

6-26-2017

# The Transformation of Gender and Sexuality in 1920s America: A Literary Interpretation

Taylor Gilkison

Western Kentucky University, [taylor.gilkison172@topper.wku.edu](mailto:taylor.gilkison172@topper.wku.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu\\_hon\\_theses](http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses)

 Part of the [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), and the [Literature in English, North America Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Gilkison, Taylor, "The Transformation of Gender and Sexuality in 1920s America: A Literary Interpretation" (2017). *Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects*. Paper 682.

[http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu\\_hon\\_theses/682](http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses/682)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact [topscholar@wku.edu](mailto:topscholar@wku.edu).

THE TRANSFORMATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN 1920s AMERICA:  
A LITERARY INTERPRETATION

A Capstone Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts  
with Honors College Graduate Distinction at  
Western Kentucky University

By

Taylor G. Gilkison

May 2017

\*\*\*\*\*

CE/T Committee:

Professor David Serafini, Advisor

Professor Susann Davis, Second Reader

Brittany M. Dodds, Third Reader

Copyright by  
Taylor G. Gilkison  
2017

I dedicate this thesis to Iced White Chocolate Mochas, to my \$7 red Christmas candle from Target, to the Gatton babies, to my roommates (Kaitlyn, Paige, and Emileigh) for putting up with all my crazy antics, and, of course, to my loving parents without whom I could not have done this without.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this Capstone/Thesis project would not have been possible without the support of the Honors College Staff, specifically Dr. Christopher Keller and Sharon Leone. I am forever grateful for the assistance of my advisor David Serafini and second reader Susann Davis for stepping into their roles on such short notice and aiding in the completion and defense of this work. Without their assistance my project would not have been accomplished in the manner in which I intended.

## ABSTRACT

The 1920s in America marked a new decade of freedom and exploration for youths. With the conclusion of the First World War in 1918 and the addition of the nineteenth amendment to the United States Constitution in 1919, women gained more prominent roles in both politics and society. The early twentieth century ushered in a new age of sexual expression and attempted gender balance. Secular thinking became more widespread than ever, which was reflected in the arts throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Artists and writers alike were not only expressing themselves through their works, but documenting the radical transformations taking place as well. Challenging society's standards became something that young people aspired to and their carefree attitudes prompted immediate backlash from the older generations. Writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Eugene O'Neill, and Edna St. Vincent Millay wished to chronicle the immediate advances and changes that were taking place throughout the 1920s. The goal of this project is to describe the transformation that American society underwent in the 1920s in relation to gender and sexuality through literature. Writers have always been historians in their own way and when it came to chronicling the massive changes taking place throughout the Roaring Twenties, literature played a vital part in social expression. A new breed of females was slowly beginning to emerge in the early 1900s and they couldn't help but attract attention from all, especially writers. This project will document the way in which gender and sexual equality were recorded by the three specific authors previously mentioned, as well as make the claim that the 1920s were instrumental in promoting impartiality for all genders.

## VITA

### *EDUCATION*

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY May 2017  
B.A. in History  
B.A. in Political Science – Mahurin Honors College Graduate  
Honors Capstone: *The Transformation of Gender and Sexuality in 1920s  
America: A Literary Interpretation*

Anderson County High School, Lawrenceburg, KY May 2013

### *PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE*

The Carroll Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science, WKU August 2016-  
Desk Clerk Present

Kentucky Library and Museum: Archives and Small Collections, WKU January 2016-  
Student Assistant/Researcher May 2016

America Reads, Housing Authority of Bowling Green, WKU August 2014-  
Tutor May 2015

### *AWARDS & HONORS*

Cum Laude, WKU, May 2017  
Anderson County Honors Scholarship, Anderson County, KY, 2013-2017  
A.M. Stickles Memorial Scholarship, WKU, 2016  
Schroeder Honors College Scholarship, WKU, 2015

### *PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS*

The National Society of Collegiate Scholars (NSCS)  
Pi Alpha Theta, Honors History Society

### *INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE*

Harlaxton College, Grantham, England Fall 2015

## CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Vita</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Section One: F. Scott Fitzgerald</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Section Two: Eugene O’Neill</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>Section Three: Edna St. Vincent Millay</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>59</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>65</b>

## INTRODUCTION

The 1920s was a decadent, fast-paced decade filled with glamour, hope, and endless possibilities. In America, the conclusion of the First World War in 1918 marked a monumental shift in the thoughts and ideals of the younger generation which culminated as a vast social transformation throughout the 1920s. The younger generation, men and women in their late teens and early twenties, soon began to view the world in a new light. No longer were they going to be held back by the ancestral Victorian customs by which they were raised; no longer were they willing to sit aside while the rest of the world developed without them; and no longer were they going to be forced by the older generations into doing anything they did not want to do. The “Roaring Twenties” was a dramatic decade filled with gradual social alteration and foundational political change because of the younger generation’s willingness to actually enforce a change. The 1920s also marked the beginning of a gender revolution; women, now more than ever, recognized that they too deserved an equal place in society. While the hierarchical social structure that was previously prominent still remained intact throughout the vibrant decade, more and more people were finally beginning to recognize its decreased importance.

Both politics and society collectively evolved throughout the twenties. However, the political change that occurred was due to an ongoing movement dedicated to the obtainment of equal rights for women. The women’s suffrage movement in America began in the late nineteenth century when the first women’s rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York. Under female leadership, the convention led to the formation of several women’s rights organizations that fought for a female voice in American politics

on all levels. Working to end disenfranchisement for women, female and male political activists and organizations in favor of giving women the vote eventually succeeded in 1920 when the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment enfranchising women was added to the United States constitution. This victory is perhaps considered the most significant event in the Progressive Era—a period of widespread political reform and social activism across America from the 1880's to the 1920's—because it demonstrated the ability of a specific group to radically change not only political norms, but social norms as well through peaceful means.

The suffrage movement aided in uniting both males and females to fight against the growing gender gap. Additionally, World War I and the role that the United States of America played in it also acted in uniting the genders to fight against inequality. America had emerged from the war an industrial leader, a military powerhouse, and an economic stronghold, all of which gave rise to the Roaring Twenties. An entire generation of young men had left to fight the war, which in turn, left the women at home to not only take care of themselves and their families, but to do the work that the men had done before their deployment. Mass involvement of women in voluntary organizations to aid the war effort led to the coalescing of social classes. Women in the lower, middle, and upper classes in the United States participated in voluntary drives and organizations, as well as took over their husbands' jobs while they went off to war. On the home front, women not only took on the roles of the caretakers for wounded soldiers, but they rushed to the workplace to help build and manufacture the actual war materials that their husbands and loved ones would be using.

Because of the role that women had played in World War I aiding the victory, females of all walks of life found it easier to organize against their disenfranchisement once the war was over in 1918. Furthermore, their male counterparts began to recognize all the work that the females had put in during the war and started to assist them in their search for equal rights. Equal rights in the beginning of the twentieth century did not just stem from women wanting the basic right of voting in their local, state, and federal elections. Women did indeed want a voice in American politics, but they also wanted impartiality within the existing culture. They wanted social equality.

Perhaps one of the most recognizable aspects of the “Roaring Twenties” in America is the Flapper. The flapper represented that woman who had not only fought for political rights but was also struggling to ensure social equality. Young women during the age were more sexually vibrant than ever; they were much more open about sex in general and were not afraid to show it. Newspapers during this time were on the rise, and many referred to the vast social change that was happening during the 1920s and the increased awareness of both male and female sexuality. For example, a writer for *The New York Times* in the 1920s agreed that young people were more and more willing to discuss gender imbalance and sexuality. She stated that: “the modern young girl is a delight. She dresses simply and sensibly, and she looks life right straight in the eye; she knows just what she wants and goes after it, whether it’s a man, a career, a job, or a new hat!”<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Margaret O. 1922. “More Ado about the Flapper.” *New York Times* (1857-1922), April 16<sup>th</sup>, p. 49.

Openness related to sexual awareness also allowed women to recognize that their gender submission, which had dominated the cultures that came before them, was no longer necessary. The modern woman was tired of being pushed around by the principal men in her life and was willing to ignore the social norms of the day and become much more independent. The birth of mass culture, as well as the introduction of new entertainment and music and the illegalization of alcohol through Prohibition, all contributed to the social and political awareness of young women living in 1920s America. These same factors eventually led to a different type of awareness for young men as well.

The 1920s in America is often portrayed by the writers and reporters of the time as a period of full equality between both men and women because of the all the political action that took place throughout the decade. However, this was not the case. Women still faced discrimination in both the working world and in education because of their gender and were often continually associated with the household even though World War I had brought with it greater responsibilities for females. Women in the 1920s were still unequal in financial aspects, social groups, and politics, despite gaining the right to vote at the very beginning of the decade in 1920. All of these inequalities helped further undermine women's fulfillment of group consciousness. The ever-changing dynamics of the Twenties also brought to light the so-called 'New Woman.'

The new woman wanted the same freedom of movement that men had and the same economic and political rights. By the end of the 1920s, she had come a long way. Before the war, a lady did not set foot in a saloon; after the war, she entered into a speakeasy as thoughtlessly as she would go to a railroad station...Sexual

independence was merely the most sensational aspect of the generally altered status of women.<sup>2</sup>

Women no longer wanted to be constrained to the home and family lifestyle and they wanted to be free to choose how and in what ways they wanted to live their lives. Women began to work different jobs. They went out more and got married at older ages, preferring to spend their late teens and early twenties exploring everything that America had to offer.

Artists and writers alike during this time period sought to explain the complete social upheaval that was taking place, as well as cement its place in history. Despite the modern-day notion that flappers (the most rebellious of the young women during the 1920s) had money because of the conception that only the elite had influence over society, it was timidly suggested by reporters of the time that “there were lots of flappers who weren’t rich—beginning young female artists, superior office girls, professional or pseudo-professional girls, apprentice writers, precious lady bums, or what not. They were also seen flapping about.”<sup>3</sup> The working woman was much more inclined to rebel against the previously constructed social norms that were present during the Roaring Twenties. Working women represented a different class type; a class that was more independent, more financially stable, and more in touch with their sexuality.

Women strove to gain independence; they were ready for the revolution. Sexual freedom, as highlighted by the media, the automobile, and new technology were all

---

<sup>2</sup> Estelle B. Freedman, “The New Woman: Changing Views of Women in the 1920’s,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (Sep., 1974), pp. 372-393, Published by: Oxford University Press on Behalf of Organization of American Historians, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1903945>, pg. 373.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret O, p. 49.

rooted in the social transformation that was taking place. Even changes in fashion were signs of a deeper change in the American feminine ideal.<sup>4</sup> Writers of the decade “had claimed [both] all things and nothing for women in the 1920s: that the vote was not used, that it had brought equality; that women became men’s equals in the world of work, that they had remained in traditionally feminine occupations; that the sexual revolution had changed women’s lives, and that the revolution was more a literary than an actual occurrence.”<sup>5</sup> All of these things had come together to help redefine the decade of transformation. There was no greater image of the woman in the 1920s than the image that the flapper revealed, something that provided immense inspiration to the chroniclers of the vibrant age.

---

<sup>4</sup> Freedman, pg. 379.

<sup>5</sup> Freedman, pg. 387.

## SECTION ONE: F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Along with the economic, cultural, and political upheaval that occurred in the Twenties as a result of the First World War and an increase in social awareness of young men and women, the arts also began to consolidate into something much more modern. As with the majority of people during this decade, artists and writers struggled to fully understand the changes that were occurring in society. With the era seeing young people gradually change their social customs and habits from those of their parents and grandparents, it also allowed them to explore the new options that the arts had brought to the period. Artists and writers of the 1920s rejected the old social norms and the new business society that had emerged as a result technological advances, and embraced the freedom of expression that the Jazz Age introduced; and as a result, much of the writing done in this decade reflected the changes that society was undergoing. Many authors wrote fiction, but even then, the majority of that fiction was still based on real-life experiences during the Twenties.

One of the most famous authors to emerge from this vibrant decade was F. Scott Fitzgerald. There was no better author to document such an age than a man also caught up in the middle of it. Fitzgerald was the poster boy for the extravagant decade and chose to focus the majority of his writings on all of the splendor, spoils, and aftermath of those who chose the party lifestyle.<sup>6</sup> Originally born as Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, before shortening his name after publication, he shares his name with the famous songwriter of

---

<sup>6</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, Barnes and Noble Classics Series: Introduction and Notes by Pagan Harleman, Published by: Barnes and Noble (2005), original publication, 1922—Additional Notes, pg. XVII.

the same name who wrote the “Star Spangled Banner.” Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on September 24, 1896, and moved around the country as a child. Even from a young age Fitzgerald showed a major proclivity towards writing and he published his first piece of work at age thirteen in his school paper.<sup>7</sup>

In 1911, he transferred from a small school in St. Paul to an elite private Catholic prep school in New Jersey because his parents felt that he was not receiving an education that matched his talent as a writer at his previous school. While in New Jersey he wrote several plays and continued to have his works published in the school newspaper. In 1913, Fitzgerald enrolled at Princeton University, where he got inspiration for the majority of his novels; however, due to poor grades, Fitzgerald was forced to leave Princeton and enlist in the Army shortly after the United States of America entered into World War I. Fitzgerald was first stationed at Camp Sheridan just outside of Montgomery, Alabama, where he met his future wife Zelda Sayre. However, he was called away before their courtship could commence and was re-stationed at a military camp in Kansas, where he began writing his first novel, *The Romantic Egotist* (which was eventually renamed *This Side of Paradise* after its revision, and was published by Charles Scribner’s Sons in 1920). He never actually fought in the war during his time in the Army and was discharged when the war ended in 1918. In 1920, Fitzgerald married his very famous and unpredictable wife, Zelda, with whom he had maintained contact during his time in the Army. She also served as inspiration for many of his works.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, Biography, xi.

<sup>8</sup> Fitzgerald, Biography, xi.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's first novel was very popular with the war generation and brought him almost immediate fame and fortune. However, he quickly developed a playboy reputation, and became well-known for his heavy drinking and continuous partying, which, again, became something that many of his works were based around. The majority of his early writings also revolved around a single theme: the effects of wealth and power on the people who possess both, one, or neither.<sup>9</sup> After the debut of his first two successful novels, F. Scott's career began to dwindle because he could no longer find inspiration. He and Zelda moved to Europe, more specifically, Paris, where he unintentionally became part of the Lost Generation (a term coined by famous author Gertrude Stein).<sup>10</sup> The Lost Generation was a group of artists and authors who had come of age during the First World War and incorporated their own experiences into their works. According to a *New York Times* article written in 1926 concerning the Lost Generation and the new authors who had emerged during the early 1920s, "of the many writers that sprang into notice with the advent of the post-war period, Scott Fitzgerald [had] remained the steadiest performer and the most entertaining. Short stories, novels, and a play [had] followed with constant regularity since he became the philosopher of the Flapper with "*This Side of Paradise*."<sup>11</sup>

It was not until 1925 that Charles Scribner's Sons published Fitzgerald's masterpiece, *The Great Gatsby*. Written while he was dwelling in the French Riviera, the

---

<sup>9</sup> Fitzgerald, Biography, xii.

<sup>10</sup> Fitzgerald, Biography, xii.

<sup>11</sup> Edwin Clark. "Scott Fitzgerald Looks Into Middle Age: THE GREAT GATSBY." By F. Scott Fitzgerald. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. New York Times (1923-Current file); New York, N.Y., April 19th, 1926, pg. BR9.

novel focused on a main character with a rather extravagant lifestyle that mirrored Fitzgerald's own. The success of this novel continued to further increase his fame and aided in supporting his rather opulent lifestyle. During the time that followed the publication of *The Great Gatsby*, his relationship with Zelda became very unstable and she eventually suffered several psychotic breaks before experiencing a complete emotional collapse in 1930. Zelda was shortly thereafter diagnosed with schizophrenia and died in a hospital fire. The majority of Fitzgerald's life paralleled the stories and characters which he wrote about in his novels; and just as the majority of those characters' lives ended in tragedy, so did his own life when he died of a heart attack at age forty-four on December 21, 1940.<sup>12</sup>

While Fitzgerald wrote dozens of short stories, which he sold to magazines in order to make ends meet, and dabbled in play writing, he is most well-known for his novels. He wrote five in total, and the majority of them (three to be exact) were actually composed about the changing social and political dynamics of the 1920s. *This Side of Paradise*, published in 1920, *The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925, and *Tender is the Night*, published in 1934, all have plot lines that resemble the extremes that the Roaring Twenties introduced to America. Fitzgerald did indeed enjoy writing, and wrote about the Twenties in order to chronicle them through his eyes; however, during his literary peak, he also wrote strictly for money.

Fitzgerald was never a poor man by any means, but he was also never necessarily rich, at least until after the success of his first novel. From then on, he was drawn to the

---

<sup>12</sup> Fitzgerald, *Biography*, xii.

life that the rich and famous possessed. Fitzgerald wanted to live beyond his means, and he dreamed of having the very lifestyle which he wrote about. But his early career was tainted by what he did not possess, which was money and Zelda. How society had treated Fitzgerald before his fame versus how they treated him after he became renowned for his novels and antics led Fitzgerald to have a deeper understanding of the way in which the society he now found himself caught up in actually worked. Edwin Clark, writer for *The New York Times*, also disclosed that “with sensitive insight and keen psychological observation, Fitzgerald disclosed in the people [of his writings] a meanness of spirit, carelessness, and absence of loyalties.”<sup>13</sup> Because of the contrasting way that elites of society had treated Fitzgerald during his journey to fame, those very same people had provided him with immense inspiration for his writings.

All three of the aforementioned novels mainly revolved around two things: 1) the relentless pressure from society, and 2) how to achieve and maintain wealth, both of which highly mimicked Fitzgerald’s own life. Most of the characters in Fitzgerald’s novels, like their author, were overwhelmingly aware of their youth and the idea that wealth both imprisons and preserves. Richard Greenleaf adds to this idea by stating that, “the social world in which Fitzgerald found himself [in] repelled him even while he was within it; despite its enchantment for him he was temperamentally outside of it.”<sup>14</sup> By reflecting on this idea in contemporary times, it is easy to see that the first of Fitzgerald’s novels based on the social dynamics of the 1920s is pretty much about what all of his

---

<sup>13</sup> Clark, pg. BR9.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Greenleaf, “The Social Thinking of F. Scott Fitzgerald,” *Science and Society*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Spring, 1952), pp. 97-114, Published by: Guilford Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40400123>, pg. 109.

novels are about: the realization of his characters that life is fundamentally a fraud and the redeeming qualities of life are not happiness and well-being but the fulfillments that come out of struggle. *This Side of Paradise*, published in 1920, speaks of the social transformation more than his other two novels do. It is in this work that we are able to grasp the depth of the changes that had progressively occurred in reference to gender and sexuality at the beginning of the 1920s.

Amory Blaine, the title character, does not begin to appreciate the redeeming things or understand what he should struggle for until the end of the novel. It takes him that long because he was not immediately one of the deprived; Amory was born into the elite life. Fitzgerald and his entire generation had found their inspiration from the same traditional nineteenth-century values against which they were rebelling. While the theme of rebellion was common in literature written in the 1920s, Fitzgerald took his writing a step further by incorporating personal experience into his works. Because *This Side of Paradise* was so closely related to the events that occurred in Fitzgerald's life, many people associate this novel with that of autobiography since his life and Amory's life had such similar parallels.

Physically, Amory thought that he was exceedingly handsome. He fancied himself "an athlete of possibilities and a supple dancer. Socially, he granted himself personality, charm, magnetism, pose, the power of dominating all contemporary males, and the gift of fascinating all women. Mentally, he had complete, unquestioned superiority."<sup>15</sup> Fitzgerald also saw himself as superior to the majority of his generational

---

<sup>15</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, Wisehouse Classics Edition (Sweden, 2016), e-book, pg. 42.

peers and literary colleagues because of his social, educational, and literary backgrounds. The Roaring Twenties were high-spirited and artistic; recklessness and audacity reigned supreme and everyone, for the most part, was fixated on vanity. The fight against morality and religion ran rampant, and all the majority of urban society had adapted to the bourgeoisie lifestyle. While Amory was born into wealth and already had a fairly opulent lifestyle, Fitzgerald came to it through his own means. Their lifestyles also reflected and affirmed the male stereotypes that existed during this age. Males were supposed to be extremely attractive, possess copious amounts of wealth, be central in most social circles, give off a domineering impression, and be prevailing in all spheres.

While the majority of literature in the 1920s written by acclaimed authors such as T.S. Elliot, William Faulkner, and Edith Wharton referenced only the social dynamics and changing aspects of the female gender, Fitzgerald also wrote about the transformation of his male characters. For example, in *This Side of Paradise*, Amory met a gentleman during his time at Princeton whom he thought encompassed everything that a man ought to be and act like. Amory, in the novel, stated that

“Dick Humbird had...seemed to [be] a perfect type of aristocrat. He was slender but well-build – black curly hair, straight features, and a rather dark skin. Everything he said sounded intangibly appropriate. He possessed infinite courage, an averagely good mind, and a sense of honor with a clear charm and noblesse oblige that varied it from righteousness...People dressed like him, tried to talk as he did...”<sup>16</sup>

To Amory, Humbird seemed like the person that he himself should strive to be. However, it is only after Humbird’s death that Amory realized that the life he was living was still perhaps too antique. The thoughts, ideas, and morals that Dick had, and the men

---

<sup>16</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, pg. 149.

he surrounded himself with did not quite fully align with the new era and the younger generation's thoughts. Amory only realized this after Dick's death because he, too, was becoming more and more accustomed to the new and modern way of life where men were not so inclined to do and say everything that their parents wanted them to do and say.

For Amory and Fitzgerald both, their total realization of the modern way of life did not happen until they had successfully surrounded themselves with members of the opposite gender. Modernists in the Twenties valued independence. They valued the idea of achieving their dreams and acquiring wealth; they were always looking to the future; they accepted more secular norms, and they were no longer willing to accept the same social values of their predecessors. After Amory got to college, he experienced a whole new way of thinking about females in general and his modernist thought continued to increase. He, like the rest of his generation, did not have the desire to marry early and immediately start a family.

Throughout the majority of the book, Amory was too close to the complex lifestyle of beauty and sex, of license and indulgence, of aristocracy and death, and he could not see the evil in it. He could not grasp the fact that the transformation regarding sex was a positive thing until he got away from his corrupting world by leaving for university. Amory had seen and done things that people of a different generation couldn't possibly imagine seeing and doing; he had a completely different outlook on life and sex and gender-- an outlook that many people his age had also. This outlook, which regarded, for the most part, regarded women as equals, and sex as a form of communication, allowed for the social and sexual revolution to take place in the 1920s. Amory in the

novel suggests that he had seen girls doing things that in the past would have been “impossible: eating three-o’clock, after dance suppers in impossible cafes, talking of every side of life with an air half of earnestness, half of mockery, yet with a furtive excitement that Amory considered stood for real moral let-down.”<sup>17</sup> It was not until the end of the novel that Fitzgerald had Amory realize exactly what all was going on socially in the world. This is in part because F. Scott did not realize the importance of the era in which he was living in until after he had already lived in it.

Even though *This Side of Paradise* was written and published early in the 1920s, it was able to capture the essence of the transformations regarding gender and sexuality that were to take place later on in the decade. As Amory said, “modern life changes no longer century by century, but year by year, ten times faster than it ever has before—populations doubling, civilizations unified more closely with other civilizations, economic interdependence, racial questions, and – we’re dawdling along. My idea is that we’ve got to go very much faster.”<sup>18</sup> And a lot faster society went. In Fitzgerald’s next two novels regarding the culture of the 1920s, it is easier to follow the complete social upheaval that happened throughout the decade. Fitzgerald’s recreations of the Roaring Twenties are highly convincing not only because they drew upon his personal experiences in the Jazz Age and as a prominent member of the ‘Lost Generation,’ but also because his portrayals convey the absolute uncertainty that the decade brought with it.

---

<sup>17</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, pg. 115.

<sup>18</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, pg. 524.

Fitzgerald's novels in relation to the 1920s were also groundbreaking in their own way because of how they used men to represent to social changes that were taking place. "In the brief histories of vanity, restlessness, boredom, the sad young men struggle to hold their tintured beauties until they discover that escape isn't across the horizon but within themselves."<sup>19</sup> According to *The New York Times* in 1926, the efforts of Fitzgerald to document the transformative decade were successful only because he never neglected his sad young men. "From the grouping adolescence of Amory in *This Side of Paradise* to *Gatsby*: he had been an interested chronicler of the efforts of his sad young men to wrestle beauty and love from the world and the ladies."<sup>20</sup> The 1920s didn't just affect a specific gender in a specific way, and Fitzgerald wanted to document the massive transformation that society had gone through in relation to both females and males and the way in which they were either accepted or rejected by the previous culture.

Fitzgerald himself, when asked about his intentions behind *This Side of Paradise*, stated that "it dealt with the flapper and was followed by *Flappers and Philosophers*. I didn't have any deep psychological or other ponderous object in view when I wrote these books," said Fitzgerald. "I merely pictured the life of the modern girl as I had observed it, and the public liked the picture."<sup>21</sup> Concern regarding the flapper and her lifestyle led to speculation about the male version of this rebellious young woman and Fitzgerald chose to document both the female and male perspectives of what was occurring during the

---

<sup>19</sup> "Scott Fitzgerald Turns a Corner." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, March 7th, 1926, pg. 1.

<sup>20</sup> "Scott Fitzgerald Turns a Corner," pg. 1.

<sup>21</sup> "FLAPPER KEEPS TO HER TYPE." *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1927, pg. A6.

decade. The Twenties were a time of exploration and of admiration. Younger people were free to explore the world, themselves, and sex without having to worry about what society thought. They admired those who could step out of the submissive and complacent world in which they were living and be free to explore the world around them, despite the consequences.

This generation of young people, of artists and writers alike, had declared themselves “lost” because they were so focused on always moving forward and modernizing, but the majority of them were still, in some way, stuck in the past. They were unable to escape their previous way of life because of the war, because of their parents and grandparents, and because of the Victorian values that refused to loosen its grip and still dominated the world in which they lived. For Fitzgerald, he wanted his next novel regarding the Twenties to deeply reflect this idea of the mix-up between past and present, and the inability of people to let go of the past. *The Great Gatsby* was such a groundbreaking work of fiction because it mimicked the essence of the 1920s so closely that no other author was quite able to capture the spirit of the decade in the way that Fitzgerald did.

When *Gatsby* was written and published, the entire atmosphere of the vibrant decade had rapidly advanced and transformed even since the publication of *This Side of Paradise* in 1920. By 1925, women had integrated themselves more into society. They were dressing differently, smoking, drinking (despite it being illegal), swearing, using contraceptives, obtaining financial aid independently, and competing with men in the business world, all of which threatened the traditional concept of masculinity. *The Great Gatsby* was, again, centered around a male main character, but it also approached

femininity in such a way that it challenged all of the previous misconceptions concerning women in the 1920s. Most literary critics agree that Fitzgerald had a number of influences not only in his life, but in his writing as well. According to Matthew Bruccoli, “the dominant influences in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s [writing] were aspiration, literature, Princeton, Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald, and alcohol;”<sup>22</sup> which is extremely evident throughout the work. The novel itself was based around one specific cultural taboo: adultery. During this time in America, it was almost acceptable for well-born men to have affairs (because of their power and status in society) but it was unheard of for women to do the same. Because of the way in which the hierarchical society operated during this time, the social elite dictated behavior; and, to them, it was seen as extremely shameful and barbaric if a woman was caught committing adultery against their husband, but not the other way around. The separation between males and females in the 1920s continued to increase during the revolutionary age because of the way that society ordained how women should behave.

Women no longer wanted to be constrained by men, and men no longer wanted to be constrained by society. But the only way for them to achieve that goal was by letting go of their previous social norms. The concept of not being able to change one’s history, and learning from the past is extremely evident in *Gatsby*. The main character, for instance, Jay Gatsby, is a low- born man who came to acquire riches through many different means who is in love with a married woman, Daisy. He and Daisy had met one

---

<sup>22</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*: with notes and preface by Matthew J. Bruccoli, Scribner Hardback Edition, Published by: Simon & Schuster (New York, 1995), originally published 1925 – *A Brief Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, pg. 218.

another and fallen in love several years earlier but when Gatsby left for the war, Daisy married another man, Tom. Upon his return, Gatsby moved to the same city that Daisy lived in, bought a huge mansion, and threw massive and elaborate parties in order to win her affection. Much like the Roaring Twenties in general, the parties that Gatsby threw became a central component in the novel. Gatsby threw the parties in order to get Daisy to recognize his growth, and how much he had achieved since they last met.

Gatsby's house-- so massive, so elaborate, so Victorian-- was similar to the characters themselves. It was a connection to the past. It showed that no matter how hard people try they will never be able to fully rid themselves of the Victorian values that their elder generations engrained in them, just as Gatsby was never able to forget how Daisy left him because he was not wealthy enough. Those particular things were haunting in that they were constant reminders of where the characters had come from; but, they were also reminders of how much society had changed since then. The narrator of the novel, Nick, was perhaps the most perplexing character of all, because he saw the vast transformation that was taking place around him, and he, like Fitzgerald, wanted to write it all down. It is hardly surprising that Fitzgerald's characters in *The Great Gatsby* are often cynical. The majority of the characters according to Steinbrink "are the very young and the very foolish, they either refuse to accept or are unable to understand the social consequences of living in an entropic system and are crushed by the burden of the truth that they are eventually made to bear."<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey Steinbrink, "Boats Against the Current': Morality and the Myth of Renewal in *The Great Gatsby*," *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 2, F. Scott Fitzgerald Issue (Summer, 1980), pp. 157-170, Published by: Hofstra University, <http://jstor.org/stable/441372>, pp. 158-159.

The characters in this novel are vastly different from the ones in *This Side of Paradise* and *Tender is the Night* because they represent the already transformed genders rather than those who are first experiencing the social changes or are still stuck in the past. Tom, Daisy's husband, represents the latter of those two. When Tom first learns that Gatsby and Daisy have met he states: "I wonder where in the devil he met Daisy. By God, I may be old-fashioned in my ideas but women run around too much these days to suit me. They meet all kinds of crazy fish."<sup>24</sup> Tom does not like the fact that Daisy can now go off and do things without him, meet new people, and express herself in the ways that she wants. She considered herself to be sophisticated because she had "been everywhere and seen everything and done everything."<sup>25</sup> However, she also recognized in herself that unyielding desire to explore even more of the world, to explore more of herself, and to participate in the gender revolution that was taking place right in front of her eyes. And she does that, to some extent, through her affair with Gatsby.

Gatsby introduced her to an entirely new world, a world that Daisy could have known if she had chosen to marry him instead of Tom. He introduced her to the New Age women who were not afraid of sexual expression. At the parties he took her to and threw for her there was new Jazz music, swing dancing, illegal drinking and betting, and all kinds of additional vices occurring that allowed Daisy a glimpse into the vibrant lives of the 'common' people. Despite the prohibition of alcohol, there were bars in full swing and floating rounds of cocktails, the air was alive with chatter and laughter and music,

---

<sup>24</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, pg. 110.

<sup>25</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, pg. 22.

there were causal innuendos and introductions and forgotten meetings, and everything that the Jazz Age embodied.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps one of the most interesting things about Fitzgerald's assessments of the culture in the 1920s was that he himself became a young celebrity while embarking on his literary journey. Through his search for a much more extravagant lifestyle, he mimicked his characters so closely because they too shared the same desires that Fitzgerald possessed. Fitzgerald was still considered to be a young man when the majority of his works were published, which is why he was able to relate to his characters on a more personal level. In 1925, it was written in *The Chicago Daily Tribune* that "no one will ever be again so old as he is in his early twenties. No one will ever look upon life with the same secret eagerness and spoken cynicism that is in his eyes at twenty. Scott Fitzgerald is [in that] bubble."<sup>27</sup> The characters in his fictional novels were so personal to him because he practically wrote his life into the stories themselves; the characters were reflections of himself.

Recognition of Fitzgerald's works came almost immediately, but appreciation for them came a little later; which is also what happened with Fitzgerald's final novel concerning the glamorous Jazz Age. *Tender is the Night* is a work that is difficult to summarize because it is a lot more expansive than *This Side of Paradise* and *The Great Gatsby*. *Tender is the Night* was written after the 1920s about the vibrant decade so the novel itself acts as a reflection piece for Fitzgerald.

---

<sup>26</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, pg. 44.

<sup>27</sup> Butcher, Fanny, "BOOKS," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963), April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1925, pg. 11.

*Tender* speaks of the substantial mayhem that World War I caused and its impact on gender and sexuality in the 1920s. Because of the disruption it caused to the traditional social and family roles, war became one of the major reasons for the gender upheaval in the Roaring Twenties. War was a ‘gendering activity’ that forced both genders into new roles not based on their education or qualification; and many of these roles were, in fact, gender reversed. Take for example the main character of the novel, Dick Diver, former Army member and current doctor of psychology; his character is extremely feminized throughout the novel because he acts as the caretaker both to his wife and to his patients (the majority of them women). This was clearly not the traditional role for a male to take.

Despite his career choice, Diver embodied the two ways in which masculinity was generally manifested in the Twenties: through heterosexuality and war. Men proved themselves to be ‘manly’ through war, but also had to secure their masculinity even further in the 1920s because of the sexual revolution that was taking place. When we think of the Roaring Twenties, the immediate image we see is the flapper, a woman without morals who dances provocatively to Jazz music all day and parties all night; a female in a short skirt, with bobbed hair, who drank and smoked and behaved however she wished. Fitzgerald’s works are so focused on portraying the 1920s as they actually were that his novels reflected both the gender transformations in males and females during the age. Men in the decadent decade struggled with the idea of manliness and how they were supposed to conduct themselves after the war; they had come home to find that women had integrated themselves into society. Men and women alike were both so preoccupied with their social lives, that business and work came in second. Youth became more fleeting during the Jazz Age, and the younger generation wanted to hold on

to that youth for as long as possible. Both genders wanted new experiences, they wanted to travel, to be carefree, and not to be held down by their overbearing parents and grandparents.

For years, men and women had held these ideals in their minds, ideals about whom they would wed, and how their lives would pan out based upon that; but, the 1920s practically got rid of that notion because of the freedom it brought. The younger generation wanted to break their mold, and gain freedom on their own terms. *Tender is the Night* also provided a glimpse into the idea that the Roaring Twenties were really only effective for a certain group of people. Young men and women in their late teens/early twenties of middle-class or higher standing generally received direct criticism throughout the decade for their scandalous behavior. Fitzgerald presents the idea in *Tender* that these specific people were the ones who influenced not only their peers, but members of other generations as well. Morality in the 1920s practically vanished, and that is extremely evident through Dick Diver's relationship with a much younger woman, Rosemary. Of course, the idea of an older gentleman dating a younger woman is nothing new to us now, but at that time it was extremely frowned upon because of the implications it might bring upon a person and their family. Another issue in the drama was the fact that Diver was married, but that did not seem to stop him from forming a relationship with the rebellious Rosemary. Rosemary reminded Dick Diver of his youth, something that he didn't want to give up.

Diver also occupied a special place in Rosemary's life, because she introduced him to the world of the flappers and the parties and the celebrations, and he, in turn, introduced her to a life of stability. For years, Diver had been the ideal by which

Rosemary measured all other men she came in contact with; she did not want Diver to be like all of the other men, yet he demanded the same things that they all did.<sup>28</sup> Youths in the 1920s wanted to create things, to give their lives more meaning, and Diver wanted to be a part of that. But, no matter how hard he tried, his inevitable failure eventually led to the realization that one simply cannot relive the past. Because of his social status, Dick's platonic relationship with Rosemary led to speculation regarding the Flapper and her morals in general. When talking about the lives of the Flappers, one *New York Times* reporter stated in 1922 that "a good girl [should] be content with one man. She [should] collect him and begin her real job. The Flapper—if you call her that—can't work or study all day and dance all night and make good at what she works at."<sup>29</sup> Flappers were criticized for being Flappers because of their proclivity towards rebellion and the fact that many of them sought out better lives. One of the main reasons why younger people during the Twenties felt that that they were actually transforming the social system was because they were of the perfect age at which to do so. They were highly critical of patriarchal power, they questioned authority, and acted the way they wanted too.

Young people were also so influential during this time because they gave more power and responsibility to women. According to Fitzgerald:

“whereas a girl of nineteen draws her confidence from a surfeit of attention, a woman of twenty-nine is nourished on subtler stuff. Desirous, she chooses her aperitifs wisely, or, content, she enjoys the caviar of potential power. Happily, she does not seem, in either case, to anticipate the subsequent years when her insight will often be blurred by panic, but the fear of stopping or the fear of going on. But on the landings of nineteen or twenty-nine she is pretty sure that there are no bears in the hall.”<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*, pg. 201.

<sup>29</sup> Margaret O, pg. 49.

<sup>30</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*, pg. 274.

To Fitzgerald, and to the majority of society during the Twenties, there was a strict difference between women and girls. Younger women, or girls, had more desires than older women, they wished to get more out of their lives. Younger girls seemed to have a breezier confidence about them they represented the generation that was so wrapped up in their fleeting youth but also so scared to lose it at the same time.

Fitzgerald's works regarding the gradual transformation of society that took place in America during the 1920s show us the stark contrast between how younger people were once viewed previous to World War I versus how they were viewed once the war came to an end. Women had stepped into the men's shoes during the war, which led them to demand an increase in rights. Once they received those rights they continued to strive for greater. Through establishing their dominance by expressing their sexuality openly and asserting their place in society through political change, the gender revolution that ensued as a result allowed both young men and women a greater amount of freedom.

## SECTION TWO: EUGENE O'NEILL

Playwright Eugene O'Neill also found the 1920s to be utterly fascinating. With the increased interest in arts and literature, O'Neill was able to establish himself as the first great American playwright while changing the dynamics of the literary world at the same time. O'Neill, too, was sort of a wandering soul, he never really stayed in one place for too long, and enjoyed traveling both domestically and abroad. And as with the previous author discussed, Fitzgerald, O'Neill also had a Princeton connection, experienced success fairly early on in his writing career, and tended to include his life experiences into his writings-- despite all of his major works being categorized as fiction. In the thirty years of his creative life, O'Neill completed drafts of sixty-two plays-- eleven of which were destroyed-- but, the extent, variety, and quality of the remaining plays all conveyed a rather rare creative energy that signaled the importance of O'Neill's works for the era in which he was writing them.<sup>31</sup>

Born on October 16, 1888, in a hotel, Eugene O'Neill was the son of James O'Neill, an actor, and Ellen O'Neill. The first seven years of his life were spent traveling across the country while his father was a significant member of a performing arts theater troupe. At the age of seven he was enrolled in a Roman Catholic boarding school; and in 1902, at the age of thirteen he entered into Betts Academy in Connecticut, one of the leading boys' schools in New England. When Eugene graduated from preparatory school in 1906, he enrolled in Princeton University, but was later expelled for poor grades and

---

<sup>31</sup> Travis Bogard, "Contour in Time: The Plays of Eugene O'Neill," Revised Edition, *Oxford University Press*, 1988, pg. xii.

for throwing a brick through a window of an on-campus office. That, in turn, marked the end of his formal education.<sup>32</sup>

Over the next couple of years, Eugene O'Neill reverted back to his roots and spent his time traveling across the country again. He even found a decent job in Honduras at one point, but was forced to return to the United States after he became severely ill. Upon his return, he worked for his father's theater company for a short while, but soon longed to be part of something more adventurous, and was offered a job traveling the world as a sailor, which he took. This particular time in his life proved to be monumental in providing him with immense inspiration for many of his plays. Eventually deciding to rejoin his father's troupe company in New York after he grew tired of the open seas, Eugene started writing about his time spent wayfaring. In 1912, however, he developed tuberculosis and was sent to a sanatorium to recover, but still managed to continue his writings. In 1914, Eugene's father paid for him to take a playwriting class at Harvard University. And in 1916, he hauled out a sizable collection of unproduced and unpublished plays and even managed to get one of them recognized. "Bound East for Cardiff," was his first formal introduction as a playwright, which was put into rehearsal in 1916 and marked his debut as a dramatist.<sup>33</sup>

After his debut, O'Neill began writing longer plays and in 1920 he had his first monumental year when he wrote the first of his three Pulitzer Prizes winners for his work "Beyond the Horizon" (the other two Pulitzer winners include "Anna Christie" and

---

<sup>32</sup> Louis Scheaffer, "O'Neill: Son and Playwright, Vol. 1," New York: First Cooper Square Press Edition 2002, ebook, pp. 114-117.

<sup>33</sup> Scheaffer, pp. 247-250.

“Strange Interlude.”) The play also marked Eugene’s first appearance on Broadway as a playwright. “Beyond the Horizon” established O’Neill as a ranking playwright after he made immense profits from it. The 1920s, additionally, marked his most successful, profitable, and intense time. It was during this remarkable decade that he produced the majority of his works. O’Neill continued writing well into the 1930s and 40s, even winning the Nobel Prize for literature in 1936; but, he was not represented on Broadway again until 1946.

O’Neill was stricken with Parkinson’s disease around 1947, which made it almost impossible for him to continue writing, despite his best efforts to continue doing so. Throughout the course of his life, he had three wives. Kathleen Jenkins, whom he married first in 1909 and divorced in 1912, bore him a son, Eugene O’Neill Jr. (who eventually ended up committing suicide). In 1918, he married Agnes Boulton and remained married to her for eleven years. She bore him two children, Shane and Oona (who eventually ended up marrying Charlie Chaplin).<sup>34</sup> His final marriage was in 1929 to Carlotta Monterey, to whom he remained married until his death in 1953. On November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1953, in Boston, Eugene O’Neill died in a hospital room at the age of sixty-five, not of Parkinson’s, which is most often associated with his death, but of cerebellar cortical abiotrophy (a neurological disorder). At the time of his death, he was the author of thirty-eight plays, both short and full-length, he was the winner of three Pulitzer Prizes, and the winner of one Nobel Prize.

---

<sup>34</sup> Scheaffer, pg. 414.

Because, as previously mentioned, the majority of O'Neill's works were written in the 1920s, his works reflect the intense social changes that were taking place in that decade. In his plays, O'Neill mentions the politics, culture, economics, and prejudices towards gender and sexuality that helped shape the overall dynamic of the decade. Of the many plays that Eugene wrote concerning American society throughout the most inventive and dynamic times (late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), there are four of his works that stand out as representing the 1920s to a much greater extent. "The Hairy Ape," published in 1922, "The Great God Brown," published in 1926, "Strange Interlude," published in 1928, and "A Moon for the Misbegotten," written between 1941 and 1943, all of which coincide with O'Neill's view of the transformative decade that was the Roaring Twenties.

Unlike his literary companion, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Eugene O'Neill had sort of a negative and disheartening outlook on life. Religion during the 1920s was on a steady decline because of the modern advancements taking place throughout the decade, and the increase in secular thought was extremely evident in most of O'Neill's works. According to a review published in *The New York Times* in 1922, "Mr. O'Neill put into [his plays] his conceptions of life, his observations of character, and his dramatic gift. The result [was] unusual. To a great extent it was fine; to some it was disappointing."<sup>35</sup> O'Neill certainly did not take the idea of progress for granted, but he also saw no great hope for mankind in improved methods of production and industry. Nor did he see any correlation

---

<sup>35</sup> A Review by, HILDEGARDE HAWTHORNE, "The Art of Eugene O'Neill," *New York Times (1857-1922)*, August 13th, 1922, pg. 48.

between a man's satisfaction in his work and the material rewards that he, in turn, got from it.<sup>36</sup>

In his first play regarding the 1920s, O'Neill definitely keeps this same view throughout "The Hairy Ape" and his attitude in the work is rebellious to the extent that the characters, like O'Neill himself, seem to view the structure of society as evil, and that nothing could really ever come out of the hierarchy except for chaos and the destruction of others. This negative societal view also represented O'Neill's thoughts regarding gender and sexuality during the Jazz Age. The 1920s were obviously a time of gradual, but immense and chaotic change, especially for young males and females. O'Neill recognized that this change was not only necessary but that it also had the potential to revolutionize the way in which all of society was structured.

The main character of the play, "The Hairy Ape," Yank, works on a ship; and much like Eugene himself, Yank finds the idea of traveling the globe to be a constant source of entertainment. However, because of that, Yank is obviously not very used to the particular customs of society, nor had he necessarily recognized the cultural transformations that were taking place throughout society during his travels. He considered himself to be particularly young because he was. But, compared to his peers he was not very educated nor was he particularly cultured in any specific way, and he fought against his strong yearning to extinguish everything that he did not particularly like about politics and society. Yank, O'Neill's "Everyman," never truly went beyond his

---

<sup>36</sup> Doris M. Alexander, "Eugene O'Neill as Social Critic," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Winter, 1954), pp. 349-363, Published by: The John Hopkins University Press, <http://jstor.org/stable/3031370>, pg. 351.

desire to destroy what was. O'Neill gave Yank no other solution than that. Nor did he provide Yank with faith in the possibility of this solution. Yank wished to destroy the status quo, but he also saw no hope for doing so. O'Neill incorporates himself into the character Yank because he possessed the same view as Yank. O'Neill thought that society would only implode on itself after a while because of the controlling nature of which it was founded. O'Neill's thoughts in "The Hairy Ape" present a profoundly pessimistic social philosophy which rejects entirely the status quo, but sees no answer for man in a better society and no hope for destroying the existing society.<sup>37</sup>

O'Neill used the revolutionary attitude that was present during the American Twenties and spun it to reflect his progressive thoughts towards not only society but towards politics as well. Yank, as an individual, represented all of the younger generation thoughts regarding the antique culture and politics that they were forced to deal with. Yank, like O'Neill, saw the need to express his individual opinion towards the modern conceptions and contemporary advances that were present throughout the 1920s. Most people during the revolutionary decade tended to gravitate more towards individualism because of its connotations, and that thought was included in the way in which they viewed politics and society as well. Those who strove to do nothing in their life but to gain wealth and affluence did not deserve their high positions in the ever persistent hierarchy that existed. Yank, and O'Neill, both made this view abundantly clear when Yank stated in "The Hairy Ape" that:

"They plot with fire in one hand and dynamite in the other. They stop not before murder to gain their ends, nor at the outraging of defenseless womanhood. They would tear down society, put the lowest scum in the seats of the mighty, turn

---

<sup>37</sup> Alexander, pg. 354.

Almighty God's revealed plan for the world topsy-turvy, and make of our sweet and lovely civilization a shambles, a desolation where man, God's masterpiece, would soon degenerate back to the ape!"<sup>38</sup>

To Yank, members of the upper class were in a constant battle against themselves, which was why the younger generation decided to rebel in the way that they did. Yank, as a part of the younger generation, thought that he had the right to do and say what he pleased and that those who were older than him should no longer have a say in the way that he chose to live his life. Evident in this play, and in the majority of O'Neill's works, is Eugene O'Neill's negative overall social criticism. Doris Alexander claims that "he condemns the capitalist state, but sees no hope for man in any other kind of state. Whatever hope he sees for man lies in individuals who may have the courage to possess their own souls."<sup>39</sup> O'Neill's social criticism essentially cancels itself out. He not only condemns all of society as it was currently, but he rejected pretty much any solution for making it better. Basically, the only answer to life he accepted was death. Which is a very morbid philosophy, but that was O'Neill's intention. While Fitzgerald tended to focus on the positive aspects that were coming out of the 1920s, O'Neill chose instead to focus on all of the criticisms that young people had, as well what would happen if the social revolution didn't continue to occur throughout the decade.

The next play that O'Neill wrote regarding the 1920s follows along the same line present in "The Hairy Ape," that the only solution to life is death. In "The Great God Brown," the title character Margaret is hopelessly in love with her husband, Dion;

---

<sup>38</sup> Eugene O'Neill, *Selected Plays of Eugene O'Neill*, Random House (New York), Copyright: 1940, Date of First Publication: 1920, "The Hairy Ape," Scene Six, pg. 143.

<sup>39</sup> Alexander, pg. 363.

however, after he died due to chronic overindulgence, she simply could not let the memory of him go, despite having two other suitors constantly vying for her hand. It was during this play that O'Neill went beyond just his simplistic social and political critiques, and he dug deeper into the underlying gender transformations that were taking place in the Jazz Age. His treatment of sexuality as psychological instead of physical is representative of the way in which a lot of authors and historians tended to treat sexuality in reference to the 1920s. As a theoretical, aesthetic, and practical moral problem, sexuality was often associated with the rise of the modern secular culture which had its foundations in the decline of religious world view and the rise of a western, advanced society devoted to the production of goods and knowledge.<sup>40</sup>

The rise of secularism in the 1920s can mostly be associated with the additional rise in the way in which sexuality was viewed in relation to being a fundamental aspect of society. In the Roaring Twenties, authors simply could not escape from the fact that sexuality was quickly becoming something that needed to be expressed publicly, and that was reflected in the majority of their works. O'Neill, as with Fitzgerald and many others, wanted to somehow help redefine the way in which women and sexuality were viewed, and they did so through literature. O'Neill's plays were also extremely fundamental during this time period because he wrote about his surroundings; he wrote what he saw, what others did, and how those actions were interpreted by society. O'Neill is often called the first great American playwright because he knew "how to write

---

<sup>40</sup> Asim Karim, "Eugene O'Neill's Concern with Sexuality and the Behavioral Disorders," *Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2010, pp. 38-49, <http://www.cscanada.net>, p. 38.

dialogue, how to create characters, how to contrive situations; he [knew] the theater and he [knew] the public.”<sup>41</sup> How his characters saw and interpreted the world paralleled his own views, which in turn paralleled the majority of the younger generations views as well.

In “The Great God Brown,” Margaret and Dion’s marriage was obviously not traditional in any form. Dion had a multiple-year affair with a younger woman named Cybel, and his wife was constantly having to fend off the advances of Dion’s two friends. Often-times marriage during the early twentieth century lacked the mutuality of feelings between both partners due to the notion of arranged marriages. Even with modern developments taking place throughout the early twentieth century, society still defaulted to the antique concept of arranged marriages because they did not wish to break the status quo. The idea that one could marry whom they wished simply did not exist and the younger generation was striving to change that. There was also the persistent idea that sex should only be pleasurable during marriage, but the fact that most younger couples found sex to be more pleasurable outside of marriage went against everything for which the previous generations stood.

Dion and Margaret in “The Great God Brown” are certainly no exception to this. Their marriage is extremely one-sided, and Dion absolutely did not feel for Margaret the way that she felt for him. Just take this line spoken by Dion for example: “I’ve loved, lusted, won and lost, sang and wept. I’ve been life’s lover! I’ve fulfilled her will and if she’s through with me now it’s only because I was too weak to dominate her in turn. It

---

<sup>41</sup> A Review by, Hildegard Hawthorne, pg. 48.

isn't enough to be her creature, you've got to create her or she requests you to destroy yourself."<sup>42</sup> Dion was not happy in his marriage because he was under the impression that it destroyed him as a person. He wears a mask around his wife because he thinks that she wanted him to be a proper and sophisticated gentleman; when in reality, she, like him, was also very rebellious. O'Neill saw marriage as sort of a wastefulness of both female and male sexuality. The fact that there were so many young people throughout the Jazz Age that were discovering they were no longer happy in their marriages showed rebirth of their sexuality because they were more willing to seek out what they desired rather than stay in a loveless, non-pleasurable marriage. That concept was exactly what O'Neill was writing about in "The Great God Brown." Despite the majority of both young men and women thinking that they were, in a sense, destroying the traditional home and family life because of their choices, most of them were fairly okay with it.

Another way in which O'Neill spoke of marriage as sort of a wastefulness of sexuality was in reference to childbearing and reproduction (something about which it was highly improper to publically speak about during the time period). At one point in "The Great God Brown," Cybel, after stating that she doesn't ever want children, speaks additionally on the matter by stating: "what's the good of bearing children! What's the use of giving birth to death?"<sup>43</sup> It was not uncommon for women in the Twenties to reject the notion of motherhood; to them, having children also meant having to settle down. And that was the last thing that they wanted. The female urge for reproduction as well as avoidance from reproduction was another area of concern in O'Neill's treatment of

---

<sup>42</sup> O'Neill, *Selected Plays*, "The Great God Brown," Act Three, Scene One, p. 263.

<sup>43</sup> O'Neill, *Selected Plays*, "The Great God Brown," Act Two, Scene One, pg. 247.

gender and sexuality throughout his many plays. Reproduction is an important and related part of sexuality, obviously; but, O'Neill contrasted the existence of both the urge for reproductive sexual relations as well as the desire to avoid reproduction within marital contracts in early twentieth century America. This notion of child bearing as being something to which not all women aspire can also be found in O'Neill's play "Strange Interlude."

"Strange Interlude" at the time of its production fascinated audiences by its bold story of Nina Leeds, the title character, a girl with a guilt complex over her refusal to marry or give herself to the boy she loved before he left for war. The second decade of the twentieth century was by far one of the most dynamic and transformative decades in history, because the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century had ushered in widespread revolt against the normative Victorian values in society, and the arts tended to reflect the formation of a new, creative society. "Strange Interlude" is perhaps one of the most striking works to come out of this period because O'Neill was able to capture what it was truly like for young people during such a transformative and fluctuating age. O'Neill describes the main character, Nina, as twenty years old, tall with broad square shoulders, slim strong hips, and long beautifully developed legs. Her straw-blond hair bobbed. Her face striking, handsome rather than pretty, the bone structure prominent, the forehead high, the lips of her rather large mouth clearly modelled above her firm jaw. Her eyes were beautiful and bewildering.<sup>44</sup> She represented everything that a young woman in the early American twentieth century was supposed to

---

<sup>44</sup> O'Neill, *Selected Plays*, "Strange Interlude," Part One, Act One, pg. 293.

be. She worked in a traditionally female occupation as a nurse and was virtuous almost to the point of being snobbish.

Despite losing her true love, Gordon, at such a young age and at such a pivotal point in her life, she still managed to completely reject everything that society wanted for her. This play was fundamental when it was written because O'Neill was so endowed with the creative energy coming from the gender and sexual revolutions. He was intellectually and artistically restless and experimental, he completely ignored the stereotypes of the stage and struck out with a kind of sullen enthusiasm against the popular old forms, which he undertook to replace the new ones.<sup>45</sup> For the first time on stage, people could finally see the actual transformation that had taken place in reference to gender and sexuality. O'Neill was not afraid to mention either and wanted others to realize just how important the changes that took place in the 1920s were. Through Nina and her conscious effort to rebel against everything that her father wanted her to be, O'Neill was able to construct a character identical to what young women in the 1920s were really like. Nina was the everywoman, the workingwoman. She had a competitive edge, despite not being married, against both males and females of her age because she was employed; and, she used this advantage as sexual competition. Her greater proximity to men because of her occupation allowed her greater presence in the male arena and also allowed her to decide for herself what she did or did not want out of life.

---

<sup>45</sup> N. Bryllion Fagin, "Eugene O'Neill," *The Antioch Review*. Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring, 1954), pp. 14-26, Published by: Antioch Review Inc., <http://jstor.org/stable/4609686>, p. 18.

Nina, like so many others her age, wanted to work for a living. She strayed away from the idea of the home and family life and wanted to make a name for herself. She had a duty to herself, which she completely recognized, although others did not. According to Darrel, another one of the title characters in O’Neill’s groundbreaking play “Strange Interlude,” Nina was neglecting her manifest duty in life because she had chosen to neither get married or raise children when she was still young. Also, according to Darrell “there can only be guilt when one deliberately neglects one’s manifest duty to life. Anything else is rot! The woman’s duty is to save her husband and herself by begetting a healthy child!”<sup>46</sup> The idea that a woman of Nina’s age, beauty, and social status did not want the traditional family life was simply appalling to a man like Darrell, a man still stuck in the past. Throughout the play, O’Neill emphasized the growing differences in thought between both Nina and Darrell because Nina realized that what she had been taught growing up, that it was a woman’s duty to remain in the home, was not what she wanted anymore. She, like so many other young women her age, was beginning to come to terms with the fact that she could make her own happiness, she had her own means, and she no longer had to depend on others.

“Strange Interlude” was also monumental during its production because it was one of the first works of fiction in the 1920s to demonstrate that women’s sexuality was in fact blooming. Women were now a part of every aspect of culture; they were prominent members of society, as well as in economics and politics. Nina was just like every other young woman in the Roaring Twenties because she recognized the difference

---

<sup>46</sup> O’Neill, *Selected Plays*, “Strange Interlude,” Part One, Act Four, pg. 354.

in herself, and wanted to celebrate that difference. Throughout the play, Nina is courted by men trying to stop her imagination and ambition; but, she wanted to express her femininity. She was a working woman perfectly capable of taking care of herself, and she began to realize that she did not need a man in her life to take care of her. But needing a man and wanting a man are two completely different things. According to an article written about “Strange Interlude” in 1928, the best situation in the drama was at the conclusion of the sixth act “when Nina is quietly surrounded by the three men who depend on her for either their strength or their comfort: Sam Evans, her husband; Darrell, her lover, and Marsden, the novelist and childhood friend.”<sup>47</sup> This scene is pivotal because, by the end of the play, the reader begins to accept that, because Nina’s ideal love cannot be received in the way that she wants it, her love must then be divided among three people. And the motives for the underlying types of love that she deals with throughout the play are made even clearer by the subconscious idea that Nina basically accepted the love she thought she deserved.

Nina is also like O’Neill in the sense that he could never really make a decision when it came to love. Take his three separate marriages for example. After going through periods in his life where he was constantly exploring and on the road, and intertwining those with periods where he sought comfort and the basic necessities of home, he used his wives in the same way that Nina used her men, to fill an unknown void.

“Strange Interlude” experienced extreme backlash during its production in the 1920s in America because so many people were against the idea that women could

---

<sup>47</sup> BROOKS, By J, "STRANGE INTERLUDE," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, February 5th, 1928, pg. 107.

actually have a voice, despite the success of women gaining the right to vote. Nina as a character was so relatable to so many young women because they were going through the same types of emotions that she was also going through. O'Neill's writing in this play definitely expressed the reality of the 1920s a whole lot more than it had previously. Frederic Carpenter states that "at first, O'Neill's heroes concentrated on the dream of absolute beauty and found salvation in dying for it. Their dreams remained pure, and their dramas beautiful. Only in the later plays did O'Neill and his characters begin to question the romantic dream and to wonder if its unreality was really as lovely as it seemed. Therefore, the later plays became more realistic but less beautiful."<sup>48</sup> This notion is extremely true especially when it came to O'Neill's grasp on the transformation of gender and sexuality throughout the 1920s. His award-winning play "Strange Interlude" was written later in the decade when he has fully grasped both the changes and consequences of the decade. In addition, his final work regarding the 1920s, "A Moon for the Misbegotten" is more of a realistic reflective piece about the age.

"A Moon for the Misbegotten" is more open than O'Neill's other plays, especially in regard to the sexuality aspect. Of course, as I have previously mentioned, O'Neill regarded gender and sexuality in the Jazz Age as a transformative process; which it was, but this play takes that process a step further than any writer had taken it before. His fictional narratives regarding both young men and women searching to find their place in the world through rebellion and romantic imagination proved that the gender gap

---

<sup>48</sup> Frederic I. Carpenter, "The Romantic Tragedy of Eugene O'Neill," *College English*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (Feb., 1945), pp. 250-258, Published by: National Council of Teachers of English, <http://jstor.org/stable/370306>, p. 253.

in the Twenties was indeed expanding due to the larger quantity of women moving towards emancipation; emancipation, that is, from their parents and grandparents, and the old Victorian ideals and morals that had kept them restrained for so long. The twenties fictional heroine was not an overt feminist, but shared with her politically active counterpart a determination to go beyond the traditional role for which she had been groomed. She wanted to find a vocation that would afford her some measure of creativity and independence while exploring an exciting world unknown to her mother or grandmother.<sup>49</sup> O'Neill, as well as many other authors of the Roaring Twenties, recognized that women were not disinterested in love, but that they were just passionate for independence, experience, and creativity.

Josie, the leading female character in "A Moon for the Misbegotten" represents the new woman that had emerged throughout the 1920s. She is smart, witty, creative, independent, and most assuredly does not take orders from any man. Her outlook on life was extremely similar to the outlook that many women of her age had in the decadent decade. She did as she wished, went where she pleased and was always dreaming of something greater than herself. Even though she is portrayed as a 'woman about town' through the majority of the play, we eventually learn that her façade is instrumental in allowing her to gain and keep her independence. For example, when her brother starts to make fun of her because of her 'questionable morals,' she shuts him down immediately.

Mike: that's right! Make fun of me again, because I want to be decent.  
Josie: You're worse than decent. You're virtuous.

---

<sup>49</sup> Maureen Honey, "Gotham's Daughters: Feminism in the 1920's," *American Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Spring 1990), pp. 25-40, Published by: Mid-American Studies Association, <http://jstor.org/stable/40642351>, p. 26.

Mike: Well, that's a thing nobody can say about – (*He stops, a bit ashamed, but mostly afraid to finish*)  
Josie: -- (*amused*) About me? No, and what's more, they don't.<sup>50</sup>

Josie, like so many other young women in the 1920s, simply did not care about her reputation any longer. She reveled in the fact that men thought that she slept around, and embraced fully the idea of sexual expression and freedom. Josie represented the kind of heroine that O'Neill had always intended to create. She was the first of O'Neill's characters to truly embrace the flapper lifestyle that had been so prevalent America during the 1920s. O'Neill's female characters were often represented as self-sufficient women that men constantly tried to control. O'Neill wanted Josie in "A Moon for the Misbegotten" to additionally represent the transformed woman of the 1920s. Josie, in addition to the young females that existed in the 1920s, wanted to contribute equally to society, she wanted to share the same power in both the home and workplace and be on the same level as the males in her life.

But, of course, women during the Jazz Age were still only seen as partners for a greater species: men. Their only duties were to marry young, have children, and maintain a sufficient and efficient household. Josie had her own opinions on the matter, and those opinions reflected the opinions of the majority of young females being forced into early marriage. After her brother, Mike, suggests that she ought to stop her 'shameless' ways with men and marry and have a decent home and man of her own, Josie states: "I don't want a decent man, thank you. They're no fun. They're all sticks like you. And I

---

<sup>50</sup> Eugene O'Neill, "A Moon for the Misbegotten", Act One, Scene One, pp. 3-4, <https://coldreads.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/a-moon-for-the-misbegotten1.pdf>.

wouldn't marry the best man on earth and be tied down to him alone."<sup>51</sup> Josie used her status, clothing, and personality as an instrument for social mobility, through which she had found an outlet for individualism and self-expression. More and more women were straying farther away from the family path and more towards the career path, and the ability that they now possessed to choose their own lifestyles was extremely valuable to the younger women who felt that the society in which they lived often-times devaluated the importance of individualism.<sup>52</sup>

O'Neill recognized the importance that individualism and self-expression held for young women, and his plays transmitted that. Women in the post-war era were more inclined to support themselves rather than remain dependent on a man to do so. Women sought to emphasize their personal and sexual freedom while downplaying their femininity in order to force the older generations to look at them in a different light. The flapper in the 1920s represented the ideal that all women wished to emulate, and authors of the Roaring Twenties were drawn to the way that the flapper women spoke, acted, and dressed. Through the image and ideal of the flapper, women during the second decade of the twentieth century had completely transformed the way that women, in general, were viewed in society. In stark contrast to the morals and accepted behaviors in the American Victorian Era, the twenties opened the door for a whole new type of woman; a woman who was not afraid to stand up for herself, a woman not afraid to be alone, and a woman who wished to express her sexuality publically. There seems to be a consensus that in the

---

<sup>51</sup> "A Moon for the Misbegotten," Act One, Scene One, pp. 4-5.

<sup>52</sup> Kenneth A. Yellis, "Prosperity's Child: Some Thoughts on the Flapper," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Spring, 1969), pp. 44-64, Published by: The John Hopkins University Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2710772>,

decade after the war there was a consolidation of a new emancipatory vision in revolt against the old order, but in decided harmony with modern feminist concepts: egalitarianism, career commitment outside of the home, personal autonomy and empowerment, and freedom of sexual expression.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Honey, pp. 25-26.

### SECTION THREE: EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

Of all the artists and authors prevalent in the 1920s, none of them were quite as scandalous nor as provocative as poet Edna St. Vincent Millay. Born in Rockland, Maine on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1892, Edna St. Vincent Millay was the daughter of Henry and Cora Millay. Named after the St. Vincent Hospital in New York where her uncle had received care, she was raised mainly by her mother, a traveling nurse, after Cora fled from and divorced Henry soon after giving birth to Edna's two younger sisters.<sup>54</sup> Millay had a very basic education up until university, but was made the editor and chief of her high school paper in her senior year.<sup>55</sup> Despite beginning her first diary in the spring of 1907 at the age of fifteen, and keeping an array of diaries, journals, and notes that not only detailed her life but detailed her inspiration, Millay did not have her defining moment as an author and poet until the age of nineteen in 1912. Millay's submission "Renaissance" to a contest run by the editor of the publication *The Lyric Year* won her much acclaim as an amateur poetess and even sparked the interest of several colleges and universities wishing for her to study with them.<sup>56</sup> Upon receiving a full scholarship offer to attend Vassar College at the end of 1912, Millay chose to extend her formal education.<sup>57</sup>

After graduating in 1917, Millay, who was then known by her friends as Vincent<sup>58</sup>, published her first book *Renaissance and Other Poems*. In that same year, she

---

<sup>54</sup> Nancy Milford, *Savage Beauty*, Random House: New York (2001), pg. 18.

<sup>55</sup> Milford, pg. 41.

<sup>56</sup> Milford, pg. 64.

<sup>57</sup> Milford, pg. 78.

<sup>58</sup> Millay was referred to as Vincent throughout her collegiate career due to her androgynous nature. In keeping with the times, Millay gravitated towards masculine clothing lines and disassociating herself with the feminine shape.

moved to New York's Greenwich Village where she began to lead a very bohemian lifestyle.<sup>59</sup> In 1920, Millay's poems and other writings began to be regularly published in the magazine *Vanity Fair*, a 'sophisticated' women's publication. The majority of the Roaring Twenties were a bright blur for Edna St. Vincent Millay between her promiscuity with both men and women, abortions, adoring crowds, long stays abroad, and constant reading tours. Her books began to come regularly and with varying degrees of success.<sup>60</sup> Along with dabbling in the theater industry as an experimental playwright Millay published *A Few Figs from Thistles* in 1920, one of the first publications written by a woman about feminism and female sexuality. Millay was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1923 for her work *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver* and also wrote for several operas during the early 1920s as well. Additionally, in 1923 Millay married a self-proclaimed feminist writer Eugen Boissevian.<sup>61</sup>

Millay's marriage to Eugen Boissevain was not traditional in any way. In the very early stages of their marriage, both Millay and her husband decided to enter into an open marriage due to the fact that Millay had publically come out as a bisexual; something that was practically unheard of during the Twenties. However, Millay remained married to Eugen until his death in 1949, a year before she passed away from heart failure in 1950. In addition to writing several plays, and operas as well as producing numerous poetical publications, Millay also embarked on several reading tours across the United States as suggested and supported by her husband/manager who helped Millay direct her growing

---

<sup>59</sup> Milford, pp. 146-147.

<sup>60</sup> J. D. McClathcy, "Like a Moth to the Flame," *The New York Times*, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/16/books/like-a-moth-to-the-flame.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Milford, pp. 250-254.

career throughout the 1920s and 1930s. During her literary pinnacle, Millay's books sold in huge quantities and many of her works received high critical praise; so, when Otto Kahn and the Metropolitan Opera Company decided in the mid-1920s that the time had arrived to produce the 'great American opera,' it was only logical that Edna St. Vincent Millay should be selected to write the libretto. Despite the publicity that came from Millay's decision to participate in the undertaking of the opera, many things about *The King's Henchman* remained secret until its debut in 1927.<sup>62</sup> Millay had been interested in theater from a young age, participating as both an actor and playwright throughout her schooling, but it was not until Kahn chose her to be a primary participant in the great American opera that she received the true taste of what it was like to work in the theater. During the two years that it took for *The King's Henchman* to be produced, Millay had not only challenged her previous conceptions concerning society in the Twenties, but she also challenged her own notions concerning the way in which she viewed sexuality and the Victorian constructions of the marriage and family lifestyle.

Emotional to an extreme—especially in the late 1920's following the debut of *The King's Henchman*—Edna St. Vincent Millay's works represented the wildness of life, the unpredictability of each day, the joyfulness of nature, and the mental torture of physical and emotional relationships. Millay was not only provocative in her time, but inspirational as well. She became "the herald of the New Woman. She smoked in public when it was against the law to do so...she slept with men and women and wrote about it

---

<sup>62</sup> Edd Winfield Parks, "Edna St. Vincent Millay," *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Jan., 1930), pp. 42-49, Published by: The John Hopkins University Press, <http://jstor.org/stable/27534465>, pg. 46.

in lyrics and sonnets that blazed with wit and a sexual daring that captivated the nation.”<sup>63</sup> Millay was one of the first great American female poets because her work represented herself. Just like the two writers—F. Scott Fitzgerald and Eugene O’Neill-- previously discussed, Millay wrote her life into her poems. She put her raw and unfiltered emotion on paper and allowed others a glimpse into her personal life through her writing.

It was not just that Millay was the first woman ever to win the Pulitzer Prize in poetry or that Thomas Hardy (the famous English romantic novelist and poet) once said that there were really only two great things in the United States, the modern skyscrapers and the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay. It was that she ignited the imagination of an entire generation of young American women, and she gave them their rallying cry to fight against the injustice they had previously been receiving.<sup>64</sup> Because Millay chose to live her life in a rather outspoken and outlandish way, her lyrics and sonnets became much more popular due to the fact that she herself was popular. However, the popularity of her work during her life, as well as the popularity of her works since her death, is greatly warranted due to the immense variety and realism present in her poems. Of the hundreds of published poems and sonnets Millay wrote throughout her literary career, *Second April*, *A Few Figs from Thistles*, *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver*, and *The Buck in the Snow* all written and published in the 1920s provide us with a glimpse into Millay’s life as well as into how her views on changing gender roles were represented in her works.

---

<sup>63</sup> Milford, Prologue, pg. xiii.

<sup>64</sup> Milford, Prologue, pg. xiii.

Despite authors and playwrights writing about the same kinds of themes that Millay chose to write about, her works were so much more controversial because they were written by a woman. Women in the 1920s were not supposed to be open to the idea of sex. Their private lives were supposed to remain private, and they certainly were not supposed to possess more than one partner. Millay's decision to write what she felt caused a whole generation of young women to be much more open about the way they viewed gender and sexuality. The gradual transformation throughout the Roaring Twenties of the views concerning gender and sexuality in society paralleled Millay's openness concerning the same subject matter. Millay had always been open regarding her views; she was open about her bisexuality, participated in an open marriage, and was open about the changing gender roles and sexual spheres in her works. As a poetess, she had "found her themes in nature and humanity, the two more fertile sources of poetic composition."<sup>65</sup> The majority of her poems written in nature and about nature make her lyrics written about social philosophy and gender that much more stark. The poems concerning gender and sexuality as she saw it and as it was present in the 1920s harshly contrast her feelings towards nature. However, Millay's ability to combine both nature and sexuality also offered her a way in which to relate more to her readers. For example, her poem entitled *The Philosopher* in the work *A Few Figs from Thistles* published in 1923 states:

And what are you that, missing you,  
As many days as crawl  
I should be listening to the wind

---

<sup>65</sup> "43 MILLAY POEMS DONE IN 5 YEARS," October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1928, *The Washington Post* (1923-1954), pg. S11.

And looking at the wall?

I know a man that's a braver man  
And twenty men as kind,  
And what are you, that you should be  
The only one man in my mind?<sup>66</sup>

In Millay's mind, she sought to combine the intimacy of nature and the intimacy of love. Through her writings, she confesses everything and reveals nothing.<sup>67</sup> Millay's stance on the ever changing dynamics of gender and love allowed her lyrics and poems to also be dominated by the same stance. In some instances, Millay is overwhelmed by love and intimacy, while other times she is saddened by the loss of love, and intimidated by the idea of searching for companionship. Millay was a highly scandalous figure throughout her life because she sought companionship in many different ways: with women, with men, and sometimes with both. Her marriage to Eugen Bossevain remained intact only because he supported the idea that they could maintain an open marriage. Millay knew that both men and women found her to be attractive because of her physical appearance and because of her literary expertise, and she did not try to avoid that fact. In one of her many journals, Millay even made reference to this by stating: "people fall in love with me and annoy me and distress me and flatter me and excite me—and all that sort of thing."<sup>68</sup> She knew the appeal she had when it came to others, and she also knew

---

<sup>66</sup> Edna St. Vincent Millay, *Collected Poems*, Edited by Norma Millay; Harper & Row, Publishers (New York, 1965), Book: *A Few Figs from Thistles*, Poem: *The Philosopher*, Stanza: 2-3, pg. 148.

<sup>67</sup> Christian Wiman, "Review: Pure Honey and Pure Gall," *The Threepenny Review*, No. 92 (Winter, 2003), pp. 10-11, Published by: The Threepenny Review, <http://jstor.org/stable/4385190>, pg. 11.

<sup>68</sup> Milford, pg. 126.

that she could not possibly be the only one who possessed this same appeal. But, due to restrictions placed on love and marriage in the 1920s as enforced by the antique Victorian norms that all of proper society still followed, Millay became both a public outcast and muse at the same time.

Of the many things that inspired Millay's writings concerning gender and sexuality in the 1920s, perhaps one of the most important moments in her life was deciding to work for *Vanity Fair*. Taking on the role of a reporter as well as poetess and lyricist, Millay took the job at *Vanity Fair* in order to shed light upon the conflicting gender struggle that was taking place. Through her writings, Millay wanted to provide the public with more options for sexual expression, and she wanted to present to society how one could stray away from the constraining morals of the past without any real repercussions. Because, after all, Millay was perhaps one of the most outrageous figures to exist in the early Twentieth century, and she still retained her popularity despite basically going against everything that society said was correct and proper. Critics of Millay often times tried to play off her literary success by claiming that she was "natural and passionate, beautiful and youthful, witty and charming,"<sup>69</sup> but by also claiming that "the paired epithets offered to characterize Millay's appeal and accomplishments closer to those of a dinner date than a woman being called the most accomplished lyricist of her generation by the very magazine that was comparing her to a datable young woman."<sup>70</sup>

Millay's time as a writer and reported for *Vanity Fair* did not turn out as she had planned,

---

<sup>69</sup> Catherine Keyser, "Edna St. Vincent Millay and the Very Clever Woman in 'Vanity Fair,'" *American Periodicals*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2007), pp. 65-96, Published by: The Ohio State University Press, <http://jstor.org/stable/20770969>, pg. 70.

<sup>70</sup> Keyser, pg. 70.

because, despite her effort to call out society for the current gender gap that was present and open up the discussion for sexually curious young people, *Vanity Fair* could not get over the fact that Millay herself actually practiced everything that she preached.

Millay was perhaps so polarizing in her time because she strove to embody everything that the young woman and emerging flapper represented. She wanted to be caught up in the scandal, in the drinking, in the partying, and in the atmosphere of the Roaring Twenties. The Twenties with their excess and illegal activity represented everything that Millay embraced, everything that she had been writing about, and everything that she wanted society to realize was okay. As reported by *Vogue* in 1929 during Millay's literary highpoint, she represented the everywoman because females in the 1920s no longer bent and broke beneath the burden, they regarded everyday as a workday, and they began again, with renewed energy and devotion, concerning themselves with living problems instead of brooding over vanished dreams.<sup>71</sup> Women during the 1920s were more inclined to independently seek out a greater life for themselves, just like Millay sought out a greater life for herself. Millay did not depend on any man, because she was raised by a single mother, and she worked hard for everything that she wanted. Her literary career was successful because she wanted to write about things that were previously considered taboo, she wanted to let others know that it was not improper to disregard all of the rules that society had set in place for them.

During Millay's literary climax, she was compared to the likes of other gifted female authors such as Sappho, Mrs. Browning, Christina Rossetti, and Emily Dickinson;

---

<sup>71</sup> S. S. S., March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1929, "Features: All is Vanity," 80-80, pg. 110.

however, Millay's works were vastly different than any other female writers because of her outspokenness concerning gender and sexuality. Her unconventional approach to society and the Victorian rules that were strictly enforced provided her with the perfect foundation upon which to build herself and others up who thought the same way she did. She was not afraid to talk about sex nor was she afraid to talk about the stereotypes of both males and females during the early twentieth century. Even though her works reflected her life and her values, much like the works of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Eugene O'Neill as well, her works were so much more drastic because her lifestyle was more radical than the lives of her literary peers. According to Edd Parks, "her poetry was intimate rather than conventional, emotional rather than intellectual, realistic rather than philosophical, and inconsistent to an extreme. In brief, feminine."<sup>72</sup> Her work was extremely feminine for the obvious reason: she was a female. But it was also feminine because her poems and sonnets and lyrics were written about the female mind; her thoughts reflected the thoughts of a whole generation of young women. She was open to life, to people, and to the possibilities that came with sexual experimentation. For all intensive purposes, she wanted to live outside the box that society had basically forced upon her since her birth.

Just like the other authors wishing to document the Roaring Twenties through literature, Edna St. Vincent Millay proved that it could be done in an effective and efficient way. Her lyrics represented everything that the Twenties brought with it: modernism, liberalism, sexual expression, freedom, individualism, and acceptance.

---

<sup>72</sup> Parks, pg. 42.

Perhaps one of her most reflective pieces concerning the ambiance of the 1920s was sonnet XV from her work *Second April*:

Only until this cigarette is ended,  
A little moment at the end of all,  
While on the floor the quiet ashes fall,  
And the firelight to a lance extended,  
Bizarrely with the jazzing music blended  
This broken shadow dances on the wall,  
I will permit my memory to recall  
The vision of you, by all my dreams attended.<sup>73</sup>

According to one *New York Times* article written in 1921, “Millay would not be a child of the twentieth century if she did not occasionally attempt to write in the vein of light cynicism and disillusion.”<sup>74</sup> Millay’s sense of disillusionment is revealed through sonnet XV. For Millay, the twenties were supposed to represent a period of amendment; revision of the way in which society viewed gender and sexuality, modification of how women were treated, and reform of gender inequality. And to Millay, these changes were simply not taking place as fast as she thought they should. Edna St. Vincent Millay was instrumental in redefining the way in which the younger generation viewed sexuality, she was a central figure in establishing and expanding the place of female voice in American poetry and society. Her political activism coupled with her desire to make others aware of the universal setback that gender restrictions were causing during this time allowed her to connect with her audience on a more personal level.

During the 1920s, Millay was learning what her country was learning: to wield an “innocence without compromising it, and to remain elusive to herself as she was to the

---

<sup>73</sup> Millay, *Collected Poems*, Sonnets: Second April, XV, pg. 575.

<sup>74</sup> A Review by: WILLIAM, LYON PHELPS (October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1921), “Edna St. Vincent Millay, Poet and Dramatist, *The New York Times* (1857-1922).

people who fell for her. And fall for her they did. Poets and publishers, barkeeps and diplomats, men, women, and amalgamations thereof all full under Millay's spell, often at the same time."<sup>75</sup> Millay's works were popular because her horizons were widened in the 1920s due to the greater recognition of the imbalance between the genders that was present. There was no woman more modern than Edna St. Vincent Millay. In fact, some claim that she was too modern for the time frame in which she lived. In fact, one reporter for *The Washington Post* claimed that it was "refreshing to find a poet so imbued with the spirit of modernity."<sup>76</sup> In some way, Millay was over appreciated during her time but is underappreciated now. Because she was so instrumental in aiding the advances of young women in society and breaking the mold by speaking openly about sexuality as well as questioning both the female and male stereotypes that were present, Millay's popularity throughout her life was unmistakable.

Millay's fame as a poetess and remarkable lyricist really only diminished after she began to take an interest in politics following her arrest for protesting the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927. Once she began to write more politically following their deaths and throughout the 1930's, her work suffered, her popularity suffered, and she also began to suffer and deteriorate both mentally and physically. It was not until after her attempt at political writing that Millay began to have more and more comparisons drawn between her and other female writers such as Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton who were emerging just as Millay's popularity was declining. Walter S. Minot suggests that because of their similarities, it was easy to trace the pattern of these popular female

---

<sup>75</sup> Wilman, pg. 10.

<sup>76</sup> 43 POEMS DONE IN 5 YEAR, pg. S11.

authors and that any woman who chose to go against the accepted norms and customs of her time only created conflict for herself and problems for those with whom she associated.<sup>77</sup> This theory is somewhat applicable to Millay's life because once she decided to continue to go against the grain and write about the political sphere rather than the social sphere her career, and by default, her life, began to diminish. Her popularity in the literary world was weaning and as a result, she began to grow increasingly unhappy with the direction that her life was taking. According to several of her journals recovered by her sister after Millay's death, Edna St. Vincent Millay believed that she did not make a big enough impact when it came to society's acceptance of the new/modern attitudes towards gender and sexuality.

During her literary success, Millay was much more than just a poet. She was an activist aggressively seeking to change the way that the antique society of the early nineteen twenties viewed gender and sexuality. In a sense, Millay wanted to create a gender revolution. And not just a revolution for women, but a revolution for men as well. She wanted to assist in helping others like herself, to be honest and open about their feelings towards the people around them. She did not want to have to shy away from sex; she wanted to be as open as she possibly could. To some extent, Millay basically embodied everything that the flapper encompassed. She drank, smoked, slept around, she was politically active, and she expressed her openness about gender and sexuality in general.

---

<sup>77</sup> Walter S. Minot, "Millay's 'Ungrafted Tree': The Problem of the Artist as Woman," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Jun., 1975), pp. 260-269, Published by: The New England Quarterly, Inc., <http://www.jstor.org/stable/364663>, pg. 268.

As a poetess, her morals were highly unconventional and she pushed the boundaries with her writing; but, that does not mean that her works were any less justified than other writers in the 1920s. Millay chose to express her views on the transitional age through lyrics and sonnets and elegantly weaved her views and emotions into her writing. Just take for example this sonnet from her work *The Harp Weaver*:

I, being born a woman and distressed  
By all needs and notions of my kind,  
Am urged by your propinquity to find  
Your personal fair, and fell a certain zest  
To bear your body's weight upon my breast:  
So subtly is the fume of the life designed,  
To clarify the pulse and cloud the mind,  
And leave me once again undone, possessed.<sup>78</sup>

Her eloquence as a poet simply cannot be denied despite her attitude about her works towards the end of her life. Throughout her literary career, she was, of course, compared to the likes of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Eugene O'Neill, and many other authors who chose to chronicle the dynamic decade that was the 1920s. But, her popularity was vastly different from theirs just because of the simple fact that she was a woman. Even though that seems like something so trivial in today's times, the fact that she was a female author made her open to more criticism and condemnation not only from her literary peers but from pretty much the entire country. Despite her thoughts concerning her own recognition, Millay's appreciation by the younger generation and by the media came early in her career. For example, *The New York Times* stated in 1920, at the very beginning of Millay's career as a poetess and three years before her Pulitzer Prize win, that "there are, perhaps no women poets in America as thoroughly talented as she appears

---

<sup>78</sup> Edna St. Vincent Millay, *Collected Poems*, Sonnets: The Harp-Weaver, XLI, pg. 601.

to be. A fine sensitivity, an unerring ear for words, and a musical command of technique are among her virtues.”<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> “Current Magazines: Treasure Mountain,” October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1920, *The New York Times* (1857-1922), pg. BR11.

## CONCLUSION

Youths during the 1920s were not afraid of their sexuality in any way. They embraced the gender transformations that were taking place around them and encouraged their growth. Men during the age were not afraid to take on a more feminine role; and women, in turn, were not afraid to take on more masculine roles, especially after the war. Postwar women felt the realities of political and social freedom during World War I and wished to maintain that freedom subsequently. Women began to gain more voice in both the political and economic spheres, and many authors wished to address the monumental aspects of the historical reality that was taking place throughout the 1920s in relation to the social and sexual revolution.

Magazines and newspapers that gained prominence during the era because of mass distribution often noted the influence that flappers and young people had over society. The changes that society was experiencing was noted, but not fully accepted, by media and the older generations. For example, one such contributor for *The Washington Post* stated in 1922 that the 1920s was “an age of juvenile anarchy, but the trouble is not altogether with the younger generation. The flapper is merely a universal product. It is their obsession with Jazz music which is considered the destructive agent of the times. Jazz music is the curse of the age.”<sup>80</sup> Apart from the technological revolution that was taking place during the Roaring Twenties, Jazz music became something that also defined the time period as well.

---

<sup>80</sup> By, L. B. (1923, May 06). Why find fault with garb of today's flapper? *The Washington Post* (1923-1954), p. 77.

Jazz music, flappers, urban areas, technology, and political reform all provided writers with sufficient inspiration through which they could chronicle the vibrant age. F. Scott Fitzgerald, Eugene O'Neill, and Edna St. Vincent Millay are only a few of the authors that sought to assist in the reformative decade by writing down everything about it that they possibly could. The morals and ideals of young men and women during the 1920s were so vastly different than those of their predecessors that it was inevitable that some type of revolution was going to take place. Not only did youths begin to rebel politically, but their dissidence about the social hierarchy that dominated America ushered in a whole new type of society.

Women during this age were not supposed to be driven by their sexual desires; in fact, they were supposed to pretend that those desires did not even exist. Before the scandalous decade, the only way in which women could express those desires was through marriage. That was the only way in which any person, male or female, could express their love and/or fondness for another person. However, it was also during this time period young people, in general, were no longer willing to postpone intercourse just for the sake of marriage; because, to the majority of youths, marriage had become somewhat of an outdated practice and an overrated institution. According to Kenneth Yellis, ideas like “modesty, chastity, morality, and traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity were perceived as almost invisible and, in some sense, interchangeable.”

<sup>81</sup> The 1920s seemed to have witnessed the emergence of a new woman whose behavior, attitude, and appearance constituted a major break with the western, male-dominated

---

<sup>81</sup> Yellis, pg. 45.

civilization and was seen, for the first time, as a dangerous threat to the once perfectly stable masculine culture.<sup>82</sup>

Women were now being much more assertive with and to men, they were no longer willing to contain themselves to the household or do or say the things that their parents, grandparents, and husbands told them to. Women were thinking and acting much more independently; which, in turn, caused massive uproar. They challenged the Victorian conception of sexuality and they challenged the traditional roles that both men and women had previously played. Women wanted more respect out of society, and, in some way, they were able to achieve that through rebellion in the 1920s. In the Victorian-American age, the Gibson girl (the personification of the fashionable and feminine ideal in the early Twentieth century) was the epitome of stability she was ladylike, she was beautiful, dressed fashionable, never caused scandal, was educated, and always knew the right things to say and do. The flapper, on the other hand, chose to be the exact opposite of this.

She was modernly fashionable in a provocative and scandalous way, she did not care as much about her education, she partied, she drank, she smoked, and she practically did and said everything that she wanted. She was not tied down by moral constraints, and she did not recognize the traditional gender roles or social codes. Yellis claims that “the flapper was the utter antithesis of the Gibson girl’s long hair, high brow, thirty-six-inch bust, narrow, anatomically precise waist, broad hips, and well-concealed legs. As an ideal physical type, the Gibson girl was contradicted in every particular way by the flapper,

---

<sup>82</sup> Yellis, pg. 63.

who bobbed her hair, concealed her forehead, flattened her chest, hid her waist, dieted away her hips, and kept her legs in plain sight. The flapper could hardly have been a more thorough repudiation of the Gibson girl.”<sup>83</sup> The dress, behavior, and attitude of the flapper basically disregarded everything that Victorian society and the Gibson girl had worked so hard to achieve. Flappers disrupted the social tendencies of the Roaring Twenties, revolutionized their morals and manners, and brought sexuality out into the open for the first time.

Authors of the Twenties strived so hard to achieve the proper replication and explanation of the flapper that many did not succeed. Because the women of this time period were so scandalous and so caught up in the glitz and glamor of the decade, it was often difficult to even get them to stop, if even for a moment. Critics of the flapper movement were even so far-fetched in their ideas about the women who participated because they were fully aware that what appalled them about the Flapper, her behavior and her dress, was precisely her modernity.<sup>84</sup> Modernity in the 1920s seemed to seep into every aspect of life. Young people were propelled into the modern lifestyle by what they wore, whom they conversed with, how they acted, and what they did. The younger generation had an economic edge over their predecessors, women entered into the workforce by choice instead of by necessity, and sexuality acted more like a competition than a barrier.

The evolution of both gender and sexuality in the 1920s was chronicled by so many because its transformation had truly sparked a new way of life. Young men and

---

<sup>83</sup> Yellis, pg. 44.

<sup>84</sup> Yellis, pg. 45.

women talked differently, dressed differently, acted differently, had different jobs that their ancestors had, didn't depend on education, and expressed themselves however they wished. Writers like Fitzgerald, O'Neill, and Millay were instrumental in capturing the essence of youths during this period, which is why their works are able to reflect the Raring Twenties in a more intense way.

Fitzgerald, and many other authors of the 1920s placed immense amounts of emphasis on the way in which young people dressed; especially as compared to the way in which the older generations dressed. The 1920s culture flourished because of the simple fact that young people were no longer willing to let others dictate what they wore, what they did, and how they acted. Clothing was an outlet of expression for both genders. It often times did what words could not it expressed to a larger amount of people the risks that a person was willing to take, their political outlook, and their determination to break the mold. Mass production in the apparel industry during the Roaring Twenties led to uniformity and simplicity in clothing; but, it also led to multiplicity and variety when it came to the types of clothing that young people and flappers generally wore and bought. The diversification of the clothing being made and sold allowed those who wished to express themselves through clothing to do exactly that.

The flapper, after all, was an ideal that many wanted to emulate. It also became possible for so many women, of all socioeconomic backgrounds, to become quite easily because of the media and mass production of goods that was prevalent and developed in the 1920s. Women sought to emphasize freedom and play down femininity in the way that they dressed, and all of the post-war realizations, as well as the sexual revolution,

allowed them to achieve that goal.<sup>85</sup> The aftermath of World War I brought with it so much change that it is often hard to even understand how so many things happened in such a short time frame. With women organizing to aid in the war effort, organizing to fight for the right to vote, and organizing for social equality, the early twentieth century could not stop the transformation of American culture and the development of a completely different social structure.

---

<sup>85</sup> Yellis, pg. 51.

## REFERENCES

"43 MILLAY POEMS DONE IN 5 YEARS," October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1928, *The Washington Post* (1923-1954).

"Current Magazines: Treasure Mountain." October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1920. *The New York Times* (1857-1922).

"FLAPPER KEEPS TO HER TYPE." *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1927.

"Scott Fitzgerald Turns a Corner." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, March 7th, 1926.

Alexander, Doris M., "Eugene O'Neill as Social Critic," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Winter, 1954), pp. 349-363, Published by: The John Hopkins University Press, <http://jstor.org/stable/3031370>.

Bogard, Travis, "Contour in Time: The Plays of Eugene O'Neill," Revised Edition, *Oxford University Press*, 1988.

BROOKS. By J, "STRANGE INTERLUDE." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*. February 5th, 1928.

Butcher, Fanny. "BOOKS." *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*. April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1925.

Carpenter, Frederic I., "The Romantic Tragedy of Eugene O'Neill," *College English*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (Feb., 1945), pp. 250-258, Published by: National Council of Teachers of English, <http://jstor.org/stable/370306>.

Clark, Edwin. "Scott Fitzgerald Looks Into Middle Age: THE GREAT GATSBY." By F. Scott Fitzgerald. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. *New York Times (1923-Current file)*; New York, N.Y., April 19th, 1926.

Fagin, N. Bryllion, "Eugene O'Neill," *The Antioch Review*. Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring, 1954), pp. 14-26, Published by: Antioch Review Inc., <http://jstor.org/stable/4609686>.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott, *The Beautiful and Damned*, Barnes and Noble Classics Series: Introduction and Notes by Pagan Harleman, Published by: Barnes and Noble (2005), original publication, 1922.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott, *The Great Gatsby*: with notes and preface by Matthew J. Bruccoli, Scribner Hardback Edition, Published by: Simon & Schuster (New York, 1995), originally published 1925.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott, *This Side of Paradise*, Wisehouse Classics Edition (Sweden, 2016), e-book.

Freedman, Estelle B., "The New Woman: Changing Views of Women in the 1920's," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (Sep., 1974), pp. 372-393, Published by: Oxford University Press on Behalf of Organization of American Historians, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1903945>.

Greenleaf, Richard, "The Social Thinking of F. Scott Fitzgerald," *Science and Society*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Spring, 1952), pp. 97-114, Published by: Guilford Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40400123>.

A Review by, HILDEGARDE HAWTHORNE, "The Art of Eugene O'Neill," *New York Times (1857-1922)*, August 13th, 1922.

Honey, Maureen, "Gotham's Daughters: Feminism in the 1920's," *American Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Spring 1990), pp. 25-40, Published by: Mid-American Studies Association, <http://jstor.org/stable/40642351>.

Karim, Asim, "Eugene O'Neill's Concern with Sexuality and the Behavioral Disorders," *Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2010, pp. 38-49, <http://www.cscanada.net>.

Keyser, Catherine, "Edna St. Vincent Millay and the Very Clever Woman in 'Vanity Fair,'" *American Periodicals*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2007), pp. 65-96, Published by: The Ohio State University Press, <http://jstor.org/stable/20770969>,

By, L. B. (1923, May 06). Why find fault with garb of today's flapper? *The Washington Post (1923-1954)*.

McClathcy, J. D., "Like a Moth to the Flame," *The New York Times*, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/16/books/like-a-moth-to-the-flame.html>.

Milford, Nancy, *Savage Beauty*, Random House: New York (2001).

Millay, Edna St. Vincent, *Collected Poems*, Edited by Norma Millay; Harper & Row, Publishers (New York, 1965).

Minot, Walter S., "Millay's 'Ungrafted Tree': The Problem of the Artist as Woman," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Jun., 1975), pp. 260-269, Published by: The New England Quarterly, Inc., <http://www.jstor.org/stable/364663>.

O, Margaret. 1922. "More Ado about the Flapper." *New York Times* (1857-1922), April 16<sup>th</sup>.

O'Neill, Eugene, *Selected Plays of Eugene O'Neill*, Random House (New York), Copyright: 1940, Date of First Publication: 1920, "The Hairy Ape," "The Great God Brown," "Strange Interlude."

O'Neill, Eugene, "*A Moon for the Misbegotten*", Act One, Scene One, pp. 3-4, <https://coldreads.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/a-moon-for-the-misbegotten1.pdf>.

Parks, Edd Winfield, "Edna St. Vincent Millay," *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Jan., 1930), pp. 42-49, Published by: The John Hopkins University Press, <http://jstor.org/stable/27534465>,

A Review by: WILLIAM, LYON PHELPS (October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1921). "Edna St. Vincent Millay, Poet and Dramatist." *The New York Times* (1857-1922).

Rockwell, Mary Rech, "Gender transformation: The Gilded Age and the Roaring Twenties," *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Recent Directions in Gender and Women's History (Mar., 2005), pp. 31-40, Published by: Oxford University Press on Behalf of Organization of American Historians, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163761>.

S. S. S., March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1929, "Features: All is Vanity," 80-80.

Scheaffer, Louis, "O'Neill: Son and Playwright, Vol. 1," New York: First Cooper Square Press Edition 2002, ebook.

Steinbrink, Jeffrey, "'Boats Against the Current': Morality and the Myth of Renewal in The Great Gatsby," *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 2, F. Scott Fitzgerald Issue (Summer, 1980), pp. 157-170, Published by: Hofstra University, <http://jstor.org/stable/441372>.

Wiman, Christian, "Review: Pure Honey and Pure Gall," *The Threepenny Review*, No. 92 (Winter, 2003), pp. 10-11, Published by: The Threepenny Review, <http://jstor.org/stable/4385190>.

Yellis, Kenneth A., "Prosperity's Child: Some Thoughts on the Flapper," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Spring, 1969), pp. 44-64, Published by: The John Hopkins University Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2710772>.