, the mirror continues to be an important part of a woman’s development from childhood and even into old age. The mirror allows women to evaluate their identity. Save Me the Waltz certainly reflects this point of view.

Mirrors are useful in helping to determine identity. However, too much time in front of a mirror can have a negative affect. According to research on ballet dancers in college, learning routines and practicing dance routines in front of mirrors affects the body image of the dancers, and contributes to the dissatisfaction they feel towards their bodies (Radell and Adame 960-61). In addition, there is a requirement for a dancer to be thin. This is nothing new. In Save Me the Waltz the narrator notes, “If they weighed more than fifty kilos, Diaghilev protested in his high screechy voice, ‘You must get thin. I cannot send my dancers to a gymnasium to fit them for adagio’” (135). This stress on thinness in dancers can promote eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa in dancers. This pressure to be thin, in addition to the pressure for Alabama to find her identity, is intense.

Anorexia

Whether or not Fitzgerald intends it, Save Me the Waltz reeks of anorexia nervosa. Michelle Payne, author of “5’4” X 2”: Zelda Fitzgerald, Anorexia and Save Me the Waltz,” is

the only literary critic to analyze Fitzgerald's life and Save Me the Waltz as anorexic texts. Payne asserts that Fitzgerald may not have suffered from schizophrenia, but instead from anorexia nervosa. Payne argues that "this conflict between her complicity with and her rage at the image inscribed on Scott's literary mirror permeated her culturally inscribed female body and somewhat unexpectedly resulted . . . in Anorexia Nervosa" (40). Many of the symptoms are, as Payne argues, similar to each other and there has been debate among some literary critics in the last ten years as to whether the diagnosis of Fitzgerald's schizophrenia is accurate. Anorexia in Save Me the Waltz works as a metaphor for both writing and the search for identity through artistic expression.

Not many are aware that anorexia nervosa is not just a disease affecting women of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Women since the Middle Ages have "fasted" for religious reasons (Ellmann 14). The term anorexia nervosa was first used, according to Leslie Heywood, author of Dedication to Hunger: The Anorexic Aesthetic in Modern Culture, in 1872 by Charles Lasegue of France and William Gull of England (16). Heywood points out that both Lasegue and Gull describe anorexia as affecting young women between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three, and the only common symptom between all anorexics which Gull could determine is a "morbid mental state" (17). Alabama in Save Me the Waltz, exhibits symptoms of anorexia nervosa throughout the novel, especially during the sections devoted to her ballet training and career.

Many psychologists and feminists note that anorexia has become a widespread disease for women during times of great social upheaval for women. Both the nineteen twenties and the nineteen seventies are periods of political and social change for women. Frances Kerr, author of "Nearer the Bone': Louise Brogan, Anorexia and the Political Unconscious of Modernism,"

writes, "both the twenties and the seventies were decades of rapid social change, which included a transformation of social roles for women. Icons of middle class femininity like the Victorian Angel in the House and the Homemaker of the fifties disappeared as images of bold, thin, androgynous women replaced them" (306). The "androgynous women" of the nineteen twenties is, of course, the iconic Flapper which Zelda Fitzgerald, and her fictional creation Alabama, personified. The make-up wearing, corset-less, bobbed, smoking, and drinking flappers of the twenties have indeed replaced the "angel" of previous generations (Collins 329-30). World War I may have also had an effect on women during the twenties. According to Maude Ellmann, author of The Hunger Artists, during World War I overweight women were regarded as being unpatriotic: "a woman overweight by forty pounds was accounted to be hoarding sixty pounds of sugar in her excess flesh, thereby depriving her European allies of their rations. Fat women thus became the scapegoats for the guilt America was suffering about its late entry and grudging entry into the War" (8). Disapproval of overweight women may very well have carried over into the following decade.

All throughout Save Me the Waltz it is apparent that Alabama is under an extreme amount of pressure to conform to an idealized image which her husband David expects her to "live up to." David does not want a socially unacceptable wife. Before Alabama and David depart for Europe they are expected to attend many parties and social occasions to bid them farewell. Alabama "picks" at the pimples on her face and indicates to David that she would prefer not to attend one of the gatherings. David replies, "'you're coming Alabama. How would it look for people to say, 'And how is your charming wife, Mr. Knight?' 'My wife, oh, she's home picking at her face.' How do you think I'd feel about that?'" (58). Rather than being concerned over Alabama's negative reaction to her reflection in the mirror and the damage she is

inflicting on her face, David is concerned about how their relationship will appear to their friends and acquaintances. David also compares the real Alabama who worries the pimples on her face and the society Alabama who is known as “charming” to the world and is effectively his “show wife.” The society show wife Alabama is obviously the one David prefers.

In order for Alabama to fulfill David’s requirement for a socially acceptable wife, she will need to suppress her identity. Early on in David and Alabama’s relationship David’s dominance is indicated. The first night that Alabama meets David, he carves into a doorpost, “‘David’ the legend read, ‘David, David, Knight, Knight, Knight, and Miss Alabama Nobody.’ ‘Egotist,’ she protested” (39). In essence, Alabama is told by her future husband that she is a nonentity and not valuable. Payne notes that “an anorexic’s body manifests both a cultural devaluation of femininity and a women’s desperate attempt to overcome that devaluation” (42). It is also difficult to ignore the word “Nobody” in relation to the anorexic tone of the novel. After all, this is what an anorexic seems to be trying to achieve, *no body*. It is not hard to imagine the subtle message which David is sending to Alabama; a body is not required in this relationship.

It also becomes apparent in the novel that Alabama hates her body. At a party, Alabama compares her body to those of other women. The narrator says:

Alabama felt excluded by her lack of accomplishment. Comparing herself with Miss Axton’s elegance, she hated the reticent solidity, the savage sparse competence of her body—her arms reminded her of a Siberian branch railroad. Compared with Miss Douglas’ elimination, her Patou dress felt too big along the seams. Miss Douglas made her feel that there was a cold cream deposit at the neckline. (101)

Alabama obviously believes these women's appearance indicates their superior accomplishments. Whether or not they are successful at other pursuits, they are obviously thin enough and well dressed enough to signify "accomplished" to Alabama. Alabama's perception of her self is that she is lacking in thinness and grace. It is not until she has become a ballerina that she feels any contentment with her body: "she was gladly, savagely proud of the strength of her Negroid hips, convex as boats in a wood carving. The complete control of her body freed her from all fetid consciousness of it" (127). Finally, after shaping her body into that of a dancer, Alabama begins to feel that she has accomplished something: control over her body.

The one thing which David does not have complete jurisdiction over in their marriage is control over Alabama's body. It can be argued that anorexia nervosa gives the women suffering from it a sense of control over their lives. In a society which requires women to repress their own needs and desires, it allows the women to have control over the only thing that they may feel they can control: their own bodies. The anorexic can control the amount of food which she puts into her body. Payne argues that anorexia is a skill that an anorexic masters to give, "her [a] sense of identity. . . . The better she is able to execute those skills, to exert some control over her seemingly unwilling and rebellious body, the better she may feel about herself" (43). It is apparent in Save Me the Waltz that Alabama feels the lack of control in her life. Alabama is ignored by her husband while he is painting and, in an effort to gain David's attention, engages in an affair. This strategy backfires and David also has an affair. Alabama then compares herself to David's mistress and finds herself lacking. In an effort to gain control of her life, Alabama studies ballet. Payne points out that ballet is "a trope for Anorexia—torturous, ascetic, bodily rituals concealed by and yet enabling the graceful, seemingly delicate performance of the

ballet/body” (49). The dancing, like anorexia, allows Alabama to control her body and express herself completely.

Writing and dancing are very similar. Dancing, like writing, is a craft which must be practiced over and over again for the dancer to become skilled. The feet of the ballet dancer, often with her weight balanced on the points of her toes, trace very specific patterns on the floor similar to that of a point of a pen copying letters onto a page. Like writing, dance is a form of expression which the dancer, like an author, uses to convey a narrative to the audience. The narrator of Save Me the Waltz notes the similarity between dancing and writing; “Swirling round and round like an exercise in penmanship, Alabama threaded the line through spots of lights” (157). Writing is also, according to Maude Ellmann, a form of starvation and a metaphor for anorexia nervosa. Ellmann argues, “the *expression* of the word requires the *repressions* of the flesh” (47). Dancing, like writing, requires the dancer to control and discipline the body. Ellmann goes on to argue that “It is revealing that we devour books, not speech, and that we read . . . ‘voraciously’: these expressions hint that the written word can actually take the place of food, whereas the spoken word is too ethereal for nourishment” (47). Before Alabama becomes a dancer, she too reads “voraciously.” The narrator observes, “Alabama read Henry James in the long afternoons. She read Robert Hugh Benson and Edith Wharton and Dickens while David worked” (87). After Alabama begins to dance, reading is not mentioned again and she spends hours practicing dance exercises. Madame informs Alabama that she (herself) did 400 repetitions of ballet positions every night. Alabama replies, “I will do four hundred” (116). It can be argued that in Save Me the Waltz dancing takes the place of food for Alabama.

While dancing may take the place of food for Alabama in the novel, there are many references to and descriptions of food in Save Me the Waltz. Unlike her husband’s friend and

fellow writer Ernest Hemingway who describes food lovingly and sensuously in A Moveable Feast, the food described by Fitzgerald is repulsive. The narrator describes Alabama's reaction to the governess eating: "She chewed with her mouth open and the crumbs of sardines about the gold fillings of her teeth nauseated Alabama" (122). Later, the narrator describes a lunch Alabama shares with another ballerina: "the saffron bouillabaisse made Alabama sweat under the eyes and turned the Barsac tasteless . . . Alabama inspected the globular yellow deposits. 'They're only lobster eyes,' she pronounced" (131-132). Later, Alabama becomes nauseated by food: "Alabama was nauseated from the gummy pastry . . . she held onto the straps of the car to keep herself from throwing up" (143). According to Gillian Brown, author of "Anorexia, Humanism, and Feminism," food for the anorexic is not a way to get nourishment and it is not a source of comfort. While she is in the hospital suffering from an infection, Alabama thinks about food: "David will bring me some chocolate ice cream and I will throw it up; it smells like a soda fountain, thrown-up" (179). The comfort food, in this situation, is not a comfort. Brown contends, "Anorectics characterize their relation to food as a form of bondage from which they must free themselves" (195). The food threatens the control that anorexics want to have over their own bodies. By making the food revolting and unappetizing, the narrator is conveying to the audience the disgust she feels for food and over her lack of control whenever she is confronted by food. Brown goes on to argue that "Anorexia is thus a fight for self-control, a flight from the slavery food threatens; self-sustaining self-possession independent of bodily desires is the anorectic's crucial goal" (196). Controlling her appetite and making food something repulsive makes it easier for Alabama to maintain domination over her body.

The body, much like food, is the enemy of an anorexic. Even though an anorexic has a sort of control of her body, at least over the amount of food which she places into it, often it

seems to rebel against her and do its own bidding. Brown notes that “however much we may identify ourselves with our bodies; we experience our bodies as distinct from ourselves. In the practice of dieting and exercising . . . our bodies seem stubbornly alien—at odds with our ideals or our norms” (195). Alabama is often at odds with her body. Early on in her ballet training it is not a “perfect” ballerina’s body. Fitzgerald describes the agony that Alabama experiences trying to force her body to become that of a ballerina: “there were blue bruises inside above the knee where the muscles were torn . . . She fastened her feet through the bars of the iron bed and slept with toes outwards for weeks. Her lessons were agony” (117). Alabama also seems to loathe her body and seeks to punish it. She also despises the natural reactions of her body as she dances. Fitzgerald writes, “It was humiliating that Madame should have to touch her pupil’s ankles when they were so hot. The human body was very insistent. Alabama passionately hated her inability to discipline her own” (118). It seems that Alabama is unhappy with her inability to control her body temperature while she dances. She would prefer her body to remain cool and controlled during the strenuous workouts. The lack of control over her body is stressful for Alabama, and one way to exercise control and relieve her anxiety is to be anorexic.

Not surprisingly, fathers are also a factor in their daughter’s propensity to become anorexic. Renee Goodwin’s research study finds that undergraduates that have distant relationships with their fathers are more likely to develop eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa. Goodwin notes that anorexic patients “experience their fathers as overly watchful and monitoring, emotionally avoidant, unaccepting and very concerned about weight and dieting, [this] suggests that the father-daughter relationship may be one of the familial factors” (qtd. in “Distant, Critical Fathers may be Agents in Their Daughters’ Eating Disorders” 2).

Daughters, Fathers, and Husbands

Alabama's father, the Judge, in Save Me the Waltz is very like the fathers described in Goodwin's study. Judge Beggs' attitude towards the children is apparent; he "loved Millie's children with that detached tenderness and introspection peculiar to important men when confronting some relic of their youth, some memory of the days before they elected to be the instruments of their experience and not its result" (10). The Judge does not view the children as his, but solely belonging to his wife. The affection he feels for them is "detached" and not an important part of the Judge's emotional life. This lack of emotional involvement in Alabama's early childhood impacts her life greatly, and it may have helped create the anorexic behavior which she exhibits later in the novel.

The emotional distance of fathers can have even more impact on a woman's life beyond symptoms of anorexia. Susan Kavalier-Adler, author of "From Benign Mirror to Demon Lover: An Object Relations View of Compulsion Versus Desire," argues that the father figure helps the daughter form her identity. Kavalier-Adler defines "benign mirror" as, "a father who gives back to his child a positive reflection of her . . . whole self. In the case of a girl, the father as benign mirror is also critical in mirroring back to his daughter a basic positive view of her femininity The father's mirroring in this way . . . allows the young girl to internalize a loving and adoring father's acceptance for who she is" (34). The father plays an important part in the development of a woman's identity, and positive view of herself and her identity. Alabama's father does not seem to reflect back to her a positive image of self. Alabama states that "she had a strong sense of her own insignificance" (34). If the father does not reflect a positive image back to his daughter, it will cause a host of problems in her life.

Judge Beggs is a less than ideal father and his emotionally distant behavior contributed, it can be argued, to Alabama's difficulty in attaining a positive self image or stable identity. Judge Austin Beggs' name gives the reader a very good idea of his character. His children and wife call him Judge or by his given name, Austin, seldom referring to him as "daddy" or even the more formal "father." Judge Beggs is a judge in the Alabama Supreme Court (as is Zelda Fitzgerald's own father, Judge Sayre). The Judge is described by the narrator as being:

a living fortress Judge Beggs entrenched himself in his integrity when he was still a young man; his towers and chapels were builded of intellectual conceptions. So far as any of his intimates knew he left no sloping path near his castle open either to the friendly goatherd or the menacing baron. The inapproachability was the flaw in his brilliance which kept him from having become . . . a figure in national politics. (9)

The characterization of the Judge is that of an old-fashioned or out-of-touch man as indicated by the archaic past tense word "builded." Not only is the castle-like fortress old fashioned, but it also indicates that the Judge guards his emotions (such as love, affection, empathy, and kindness) by locking them away behind defensive walls which his wife and children cannot penetrate. This emotionally guarded man is not willing, or even able, to reflect a positive sense of self or identity to his daughter.

The Judge's name also makes clear his alignment with the patriarchal culture of western society. A judge is someone who enforces the laws of society and so can be seen as an ultimate representation of patriarchal society. Sandra M. Gilbert, author of "Life's Empty Pack: Notes Toward a Literary Daughteronomy," notes that such a man is, "no more than the role his professional title . . . denote[s]: a . . . lawgiver, a mythologized superego whose occupation links him . . . with culture . . . with the complex realm of patriarchal history" (268). Judge Beggs'

children seem to view him as being a distant, vengeful "God" figure in their lives that is similar to ancient Greek gods. The narrator describes the way Alabama and her sisters view the Judge: "a retributory organ, an inexorable fate, the force of law, order, and established discipline" (11). This description does not depict an ideal father, but it does depict an ideal judge. Judge Beggs devotes himself entirely to his law practice, barricading himself behind the guise of his law practice similarly as he barricades his emotions from his family. While studying for his law degree, he declared his intention to separate himself from his family declaring: "I will build me some ramparts surrounded by wild beasts and barbed wire on the top of a crag and escape this hoodlum" (10). Comparing his family to a "hoodlum" seems to suggest that Judge Beggs views his family as being outside the law, breakers of the patriarchal law which he, as the Judge, represents.

For a man who is both representation and enforcer of a patriarchal society, Judge Beggs' family is outside the boundaries of an ideal patriarchal family. The ideal patriarchal family includes sons. According to Lynda E. Boose, author of "The Father's House and the Daughter in It: The Structures of Western Culture's Daughter-Father Relationship," fathers want sons to ensure the continuation of the family name. Boose argues, "The father-to-be asking the divine father to give him a son so that he may transmit his own father's name is a narration in miniature of the cultural reproduction that has marginalized daughters" (22). Judge Beggs is the father of three daughters. With his death the family name will die. Alabama realizes this while her father is ill: "She hoped they would get home while he was still alive. Without her father the world would be without its last resource. 'But' she remembered with a sobering shock, 'it will be me who is the last resource when my father is dead'" (181). The family name, Beggs, is considered by Judge Beggs to be a resource for his family, and, in the case of his daughters, their only

resource. Fitzgerald writes, “‘My children have got to respect my name. It is all they will have in the world,’ the Judge exploded” (19). The Beggs family, like that of Fitzgerald’s family, the Sayres, is an old Southern family whose name gives its family members status and privileges. The narrator notes how the community indulges them: “‘Those girls,’ people said, ‘think they can do anything and get away with it’” (9). The family name is a resource in that it saves Alabama and her sisters from consequences which poorer or less socially well-connected girls suffer.

For a man who represents patriarchal society, the ending of his family name is distressing. But in addition to the end of the family name is the shame that comes from not producing a living son. He is only mentioned briefly in the novel, but the Judge and Millie do have a son who dies during his infancy. For men who do not produce sons or sons who live into adulthood, their masculinity is put into question. Boose asserts, “lurking beneath modern scientific data is the stubbornly powerful association which links masculinity to the production of sons When a son is born the cultural psyche traditionally credits the determination of sex to the father’s masculinity; but when the child is a daughter, her sex is somehow re-imagined as the mother’s fault” (24). The narrator writes that “The judge turned savagely to worry fleeing his disappointment” (10). The Judge does not seem to grieve for the loss of the child, but is instead “disappointed” in the child’s failure to live. The death of his son also contributes to the Judge’s emotional distance from his family. The narrator notes this as a reason: “Austin might have borne a closer relation to the family had he not lost his only boy in infancy” (10). It seems the loss of the son gave him an excuse to remove himself emotionally from his family full of women. It is not hard to imagine that the disappointment is in his own inability to produce a living son who will pass on the family name.

Although Judge Beggs' daughters use the family name during their adolescences, the family seems to forget that with the girls' marriages they will no longer have access to the family name. Unlike some today, women automatically gave up their maiden names and assumed their husbands' names. Boose notes the temporariness of a daughter's last name: "Unlike the son, [the daughter] is the temporary sojourner within her family, destined to seek legitimation and name outside its boundaries" (21). Daughters marry men and then become a part of their families producing children--especially sons--who will continue the new family name and line. Alabama recognizes after her father's death that this is what has happened: "[Judge Beggs] was the father of . . . children, who were girls, and who had left . . . for the families of other men" (186). After the death of Alabama's father, the family name is finished along with a sense of family which held the daughters and their mother together.

The daughter's temporariness in a patriarchal culture begs the question: what is her value to her father and the family? The daughters' role in the patriarchal culture becomes, according to Boose, that of a commodity: an object to trade or to give. Boose argues that the daughter is used by the father to create alliances and strengthen bonds between powerful families (25-32). A father with a houseful of daughters, then, would have interest in and concerns with choosing the appropriate husband for his daughters. Judge Beggs is, in spite of the emotional distance from his daughters, very concerned about their choices of husbands. Dixie and Joan (Alabama's older sisters) both have beaux Judge Beggs finds inappropriate. Dixie's beau is not yet divorced from his first wife. The Judge says of Dixie's suitor: "The man is a worthless cuss and an unmitigated loafer" and questions "I don't see why . . . my daughter has to choose her companions from the scum of the earth" (14, 20). Later, Joan is not allowed to marry the inappropriate--penniless--suitor. The penniless suitor is set aside by the Judge in favor of another affluent suitor of Joan's

who writes this note: ““And being able to support your daughter in comfort and, I believe, in happiness, I ask your sanction to our marriage”” (27). Dixie’s beau is not an appropriate husband for the daughter of a judge because he is a divorcee. The Judge disapproves of giving his daughter, Dixie, in marriage to a husband whose reputation does not enhance the Beggs family reputation; it would, in fact, tarnish it due to his status as a divorced man. Joan’s penniless suitor would not be able to support the Judge’s daughter in an appropriate manner. To keep Joan monetarily in the same position to which she is accustomed would require the Judge to financially support her family in addition to his own. Dixie’s divorced suitor conveniently dies, preventing her from running away to marry him against her father’s wishes, and eventually she marries someone else, the appropriate suitor her father picks for her. The Judge is able to place his older daughters with husbands whom he deems to be appropriate.

Alabama’s search for an appropriate beau is parallel by the invasion of soldiers into her town during World War I. As the youngest child of the Judge she is allowed to “run wild” by her indulgent mother, Millie. Alabama, while still in high school, spends time with married and unmarried officers stationed in the area. The Judge, worried, again, that Alabama is tarnishing the Beggs family name, tells her, ““You will have to find a way of conducting yourself more circumspectly”” (34). Alabama, after collecting many suitors, finally falls in love with David Knight. David then decides to follow the patriarchal dictates of the culture and declares: ““I’ll see your father...about when we can be married”” (40). The Judge considers David’s request as he “rocked himself back and forth from his toes to his heels, sifting values” (40). The Judge is considering the advantages, just as he considered Dixie and Joan’s suitors, of a connection for his family with David Knight; is it a valuable or an insignificant connection? Because David is not a Southerner and his family and circumstances are unknown, the Judge seems to reluctantly

give approval to the marriage. After all, since a daughter is, as Boose notes, a gift, one does not want to bestow a gift on someone undeserving of it (31-32). Why does the Judge allow Alabama to marry David? In the end, it seems that the Judge is worn down by the wildness of his youngest daughter. After confrontations with Alabama concerning her romances with officers, the Judge seems relieved to hand Alabama over to someone else (33). After Alabama has left for New York, the Judge "rose to close the shutters for the night. It was his house at last" (43). The family that the Judge feels that he must barricade himself away from is gone. Oddly, Alabama's marriage is not celebrated at home. She travels to New York to marry rather than stage an elaborate society wedding in her hometown as would be expected of daughter of a prominent family. In addition, neither parent attends the marriage ceremony. Instead, the Judge pays for Alabama's train tickets to New York City (42). Judge Beggs does not discover until later how unsuitable a connection David is for his family.

During a visit to New York, after David has become a famous artist, the Judge learns about the wild, rebellious life Alabama leads with David. The lifestyle which David and Alabama lead is not the conservative, traditional life that would be appropriate for the daughter of prominent judge, but is instead a rebellion against traditional society. Judge Beggs mistakenly believes that his daughter is a traditional housewife. The Judge congratulates David on Alabama's progress: "she seems to have become a very good housekeeper since her marriage" (53). Unfortunately, at that moment two drunken friends of David disrupt the family dinner, shattering the illusion of a traditional lifestyle. After the disruption, the Judge and Millie decide to leave. Alabama and David's drinking and carousing are foreign to the Judge and his wife. Alabama states in regards to her behavior: "you just disapprove, so you're not going to stand it. If I don't accept your way of thinking, you'll leave me to myself. Well, I suppose I have no right

to ask you to stay.' 'People who do not subscribe,' answered the Judge, 'have no rights'" (56). The rebellion against the traditional lifestyle of Judge Beggs and the traditional society which he represents causes him, in essence, to reject Alabama. It seems that in the Judge's mind, Alabama's rebellion requires her to relinquish any sort of relationship she has to either of her parents. As a result, Judge Beggs and Millie do not enter the narrative again until near the end of the novel.

Judge Beggs' less than ideal relationship with his daughter is very unfortunate since the relationship between father and daughter and its state--good, bad, or neutral--will probably indicate the type of relationships his daughter will have with men for the rest of her life. Boose affirms, "the father's position as chief authorizing figure and primary model for daughter's later male relationships makes the father's . . . behavior more significant in terms of the daughter's relationship to the world beyond her father's house" (38). In other words, Alabama will expect the men in her life to behave and behave towards her, just as her father would, and even become replacement father figures.

Alabama seems to shift David into the role of her father. While it may not seem that Judge Beggs and David Knight have much in common, they are both products of a patriarchal society which has certain expectations. One of the roles is that of the head of household. It is in this role that men may seem to be stepping into the role of the father figure. As the father figure the wife and children depend on him to be head of the house. For women used to deferring to their father, it is difficult not to treat the husband as a father figure. As Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, author of "A Father's Prayer, A Daughter's Anger: W.B. Yeats and Sylvia Plath," argues, "As a result of her enforced dependency the daughter may find it hard to establish a psychically distinct relationship with the bridegroom" (233). At the beginning of the courtship

of, and marriage to, Alabama, David does not seem to be anything like the Judge. After all, David's last name, Knight, places him in the realm of the fairytale prince who saves the princess (Alabama) and lives happily ever after with her. But rather than take Alabama away to live in a palace, David tells Alabama, "oh, my dear, you are my princess and I'd like to keep you shut away forever in an ivory tower for my private delectation" (41-42). This is not behavior associated with handsome knights, but with the evil kings and fathers in the fairytales. David's urge to lock Alabama away in a tower transfers him from the role of husband to that of father in the novel. Boose declares, "the daughter's struggle with her father is one of separation Its psychological dynamics thus locate the conflict inside inner family space. Father-daughter stories are full of literal houses, castles, or gardens in which fathers such as Danae's or Rapunzel's or Brabantio or Shylock, lock up their daughters in the futile attempt to prevent some rival male from stealing them" (33). Cullingford argues that in addition to keeping the daughter safe from rivals, it is necessary for fathers to keep their daughters isolated to protect her from rape or sexual relations with other men (240). Placing Alabama in a tower would allow David to isolate and protect her from everyone. It would also protect her from any threat of rape and also insure that Alabama's sexual fidelity to him.

In addition to the urge to keep Alabama sequestered from the world, David also expects her to place his requirements above her own. One of those requirements is a quiet house while David works. A noiseless environment is nearly impossible in a household with a small child. David quiets an argument between Alabama and Bonnie's (Alabama and David's daughter) nanny by telling her, "Peace is absolutely essential to my work at present" (87). Demanding Alabama's silence indicates to the nanny exactly who is in charge of Bonnie and it is not Alabama. Her authority over Bonnie is undermined while David's authority is reinforced.

Christine Froula, author of "The Daughter's Seduction: Sexual Violence and Literary History," notes that a woman's voice threatens men's authority. Froula argues, "the cultural text dictates . . . the necessity of silencing woman's speech when it threatens the father's power. This silencing ensures the cultural daughter remains the daughter, her power suppressed and muted, while the father, his power protected, makes culture and history in his image" (112). In this case the father figure is the husband and the daughter is the wife. Alabama's silence is necessary to keep him in power and in control.

Alabama's silence is also necessary to enable David's affair with a dancer. Alabama does not protest when David leaves with Gabrielle Gibbs. When David returns the next morning, Alabama breaks the silence that she has maintained: "I can't stand this any longer," she screamed . . . 'I don't want to sleep with the men or imitate the women'" (111). Alabama rejects both her husband's affair and the cynical lifestyle of the women of her social set. Alabama decides that she wants to do something that has meaning and significance. It is at this point that Alabama begins to study ballet and find her vocation. Alabama is able to express herself through the study of dance. By refusing to stay silent, Alabama does not allow David to dictate the terms under which they stay married.

David in the beginning does seem to support Alabama's study of ballet. After all, in the beginning David benefits from Alabama's absence: "David was glad of her absorption at the studio . . . [He] could work more freely when [Alabama] was occupied and making fewer demands on his time" (117). Eventually, Alabama puts her study of ballet ahead of David's requirements and this causes conflicts with David's social and career plans. David and Alabama argue, "Why will you never come out with me?" he said." She answers, "because I can't work the next day if I do.' 'Are you under the illusion that you'll ever be any good at that stuff?'"

(119). By taking her own career seriously Alabama has stopped being the society girl who David seems to prefer. After she refuses to stay out and drink in the cafes and bars David tells her, “What’s the use of having a wife? If a woman’s only to sleep with there are plenty available for that-----” (120).

Why does David seem to need to have Alabama as a “drinking partner?” The answer may be that not only is Alabama David’s wife, but that she is also the model/subject of his paintings. As the subject of David’s art work, Alabama is also a walking advertisement for it; this is her job. What Alabama wears, where so goes, whom she goes out with, and how outrageously she behaves are all advertisement for David’s paintings. Alabama and David’s outrageous lifestyle causes interest in his works and this attention allows David to sell his art. Alabama is accustomed to being an advertisement: “She knew her face glowed in the firelight like a confectioner’s brewing, an advertisement of a pretty girl drinking a strawberry sundae in June” (39). Alabama also notes that “I give a damned good show” (32). Alabama is accustomed to fulfilling this role. Simone Weil Davis, author of “In the Tutu or Out the Window: Zelda Fitzgerald and the Possibility of Escape” believes that this role relegates Alabama to the role of an “accessorizing muse and show-wife” (162). After the revelation of David’s affair with a dancer, Alabama rejects the role of advertisement and studies dance. She also rejects David’s attempt to exploit her dancing by bringing their friends to one of Alabama’s dance lessons. This is an obvious attempt by David to display Alabama before his friends. Alabama scolds a fellow ballerina for allowing them in the studio: “My lessons are not a circus. Why did you let them come in?” (134). Alabama’s study of ballet is not for the amusement of David’s friends; she does not want him to turn her dancing into an advertisement for his art. She is studying ballet in

an attempt to discover her own identity and to express her own artistic abilities. Alabama does not want David to take advantage of her dancing to further his own career.

Later, after Alabama loses her ability to dance, David does misappropriate Alabama's dancing by making ballet the subject of his paintings. He exploits Alabama's artistic work by using it in his own:

"We love those last pictures," they said. "Nobody has ever handled the ballet with any vitality since----"

"I thought," said David, "that rhythm, being a purely physical exercise of the eyeball, that the waltz picture would actually give you, by leading the eye in pictorial choreography, the same sensation as following the measure with your feet." (194)

David's appropriation of ballet again places Alabama, as the former ballerina, into the role of advertisement for his art work. Alabama tells someone who claims she and David are lucky, "You mean that we've parted with segments of ourselves more easily than other people--granted that we were ever intact" (195). Alabama is well aware that her dancing has been taken away and that she has lost an avenue with which she can discover her identity.

Alabama, having lost her "voice"—her ability to dance—has been silenced. This silence allows David to reinvigorate his own career and gives him a fresh subject matter. It also restores David's patriarchal place in the marriage and reduces Alabama to the role of daughter and makes her a sacrifice: "the effective performance of [Alabama's] redemptive function requires martyrdom, and a good daughter [wife] is measured according to the degree to which she subsumes herself to her father's [husband's] needs" (Giffen 260). It does not appear from the text of the novel that while Alabama is studying ballet David is becoming more successful. It takes Alabama's loss of dancing ability to reinvigorate David's artistic endeavors. From a

patriarchal standpoint, Alabama's sacrifice of both her career and identity are proper for her marriage's success.

Surrealism

Many critics would argue that Save Me the Waltz ends in failure because Alabama does not succeed in becoming a great dancer. Just as she begins her career as a dancer in Naples, Alabama contracts blood poisoning through a blister on her toe infected by the glue in her toe shoes. This injury stops her from ever dancing again. Alabama returns to David and is once again subsumed back into their patriarchal relationship. It seems that her search for identity and self are over. Alabama is seemingly willing to accept the role in their marriage as an advertisement for David's career. In other words, Alabama is willing to be the object whom David paints. Like the character that she created, critics point to Zelda Fitzgerald's own life as a failure. After all, Fitzgerald does not ever have a serious writing career in her lifetime. Before writing the autobiographical Save Me the Waltz, Fitzgerald is hospitalized, diagnosed a schizophrenic, and spends the rest of her life in and out of clinics until her death in a fire in 1948.

Zelda is best remembered as the wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald, the original Flapper, as described in his novels, and not as a writer in her own right. Failure to find their own identities is not necessarily an accurate representation of Alabama in Save Me the Waltz and Fitzgerald in life. It can be argued that Fitzgerald did not fail in her attempt to find her own identity. As a part of the process of establishing her identity, Zelda rebels against her husband, as critics have recently begun to acknowledge, by flirting with Surrealism and writing Save Me the Waltz, which could be considered a surrealist novel.

The surrealist movement was born in Paris around 1920. After he broke with the Dada movement, André Breton formed Surrealism which he defines as:

Surréalisme: automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière. Le fonctionnement réel de la pensée. Diction de la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par le raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale.

(Surrealism: pure psychological automatism by which one proposes to express whether verbally, in writing, or by any other means, the real function of thought. Dictation of thought, in the absence of any control exerted by reason, outside all aesthetic or moral concern) (qtd. in Castillo 59; translated by Rudy Williams).

Rebellion against the stifling conventions of society seems to be the aim of the surrealists.

Penelope Rosemont, editor of Surrealist Women: An International Anthology, argues that the goal of surrealists is, "to overcome the repressive apparatus of logic, common sense, faith, law, bureaucracy, obedience to authority, militarism, and all closed systems" (xxxv).

While it would be a stretch to claim that Fitzgerald's novel encompasses all these goals, it does include many of these elements. Fitzgerald was not a part of the formal surrealist movement, but that she was aware of surrealism is very likely. After all, Fitzgerald is the wife of a famous author living in Paris at the time of Surrealism's beginning. The narrator of Save Me the Waltz mentions one of the original members of the surrealist movement: "The French talked volubly and incomprehensively to David and Alabama about the works of . . . René Crével" (88). Both Susan Castillo, author of "(Im)possible Lives: Zelda Fitzgerald's Save Me the Waltz as Surrealist Autobiography" (56) and Simone Weil Davis, author of "In the Tutu or Out the Window: Zelda

Fitzgerald and the Possibility of Escape” (172-185), argue that Save Me the Waltz has many literary elements of a surrealistic novel.

One element which relates Save Me the Waltz directly to the surrealist movement is rebellion. Zelda rebels against Scott’s wishes in regards to publishing this particular novel. Most literary critics and biographers discuss this argument between the Fitzgeralds. However, it is not often noticed by literary critics that Zelda rebels against Scott’s style of modernism. Fitzgerald, early in her husband’s literary career, had written many short essays and stories that were published under both Scott’s and her name in order to receive more money from publications. Fitzgerald more than anyone else knows her husband’s writing style. Linda W. Wagner, author of “Save Me the Waltz: An Assessment of Craft,” agrees that Fitzgerald, “knew how to write the way her husband did but she purposefully chose to write the way *she* did” (207). Zelda indicates her awareness of the differences between her and Scott’s writing style, and her determination to write differently by describing David’s (Scott’s fictional double) depiction of women, “David’s reiterance that many women were flowers—flowers and desserts, love and excitement, and passion and fame!”(106). This description suggests that Scott is apt to use traditional imagery that employs conventional romantic similes and metaphors.

Mary Gordon, in the introduction to Zelda Fitzgerald: The Collected Writings, observes that “Scott Fitzgerald is a pretty even blend of classicist and romantic: his characters experience extreme emotion and situations, but they are described in sentences and stories and novels that are formally rhythmic and carefully shaped” (xviii). Zelda Fitzgerald does not follow the formal conventions in regard to her writing style. It seems to be an example of what André Breton called automatism: “dictation of thought, in the absence of any control exerted by reason, outside all aesthetic or moral concern” (Castillo 59). She includes long, confusing sentence structures

with strange and unusual metaphors. In certain sections of the novel it seems as if the reader is reading the thoughts that are occurring in Fitzgerald's mind: "Nobody knew whose party it was. It had been going on for weeks. When you felt you couldn't survive another night, you went home and slept and when you got back, a new set of people had consecrated themselves to keeping it alive" (95). This sort of tapping into the unconscious style of writing gives the impression that certain segments of the novel are actually her thoughts copied down with no thought given to formal structure; Scott's writing is much more formal and controlled in structure.

Fitzgerald seems to explore the "unconscious" writing style in many of the novel's passages. Distorted time sequences and strange juxtapositions are used throughout the novel. In the first section of Save Me the Waltz, which documents Alabama's adolescence, time is linear, but not clearly defined. It seems to pass very quickly with significant time passing between paragraphs on the same page. It is noticing small indicators such as references to Alabama's lengthening of her dresses or to schoolrooms that allows the reader to surmise her age. The odd juxtapositions that Zelda uses are unusual and completely different than anything Scott would have written. Zelda writes a very unusual passage describing the first kiss after Alabama discovers she is in love with David:

She crawled into the friendly cave of his ear. The area inside was gray and ghostly classic as she stared about the deep trenches of the cerebellum. There was not a growth or flowery substance to break the smooth convolutions, just the puffy rise of sleek gray matter. "I've got to see the front lines," Alabama said to herself. The lumpy mounds rose wet above her head and she set out to follow the creases. Before long she was lost. Like a mystic maze, the folds and ridges rose in desolation; there was nothing to indicate

one way from another. She stumbled on and finally reached the medulla oblongata. Vast tortuous indentations led her round and round. Hysterically she began to run. David, distracted by a tickling sensation at the head of his spine lifted his lips from hers. (40)

Usually, it would be assumed that the imagery would be much more romantic, such as hearts, flowers and tiny cupids winging their way around the entwined couple. Instead, Fitzgerald causes her heroine to become frightened and lost inside the mind of her lover, unable to discover the true center of his thoughts and being. The passage also foreshadows the difficulty Alabama will have in negotiating the confusing maze that is her marriage to David. The rejection of and rebellion against the more traditional imagery and the use of something more interesting and strange is one of the goals of the surrealists.

Of course, not everyone understands or appreciates the more surreal aspects of Zelda's writing, including her husband Scott. Nancy Milford, author of Zelda: a Biography, quotes a passage from one of Scott's letters (apparently written, according to Milford, just prior to his discovery that Zelda had sent off the manuscript to Max Perkins) which indicates he did not understand what his wife was trying to achieve: "The lack of continuity in her novel doesn't worry me. She isn't a 'natural storyteller' in the sense that I am, and unless a story comes to her fully developed and crying to be told she's liable to flounder around rather unsuccessfully among problems of construction" (215-16). Contemporary literary critics of Fitzgerald are also confused and put off by the more surrealistic aspects of Save Me the Waltz. William McFee in the New York Sun describes Fitzgerald's writing, "In this book, with all its crudity of conception, its ruthless purloinings of technical tricks and its pathetic striving after philosophical profundity, there is the promise of a new and vigorous personality in fiction" (qtd. in Castillo 55). Joseph Henry Jackson insists that "it is an odd combination of good and bad. Mrs.

Fitzgerald has moments of easy naturalness which make her a born storyteller, but she is guilty of a good deal of awkward, clumsy overwriting” (qtd. in White 166). Jane Morrison of the Charlotte News writes, “[I] found the plot confusing . . . full of unnatural situations . . . unsupported by any well-depicted or realistic character study . . . [it is a] portrayal of twentieth century life as it is imagined, rather than it really is” (qtd. in White 168). It is the very elements of surrealism—lack of continuity, perceived overwriting, and lack of realistic characters and life—that are condemned by the critics.

More current literary critics striving to bring attention to Fitzgerald’s novel are also distracted by the surreal elements of her writing. Victoria Sullivan claims that “the first forty pages . . . are marred by excessive overlapping of images and eccentric word choices. Perhaps she was struggling to impress, although this style only slows the reader” (35). It is not surprising that the critics are so disapproving or even unaware of the surreal style that Fitzgerald employs in Save Me the Waltz. Surrealists reject what they consider to be the establishment as oppressive to the surrealist artists since they believe the establishment stifles creativity. Literary critics due to the nature of their profession use sets of criteria to critique literary works. Surrealists are, as part of their rejection of traditional art, against a system which oppresses the free flow of artistic ideas and literature. According to J. H. Matthews, author of The Surrealist Mind, the surrealists are frustrated by critics’ failure to understand surrealism (79). Matthews asserts, “Where surrealism is in question, the person looking out and the one peering in usually do not see the same thing . . . So [the critic] chides or even attacks them when . . . they fall short of aims he believes are to be ascribed to them, quite regardless of the fact that surrealism fostered ambitions different, or even altogether contrary, from those he has in view” (119). Because surrealism is rebellion against institutions that impose regulations that they feel suppress creativity, it is not

surprising that Surrealists have not established criteria against which to judge their work.

Literary critics, then, find it difficult to determine whether or not a work is surrealistic or what makes it good surrealism. Fitzgerald's writing is not recognized by many critics as being surreal in style. So, what the critics find confusing or unpolished may be instead an intentional attempt by Fitzgerald to tap into her unconscious mind.

Connections in Fitzgerald's writing to surrealism can be found in the more obvious: surrealist imagery in use of similes and metaphors, the structure of sentences. But interestingly, anorexia is also connected to modernism and its offshoot, Surrealism. Earlier in this essay I argue that anorexia is a motif used by Fitzgerald throughout Save Me the Waltz. The act of writing itself is related to regurgitating of food by Maud Ellmann. The compulsion to write then causes the writer following this line of reasoning to be affected much as anorexics are affected by their compulsions. Ellman notes that "Modern writers experience themselves as even thinner and more tenuous than their . . . predecessors, while their artifacts have grown more bloated with their lost élan" (26). What Ellmann seems to be saying is that the more fanciful elements of the Modernist movement, such as Joyce's stream of consciousness writing (similar to the surrealists' automatism) can cause authors to be eclipsed by their writing. Fitzgerald is certainly not overshadowed by her writing. However, the myth of Scott and Zelda certainly overshadows Zelda and any sincere attempts that she makes to be regarded as an author and artist. In fact few are aware that Zelda Fitzgerald is an author of a novel.

Jennifer Patterson connects anorexia even more directly to surrealism, contending that anorexia is an attempt by the sufferer of the disease to revert back to childhood (276). Experts who study anorexia note that women who suffer from the disease stop menstruating, lose gender characteristics such as breasts and hips, and lose weight, making it plummet closer to that of a

child. This regression of their bodies to that of a preadolescent child brings women closer to a state which is idealized by male Surrealists: *femme-enfant*, the woman-child. According to Rosemont, the child-woman “is a proud and defiant being who refuses to surrender the child’s boldness, curiosity, and spirit of adventure” (xlvii). This would be an apt description of Fitzgerald’s character, Alabama. Alabama boldly attempts a ballet career long after most ballerinas begin serious study, and she does attempt to live on her own in Naples in pursuit of her dancing career. The negative connotation of the “woman-child” implies infantilization of women. Alabama certainly is infantilized by David by the end of the novel. The narrator notes that during Alabama’s hospitalization, “David came when anything new occurred, like a parent supervising a child who is learning to walk” (181). David certainly continues to treat Alabama as a child and it is anything but the positive relationship that Rosemont believes the “child-women” to have.

In addition to the idealization of child-women, Surrealists of the twenties also flirted with communism. An indication of this connection is, according to Robert Belton, author of The Beribboned Bomb: The Image of Woman in Male Surrealist Art, that “the Surrealists named their first journal La Révolution Surréaliste and cultivated the PCF [Parti Communiste Française]” (6). Rosemont asserts that “by boldly identifying themselves with the cause of the working-class self-emancipation, the surrealists demonstrated their utter scorn for capitalism’s cultural elitism” (xxxiv). While there is not any evidence that Fitzgerald joined the communist party or even necessarily agreed with all of communism’s doctrines, there are passages which imply a certain amount of sympathy for communist ideals. Early in Save Me the Waltz, Alabama does not seem sympathetic to the plight of the working class. After Alabama begins dancing with women of lower social classes, she becomes concerned about them and their

welfare. For instance, Alabama buys Madame a stove for the benefit of the other dancers in the studio (123). The poverty of the other dancers begins to affect Alabama and her feelings about the wealthy life she enjoys; "It seemed a crime owning new dresses She thought she could work better when she felt poor" (130). Alabama begins to buy cheap shirt waists' fading them in the sun (136). The consumption of goods becomes less important to Alabama: "Spending money had played a big part in Alabama's life before she had lost, in her work, the necessity for material possessions" (131). It seems that Alabama begins to identify more with the working class and becomes more sympathetic to their plight just as the Surrealists did.

After Alabama accepts the role of solo dancer for a ballet company in Naples, Italy, she begins to separate herself from the life of an artist's wife and reject the trappings of wealth. David offers to buy Alabama a first class seat on the train. David says, "'it's silly to travel second class. Won't you let me have them change you to first . . . ?'" Alabama says, "'I'd rather feel I could afford it from the beginning'" (153). Traveling first class would place Alabama firmly within the wealthy class which she is trying to escape by going on her own to Naples and living off the wage she will earn dancing. When Alabama's daughter, Bonnie, arrives to stay with her mother, she is uncomfortable with the lower class lifestyle her mother has adopted which does not include a car; "'You and Daddy are very chic,' Bonnie went on speculatively. 'You should have a car--'" (163). Cars are, of course, accessories which imply wealth and status. Later, after Bonnie has returned to her father, the car metaphor continues: "Safe in the glittering car they [Bonnie and David] rode: the car-at-your-disposal, the mystery-car, the Rajah's car...puffing the power of money out on the summer night air like a seigneur distributing largesse" (173). Alabama tries to dilute the sense of entitlement that Bonnie has: "'I suppose I shall be very rich,' said Bonnie." Alabama replies, "'My god, no! You must get things

like that out of your head. You will have to work to get what you want” (163). Alabama is warning Bonnie that the life of a rich wife is not at all satisfying and that it is better to work and strive to attain a more satisfying identity, which she herself has earned.

Conclusion

Elizabeth Ammons, author of Conflicting Stories: American Women Writers at the Turn of the Century, contends, “To be written is passive. To write is to be active, to take action, to be the actor—to own and create one’s self” (38). Alabama in Save Me the Waltz, seems to decide to be active and to find her own identity. She uses mirrors to help her find herself as De Beauvoir argues. Alabama looks to her father for help in developing a positive identity and, when he fails her, replaces him with a husband. The husband, David, is very similar to Alabama’s father; he is unable to help her find a positive identity. Also, David needs Alabama to be his muse in order to have a successful career. Anorexia nervosa, in addition to being a metaphor for writing, allows Alabama to exert control over her life, in a very negative fashion, for the first time. Before the end of the novel, Alabama does enjoy, for a brief time, a modestly successful career as a ballerina. Similarly, Zelda Fitzgerald herself rebels against her husband by writing Save Me the Waltz and seeming to use the tenets of surrealism as a guide. Alabama and Fitzgerald both reject the more passive roles that David and Scott intend for their wives. Both women create their identities, one by becoming a dancer and the other a writer. Alabama and Fitzgerald’s search for identity in Save Me the Waltz deserves further study.

Over the last twenty years there has been a surge of interest in the writings of Zelda Fitzgerald, probably due to an increasing interest in previously ignored female authors. Most of the critics compare Fitzgerald’s life with that of her characters, such as Alabama in Save Me the

Waltz. Other critics compare and contrast Save Me the Waltz with F. Scott Fitzgerald's Tender is the Night. While biographical analyses are important and informative, more critical analysis on Save Me the Waltz as a text remains to be done. Recently, there has been a rise in anorexia nervosa stories in the news. With this renewed interest, more interest in the connections between Alabama's possible anorexia and her relationships with both her father and husband could be expanded to include the relationship with her mother, Millie, and a mother's effect on the daughter's susceptibility to the disease. Additionally, analyzing Alabama's relationship with her father could be extended to examine the incestuous themes between Alabama and the Judge and David and Bonnie. Analyzing Alabama's and Bonnie's relationship and how it is affected by Alabama's decision to dance would also be worth studying. Additional work in examining the novel as a surrealist text also needs to be done. Even though it seems to go against the very tenets of surrealism, detailing what it is that makes a work of literature surreal would be very helpful. One aspect of surrealism that could be further explored in relation to Save Me the Waltz is black humor. According to Simon Weil Davis, black humor is a characteristic of surrealism. There are many instances of humor in the novel which may be considered to be very dark and even surreal. Zelda Fitzgerald's novel, Save Me the Waltz, deserves further analysis to expose Fitzgerald as something more than F. Scott Fitzgerald's wife.

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