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Title

Introduction: The Roaring Twenties, or the Jazz Age, a term coined by Fitzgerald, was a period of enormous social change in America, especially in the area of women's rights. Before World War I, American women did not enjoy universal suffrage, but two years after the end of the war, they were finally given the vote, fashion changed, dances became more wild and sexual, and women engaged in smoking and drinking, often in the company of men and without chaperones. In other words, as often seen during times of social change, a "New Woman" emerged in the 1920s (Bode). And, again as usual, her appearance on the scene evoked a good deal of negative reaction from members of society, both male and female, who felt, as they generally did at these times, that women's rejection of any aspect of their traditional role inevitably would result in the destruction of the family and the moral decline of society as a whole. These social fears and biases toward the new era for women are reflected in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*. In spite of numerous differences of female characters, Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker, and Myrtle Wilson, are all versions of the "New Woman." Fitzgerald exposes the plight of the new woman in 1920s America – social expectations of the 1920s trapped women in unhealthy and unsatisfying relationships while their independence from relationships made them appear less attractive and elicited unsympathetic responses.

Body Paragraph 1: Fitzgerald highlights women's disempowerment when entering into their marriage by showing how Daisy expressed clear discontent for her impending wedding, yet gets forced into the marriage anyway. This clear disregard for her wishes is shown when Jordan recounts the past relationship of Daisy and Gatsby. Jordan remembers that thirty minutes before the wedding rehearsal dinner, she saw Daisy "grop[ing] around in a waste-basket . . . and pull[ing] out the string of pearls (Fitzgerald 81), showing Daisy's clear devaluation of the gift that her fiancée gave her before the wedding, and ultimately their relationship – as though it is worthless and should be discarded. Not only do her actions indicate her desire to separate herself from this marriage and lifestyle, but she also verbally expresses her desire to avoid the union by asking Jordan to "give 'em back to whoever they belong to," (81) further disassociating herself with Tom by acting like she doesn't even know who owns the expensive jewelry, as though they are foreign to her. Daisy strengthens her conviction of leaving Tom by repeating "Daisy's change' her mine" (81) – a clear, concise refusal of Tom's proposal. Without taking a moment to pause or wait for a response, Daisy refutes the impending marriage four times through her physical actions and verbal commands. But, after hearing Daisy's distinct refusal to end the relationship, Jordan and the maid invalidate Daisy's feelings by ignoring her claims and forcing her abandon this decision: "We locked the door, and got her in a cold bath" (81), literally trapping Daisy until she is ready to go to the dinner. By hiding her disheveled appearance and trying to clean her up, they prevent others from seeing Daisy's reaction, allowing them to maintain Daisy's social appearance. As they get her ready for the

rehearsal dinner, they “gave her spirits of ammonia”, as though to rouse her from an unconscious state, as though she had no control and was not acting like herself. Then they take the initiative to finalize her elegant, celebratory façade when they “hooked her back into her dress,” securing her into the woman’s role. Daisy’s clear and vocal desire to end her relationship with Tom fails, because society forces her to stay in this relationship, ultimately maintaining social appearances.

Body Paragraph 2: Women of the lower class were also subject to social restrictions and disempowerment in their marriages, as shown through Wilson's imprisonment of Myrtle.

Example 1: figurative imprisonment: "He borrowed somebody's best suit to get married in, and never even told me about it, and the man came after it one day when he was out . . . but I gave it to him and then I lay down and cried to beat the band all afternoon" (35).

Example 2: literal imprisonment: "I've got my wife locked in up there . . . she's going to stay there till the day after-to-morrow, and then we're going to move away" (136).

Body Paragraph 3: While Fitzgerald exposes the restrictions of married women during the 1920s, he negatively depicts the changing roles of women during the 1920s through Jordan Baker – while she is an independent and self-sufficient woman, Fitzgerald makes her physically and morally unappealing.

Example 1: physical description: "grey sun strained eyes" (11) "wan" (11) "discontented face" (11) "contemptuously" (11) "bored haughty face" (57)

Example 2: moral degradation: "she left a borrowed car out in the rain with the top down, and then lied about it" (57).

Example 3: moral degradation: "At her first big golf tournament there was a nearly row that nearly reached the newspapers – a suggestion that she had moved her ball from a bad lie in the semi-final round" (57).

Conclusion: Although Fitzgerald exposes the powerlessness of women through their relationships with the men in their lives, he fails to empower his only independent female character – instead he depicts her as unattractive and cold. This depiction of men and women proves problematic for 1920s readers, who may already view the new women of the 1920s with trepidation. The new independent woman, Jordan, is not merely a woman with a job who can support herself, but her independence is based on immorality: lying and cheating, as though women could not achieve this independence through just means. The social ladder climber, Myrtle, emotionally abuses her husband and secretly tries to leave him, ultimately destroying her marriage and her husband. Even Daisy, the stereotypical “damsel in distress” publically challenges her husband, devalues her relationship with her daughter, and engages in an affair with another man, subconsciously telling readers that even more traditional women are changing and rejecting past social morals. Each of these women challenge society’s values with their irresponsibility and detachment, destroying the men in their lives. And, whether these negative depictions were intentional or not, Fitzgerald’s fears toward the new 1920s women flowed through his writing, warning others of the immorality and danger of these social changes and unintentionally biasing future generations.