

OUTLINE OF FICTIONAL APPROPRIATIONS OF F. SCOTT AND ZELDA FITZGERALD

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Целта на овој труд е да направи хронолошки и тематски преглед на објавените романи, жанровски определени како биофикции/литературни биографии кои комбинираат факт и фикција, а се однесуваат на животите на американскиот автор Френсис Скот Фицџералд и неговата жена Зелда Фицџералд. Оваа листа може да послужи за понатамошно истражување на таквиот жанр и трендот на неговата популарност. Понатаму, преку ваквиот преглед, може да се анализира фикционалниот лик на семејството Фицџералд.

Клучни зборови: биофикција, литературна биографија, преглед, Френсис Скот и Зелда Фицџералд

The aim of this paper is to chronologically and thematically outline the existing novels combining fact and fiction, termed biofictions/literary biographies about the lives of the American author Francis Scott Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda Fitzgerald. The list could further serve the study of this genre and the trends of its popularity. Furthermore, it can lead to the study the Fitzgeralds' fictional portrayal.

Key words: biofiction, literary biography, outline Francis Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald

Introduction

Numerous fictional and non-fictional works have appeared about the lives of F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda. In particular, the list of literary biographies and biographical fictions about them is long and diverse. This paper aims to chronologically group and thematically outline the rich output and to further serve any critical assessment of the genre.

Outline

To begin with, the scholarship on Fitzgeralds' legacy is wide and extensive and as such, together with the existing factual documentation about their lives it is essential in the creation of their biographies. This also includes their mutual correspondence. The first substantial publishing of their letters was made by Matthew J. Bruccoli in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters* (1994) and in *The Collected Works of Zelda Fitzgerald* (1992). In 2002, the first collection of Scott and Zelda's letters in one volume *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald* was published by Jackson R. Bryer and Cathy W. Barks.

At the same time, the appearance of novels trying to uncover the enigmatic lives of the Fitzgeralds notes different trends. In 2013 alone, six biographical fictions were released about Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. Therese Ann Fowler's *Z: A Novel of Zelda Fitzgerald*, Erika Robuck's *Call me Zelda*, R. Clifton Spargo's *Beautiful Fools: The Last Affair of Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald* feature Zelda as one of the main characters. In *Careless People: Murder, Mayhem and the Invention of Great Gatsby* by Sarah Churchwell, *Guests on Earth: A Novel* by Lee Smith and *Flappers: Six Women of a Dangerous Generation* by Judith Mackrell her life story is presented alongside other people's life stories and plot lines. The novels take on the task of revising the treatment of Scott and Zelda as public figures while addressing the established facts in their standard biographies. In *Z: A Novel of Zelda Fitzgerald*, Therese Ann Fowler writes about what Fischer calls "Zelda's self-help epiphanies" (Fischer, 2013). It is about "Zelda's grand romance and its ugly conflicts as well as the hopeful suggestion of Zelda's emergence as a self-actualized woman." (Fischer, 2013).

In *Call Me Zelda*, Robuck introduces the character of Anna, a nurse in a Baltimore psychiatric hospital who befriends Zelda and the two manage to help each other go through difficult periods in their lives. Both Zelda and Anna adopt the language of therapy to alleviate and cure their pain. Anna tells Zelda's stories based on what Zelda writes and while helping Zelda, she finds a friend to whom she can confess all her troubles (a dead husband and child, abandoned musical pursuits). Anna continues to tend to Zelda even after she's left the hospital while also joining the Fitzgeralds on a trip to Bermuda eventually becoming Zelda's true friend.

Spargo's *Beautiful Fools* tells a story of the last trip of the couple to Cuba which is the last trip they take together and the last time they see each other. The story includes local scenes and character, including a Cuban playboy, a night club stabbing and an aged fortune teller. The story encompasses one of the less known stories about the couple's life and this therefore makes it considerably more successful as a biographical fiction. Churchwell's *Careless People: Murder, Mayhem and the Invention of Great Gatsby* traces the couple's life story at the very beginning of their marriage in America. Their stay in New York at that time coincided with some bizarre crime events in the autumn of 1922 involving a double murder in New Jersey. These developments eventually led to the conception of

Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. *Guest's on Earth: A Novel* and *Flappers: Six Women of a Dangerous Generation* portray Zelda alongside other people's stories. The former deals with the events taking place in 1936 in Highland Hospital in Ashville, North Carolina. A thirteen- year - old orphaned Evalina Toussaint admitted to this institution is under Zelda's protection. She witnesses a number of events including the 1948 tragic fire killing nine women in a lock ward, one of which is Zelda. The latter tells the stories of six notable women of the Jazz Age their struggles and triumph. These stories, including that of Zelda, are often intertwined and compared give a richer perspective of the times and the people of the period.

Another group of fictional appropriations casts the Fitzgeralds as secondary characters. *Gatsby's Girl* (2006) by Caroline Preston traces the life of Scott's first love, Ginevra. From their first meeting to her marital life, the book concentrates on her happy and sad moments. *Villa America* (2015) by Liza Klaussmann is another story about love and marriage in the Jazz age ex-pat community of young Americans in France. The golden age of the main protagonists Sarah and Gerald Murphy sadly does not last. The story features the Fitzgeralds, Hemingway, Picasso, Dos Passos and many other writers and artists attending the parties at the French Riviera. Prior to that, the life of the Murphy family was classically portrayed in *Living Well is the Best Revenge* (1971) by Calvin Tomkins. A. Scott Borg's *Maxwell Perkins: Editor of Genius* (1978) is a book about the life of Maxwell Perkins, the editor of Fitzgerald, Hemingway's and Thomas Wolfe's work. He plays crucial role in the authors' lives and careers dealing with all their personal and professional struggles.

Furthermore, Scott's last years in Hollywood and his love affair with the columnist Sheila Graham, is presented in Sheila's own autobiographical novel *Beloved Infidel* (1958) and in *Intimate Lies: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sheila Graham: Her Son's Story* (1995) by Robert T. Westbrook. Stewart O'Nan's *West of Sunset* (2015) is another biographical fiction about that period of Fitzgerald's life. It is a story told by a third person narrator, set in Hollywood intensely portraying Fitzgerald's last years during the glamorous Golden Years of Hollywood. The story delivers Fitzgerald's inner portrait, his thoughts and emotions. The book encloses episode of his love affair with Sheila Graham and ends with his death and his imagined last thoughts before his death.

It is interesting that the first lengthy biography of either of the two is about Zelda Fitzgerald, published by Nancy Milford in 1970 called *Zelda: A Biography*. A year later, another memoir is published by Zelda's friend Sara Mayfield called *Exiles from Paradise: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald*. These books made the definitive biographies about the couple's lives trying to present a balanced approach in not taking sides with any of the two.

In 1991, two decades after the publication of Mayfield's book, another biography about Zelda Fitzgerald was published, Koula Svokos Hartnett's *Zelda Fitzgerald and the Failure of the American Dream for Women*, as the first biography to try to prove Zelda's misdiagnosis as a mental patient was being the result of a doctor's mistaken judgement. A decade later, another two biographies about Zelda were published aiming at distinguishing reality from legend. These include Kendall Taylor's *Sometimes Madness is Wisdom, Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage*

(2001) and *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise* (2002) and its second edition entitled *Zelda Fitzgerald, The Tragic, Meticulously Researched Biography of the Jazz Age High Priestess* (2011) by Sally Cline. These two biographies openly discuss Zelda's position in her life and marriage. Cline's book especially deals with Zelda's misdiagnosis. In 2004, another biography of Zelda, *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman's Life* by Linda Wagner Martin was published. Here, Zelda's central place as a cultural figure reappraising the cultural world as well as the role of women in cast in twentieth century America is once again revisited.

The same year as Mayfield's biography, 1971, a biography of Fitzgerald was also published, called *Crazy Sundays: F. Scott Fitzgerald in Hollywood* (1971) by Aaron Latham. The book offers a detailed account of Fitzgerald's life especially of his last years, although due to some fictional elements it is not considered a standard biography. Ten years later, Matthew J. Bruccoli published Fitzgerald's standard biography *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur* (1981). In 2007 the first biographical fiction dealing primarily with the Fitzgerald's marital life called *Alabama Song* was published in French by Gilles Leroy. The same year the book won the highest literary award in France, Prix Goncourt. This seems to have spawned the subsequent avalanche of biofictions about Fitzgerald that keep on emerging to this day.

Conclusion

All of these novels show a very specific process of sieving through the fact and fiction of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald's lives trying to present a different (fictional) perspective of their life story. In that way, the authors of the biofictional novels choose to accentuate different aspects of the couple's lives thus transferring new and different meanings. In this respect, the proliferation of this type of writing, as the above list outline shows, attests to the creative potential of biographical accounts of famous literary figures. As an overview of the published biofictional works on the Fitzgeralds this outline can serve the purpose of further studies in the genre of biofiction and the new fictional images of the real-life personas resulting from such narratives.

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