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English 301

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The Fitzgerald Love Affair

I want to propose that F. Scott Fitzgerald treated his wife as more of “just a friend” than as a lover or wife. This is due to the ring on Zelda’s hand being to initially keep Zelda as “the muse” rather than as “the wife” with how it is argued whether or not Fitzgerald had previous affairs when married. This can also be looked at through Fitzgerald’s work, which is able to be analyzed to see if the author’s characteristics have been engrained into his characters.

F. Scott Fitzgerald had married Zelda Sayre in order to solidify her status as being “the quintessential muse” (Lawson 77) to only Fitzgerald. Zelda would tire of being expected to live up to the heroines that her husband would create in her image as their marriage continued. And due to being Fitzgerald’s muse, this meant that they were “unable” to collaborate according to Lawson, as F. Scott treated inferior work to be “feminine” when compared to the modern and “masculine” ideologies. The stance of “feminine” work and being unwilling to part with his muse were the most likely influencers as to why Zelda was never allowed to publish her diary, it would allow other authors to use Zelda as their own muse and thus negate all of the work that he had put into marrying her which was an act that he would later regret. During Fitzgerald’s final days at Hollywood, with World War II just around the corner, and the newest artistic consciousness of Postmodernism coming to the forefront of the art world, Wasserstrom would argue that Fitzgerald would end up becoming an alcoholic. This was due to his marriage to Zelda not having turned out the way that he had first envisioned which would become his biggest regret as he would hope to

create a work of such stature that it would right the wrong of not having followed his dream instead of marrying Zelda.

It is not known if F. Scott Fitzgerald was truly in love with his wife considering that there are rumors of F. Scott having actively looked outside of their marriage for an affair, a discussion in which has not been given a direct outcome as one can only speculate at this point. Donaldson has argued that F. Scott Fitzgerald did not be kind of guy to have an affair when Dorothy Parker revealed to Lillian Hellman, who would document this in her autobiography, that “she had slept with Scott Fitzgerald ‘in a one- or two-night affair’... some years previously” (41). Hellman was accused of inventing and altering stories for her autobiography which would then make her account of Parker claiming to have an affair with Fitzgerald extremely unreliable, even though there is a lack of motive to fictionalize such an encounter. Donaldson claims that both Fitzgerald and Parker were nothing more than close friends, after having met in 1919, who would travel together and shared a fascination with the theatre and dependency on alcohol. While Gatzemeyer would state that in Tony Buttitta’s autobiography, taking place over the summer of 1935, that conversations with Fitzgerald concerned literary figures and influences along with discussions of whirlwind romances that F. Scott would have over that summer. The first romantic encounter was with Beatrice “Rosemary” Dance and then later a high-class prostitute named “Lottie” which would end after information came to light of her being a-quarter black with Fitzgerald potentially being racist. Gatzemeyer argues that the autobiography has to be taken with a grain of salt considering the amount of time that it was published after Fitzgerald’s death and that Buttitta heavily relied on academic sources when writing, thus losing subjectivity when actively attempting to fill in any fact that has been left in question.

Interpreting how Fitzgerald had inserted himself into *The Great Gatsby* (1925) might be able to determine the feelings that were felt towards Zelda. This is important due to how Callahan argues toward Fitzgerald being able to embody the “American experience” (374) that is felt in society. During the Jazz Age of the 1920’s, Fitzgerald used personal concepts to explore the American dream while straining to figure out the meaning of life before determining that life has cheated him out of what was desired. Such personal struggles of Fitzgerald would have likely made it into the works of fiction that he would create, evolving from “self-destroying romantic obsession” (Callahan 376) that *Gatsby* would inherit in 1925 to having the need to “wrench free from the opposed complimentary shoals identification and alienation in his marriage” (Callahan 376) that *Diver* would be seen with nine years later in 1934. This means that these characters would be able to be his “alter egos.” As Fitzgerald would mature so would the main characters in his writings: *Gatsby* obsessing over his love for Daisy and his dream and *Diver* being trapped in his misguided attempts at love (Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby*, *Tender is the Night*).

Being able to look deeper into the marriage between F. Scott Fitzgerald and Zelda Sayre has unearthed a lot about how they see each other. Zelda sees herself as the muse who cannot publish her own work due to how controlling her husband is concerning “traditional” art and being unwilling to let Zelda become a muse for others which would become a huge regret as F. Scott Fitzgerald would have rather worked on his career instead of having of marrying Zelda. Fitzgerald would have more than likely had an affair, Donaldson argued about there being no affair with Dorothy Parker and Gatzemeyer having evidence that Fitzgerald had an affair with two women in 1935, when he felt as though the marriage with Sayre was going downhill. There is even a vague hint about Fitzgerald’s thoughts concerning his love life at the time in his work. Even though the literature, the likelihood of having affairs, and controlling his muse is not enough evidence on its

own there is a strong likelihood that F. Scott Fitzgerald did not love his wife when they were married when all of the evidence is looked as a whole.

Works Cited

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