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Liberated Women in American Fiction of the 1920s

by

Mirell L. Walden

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

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Introduction: Feminist Theory and American Fiction

Writing in "Archimedes and the Paradox of Feminist Criticism," Myra Jehlen proposed a comparative method for measuring the relativity of gender definitions. She suggested taking male and female authored novels treating similar subjects, and placing them side by side. Jehlen believed the resulting comparisons would offer a better understanding of women's issues and perspectives as compared to men's, while also providing a better "definition of the world" (200). I have explained male and female authors' differing responses to liberated female sexuality in the Twenties by using a methodology similar to Jehlen's.

While this methodology seems relatively straightforward, methodology, as Luce Irigaray notes, is never as simple as it might seem (135). It becomes more complex when the relationship between reader and text is linked to questions of gender. By gender I mean identity that is socially and culturally constructed, rather than biologically determined. Implicit in this definition is the assumption that gender issues enforce "unequal relations of power," and generate what feminist critics Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt call a "struggle" for dominance (xv).

A comparative study of male and female authors' reactions to changing sexual practices in the Twenties has not yet been done. The influence of authorial gender on the perception of female sexuality during that decade has also not been examined yet. I plan to investigate these subjects, while also showing how

changing social conditions and sexual roles affect literary themes. By designating the authors' sex as an important variable, the impact of gender on social and cultural changes can be more clearly examined.

My work builds on the investigations of others. Cultural historian Kenneth Yellis has already commented on threatening aspects of women's emancipated sexual behavior in the Twenties, describing how female sexual independence was perceived as an "assault on the prerogatives of traditional masculinity" (46). In Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction, K.K. Ruthven recognized the persistence of misogyny in literature, attributed it to male fearfulness, and pointed out how literature often functioned as a safe haven for displacing aggression. He observed that literary works written by men often reproduced women as "objects of sadistic humiliation" (83-84). Ruthven questioned the presence of such misogyny, but provided no explanations. I hope to answer this question as it relates to fiction written in the Twenties.

While Ruthven's statements about male alienation and anger can be seen as exaggerations, they also contain seeds of truth. William Faulkner's misogynistic streak emerged in his punitive treatment of the aggressively sexual Caddy Compson in The Sound and the Fury. Ernest Hemingway's misogyny was similarly revealed in the harsh fate meted out to the sexually accommodating Catherine Barkley in A Farewell to Arms. Roberta Alden in Theodore Dreiser's An American Tragedy suffers bitter humiliation after her seduction, and pays for her moral lapse with her life. In F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, Myrtle Wilson's

grotesque death is briefly, but sadistically detailed. Indeed, these controlling, aggressive fictional acts give credence to French feminist Helene Cixous' assessment of male literary practice as "a locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated" (249). They also support Judith Fetterley's contention that male-authored American fiction has historically privileged misogyny.

American feminists Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have also commented on male antagonism and male retribution, attributing such reactions to the altering social order. When Gubar and Gilbert examined changing gender definitions in the periods before and after World War I they linked the emergence of a "New Woman" to a "crisis in masculinity" (Sexchanges xii).

The social changes affecting female behavior were already underway in the prewar era, and had gained additional momentum during the war. By 1920 these changes had become part of an urban mass culture. When modern young women appropriated male habits and demanded more equalized sexual and social relationships, they became increasingly visible, a force to be contended with in American life. As their emancipated behaviors encroached on male territory, threatened male authors' "disturbingly bitter" reactions manifested themselves in hostile portraits of female characters (Ibid. xii-xiii).

The implied threat of increased female power, particularly sexual power, has also been noted by Minrose Gwin. Gwin was convinced that when a patriarchy's dominance was challenged by women's more assertive sexuality, it generated a "nightmare of male fear" inviting response (50). Indeed, many novels written

by Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Hemingway and Dreiser in the Twenties were characterized by violent responses to women's sexual freedoms, fear and distrust of female passion translating into scenarios of appalling carnage and ruin.

In The Resisting Reader, Judith Fetterley centered her study on American male authors, devoting almost half her book to Fitzgerald and Hemingway. Fetterley observed how male writers exercised power over women, often rendering sexually active heroines powerless. However, Fetterley's approach also analyzed the role female readers played in their own repression. By habitually reading from and identifying with the male viewpoint, women become "immasculized," thus participating in their own reduction (xx). Fetterley urges women to keep from getting "lost in 'the masculine wilderness of the American novel,'" by resisting such readings (viii). By implication, this greater self-awareness would be a first step toward overthrowing male domination and men's imagined superiority. Fetterley, however, ignored novels of Twenties female writers in her study. Ironically, many of these novels showed female characters discovering new roles for themselves precisely by ignoring or circumventing culturally imposed definitions of femininity.

While Fetterley's hypothesis centered around women as readers, feminist theorists examined women as writers. Although I plan to examine the Twenties by focusing on its cultural climate, "l'écriture feminine" has potential relevance to my study. While Jacques Lacan believed that language imposed identity and consciousness, Julia Kristeva questioned the masculine bias of Lacan's model. Along with other French

feminists, Kristeva believed that western cultures were fundamentally oppressive in their systematic negation of women's experiences. Viewing language as a process through which people came to terms with basic sexuality, she linked artistic productivity to female sexuality. Kristeva wrote:

sexual difference--which is at once biological, physiological, and relative to reproduction--is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contrast which is the social contract; a difference, then, in the relationship to power, language, and meaning. ("Women's Time" 21)

Kristeva also urged women to resist conventional culture and language, to "reject everything finite, definite, structured, loaded with meaning, in the existing state of society" ("Oscillation" 166). Kristeva hoped her words would serve as a battle cry, and encourage women to act freely, thumbing their noses at traditional culture and language. Such actions, she believed, would also allow women to create a revolutionary movement where the "explosion of social codes" would be imminent (Ibid.).

In the more relaxed moral climate of the Twenties, women's images (as well as their behavior) had started to change, and become more erotic. Novelists regularly incorporated these altered images into their novels, allowing female sexuality to become important to the plot. However, unlike the situations in many male-authored novels, female sexuality did not become a disruptive force in female-authored novels. Instead, the

exercise of female sexual freedom helped to explode oppressive social codes. In Cather's My Antonia and A Lost Lady, Glasgow's Barren Ground and They Stood to Folly, Wharton's The Age of Innocence and "The Old Maid," women systematically flout established behavioral codes, making decisions about their sexuality. In the process they find new roles for themselves, while also contradicting male expectations about female submissiveness and powerlessness. Only Quicksand's heroine Helga Crane encounters absolute failure. Reluctant to give into sexual desire, afraid of toppling repressive moral codes, she is left powerless and trapped by the traditional roles she assumes.

When Cixous examined male writing, she labeled it "self-admiring, self-stimulating, phallocentrism" (249). However, Cixous' allegations were contradicted by important male authors of the Twenties, such as Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Hemingway and Dreiser. Their novels were not filled with the self-congratulatory feeling Cixous attributed to male writing. Instead, their novels resonated with the fears and doubts coinciding with a newly emergent sense of male vulnerability.

Like Kristeva, Cixous had hoped for a literature that would subvert and explode repressive traditions. Paradoxically, at first glance, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Hemingway and Dreiser seem to embody Cixous' hopeful description that there might be some male authors capable of "imagining the woman who would hold out against oppression and constitute herself as a superb equal,..." and whose appearance "would necessarily bring on, if not revolution--for the bastion was supposed to be immutable--at least harrowing explosions" (249).

Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Hemingway and Dreiser often portrayed women whose morally permissive behavior ignored the established social code and whose dismissive attitudes toward oppressive patriarchal social structures dramatized women's issues in the Twenties. While Cixous acknowledged the revolutionary impact of such change, she also hoped it would operate as a beneficent force, unsettling a male dominated social order, eventually creating the kind of disruption that "unthinks" history (252). However, on closer inspection, while the fallout from such explosions were harrowing in The Sound and the Fury, An American Tragedy, The Great Gatsby and A Farewell to Arms, they did not revise history. Instead the explosive force of female sexuality turned back on itself. By severely punishing female eroticism, the same cycle of female repression-male oppression was perpetuated. After brief moments of female sexual autonomy and power, female characters were harshly punished for exercising sexual freedom, much more severely than were their male counterparts.

While some feminist critics focused on female repression in a patriarchal society, others such as Elaine Showalter fastened on the role played by society, culture and literature in defining women. Showalter writes: "Women are estranged from their own experience and unable to perceive its shape and authenticity, in part because they do not see it mirrored and given resonance by literature" ("Curriculum" 856). Showalter's argument assumes the primacy of a male controlled value system that limits and marginalizes female participation. Indeed, male authors such as Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Hemingway and Dreiser often placed women in

narrow roles that did not reflect Twenties expanded opportunities. Often they depicted women essentially in terms of their relationships with men. Often their limiting representations expressed defensive reactions to female sexual freedom. Daisy is irrevocably branded as an adulteress, while Caddy Compson's sexual behavior identifies her as a nymphomaniac. Roberta Alden is remembered as a morally conflicted lover, Catherine Barkley as an acquiescent mistress.

Cather's, Glasgow's and Wharton's different viewpoints made them forerunners of feminism. While their fiction explored female passion and illicit love, their female characters escaped being defined or limited by sexual transgression. In Barren Ground, Dorinda Oakley becomes a successful entrepreneur in a male world, while Milly Burden in They Stooped to Folly is independent and identifiably modern in her role as a career woman. Charlotte Lovell in "The Old Maid" is defined by the complete cessation of any sexual activity, while in My Antonia, Antonia Shimerda is pictured as a strangely asexual Earth Mother. Even when uncontrolled sexuality is criticized, as it is in A Lost Lady, it receives different treatment than in male-authored novels. Rather than being branded as an adulteress, Marian Forrester is remembered instead for her elegance, her refinement, a woman who is a civilizing force.

While Showalter saw women as alienated from their experience, Patricia Spack believed in women's ability to "dominate" their experience by "imagining it, giving it form, writing about it" (413). Indeed in the Twenties, Cather, Glasgow and Wharton frequently breathed new life into female experience

by creating female characters whose conduct repudiated tired clichés revolving around female virtue and purity, submission and dependence.

Myriam Diaz-Diocaretz admonishes women against accepting marginalizing patriarchal definitions because they reveal only "a glimpse of presupposed 'truth'" (260). Taking a cautionary stance, Diaz-Diocaretz warns that by allowing herself to be "named by a male-oriented ideology that speaks to itself," woman cedes control to and thus allows her image to be created by others (Ibid.). However, in the Twenties, and in varying degrees, Cather, Glasgow, Larsen and Wharton were already reacting against imposed definitions of womanhood, balking at accepting what a male-dominated society decreed was possible for women. By creating fictional characters who controlled their own destinies rather than relying on male confirmation, they indirectly began revising how women were viewed in society.

Toril Moi charges that even in the domain of female sexuality women are forced to operate within a phallogentric culture that "systematically denies woman access to her own pleasure" (142). In Twenties literature women were no longer denied access to erotic pleasures, and were frequently presented not as sexless but as sexual creatures. However, patriarchal values were still apparent in the differing responses of male and female writers to female sexuality. Male authors reacted with hostility, anxiety and fear to female sexuality, and in what might be termed a male backlash to female sexual freedoms, punished their heroines much more severely than did Cather, Glasgow and Wharton.

Like Showalter, Irigaray concluded that male discourse creates a misleading impression of female experience, preventing women from accurately knowing or representing themselves. According to Irigaray, for women to achieve both a dominant voice and adequate self-representation, they must recognize the female body as the source of female writing. Focusing on female physiology and the structure of the female genitals as a source for creating this distinct female voice, Irigaray also uses Marxist categories to note how women in western cultures are diminished in their relationships to men:

For woman is traditional use--value for man,
exchange--value among men. Merchandise, then....
Women are marked phallically by their fathers,
husbands, procurers. This stamp-(ing) determines
their value in sexual commerce. Woman is never
anything more than the scene of more or less rival
exchange between two men, even when they are
competing for the possession of mother-earth. (105)

Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva concluded that women must first confront male oppression of female sexuality, and then struggle to redefine women's roles. Feminists believe that Western culture systematically represses women's experiences. Thus recognizing and then challenging patriarchal repression can be seen as first steps in the struggle to achieve accurate representation of female experience.

Reacting to theories of language and culture which implied subordination of female sexuality, Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva encouraged women to resist Lacan's Law of the Father through the

process of "jouissance"--the enjoyment of sexual pleasure.

Irigaray further recognized female sexuality for its plural and autoerotic qualities, observing that, "A woman 'touches herself' constantly without anyone being able to forbid her to do so, for her sex is composed of two lips which embrace continually Her sexuality always at least double is in fact plural"

(100,102). However, if this were true, then female sexuality could never be denied or repressed. Irigaray also concluded that "For a woman to arrive at the point where she can enjoy her pleasure as a woman, a long detour by the analysis of various systems that oppress her is certainly necessary" (105).

In the Twenties, novels written by Cather, Glasgow, Larsen and Wharton had unforeseen consequences, unwittingly fulfilling imperatives against male oppression. Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva had glorified female writing as an alternative to the male literary tradition. While Cather, Glasgow, Larsen and Wharton did not so much glorify women's writing, they did celebrate expanded female opportunity, using their novels to help redefine what was possible for women. In the freer Twenties moral climate, they created fictional women who attempted to overcome their marginalized status, rather than submitting to a set of culturally created standards. While male novelists such as Dreiser, Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway were trying to define women in ways that would keep patriarchal structures intact, female authors such as Cather, Glasgow, Larsen and Wharton were creating narratives in which fictional women often subverted those structures, defined themselves in their own (rather than male) terms, and took control over their lives.

Cixous', Irigaray's, Kristeva's and Moi's works are essentially abstract. Their writings have philosophical underpinnings, and are predicated on advanced knowledge of linguistics and psychoanalysis. Basically theoretical, they contain little of the cultural or historical grounding important to my study. Moreover, their insistence on a distinctly female voice is open to question. As Joyce Carol Oates argues, "what matters in serious art is ultimately the skill of execution and the uniqueness of vision the serious artistic voice is one of individual style, and it is sexless" (10, 11).

I plan to approach the issue of female sexuality in novels of the Twenties through a cultural history which will record and analyze moral and cultural currents influencing women's lives. My study will examine how the depiction of female character is shaped by the author's gender, and how gender roles were gradually redefined in the literature of the Twenties. Instead of the works of Cixous, Irigaray or Kristeva, I view the works of such critics as Judith Fetterley and Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert as ultimately more useful and relevant to my study. I plan to refer to their criticism because of the practical, rather than theoretical application to Twenties texts.

For the purpose of my study, I am assuming that texts are authored by gendered writers who are influenced by their historical, social and cultural contexts. I believe in the idea of an "author" as a prerequisite for literary analysis, although I realize that the finished text may not necessarily reflect what the author intended, or may reflect a compromise between the author's intention and the available linguistic and cultural

materials. I admit that pinpointing the author's intentions is difficult. When authors work consciously they may or may not achieve their intended goals, and when they work unconsciously their texts may reveal intentions of which they are unaware. Still, regardless of an author's intentions, texts frequently reflect the prevailing culture and controversies of the times. In the Twenties, changing female sexual practices associated with growing female independence and female sexual power was one of these important issues. In my study I plan to examine the images of sexually active women in Twenties fiction in order to reconsider and revise how women were viewed during that turbulent era.

In "When We Dead Awaken," Adrienne Rich defined the revision process as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (35). Writing about the significance of such an approach, Rich explained that the act of revision

is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society. A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living [and] how we imagine ourselves (35)

Keeping Rich's words in mind, let us begin first with a

cultural history of the Twenties, and then go on to discover how gender issues influenced the era's fiction, particularly in the way women were viewed.

Chapter I

A Cultural History of the Twenties

Seen retrospectively, the Twenties were lighthearted years sandwiched between the cheerless periods of World War I's destruction and the Great Depression's ruin. Frequently remembered as an era preoccupied by sex, Twenties upheaval was to a large part affected by what Frederick Lewis Allen aptly named a "revolution in manners and morals" (88-122). This revolution particularly affected young, white, middle and upper-class women.

In the Twenties, as in any other era, there were multiple and often competing sexual realities for women. It had long been understood that young, poor and working class women, as well as black women were "freely available for sexual use," in particular by upper-class white males (Lerner 57). Within the working class, circumstances were different as well. Working class women viewed sexual liaisons and marriage as opportunities to better their lives. Moreover, reactions to issues of premarital sex and illegitimate children were "less restrictive and retributive" than the "'better'" classes (Ibid.) Because of these social realities, the struggle between new mores in conflict with traditional concepts of masculinity, femininity and morality was fought essentially within the large American middle class (Yellis 47). This paper focuses primarily, but not exclusively, on the white, middle and upper-class women who were in the forefront of the so-called sexual revolution.

The high spirited Twenties succeeded in capturing the American imagination. Sexual and cultural transformation emerged

together. Flappers and movie stars became ideals as well as sex symbols. Prohibition, speakeasies and smoking became part of a new sense of sexual adventure. The automobile symbolized the decade's accelerated pace as well as providing an unchaperoned spot for necking and petting. Mythologized as youth-oriented, celebrated for fast and loose tempos, the Twenties were, above all, a decade of change.

In 1931, F. Scott Fitzgerald, a leading Twenties spokesman, recalled his high hopes for the decade. "The uncertainties of 1919 were over--there seemed little doubt about what was going to happen--American was going on the greatest, gaudiest spree in history..." (Crack Up 87). Fitzgerald's expectations were filled with youthful exuberance, optimism and possibility. In contrast Malcolm Cowley saw a conservatism which resulted in the Prohibition Amendment of 1920, and situations in which women seen smoking publicly were arrested as prostitutes. Until Harding's election in 1921, Cowley recalled in Exile's Return, the Twenties initially foreshadowed not a revolutionary era but "a period of social and moral reaction" (5-6).

The Twenties have been seen as an era of "lost orientations, new manners," and "self-conscious fashions," (Bradbury 11). Variouslly branded as the "Jazz Age," the "Roaring Twenties," "the Ballyhoo Years," or the era of the "Lost Generation," the Twenties were portrayed as flamboyant and iconoclastic, a decade during which many Americans feverishly explored "new tastes" (Ibid. 12). However, not all Americans embraced change. Some, of course, did reach eagerly for new experiences; others yearned for a secure prewar past impossible to restore.

By 1920, for the first time in U.S. history, fewer people lived in rural areas than in urban towns and cities of 2,500 or more, as defined by the U.S. Census. (There were 54,158,000 urban dwellers, as opposed to 51,553,000 rural Americans.) As Americans moved from small towns to large metropolises, rural and city values frequently clashed.

At the same time, ideas about women's rights to sexual experimentation spread from the bohemian Greenwich Village culture, and were popularized on college campuses, High schools, and Junior High Schools throughout the country. Soon the "whole of middle-class America" from Seattle to Middletown, seemed to be "going Greenwich Village" (Cowley, Exile 65).

Middle and upper-class parents tried to cope with the complex and often confusing changes initiated by their sons and daughters. A Middletown mother revealed her anxieties about shifting standards of behavior:

You see other people being more lenient and you think perhaps that it is the best way, but you are afraid to do anything very different from what your mother did for fear you may leave out something essential or do something wrong. I would give anything to know what is wisest, but I don't know what to do. (Lynd 143)

In contrast, a college co-ed at Ohio State University confidently asked: "Are we as bad as we're painted? We are. We do all the things that our mothers, fathers, aunts and uncles do not sanction, and we do them knowingly" (As cited in Fass 307).

For cultural historian William Leuchtenburg, the Twenties were a contradictory era in which "despair and joyous abandon"

opposed each other (271-72). The troubled mood emerging after the war reflected disappointment that a war begun with high purpose had ended as an apparently futile exercise.¹ Expectations that the United States would operate as a beneficent international peace keeper had proven illusory. Believing they had been deceived, some Americans washed their hands of any responsibility for the post-war world. In 1920, John Carter described the war's effects on his generation, writing that they felt "disillusionized, and, . . . to a certain extent brutalized, by the cataclysm" that had been engendered by an older generation's "complacent folly" (302).

As the United States had isolated itself by declining to participate in the League of Nations, some young Americans also looked inward, feeling accountable only to themselves. Some had been uprooted from provincial settings, and during their wartime service exposed to liberating standards quite different from America's rigid morality. Men who were soldiers and ambulance drivers, and women who served as nurses and munitions drivers, had seen and done things they had never done before, things that had distinctly "sexual implications" (Gilbert, "Soldiers" 284). As they recovered from the war, upon returning home, many were ready to be distracted by entertainment, novelty and change. Carter wrote that he and his peers had been "forced to live in an atmosphere of 'tomorrow we die . . .'" (303). Now their response was to drink and be "merry" (Ibid.; see also Allen 94). Writing in The Literary Digest, a magazine of middle class opinion, another observer asked in 1927, "Can you be surprized if a generation robbed of its youth, with its ideals empty as blown

bubbles around it, turned for a time to a mood of pessimistic cynicism which found a sad relief in mere pleasure ?" ("Why Youth is Cynical" 32).

Young Americans remaining at home were also influenced by the war. In 1937, Malcolm Cowley recalled wartime influences on sexual conduct:

All standards were relaxed in the storm-sultry wartime atmosphere. It wasn't only the boys of my age, those serving in the army, who were transformed by events: their sisters and younger brothers were affected in a different fashion. . . . it was possible for boys and girls to do what they pleased. For the first time they could go to dances unchaperoned, drive the family car and park it by the roadside while they made love, and come home after midnight, a little tipsy, with nobody to reproach them in the hallway. (Exile 63)

In 1928 V.F. Calverton argued that the moral climate had become sexually permissive even before the war, claiming that the twenties merely expressed "the final turn of the revolution" (iii).² Cultural historians likewise have linked radical moral change and the new sexual atmosphere to prewar rather than postwar years.³ Even fabled petting parties seem to have existed earlier than the twenties. Fitzgerald's seminal This Side of Paradise, partially based on his experiences at Princeton beginning in 1913, traces the petting party to 1915 (See also Crack Up 14-15). This book publicly declared to previously oblivious parents that their children had been more sexually active than they ever could have believed, and it "caused a

shudder to run down the national spine" (Allen 91)

Changes in sexual behavior had their roots in prewar times, but the war gave momentum to those changes. However, sexuality, especially young women's sexuality, underwent radical transformation in the Twenties, advancing at, what Calverton called, a "maddening gallop" (31). As young, middle-class Americans created a subculture in which unparalleled sexual experimentation and personal freedom played important roles, they led the way not only in sexual conduct, but in fashion and lifestyle as well.

Women's evolving images, both in the media and the American imagination, provided evidence that radical social change had occurred, and the moral revolution's predominant feminine emphasis generated considerable discussion. Writing in "Current History" in 1923, Alyse Gregory commented on the uproar over women's moral laxness. She noted that despite reactionary outbursts, there had been discernible changes in the prevailing "Anglo-Saxon attitude toward the chastity of women" (295). In 1924, Beatrice M. Hinkle, writing about the new morality, cited women's demands to partake in "forbidden experiences," their "open defiance" of tradition, and their intentions to achieve "a reality in their relations with men that heretofore had been lacking" (543). V.F. Calverton, acknowledging that women were appropriating "sex liberties" previously reserved for men, complained that female virtue had "lost its spell" (22).

In contrast to unprecedented sexual and social change, a relative political calm blanketed the United States after the war, turning America into a country "curiously lacking in events" (Bradbury 11). American involvement in governmental issues

diminished while self-absorption in personal affairs increased (Hoffman 99). As The United States became increasingly secular and materialistic, and less God fearing, its religious institutions were no longer as influential as they once had been.⁴

Spending habits were transformed, as Americans found themselves living with evolving economic and social structures. Twenties technological developments complemented, perhaps even superseded, social and moral change. For one cultural historian the Twenties were characterized by efforts to enhance communication, a search for "knowledge and experience and the effective use of both" (Susman 120). As work opportunities were transformed by new technologies, so were modes of entertainment and information distribution. Middle-class Americans became avid consumers, the first generation to savor leisure time. They listened to radio programs, went to the movies, and took rides in their new automobiles. Many diverted themselves with harmless activities and crazes such as Mah Jong, crossword puzzles, and golf, and praised themselves in the style of Emil Coue that "Day by day in every way" they were "getting better and better" (Allen 83).

Despite the general optimism, Americans were living and breathing a cultural paradox in the Twenties, uneasy with the changes they were simultaneously committing themselves to and apprehensive about renouncing values that had shaped their lives. (Leuchtenburg 271-72). Postwar disenchantment and the loss of a stable moral structure made change seem inevitable, but could not stop opposing opinions from being voiced. The Catholic

Archbishop of the Ohio diocese warned against the "toddle," the "shimmy," and "bare female shoulders," while the Woman's Auxiliary of the Episcopal Church conducted nationwide meetings with girls to consider the "problem of 'upholding standards'" ("Younger Generation" 10). A New York judge called the younger generation "sex mad" (Ibid. 61). In the South, the University of Florida's president wrote about college co-eds: "The low-cut gowns, the rolled hose and short skirts are born of the Devil and his angels, and are carrying the present and future generations to social chaos and destruction" (Ibid.)

Young Americans gravitating toward self-indulgent practices prompted staunch moralists to try to preserve established values. They attacked movies and books considered too sensational, their conflicts with adherents of the new morality both "bitter" and "extensive" (Mowry, Twenties 1). Subtle opposition to manners that deviated from tradition was reflected in Emily Post's Guidebook to Etiquette. Hostility toward jazz's erotic effects was voiced as early as 1921. Columnists for the primarily middle class house-wives' magazine, The Ladies Home Journal upbraided jazz orchestras for lowering moral standards (McMahon, "Jazz" 34). There were complaints about jazz's "wriggling movement and sensuous stimulation," and its "direct appeal to the sensory center" (McMahon, "Morals" 13).

Allen imparts a sense of what it was like to witness the disintegration of traditional moral structures:

With the old order of things had gone a set of values which had given richness and meaning to life, and substitute values were not easily found. If morality

was dethroned, what was to take its place? . . . If romantic love was dethroned, what was to take its place? Sex?" (121)

For some Americans, the answer to this question was a resounding "yes!" Others, troubled by their society's lack of moral stability, sought to vent their frustrations and assign blame for such alarming change. Their target was American youth's brazen ways.

The Twenties sexual upheaval was initially "a middle-class children's revolt" (Cowley, Exile 64). Although people of all ages had been troubled by the war's after-effects, young people's reactions were strongest. Rejecting prewar conduct and convictions as inconsequential, they labeled their elders as hypocrites and "frauds," and in seeking truth negated the moral authority their elders thought was due them (Hamilton 298). In 1948, John Peale Bishop, Fitzgerald's Princeton classmate, summarized youthful disillusion in the Twenties: "The war made traditional morality unacceptable: it did not annihilate it; it revealed its immediate inadequacy. So that at its end, the survivors were left to face, as best they could a world without values" (304).

Still the younger generation was not without its defenders. One commentator cautioned against vilifying an entire generation just because of a "few black sheep" ("Dreadful" 18). Another contemporary observer believed the younger generation had been falsely scapegoated, while the older generation had been let off the hook. In 1926, James Truslow Adams wrote about the absurdity of believing that an adult world of "mature men and women" could

be "set topsy-turvy by young persons but recently emancipated from the nursery" (577). Notwithstanding such ardent defenses, the younger generation's reputation for licentiousness persisted, and as young Americans restlessly pursued new ideals and tried to refashion the world according to new tastes, they were accused of undermining the social order.

Believing they had been deceived by past pretensions, young men and women who were in junior high school, high school and college sought to counteract, or even remedy Victorian hypocrisy by experimenting with new sexual behaviors. Cowley evokes the period's youthful suspicions:

At seventeen we were disillusioned and weary. . . . we had come to question almost everything we were taught at home and in school. . . . Morality, which we identified with chasteness, was a lie told to our bodies. (Exile 18)

The Dean of Women at Morningside College, Sioux City, Iowa writes about laxer morals for even younger boys and girls:

The war has played havoc with our ethical standards, and after four years of killing it is only natural. It is certainly responsible for part of the riotous license found among students in the junior high schools. The number of cases of immorality is appalling. ("Younger Generation" 61)

When female virtue and other past ideals crumbled, young men and women rationalized their excesses as legitimate responses to their once peaceful, now destroyed childhood world. They shook off war-time trauma, wanting only "To live, to live intensely, to

live furiously" (Calverton 17). Unlike their middle-class parents, whose moral outlook had been formed by Victorian conventions, the young had little allegiance to outmoded sexual mores. Committed to "'terrible honesty,'" they "wanted not fewer ethics but more searching ones" (Douglas 33). Judge Benjamin Lindsey, commenting on youthful rebellion against outworn moral standards, conceded the uniqueness of their revolt. He warned, "Youth has always been rebellious But this is different Now the gun's loaded" (54).

Many historians have tried to discover precisely why younger Americans were allowed to set the Twenties' social pace. Parental guilt over high war casualty rates and subsequent relief that their own children had gone unharmed may have accounted for uncurbed permissive behavior (Cashman 58). Youthful cynicism could have originated with the realization that "Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene," and irrelevant (Hemingway, Farewell 185). Perhaps American youth thought themselves uniquely capable of determining "new standards of authenticity" (Aldridge, "Afterthoughts" 72) or perhaps jaded attitudes were deliberate affectations, excuses for shedding "moral commitments" (Hoffman 100-101). Whatever the reason, new youthful attitudes came to symbolize the decline of stable values, epitomizing "both what America had lost and what America had become" (Fass 28).

Sexual activity gradually increased among young people. In Middletown, Robert and Helen Merrell Lynd investigated the "trends" of life in a small but typical American city (3). In their study, they reported that forty-eight percent of junior and

senior boys and fifty-one percent of junior and senior girls agreed with the statement "'Nine out of every ten boys and girls of high school age have 'petting parties'" (138). In a questionnaire given to high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors, forty-four percent of the boys, and thirty-four percent of the girls answering the Lynd's questionnaire admitted they had taken part in "petting parties" (Lynd 139). At a 1925 conference of college girls from the mid-west Eleanor Rowland Wembridge reported that upper-class co-eds were advising younger co-eds "to learn temperance in petting, not abstinence," warning the younger women to draw a line between petting and "actual illicit relations" (176, 177). Wembridge also concluded from her discussions that sexual mores of the times demanded that girls should not be "too priggish to respond" to boys' advances (Ibid. 177).

Indeed, as young women pursued freedom and fulfillment their more permissive dating habits began to include kissing, necking and petting. Lloyd Morris humorously describes liberated sexual behaviors of the Twenties dating scene: "the word 'neck' ceased to be a noun; abruptly became a verb; immediately lost all anatomical precision" (As cited in Leuchtenburg 170). Once necking and petting lost their stigma, the double standard's traditional morality became vulnerable and subject to challenge.

Although men and women in their teens and twenties originated petting parties, licentious sexual behavior soon attracted the older generation's enthusiastic attention. Remembering 1922, Fitzgerald writes "That was the peak of the younger generation, for though the Jazz Age continued, it became

less and less an affair of youth" (Crack Up 15). Allen writes of the older generation, "They saw their juniors exploring the approaches to the forbidden land of sex, and presently they began to play with the idea of doing a little experimenting of their own" (95). In a surprising role reversal, older women modeled themselves on women young enough to be their daughters. Young women may have popularized the flapper's liberalized attitudes and behaviors, but their mothers kept them going.

Allen remembers how the decade's moral fabric slowly disintegrated, with "men and women of every age in every part of the country" casting longing eyes on new sexual behaviors (94). Despite Allen's claims, the Twenties sexual revolution was not as widespread as popularly believed. Licentious moral conduct associated with the jazz age reflected the behavior of only the "upper tenth of [the] nation" (Fitzgerald, Crack Up 21). Twenties crazes and fashions were accepted on a superficial level by many middle-class Americans, but beneath the surface they continued living conservative lives similar to the middle class existence portrayed in Sinclair Lewis' Babbitt (where there is, however, a Bohemian set, and Babbitt's mini-rebellion and extra-marital affair). Moreover, despite a freer society, there was a "great supply of women in the middling range," such as Lewis' Carol Kennicott, and the psychological misfits of Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio, who were unable to find the expression for which they yearned (Stevenson 126).

Young single women's more liberated behavior and disregard for past proprieties threatened to disrupt traditional practices. Concerns of sexual promiscuity were raised as women entered

sexual relationships with less hesitation. Allen recalled: "One began to hear of young girls, intelligent and well-born, who had spent week-ends with men before marriage" (116). Sexual license grew in this atmosphere, toppling Victorian self-righteousness, weakening the moral order, and becoming for some "the most powerful bogeyman of the twenties" (Fass 21).

Following the war, Americans became increasingly familiar with Freudian doctrine which linked sexual fulfillment to mental health and happiness. A 1927 article in Vanity Fair reflects Freud's influence by warning against the dangers of repressing "normal instincts and desires" (As cited in Hoffman 111). Although Freud cautioned that repressed desires were dangerous, he did not advocate permissive behavior. Instead he proposed a more "limited hedonism" (Hale 342). But by 1920 Freud's scientific theories had been popularized, reinterpreted and misinterpreted. As young Americans started distorting his words, Freud's name became a household word synonymous with licentious sexual conduct.

Freudian ideas about sex and gender were everywhere. In this climate of identifiably modern sexual thought, it became possible for men to think of women more in terms of sexual pleasure, and less as domestic and maternal figures. Women had previously been seen as civilizing guardians of morality and the family. Now women began to assume new erotic roles. Sexuality was gradually being considered a basic life-force, important not only to men, but to women as well. Sexual expression became synonymous with well-being, while mental health was linked to satisfied sexual desire. Sexual inhibition was associated with

unhappiness, and sexual repression was viewed as tantamount to being old-fashioned and out of touch. In 1929, Edward Sapir wrote that sexually free Americans gloried in "'sin'" because it gave them opportunities to "challenge . . . the very notion of repression" (416). Malcolm Cowley further explained: "we are unhappy because we are maladjusted, and maladjusted because we are repressed. If our individual repressions can be removed. . . then we can adjust ourselves to any situation" (Exile 60-61).

Sex permeated Twenties culture, slowly changing societal attitudes toward sex. As sexual taboos were dismantled, women began shedding sexual inhibitions. Sex and procreation were no longer inextricably linked; women and sex no longer were exclusively associated with prostitution and deviance; and women's reach for sexual satisfaction was no longer considered extreme. Gradually, female sexuality became part of an evolving social climate in which eroticism was visible and had a positive value; sex was associated with leisure and self-expression; and women's interest in sexual matters was permissible (D'Emilio 233).

Margaret Sanger's message in Woman and the New Race (1920) helped create and articulate the Twenties identifiably modern sexual climate. Sanger's book advocated fertility control for women through contraception rather than abstinence, and educated women how to prevent pregnancy, the consequence of unprotected sex. She was insistent about a woman's "right to own and control her own body," believing that unwanted children drained women's energy and adversely affected family life (94). Information about contraception became more readily available, supporting a

more permissive environment in which women could enjoy risk-free sex. With the diminishing fear of scandal, shame, disease and pregnancy, the taboo against premarital sex became difficult to enforce.

As risks associated with female sexuality diminished, women's ideas about their own sexuality changed too. Commenting on the sexual climate, Phyllis Blanchard and Carolyn Manasses noted that modern Twenties women had "awakened to the fact that they [were] sexual beings"(196). Intrigued by the possibilities of risk-free sex, they wanted to learn as much as they could about contraception as fast as they could (Lynds 123-6). With this new knowledge came the potential to dismantle male created stereotypes of female virtue. For married women, the sexual revolution occurred within marital confines as women began demanding "equalized rights" (Fass 72) and "erotic enjoyment" (D'Emilio 241). Single women's sexual behavior also changed. In greater numbers they dared to experiment with sex (although still oriented toward marriage).⁵

Open discussion of sex encouraged surveys which showed changes in women's sexual practices. A contemporary study by Blanchard and Manassas presented young single women's more liberated attitudes toward sexuality, while the Lynds' study showed that if premarital sex was not a norm, the "petting party" certainly was (138). Other studies of female sexuality further documented women's changing sexual habits, although these changes reflected the sexual practices of a minority of American women.

Despite shifting standards and the growing acceptance of female eroticism, sexual habits were too deeply ingrained to

change instantaneously. While tolerance toward sexually active women grew, there were also unspoken limits defining what was sexually permissible. Petting became a kind of sexual modus operandi, becoming "an end in itself," and to some degree a "substitute for more advanced sexual activities" (Blanchard and Manasses 69). Often young women distinguished between "the exploratory activities of the petting party" and the "complete yielding of sexual favors to men" (Ibid. 70). In their study of young, single women Blanchard and Manasses found that 92% of girls "classed extra-marital sex relations as immoral or unwise" (Ibid.). By the 1930s, almost two-thirds of the women in Dorothy Bromley's and Florence Britten's study admitted they would consider premarital sexual intercourse, but only in a relationship marked by "much affection" (5). Male attitudes changed too. Among men, a woman's virginity was considered desirable but not absolutely necessary for marriage, compatibility of taste and temperament being more important (Blanchard and Manasses 238). Indeed, premarital sex was still far from being encouraged or sanctioned, but it was no longer considered an outrageous female act. Instead it was gaining slow acceptance in discreet, marriage oriented relationships. Blanchard and Manasses sum up their findings in the sexual relationships of unmarried women and the men they expected to marry:

With a knowledge of birth control . . . they see no reason for denying themselves or their lovers sexual satisfaction prior to the wedding ceremony. But this is widely divergent from bestowing approval upon

episodic sex unions which both parties admit from the first to be casual and fleeting. (239)

Changing sexual behavior was a fact, though rarely as promiscuous as writers of the era showed. Kissing and petting openly and frequently occurred, and outmoded concepts of female purity no longer dominated or prevented physical affection as a form for expressing love. These changes, however small, coupled with women's growing sexual assertiveness alarmed and threatened Twenties' men. Beatrice Hinkle commented in 1924 that these changes made men "bewildered accessories to the overthrow of their long and firmly organized control of women's sexual conduct" (541).

In 1929, in one of the earliest sex surveys, Katherine B. Davis questioned unmarried, female college graduates about contraception. She hoped to use their views as an "index" to the developing sexually liberated climate as it applied to educated women (329). She found that of 1,200 unmarried women, 84.6% approved of marital sex without procreation, (357) and the figure jumped to 89.7% when these women were asked if they endorsed birth control within marriage (372). Similarly, Blanchard and Manasses found 81% of unmarried young women answering their questionnaire also intended to use contraception to limit family size (182).

Compared with the usually slow pace of cultural change, Lewis Terman believed that women were forging ahead with "extraordinary rapidity" when it came to participating in premarital sexual experiences. Like other sex researchers, Terman hoped to prove that a new sexual climate really did exist

by finding a correlation between date of birth and incidence of premarital intercourse among women.

In his 1938 study of 777 already married middle-class women, he noted a "marked relationship" between premarital intercourse and date of birth, with a growing number of younger women having pre-marital sexual experiences earlier and more frequently than ever before (321). Among women born before 1890, 86.5% had been virgins at marriage. For women born between 1890 and 1900, 74% were virgins until they were married. Among those born between 1900 and 1909, the figure dropped to 49%, and after 1910, the figure plummeted even further to 31.7%. Of women born before 1890, 11.6% admitted to having intercourse with their future spouses, while 65% born in 1910 or later admitted having intercourse with their future husbands (321-23). Obviously, the Victorian belief that considered premarital sex sinful "in theory if not practice," was being challenged, while at the same time premarital chastity was becoming a lesser requisite for marriage (Terman 319)

Kinsey's study of 8,000 women reinforced and strengthened Terman's conclusions about changed female sexual practices for women born after 1900. Kinsey attributed liberated female sexual practices to increased acceptance of petting and premarital coitus among the sexually active younger generation. He found the "major change" in sexual practices occurred in the generation born between 1900 and 1909, who were in their teens and early twenties during World War I and the Twenties (244,299). Kinsey found premarital petting was more widespread for women born after 1900. By thirty-five, 80% of women born in the decade before

1900 had had some premarital petting experience. Of those born between 1900 and 1909, the figure grew to 91%. He also discovered that the younger generation began petting at younger ages. Women who had been born before 1900 were eighteen before half of them had had some kind of premarital petting experience. In women born after 1900, half had petted before they even reached sixteen (242-44). Kinsey found that women born after 1900 were more than twice as likely to have experienced premarital sex as women born before 1900. Among twenty-five year old unmarried women born before 1900, 14% admitted to having premarital sex. Of those born between 1900 and 1909, the figure jumped to 36% (298-99). Young men turned to prostitutes half as often as their pre-war counterparts. Instead their sexual experiences were more frequently with women from their own class (Lynd 113-14), who had become more enlightened" and "emancipated" (Calverton 23).

By 1920, the New Woman was a fixture on the American scene. Autonomous and self-sufficient, the new woman was capable of managing her life, creating her own social role and choosing her destiny. However, the New Woman's actions created a breach in traditional male-female relationships. As the balance of power changed and male dominance seemed less certain, the New Woman in possession of more freedom, particularly sexual freedom, was increasingly perceived as a threat to the male status quo. O'Neill argues that while contemporary sexologists claimed they wanted women to be "sexually free and sexually more responsive," the reality was that "few of them really desired women to act in society as men did" (311).

Many New Women were feminists, exultant at having achieved

suffrage. With women's suffrage granted, there was general consensus that a major political goal had been realized. Their success, accomplished after a long struggle, made feminists optimistic about future prospects. Ironically however, at the moment of greatest victory, organized feminism began to fragment and fall into disarray, lacking a powerful issue capable of capturing women's imaginations and energies. The energy fueling the feminist movement had burned out, while its glamour and allure had become less appealing. In 1921, the first Miss America Beauty contest marked "the triumph of the fashion culture over feminism" (Banner, Beauty 16). The Miss America contest provided Americans with a visible symbol of a feminine ideal, while also promoting what was to become American women's obsession with beauty (Ibid.). O'Neill pointedly remarks that while social feminists had worked hard to give women new freedoms, their aim was "to free women from sexual bondage, not to promote eroticism" (295).

The feminist movement's legacy did continue to color women's lives. The activist desire for freedom, equality and independence translated into a lifestyle where women demanded the freedom to emulate men. Sexual expression and experimentation became a goal for a small, but highly visible group of young women. These distinctly modern women repudiated Victorian conventions and traditional femininity, expressing their rebellion in altered dress and behavior. They were called flappers, and their frenetic behavior, for some, "signaled the downfall of society" (Mowry, Twenties 173).⁶

The flapper's visibility occasioned contemporary comment.

In comparison to social feminists, Charlotte Perkins Gilman viewed flappers as self-centered pleasure seekers involved in "a cult of 'shallow self-indulgence'" ("Vanguard" 353). Dorothy Dunbar Bromley justifies the move away from social feminism, explaining that feminism had "become a term for opprobrium," suggesting the drabness of women "who wore flat feels and had very little feminine charm" (552). Young modern women spurned activist concerns having social and political ramifications and concentrated instead on personal grooming and appearance.

Although there was debate over how profound the flapper's influence really was, flapper fashions and behavior drew heated comments. Hugh McMenamin, Rector of the Catholic Cathedral in Denver, denounced the flapper's "brazenness," "immodesty," and "license" (30), while Anthony M. Ludovici complained about female "laxity" (25). Edward Sapir wrote about "the gradual deterioration of personality" among young women adopting "new sophisticated sex standards" (420), while George Jean Nathan wrote disapprovingly about masculinized women who "act like men, talk like men, think like men" and even try to appropriate male sexual freedoms (242). Thomas Arkle Clark called the unchaperoned flapper "cruder" and "less polished," (517) while Gina Lomboso Ferrero insisted that despite new freedoms women were "less contented" than before (491). Flappers' sexually permissive reputations became contemporary lore, but they reflected only "the most sensational aspect" of women's "generally altered status" (Leuchtenburg 159; Degler, "Women" 198).

Not all commentators criticized flapper behavior. Dr. Katherine Manion called the modern flapper a "healthy minded"

girl, and approvingly wrote: "The girl of today who swims, plays golf, bobs her hair, goes without corsets, wears flat heels and takes long hikes is something to be mighty proud of" ("Courting" 35). A forty year-old woman applauds the new shorter dress lengths popularized by the flappers, writing that long skirts had caused her "much physical and mental misery" because of the "confounded skirt getting in the way." She adds "skirts can't be too short for me" ("Today's Morals" 34). Still another commentator acknowledges women's changed status noting that for "the girls of today" petting, smoking, and drinking are "ordinary parts" of female life ("Case" 42).

The flapper's new look and larger than life presence contrasted with the previously popular, turn-of-the-century Gibson Girl. Like her predecessor, the flapper reflected current feminine ideals, but all similarities ended there. The flapper was boyish, single and flighty, while the Gibson girl was lovingly maternal and steadfast. The Gibson girl was pure, the flapper sexy. At the century's start social feminists such as Jane Addams were idealized as role models. By the Twenties, the flapper had pushed such representations aside, and replaced them with her own giddy image (Ryan 153-4; Banner, Beauty 154-74).

The flapper was the Twenties version of youth, sex and style. She became a model for free spirited middle-class women eager to challenge traditional notions of femininity, morality and sexuality. Her selfish behavior offended, angered and shocked traditional Americans. She was described by one Twenties writer:

This new girl, with all her emptiness of ideas and

effusiveness of emotions is a revolutionary outgrowth on the feminine scene Her speech, her dress, her gestures are outspoken evidences of the nature of her insurrection. The spread of her influence has been infectious. (Calverton 12)

Still another Twenties writer defended the flapper's behavior:

Of course a flapper is proud of her nerve--she is not even afraid of calling it by its right name. She is shameless, selfish and honest, but at the same time she considers these three attributes virtues.

Why not? (Hooper 13)

The flapper's appearance expressed new comfort and ease, and her behavior, conspicuously different from previous generations indicated the disappearance of "a spectrum of taboos" (Degler, "Women" 198). Flappers cut off their braids and bobbed their hair, much like the young flapper in Fitzgerald's story "Bernice Bobs Her Hair." They checked their corsets at dances to keep from being called "ironsides," and finally stopped wearing them altogether (Hall 773), causing one columnist to comment "the corset is as dead as the dodo's grandfather" (Bliven 65). Unlike their feminist predecessors, flappers "struggled not against social problems" but against "social conventions" (O'Neill 251).

Before the Twenties, smoking had been considered immoral for women although acceptable for men. Cowley recalls that even at the decade's start women had been "arrested and charged with prostitution" simply because they had been seen smoking cigarettes in public (Exile 6). But as the Twenties progressed, young middle class women began smoking more openly and with

little fear of punishment. (Allen 109). Gradually, smoking became a proving ground where women could test their new freedoms and equality with men. Ultimately it was associated with the sexy, glamorous look some women craved.

While smoking was no crime during the Twenties, drinking was. The Volstead Act had made drinking illegal, and its influences on morality were far-reaching. Once Prohibition became law, bootleggers distilled liquor and sold it on the black market. Drinking was no longer a "masculine prerogative" but "one shared by both sexes together" (Allen 99). Tantalized by the forbidden, men were known to stash hip flasks in their pockets; women were seen gulping down cocktails; both began frequenting speakeasies and attending cocktail parties. Female drinking loosened female sexual inhibitions, and according to Judge Ben Lindsey, caused girls to "lose their judgment in Folly Lane" (51).

Previously forbidden male habits such as drinking and smoking gradually became more socially acceptable for women, helping to crumble traditional barriers between the sexes. But arguably the biggest shock to the Twenties psyche was women's exploration of sexual freedoms already enjoyed by men. Of course, the double standard still existed but in a weakened and transformed state. In 1924 Isabel Leavenworth had openly urged women to deny past notions of virtue, and to show "scorn for the 'respect' our feminine predecessors thought was their due" (44). But deeply ingrained manners often resist change, and, "hoary, old ideas" about women's roles persisted (Seabury 517). However, in this openly sexual time, the tyranny of such gender

stereotypes was finally open to challenge (Yellis 47).

Other female habits were troublesome too, and suggested sexual license. Flappers loved dancing, and their suggestive movements on the dance floor were shocking. As slow waltzes gave way to more frenetic dance styles, flappers danced physically demanding and provocative Charlestons. Young men and women dancing cheek to cheek prompted a contemporary observer to describe their dance style as "the maximum of motion in the minimum of space" with partners "clinging to each other in order to move at all" (Hall 773). Flappers rode in unchaperoned, closed automobiles, dispensing sexual favors to men who shared their fun-loving, adventurous spirit. Immortalized in John Held Jr.'s famous drawings, the flapper was motion incarnate, an exaggerated stick figure whose flying arms and legs embodied nervous energy.

The flapper's youthful appearance included a fashionable head to toe new look. Flappers wore cloche hats pulled low over their foreheads. The vogue for short bobbed haircuts like actress Gloria Swanson's (and in imitation of dancer Irene Castle's hairdo in the previous decade) were associated with promiscuity (Yellis 45). Make-up included powdered noses, arched eyebrows, and lipsticked bow-shaped mouths. Curveless silhouettes were achieved by breast binding. Paradoxically, in an era alive to women's sexual potential, the flapper's boyish figure became the aesthetic ideal.

In retrospect, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's complaints about the flapper look sound like parody. She describes the flapper's appearance:

. . . plucked eyebrows obscured by hats worn like the caricatures of an old clothes man, and legs whose scanty shelter is a skirt. . . far too tight to allow them to do more than twitter along the sidewalk like an active clothespin; and if the skirt did allow of any grace and speed, the shoes would forbid it.

("Vanguard" 353)

Dress styles were derived from sports clothes and their rising hemlines allowed easy movement. Dresses were low waisted, simply cut, tight and straight, and diverted attention from the bust line. When the weather was hot, stockings were discarded altogether. In the evening, necklines were lower and sleeves shorter (Bliven 65-66).

While these new styles were adopted by women throughout the country, in New Jersey, South Carolina, Kansas, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Utah, Virginia and Ohio, conservative state legislatures were actively trying to regulate female dress ("Younger Generation" 10). In 1921 The New York American noted a pending bill in Utah to fine and imprison women if their skirts were more than three inches above the ankle. The Virginia legislature tried to pass a bill decreeing that no woman could wear dresses that showed more than three inches of their throats, while Ohio tried to ban dresses accentuating women's bodies and those made of transparent fabric (Ibid.).

In 1925, Bruce Bliven wrote about a fictional nineteen year old, "Flapper Jane" (65-67). Citing her influence on fashion, he described the flapper look as so "universal," that it was already being worn by "Jane's sisters and her cousins and her

aunts," by women "three times Jane's age" who "look ten years older; by those twice her age who look a hundred years older" (65).

Not every American woman aspired to be a flapper, but the flapper's influence on fashion was widespread. Even the bastion of respectable female fashion, The Ladies Home Journal, carried a style column that, as the Twenties progressed, centered increasingly on voguish flapper styles to be worn by virtually every age, size and shape. Despite the appearance of sexual liberation, the revamped look minimally affected sexual relationships. The changes it embodied proved instead to be "superficial, not structural," a kind of window-dressing that "added spice to a generational life-style" (Chafe 106).

Although flappers symbolized Twenties sexual license, the flapper's wild ways were adopted by only a small minority of American women. Except perhaps in matters regarding fashion, ordinary women's lives were not significantly affected. Average American women followed established social practices, while only a small group of bold, affluent women's actions actually shaped social conduct. Even women's highly publicized new sexual freedoms had negligible effects on most women's lives (D'Emilio 302). In small towns throughout the country American women continued, for the most part, to live traditionally as wives and mothers, remaining untouched by the moral revolution's sexual freedoms (Paul Carter ix). Flapper fever ultimately burned itself out, proving to be a temporary manifestation of adolescent rebellion. Unable to put childhood sex conditioning permanently behind them, young American women eventually reverted back to

marriage and motherhood, the traditional choices of their parents' generation. (Banner, Women 153). Indeed, the flapper's role has been described as "little more than a new technique for the old purpose of catching a man" (Paul Carter 114). By the decade's end, "Flapper violence and flapper knees" were being dismissed for being "as dead as the Charleston" (Mildred Adams 4), and the flapper was already being replaced by a new feminine ideal, the siren (Ibid. 4-5.)

The stylish flapper look and the growing consumer economy affected each other, influencing sexual norms as well. As women desired to make themselves more attractive to men, sales of cosmetics grew from seventeen million dollars in 1914 to one-hundred forty-one million dollars in 1925 (D'Emilio 279). Young women craving sex appeal believed cosmetics would enhance their appearance. Older women sought to renew youthful looks. Once the province of prostitutes, use of make-up moved from subtle to sometimes blatant application. Women who had once considered make-up a sign of immorality were soon "applying it regularly" (Allen 106).

Of all the consumer goods produced in the Twenties, closed automobiles impacted most on dating and sexual relationships. As Americans became automobile owners in increasing numbers, their cars served as places where men and women, and boys and girls could neck and pet. Parental control became a thing of the past as sedentary gentleman callers sitting in parlors or on porches were replaced by hopped-up motorists ready to joyride. Boys and girls tasting the freedom of increased mobility, coolly drove to neighboring towns to dance the night away and escape local gossip

(Lynd 137).

Female morality was particularly affected by the automobile. The Lynds noted that between September 1923 and 1924, nineteen out of thirty girls accused of "sex crimes" had been charged with committing the misdeed in cars (258). A juvenile judge complained that "the automobile had become a 'house of prostitution on wheels'" (Lynd 114; Allen 100), while a nameless city official, commenting on female shamelessness, said that flappers were happy when there were just two people in a car, with the "back seat empty" and "no one lookin' on" (Hall 775).

Although the flapper was the dominant Twenties figure, flappers were not the sole models for women seeking new roles. In spite of a weakened feminist movement, there were expanding opportunities for women in male dominated fields. In the political arena alternate female role models were provided by "Mother" Jones, a well known labor agitator, and "Ma" Ferguson, a Texas governor. In New York State, Belle Moskowitz became an influential political adviser to Governor Al Smith. Nellie Tayloe Ross became Governor of Wyoming; Miriam Ferguson governed Texas. Aimee Semple McPherson, although not a political figure, was a charismatic revivalist whose devoted audience responded to her moral messages, and chose to ignore her dubious sexual adventures (Nash 149-151).

Sports became a vehicle in which female competitiveness and aggression were permissible, and female athletic achievement helped modify the idea of women as unassertive and meek. Successful female athletes became role models, their feats indicating female independence and freedom. Helen Wills was a

prominent international tennis star. In 1928, after swimming across the English channel, Gertrude Ederle proved that a woman's physical prowess could be as great as a man's, and she was feted with a ticker tape parade on Broadway. Amelia Earhart's fame as a pilot earned her a worldwide reputation.

Movie stars attracted the most media attention of all. As they used screen personae to attract audiences, their images helped introduce Americans to female eroticism. Sometimes viewed as sex objects, these movie stars often embodied variations on the liberated, fun-loving New Woman. One observer noted that "at least half the movie films made seem almost to have been made for the flapper, and her tastes and style, if not her very code of honor, are fashioned on them" (Hall 775).

While movie stars often influenced Twenties female fads and fashions, they virtually bewitched men with their sex appeal. Mary Pickford's innocence opposed the flapper's hard veneer while Clara Bow's, "It" Girl role embodied sexiness and cool detachment toward men. Twenties movie-goers naturally understood what "It" was. Theda Bara's sexual intrigues were described by the word "vamp," and her eroticism excited an American public who recognized in her name an anagram for Arab Death (Banner, Women 279).

Movie plot lines involving passion and romance helped modify strict sexual standards, while steamy movies encouraged Americans to believe that eroticism was possible in their own sexual relationships (Lynd 139). Movies often exploited sex with titles such as "Sinners in Silk," "Women who Give," "Rouged Lips," and "The Queen of Sin" (Lynd 266). Film advertisements

were sexually suggestive too. Young people were enticed by a movie called "Flaming Youth" which guaranteed "'neckers, petters, white kisses, red kisses, pleasure-mad daughters, sensation-craving mothers, by an author who didn't dare sign his name; . . ." (Ibid.). Another movie, "Alimony," invited its audience to see " 'brilliant men, beautiful jazz babies, champagne baths, midnight revels, petting parties in the purple dawn, all ending in one terrific smashing climax that makes you gasp'" (Ibid). The movies' conclusions, however, generally mocked these promises: most movies still had preachy, moral endings that reinforced the Victorian era's moral values.

After touring the country in 1925 journalist Frank Kent noted that "between the magazines and the movies a lot of these little towns seem literally saturated with sex" (As cited in Leuchtenburg 168). Malcolm Cowley expanded on this observation when he noted that the triumph of pulp magazines signaled a moral revolution to which Americans had silently acquiesced (Exile 64). Certainly the growth of sex and true-confession magazines deepened the moral struggle already taking place, and their dramatically growing readership revealed prurient interest in female sexuality. Allen recounts the phenomenal growth of one confession magazine. In 1923 True Story had only 300,000 readers. Three years later in 1926 the figure had almost reached the two million mark (101).

True Confession magazines featured dramatic, sometimes arousing stories whose titles titillated. Some examples are "Indolent Kisses," "Primitive Love," and "Innocents Astray" (Lynd 242). However, despite liberated publishing standards which

allowed transgression and erotic behavior, publishers (as well as Hollywood movie producers) deemed moral conclusions "essential" (Lynd 241).

Newspapers also played a part in American rejection of Victorian proprieties. The first tabloid, The New York Daily News, was published in 1919. Its pages provided vicarious sexual excitement, and were filled with what one critic called "'More sex than sense'" (As cited in Cashman 61). Romance was an appealing topic, and readers were fascinated by the advice-to-the-lovelorn and "sob-sister columns" regularly appearing in such newspapers (Allen 188). Once again, Americans were becoming accustomed to seeing women portrayed in new sexual lights.

Women's sexual freedoms and sexual roles were only one aspect of social reform. Feminists realized that for women to be truly free, social change must be accompanied by economic reform. Charlotte Perkins Gilman argued that "No matter what other equality might be obtained, so long as one sex was dependent on the other for its food, clothing and shelter, it was not free" ("Generation" 734). Once women found jobs, economic independence would help them exert more control over their lives, weakening their parents' and husbands' authority.

Allen's description of middle-class girls "pouring out of schools and colleges into all manners of new occupations," linked new-found economic freedoms with women's emancipation (97). Leuchtenburg, writing about the 10,000,000 wage-earning women in the labor force by 1930, observed that "nothing did more to emancipate them" (160). Women's new awareness of economic

opportunities changed their social lives too. In the workforce they had chances to socialize with men, and to broaden casual associations into more romantic and erotic experiences. As new ideas of female sexuality took root, women's awareness to and interest in their own erotic potential grew (D'Emilio 234).

The effects of altered economic circumstances were particularly visible in large cities, where women sometimes had their own apartments. Alyse Gregory wrote of women twenty-five to thirty-five whose economic independence made them more sexually liberated: "many of them are apt to drift into . . . relationships with certain men friends which may or may not end in marriage" (298).

Not all historians agreed about the changed female job situation. Chafe claimed that Allen "overstated the amount of economic change for women," claiming that there was "little evidence that a revolution took place in women's economic roles" (65). Banner's analysis attributed growth in female employment to general population growth, and argued that with the exception of clerical jobs, women's positions in the work-force had not "substantially changed" (162). Carl Degler similarly believed that the war "failed to live up to feminist anticipations" of permanent job increases for women ("Women" 200). Despite these opposing opinions, women's participation in the workforce on a "large-scale" basis played a part not only in the "enfranchisement of sex," but in extending women's purchasing power as well (Mowry, Nation 25).

In the postwar years, the economy became consumer driven. To keep factories productive, domestic trade would have to

replace war-time industry. At the same time statistics showed that at least eighty-five percent of consumer spending could be attributed to women (Marchand 66). In this market place, women's money was clearly worth competing for. Manufacturers sensitive to women's buying power began mass producing time-saving devices such as refrigerators, vacuums, toasters and washing machines (Banner, Women 150). Clothes and cosmetics answered women's growing hunger for personal grooming products. In 1929 Allen wrote that American women were using over a pound of face powder each year and buying at least eight rouge compacts. More startling is his statistic that if all the lipsticks sold in one year were placed end to end, they would stretch from New York to Reno (107).

As material goods became more plentiful, varied, and up-scale, women's purchases revealed a similar self-indulgent search for pleasure also being reflected in permissive female behavior (D'Emilio 233). Advertisers alert to a consumer windfall, reshaped American standards and spending habits by making "consumption . . . the new necessity" (Lynd 88). Cowley observed, "Our industries had grown enormously to satisfy a demand that suddenly ceased. To keep the factory wheels turning, a new domestic market had to be created There must be a new ethic that encouraged people to buy, a consumption ethic" (Exile 62).

In women's magazines, persuasive advertisements filled with suggestive copy promised rewards to women using their products. At the decade's start, advertisements in The Ladies Home Journal pictured mothers and housewives worrying about their family's

well-being (Coben 99-100). By the era's end, the provocative flapper joined those more traditional models, becoming what one women's historian calls "the sexy saleslady" (Ryan 155). The sexy saleslady appeared in ads whose subliminal messages of sexual satisfaction and happiness helped introduce female eroticism into the public domain. (Banner, Women 168).

While many Twenties advertisements played on women's insecurities about their appearance, advertisements aimed at male audiences suggested a relationship between consumer products and sex, particularly advertisements persuading men to purchase cars, liquor or cigarettes. Advertisements for Fisher automobile bodies were popular throughout the decade in such varied magazines as The American Mercury and The Ladies Home Journal. Substituting beautiful "Fisher Girls" for actual pictures of a car chassis, these ads went under the suggestive rubric "Body by Fisher." An ad in the July 1929 issue of The American Mercury for Ethyl Gasoline showing a young model named "Ethyl" is sexily captioned, "I started something." Lucky Strike cigarettes were advertised with sexy models, and the slogan "Reach for a Lucky when you crave something sweet" had an obvious double meaning, as did a Camels ad that proclaimed "Pleasure for all."

Gradually as American women of all ages began smoking, advertisers took advantage of its sexual connotation. At the decade's start there were virtually no magazine ads featuring women smoking. By the decade's end, women and smoking were openly linked on page after page of magazine ads. Sometimes even movie stars promoted cigarettes: Billie Burke attested to Lucky's Strike's effectiveness in controlling weight.

Many women were conscious of the shifting currents that had swept them into the "vanguard of change" (Bromley 560). These changes were also felt within the literary community by a group of young, "freshly and naively talented" American writers (Hoffman 436). Bound together by shared concerns of creating authenticity in their world and work, they labored with the self-conscious belief their "unprecedented" experiences could only be captured by a new literary style. (Aldridge, "Afterthoughts" 74). Mostly young, male, and middle class, they seemed sympathetic to changing concepts of femininity, even though such radical ideas appeared to threaten traditional concepts of masculinity. These writers believed it possible to reshape American culture according to "newly acquired insights into human nature" (Hoffman 434). In the process, they played a part in altering America's social and moral environment forever.

These writers became part of a new literary generation which arguably founded modern American writing. As serious professionals, they absorbed new ideas from a culture in which political, economic and social structures were in flux, particularly as they applied to women. Hoffman points out the seriousness with which these writers approached their craft (434-436). Preoccupied with new freedoms centered around youth, love and sex, they created memorable novels that defined the decade for some. Aldridge questions whether "the literature created the fantasy or the fantasy found its embodiment in the literary life," and then criticizes these writers for their narcissism ("Afterthoughts" 71).

Many Twenties writers had been shaped by the post-war mood.

Fitzgerald wrote of American disillusion: "There is a Weltschmerz--the uncertainty of the world today. All sensitive minds feel it. There is a passing away of the old order and we wonder what there will be for us in the new--if anything" (Turnbull 265). In Letters and Leadership, Van Wyck Brooks tries to explain postwar writers' viewpoints: they "find themselves born into a race that has drained away all its spiritual resources in the struggle to survive and that continues to struggle in the midst of plenty because life itself no longer possesses any meaning" (As cited in Hoffman 29).

Young male writers who had come of age during the war, such as Hemingway, Fitzgerald and Faulkner, were not alone in commenting on the American Twenties moral scene. Older novelists such as Cather, Dreiser, Glasgow and Wharton whose careers spanned the century were also active and productive during the Twenties. Although Hoffman writes that the older generation "surveyed the weaknesses of a tradition that had culminated in a war and an uneasy peace," while the younger generation "assumed the task of renewing that culture" and of "making it over," during the Twenties both older and younger generations also shared novelistic themes centering on female sexuality (434).

Many novelists writing in the postwar era felt suffocated by the hypocrisies of the genteel tradition and, like other Americans, felt divided from the world they had been educated to enter. Trying to escape a repressive environment, they chose self-imposed exile in Paris over spiritual alienation in America (Aldridge, Generation viii). Influenced by Harold Stearns' exhortation to "'Get out!'," they fled to a Europe which appealed

to their American imaginations and which allowed them to retreat from American vulgarity, Victorianism and provincialism. In Europe, the rich cultural life and liberated attitudes toward sex encouraged these writers to discard "conventions that did not fit their personal lives" and then to use their novels to test "the authenticity of their new experiences" (Cowley, Tradition 16). Far from feeling distanced from what was happening in The United States, writers such as Fitzgerald and Hemingway wrote convincingly about the restive American spirit. Their novels reflected their own "youthful narcissism" as well as the conflicts of Americans dealing with unparalleled social change (Aldridge, "Afterthoughts" 71).

As a result of Gertrude Stein's famous words, many American writers in Europe were stereotyped as part of a debauched "Lost Generation" (Hemingway, Feast 29). In his prologue to the 1951 edition of Exile's Return Cowley dismisses the phrase "Lost Generation" as a "half-accurate tag" which even Hemingway was unsuccessful in repudiating (3-4). Referring to Stein, Hemingway wrote: "the hell with her lost-generation talk and all the dirty, easy labels" (Feast 31). Still, as Ann Douglas points out retrospectively, Hemingway and his friends were the ones who made the label stick (41).

Most Twenties writers never saw themselves as lost. Instead they saw themselves as optimistic pioneers separated from older writers by unique experiences and adventures (Cowley, Exile 4). Aptly labeled by Hoffman as having "useful innocence," as being "poets of formalized insight into moral chaos" and "novelists of manners" (434), in their search for new moral truths they wrote

novels that "shook America to its depths" (Leuchtenburg 158). For the first time there was widespread frankness in American literature. Such representative novels as An American Tragedy, The Sun Also Rises and This Side of Paradise treated sex openly and objectively (Allen 113). However, even while Dreiser, Fitzgerald and Hemingway wrote frankly about sex and sought new standards to replace outworn values, even as they wrote novels celebrating women's sexual emancipation, their ambivalence about sexually liberated women emerged.

Twenties novelists examined sexual issues avoided by prudish Victorians. Unafraid to tackle subjects previously considered too sordid or even taboo, these writers produced novels whose themes explored the consequences to women of living within a sexually liberated society. Rejecting traditional representations of sexuality, they began creating female characters whose sexuality was central to the narrative. They began questioning the double standard, and as Americans turned away from Victorianism toward the more permissive sexuality of Freud, women's decorous novelistic images were replaced by more openly sexual characters.

As sexual power gradually shifted from male dominance and authority to more equalized relationships, Twenties' writers abandoned Victorian reticence and gentility, and moved toward discussions of women's sexuality. Women had been long presented as submissive, sexless creatures devoid of desire and passion. Now their sexuality was newly illuminated and defined. The impact of changing and loosening sexual standards in the Twenties, and the consequences of explicit sexual behavior for

women were explored by male and female authors alike, with different conclusions.

Notes

1. Cultural historian Roderick Nash acknowledges the war's unnerving influence, but questions whether it was strong enough to cause widespread rebellion or cynicism. Rather than becoming increasingly iconoclastic, Nash argues, Americans seeking "intellectual guideposts," turned instead into a "nervous generation" groping for certainties (2). Susman thinks it is simplistic to see the Twenties as "the consequence of involvement in World War I" (105). Instead he describes the Twenties in terms of structural changes to the "natural, technological, social, personal and moral" world, created in part, by new techniques for amassing knowledge (Ibid. 106).

2. Writing in The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Henry May hypothesized a new approach to the Twenties. He maintained that genuine understandings of the postwar era could only be achieved by exploring the years preceding America's entrance into World War I (426-7). In a subsequent book, The End of American Innocence, May pursued his idea, and his conclusions challenged Allen's version of a Twenties moral revolution. Contradicting generally accepted opinion, he rejected wartime disillusion as a catalyst for social change, and supported his argument by pointing to women's prewar moral permissiveness, their participation in dance crazes and interest in birth control (334-37). James McGovern similarly claimed that the postwar atmosphere merely accelerated and gave added vigor to already present trends (316-33).

3. Chafe unequivocally states "Most of the revolution occurred prior to 1920" (105). O'Neill considers the dance mania sweeping the nation in 1912 an important barometer of prewar social change and sexual revolution (297). Women's historian Lois Banner also pointed to the 1912 dance mania as symbolizing women's "new sensuality" (Women 85). During this time, respectable middle-class women were lured on to dance floors, moving to the music of sensual bunny hugs, turkey trots, and tangos. Indifferent to criticism, they nonchalantly flaunted new sexual roles while they danced. For Banner, female willingness to publicly display themselves in sexual lights was as essential to women's liberation as their advance into the work force (Ibid.).

4. In Freud, Religion and the Roaring Twenties, Henry Idema explores how secularization, American affluence, and the decline and privatization of religion led to the spread of neurosis. He tests his ideas against the works of Anderson, Fitzgerald and Hemingway.

5. If there is any doubt that fear of repeated pregnancy and childbearing were real issues even in marriage, the autobiographical remembrances of contemporary Twenties women gathered by Elaine Showalter in These Modern Women: Autobiographical Essays From the Twenties, prove otherwise.

6. The word flapper has various attributions. It is said that the term was derived from an English word to describe a teen-age girl who was not considered mature until she had "flapped." To hide her awkwardness, the flapper wore long, simple dresses advertised as "flapper dresses" (Yellis 49). Another explanation originates with a style of flapping galoshes worn by young women before the war (Banner, Women 279).

Chapter II

Debating Women's Sexual Freedom: A Female Perspective

The Twenties were a time for women to confront their sexual potential. More than ever before, young, white middle and upper class women had new moral choices, and their bid for sexual emancipation was the freedom that for some defined the era. In the past the moral code for poor and working class white women, as well as black women, had been less restrictive than middle and upper-class standards. Now, young women of the upper and middle classes began adopting sexual practices previously associated with the lower classes (Lerner 57). While many young middle-class women still clung to familiar roles bearing Victorianism's unmistakable stamp, by the Twenties these practices were being challenged as outmoded and irrelevant. As the decade progressed many young women were tempted by permissive standards, and Victorian manners and the double standard began losing ground to sexual freedom's new lure.

Although the double standard was beginning to collapse in the Twenties, for many youthful members of the middle and upper classes, sexual conduct still revolved along Victorian conceptions of gender appropriate sexual behavior. According to this tradition created and perpetuated by men, respectable white middle and upper-class women were defined as passionless, chaste, and their lives best fulfilled by conforming to conventional roles of the wife or the mother. It was rare for these women to openly voice discontent with their roles. Deferring or submitting to one's husband was the accepted norm, and women were

educated to believe that female sexual expression was unbecoming.

Sex was typically considered a male prerogative. Unmarried middle and upper-class women were often kept ignorant of anything sexual, and when they married, they were expected to be passive participants in conjugal sexual relations. Such stereotypical assumptions froze men and women into sexual roles. Men gratified their sexual impulses, women were not supposed to have them. Men's sexual appetites were natural; women's sordid. Men enjoyed sex, women endured it. Men's love affairs reflected a "men will be men" credo; women's love affairs challenged Victorian stereotypes of purity. At the end of the nineteenth century, one time Surgeon General of the United States Army, Dr. William Hammond Taylor referred to the generally accepted commonplace that was still true for women in the Twenties. Hammond wrote that women had "far less intensity of sexual desire" than men, but attributed their behavior to societal teachings rather than an inborn female predisposition (As cited in Degler, Odds 257).

Although the double standard was still in effect in the Twenties, and would continue with diminishing force for decades to come, respectable women's social and sexual practices were changing. More than ever before young middle and upper class women refused to live by rules others had imposed on them, or to allow others to define their lives. These women gradually began rebelling against the patriarchal system which delineated the boundaries of proper female sexual behaviors, seeking to decide by themselves what was appropriate, rather than being dictated to by men.

Sex was everywhere as a motive and powerful force in the

fiction of the period. Women's changing social and sexual positions became underlying issues with such different female writers as Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow and Nella Larsen. Superficially these novelists had little in common except for their overlapping writing careers. Their fictional terrain ranged widely, spreading from narrowly exclusive, upper-crust New York society, to the conservative South and back again to New York and middle-class Negro Harlem. Yet despite their dramatically different novelistic settings, and despite geographical, class and racial differences, in Wharton's The Age of Innocence and "The Old Maid," Glasgow's They Stooped to Folly and Larsen's Passing, underlying subtexts demonstrated the pervasive infiltration of sexual issues into fiction written by women.

By creating literary doubles or alter-egos consisting of traditional and non-traditional women, Wharton, Glasgow and Larsen were able to examine and debate disturbing questions surrounding women's new sexual standards. Although they probed the issues from different vantage points, they shared a deep uncertainty about women's new sexual freedoms. While they recognized the inherent defects and dangers in Victorian assumptions and practices, they also saw danger and social disorder in more modern female sexual behavior.

Although the aristocratic Edith Wharton was not overtly feminist, throughout her career she wrote about "women and issues affecting women" (Ammons, "Diana" 209). In such novels as The House of Mirth (1905), Ethan Frome (1911), The Custom of the Country (1913), and The Age of Innocence (1920), and the novella

"The Old Maid," (1924) Wharton explored what happens to women who overturn conventional standards in search of free expression. In a society still accustomed to male supremacy, Wharton called for female moral and social equality. In a society where overt female sexuality was still foreign, she confronted the "problem of female desire" (Gubar, Sexchanges xiv). Because of her concerns, recent critics have called Wharton "a novelist of morals," (Singley x), a "fierce critic" of the American "process of feminization," (Gubar, Sexchanges 123) and a writer concerned with the issue of women's rights to "feel and express feeling" in their relationships with men (French 228).

The Age of Innocence, and "The Old Maid" were written in France where Wharton gained "a fresh perspective" on what was happening in America (Gubar, Sexchanges 172). They reflect Wharton's preoccupation with the "woman question" and both examine "what women could realistically expect to attain and at what cost" (Gubar, "War" 81). Illuminated by the Twenties social climate, both works can be seen as Wharton's attempt to debate women's changing sexual roles.

The Age of Innocence is Wharton's retrospective vision of ordered, conventional 1870s upper-class society. The plot centers around a love triangle. On the eve of his engagement to virginal May Welland, Newland Archer meets May's tarnished cousin, Countess Ellen Olenska, who has returned to America to get a divorce and rebuild her life. Although Archer is irresistibly drawn to Ellen Olenska, he dutifully marries May.

Using an informed-twentieth century perspective shaped by the postwar moral climate, Wharton reveals the sexual

restlessness already present beneath Victorianism's placid surface. It is colored by Wharton's allegiance to repressive traditions, and her simultaneous awareness of how these conventions stunted and even marred women's lives. Sometimes called Wharton's "pivotal novel" (Judith Fryer, "Purity" 103), and characterized as a novel which explored "the problem of sexuality in all its complexity" (Wolff 310), The Age of Innocence examines the difficulties involved in confronting sexual change and the impossibilities of eluding it.

Wharton described a society unalterably opposed to change, a guarded community so bent on preserving its practices that it was unable to recognize the seeds of change already undermining and refashioning established mores. Wharton describes that society:

It was the Old New York way of taking life "without effusion of blood": the way of people who dreaded scandal more than disease, who placed decency above courage, and who considered that nothing was more ill-bred than 'scenes,' except the behavior of those who gave rise to them." (AI 335)¹

The Age of Innocence is set in the 1870s. One of its focal points is the sexually charged but finally unconsummated relationship between Ellen Olenska and Newland Archer. Another is May Welland's and Newland's proper but passionless marriage. The comparison between the two makes the novel a "convenient point of departure" for discussing postwar sexual upheaval (Tuttleton 275). The novel's mood illustrates Wharton's "new consciousness of history" occasioned by the war (Lewis, Wharton 243), and its temper reflects "the main impulse of the postwar

generation in its desire to throw off every kind of restraint imposed on conduct, morals and religion" (Nevius 189). But Wharton does not wholeheartedly endorse such restless bids for freedom. Instead she examines the uneasy emergence of female sexual freedoms. Dramatizing the rival claims of change versus tradition, she is torn between the two.

Ellen Olenska and May Welland are literary doubles who "make a perfect whole" when placed side by side (Goodman 96). Their comparisons to each other give the novel dynamic range, and embody conflicting positions in the debate over women's new freedoms. Although Ellen belongs to New York society, she is also a threatening "intruder" figure whose European manners portend social disruption. (Wershoven 76-93). May is the insider whose commitment to order makes her an inadvertent champion of long established values. While May represents duty, Ellen suggests sexual freedom and excitement. Ellen's emancipated behavior and thoughts exude vibrant sexuality. May's virginal conduct and comforting predictability never deviate from the Victorian norm.

Although Ellen is nearly thirty and hardly a girl, for Elizabeth Ammons she and May represent "polarized portraits of the American girl" ("Diana" 210). May's sexual ignorance and irrefutable purity uphold Victorian ideals, while Ellen's sexual energy and mystery threaten to topple them. Much has been made of the fair/dark lady argument from the time a reviewer called May the "handsome white and gold debutante of regulation inexperience" and Ellen the "dark, seductive countess" (Perry 195). Contemporary critics characterize May as the fair

"American child-woman" who represents Old New York's preference for infantilized women, while Ellen is the "dark" feared adult (Ammons, Argument 148-52). May is compared to the chaste Goddess Diana (Ammons, "Diana" 209-24), while Ellen is likened to Aphrodite who rules "all aspects of sexual love and beauty" (Singley 172).

Ellen possesses an individuality that cannot be imitated, and her uniqueness and "uncompromising freedom" disturb a society where uniformity is the rule (Cuddy 18). Her daring is a matter of personal style, surrounding her with an undercurrent of illicit sexuality, and she has been seen as a woman who deliberately "chooses to be a sex object" (John W. Murphy 479). In the novel's opening scene, her opera dress attracts shocked attention. Sexily different from the other women's clothes, its revealing cut exposes Ellen's shoulders and bosom and is evocative of a nightgown. While Ellen claims she wants to be like everybody else, she is unable to repress her sexual nature to conform to prevailing attitudes toward male/female relationships.

Having lived most of her life in Europe, Countess Ellen Olenska remembers New York with a child's perception, and believes it is the one place where she can be cared for and protected. Accustomed to a laxer European moral climate and to living as she pleases, Ellen does not realize how unyielding New York society can be, how averse it is to scandal, nor to what lengths it will go to preserve its traditions. Her flip dismissal of society's leaders reveals her ignorance of their influence, leaving her vulnerable to their controlling power.

Although unintentional, her actions insinuate defiance. She blatantly violates New York's social code by attending a "French Sunday" where the Sabbath is ignored, and music, smoking and champagne are permitted. She settles in an unfashionable Bohemian area of New York City, where she entertains artists, singers and musicians, and thrives on the intellectual stimulation they provide. But Ellen Olenska is most disturbing when she exudes "sexual richness" (Fryer, "Purity" 109).

Ellen's clouded past and unhappy marriage engender troubling innuendos. Her determination to file for divorce startles Old New York Society, and reports alleging an affair between Ellen and her husband's secretary add to the scandal. Despite rumors about her aristocratic husband's brutishness, Old New York society favors preserving Ellen's marriage at all costs. To argue their case they enlist lawyer Newland Archer. Deep in his heart Archer thinks Ellen is guilty, and her willingness to drop divorce proceedings without defending her reputation reinforces his belief in her guilt. Later he discovers that Ellen's silence was not an admission of guilt, but stemmed from fears of embarrassing her family. Ellen's protective silence contrasts to Old New York's use of silences and silencing to maintain control over female behavior (Eby 93-104). As Ellen's marital problems are gradually disclosed (they are never fully explained), New York society's pretended ignorance of her problems increases her isolation and loneliness.

Ellen's behavior is provocative, her conversations full of insinuation, and her manners and taste reflect a more liberated European upbringing. She understands the lies,

hypocrisies and destructive consequences of illicit sexual relationships, yet she is still a victim of the double standard. Although Archer dreams of having Ellen as his mistress, he also recoils at her sexual knowledge. Noticing how casually she utters the word "mistress," he condemns her for being familiar with it. (AI 289-90). When he and Ellen agree to a secret meeting, he thinks of her "almost contemptuously" as a woman whom "he was indebted to for pleasures already wearied of" (Ibid. 289-90).

Although their relationship is never consummated, Old New York thinks that Ellen and Archer are lovers. In an effort to protect its code and safeguard May's marriage, Ellen's financial independence is secured in exchange for her leaving New York. In effect Ellen is ostracized because her sexuality threatens social disruption. Ammons sees in Ellen Olenska's banishment America's rejection of Wharton's own "sexual, intellectual and artistic energy," and comments on the "strong parallels" between Wharton's life and Ellen Olenska's fate ("Diana" 220-23). Perhaps this biographical identification motivates Wharton to let Ellen triumph. Although Ellen's exile from New York indicates that her "feminine power is too strong" (Singley 17) for what reviewer Henry Seidel Canby called "the bourgeois Puritanism of nineteenth century America" ("America" 288), Ellen does rebuild her life in Paris. Her grandmother's financial settlement allows her to live independently without compromising her principles. If at the novel's conclusion Archer feels he has missed "the flower of life" (AI 347), it seems as if Ellen has not. Ellen is surrounded by the books, art and good conversation that have

always been important to her. In Paris, Fryer suggests, she has been able to create "her own sources of tradition and continuity, of richness and power" ("Purity" 115).

While Ellen Olenska is suspect because of her tainted past and sexual aura, May Welland's careful training makes her the embodiment of unclouded innocence. While Ellen is dramatic, passionate and dangerously sexual, May represents safe, sexless perfection. While May receives pure white lilies of the valley from Archer, Ellen receives the more sensual yellow roses. May's primitive purity epitomizes her "hieroglyphic world" (AI 45) and its Victorian ideals of "innocence, ignorance," and "dependence" (Ammons, Argument 148).

As the "terrifying product" of New York's social system, (AI 43) May upholds Old New York's values, suppresses her own opinions, and ignores disagreeable matters. Her perpetual expression of "vacant serenity" (AI 142), and "faculty of unawareness" (AI 188) give her eyes their icy, transparent glaze. Her sexual inexperience reflects Victorian prohibitions and when Archer kisses her, she is startled and draws back from his embrace. Her comparison to "a young marble athlete" implies sexlessness (AI 142), and her lack of passion is reinforced by Archer's description of their marriage as a "perpetual tepid honeymoon" (AI 293), and contrasts to what a reviewer called the "terrible inarticulate passion" Ellen arouses in him (Phelps 286).

Archer's worry that beneath May's flawless facade is "innocence that seals the mind against imagination and the heart against experience" (AI 146) causes Ammons to charge that May "is

empty" ("Diana" 214). Yet this is far from the truth. May's simplicity is a carefully cultivated pose, and her allegiance to Old New York's values camouflages a shrewd ability to size up threatening situations. Showing that she is not entirely innocent, and that she has courage that contains within it capacity for change, May offers Archer a way out when he tries to push up their marriage date. Directing her remarks toward Archer's and Ellen's growing attraction to each other, she explains that she does not want happiness at someone else's expense. Later, May's early announcement of her pregnancy thwarts Archer's and Ellen's plans. It also reveals that when May's self-interest is at stake, with the help of New York society, she can be "calculating rather than spontaneous and innocent" (Schriber 196). Because May is assumed to be artless, she is able to reach beyond that role and achieve her aims without exciting suspicion (Schriber 196-97). May has absorbed more than her inexpressive countenance reveals.

May has been seen as the "pernicious ideal" of nineteenth century traditions, (Ammons, "Diana" 215) as well as the novel's "true heroine" (Goodman 101.) Trapped in a colorless marriage, May's story is written between the lines of Archer's and Ellen's romance. Although she had within her the capacity for growth, it had been discouraged. Capable of feeling but taught to avoid emotion, she is the perfect Victorian wife who has absorbed her lessons too well. Trapped in the vacuum of silence and loneliness created by unexpressed thoughts, averted glances and pretense, May's life is built on secret lies and is filled with the sadness associated with waste. She is, finally "victimized" by a narrow

definition of femininity that reduces her to playing the role of "domestic manager" (Tuttleton 275).

The Age of Innocence was written in Europe about a society that existed in America fifty years earlier. At the same time it reflected the twentieth century's sexually liberated climate by introducing issues such as adultery, passion and infidelity. The Age of Innocence also testifies to ambivalent Twenties attitudes toward women's sexuality. In his review, Henry Seidel Canby commented on the underlying debate in the novel by asking, "Was May right when with the might of innocence she forced Newland to give up Ellen? Was Ellen right when she made him live up to the self-restraint that belonged to his code?" ("America" 289). For David Godfrey, the answer to these questions are inextricably linked. Ellen's and May's actions ultimately reflect "the same values and way of life," and show their commitment to society's values of "solidarity, continuity and the family" (Godfrey 39). Ironically, despite her individuality, Ellen upholds the same "system of moral and social taboos" which tries to destroy her (Pizer, "Naturalism" 138). She has become morally allied with May's and Archer's values, despite the fact that they perpetuate a social system repressive to women.

The novel's conclusion raises important questions about female sexuality. How should women act in an era that was becoming sexually liberated? Should they experiment with new sexual roles, or should they cling to old sexual practices? Do new freedoms bestow new benefits or are they damaging to happiness? By contrasting the lives of two women with differing approaches to proper female conduct, Wharton tries to answer the

questions, but her results are inconclusive. Ellen's sexual sophistication and her emancipated ideas are measured against May's more conventional Victorian conduct. Both standards are found wanting. Ellen's attractive sexuality eventually becomes a disadvantage in the game of love, alarming to men accustomed to defining and dictating women's behavior. In a patriarchal society, where "the most desirable wife is not sexual," the inexperienced May is the woman Archer marries (Ammons, Argument 143). Yet May's passivity damages her relationship with Archer, turns her life into one big lie. Although she claims in almost the same words as Ellen that she does not want her happiness at someone else's expense, May's words are cunningly spoken, and her happiness is eventually built on Archer's and Ellen's unhappiness. Ellen's happiness is also presumed to be flawed. In a society in which marriage was the prized institution by which women measured their successes and expressed themselves, Ellen never marries.

Wharton's debate about the legitimacy of female sexuality continues in "The Old Maid" (1924) where she once again raises questions about female sexual choice. But unlike The Age of Innocence, when Wharton examines the issue of female sexuality, she juxtaposes it against the Victorian definition of women as mothers and wives. Like those of The Age of Innocence, the protagonists of "The Old Maid" are two cousins living in upper-class New York. But unlike The Age Of Innocence, "The Old Maid" is a tale colored by a "Victorian emphasis on seduction" (Nevius 192). Set in the New York of the eighteen fifties, its storyline is informed by the turbulent Twenties sexual climate,

prompting a reviewer to write: "It simply happens that Mrs. Wharton has chosen the New York of nearly three quarters of a century ago. . . with but little change it could be transferred to the present day" (Field 361).

Charlotte Lovell is the title's old maid. She is also a woman whose silences and lonely existence hide a secret. Delia Lovell Ralston is the respectable married mother. Her outward adherence to the traditional moral framework masks buried longings. Delia and Charlotte are mirror images of each other embodying contradictions that explode Victorian "cultural myths" about women: Delia shows how "staid matrons" can "harbor adulterous passions," while Charlotte demonstrates how "fallen woman" can "live chaste lives" (Saunders 21). Each becomes a foil for the other, yet together their lives remain "bitterly incomplete" (Wolff 357).

Delia Lovell is the traditional Victorian nice girl, culturally conditioned to accept a double standard in which men initiate sex while women are passive recipients who would be degraded by erotic sensation. Her early married life reveals the sexual ignorance and inadequate premarital instruction common to women of her class. Delia recalls:

the incomprehensible exigencies of the young man to whom one had at most yielded a rosy cheek for an engagement ring; . . . the large double-bed; the terror of seeing him shaving calmly the next morning in his shirt sleeves... the evasions, insinuations, resigned smiles and Bible texts of

one's Mamma; the reminder of the phrase "to obey".

(OM 63)²

For Delia sex is a marital responsibility that in the days of minimal contraceptive information is inevitably linked with reproduction. Indeed, Delia's sex life progresses from "flushed distress" to "confusion" to an "embarrassed pleasure" that is justified by the babies "who were supposed to 'make up for everything,'--and didn't" (Ibid.). Although she accepts the Victorian belief that female sexual pleasure is improper and has no place in marriage, she also fantasizes what life with her rejected suitor Clem Spender might have been like. The sexual stirrings she experiences lead her to secretly question the standards she upholds.

Delia is jolted when Charlotte confesses that she has also loved Clem Spender, and has secretly become the unmarried mother of his child. In Delia's mind Charlotte's forthcoming marriage to Joe Ralston is now unthinkable. For Charlotte to marry Joe without disclosing her past would be dishonorable, while knowledge of Charlotte's past would almost certainly make marriage impossible. The story gains its momentum from this plot, described by one reviewer as "meagerly simple" (Morris 359).

Delia's reaction seems to be honorable, but it contains the seeds of "something dishonorable," and introduces "jealousy, anger and shame" into her relationship with Charlotte (Raphael 100). Delia strongly suspects that Joe Ralston would have accepted Charlotte and her child. However, she sees Charlotte's illegitimate child as tangible proof of an "unbridled passion"

that violates standards of decency (Funston 146). Taking matters into her own hands, Delia presents Charlotte with an ultimatum. If Charlotte wants to keep her child she must break her engagement. However, in a society in which marriage and motherhood are considered women's primary roles, Delia's compassion is colored by "subtle cruelty" (Rae 34).

Years later when Charlotte and her daughter Tina are living with Delia, the two older women become locked in an unspoken but "ferocious" power struggle over Tina (Wilson, "New York" 77). Delia has assumed the dominant motherly role, taking vicarious pleasure in Tina's openly passionate response to life. Charlotte has been relegated to "the marginal and powerless status" of spinsterhood (Saunders 16). Although she has chosen to play the "demeaning" part of the prim and proper spinster aunt, she recognizes and worries about Tina's sexual nature (Bentley 362). Further concerned that Tina's obscure origins will hinder her marketability in New York's marriage market, Charlotte allows Delia to adopt Tina, a move which "consolidates" Delia's hold over Tina (Funston 154).

The power struggle between Charlotte and Delia ironically comes to a head in a climactic scene over a mother's duty to educate her daughter about female sexual responsibility in marriage. Charlotte's plaintive question, "which of us is her mother?" resonates with the anguish of her sacrifice (OM 129). Painfully aware that she has no rights, either before the law or in her daughter's heart, she is forced to confront and confirm the circumstances that have robbed her of her child.

Wolff writes that in "The Old Maid" Wharton shows what it is

grow old and to be lonely--with all life's options already taken and all life's expectations harshly foreclosed" (357). Delia's sacrificed passion for Clem Spender has not brought her fulfillment, and she admits her obsessive interest in Tina has somehow decentralized" her life (OM 109). Delia eventually sees herself as "a third person, living the life meant for another woman" (Ibid.). Her life has been "shaped and coloured by the faint reflection of a rejected happiness" (Ibid. 125), and it has been derailed by Charlotte's story. What remains for Delia is an "embittering sense of failure" (Ibid. 132).

Both women are victims of a social order in which gender roles are strictly defined and enforced. Although Delia secretly questions the Victorian standards defining her life, she lacks the courage to oppose them. Denying her own sexual needs, she centers her energies on her family, becoming a standard bearer for a life that has lost its allure. Delia has become an unfulfilled woman secretly yearning for passion, and the vicarious pleasure she takes in Tina's achievements are ultimately inadequate for happiness.

Charlotte's precipitous behavior undermines the carefully held together patriarchal social order. Ignoring the taboo against premarital sex, and the importance of chastity and modesty for unmarried women, Charlotte's secret love affair destroys her chances for conventional happiness. Determined to make her own sexual decision, and refusing to be influenced by the conventions governing female sexuality, Charlotte's sexual choice induces far-reaching loss, including sacrifice of marriage in a world in which marriage and children are the central facts

of women's lives. She has become the mother whose biological claims have been superseded, a woman living on the outskirts of society. Having internalized what a reviewer recognized as an "exaggerated prudishness and conventionality," she is permanently separated her from the person she loves most (Morris 359).

The story of Delia's and Charlotte's stunted lives introduces troubling questions revolving around female eroticism and illegitimacy. How do women find fulfillment in a society that limits them to marriage and motherhood? Is the conception of female fulfillment through marriage and motherhood adequate for women? Should society expect women to suppress sexual impulses? Certainly Charlotte's sexual nature contradicts the myth of female sexlessness. Finally, which of the two cousins is really the old maid--Delia with her sexual needs permanently denied or Charlotte who has experienced love and sexual fulfillment? Some of these questions are echoed in Nella Larsen's Passing.

Nella Larsen, the daughter of a West Indian black father and a white Danish mother, was a novelist of the Harlem Renaissance. Her two novels Quicksand (1928) and Passing (1929) were largely forgotten until the 1970s, when they were rediscovered by such feminist critics as Hortense Thornton. In the 1980s her novels captured the interest of Deborah McDowell, who edited both Quicksand and Passing for the Rutgers University American Woman Writers Series.

Larsen's treatment of female sexuality's disruptive potential and her questions about sexual repression allows

Passing to be compared with Wharton's The Age of Innocence and "The Old Maid". Primarily set in New York's black, middle-class Harlem, Passing's locale is light years away from Edith Wharton's wealthy, upper-class New York. Surprisingly lacking in stereotypical images of Jazz Age nightclubs, devoid of an oppressed lower-class, Larsen writes instead about a black bourgeois world of cultural and philanthropic organizations, and parties and charity balls. It is a middle-class world which faithfully imitates its white counterpart, even down to the debate on female sexual expression.

While the novel's epigraph becomes a device for drawing attention to the complex issue of racial identity and the psychology of black people who crossed the color line, Passing also examines the risks of female sexuality in the Twenties (Sato 88). Like her white counterparts, Larsen assessed the dangers of female sexual pleasure and questioned its place in black middle class culture. She also raised important questions about traditional female roles and gender identity that transcended race. What is the family's role as an institution and emotional anchor of the middle class? What identity is there for women outside of marriage or motherhood?

Larsen tried to resolve issues surrounding black female sexuality by contrasting the decorous Irene Redfield to the more flamboyant Clare Kendry. If as McDowell suggests, Larsen tried to use her novels to repudiate the myth of black women's promiscuity, then Clare's adulterous actions must be punished. If Larsen saw in Irene's exaggerated modesty an opportunity to overthrow the stereotype of black women's sexual licentiousness,

then Irene's actions must somehow be vindicated (Deborah McDowell xiii).

Critics have seen Irene and Clare as doubles or alter-egos. Cheryl Wall calls Irene the "perfect lady," and Clare "the exotic Other" (121), while Priscilla Ramsey points to Clare's narcissistic personality as a counterpoint to Irene's "lack of it" (35). For Ammons, Irene and Clare are either "alienated parts of one whole identity" or "split and conflicting identities --or both," and she sees Clare's bold sexuality and inventive spirit as reflections of Irene's suppressed dark side (191 Stories). Despite Irene's selflessness, she becomes by the novel's end "an unlikable woman driven to recklessness and murder," while the more selfish Clare maintains her exciting attractiveness (Larson 87).

• Irene Redfield's identity revolves around rigid gender definitions which made traditional family structures fundamental to female happiness. Irene is proud of her perfect family life and the role she plays in making that ideal existence possible (Thadious Davis 312). As the wife of Doctor Brian Redfield she lives in Harlem, her privileged life an example of black middle-class manners and morals. Financially dependent on her husband, she fears anything that would jeopardize her security. Like many middle-class married women of her time, Irene's conservatism is more reminiscent of the Victorian era than the liberated Twenties. Despite a revolution in manners and morals, Irene takes her traditional roles seriously, unable to envision options for herself outside of marriage and motherhood. When her childhood friend Clare Kendry shrugs off the importance of

children by confessing "Children aren't everything," she is shocked (P 210).³

Irene is dutifully correct in her behavior and views the "bond of flesh and spirit" between herself and her husband as "strong" (187). Her belief in female moral superiority is strong. In her attitude toward sex she possesses a prudish, even puritanical morality more reminiscent of old Victorian morals than modern Freudian ideas. She thinks her eleven year old son is too young to learn about sex and is uneasy about the informal sex education he is receiving from older classmates. Although by the Twenties sex had become an openly discussed topic, when Irene broaches the subject with her husband, a Victorian aversion to displaying knowledge of such a distasteful subject leaves her unable to speak candidly. She leaves it to Brian to interpret that when she says her son has "picked up some queer ideas about things," she is talking about sex (P 189).

In her relationship with her husband, Irene appears to have a sexless marriage consistent with the middle-class Victorian definition of sexual pleasure in marriage as improper for women. The "intimacy," and "casual sexual interplay" that were becoming part of Twenties marriages are missing Irene's life, and her marriage seems formalized and dry (Ramsey 35). She is reassured by rather than concerned with Brian's "slightly undemonstrative way" (P 190), and appreciates it when Brian is "more than customarily considerate and abstemious" (P 214). She and her husband sleep in separate bedrooms, and an indication of their sexual relationship comes with Brian's evaluation of sex as "a joke" (Ibid. 189).

If Irene Redfield is sexually repressed, Clare Kendry is frighteningly sexual. Describing both women, Du Bois called Clare a "lonesome hedonist," while labelling Irene a "race-conscious Puritan" (202). Irene is clearly aware of Clare's capacity to experience feelings unknown to her. Indeed, Clare's verve, her energy and passion create an "erotic sub-plot," lying beneath the novel's orderly surface (Deborah McDowell xxx). While McDowell recognizes Larsen's role as a pioneer in describing female sexual feelings, she attributes the novel's sexual tension to unacknowledged lesbian undercurrents between Clare and Irene. Peter Rabinowitz extends McDowell's argument, arguing that the issue of racial passing masks the novel's real story of lesbians passing as heterosexuals (201-13).

Self-assured, and arrestingly beautiful, Clare Kendry is also politely insolent, the possessor of a "flaunting personality" (Thadious Davis 309). While Clare's sexual attractiveness has allowed her to cross the color line, the cost has been high. She has degraded herself, selling her body to a black-hating white man who calls her "Nig." She is dangerously aggressive, willful and guiltless about her actions. Although Ammons finds Clare unattractive, hypocritical and even cowardly, a woman who uses her freedom in destructive ways, she nevertheless can be admired for her verve, her passion, and her daring to go after whatever her wants (Stories 191).

Clare's mysterious air fascinates, but she is also somewhat furtive, and even cunning. When Irene reencounters Clare, Clare seems to be a socially liberated woman lunching with an acquaintance. However, when Irene discovers the man is not

Clare's husband, the question of Clare's promiscuity is introduced. Clare later openly admits she lacks morals and a sense of duty. Financially dependent, she sees nothing wrong in bartering her body in exchange for material comforts, and her mannerisms challenge the Victorian sensibilities shaping Irene's life. In a moment of unprudish recognition, Irene understands the "economic pressures," behind Clare's marriage, and accepts that the female body can sometimes be used as "a commodity in marriage" (Thadious Davis 323). But Irene's knowledge does not help illuminate her own life: for if the female body is a sexual commodity, what happens to a sexless marriage such as her own?

Clare has been described as "hard, amoral, and utterly selfish in her search for happiness" (Arthur Davis 97), and she herself cautions Irene that she is not safe. But while Irene disapproves of Clare, even recognizing Clare's dangerous potential, she is also drawn to Clare's beauty. In a description that supports Deborah McDowell's contention that Irene feels an "awakening sexual desire for Clare," (xxvi-xxx) Irene notes Clare's "tempting mouth," her "arresting eyes," and beautiful hair (P 161). Indeed, Irene's reaction to Clare may spring from "forbidden sexual longings" indicating "love and desire" and "a longing for fusion" (Ammons, Stories 191).

But while much has been made of Irene's sexual feeling for Clare, some of the novel's tensest moments are rooted in the growing attraction between Clare and Brian, and the threat their relationship presents to Irene's marriage. Indeed, the novel has been called an "old-fashioned" story of "jealousy, infidelity and marital disintegration" (Larson 82). For as Clare makes repeated

risky visits to Harlem, Brian is increasingly drawn to Clare, and she to him. Although Irene has no actual proof, and rationally reminds herself "Brian doesn't care for ladies," (P 173) she convinces herself that Clare and Brian are having an affair.

Irene's suspicions about their affair begin to erode her confidence in her traditional role of wife and mother. She worries about the stability of her carefully constructed life, realizing that for Brian "she didn't count. She was, to him, only the mother of his sons. That was all. Alone she was nothing. Worse. An obstacle" (P 221). Because Irene's marriage and status in the community are so important, she becomes frantic at the thought that her husband might divorce her. Although divorces were becoming more frequent and easier to obtain during the Twenties, for Irene this option is unthinkable (Lynd 120-21).

Deborah McDowell contends that Irene merely imagines an affair between Clare and Brian, and Irene's growing suspicion about Clare and Brian coincides with her own attraction to Clare. As Irene's feelings for Clare are aroused, she denies them, projecting them instead onto Brian (xxi). Thadious Davis concedes the possibility that Irene is only guessing at an affair between Clare and Brian (319). However, what we learn about Irene as the betrayed wife is always seen through Irene's eyes, while Clare's perspective remains unvoiced.

By the novel's conclusion, Irene has started questioning whether her need for security had been achieved at the sacrifice of "happiness, love or some wild ecstasy that she had never known . . . ? And did too much striving, too much faith in safety and permanence, unfit one for those other things?" (P 235) As the

sexual tension between Clare, Brian and Irene takes on palpable reality, it becomes for Irene a "live thing pressing against her" (P 237). The result of that anxiety, Ammons observes, is that "Irene clearly needs Clare dead. She is too frightening, threatening and sexual--too unsafe--for the conventional bourgeois black woman" (Stories 191).

When Clare's husband learns of her blackness, he confronts her, precipitating the novel's crisis, which leaves Clare dead and Irene's actions suspect. When Irene disappears through a window questions are raised. Did Clare jump or fall, or did Irene push her? Ammons comments: "to say that Clare jumped is the same as to say that Irene pushed her and vice-versa" (Stories 191). Thadious Davis echoes her assessment, observing that when Irene kills Clare, she is also destroying a "rival part of herself" (321). By the novel's conclusion Irene has been transformed into Clare's double, prepared to "do anything, hurt anybody, throw anything away" (P 210) to preserve her world. However, as Charles Larson notes, Brian's absence from the novel's final scene indicates a possibility that Irene has lost the secure position she fought so hard to keep (86).

If one accepts the theory of Irene's sexual attraction to Clare, one can also point to Irene's inability to cope with such passion. By killing Clare she both banishes forbidden erotic feelings that represent just as powerful a threat to her marriage as an affair between Brian and Clare. At the novel's conclusion, although Irene is stunned at Clare's death and tries to convince herself of its accidental nature, she is also finally unremorseful. Although Clare's death frees Irene from her

worries, if one accepts the theory that Irene pushed Clare, then Irene can never escape guilty knowledge of her actions. In Mary Youman's words "In preserving her . . . security, Irene has committed the ultimate inhumanity -- murder" (239).

When Larsen contrasts the limitations of traditional gender roles against the risks of breaking away from those more conventional behaviors, her conclusion is ambivalent. Neither Irene with her sexually repressed energies channelled into familial and community obligations, nor Clare with her sexual daring provides an answer for how women can and should deal with sexual feelings.

Ellen Glasgow raised similar questions in her novels. A Southern aristocrat whose major books were set in Virginia, Glasgow's career, like Wharton's, spanned both sides of the twentieth century. Like Wharton and Larsen, Glasgow explored changing female sexual standards and the new definitions of women's roles that emerged in the Twenties. In such novels as Virginia (1913), Barren Ground (1925), The Romantic Comedians (1926), and They Stooped to Folly (1929), Glasgow used her satirical talents to confront and challenge Southern Victorian ideals.

In They Stooped to Folly Glasgow examines the shifting sexual code, critiquing both Twenties conduct and Victorian hypocrisies and prohibitions as they manifested themselves in postwar America's social and moral life. By examining the sexual conduct and transgressions of three generations of middle-class women, Glasgow shows how the definition of female ruin is culturally created (Saunders 22). Focusing on women's altering

sexual behavior as an index to changing times in the post World War I era, Glasgow reveals a "back-ground of forsaken standards" against which Queenborough's ruined women are judged (Measure 238).

Seen through the eyes of Virginus Littlepage, World War I has created a "witches' sabbath of released desires" (TSF 5).⁴ As a member of an older generation commenting on a new age, Virginus voices the conflict between old and new behavioral standards for women, particularly for white, southern middle-class women. Although he admits that the world was never fair to women, he nevertheless laments the decline of "Victorian modesty," (136) and recalls the Victorian age as "an epoch when womanhood was exalted from a biological fact into a miraculous power" (13). Educated to respect women who had not "stooped to folly," (13) but trying to understand modern trends, Virginus Littlepage balances contemporary women's looser moral conduct against Victorian standards. His reflections add to the Twenties debate surrounding modern woman's reach for sexual freedom.

Glasgow's first ruined woman is Aunt Agatha Littlepage, a spinster whose life has been sacrificed to the repressive Victorian moral principles of the 1870s. Characterized by a reviewer as "a fallen dumpling," (Smith 60), she has also been called a fallen woman who wears "an invisible scarlet letter with commendable humility" (Myer 43). Although she is virtually speechless throughout the novel, Aunt Agatha's story becomes a pointed example of a punitive society's unfair response to female sin.

Aunt Agatha's transgression with an already married man

results in an out-of-wedlock child. Following a moral code in which the "womanly woman" withholds her seducer's identity to her own detriment, she uncomplainingly accepts a fate in which she is ostracized from polite society. Her seducer, on the other hand, remains an active participant in Queenborough's social life. Aunt Agatha's fate is determined by the Victorian double standard, and reflects women's powerlessness in a society where men define the standards. Male sexual appetite is allowed to be satisfied without any consequences. Female sexual desire is seen as a sign of "mental affliction" meriting punishment (85).

In the more accepting postwar moral atmosphere, Aunt Agatha is liberated from her attic prison. Unresentful about her wasted life, she finds limited consolation in eating banana sundaes, which Raper humorously calls "a compulsion we dare not examine too closely" (Garden 133). Taking advantage of the technology which made movies into an increasingly popular leisure time activity, celluloid excitement becomes a substitute for Aunt Agatha's missed life.

While Aunt Agatha regrets her fall, Amy Dalrymple, a ruined woman of the 1890s, is somewhat cavalier about her stained reputation. Divorced for immoral behavior, abandoned by her lover, rumored to have had affairs in Europe, Amy Dalrymple's life has been clouded by a series of transgressions. Beautiful in the voluptuous Gibson Girl style, Amy Dalrymple is a woman who in another time "might have been a cherished courtesan" (Rouse 103). She has been seen both as "the goodhearted woman whose private life will not bear scrutiny by the "'virtuous'" (McDowell 173), and the "town tramp" (Wagner, Glasgow 82).

Amy Dalrymple is as calculating, aggressive and hard as the most modern young woman, although she seems to be as submissive and pliable as the Victorian Southern ideal. She cynically defines men as inadequate lovers, plainly admitting she would have been better served monetarily if she had a perfected card-sense to fall back on, rather than having to rely on her looks.

Amy's predicament shows the relationship of economic reform to female emancipation. Despite her sexual freedom, Amy's financial dependence keeps her from exercising control over her life. Unlike the young working women who were entering the labor force in the Twenties, Amy lacks the training and education that could allow her to become self-supporting. Amy Dalrymple's motto is any port in a storm, and her only option is to wearily offer her sexual wares to still another suitor.

While Amy Dalrymple has to depend on men for her financial well-being, Milly Burden, the ruined woman of the 1920s, insists on controlling her own life. Unlike Aunt Agatha and even Amy Dalrymple, she refuses to accept a Victorian code with its implicit belief that "feminine human nature possessed no rights, only duties" (113). Recovered from the aftereffects of her failed premarital affair and the birth of an illegitimate child, Milly defiantly refuses to see herself as a ruined woman, and her insistence on her right to sin sets her apart from Aunt Agatha and Amy Dalrymple.

Kathryn Lee Seidel sees Milly as an unappealing young woman, but acknowledges her role as a "modern foil" for both Agatha Littlepage and Amy Dalrymple (90). Marcelle Thiebaut writes that

Milly is a one-dimensional character whose brashness is proof that Glasgow views young people as "hard, shallow and egotistical" (142-43). However, an early reviewer applauds Milly's behavior, labeling her as an "entirely modern young miss, who rides triumphant on the phrases that her life is her own" (Hutchinson 2). Still another reviewer writes of Milly: she is "completely of her day and her generation, she is at once the exemplar and the justification of youth in revolt" (Loveman 19).

Young, imprudent and passionately independent, Milly believes she has a right to control her destiny. She is described in the novel as "the kind of woman whose every act, every gesture is instinct with vitality; the kind of woman who, whether she was innocent or guilty, used to be called dangerous" (234). Attractive in an unconventional way, flat-chested in the new Twenties style, she has power over men, drawing them with a thrilling voice filled with "youth and magic and a breathless longing for flight!" (TSF 235). Her appearance is striking, even exciting, and when she wears a red cardigan it is associated with her "carnal appeal" (Ibid. 235).

Milly Burden overturns Queenborough's moral code by having an illegitimate child. When her lover abandons her, she is unashamed. Nonchalant about her sexual misbehavior, she brazenly admits to sneaking out at night to meet her lover. Milly has discarded principles she regards as obsolete and ineffective, demanding to experience life first hand, and not through the dictates of failed Victorian theory. For Milly, the forced isolation of Aunt Agatha would seem absurd. Reflecting the reckless attitude of the postwar generation, she concludes that

"the regret for what you have had doesn't last nearly so long as the regret for what you have missed" (TSF 40). When asked why she hadn't waited to get married before she had sex, her answer mirrors the younger generation's new morality and its casual attitude toward premarital sex: ". . . if you are in love, then you know that nothing else really matters" (Ibid. 39). Milly refuses to be controlled by the Southern tradition or victimized by her experiences. A self-supporting career woman of the Twenties whose secretarial skills give her financial independence, Milly assumes she can put the past behind her and she confidently expects to rebuild her life.

If Agatha Littlepage, Amy Dalrymple and Milly Burden express three different stages in women's movement toward increased sexual freedom, then Victoria Littlepage represents the Victorian standard against which they are contrasted. Saunders sees Victoria as "Glasgow's indictment of the Victorian myth" (31). For Linda Wagner she is the central character (Glasgow 85).

Old fashioned in appearance, trained to become "an edifying example", Victoria reflects 1890s' styles and manners (TSF 210). She sees herself as "a power for good," and in keeping with expectations of the eighteen nineties believes that woman's mission is to "soothe the tired brow and tame the predatory nature of man" (Ibid. 210). Full of unselfish goodness, she is sweet, modest and in her devotion to her husband and family embodies the stereotypically perfect Victorian wife.

Victoria's attitude toward sex reflects the belief that there is little place for female sexual desire in marriage, unless it is linked to procreation. She sees her mission as

"designed to curb the lower nature of man" (TSF 12) and defines her marriage as "an agreeable duty" rather than a pleasure (Ibid. 185). She is "superior to the magnetism of sex" (TSF 267) and grateful that Virginius does not have "that other side to his nature" (Ibid. 92). Conceding that in the thirty-one years of her marriage she had "remained virgin in sentiment" (TSF 185), she remains untouched by men and marriage, although she believes in marriage as a sacred institution. She prides herself on being a civilizing force, a guardian of morality and the family, and is convinced that she has made her husband completely happy.

Victoria has difficulty accepting liberated Twenties' manners and is convinced of a wife's moral influence. She wholeheartedly believes that America's future success rests on the shoulders of mothers, and is shocked by the idea of moral relativity. But beneath her respectable veneer Victoria Littlepage questions the Victorian ideals to which she has devoted her life. She questions why women should be held responsible for safeguarding men's morals, and wonders what qualities make a woman "the right kind of woman?" (TSF 146). Victoria's instincts eventually lead her to become "subversive of the morality she incarnates" (Frederick McDowell 174).

Beneath her chaste exterior Victoria Littlepage has unfulfilled longings that verge on sexual fantasy, and her disillusionments with marriage and sex echo her husband's disappointments with "the pleasures of love" (TSF 13). Secretly wishing her husband had "cultivated a lower nature," she ignores the role her own cool response has played (Ibid. 210). In reviewing her past she wonders whether she has missed "some finer

essence of living, some purer distillation of joy" (151). She remembers a recurrent youthful dream, full of sexual imagery. In this dream she had allowed herself the impassioned response she had denied herself in life:

she had imagined herself to be in the midst of an immense level plain, caught up suddenly into the thunder of galloping horses. Far in the distance, she had first heard them approaching, while a liquid fire ran in her veins, and she had asked herself, "Is it he? Is he coming at last?" Then, in her sleep, she was lifted by an arm like the wind, and borne away, with the wild horses, into a sunset that was like the fire at the heart of an opal. (TSF 151)

Unable to separate herself from the era that has shaped her life, haunted by the recurring thought that in her marriage the "secret core of her being" had been left unsatisfied (TSF 151), Victoria unsuccessfully tries convincing herself that she has been happy. The strict Victorian system has encouraged a frigidity that "has robbed her of some things that she is too repressed even to identify" (Seidel 91).

In They Stooped to Folly Glasgow strongly objected to punitive Victorian attitudes toward sexually active women. However, at the same time she rejected modern trends toward more permissive female sexual behavior. None of Glasgow's women achieve real happiness in the novel. They live in a morally uncertain world in which criteria for appropriate behavior are disappearing. Although in They Stooped to Folly, the Twenties are shown as exhilarating times for young, sexually active women,

are shown as exhilarating times for young, sexually active women, they are finally also shown as confusing, an era in which there are no easy answers to questions regarding new female roles.

The Twenties liberated social atmosphere presented young middle-and-upper-class women with moral choices revolving around female sexual expression. These exciting female freedoms were dramatized in such fictional works as Glasgow's They Stood to Folly, Larsen's Passing, and Wharton's "The Old Maid," and The Age of Innocence.

In these texts, Glasgow, Larsen and Wharton used literary doubles to examine and debate questions surrounding female sexuality, frequently creating emancipated and passionate women, often placing them side by side with their morally scrupulous and chaste counterparts. Wharton, Larsen and Glasgow pointed to strictly defined and enforced gender roles, then showed how these cultural stereotypes were gradually being exploded in the new moral climate. While acknowledging the shortcomings of Victorian practices and repressed female sexuality in their fiction, Wharton, Glasgow and Larsen also recognized the dangerous impact of female sexual expression on existing patriarchal structures.

Despite intense debate over emerging and competing sexual standards, Glasgow in They Stood to Folly, Larsen in Passing, Wharton in "The Old Maid," and The Age of Innocence were finally unable to reach decisive conclusions about the role of female sexual expression in the Twenties. Their ambivalence toward their sexually repressed and their sexually liberated heroines revealed uncertainty about women's new sexual freedoms. However, misgivings over women's new freedoms were not limited

exclusively to female writers of the Twenties. Questions about women's freedoms also surfaced in the novels of such male writers as Dreiser, Fitzgerald and Hemingway.

Notes

1. Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence, 1920; New York: Scribner's, 1968 . All references are to this edition.
2. Edith Wharton, "The Old Maid, Old New York 1924; New York: Berkley, 1981. All references are to this edition.
3. Nella Larsen, Quicksand and Passing, ed. Deborah E. McDowell 1929; New York: Vintage-Random, 1972 . All references are to this edition.
4. Ellen Glasgow, They Stopped at Folly, New York: Doubleday, 1929 . All references are to this edition.

Chapter III

Style, Image and the Flapper: A Male Perspective

In the years following World War I, young middle-class Americans became trend setters. Attempting to shake off the grim disillusionment that followed the war, they replaced irrelevant Victorian norms and genteel manners with a new era's brash, irreverent spirit. Shrugging off the taboos of their parents' generation, rebellious young middle-class Americans cited Freud's authority to initiate and rationalize changes in sexual behavior. During these heady times, excitement and pleasure became their goals.

In 1929, Robert and Helen Lynd completed their groundbreaking sociological survey, Middletown. Their study illuminated subtle changes in Twenties sexual norms, particularly among young, white middle-class women. Their objectively gathered data about young women's changing sexual mores were subsequently corroborated by Katherine Davis, Lewis Terman, Phyllis Blanchard and Caroline Mannasses, and Alfred Kinsey. These studies confirmed that a female sexual revolution had really taken place in actual behavior, not simply in public perception.

The new woman's appearance coincided with the emergence of the American cult of youth and was exemplified by the flapper. Initially the flapper style was an urban, upper-class phenomenon, which filtered down from debutantes and college students to the middle and working classes, spreading from coast to coast, and into small cities and rural areas. Flappers' ages ranged from

twelve to thirty. At times, even forty-year-old women effected flapper behavior (Cowley, Exile 64). Usually, though, the flapper was between seventeen and twenty-one, worldly, fashionable and in many ways identifiably modern (Hoffman 111).

Although not all American middle-class women were flappers, Kenneth Yellis attests to the influence of flapper styles, writing "what was true of the flapper was true of fashionable women fairly generally, and somewhat less true of a whole range of women not strictly fashionable, but not totally out of it either" (50). Sears, Roebuck catalogues which provided women in areas inaccessible to urban department stores with clothing, carried apparel that was "no more than three months" behind what was being shown in New York department stores (Ibid. 50-51). In small cities such as Middletown, the flapper influence was felt as Middletown women and girls began shortening their skirts to the knees, emphasizing their legs with sheer silk stockings, exposing their arms, and discarding corsets to reveal "more of their bodies' "natural contours" (Lynd 159). While these clothing styles may have appeared to be "a violation of morals and good taste," at a high-school revue, many Middletown women nevertheless went stockingless and openly wore dresses whose backs were bare to the waist (Ibid. 160).

The flapper's giddy lifestyle promised adventure, opportunity and freedom. Pursuing new experiences, she sought not only to be with men in the workplace, but to play with them after work. She wanted to be not only a dancing partner, but a smoking and drinking partner as well. She wanted to be sophisticated and shocking, while remaining resistant to shock

herself. Flappers bobbed their hair, kissed and petted and astonished their tradition-bound parents with their audacity and feverish activity levels. Their drastically changed appearances signified departures from traditional morality for some women. For others the new fashionable look reflected only superficial change and was just another strategy for attracting men. Of course, there were many girls who did not "'behave like that,'" but "there was enough fire beneath the smoke of these sensational revelations to make the Problem of the younger generation a topic of anxious discussion from coast to coast" (Allen 92-3).

Newspapers and magazines familiarized the public with fun-loving flappers. While the mass media recorded the flapper's activities and turned the flapper into a media sensation, important male novelists such as Dreiser, Fitzgerald and Hemingway began responding to those images. Almost as if they were reporting social history, they described the erosion of established values, using their novels to fill in broad outlines of flappers' stereotypical conduct found in newspapers and magazines.

Glasgow, Larsen and Wharton had questioned the old sexual order's relevance, its strict rules of gender-appropriate behavior and the difficulty of abandoning traditional sexual roles. As members of an older generation whose own lives had been shaped by Victorian standards, Glasgow and Wharton had examined female sexual practices from a dual perspective. Having witnessed the shift in manners and morality, they also remembered the past. Their experiences allowed them to judge both.

In contrast Fitzgerald and Hemingway, belonged to a group of

writers whose careers flourished after World War I. Malcolm Cowley described their emergence onto the literary scene:

Instead of being Puritans in the cant sense of the word, many of them were frankly sensual, given to praising sexual freedom and justifying drunkenness.... Instead of belonging to the North Atlantic seaboard, most of them boasted of having roots in the Middle West or the South. . . . But most of all the new literary movement was a revolt of the lower middle classes against conventions that did not fit their personal lives and that prevented them from telling the truth about their world. (Tradition 16)

Representing a restless new generation lacking allegiance to the genteel tradition's Victorian ideals, they created female characters whose attitudes and behaviors reflected the Twenties sexually permissive atmosphere. Kenneth Lynn acknowledges that Hemingway's fiction emerged directly from "the sexual turmoil of the twenties" (318), while Alfred Kazin describes Fitzgerald's treatment of women in the Twenties as follows:

As the flapper supplanted the suffragette, the cake-eater, the earnest young uplifter of 1913, Fitzgerald came in with the modernism that flew in on short skirts, puffed audaciously at its cigarette, evinced a frantic interest in sport and sex, in drinking prohibited liquor, and in defying the ancient traditions. (Grounds 317)

For John Peale Bishop, Fitzgerald and Hemingway fiction had the viewpoint," and "more than any others who wrote in prose, they

succeeded in communicating their emotional attitudes to their contemporaries" (299).

Theodore Dreiser was not a contemporary of either Fitzgerald or Hemingway. However, Sinclair Lewis recognized Dreiser's pioneering spirit, calling him the man who "cleared the trail from Victorian . . . timidity and gentility in American fiction to honesty and boldness and passion of life" (Cowley, Tradition 7). Like those younger writers, Dreiser's novels were often filled with images of young, sexual women experimenting with new sexual options. Even today, Dreiser seems modern because of his "sexual radicalism" and ability to portray women's erotic lives (Weir 65-66).

As early as 1900 Dreiser's novel Sister Carrie had been denounced for its objectionable morality and obscenity, and for allowing Carrie Meeber's immoral behavior to go unpunished. At that time Dreiser had been unable to persuade his readers of "the power of sex," but two decades later, a changing social climate made his sexual frankness more acceptable (Grebstein 9). Now along with Fitzgerald and Hemingway, he began examining evolving female sexual roles and the impact of loosening moral codes.

Fitzgerald's, Dreiser's and Hemingway's novels lacked the intense moral debate over emerging and competing sexual standards found in Glasgow's, Larsen's and Wharton's fictions. Instead, in the postwar era such novels as Fitzgerald's, This Side of Paradise and The Beautiful and Damned, Dreiser's An American Tragedy and Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises explored ways of representing the flapper's image and the sexual aura surrounding her behavior.

More often than not in Dreiser's, Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's novels, it became difficult to reconcile flapper charm with slightly cynical, unsentimental and sometimes even bitchy female behavior. Flapper moral license and sexual freedoms were portrayed with ambivalent combinations of authorly approval and disapproval. In principle, Dreiser, Fitzgerald and Hemingway embraced and popularized flappers and their new ways. In practice they discredited them over and over again, channeling their edginess about these new women into caustic, critical portraits of the new woman's bold lifestyle. While flappers were often introduced as glamorous young women, they were also shown as demanding women. While the media had frequently presented flappers as charming, male novelists often pictured them as shallow and self-absorbed. While their beauty and style were supposed to be notable characteristics, what often emerged was vanity and selfishness. While flappers were believed to be spontaneous, free spirits welcoming adventure, they were also shown as flighty, flippant and shrewd.

The flapper's image dominated the Twenties, impressing itself on the imaginations of trendy young women eager to experiment with new sexual freedoms. Flappers' emancipated behavior spurred Fitzgerald to remark in This Side of Paradise that the cities between New York and Chicago appeared to be "one vast juvenile intrigue" (59). Girls who were little more than children began setting styles later imitated by American women of various ages and from diverse walks of life. As more women availed themselves of new social freedoms associated with flappers, the flapper style began to spread from big Eastern

cities to cities in the West and beyond into rural areas, filtering down from the monied classes into the middle and working classes. Mannerisms popularized by American youth were appropriated by adults, and by 1923 the older generation began taking over "the carnival," pushing the younger generation out of its starring role (Fitzgerald, Crack Up 15).

For many, Fitzgerald is the writer who most completely represents the Twenties spirit, and his novels, rooted in Jazz Age Culture, heightened public awareness of moral change. Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, far from the glittering east-coast social world that later fascinated him. Drawn to the rich and powerful social set, and in particular to young, wealthy women, Fitzgerald often represented their changing lifestyles in his fiction.

Writing of Fitzgerald, Malcolm Cowley remarked that in an era of changing morality, Fitzgerald "set himself the task of recording the changes" (Flowering 30). James Tuttleton acknowledged Fitzgerald's instinctive understanding of female rebellion against sexual restraints, but believed Fitzgerald was "charged wrongly" with engineering the sexual revolution (278), while Perosa contends that rather than being the "mouthpiece" of the Jazz Age, Fitzgerald was its "accuser" (42).

Fitzgerald defined the flapper for the American reading public. In doing so he chronicled the spread of women's changing sexual attitudes and practices, writing about female sexual experimentation as if it had already achieved widespread reality. Although women had gradually been gaining new social and sexual freedoms since 1910, Brian Way noted that "Fitzgerald recognized

sooner than anyone else, that the nature of their advance had changed radically with the coming of the Jazz Age" (10).

Although the sexual behavior of Fitzgerald's female characters is neither explicit nor shocking by today's standards, in the Twenties his open reference to and discussion of female sexual activity marked a distinct departure from the more reserved genteel tradition. This Side of Paradise, and The Beautiful and Damned reflect "gender-related concerns characteristic of his era," particularly as they applied to sexual matters (Sarah Fryer 1). Paradoxically, despite his flappers' iconoclastic behaviors, the novels themselves contain "little consummated genital love" (Fiedler 304) and are actually quite "innocent of mere 'sex'" (Trilling 198). His flappers are often just concerned with "'kissing'" as an act "dissociated from any other physical action" (Mizener 105).

In This Side of Paradise and The Beautiful and Damned, Fitzgerald is ambivalent about new female roles, and his underlying disapproval is sometimes more consistent with Victorian standards than new, emancipated values. As Fitzgerald's flappers break loose from previous generations' sexual restrictions, they are portrayed as excitingly attractive in their new liberated conduct, but they are also shown as tarnished by their self-centered, calculating behaviors.

Fitzgerald frequently judged his female characters "severely" (McKay 311). He routinely wreaked "mayhem" on them (Hindus 32), and candidly admitted that his novels were characterized by a "touch of disaster" which caused the "ruin" of his "lovely young creatures" (Crack Up 87). Fitzgerald's flappers

regularly emerge as "shoddy products" of a materialistic era (Elizabeth Aldrich 164). On the other hand, Fitzgerald admired his characters' glamour and beauty, which for Fitzgerald revolved around Twenties' female styles. For Fitzgerald, ideal beauty was "a ragtime kid, a flapper, a jazz-baby and a baby vamp" (BD 29).

Fitzgerald's flappers have been called "spirited, ambitious, and outspoken" women who "face a world of changing morals and manners with both courage and trepidation" (Sarah Fryer 6, 17). They have been labeled "innocent" and "childlike" despite their daring behaviors (Eble 64), and they have been seen as expressing Fitzgerald's "deep fantasy about beautiful, emotionally inaccessible, wealthy and socially desirable women" (Tuttleton 279).

When This Side of Paradise exploded onto the American scene in 1920, it first "announced the lost generation" (Kazin, Grounds 316) then, as Glenway Wescott retrospectively wrote in 1941, it "haunted the decade like a song" (118). Captivating and shocking the American reading public with its allusions to women's altering sexuality, the novel has been read variously as "a gesture of indefinite revolt" (Wilson, Shores 28), "a statement of the new morality," (Lehan, Fitzgerald 64), and a "social history . . . a humorous, vain and naive attempt to portray a humorous, vain and naive generation" (Sklar 36). It has been seen as an immature effort, at times overly sentimental, at other times "cynical to the point of pretension" (Eble 67).

Rather than foreshadowing the Twenties, Robert Sklar argues, This Side of Paradise evaluated conduct and manners present as early as 1910-1920, the novel's actual time period (36).

Fitzgerald's own words confirm Sklar's opinion, but Fitzgerald also emphatically noted that early liberated sexual practices had been limited to the affluent. Not until 1920 "did the veil finally fall," only then did the Jazz Age really "flower " (Crack Up 15).

Burton Rascoe, a reviewer of This Side of Paradise, noted that the novel showed that "Victorian checks, taboos, and reticences are no longer in force among the flappers, the debutantes and collegians of the present generation" (5). Observing the novel's "healthy eroticism," another reviewer believed it revealed a "more or less a true picture of manners as they existed in the war period" (Coghlen 206). Still another reviewer called Fitzgerald the "first person to turn the spotlight on the flapper in the backseat on a lonely road . . . " (Butcher 196).

In This Side of Paradise, Fitzgerald portrays adolescent girls whose casual sexual experimentation and indifference toward sexual conventions helped shock a nation. Fitzgerald's American girls engage in sexually permissive behaviors, boldly assert their right to kiss and be kissed, and enjoy the "desperate adventure" of petting in automobiles (Crack Up 15). Although Fitzgerald maintained that flappers had generally become "passé by 1923" their images in his early novels and the new freedoms associated with flapper activities helped form the character of Twenties literature (Ibid. 29).

In This Side of Paradise Fitzgerald captured the flavor and concerns of the postwar sexual era, its youthful indifference to Victorian prohibitions and its breathless eagerness for social

and sexual freedom. Painting a picture of the Twenties female ideal, Fitzgerald showed the flapper in her various incarnations from "'belle'" to "'flirt'" to "'baby vamp'" (TSP 59).¹ Sexual experimentation was the norm for these girls, and they lived in a wayward world hidden from their parents. Fitzgerald writes, "None of the Victorian mothers . . . had any idea how casually their daughters were accustomed to be kissed" (TSP 58). For Victorian mothers, promiscuity was a trait reserved for lower-class servant girls who were "kissed first and proposed to afterward" (TSP 58). Now in the Twenties, the "American phenomenon, the 'petting party'" became increasingly popular among young middle class men and women (TSP 58). In an attempt to construe what had happened, Tuttleton observed, "generational attitudes" gradually began to replace "class attitudes" toward women's sexual freedoms (278).

Sexual experimentation is celebrated in This Side of Paradise, even by the very young. Amory Blaine's various love affairs give the novel its shape and form. Amory's first romance is with Myra St. Clare. Sklar humorously describes Amory's and Myra's encounter. "His thirteen-year old imagination conjures up for her thirteen-year old imagination a world of sin" (41). In a glimpse of early adolescent love-making, Myra St. Clare is surprisingly aggressive. She tries to hold Amory's hand, admits that her behavior is "awful," and dreams of telling her friends about kissing and being kissed (TSP 14). When Amory refuses, she is both humiliated and angry. Precocious, designing, and spoiled, she represents the new brazen ways of the pre-pubescent Junior High School flapper.

Several years later when Amory is a sophomore at Princeton, his romantic interest is Isabelle Borge, a sixteen-year-old girl who contradicts the phrase "sweet sixteen and never been kissed." Isabelle is shrewdly aware of her good looks and is a practiced flirt who keeps boys dangling on a string. An incarnation of the youthful flapper, she goes to dances, rides around in red Stutzes, and is keenly aware of her well-deserved reputation as a "Speed," a young woman who indiscriminately allows boys to kiss her.

Donaldson sees Fitzgerald's lovers as always competing for dominance (116). This is particularly true in Amory's relationship with Isabelle. When Amory and Isabelle first meet, each has been "coached" for the other and each is aware of the other's reputation (TSP 64). Although Amory is the actual aggressor, Isabelle is no passive partner, and she is determined not to "lose the leadership" in their relationship (TSP 64). Although they both anticipate experimenting sexually, to their mutual disappointment no opportunity for real kissing materializes. Isabelle feels particularly "deprived" (TSP 70). At a later meeting when Isabelle rebuffs Amory, her refusal to kiss him stems not from "moral grounds" but from pique (TSP 92).

Just as Amory isn't really interested in Isabelle, Isabelle sees Amory as just another conquest. She is the youthful flapper whose statement "I'll be anything I want" really means she is determined to do anything she wants (TSP 91). Despite her "intense physical magnetism" (Ibid. 63), and although she is described as exotic and excitable, Isabelle is not really exciting. While Amory thrills at the thought of her touch,

Isabelle is essentially cold. She engages in many of the activities associated with the flapper, but is not really fun-loving. Her appeal remains a mystery. Sarcastically described as someone who "had walked with an artificial gait at nine and a half" (TSP 66), scornfully praised for the remarkable things she "could do socially with one idea" (Ibid. 64), Isabelle comes across as affected, insincere and vain. She is a girl more juvenile than womanly, interested mainly in exhibiting her power as an adolescent femme fatale. For Isabelle sexual experimentation is an ordinary part of female life.

Amory's next romance is with nineteen year old Rosalind Connage, who is portrayed in a "rather cruel" manner (Hindus 25). The most fully developed of Amory's girlfriends, she is the essential flapper whose behavior is in keeping with women's new freedoms. Young, spoiled, and accustomed to wealth, she enjoys experimenting with sex. In contrast to the more self-conscious Isabelle, she is flippant, openly admits her faults and doesn't take herself too seriously. In a blanket statement about women that also illuminates her own nature, Rosalind claims to hate girls because they have the qualities she dislikes most in herself--"incipient meanness, conceit, cowardice and petty dishonesty" (TSP 171).

While Isabelle has declared that she will be whatever she wants, Rosalind is determined to get exactly what she wants. Her philosophy is "carpe-diem," and Fitzgerald describes her as "by no means a model character" (TSP 171). Like many of her contemporaries, she smokes, drinks and is used to being kissed. A flapper who uses cosmetics to enhance her appearance, she

treats the men who love her indifferently and is secure about her ability to keep them on a string.

Rosalind is unapologetically mercenary. Although confident of her sexual appeal, Rosalind, like many of Fitzgerald's heroines, is acutely conscious that she is reliant on men to fulfill her material needs, and she views her dates as business appointments. Sarah Beebe Fryer believes that Rosalind's joking manner conceals a sad awareness that she is prostituting herself to find a wealthy husband (24-25). Referring to her extravagant nature, Rosalind is both pragmatic and blunt about her need to make a moneyed marriage. Aware of the role her looks will play in capturing a rich husband, Rosalind calls herself, "'Rosalind, Unlimited.' Fifty-one shares, name, good-will, and everything goes at \$25,000 a year." (TSP 174). While Rosalind claims she must be free, she acts conventionally and takes her mother's advice to make money the deciding factor in her marriage.

Rosalind's portrait is ambiguously presented. Completely self-centered, Rosalind likes "pretty things," dreads responsibility, and is youthful enough to consider tanning her legs one of her biggest concerns (TSP 196). The disdain elicited by Rosalind's selfishness is tempered with admiration for Rosalind's honesty and self knowledge about what she needs for happiness. While Rosalind can be condemned for being shallow and mercenary, she can also be admired for her beauty and high spirits, her courage and zest for life. While Rosalind seems to be superficial and self-absorbed, Andrew Hook excuses her reactions, attributing them to youthful preoccupations (26).

Amory is attracted to and frightened by eighteen-year-old

Eleanor Savage, his last romantic interest. Eleanor feels frustrated and trapped because she is a woman who wants to be independent. While Rosalind is seeking a rich husband, Eleanor defiantly says that she has never met a man that she would marry. While Rosalind loves a physical challenge, Eleanor's behavior can be senseless and tinged with bravado.

Eleanor can be recognized as a flapper by her noticeably bobbed hair, promiscuous behavior and longing to avail herself of the opportunities open to men. She is wild, and there is a touch of the bohemian about her. She travels with a fast crowd, drinking cocktails in limousines and shocking her elders, as opposed to a more traditional Rosalind, who ultimately follows her mother's advice.

Eleanor is modern. She is "hipped on Freud" (238) and jaded about sex, despite her relative youth. She is a non-conformist whose belief in nothing represents to Sklar "the opposite pole of social conformity--the unfettered romantic will" (53). Her self-destructive nature and crazy streak manifest themselves when she tries to throw herself off a cliff. In Eleanor's subsequent outburst she is portrayed as close to the edge not only of the cliff but of sanity and hysteria. Full of nervous energy, scornful of an older generation's values, Eleanor is admired for her fearlessness, but her intensity and hysteria are offensive.

After his experiences with Eleanor, Amory recognizes that for him "the problem of evil had solidified . . . into the problem of sex" (TSP 280). Further explaining Amory's feelings, Fitzgerald writes that for Amory evil and beauty had become "inseparably linked," particularly "the beauty of women" because

of its "many associations with license and indulgence" (Ibid.). By firmly linking beauty and sex with evil, and by associating beauty with indulgence, Fitzgerald questions whether female beauty should be idealized, and whether female sexual freedoms could ultimately become a destructive force. Finally, Fitzgerald's words reverberate with mixed feelings about the permissive female behaviors he was ostensibly championing.

In This Side of Paradise Fitzgerald described a restless society in which young women openly sought to overturn traditional gender roles. From thirteen-year-old Myra St. Claire's puppy love to Eleanor Savage's intensity, Fitzgerald's flappers are young, rich and, except for Rosalind, exist in a world where parents have little influence. Fitzgerald's flappers possess a daring that allows them to engage in behavior shocking to their Victorian parents, and they dance and date in a world where parental presence is rarely acknowledged.

Fitzgerald seems to cheer his flappers on for setting new styles and appropriating new freedoms. At first glance he praises them for their place in the vanguard and for their fearlessness in overturning societal standards. Yet Fitzgerald also allows his ambivalence toward such women to emerge by showing the very real flaws lying just beneath their beautifully made-up surfaces.

The success of This Side of Paradise largely came from Fitzgerald's exciting conception of the flapper and her liberated conduct. In his next novel, The Beautiful and Damned (1922), Fitzgerald again focused on a pleasure-loving flapper, but studied her from the more sober perspective of wasted youth and

failed marriage. If in This Side of Paradise Fitzgerald attempted to present an ideal, in The Beautiful and Damned his disappointment and disillusion with this ideal began to emerge. Although Fitzgerald was still attracted by the possibilities of the flapper, in The Beautiful and Damned he focused more closely on the superficiality and basic insincerity motivating much flapper conduct. By turning his attention to the unmarried Gloria Gilbert in the novel's first sections, Fitzgerald reinforces his glamorous characterization of flappers seen in This Side Of Paradise. However, through Gloria's meaningless engagements and boredom with life and men, Fitzgerald also exposes what can lie beneath the carefree facade of flapper mannerisms.

Like Rosalind Connage in This Side of Paradise, Gloria Gilbert trades on her beauty. She participates in new social and sexual freedoms largely unknown to women of her mother's generation. Like Rosalind, she is vain and self-centered, and like Rosalind she is ambivalently portrayed. Unlike Rosalind, who aspires toward a monied marriage, Gloria loathes the thought of marriage and its responsibilities. Gloria thinks married women are "grubworms" who "crawl on their bellies through colorless marriages" (BD 147). She rails against dedicating her life to "posterity," and shrinks from a fate which dooms her to "think in terms of milk, oatmeal, nurse, diapers...." (Ibid.).² Like Rosalind she ultimately realizes that marriage is necessary to her financial well-being, but unlike Rosalind, Gloria is outspokenly opposed to assuming a traditional role.

In his review, Henry Seidel Canby called Gloria "an original

creation, frightening in her truth," ("Tragedy" 64), while John Peale Bishop labeled her a flapper with a past "monotonous in its promiscuity" ("Flapper" 71). Gloria is a vamp whose constant demands are enervating. Although never boring to her many male admirers, and although fondly described as "an authentic and original character" (BD 49), Gloria is alternately presented as disagreeable, rude, and tiresome. She is more openly sexual than any of the characters in This Side of Paradise, but she is also older. Although she looks eighteen, she is twenty-two, a recognized beauty whose absorption in her appearance stems from a perception that her good looks are her only "negotiable currency" (Sarah Fryer 34).

Gloria Gilbert is a "new, more dangerous incarnation of the flapper" (Perosa 38), "an aging debutante fatigued by social pressures" (Sarah Fryer 33). James Miller calls her "a superficially sophisticated girl whose only virtue is her great beauty" (59-60), while Hindus sees her as "profoundly nihilistic" and possessed of an "incurably narcissistic personality" (30). For Lehan there are two Glorias: "One is a femme fatale and the other is the slightly schizophrenic girl who moves between states of exaggerated excitement and melancholy pouting" (Fitzgerald 111-12). One reviewer calls Gloria "a selfish, spoiled irresolute girl of great beauty of face and none of soul" ("Dance of the Midgets" 53). She has been seen as a woman who exploits her "ephemeral youth," and who inevitably "fizzles out" (Podis 143). In her defense, Barry Gross calls her "Fitzgerald's best female characterization, his most detailed and developed golden girl," his "most substantial female" (47, 49).

Gloria smokes, drinks, and acts irresponsibly and uncontrollably. She is full of "tremendous nervous tension," (BD 157), is frenetically active, and resents people who advise her how to behave (Ibid. 59). She is well known throughout the country, is nicknamed "Coast-to-Coast Gloria," and sees her beauty and youth as assets entitling her to whatever she wants (Ibid. 68). Although she boasts of having a man's mind (BD 134), she is described as not having "a brain in her head" (Ibid. 35). She is a trend setter, daring to bob her hair before it is fashionable. She chews on gumdrops to keep from being bored, and is only stimulated when discussion revolves around her beauty. She is the most sought after flapper in New York and is part of the fast set's up-to-the-minute culture.

Gloria belongs to the wave of women reaching for sexual freedom. Having caught Gloria several times acting "very much engaged indeed" (BD 80), Mrs. Gilbert each time has falsely, and to her disappointment, assumed that such behavior presumes a forthcoming engagement. By the time of her marriage, Gloria admits to kissing many men, is unbothered by the taint of promiscuity such behavior confers on her, and laughs off a comment that she is little more than "a public drinking glass" (BD 182). Although she was sexually permissive before her marriage, once she is married she rejects casual sex, because "the lure of promiscuity . . . had no call or promise" for her (Ibid. 368).

In The Crack-Up, Fitzgerald observed that girls living in the Twenties "dramatized themselves as flappers" (15). Certainly Isabelle, Rosalind and Eleanor in This Side of Paradise were

self-consciously aware actresses performing before a male audience. Gloria Gilbert is also an actress with what Perosa calls "a romantic conception of the world" (37). Contemplating marriage, she decides hers will be a "live, lovely, glamorous performance" and she eagerly hopes unsatisfying party life will be replaced by this new dream (BD 147).

The initial years of Gloria's "flapper marriage" turn into a succession of wild alcoholic parties (Stallings 203). However, in her marriage Gloria is forced to grow up and leave her purposeless flapper days behind. She becomes more mature and responsible, admitting the failure of her dreams. At the novel's end she has become, at thirty, a caretaker for her shattered, invalid husband. As a flapper, Gloria had been presented as selfish and high strung, her every whim gratified. After several years of marriage, her once celebrated "blowly clean" (BD 131) beauty has deteriorated into a "dyed and unclean" look (Ibid. 448).

Gloria's grief over the disappearance of her "pretty face" (BD 404) causes McCay to accuse Gloria of sinking "into a kind of mental and moral decay" (316). Gross, on the other hand, concludes that Gloria rises above her sorrow, and refuses to be "compromised by the meaningless world" (49). His claim is also somewhat exaggerated. Gloria has tried to make the best of difficult circumstances, and by the novel's end she has mobilized her energies. Although she has no training or education, she hopes her beauty will get her a movie role. While she is unsuccessful, she has at least tried to get a job. The woman who had once rejected domesticity and craved excitement is now living

what might be called a quiet, healthy life. She cooks three meals a day, takes afternoon walks, and reads at night. The flapper of "nation-wide notoriety" has disappeared, replaced by a more sober and likable woman (BD 61).

Flappers, and the immense discussion they generated, helped create a new moral climate in which more permissive sexual practices were gradually becoming accepted. As the Twenties version of the American dream girl, the flapper was often idealized, and her mannerisms were copied everywhere. As the flapper's sexually liberated mores penetrated deeply into the recesses of even provincial American society, they highlighted the social transformation affecting women. In Theodore Dreiser's An American Tragedy, the episodes involving flappers Hortense Briggs and Sondra Finchley demonstrate just how strong the flapper's influence had been in changing female manners, even in small American towns and cities.

Dreiser was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, and was permanently marked by his impoverished background. Even when he wrote of romantic love and women, he complicated the issues by placing them in social or financial contexts (Donaldson 99). Dreiser's characters are frequently defined by their wealth or lack of it, and are often seen scrambling to escape poverty and the workings of an indifferent universe. An American Tragedy reflects Dreiser's pessimistic vision while also exploring women's sexual and social freedoms, as well as the impact of flapper conduct on small-town life in the Twenties.

Set in the Twenties, An American Tragedy's various settings range from mid-western Kansas City to Chicago to small-town

Lycurgus, New York. The novel centers on Clyde Griffiths' social ambitions, his sexual impulses and longing for money. Aroused by dreams of sexually available women, and driven by chemisms, Clyde becomes trapped by his own nature. Uneducated and inexperienced, he is hopeful about having some kind of sexual relationships with provincial flappers Hortense Briggs and Sondra Finchley.

Although both embody "the 'hardness' of wealth and sexual power," (Pizer, Novels 240) to Clyde they represent sexual opportunity and Paradise.

Although Hortense Briggs' character is merely "sketched in," she is seen as a lower-class girl who audaciously apes flapper mannerisms to get ahead socially and financially (Warren 121). A "coarse and vulgar" girl, she possesses a sexuality which is reflected in "sensuous and suggestive" mannerisms (AT 72, 85).¹ She is vainly "infatuated by her own charms" and she is called a "heartless flirt" (Ibid. 79, 127). Critics have described her as "vain" and "stupid," (Lundquist 91), "cheap" and "grasping" (Shapiro 89), and "cruelly selfish and bitchy," (Hussman 128). Pizer calls her "the young girl as bitch," "an entrepreneur of sex who sells promises of consummation to the highest bidder" (Novels 241), while Howe characterizes her relationship with Clyde in terms of "its chill manipulativeness" (824).

Hortense is a self-supporting Kansas City clerk whose speech defines her as uneducated and unrefined. She introduces Clyde into a world of sexual pleasure as well as sexual conflict, and he learns from her how promises of sexual favors can be cruelly misleading. A working girl with expensive tastes, she yearns for the consumer economy's luxurious products, but does not have the

money to buy them. She uses her sexuality to advance her goals, playing one boyfriend against the other to get what she wants. For Hortense, "sex becomes not part of a meaningful relationship" but something with which to win "material" gains (Shapiro 103).

Hortense's modern lifestyle includes dancing and liquor. She is "no longer virtuous" (AT 86), and is part of a loose crowd who sit on each others laps, lie together on sofas and above all enjoy "spooning" (AT 78). Yet for Pizer, Hortense's conduct is "understandable--what else has she to capitalize but her sex?" (Novels 241).

When Clyde meets her he is captivated by Hortense's sexual aura, "her small, sensuous mouth and bright hard eyes" (AT 74). There is nothing good-natured or innocent about Hortense. She shrewdly capitalizes on Clyde's sexual hunger, while Clyde sees in her the opportunity for sex without obligation. She hints at sexual rewards in exchange for a fur coat. She teases him with talk about other suitors, and sadistically enjoys the thought of Clyde's "suffering from repressed desire for her all of the time that she tortured him" (AT 107).

On an all-day country outing Hortense deliberately makes Clyde jealous by flirting with another man. Yet her rude but coquettish behavior does nothing to discourage Clyde, and when he complains about her behavior, hinting about owed sexual favors, she is resentful, intimating she is under no obligation to him. On the way home, their party is involved in an auto accident. Speeding away from the scene, they are involved in a second crash. The last impression of Hortense is of her overwhelming shallowness. In the face of real disaster, Hortense cares only

about her own injuries. Oblivious to the genuine distress around her and panicked that she might be permanently disfigured, Hortense is virtually hysterical about some minor facial scratches.

Hortense Briggs can be seen as an earlier version of Sondra Finchley. Indeed, Sondra is described as a "less savage, although scarcely less self-centered, Hortense Briggs" (AT 320). When Clyde meets Sondra, he focuses all his fantasies about women on her, and eventually grows to see marriage to her as "the crowning symbol of success," as well as the "liberating fulfillment of desire" (Pizer, "Naturalism 136).

Teen-aged Sondra Finchley is described by one reviewer as "an ornamental, upper-crust flapper" whose wealth allows her a socially dominant position in Lycurgus' youthful society (Brenneke 496). Another reviewer, Stuart Sherman, sarcastically notes that the only impressive thing about Sondra was her "'tailored suit which followed her form exactly and which was enhanced by a small dark leather hat'" (444; AT 219). Sondra has been described as "inconsequential, if alluring" (Hussman 140), while Sybil Weir has called her "the embodiment of the America dream;" an unwitting "social bitch, destructive because she represents the materialistic values of the surrounding society" (70). She possesses an entrepreneurial sense of self as did Hortense Briggs, but instead of withholding her favors in return for gifts, Sondra saves them for marriage (Pizer, Novels 241). Sondra is "inviolable" (McAleer 135), and her prattling baby talk, peppered with such expressions as "pheet phing" (AT 433), "baddie, good boy" (AT 433) " and Clydie-Mydie" (AT 525) reveals

an "infantalized" state appealing to Clyde perhaps because it asks nothing of him (Wolstenholme 260). A reviewer tries to somewhat excuse Sondra's baby talk, writing that "infatuated young persons . . . do babble in this unpleasant way" but censures her with further comments that young people only talk that way "when they are devoid of all critical alteregoism" (Powis 492). Indeed, Sondra's grating speech makes Shapiro wonder "whether Clyde didn't take the wrong girl for a rowboat ride" (84).

Dreiser emphasizes Sondra's superficiality and conceit, and seems to poke fun at it. She is completely one-dimensional and often unconvincing. Matthiessen traces Sondra's lack of credibility to Dreiser's inability to portray women "above a certain point in the social scale" (197). He argues that Dreiser is not trying to be satirical. Instead, he contends, Dreiser is merely trying to capture the Lycurgus "social set in its animation as well as its superficiality," but without the style "that was second nature to Scott Fitzgerald" (Ibid. 198).

Sondra is a modern young woman of the Twenties, whose world is peopled by "flappers and college 'grads,'" (Moers, Dreiser 237). Her days are overflowing with athletic activity, while her nights are filled with parties, dinners and dancing. She is an enthusiastic sportswoman who swims, dives, rides and enjoys winning at tennis. She drives a car, an aquaplane and a motor-boat.

An accidental meeting with Clyde where she mistakes him for his look-alike cousin Gilbert Griffiths leads to an invitation to her club's dinner dance. Sondra enjoys Clyde's company, responds

to his good looks, and eventually falls in love with him, attracted to him by "an animal spontaneity unknown in her world" (McAleer 136). Sondra's sees their relationship as an adventure, and Clyde's adoration satisfies her vanity. Although Shapiro labels Sondra a "class conscious hypocrite, lacking both the strength and the sense of [her] parents," his argument is unconvincing (100). Sondra recognizes, but is finally indifferent to, Clyde's social status. Although her parents want her to make a more appropriate social match, "the profound chemistry of love" prompts Sondra to protect their relationship's future by keeping it a secret (AT 421). Moreover Sondra shows surprisingly good sense when she tells Clyde that an elopement is impossible, but she will marry him when she comes of age.

For Clyde, Sondra is the American dream come true. She represents sexual power, social connections and wealth. Seen through Clyde's worshipful eyes she is a "perfect girl" (AT 308). She appeals to Clyde as "the most adorable feminine thing he had seen in all his days," (AT 219) and her effect on him is "electric" (AT 220). She arouses in him a "sense of what it was to want and not to have," and he sees her youth and beauty as "the ultimate triumph of the female" (AT 220). Clyde's relationship with Hortense had been based on sex and Hortense's materialism. He is sexually restrained with Sondra, awed by her wealth and social position. When he thinks of kissing Sondra, Clyde's thoughts are "without lust, just the desire to constrain and fondle a perfect object" (AT 365). Sondra's good girl, privileged social position gives her the upper hand enabling her to limit their sexual encounters to kissing. Their relationship

and his idealization of Sondra are also influenced by the double standard: premarital sex and love are often kept separate when the goal is marriage. At Roberta Alden's murder trial, Clyde is shocked and upset that people could believe he and Sondra had a sexual relationship. Respecting her social position and reverential toward her good-girl status, he explains that "She wouldn't allow anything like that. . . . Well, you don't want to forget who she is" (AT 600).

Although Clyde idolizes Sondra for "her love, sympathy, generosity, courage" what Dreiser highlights is her vanity and conceit (AT 537). Sondra is used to getting whatever she wants, doing whatever she wants, and she shows a spiteful, manipulative streak when she initially patronizes Clyde to get at his cousin. Although Clyde describes her as knowing "more than any one else I ever knew" (686), nothing in the story supports his perceptions.

However, Dreiser's contemptuous portrait of Sondra is tempered by reminders of Sondra's youth. Although for Clyde Sondra is sophisticated and worldly, in reality she is just an inexperienced seventeen-year-old reacting to youthful love. Like Rosalind Connage in This Side of Paradise, Sondra's self-absorption can be interpreted as a reflection of youth. Although she is strongly competitive, she is also self-consciously dramatic. Her romantic affectations stem from a desire to role-play, and she aspires to be seen as "a flower of life" (AT 325). Sondra's wealth has given her power. Her youth has leveled the playing ground, making her susceptible to being hurt.

Robert Penn Warren remarks that Sondra seems like a

"particular type of femme fatale destined to work Clyde's ruin" (121). However, she is also sincere in her feeling for Clyde. When Sondra hears about Clyde's indictment, she worries that their relationship will be made public, but she is also genuinely concerned about him. After Clyde's sentencing she communicates with him, trying to show sympathy and support. Her short, unsigned letter, written in the third person, shows the "mixture of human feeling and falsity" that have personified her from the start (Warren 121).

Although Matthiessen writes that "Dreiser can make us feel what Clyde feels" (194), Dreiser's provincial flappers belie Matthiessen's point. While Sondra's and Hortense's lives reflect new flapper freedoms, neither Hortense nor Sondra can be seen as ideal women, except perhaps through Clyde's eyes. Although there can be brief sympathy for Hortense as she tries to make her way in the world with limited resources, her selfishness and manipulativenness are finally distasteful. Sondra fares little better. Her wealth emphasizes her shallowness, and her whole existence ultimately seems silly and trivial. Although Sondra is wealthy and Hortense just a working girl, both show the naivete of youth in their belief that they will be able to decide their destinies. Instead they are influenced by social circumstances, their lives shaped by powerful forces beyond their control. In the end, they are saved from complete censure by their faith in their future.

Dreiser and Fitzgerald had written about flappers scarcely removed from their teens. In The Sun Also Rises, Hemingway adds another dimension to the flapper picture. Moving the setting to

expatriate Europe, where many Americans were living in a postwar atmosphere of moral confusion, Hemingway turns his attention to that aging flapper, Brett Ashley.

In America, resistance to flappers' more liberated sexual practices had turned the twenties into "a battleground" between defenders of tradition and innovators of change (Mowry, Nation 23). Similar conditions existed in Europe. There too, flappers' lives became visible symbols of altering female conduct. Their behavior and appearance reflected expectations that male privileges would become theirs. Pleasure seeking, worldly women, they rejected the Victorian code as irrelevant to their lives. However, as the flapper's emancipated practices were described in Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises, they presented a flapper image different from the one drawn by either Fitzgerald or Dreiser.

Where Fitzgerald's and Dreiser's flappers were young, inexperienced and innocently sexual, Hemingway's flapper Brett Ashley is promiscuous and spiritually damaged. Wartime experiences have destroyed her innocence (if she ever had any), and turned her into a woman who "wreaks Circean havoc on the men in her life" (Tuttleton 283). While Fitzgerald's and Dreiser's flappers attempted to shape their futures, Brett's life is an aimless struggle to keep afloat. However, Hemingway shares Fitzgerald's and Dreiser's fascination with and revulsion for liberated flapper ways. While Brett is sympathetically portrayed at times, and may even be seen as the novel's most admired character, it is hard to ignore her careless, even unfeeling, treatment of the men in her life.

Written when Hemingway was living abroad, The Sun Also Rises

successfully captured the American mood of the Twenties. Ann Douglas suggests that by withdrawing from the American scene, Hemingway was able "to write more effectively" about America (216). When the novel had first been published, similar observations had been made. One reviewer wrote that despite their distance from the United States, Americans living in Europe reflected and even expanded on social and moral changes taking place at home. For this reviewer, the American mood and temper could be readily ascertained just by going abroad and examining expatriate "vices and virtues" (K.J.W. 37). Indeed, in The Sun Also Rises Hemingway's "thoroughly Americanized," Paris shows expatriate life as a pocket disconnected from the larger Parisian social and cultural scene (Reynolds 49).

Reviewer Herbert S. Gorman labeled The Sun Also Rises "the tale of a great spiritual debacle, of a generation that has lost its guiding purpose" (38). Hemingway had recognized the collapse of an older generations' previously sustaining stable culture and its values revolving around home, family and church. At the same time, he acknowledged his generations' wild, self-indulgent conduct and its disillusionment with a postwar world. In this cultural climate, Brett Ashley became the woman with whom the younger generation could identify either as "historical victims" or "fellow lost souls" (Lynn 337).

Arguably thirty-four year old Brett Ashley is the Lost Generation's most notable fictional female, an "embodiment" of the "post-war woman" (Bardacke 342). She also represents the degeneration of the flapper's bright ideal. While her sexual behavior even today might seem a little promiscuous, in the

Twenties her sexuality was shocking, and at the time was feared to be part of a "new wave" (Reynolds 58). In 1937 Cowley became one of the first critics to note Brett Ashley's influence on young impressionable women, recalling how Smith College girls chose her as a role model and aspired to imitate her liberated manners and morals (Exile 225). Since then she has been generally accepted as the "literary prototype of the liberated woman" (Benson 36).

Brett "thinks of herself as a flapper," and her drinking and sexuality reflect new female license of an identifiably modern Twenties world (Fiedler 308). However, while Brett enjoys flapper freedoms, she also abuses them. She uses sex as well as alcohol as anodynes, and moves in a self-created world of feeling and desire, effecting sexual chaos and confusion wherever she goes. She takes the flapper's enjoyment of having a drink and transforms it into chronic drinking and alcoholism. She takes the flapper's sexual independence and turns it into promiscuity. In Brett, the flapper's adventurous spirit is translated into a reckless attitude toward the risky business of sex. Sex and alcohol are the drugs of choice for Brett, and her addiction to both allows her to survive in an ugly world. Her aimless but feverish activity distorts the flapper's love for adventure, while her self-destructive streak contradicts the flapper's pleasure-seeking behavior. She is an aging, out of control flapper at the extreme end of the flapper universe. The fun-loving, thrill-seeking flapper has been transformed in Brett's portrait, replaced by a hard-edged, sexual adventuress whose actions invite disaster.

Brett's appearance reflects the flapper look which she is alleged to have "started" (SAR 22).⁴ Her hair is bobbed and "brushed back like a boy's," but her womanly figure, accentuated by a wool sweater has "curves like that of a racing yacht" (Ibid.). She lives in a man's world as an equal to men. She drinks like a man, and her presence at the bar is only one example of the male freedoms she claims. The sexual dominance she shows in selecting and discarding lovers is another.

In an era in which women were appropriating men's behaviors, Brett is arguably the one who comes closest to total success. As she searches for sexual gratification, her actions infringe on what were previously exclusively male freedoms, making sexual experimentation with kissing, necking and petting seem tame in comparison. Acting with a femme fatale restlessness, Brett is finally portrayed as a woman cut off from pre-war moral values, a woman whose exaggerated sexual practices illustrate the collapse of traditional sexual relationships between men and women.

Issues of gender identity and perception of gender surround Brett. Often they revolve around questions of androgyny. The "mannish" Brett (Spilka, "Fauntleroy" 340) wears a "man's felt hat" (SAR 28), and when in Spain wears "a Basque beret" (Ibid. 134). Her friends are all male and she addresses them as chaps, a term she applies to herself as well (Ibid. 22). In the novel's opening pages Brett is the center of attraction, arriving with a group of homosexuals and described as "very much with them" (SAR 20). For Comley and Scholes, the setting serves as a clue that Brett's sexuality is "different from what might be considered normal for women of her position" (43). Yet despite Brett's

androgynous image, she is uniformly attractive to men. Mike, Bill, Cohn and Jake openly acknowledge her good looks. Romero is irresistibly drawn to her sexual aura as are the riau-riau dancers who treat her like a female deity.

Brett's sexuality has been seen as an "abnormality" bordering on "nymphomania" (Smith 133). She has been charged with being "dangerous" and "unreliable" because of her often aggressive, sometimes odious behavior (Ibid.). She flaunts her affairs in Mike's face, and becomes impatient and even tormented when Cohn wants to turn their affair into a grand romance. She claims to long for the eternally unattainable Jake Barnes, but tortures Jake and herself by her inability to cut off their relationship.

In perhaps her most important but least sexual relationship, Brett's unfulfilled longing for Jake Barnes makes her feel as if she is living in a "hell on earth" (SAR 27). It caused Wilson to speculate that Jake is "in a sense revenging his own sex through being unable to do anything for her sexually" ("Gauge" 254). Brett is "sick with love" for Jake, and tries to come to terms with the knowledge they can never be lovers (Smith 133). His impotence puts her, according to Comley and Scholes, in the position of trying to find men "to provide the apparatus that Jake has lost" (44). Yet in the scene where Brett sends Count Mippopolous away (54-55), Lynn theorizes that Brett actually gives Jake "a degree of sexual satisfaction through oral sex" (324). Although Lynn's argument is conjectural, it is also strong enough to support the possibility that Brett and Jake actually did share some kind of erotic experience.

With Pedro Romero, Brett's lust is obvious. For Brett, nineteen year old Romero is "the phallus personified" (Comley 45). She is immediately drawn to him, excitedly admitting that she would "would love to see him get into those clothes. He must use a shoe-horn" (SAR 177). She persuades Jake to pimp for her, and when Jake encourages her to control her excitement she simply confesses, "I can't help it" (Ibid. 183). She is trembling with desire, unable or unwilling to control her passion, and thinks only of seducing Romero.

Although Romero responds to Brett, he is uncomfortable with her untraditional values. He wants to legitimize their relationship by marrying her and wants her to grow her hair longer so she will look more womanly. Brett objects to such feminization, perhaps fearing Romero might make her a woman (Fiedler 308). However, while Brett fears for herself, she recognizes Romero's purity: when considering an affair with Romero, she says such thoughts make her feel like a "bitch" (SAR 184). Afraid of corrupting him, she voices her determination not "to be one of those bitches that ruins children" (SAR 243). Searching for the self-respect damaged by her affair with Cohn, she tries to retrieve it by breaking off her relationship with Romero. When she renounces him, she (perhaps disproportionately) feels "rather good deciding not to be a bitch," proudly pointing out that her sacrifice is what she has "instead of God" (Ibid. 245). Brett's noble decision becomes one of the novel's most memorable events, her actions interpreted as a despairing admission that it has become impossible for her to "live with a fine man without destroying him," (Spilka, "Death" 91).

The question of "whether or not she is a bitch" consumes Brett (Comley and Scholes 43). Critics have been similarly absorbed. Fiedler labeled Brett a "bitch-goddess with a boyish bob" (308), while John Aldridge called her "a compulsive bitch" (Generation 24). Comley and Scholes also acknowledged Brett's bitchiness. Linking their interpretation to gender roles, they praised Brett for moving away from "that version of female excess--bitchiness--toward a more manly resignation" (45). In doing so, Comley and Scholes claim, she complicates and enriches "the basic mode of bitchiness, partly by masculinizing that mode" (Ibid. 46). For Spilka, Brett's fate becomes Hemingway's way of proving that romantic love and marriage are deservedly denied to women who appropriate male prerogatives. Such traditional roles become impossible for women because they have become "bitches" who ultimately "destroy the men they love" (Spilka, "Fauntleroy" 347). However, what finally makes Brett a bitch is her casual attitude toward sex and the episodic nature of her many insignificant sexual encounters.

Although Brett is often seen as a bitch, her wild and sometimes heartless behavior can be excused by attributing it to postwar shock. It may also result from having to cope with a lover's death, or trying to rise above the effects of an abusive marriage. Critics have rallied to her defense, noting her redeeming characteristics. Wendy Martin sees Brett as "Hemingway's idealized rendering of the woman free of sexual repression" ("New Woman" 70). Gladstein argues that Brett's "positive mothering qualities" help preserve peace within the group, and her use of sex often rescues men from their own

unhappiness (Women 61). Whitlow acknowledges Brett's promiscuity and alcoholism, but notes that her lifestyle is often more self-abusive than destructive to others (56).

Jackson Benson's appraisal of her as a Hemingway female "who enjoys sex and who is genuinely able to give of herself" has truth in it, but it does not take Brett's extreme behaviors into consideration (28). Although she has taken advantage of women's new sexual freedoms, she has distorted and misused these freedoms so that they provide neither satisfaction nor fulfillment. Instead of being independent she has become a prisoner to addictive behavior. It is hard to take her actions seriously or view her as "heroic" as Bardacke does (344).

Still, Brett's courage and sexual independence, her refusal to give in to painful losses, her search for a meaningful life, all give her the distinction and class that made her behavior so attractive to young girls at home in America. Nevertheless, by the novel's end she has also become a pitiful, self-deluding character who seeks comfort in assuming that had Jake not been wounded, she and Jake could have been happy together.

While such novels as This Side of Paradise, The Beautiful and Damned, The Sun Also Rises and An American Tragedy reflected social change as reported in the mass media, Fitzgerald's, Hemingway's and Dreiser's responses were not always representative of the general American male population. Indeed, their treatment of female sexual freedoms has been linked to idiosyncratic details of the authors' own lives. Fitzgerald's approach to flappers grew out of his almost obsessive fascination with female beauty and wealth. Yet his glorified flapper

portraits were colored by his simultaneous recognition of flappers' frequently self-indulgent, shallow behaviors. Hemingway's ambivalence toward female characters has been traced to his conflicted relationship with a dominating mother (Douglas 220- 28), his almost life-long interest in the androgynous make-up of men and women (Spilka, "Fauntleroy" 340), as well as his fear of female power (Eliot 2). Susan Wolstenholme cites Dreiser's notorious womanizing on the one hand, and his devotion to his mother and sisters on the other, as contributory factors to his ambivalent rendering of women (244).

Despite their differences, Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Dreiser often created flappers whose conduct embodied female sexual emancipation. While they presented flapper charms as irresistible and winning, they also interpreted them as morally hollow and self-defeating. While they were obviously fascinated by and curious about women's liberated social and sexual practices, their novels revealed anxiety toward female encroachment upon previously all male privileges.

When Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Dreiser turned from flappers' relatively innocent behaviors to the darker subject of women's illicit sexual behavior, their misgivings and uncertainties were overshadowed by clear-cut and unforgiving anger. As Victorian social codes toppled and female sexual desire was gradually legitimized, male animosity and antagonism toward sexually active women emerged. Such novels as Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms and Dreiser's An American Tragedy, as well as William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury showed young, permissive women turning their backs on traditional

morality and shedding sexual inhibitions. These novels also revealed the grave consequences of such behaviors.

Notes

1. F. Scott Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise (1920; New York: Collier, 1986). All references are to this edition.
2. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Beautiful and Damned (1922; New York: Collier, 1986). All references are to this edition.
3. Theodore Dreiser, An American Tragedy (1925; New York: Signet, 1981). All references are to this edition.
4. Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises (1926; New York: Scribner, 1970). All references are to this edition.

Chapter IV

The Consequences of Sex: The Male Perspective

The Victorian value system was, at least on the surface, the "acknowledged general standard" for the American middle class (Yellis 47). This code placed men and women in separate worlds. Men worked outside the home, women within it. Men's lives were conducted in the public domain, women's revolved around their more private, domestic sphere. Acceptable sexual conduct also varied, and was measured and judged by the double standard. Male aggressive sexual activity was taken for granted and was attributed to men's inherent moral inferiority. By the time men married, they were expected to be sexually experienced, and their sexual demands were considered a husbandly right.

Women, on the other hand, were stereotyped as morally superior and expected to be society's refining influence. Respectability was supposed to be their virtue, sexlessness their fate, wifely submission a foregone conclusion. Their hallmark was purity of mind and body, and unwavering devotion to domestic matters. When they married, in contrast to their husbands, women were assumed to be sexually ignorant. In a sex manual written at the end of the nineteenth century and geared toward middle-class women, Dr. Alice Stockman complained about the Victorian gender system:

We teach the girl repression, the boy expression, not simply by word and book, but the lessons are graven into their very being by all the traditions, prejudices and customs of society. . . . Physicians

and physiologists teach, and most men and women believe: That sexual union is a necessity to man, while it is not to women. (As cited in D'Emilio 179)

These notions of appropriate gender behavior were still current in the postwar era. In 1929, Dr. Katherine Davis described the impact of such assumptions on conjugal relations: "The wife, ignorant, unprepared, shocked at the strength of her husband's passion; the husband unable to realize this, inconsiderate, uncontrolled; a long period of adjustment--and if this fails, unhappiness for both" (71).

During the Twenties, however, new definitions of femininity began emerging that signalled an end to the Victorian model of femininity. Popularized interpretations of Freudian theories both acknowledged female eroticism and accepted the legitimacy of women's sexual desires. At the same time, growing availability of contraceptive devices diminished the threat of unwanted pregnancy, taking sex beyond a merely "procreative framework" (D'Emilio 225). Confession magazines and movies disseminated images of liberated female conduct to middle-class audiences, while automobiles allowed young middle-class men and women to meet without the presence of chaperones, permitting increased sexual freedom. Young white women were more actively engaged in the public arena as employees, consumers, and voters. Many flaunted their independence, indulging themselves by drinking and smoking. Others experimented with sex.

As young women abandoned Victorian ideals of respectability and chastity, their lax morality threatened an older generation that equated sexual permissiveness with promiscuity and youthful

enthusiasm with moral disorder. Young women's new conduct helped break down traditional boundaries dividing men and women into separate sexual worlds. The behavior of many of these young, white women highlighted the changing social climate and was viewed with alarm. Sexiness and sophistication slowly became substitutes for purity and innocence, and modesty and reticence were abandoned to sexual experimentation and self-expression.

Gradual acceptance of female eroticism was perhaps the most important change in attitudes toward female sexuality. For young, single women, sexual exploration in the form of kissing and petting was considered permissible premarital behavior. New standards accepted women's sexual experimentation, but stopped short of endorsing promiscuity or premarital intercourse. Assessing the behavior of young, middle-class women, Blanchard and Manasses observed that in the Twenties there was a "distinct line between exploratory activities of the petting party and the complete yielding of sexual behaviors to men," with ninety-two percent of the women in their study classifying extra-marital sexual relations as "immoral or unwise" (70). Kinsey's study indicated that women whose sexual experience began around 1920 had premarital sexual intercourse almost twice as frequently as their mothers (349). Despite these more liberated sexual practices, only a minority of women participated in premarital sex, and when they did it was usually linked to love and promises of marriage (Blanchard and Manasses 239).

The breakdown of the traditional sexual code with its new female freedoms for women altered society, and with it men's view of women. As women began reaching for equality in the sexual

domain, as they began pursuing erotic experience, important male writers of the Twenties such as Theodore Dreiser in An American Tragedy, William Faulkner in The Sound and the Fury, Ernest Hemingway in A Farewell to Arms and F. Scott Fitzgerald in The Great Gatsby reacted to women's new sexual practices. Often these writers made female sexuality central to their narratives.

In The Sound and The Fury, Faulkner examines premarital female sexual activity, juxtaposing it with another typically Faulknerian issue, the South's moral decay. Like many of Faulkner's novels, The Sound and The Fury is set in the fictional region of rural Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi. Written partially in a stream of consciousness style, the novel's events are revealed through different viewpoints and flashbacks. Faulkner's use of syntax and image impressionistically evokes the novel's main characters, impoverished Southern gentry struggling to maintain their status. Discussing Faulkner's novels, Alfred Kazin comments on his "almost ferocious misanthropy" (Grounds 455). At the same time, Kazin cites Faulkner's "ability to invest his every observation of Southern life and manners with epic opulence," noting how Faulkner's "admiration and acceptance and disgust operated together in his mind" (Ibid.). In The Sound and The Fury, Faulkner's ambivalence toward southern life and southern characters come together in his misogynistic portrait of Caddy Compson.

Although Naomi Jackson argues that Faulkner's female portraits are not misogynistic but are instead "tributes to women's capacity for both the heights and depths of emotional existence," hers is a minority opinion (17). William Faulkner

often is cited for his misogyny. In 1942, Maxwell Geismar was among the first to note how Faulkner directed his anger toward female characters (168). Almost two decades later, Leslie Fiedler remarked on Faulkner's "fear of the castrating woman" and his "dis-ease with sexuality" (309). More recently, Gail Mortimer commented on Faulkner's "deep distrust and bitterness toward women," but, in Faulkner's defense, viewed it as the flip side of his "powerful longing for romantic passion" (122). James Tuttleton had argued that such comments "distort" Faulkner's fiction (287), but Tuttleton's remarks are ultimately unconvincing. In The Sound and the Fury, Faulkner's anger and discomfort with female sexuality are apparent in his representation of Caddy Compson.

Faulkner's portrait of Caddy Compson can be seen in terms of Faulkner's comments on achieving the "right view" of Sutpen in Absalom, Absalom!:

It was, as you say, thirteen ways of looking at a black-bird. But . . . when the reader has read all these thirteen different ways of looking at the blackbird, the reader has his own fourteenth image of that blackbird which I would like to think is the truth. (Gwynn and Blotner 273-74)

It is even more difficult to discover the truth about Caddy, particularly as she grows older and becomes entangled in the web of her own sexuality.

Peggy Prenshaw notes that early twentieth century Southern writers such as Faulkner sought to come to terms with "the myth of the ideal Southern white lady" (74). For Diane Roberts, early

twentieth century Southern fiction was more concerned with changing female sexual practices (108). In The Sound and the Fury, through Caddy Compson, Faulkner examines both the idealized and the sexualized woman. As Caddy's story unfolds, the consequences of her sexual behavior become the novel's dominant theme.

In The Sound and the Fury Caddy's "virginal purity" (Gregory 96) is steadily counteracted by the darker "level of sensuality" in which she moves (Gresset 116). Although she has been praised as a "natural woman responding to her sexual urges, and doing her part in the procreation of species (Gladstein, "Women" 13), Caddy's uninhibited sexual appetite grows into an uncontrollable, damaging force. Her search for love creates chaos and sorrow, and her hope for sexual gratification engenders betrayal instead. Because of her sexual nature, she has been labeled a menacing "Eve who brings knowledge of sex and death into the world" (Seidel 115). She has also been called a woman whose "difference . . . deconstructs phallic authority" (Gwin 55), a "female subject struggling within a cultural text which seeks her silencing" (Ibid. 60).

Caddy Compson's story is told in her brothers' words. Their differing perceptions of Caddy originate in their own obsessive relationships with her. To Benjy, she is the smell of trees; for Quentin she represents honor; Jason sees in Caddy endless possibilities of money. Caddy's developing sexuality also affects her brothers' lives, and her brothers relate to her in sexual ways. Benjy is the idiot brother whose adoration of Caddy is a child's "pre-sexual" love: his narrative focuses on Caddy's

innocence and tenderness toward him when they both are children (Hill 86). Quentin is the brother whose love for Caddy verges on the incestuous. He is obsessed with her sexuality and the changes her awakened passions bring to their relationship. Jason is the "anti-sexual or post-sexual" brother who sees Caddy as a bitch (Ibid.). Finally, however, her brothers' recollections are unable to completely capture her. By the novel's conclusion Caddy has evaded "satisfactory definition" (Millgate 98). She remains elusive and only partially known.

While the novel revolves around Caddy, her voice is silent, obscured by her brothers' subjective memories, and she emerges as a blurry but intensely felt image, an "empty signifier" that reflects male desire (Bleikasten 56). However Caddy is neither silent nor absent from the text. She exists as "the sound of male anguish" (Trouard 37), and as a "text which speaks multiplicity, maternity, sexuality," which "retains not just one voice but many" (Gwin 46). Applying Julia Kristeva's theories, Gwin also sees in Caddy an expression of creative "libidinal energies" (35).

Caddy is first seen by Benjy. Because Benjy is unable to process the idea of passing time, past and present have become indistinguishable to him, and they exist simultaneously in his mind. Even when Caddy has disappeared from his life, her image remains deeply embedded in his consciousness and is easily resurrected by ordinary sights and sounds.

As seen through Benjy's limited perceptions Caddy emerges as valiant, compassionate, and full of "unselfish love" (Baum 36). As Caddy meets Benjy's needs, her warmth and kindness are

unforgettable, her patience and sensitivity impressive. She tries to interpret the world for him and protect him from cruelty, becoming, Benjy's "focus of order" (Vickery 36). Her childish innocence is disarming, and she is exquisite in her purity.

Caddy's sweetness emerges from the novel's first pages, her childlike voice interpreting Benjy's experiences. Although only a child herself, she is self-confident in her maternal role and speaks "out of the maternal space created in Benjy's discourse," her voice carrying the "referential weight" of the mother (Gwin 43,41). She teaches Benjy how to keep warm: "Keep your hands in your pockets, . . . Or they'll get froze. You don't want your hands froze on Christmas, do you (SF 5).¹ She interprets Christmas for him in simple terms: "Santy Claus, Benjy. Santy Claus" (7). She lovingly refuses to pity him: "You're not a poor baby. Are you. Are you. You've got your Caddy. Haven't you got your Caddy" (9-10). She shows him the natural world: "Ice. That means how cold it is" (14). Caddy always finds ways to comfort, nurture and love Benjy.

Caddy's grace contains courage, and her independence reflects confidence. As the leader among the children, she is at times spunky, but never cruel. At seven years old she already chafes at what she considers unfair restrictions, and her first actions in the novel are defiant (Gregory 94). She stubbornly refuses to go home for supper. Instead she plays in the branch, getting her dress wet. When her brothers warn her about the possibility of parental discipline, she contemptuously dismisses their threats. Later that evening, while Caddy's brothers watch

her, Caddy fearlessly climbs a pear tree to see into her dying grandmother's window. For David Williams this incident is significant. While looking up at Caddy's muddy underpants Caddy's brothers are introduced to desire for the first time. Caddy learns about death and change.

Childhood innocence and forbidden knowledge exist simultaneously in this "'seminal'" scene in which Caddy is presented as "a turbulent little Eve" (Bleikasten 55). The mudstained pants pre-figure menstruation, "the 'taint' of female sexuality and pollution" (Roberts 116). They also predict Caddy's later transgressions. While the muddy drawers call attention to the soiled sexual region, they are also a reminder that lost virginity is "the prerequisite for participation in the forces of the feminine" (Williams 75)

Referring to this episode, Faulkner said that The Sound and the Fury stemmed from an image of children looking up into a tree at a little girl's muddy drawers. For Faulkner, "the symbolism of the drawers became the lost Caddy" (Gwyn and Blotner 31). Arguably then, even from the very beginning, Faulkner deliberately linked Caddy to sex, loss and sin. Even when Faulkner was creating a portrait of childish courage, even while he was describing a compassionate, endearing child, he was also undermining his portrait with suggestions of the moral deterioration and the "indelible stain" to Caddy's honor that would follow (Bleikasten 62). When Caddy finally has sexual relations with Dalton Ames, the image of the muddy drawers is realized.

As Caddy matures, she develops into a sexual adolescent

whose increasing curiosity about boys supersedes her maternal feelings for her brothers. Although Benjy is unable to understand Caddy's sexuality, he unknowingly responds to it. When she experiments with her appearance, Benjy is alarmed that the changes he discerns will somehow affect his world. He cries when Caddy puts on a hat because it alters her looks, and doesn't stop crying until she takes it off. He cries when she uses perfume to attract boys. Caddy tries to appease him by washing it off. Benjy also grieves when her treelike fragrance disappears, a result of her lost virginity (Gladstein, Women 14). However, Benjy's instinctive knowledge of Caddy's lost virginity is irrelevant, and his tears can neither salvage Caddy nor alter the importance sex will play in her life.

Caddy's brother Quentin is also preoccupied with his memories of Caddy and their idyllic childhood. Quentin admiringly recalls Caddy's unconventional behavior. Instead of conforming to a traditional gender role, Caddy had insisted on acting more like her brothers might have, pretending to be "a king or a giant or a general" never "a queen or a fairy" (SF 198). However, when the adolescent Caddy appropriates masculine sexual conduct, Quentin feels betrayed by her corruption. A lover in spirit only, he imagines that theirs has become an incestuous relationship. Later, he helps seal Caddy's doom by trying to impose his feelings about female sexuality on her, including his traditional southern male belief that unmarried Southern women practice chaste behavior.

In her study of Southern society's belles, Seidel explained young Southern women's contrasting options. They could either

act like ladies or become fallen women (114). For Caddy Compson, such restrictive choices evolved into a "struggle between the free play of sexuality and the social discourse demanding containment of the female body" (Roberts 108-9). As Caddy rejects the ladylike chastity traditionally expected of southern women by southern men, she moves toward a fate in which she is categorized as a sinner whose bridges are burned.

Caddy's sexual drive affects her life as well as her brothers'. While she feels genuine remorse about her changed relationship to Benjy, she expects Quentin to accept such inevitabilities. However, Quentin's inability to cope with Caddy's sexuality exacerbates matters. In his efforts to possess Caddy and preserve her love in an unchanged state, Quentin fixates on a narrow idealization of Caddy that revolves around her virginity. When Caddy becomes sexually involved with Dalton Ames, she betrays Quentin's ideal of female chastity and honor. As sex becomes an indisputable physical and/or emotional need for Caddy, it also becomes an insidiously corrupting force, undermining her self-control and independent spirit.

Quentin is obsessed by Caddy's sexuality, and his sexual inexperience contrasts to Caddy's sexual nature. Quentin believes in the Victorian myth surrounding upper-class white Southern women. For Quentin, female chastity guards communal morality; it is a force that preserves order. Living by this traditional patriarchal code which exalts female virginity and fidelity, Quentin tries to make Caddy think she possesses a "contemptible and corrupt promiscuity" rather than a "positive and innocent reality" (Gregory 98). Quentin subscribes to a

morality which elevates white southern women to a "non-sensual plane," (Kerr 2) and then demands that their innocence be protected. Caddy's lost virginity devastates Quentin in part because it affects the family's social status, and it impels him to try to avenge her honor. His strong beliefs cause him to judge Caddy, and his excessive moralism influences Caddy, although not enough to convince her to change her ways.

Caddy and Quentin learn about chastity and honor from their father. Mr. Compson explains virginity as a male invention. From Mr. Compson's perspective, the loss of virginity is the inevitable female condition, making Caddy's fall normal since "Women are never virgins" (SF 132). He sees female purity as "a negative state and therefore contrary to nature" (Ibid.) However, Mr. Compson also sees woman's body, and by extension, Caddy's body, as corrupt, a foul "equilibrium of periodical filth, suspended in "liquid putrefaction" (SF 147). Significantly, Mr. Compson's thoughts on female sexuality are revealed soon after Caddy's fall.

In part, Caddy's power and threat come from her repudiation of chastity and the southern tradition's moral code encouraging female passivity. For Caddy, conventions are unimportant, and she has learned that words such as virginity are only important for what they mean to men. Indifferent to the consequences of sexual expression, Caddy becomes sexually active in a society which demands female pre-marital chastity. However, in Caddy's patriarchal southern society, such deviation from previously sustaining norms of female passivity and compliance causes turmoil and destruction (Schulz 93).

When it comes to sexual behavior, Caddy and Quentin reverse gender roles. Caddy's aggressive sexual activity places her in what ordinarily would have been a traditional male role (Irwin 37-38). At the same time, Caddy's loss of virginity is contrasted to Quentin's virginity. Quentin is tormented by Caddy's relationship with Dalton Ames, while Caddy pities Quentin for his inability to appreciate sexual pleasure. When Caddy confesses her passion for Dalton Ames, her words resonate with the "unending pleasure" she takes in her sexuality (Gwin 52). Her open admission is sexually powerful: "I would die for him I've already died for him I die for him over and over again everytime. . . , " and reveals a passion that recklessly subverts southern patriarchal codes (SF 173). Caddy is unashamed of her sexuality and takes an active rather than a passive role, confessing her lovemaking with Dalton Ames, "I didn't let him, I made him" (153). Quentin's obsession with Caddy's sexuality becomes most graphic in the "phallic knife" scene (Irwin 46). In a conversation with Quentin that mimics sexual intercourse Caddy shows how sexually aggressive she has become:

it wont take but a second I'll try not to hurt . . .
 . . . you'll have to push it harder
 touch your hand to it . . .
 push it are you going to do you want me to
 yes push it
 touch your hand to it. (174-5)

As Caddy tells Quentin about her relationship with Dalton Ames, she is surrounded by the scent of honeysuckle, which for Bleikasten symbolizes Caddy's sexual sins, and contrasts to the

fresher grassy smell Benjy associates with her (63-4). For Williams, Caddy's association with honeysuckle, trees and earth make her an "archetype of life" (83), while for Mortimer honeysuckle symbolizes Caddy's sexuality "as a pervasive and threatening presence" (66). Roberts sees in Caddy's association with honeysuckle "a powerful, disruptive female sexuality" that is "both enticing and overwhelming" (116). Nevertheless, as Caddy talks to Quentin about Dalton Ames, she may have already started to feel defiled. As she lies there in the branch letting the water flow around her, she feels corrupted and dirty, and her actions have been interpreted as a reflection of Caddy's wish "to be cleansed" of her sins (Gregory 98-99).

Naturally loving, and seeking love outside of her loveless family, Caddy gives herself to Dalton Ames, a man who calls all women "bitches" (SF 183), and whose words are a reminder about the "systemic reduction" of women in a patriarchal society (Trouard 46). When Dalton Ames leaves town, Caddy has many meaningless affairs and is labeled a "whore" (SF 182). She is unable to control her sexual impulses and her promiscuity arises not only from her sexual nature, but from a wish to punish herself for something she cannot quite define (Polk 63). She admits that "There was something terrible in me sometimes at night I could see it grinning at me I could see it through them grinning at me though their faces it's gone now and I'm sick" (128). She sees herself as corrupted and unclean, and repeatedly warns Quentin, "Don't touch me" (128-29).

Caddy's indifference to the concept of virginity finally clashes with Southern ideas of female chastity, and her fate is

related to her lack of sexual inhibitions. Despite Faulkner's claim that Caddy was his "heart's darling," Caddy is severely punished for her defiance, courage and most of all for her sexual transgression (Gwynn and Blotner 6). Caddy's premarital affairs ultimately result in an out-of-wedlock pregnancy. To give her child a name, she quickly marries and is even more quickly divorced by Herbert Head, when he discovers that Caddy is pregnant and that he is not the child's father. Caddy's inability to support herself forces her to leave her daughter Quentin with the Compsons. Mrs. Compson's refusal to allow Caddy back into the house pushes Caddy into a life of prostitution. In a chain of events that Caddy is unable to control, the unselfish love once given so freely is transformed into a sexual commodity that enables Caddy to survive. The "loving child" has been transformed into an "unnatural" woman whose fate is "sex without love" (Page 65).

While The Sound and The Fury can be read as an attack on the romantic idealization of virginity, it can also be read as an indictment of extra-marital female activity. Caddy's sexuality destroys her life, and indirectly causes pain to the people she loves most. She is unable to help her brothers, or to love and protect her child.

The sweet, promising Caddy of Book I, who really was presented as a "darling" child vanishes by the novel's end. The image of the confident child in the muddled drawers has been replaced by an uncertain woman, pleading for even the smallest kindness, while in the Appendix she appears to have become indifferent to everything, including her own damnation. The

child who had the capacity for compassion, the desire to love and be loved, who was outgoing and unfailingly patient, has vanished. Caddy's love and intrepid spirit have been annihilated. In Faulkner's added Appendix he describes Carrie as a woman who "doesn't want to be saved hasn't anything any-more worth being saved for nothing worth being lost that she can lose" (SAF Reader 247).

For David Williams, the novel centers on "the warping of her great capacity for love" (66) and he describes Caddy as a woman who began as a "mother of life" and ended as a "mother of death" (86). Bleikasten sees in Caddy's portrait "a dream of beauty wasted and destroyed" (66). Exiled from her home, separated from her child, Caddy's loving nature is crushed. The spirited, defiant child who climbed the tree, and the passionately hopeful adolescent whose heart hammered when speaking of her boyfriend, have disappeared. Circumstances have defeated her, and Caddy has become a powerless woman subject to her brother Jason's mercy.

The consequences of Caddy's sexuality are divulged through Jason's eyes. For Jason, Caddy will always be a bitch, and his words can be seen as mirroring a male-dominated culture where, according to Trouard, misogyny is prevalent and female bitchiness expected (45). Jason is convinced he has been victimized by Caddy, that he bears the brunt of her promiscuous behavior, and according to Gwin "cannot forgive her for spending . . . her past value as a virgin" (57). His resulting grudge and resentment about lost social status, his promised job and money become part of Caddy's punishment. Because of Jason's thwarted expectations, he obsesses about Caddy and her daughter Quentin, whom he sees as

a "perverse rendering of *The Scarlet Letter*" (Trouard 46), a "living reminder" of Caddy's sin (Dowling 50).

Jason uses Caddy's love for her child to avenge his ruined career. His attempt to subdue Caddy through her daughter helps perpetuate "the central place of female sexuality" in the novel, particularly when the focus is on Quentin's promiscuousity (Roberts 115). The independence displayed by the youthful Caddy is destroyed by Jason's control over her child, and Caddy's spunk and defiance disappear in face of Jason's cruelty and greed. Powerless to oppose him, she becomes anxious and transformed, resembling "a toy that's wound up too tight and about to burst to pieces" (240).

In her daughter Quentin, Caddy's punishment is complete, and Faulkner's comment that the novel was "the tragedy of two lost women" is fulfilled (Stein 130). Emotionally abused and beaten by her uncle, Quentin sees herself as "bad" (300). Although for Williams she embodies the "same life force of her mother," (89) all that was beautiful and moving in Caddy is twisted and distorted in Quentin. All that was loving and sweet in Caddy becomes hard and bitter. Caddy's child is unprincipled, promiscuous without being loving, a slut who is always sexually available. Caddy's humanity becomes spite and anger in Quentin, and because of her harsh upbringing, Quentin has become wild, even uncontrollable. While Caddy had defined only her sexual urges as "terrible" (128), Quentin considers her entire being as bad and "going to hell" (217). Rejected by her uncle and grandmother, incapable of genuine affection, love exists for Quentin as a series of sexual acts.

Fowler sees the "grieving mother" and ravished" daughter of the classical Demeter and Persephone myth in Caddy's relationship to Quentin (Fowler 144). Gladstein also interprets their relationship in this light, seeing in Caddy's and Quentin's behavior suggestions of female strength and "the endless renewal of the eternal Feminine" ("Mothers" 101). However, Quentin's behavior is really more like a warped version of Caddy's. This has been noted, even in the earliest reviews, where both mother and daughter were labeled as "declasses" (Yust 36) and "reckless nymphomaniacs" (Robinson 37). Like her mother, Quentin resists authority and violates traditional sexual boundaries with impunity, and like her mother her sexual practices disrupt and disturb her family. While Quentin's reactions recall Caddy's goodness, they also sharpen the differences between mother and daughter. Quentin loathes Benjy and is repulsed by his manners. Caddy was always solicitous about his needs. When Benjy discovered Caddy in the swing with Charlie, Caddy tried to calm Benjy's agitation. In a similar scene Quentin just gets mad and complains about him, callously calling him an old crazy loon" (55). Quentin wants to put Benjy in a mental institution. Caddy tries to keep him out of it.

Caddy's gallantry is replaced by Quentin's furtive ways. Her mother's kindness becomes the daughter's nastiness, her generosity translates into the daughter's impatience. Quentin escapes from the Compson household by climbing down the pear tree that Caddy had climbed up as a little girl, her disappearance echoing her mother's departure. Taking the money Jason stole and hid from her, Quentin runs away with a showman. Although

Gladstein reads Quentin's escape as a means of self-preservation and victory over Jason, Quentin's flight with a man who appears to be a scoundrel almost guarantees her a bleak future ("Mothers" 105). In the novel's final pages Benjy's despairing cries reflect the "grave hopeless sound of all voiceless misery under the sun (366). They are also powerful reminders of Caddy's absence, and the sorrow over the loss of the spirited, loving child she had once been. In the 1946 "Compson Appendix" to The Sound and the Fury there is an "erasure of all traces of female lineage" (Thadious Davis 238). Quentin has disappeared. Caddy has resurfaced in Europe as an irrevocably damned beauty. Her facial expression is coldly indifferent, rather than compassionately alive. As the mistress of a Nazi General, her association with the Hitler regime and its Holocaust of unparalleled depravity finalizes her condemnation.

Faulkner repeatedly wrote about Yoknapatawpha County throughout his life. Even his wartime stint in The British Royal Air Force in Canada did not deter him from returning imaginatively to the South and centering his prose on Southern subjects and mythical Southern locales. While Faulkner remained largely untouched by the war, Ernest Hemingway, on the other hand, was profoundly influenced by his war experiences.

World War I provides a historical framework for Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms, and his characters emerge from this setting. Frederic Henry is a volunteer ambulance driver for the Italian Army, who initially views the war as "no more dangerous . . . than war in the movies" (FTA 38).² Later he is a deserter who tries to escape the war's insanity. Catherine Barkley is a nurse

motivated by fantasy to join the war effort. Summoning up a picture that her former lover might be wounded, she envisioned him coming "to a hospital where I was, with a sabre cut . . . and a bandage around his head. Or shot through the shoulder" (FTA 20). Catherine's affair with Frederic develops against this unsettled background, and while the war does not hinder their love, its events are never far from the surface.

Hemingway's stripped-down prose in A Farewell to Arms contrasts to Faulkner's lyrical stream-of-consciousness outpouring. His use of a single narrator opposes Faulkner's use of multiple viewpoints. Yet despite their differing approaches, Faulkner and Hemingway shared an underlying, possibly unconscious, hostility toward their sexually liberated female characters. Indeed, Hemingway's and Faulkner's hostility toward female characters, particularly sexual females, prompted Fiedler to call both men "serious calumniators of the female" (333).

In The Sound and the Fury Faulkner had revealed his misogynistic streak by strongly implicating Caddy Compson's sexual behavior in her unhappy fate. In A Farewell to Arms, Hemingway's misogyny is similarly revealed in his punitive treatment of Catherine Barkley. Like Faulkner with Caddy Compson, Hemingway appears to approve of Catherine Barkley. He seemingly sanctions Catherine Barkley's sexual pliancy but makes Catherine's out-of-wedlock pregnancy directly responsible for the novel's calamitous ending.

Hemingway's hostility toward women has often been documented, although his relationship to women was actually more complex and ambivalent. In 1939 Edmund Wilson commented on

Hemingway's "instinct to get the woman down," interpreting it as a response to Hemingway's "fear that the woman will get the man down" ("Gauge" 254-55). While Leslie Fiedler maintained that Hemingway was only comfortable writing about "men without women" (304), Linda Patterson Miller argues that rather than being uncomfortable writing about male-female relations, Hemingway was at his "best" writing about men and women together and in love (6).

Others have tried to find the root of Hemingway's hostility toward women. James Tuttleton was convinced that Hemingway's female characterizations emerged from his own confused feelings about male and female sexuality (280), while critics such as Ann Douglas attributed Hemingway's reaction to women, in part, to his conflicted relationship with his mother and his desire to disown Grace Hemingway's influence on his work (220-25).

From the novel's earliest reception, critics commented on Catherine Barkley's strength. One reviewer noted Catherine's "fine courage," her "touch of nobility" (Hazlitt 69), while another called her "impossibly beautiful" (T.S. Matthews 77). Nearly forty years later Philip Young similarly labeled her "the first true Hemingway heroine" (91). Described in the novel as "very good," "very gentle," and "very brave," (FTA 249) Catherine Barkley is a woman whose actions have been interpreted as reflecting the quiet courage and integrity associated with the Hemingway code (Spanier, "Soldier" 80). But while her strength keeps her from breaking, it is also implicated in her death.

Although Catherine appears to be bravely attempting to reorder a disrupted life, her early conversations with Frederic

Henry also reveal confused emotions. In their first meeting, she inappropriately discusses intimate matters that most people would keep under wraps, considering it best to keep such personal subjects secret. When Frederic realizes how deep-seated Catherine's guilt over her fiancé's death really is, he schemes to use it to his advantage.

Frederic's initial interest in Catherine centers around sex. Catherine's interest in Frederic also has a focus. She feels responsible for her fiancé's death and senses in her emerging relationship with Frederic an opportunity to ease her pain. In her unconscious mind, Frederic and her lover have merged, and she begins to project her unresolved feelings onto Frederic. At the same time, by mentioning her regrets over her unconsummated sexual relationship, Catherine brings the issue of female sexuality to the novel's forefront.

On their second date Frederic tries to kiss her. Bridling at his advances, Catherine slaps his face, angered at his insincerity and its obvious "nurse's-evening-off-aspect" (FTA 26). Then in a dizzying reversal she becomes both aggressor and easy conquest when she offers to kiss him. After they kiss, she rather surprisingly and unjustifiably assumes they will have a future together, asking "You will be good to me, won't you?" (26).

Catherine's conversations with Frederic in their first two meetings have been odd. In their third encounter her requests and insistence on talking about love make Frederic view her as "probably a little crazy" (FTA 30). Serious about regaining lost emotional equilibrium, Catherine asks Frederic to role-play the

part of her dead fiance in an attempt to ease the grieving process:

Say, "I've come back to Catherine in the night."

I've come back to Catherine in the night.

Oh, darling, you have come back, haven't you?

Yes.

I love you so and it's been awful. You won't go.

No. I'll always come back.

Oh, I love you so (FTA 30)

Catherine does sound deranged. However, she is also strong and smart in her awareness both of the "rotten game" she is playing and the "fine little show" she is putting on (31).

Catherine is slightly hysterical; indeed Kenneth Lynn comments on her "jittery, neurotic" manner (386). However, to judge Catherine by "normal" standards is unfair because Catherine is living in an abnormal wartime world (Whitlow 18). While she may be suffering from shock, she is perceptive enough to realize what she must do to regain her emotional health, and despite her recent trauma she is portrayed as courageous enough to take the risks that will once again reinvolve her in life.

From the start, Catherine is more in charge of their relation-ship than Frederic realizes (Robert Lewis, Farewell 74-84). Although Frederic thinks he is manipulating Catherine, in reality Catherine manages their relationship from the beginning, deliberately steering it into a sexual realm. First she substitutes Frederic for her lover in an attempt to assuage guilty feelings over her fiance's death. Next she solidifies their relationship by following Frederic to Milan, where their

romance deepens and becomes all-encompassing. Viewing Catherine in terms of sexual opportunity, Frederic's belief that he is directing the moves of their sexual "chess game" blinds him to what his metaphor implies (FTA 26). In chess the queen makes the most sweeping moves, while the king is weaker and exerts less influence over the game's final outcome.

Catherine's needs have influenced her interactions with Frederic, and she has chosen to make Frederic a temporary substitute for her dead lover. Fighting to regain emotional stability, Catherine uses their encounters to find relief from the trauma of her fiance's death and the role she thinks she played in it. Catherine further "creates" their involvement (Fetterley, Reader 59) when she goes to the Milan hospital where Frederic falls in love with her, arguably because of her sexual availability and "devotion" to his needs (Hays 16)

Their relationship moves from what reviewer Henry Seidel Canby termed an "impersonal amorousness" to a "deep, fierce love" ("Brave" 80), ultimately emerging almost like a male "erotic fantasy" (Canby, "Chronicle" 99). As their affair evolves from sexual game to real love, Catherine's comments reveal a desire to be absorbed by Frederic. The first time she makes love with Frederic she may be trying to expiate her guilt, but by the second time, Frederic is no longer a substitute for her dead fiance. Although she worries that her sexual inexperience prevents her from being "good at it,!" (FTA 106) she is also willing to efface herself completely, and lose herself in love. She tells Frederic: "I want what you want. There isn't any me any more. Just what you want" (Ibid.). Catherine further

subordinates herself to Frederic's desires, saying, "There isn't any me. I'm you. Don't make up a separate me" (Ibid. 115). In an attempt to be sexually accommodating she asks, "Is there anything I do you don't like? Can I do anything to please you?" (Ibid. 116). In her desire to please Frederic she is a sexually pliant "dream girl," (Robert Lewis, Farewell 69), the kind of woman whose submissive behavior makes her a perfect mistress.

Catherine's self-effacing behavior provoked Philip Young's comment that Catherine had been "idealized past the fondest belief of most people" (91). Catherine's constant devotion to Frederic's needs elicited Judith Fetterley's dismissal of Catherine as a mere "reflection of male psychology and male fantasy life" (Reader 66). Indeed, Catherine's overwhelming desire to please makes her seem at times like little more than a literary doormat, a diminished woman whose behavior represents "passive femininity incarnate" (Martin, "Woman" 236). However, despite Catherine's submissiveness, she is not spineless, and her sexual capitulation emerges from her need to eradicate the pain created by her war experiences (Spanier, "Ritual" 134).

As Catherine's and Frederick's affair continues with the war's threats never far away, Catherine's sexual practices help her gain the "strength" and "independence" previously undermined by the war's events (Fisher 35). She has learned to view life and emotion in the context of the war's dangers, and her simple, selfless sexuality allows her to experience the "frank and honest enjoyment" of sex (Smith 130). Although she had refused to have sex with her fiancé, she is openly sexual with Frederic, determined not to make the same mistake twice. Catherine's

feelings for Frederic emerge from her need to have "faith in an ideal of love and service" (Spanier, "Ritual" 134-45). However, because her sexuality is often placed alongside references to prostitution, by implication, a different, even immoral light, can be cast on her behavior. Such placement also raises questions of Hemingway's underlying hostility toward women.

In an early encounter, when Frederic anticipates a sexual relationship with Catherine, he characterizes it as better than going to a whore house. In the Milan hospital, Catherine questions Frederic about the whores' sexual practices. Her queries grow out of their physical relationship and her eagerness to please Frederic sexually. They also reflect curiosity about sexual acts which she may be hoping to imitate or surpass. Indeed, for Comley and Scholes, Catherine tries to assume a "'bad'" girl's role so that "she can learn to enjoy illicit sex" (36). In still another scene, the red plush hotel where they make love makes Catherine feel like a whore, in part because Frederic has rented their room for only a few hours.

The war has changed Catherine, and by the time she meets Frederic, she has started to live for and in the moment. Conventional morality has become meaningless and traditional values irrelevant, both linked in her mind to her fiancé's premature death. For Catherine, having sexual relations with the man she loves is both right and important, and she makes love to Frederic freely, ignoring societal sanctions against premarital sex. Later, when she finds out she is pregnant, her nonchalance about legitimizing her child once again is atypical. She does not want her pregnancy to cause any trouble, refuses to

make any demands on Frederic about getting married, and plans where and how the baby will be born. However, in her insistence that her baby will be a girl, an extension of her female self, Catherine reveals that beneath her seemingly acquiescent facade is an "assertiveness" that demands to be recognized (Robert Lewis, Farewell 85). Ironically, though, Catherine's baby is a boy whose birth results in her death.

In her undemanding role, Catherine has been seen as the "good androgynous woman" (Spilka, "Fauntleroy" 355) who permits Frederic to flee from responsibility for and commitment to their relationship (Fetterley, Reader 59-60). However, for Comley and Scholes, Catherine's decision to have the baby seals her doom. They see Frederic Henry as a "child-man" unable to "share his mother-lover with a real baby" (39). Thus, for them "the logic of the narrative" dictates that "mother and child must go" (Ibid.).

Frederic's reaction to Catherine's pregnancy is ironic. It is he, rather than Catherine, who expresses fears of biological entrapment. Young justifies Frederic's reaction, emphasizing that ultimately Frederic is biologically trapped by a "natural process," which results in his loss of his future wife (93). However, Catherine is really the one who cannot escape. Although Catherine survives a hazardous journey to Switzerland and although she experiences a healthy pregnancy, she has been doomed from the moment her child was conceived. Her narrow hipped, androgynous body is poorly suited for its task, and its inadequate structure makes her death inevitable.

Chapter XLI is full of ironies. When Catherine goes into labor she is unafraid, excited and even cheerful, eager to have

her child "without any foolishness" (FTA 315). Her pain becomes extreme, her agony horrifying. When she begins to hemorrhage uncontrollably, Frederic's attempt to comfort Catherine provokes her to say, "Don't touch me Poor darling. You touch me all you want" (FTA 330). The truth is that Catherine has allowed Frederic's sexual touches too often, and now she is paying for them with her life. Frederic explains Catherine's death as the price to be paid for "sleeping together" (Ibid. 320). Arguably, his comment also reflects a Puritanical philosophy that, inevitably, the cost of premarital sex is dangerously high. Indeed, the labor-room scene has been described as "right out of a Puritan sermon depicting the consequences of God's wrath" (Martin, "Woman" 236).

Hemingway could not fully mask his resentment toward female sexual activity, a fact suggested early on by Wilson, who wrote that Frederic "eventually destroys Catherine--after enjoying her abject devotion--by giving her a baby, itself born dead" ("Gauge" 254). Nor could Hemingway hide his confused feelings about male and female sexuality. Although Baker argues that Catherine's death does not result from this "immoral social situation," (99) in the end Catherine's death is directly related to her sexual activity. While Hemingway ostensibly idealizes Catherine as sexually accommodating and willing to devote herself to Frederic's needs, at the novel's conclusion she is killed off.

An argument could be made that Frederic is also punished. After becoming emotionally and physically dependent on Catherine, he must face life without her. By the novel's conclusion his bitterness about society's responsibility for the war has been

combined with Catherine Barkley's death, and he realizes that he has been unable to elude either the war's danger or its random violence. However, while Frederic has been broken, he has survived, and according to his own definition will become "strong at the broken places" (FTA 249).

Catherine's knowledge of wartime destruction puts her in possession of information that is "traditionally male" (Barlowe-Kayes 31). However, when Catherine's sexual behavior further trespasses on male territory, the consequences of such liberated sexuality become too threatening to be ignored. Catherine's courage to deviate from the sexual norm leads to her death, becoming just another example of the way Hemingway regularly doomed his women to "defeat or inadequacy" (Pearson 19). Fiedler's harshly unsentimental assessment about Catherine assumed that "had Catherine lived, she could have only turned into a bitch; for this is the fate in Hemingway's imagination of Anglo-Saxon women" (306).

Frederick Hoffman places Catherine's death "in sharp equation with the defeating and confusing terror of the war itself" (93). Spanier has argued that Catherine's death is necessary if Hemingway is to prove that "the world breaks everyone" ("Code" 142, FTA 249). Judith Fetterley's findings are more in line with my own. Fetterley argues that Catherine's idealization is a disguise for Hemingway's hostility. She sees Catherine's death as the "punishment for having failed Frederic sexually by getting pregnant" (69) and she interprets Hemingway's message as bitterly conclusive: "the only good woman is a dead one, . . ." (71).

In A Farewell to Arms, the link between sex and death is suggested at the novel's start. Describing the passing troops, Hemingway writes, "their rifles were wet and under their capes the two leather cartridge-boxes on the front of the belts . . . bulged forward under the capes so that the men (FTA 4). By the novel's end, the link between sex and death has been firmly established, and female biology is implicated in the denouement.

Hemingway called Catherine and Frederic his "Romeo and Juliet" (Wilson, "Gauge" 242). However, he treated his lovers unequally, and he punished his "Juliet" with death. In Hemingway's world, the sexuality of women such as Catherine Barkley is ultimately seen as dangerous. Despite their nurturing qualities, women like Catherine are finally shown to be barren and incapable of creating a future generation. Their sexuality is represented as a smothering threat to masculinity. To overcome that threat and to ensure male preservation, their sexuality must be neutralized.

In 1939 Edmund Wilson observed how Hemingway had used his novels to respond to "every pressure of the moral atmosphere of the time" ("Gauge" 255). In An American Tragedy Dreiser also reacted to the changing Twenties moral and social climate. If Dreiser's response was not as sensitive as Hemingway's would be a few years later, it was just as timely. Trying to explain society and sex through the "sensationalized narrative" of a pregnant working girl's murder (Lundquist 86), Dreiser dismisses women as "symbols of the American ideal," and accepts them instead for their ambitions to find a better life, even if that life could only be attained by sexual means (Weir 65). As

Faulkner and Hemingway would do several years later, Dreiser recognized female sexual desire and the "complexity" of female eroticism (Ibid. 66). While Faulkner and Hemingway, would present sexual women as dangerous, in 1932 Joseph Beach noted that women in Dreiser's novels were frequently "condemned" because of their "relative weakness economically and biologically," (323,324). Weir supported such interpretations when she wrote that Dreiser's male/female sexual relations were "infected by the capitalistic ethic" (Weir 69).

In An American Tragedy Dreiser explored the connection between female sexuality and the inherent possibilities of the American dream, but he did not celebrate women's new freedoms. Perhaps because his sense of irony was "more weathered" and his sense of pleasure "more tired," Dreiser's alienation came across as even "more profound" than other Twenties male writers (Lingeman 242). Although Wolstenholme argued that for Dreiser, America's "social sexual arrangements" victimized both men and women alike (261), Joseph Beach's interpretation that in Dreiser's novels women "would get the worst of it" (324) is more convincing.

An American Tragedy is firmly placed in the Twenties by frequent references to social activities associated with postwar excess. However, such typical activities rarely evoke the Twenties' care-free spirit. Rather there is a sense of something dark lurking beneath the fun-filled surface, and the gaiety is often marred by the realities of individual experience. Still, men and women are shown participating in Twenties recreations and trying out new social freedoms. They ride about unchaperoned in

automobiles, they go dancing, attend parties and experiment with sex. In Clyde's and Roberta's cases, their liberated sexual conduct conflicts with their parents' more traditional, religious values.

Despite new social freedoms and pleasure-seeking behaviors, freedom of choice remains illusory, and in Dreiser's mechanistic world Roberta's fate is decided by chance. Roberta's first outing with Clyde at Crum Lake results from an unplanned meeting; she realizes their relationship's insignificance to Clyde when she inadvertently reads about his involvement with Lycurgus' social set; her pregnancy is unintended and comes at a time both she and Clyde are thinking of ending their relationship; Clyde finds a way of murdering Roberta when he comes across a newspaper story about an accidental drowning; and finally, when Roberta's agitation makes the boat capsize, Clyde's indecisiveness leads to her accidental death.

Critical opinion of An American Tragedy generally centers on Clyde Griffiths and "the environmental pressures at all stages of Clyde's story" (Gerber, Dreiser 82). Little critical mention is made of Roberta Alden, particularly among early reviewers. However, among more contemporary critics, Shafer regards Roberta as "an embodied energy rather than a person," and sees her fate as predetermined by "inheritance, environment and sex" (122). Shapiro notes her fundamental "courage and decency" (104). Robert Penn Warren views Roberta as a "fully rendered" character, not only in her position on the social and economic scale, but in the "complexity of her humanity" (120). Ellen Moers notes Roberta's sensual nature. She also expresses sympathy for Roberta, seeing

her as a victim of "the sexual waters that had flooded her parched maidenhood" (283).

In many respects Roberta Alden is a female version of Clyde Griffiths, although she does not possess the innate sexual longing that characterizes Clyde. Roberta's background is as impoverished and bleak as Clyde's, and the insecurity of her lower class social position thrusts her into a "sexual career" that directly conflicts with her moral training (Weir 69). Both Roberta and Clyde share a conventional moral upbringing and both have parents who are ineffectual, incapable of preparing their children for the realities of life. Powerless in a money-oriented society, poor, ignorant and uneducated, both are unprepared to confront the complex world which eventually traps them. Like Clyde, Roberta dreams of a better life, and her life, as well as Clyde's, reflects the aspirations and disappointments of the American dream. Like Clyde, Roberta lacks opportunity and is infected by the "very virus of ambition and unrest that afflicted him" (AT 250).³ When she comes to Lycurgus she feels the same frustration with life that Clyde is feeling, and once established in Lycurgus is as lonely and isolated. By the time she meets Clyde, this lack of companionship makes her vulnerable to his advances.

Roberta Alden's life reflected Twenties realities. Since the turn of the century, American society had become increasingly mobile. Young women had been leaving rural, farm communities for larger, industrialized cities where they hoped to find factory employment. For such young women, the work place provided an avenue to search for and find a suitable husband. Like many

other young, working class women of the time, Roberta's options had been predetermined by the "economic, social and psychological conditions" of her life (Weir 69). She was aware that to escape grinding poverty of her parents' lives, her "sexual allure" would be her only bargaining point (Ibid.)

When Clyde and Roberta meet for the first time at the Griffiths' factory, Clyde is immediately attracted to Roberta but is also determined to comply with his cousin's warning about becoming involved with employees. Nevertheless, Clyde is impressed by Roberta's charm and her difference from all the other working girls. Drawn to Roberta's appearance, her cheerful competence and intelligence, he soon becomes conscious of her "warm, imaginative, sensuous temperament" dangerously compatible with his own unfulfilled sexual yearnings (AT 244). At the same time Roberta's reaction to Clyde is also based on an immediate physical attraction. She focuses on "the beauty of his face and hands--the blackness and softness of his hair, the darkness and melancholy and lure of his eyes" (Ibid. 253). She senses Clyde's interest in her, but is apprehensive about their different social positions, troubled that a man from the upper class would never marry her.

When they accidentally meet at Crum Lake, both Roberta and Clyde are delighted. Each has been feeling forlorn and friendless, and each has been thinking of the other. Despite an uneasiness about keeping their encounter secret, its idyllic quality encourages a second meeting. To keep this date, Roberta deceives her friends about her plans. This lie and her willingness to kiss Clyde moves their relationship into a sexual

realm and signals a break from the old-fashioned values that have been part of Roberta's moral upbringing.

Roberta is eager to see Clyde again and schemes to find ways of meeting him. On a secret weekend trip planned by Roberta, Clyde tries teaching Roberta to dance. Initially reluctant because of her church's teachings but excited by Clyde's closeness, she is described as "quite weakened by her desire for him" (AT 280). When they dance they move "rhythmically and instinctively together" (Ibid. 280-81), "the wonderful rhythm of his body coinciding with hers" (Ibid. 281). Although Roberta does not realize it yet, she is in the process of being trapped by her own sexual nature.

Roberta decides to move when boarders in her rooming house report having seen her dancing and make it clear they think dancing is sinful. In selecting a new residence, she perhaps unconsciously picks a single room separated from other parts of the house, a room whose outside door will allow Clyde access without exposure. Roberta knows she is "trifling with fire and perhaps social disgrace into the bargain" (AT 287). Her moral struggle has begun.

In their relationship Clyde presses for more intimacy. He uses the oncoming cold weather to justify entering Roberta's room, and he tries to push their relationship beyond conventional sexual boundaries. Roberta is conflicted because Clyde's request contradicts her religious upbringing. She is simultaneously wary of being seduced and afraid that resisting Clyde's demands would spell the end of their relationship. When Clyde pressures Roberta, she responds with, "I can't Clyde. I can't. I would if

I could but I can't. It wouldn't be right. I would if I could make myself, but I can't" (AT 291). However, when she thinks of losing Clyde, she capitulates, hoping "Clyde would be satisfied with just some form of guarded social contact in the room . . . For more than this she should not grant--never" (Ibid. 298). When she acquiesces to Clyde's demands, she has a physical, almost sexual reaction. Anticipating their meeting, she is flooded with a "rich upwelling force of life and love" (Ibid. 299)

Clyde is insistent on making their relationship increasingly sexual and suspiciously sees in Roberta's heartfelt hesitation echoes of Hortense Briggs' more deliberate exploitation. However, there are distinctions between Roberta's and Hortense's use of sex. Sex gives Hortense power, and she manipulates Clyde's weakness for women to her own advantage. Acting as an "entrepreneur of sex," she sells her sexual wares to the "highest bidder" without any qualms (Pizer, Novels 242). Roberta's more conflicted emotions put her at a disadvantage. Her loneliness makes her easy prey to Clyde's demands for premarital sex. Eventually she makes a bad investment on her future and "squanders her capital" on Clyde (Ibid.).

When Roberta's resolve to limit their sexual encounters weakens, sex becomes part of their clandestine relationship. They continue to meet, but only at night, hidden away from Lycurgus' prying eyes and conventional moral standards. From the beginning theirs has been a relationship based on Roberta's insecurity, her fear of betrayal and her painful awareness of their unequal social positions. She fears that Clyde will leave

her if she withholds sex but also realizes that should their affair be discovered, she would be categorized as a fallen woman.

Although Roberta sees danger in their association, she is genuinely in love with Clyde. She is also attracted by a mistaken perception of Clyde's wealth and prominence, and bases their relationship on hopes that he will marry her. She compromises her values to hold on to him, and worries about losing him, especially after they have sex. Once she has sex with Clyde, she regrets giving into Clyde's pressure, is troubled about the possibility of shaming her family if she should become pregnant, and is keenly aware that she has compromised herself. When Clyde predictably begins losing interest, she becomes agitated. Hers has not been a promiscuous sexuality. Clyde may have dismissed thoughts of marriage from the beginning, but for Roberta their relationship has been linked to love.

Clyde's thoughts have been shaped by traditional assumptions that different moral standards were applicable to working class women and upper class women. Working class women were supposed to be sexually available to upper class men, but they were not marriage material. Identifying with his wealthy Griffiths relatives, Clyde sees Roberta as beneath him socially, a mere factory girl with little to offer. He thinks about Roberta, conceding that "he could be happy with her if only he did not need to marry her" (AT 258). Once their affair is underway, his conventional moral background further contributes to his denigration of Roberta. Thinking about sex, Clyde reflects, "Religious, moral and reserved girls didn't do it" (Ibid. 249). Troubled by her lost virginity, he begins to see her as a fallen

woman for whom he has lost respect and to whom he has no obligations.

Ironically, when Roberta announces her pregnancy, it is at a time when their lovemaking has become sporadic and both have recognized their relationship's inevitable end. Roberta's pregnancy makes them both feel trapped and victimized, and both imagine the pregnancy ruining their lives. For Roberta in particular, having an illegitimate child means the end of her hopes for a better life, and a forced return to the impoverished farm life from which she longed to escape.

Roberta worries about exposure and shame. She hopes she can reawaken Clyde's former affection but realistically recognizes Clyde's lack of feeling. Conscious that Clyde had never promised marriage, aware of his indifference and resentment, she comes to realize she alone will be responsible for finding a viable solution for her pregnancy. When Roberta tries to resolve their problem, she shows the "self-reliant courage and determination" initially noticed by Clyde (AT 241). When they seek someone to perform an abortion, she, not Clyde, thinks of a story to tell Dr. Glean. Regardless of Dr. Glean's previous denial of help, Roberta decides to see him a second time, hoping to convince him to perform the abortion. When he refuses, the consequences for Roberta are overwhelming. She is stunned at the finality of the doctor's decision and its implications of "illegitimacy and disgrace" (AT 407). Marriage is her only option, and out of fear she threatens Clyde: "I've got to get out of this, that's all Clyde. I've got to. I'm not going to be left to face my people and everybody without any help or marriage or anything" (AT 417).

Time is running out for both of them. Clyde has "lost touch with Roberta's capacity for love," and becomes motivated by fear and desperation (Pizer, "Drama" 208). Although he promises to marry Roberta, he secretly plots to drown her instead. In the boat Roberta notices Clyde's strange expression, seeks to comfort him, reaches out for his hand. He flinches at her touch and flings his hand out. The camera he is holding hits Roberta's face and she loses her balance. Clyde gets up to help her and in doing so capsizes the boat. Roberta hits her head, falls into the water, and while Clyde listens to her screams, she drowns. In this scene Dreiser has taken "one of the stock legends of American behavior" and reversed its "happy ending" (Matthiessen 191).

Since his teens, Clyde has encountered women who make demands on him. Hortense exploited Clyde in exchange for sexual favors; his mother asked him for money for his pregnant sister Esta. Thus when Roberta announces her pregnancy, Clyde feels trapped once again, and Roberta's requests recall other threatening situations with women that had made Clyde fear engulfment. He feels as though he is once again "drowning in a sea of 'female' problems" and retaliates first by thinking of killing Roberta, then passively watching while she actually drowns (Wolstenholme 259).

Roberta has been seen not just as a sex object, but as "another victim of the American dream, destroyed by her own aspirations to a better life" (Weir 70). Ultimately though, Roberta is made to seem less a victim and more an object deserving censure. Certainly Clyde holds her responsible for his

predicament: "was she so entirely lacking in blame herself? To be sure, he had sought to entice or seduce her, as you will, but even so, could she be held entirely blameless?" (AT 468). Mrs. Griffiths notes the difference in their ages (Roberta is twenty three, Clyde is twenty one) and questions Roberta's role in seducing her son:

the lure of her must have aided in the weakening and the betrayal of her son. A strong, good girl would not have consented-- . . . And might it not be said in Clyde's favor--as in the very beginning of life in the Garden of Eden--the woman tempted me. (AT 743)

Dreiser's response to Roberta is ambivalent. He admires her beauty and courage, yet appears to indict her for giving in to Clyde's sexual demands. Sheldon Grebstein's description of Dreiser's Carrie Meeber in Sister Carrie is equally relevant to Roberta: "She yields to the flesh, but in the strongest Victorian tradition she does so out of helplessness and man's predatory lustfulness Despite her fall, she is better than anyone else" (11). While Roberta's letters to Clyde are heart wrenching, and her parents' grief pitiful, ultimately she is presented not as a victim but as a limiting presence in Clyde's life. The reader roots for Clyde and his dream to the detriment of Roberta and her dream. Although her plight is sympathetically presented, and while there is no doubt that she is decent and loving, ultimately Irving Howe's observation of Clyde and Roberta holds true: "we participate vicariously in his desperation to be rid of her. We share his desire with some shame, but unless we count ourselves among the hopelessly pure, we share it"

(Afterword 827).

In the liberated sexual atmosphere of the Twenties, it was possible to discuss such controversial sexual issues as abortion. In An American Tragedy Dreiser frankly discusses Roberta's dilemma, which stems from her lack of money. Because Roberta is not of a "good family" and because she is "not heavily sponsored by others" she is denied an abortion (AT 400). While Clyde thinks of ways to evade his responsibility to Roberta and the unborn child, Roberta has no such options.

In An American Tragedy, Dreiser reveals his interest in the consequences of female sexual freedoms. Putting a different twist on female sexual power, Dreiser's examination reveals "that the problem lies not in some inherent female destructiveness: but in "the structures that force sexual power to be used destructively" (Woestenholme 261). Although Roberta's character is a result of genetics and economics, ultimately the consequences of her sexual behavior bring about her death, and indirectly, Clyde's as well. Despite a moral upbringing Roberta knowingly goes against her church's strict religious teachings, as many young women in the Twenties were doing. However, Roberta is severely punished for ignoring traditional moral codes. Her lapse from conventional morality, her illicit affair and her death carry a clear message. For women, the consequences of premarital sexual relationships are inescapable and deserve punishment.

In An American Tragedy Dreiser shows how "women's biological circumstances" can be "made into a trap to ensnare both women and men like Clyde" (Woestenholme 258). While Clyde also suffers, it

is Roberta whose death at her lovers' hands, is more horrible because it contains within it seeds of betrayal and hate. Roberta dies calling for help, knowing that the person she loves best is allowing her to drown.

For Roberta Alden, marriage offered security, and it was the goal she aspired to. However, the role of married women also changed in the Twenties. Although most middle-class American women adhered to conventional marital patterns, by the Twenties the double standard was collapsing and traditional values and beliefs were being openly questioned. Many women were no longer willing to live in their husband's shadows nor to submit to their husband's economic and social control, although fidelity was, of course, still basic to most marriages.

In part, changes in marital sexual practices originated with dissemination of birth control information. Margaret Sanger, perhaps the best known birth control advocate, geared her campaign toward improving, rather than changing, women's lives. Initially aimed at working class women, Sanger's message and contraceptive advice was appropriated by middle-class and upper-class women who, freed from worry about unwanted pregnancy, were now able control what happened to their bodies.

Contraceptive availability gave options to women who had previously considered abstinence the only reliable birth control. At the same time, it opened up possibilities for expanded sexual experience within marriage. Women could be thought of as sexual partners as well as wives and mothers. As sexual inhibitions arising from fear of pregnancy diminished, women began to use sex to fulfill and express themselves emotionally. But despite the

fact that the sexual revolution was occurring more within marriage than outside of it, most Twenties novels that explored female sexual practices focused on single women's sexual behavior (Banner, Women 157). One of the few American novels treating married women's illicit sexual behavior was The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

The Great Gatsby and An American Tragedy were published in the same year. Both novels explore the illusions and the realities of the American dream. Both examine the issue of female sexuality, showing how love and sex are influenced by money and social class. But despite thematic similarities, the novels' achievements are attained through different stylistic methods. Dreiser's clumsy prose brings home the grim realities of his characters' world, a world in which heredity and environment inescapably affect fate. Fitzgerald's more lyrical prose, on the other hand, has the magic of poetry, and his lucid, fluent style captures the textures and tones of the hedonistic Twenties. Dreiser relies on the heavy weight of ever-accumulating detail to delineate character. Fitzgerald's rendering of character is more blurred, as when he links Daisy's desirability to the sound of her voice. In Alfred Kazin's words, Fitzgerald's novels

always hovered on the verge of fantasy and shimmered with all the colors of the world. Just as the world swam through his senses without being defined by him, so he could catch all its lights and tones in his prismatic style without having to understand them too consciously." (Grounds 319)

In An American Tragedy Dreiser evokes a cheerless vision of the Twenties, while in The Great Gatsby Fitzgerald makes the era come alive, revealing what H.L. Mencken called "the florid show of modern American life--and especially the devil's dance that goes on at the top" ("Gatsby" 213). Another reviewer, William Curtis, also referred to the Twenties party culture and its lax moral climate, writing that in The Great Gatsby Fitzgerald definitely succeeded in creating a "sense of dissatisfaction with the majority code of conduct (227).

In The Great Gatsby Fitzgerald examines the consequences of illicit female sexuality in the context of marriage. Although he is not nearly as critical or punitive toward Daisy Buchanan as Faulkner was with Caddie Compson, or Hemingway with Catherine Barkley or Dreiser with Roberta Alden, Fitzgerald makes it clear that illicit sex is a deadly force for which someone must pay. In The Great Gatsby, Daisy Buchanan's wealth shields her from facing any consequences for having extra-marital sex. However, while Daisy herself escapes punishment, the people surrounding her pay a heavy price.

Fitzgerald is ambivalent about Daisy. He is intrigued by her sophisticated self-reliance and the wealthy world through which she moves, but questions her sincerity and the "foul dust" of her values (4). Fitzgerald longs to characterize Daisy as a "golden girl" who lives "high in a white palace" (91).⁴ Nevertheless, he uses her sexual conduct to brand her, according to Fiedler, as a "White Maiden" turned "White Witch," a "golden girl" turned "golden idol" (301). While Fitzgerald blames Daisy for not living up to Gatsby's vision, he also depicts her as

perplexed and burdened by its intensity.

Daisy has been condemned by the critics. In an early review, Daisy is cited for exhibiting "the casual cruelty of her class," and chastised for "speaking no word of sorrow" for the tragic sweep of events her actions cause (Bryer 209). In 1946, Alfred Kazin labeled Daisy "vulgar and inhuman" ("Confession" 179). In 1954, Marius Bewley alluded to the "vicious emptiness" that made her a "representative creature of the Jazz Age" (132,133). Fiedler characterized Daisy as "the first notable anti-virgin of our fiction," and sees her as the "prototype" for the "Fair Goddess as bitch" (300). James Miller responds to her insubstantiality by identifying her as "a vision that really doesn't exist" (123), while Milton Hindus comments on her "intense self-centeredness" (33). More recently, McCay described Daisy as "a curse" to the people whose lives she affects (318) while Scott Donaldson disparaged her for talking "nonsense" and striking poses (107).

Recently Daisy has been vigorously defended by feminist critics. Sarah Beebe Fryer argues that Daisy is in a bind between the social stature and security represented by marriage to Tom and her need for love which is fulfilled by Gatsby (43,54). Fetterley contends that the novel's hostility is unfairly directed toward Daisy, claiming that Daisy is scapegoated and even victimized by Gatsby's dream (Reader 72).

In 1925 reviewer Edwin Clark wrote that Fitzgerald had "said farewell to his flappers" in The Great Gatsby, and was writing instead about their "older" married sisters, noting that marriage had not changed their flapper world, "only the locale of their

parties" (199). Indeed, Daisy Buchanan still exhibits many of the flapper mannerisms that had made her "by far the most popular of all the young girls in Louisville" (GG 57). As a young married woman of twenty-three she drives her own car, drinks freely and enjoys what life has to offer. She looks for fun and excitement, and uses her charm to both attract people and keep them at a distance. When Nick describes her, he admits having "no sight into Daisy's heart" but is nevertheless unprepared for the sordid realities of her marriage and the unprincipled world in which she moves (GG 7).

Daisy Buchanan's world is characterized by purposeless energy. She lives in an upper-class society which denies responsibility for its actions and where enormous wealth replaces enduring values. People aimlessly drift from one place to another, from one party to another, their money bestowing freedom, confidence and power on them. Although Daisy has the gracious mannerisms and good breeding cultivated by the rich, she is playing a role. Her romantically appealing facade hides a heart already empty, hardened and even corrupted by her short marriage to Tom Buchanan. She has little to offer as she drifts along in a visionless but monied world, inevitably failing to understand or measure up to the intensity and "creative passion" of Gatsby's dream (GG 73).

Although Daisy creates an illusion of excitement, it does not quite camouflage her dreary reality. At once bored and full of nervous energy, she plaintively asks, "What'll we plan?. What do people plan?" (GG 11). Still later she cries out in only a half-joking manner, "What'll we do with ourselves this afternoon?

. . . and the day after that, and the next thirty years?" (Ibid. 90). When she re-encounters Gatsby, she finds a temporary answer to her question.

Daisy toys with people for her own entertainment. She uses her voice to attract people and manipulate their emotions, and in The Great Gatsby her voice becomes an index to her character. When she recalls the emotionally painful circumstances of her daughter's birth, Nick is almost convinced by her bitter words until he realizes Daisy is using her voice to mask the basic insincerity of her words. Already in this early episode, Daisy is exposed as an unreliable narrator of her own experience, an exhibitionist willing to use her pain as an attention-grabbing trick.

Before her marriage, Daisy had lived in a monied world of motorcars, dances and "cheerful snobbery" (115). Surrounded by a succession of beaux that drifted in and out of her house, Daisy became an exalted and increasingly desirable figure for the penniless Gatsby. As Daisy and her money became indivisible to him, she was transformed without her knowing it into "the ultimate object" in Gatsby's world (Fetterley, Reader 75).

As a young officer lacking social connections and background, Gatsby was fascinated by Daisy. Gatsby sees Daisy as a "'nice'" girl, whose respectability cannot be challenged, despite the ambiguously phrased fact that "many men . . . had already loved Daisy" (GG 113). Blinding himself to her sexuality, he is nevertheless sexually attracted to her. (The quotation marks around nice, and the description of things associated in Gatsby's mind with nice, show that for Gatsby

Daisy's mystery and allure were grounded in her wealth and social distinction.) Fueled by exigencies of war and a liberated sexual atmosphere, drawn by Gatsby's forcefulness and good looks, Daisy allows Gatsby total sexual liberty, even though socially "he had no real right to touch her hand" (GG 113). When Gatsby goes off to war, Daisy yearns for a more orderly and shaped life, and she chooses wealthy Tom Buchanan to provide that order.

Paradoxically Gatsby, not Daisy, has taken "their month of love" seriously (GG 114). While Daisy eventually puts Gatsby out of her mind, Gatsby is haunted by her memory, and in the intervening years confers on her the mythological status of a golden girl. Indeed, Gatsby's dream is so strong and engulfing that for Fetterley it virtually "annihilates Daisy as a separate person" and turns her into "the empty room of his own solipsism" (Reader 99). Daisy has become frozen in Gatsby's mind as the embodied form of an ideal, and Gatsby sees her only as an extension of himself and his dream. Without knowing it, Daisy has become a primary force in Gatsby's life, motivating him to find the key to her elusive but tantalizing world. She becomes a green light, unwittingly signaling to Gatsby that she could be permanently his, if only he had enough money.

When he meets her five years later Gatsby's dream of Daisy has remained untouched. Daisy still represents life's possibilities to him, and he fails to see that her "fire and freshness" are gone, and she is only an imitation of her youthful self (GG 73). Blinding himself to her tarnished luster, he sees Daisy as she existed in the past as a symbol of social

distinction and wealth, of romance, glamor and sophistication.

However, when Gatsby meets Daisy again, she is vulnerable, perhaps even bewildered and humiliated by Tom's infidelities. Although Richard Lehan questions why Daisy encourages Gatsby (Fitzgerald 112), Gatsby's faithfulness comforts her wounded pride. When Gatsby shows her through his estate, she cries when he shows her his shirts. Perhaps her tears are in response to an unqualified admiration and desire to please her, exceeding anything she has ever known before. Perhaps they symbolize her inability to measure up to Gatsby's expectations. For Daisy has changed. Firmly rooted in Tom's world, Daisy tolerates Tom's infidelities and her own misery in exchange for wealth and social standing.

Gatsby's tie to Daisy is based on pure emotion and a deluded vision that is more vivid than Daisy's actual reality. Because Gatsby lives in the mystery and power of Daisy's past, he finds the present irrelevant. Expecting Daisy to have remained faithful to him, he is astounded by the existence of her child, tangible proof of her marriage and a consummated sexual relationship. However, these facts do not deter Gatsby's unshakable conviction that he and Daisy are meant to be together. Their relationship becomes sexual again, suggested by Gatsby's absolute desire for privacy when "Daisy comes over" (GG 86).

Daisy's physical presence is "vague and impalpable," and even her name suggests perishability and transience (Lehan, Gatsby 74). Her sexuality is kept in the background, and her adultery played down, although both ultimately become central to the novel. Daisy is eventually seen as "not the white bride but

the Dark Destroyer," a "phallic woman with a phallus of gold," whose sexual conduct is both corrupt and destructive (Fiedler 301)

Daisy's affair with Gatsby originates with her boredom, and she ultimately uses sex as a balm to her wounded vanity. While Gatsby thinks of eternal love, Daisy searches only for diversion and reaffirmation. Perplexed by the intensity of Gatsby's love, Daisy is also bewildered by Gatsby's romantic belief that he can recreate the past by obliterating time and her life with Tom. When Gatsby asks Daisy to repudiate Tom and their life together she protests, "you want too much! I love you now--isn't that enough? I can't help what's past" (GG 101).

Tom's exposure of Gatsby's bootlegging activities effectively terminates the relationship. Daisy will never abandon the comfort and security Tom's old money provides. In a car trip back to her home, an overwrought Daisy accidentally runs over Tom's current mistress Myrtle Wilson. Never stopping or returning to the accident scene to see what happened, Daisy drives home. As the story reaches its conclusion, Daisy's character is shown "curdling into the viciousness of a monstrous moral indifference" (Bewley 133).

Daisy has acquired "Tom's hard malice" and sense of superiority, and she is ruthless in her impulse toward self preservation (GG 112). Uniting with Tom to deny the truth, Daisy compromises any love she might have ever felt for Gatsby. Taking advantage of Gatsby's devotion, she allows him to accept the blame for Myrtle's death. While Gatsby awaits a signal from Daisy, who he thinks has locked herself into her room for her own

safety, Daisy is actually talking with Tom in the kitchen.

Daisy's adulterous affair with Gatsby is paralleled by Myrtle's affair with Tom. In fact, H.L. Mencken noted that despite their different backgrounds, the "grand lady" and the "kept woman" are "indistinguishable" in the novel ("Gatsby" 214). Both Myrtle and Daisy tolerate Tom's rage and brutality in exchange for the financial benefits his wealth confers on them. Perhaps they believe they have no other options. Daisy's finger injured by Tom, pre-figures the later more violent incident with Myrtle when Tom punches her in the nose. However, all similarities end there.

Vulgar where Daisy is genteel, vital where Daisy is bored, Myrtle is Daisy's opposite, a cheap, lower class woman whose life is a far cry from Daisy's upper class existence. Daisy is supposed to be the "nice" girl who lives in a white house, while Myrtle, who lives in The Valley of Ashes, epitomizes vulgarity. Daisy's girlhood home in Louisville represents privilege, while Myrtle's garage apartment suggests, for Sergio Perosa, the novel's "sordid atmosphere of moral disorder" (63). While Daisy's voice embodies breeding and confidence, Myrtle's voice is coarse and falsely genteel. Where Daisy is aimless, Myrtle purposefully aspires toward the opulence and refinement that are Daisy's birthright. Their stories intersect when a high-strung Daisy accidentally runs Myrtle over.

Fitzgerald treats Myrtle's and Daisy's adulterous affairs differently. Daisy escapes unharmed from the chaos created by her extramarital affair, aided by her wealth and its engendering sense of entitlement. Myrtle, on the other hand, is propelled to

a violent death. When Wilson discovers Myrtle's affair with Tom, he is physically sickened, locks his wife in their apartment, and makes plans to move away. Distraught over his plans, Myrtle rushes outside when she thinks she hears Tom's car approaching and is accidentally run over by Daisy. Myrtle is "ripped open" , and in a bizarre twist, she is also sexually mutilated (GG 110). Her death is instantaneous and grotesque. Her left breast is partially severed, and is described as "swinging loose like a flap" (Ibid. 105).

While Daisy escapes destruction, her infidelity leads to a chain of events that turn her into an agent of destruction. In the novel's course, she is transformed from Gatsby's romantic ideal to Myrtle Wilson's killer, and indirectly Wilson's. However, she is most condemned for her readiness to sacrifice Gatsby and his misguided gallantry for her own safety. In Fetterley's words, "the golden girl has been revealed to be a common weed" (Reader 73)

Fitzgerald assumes that rich women such as Daisy are incapable of any real "moral responsibility" (Fetterly, Reader 93). His double standard for rich and poor women and his fascination with money's power and women's beauty combine to allow Daisy to escape punishment. Unwilling to accept responsibility for her actions, Daisy also discovers it is unnecessary. Gatsby will do her dirty work for her. In her final treatment of Gatsby, Daisy uses the prerogatives of the rich to escape responsibility for Myrtle's death. Fitzgerald writes about Daisy and Tom, noting that "they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their

vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made" (GG 136). Daisy literally gets away with murder, while Myrtle is murdered trying to get away.

Notes

1. William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury, 1929; New York: Vintage, 1987. All references are to this edition.
2. Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms, 1929; New York: Scribner, 1987. All references are to this edition.
3. Theodore Dreiser, An American Tragedy, 1905; New York: Signet, 1981. All references are to this edition.
4. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby, Three Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1925; New York: Scribner, 1953. All references are to this edition.

Chapter V

The Consequences of Sex: The Female Perspective

In the Twenties, writers such as Dreiser, Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway explored the consequences of women's sexual activity. Female authors of the period such as Willa Cather, Ellen Glasgow, Nella Larsen and Edith Wharton also acknowledged the importance of female sexual expression in their novels. However, in Cather's A Lost Lady and My Antonia, Glasgow's Barren Ground and They Stood to Folly, Wharton's "The Old Maid" and Larsen's Quicksand their treatment of this issue differed from their male peers.

In The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald had explored the consequences of Daisy Buchanan's adultery. Although Daisy escaped direct punishment for her extramarital affair, Fitzgerald showed how her actions had a galvanic impact on other people's lives. Fitzgerald portrayed Daisy's adulterous actions as morally ambiguous, ultimately judging her for her moral indifference, and condemning the insensitivity and fickleness that made her adultery and callow behavior possible.

In A Lost Lady Cather treads on similar ground when treating Marian Forrester's infidelity. Marian Forrester's story, like Daisy Buchanan's, is one of unapologetic adultery and betrayal. Although she exposes Marian Forrester's moral weakness and judges her for yielding to unworthy lovers after her first marriage, Cather eventually excuses Marian Forrester's actions. While Daisy's infidelity sets off a series of lethal events, Marian

Forrester's corrupt behavior produces no corresponding disasters. By the novel's end, Marian Forrester (like Daisy) has escaped punishment for her actions. While both have been diminished morally by their adultery, Marian Forrester's survival is warmly celebrated, while Daisy's is not.

Marian Forrester, like Daisy Buchanan, is a romantic heroine who excites male admiration. She is spoiled, vain and at times superficial, but unlike Daisy she is neither arrogant nor sterile. Based loosely on Mrs. Silas Garber, whom Cather had known and loved in her youth, the portrait of Marian Forrester reflects a mystery and excitement similar to that found in Fitzgerald's presentation of Daisy. However Cather, accepts Marian Forrester's imperfections, and despite her transgressions Marian Forrester is remembered as an "aesthetic ideal" (LL 87).¹ Daisy, on the other hand, is irrevocably flawed for Fitzgerald.

Willa Cather grew up on the Nebraska plains and saw its prairie transformed by pioneers who conceived of and built the first railroads. Surrounded by European immigrants who hoped to make their fortunes in a region where "there was nothing but land," she witnessed the development of an agrarian culture whose traditions she celebrated in My Antonia, and whose disappearance she eulogized in A Lost Lady (MA 7).²

As a young woman Cather dressed like a man and even referred to herself as William Cather. This confused or conflicted sexual identity may explain Cather's later use of male narrators in her fiction. By choosing Jim Burden in My Antonia and Niel Herbert in A Lost Lady as male narrators who idealize female characters, Cather may have been trying to find a way to confront memories of

women she had loved in the past (O'Brien, Voice 239). Cather's approach also raised questions that she was attempting to mask a lesbian view-point. If this was the case, then by camouflaging homoerotic "female intimacies" as "heterosexual attachments" Cather was able to write novels whose subject matter, at least on the surface, masked her attraction to women (O'Brien, "Mothers" 272).

In 1922, Cather's words about the world breaking in two attested to her estrangement. A Lost Lady (1925) reflects this alienation from society, while simultaneously accepting the changes characterizing it. However, it also sounds "a new note," containing "Cather's implicit message that one must learn to live with change, adapt to new conditions, accept the inevitable" (Woodress 348).

Viewed in a changing American landscape, A Lost Lady is an elegy to the Old West, with America's pillaged virgin land representing the story's real lost lady. Against this background, Marian Forrester's adultery becomes part of a lament for the frontier's lost virtues and its pioneer settlers. As the novel progresses, Marian Forrester symbolizes the vanishing dream of the old West and the impending entrenchment of materialism's corrupting influences. However, Marian Forrester's actions can be seen in a different light. Just as her husband, Captain Forrester, embodied an earlier era, Marian Forrester's adaptation to a changing world has been interpreted as another manifestation of "the dreamer's spirit of the pioneer" (Harvey 69).

Marian Forrester is characterized in the novel by "the magic of contradictions" (LL 79). That she was contradictory was

acknowledged almost immediately by a reviewer who saw her as "weak and immoral" but also as "courageous" and "generous" (Forman 178). Marian Forrester is presented as superficial and complex, mocking proprieties while seeming to observe them. She is gracious and charming, thoughtful and selfish, elegant and coarse, her allure springing from an opposing combination of "aesthetic otherworldliness" and "sensuality" (Rosowski, Voyage 119). At once faithful and adulterous, she indulges her sexual appetite outside of marriage. Love for her husband turns her into a devoted nurse during his illness, but her sexual drive prompts her to betray him. She is fascinating as a member of the respectable "railroad aristocracy" but after her husband's death is offensive in her sexual liaison with Ivy Peters (LL 9). However, while she betrays her husband, she too is betrayed--by her husband's illness and financial losses, Niel Herbert's rigid idealism, Frank Ellinger's opportunism, and Ivy Peters' greed.

In 1953 Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant argued that despite being written in the Freudian age, A Lost Lady "had no modern implications" (186). Yet the theme of Marian Forrester's "'refined'" female sexuality resonates in identifiably modern ways (Skaggs 47). From the novel's opening Marian Forrester is portrayed as a sexual, often erotic figure, "a lady of love" whose sexual appetites are frankly acknowledged (Stouck 58). Her power emerges both from her ability to charm and from her erotic qualities. Possessed of a distinct physical presence, she is openly flirtatious, a woman whose bewitching" presence "made one's blood tingle" (LL 35, 41). Her laugh is described as "inviting," and "musical" (Ibid.), her eyes "lively" and

"intimate" (LL 35).

Male reactions to Marian Forrester revolve around her genteel but nevertheless sexual effect. From the railroad men's appreciation of her hospitality, to the unrefined town boys' admiration of her elegance, men bask in the warmth of Marian Forrester's charm, instinctively responding to her sexual power. Captivated by her style, they see her as set apart from other women and believe that "whatever Mrs. Forrester chose to do was 'ladylike'" simply "because she did it" (13).

Although Niel Herbert dismisses her sexual behavior as disgusting, other men do not. Captain Forrester appreciates both her sexual energy and the admiring reaction it elicits from his friends. Although he apparently knows about her extramarital affairs, he accepts them. Ivy Peters uses his affair with Marian Forrester as a token of success, while Frank Ellinger takes advantage of her sexual longing, and then betrays and deserts her.

Marian Forrester's sexual nature is revealed by her initial reaction to Captain Forrester. When he rescues her from a near fatal mountain climbing accident, she is immediately attracted to him. Despite her injury and pain, she reacts to him sensually, aware of his muscles, his heartbeat, his masculine strength. She marries him, expecting that he will take care of her sexual, as well as her financial and emotional needs. Their age difference and her dependence on him has prompted some critics to view their relationship as an "Electra Story" (Moers, Women 238) in which a young girl returns "to her first love of the father" (Schwartz 39).

Marian Forrester's marital expectations are fulfilled as Captain Forrester's indulged second wife. The expensive jewels Captain Forrester buys for her "in acknowledgment of things he could not gracefully utter" (LL 51) take on sexual undertones, while her sensuality and pride prompt her to conduct herself in a way that makes her seem "worthy to wear them" (LL 52). However when his illness and financial troubles curtail their comfortable existence and active social life, she becomes increasingly restless. Sex becomes an outlet for her frustrations. Her relationship with Frank Ellinger turns the novel into what Susie Thomas calls "a Middle Western Madame Bovary, a tale of adultery in a provincial, bourgeois setting" (100).

In a brief encounter with Frank Ellinger after a dinner party, their burning physical attraction for each other is graphically illustrated when Mrs. Forrester's dress brushes up against his pants, and sparks literally fly between them. When she chooses the "deep ravine that winds back into the hills" as a safe spot for their love-making (LL 65), her words are so full of suppressed passion that even the woods themselves become sexualized (Winters 30-31). After they have made love, her erotic responses reflect her remembered passion. As Ellinger cuts down some branches, she sits there with closed eyes, a "faint, soft smile on her lips," while "soft shivers" go through her body (LL 67).

Despite loosening moral standards in the Twenties, Marian Forrester's relationship with Frank Ellinger reveals a still applicable double standard. Frank Ellinger's wild reputation with women does not bar him from society, nor does it keep him

from making a monied marriage. However, after her husband's death, Marian Forrester's actions, particularly with Ivy Peters, scandalize the townspeople, goading them to gossip about her as a shameless "Merry Widow" (LL 156).

Although she had seemed to possess her husband's integrity, after her husband's death Marian Forrester declines into a woman whose sexual activity makes her morally indifferent, incapable of either recognizing or choosing between right and wrong (Bloom 70). She drinks too much and becomes increasingly unstable. Her moral decline already underway, accelerates further. Lacking the Captain's inner convictions, she finally discards his moral principles altogether as soon as she sees they cannot help her. Too poor to pay for financial advice, but serious about saving herself, she acts in the only way she knows. She becomes Ivy Peters' mistress, making her in Ellen Moers' opinion, "a whore" (Women 238).

Marian Forrester's gradually revealed sexuality becomes most offensive in her relationship with the repellent Ivy Peters. As his mistress, Mrs. Forrester becomes even more tarnished, and their liaison further confirms her debasement. While her sexual relationship with Frank Ellinger had been discreet, her relationship with Ivy Peters is open. In her desperation to escape Sweet Water, Mrs. Forrester rationalizes Ivy Peters' attentions, excusing his unethical methods of making money by saying they succeed "faster than anything else" (LL 124). When Ivy familiarly fondles her breasts, her acquiescence reveals Marian Forrester's desperation to escape Sweet Water. It also reflects "the indiscriminate force," "the anarchic intensity"

behind her sexual needs (Skaggs 57).

At the novel's conclusion, Marian Forrester's remarriage to a wealthy Argentinean is reported, as is her death. Despite her shameful conduct, there are few consequences for Marian Forrester's adultery, unless one chooses to see her dimmed beauty as a punishment, instead of a natural aging process. Although her dyed hair and use of make-up have been interpreted as signs of her compromised morality, (Shaw 101) the intervening years had not changed Marian Forrester "as much as you'd think" (LL 173). Her eyes and her laugh are still recognizable, and her charm still powerful enough to have won her a marriage where she "seemed to have everything" (LL 173). From the novel's beginning where she had been idealized, to the novel's end where her imperfections were finally confronted and accepted, Marian Forrester had been admired for her courage and charm. Her life, a rise and fall of personal fortunes, has included humiliation, betrayal, and debasement, and she is shown as flawed.

Through the double lens of Niel Herbert's narration and Cather's omniscient perspective Marian Forrester's adultery is forgiven, her moral decline understood, her repudiation of her husband's values pardoned. Although her sexual behavior attests to her lost morality, it also reflects an independence that refuses to bend itself to social convention (Schwartz 34). Refusing to "immolate herself, like the widow of all those great men, and die with the pioneer period to which she belonged" (LL 169), eager for "life on any terms" (Ibid.), she uses sex to attain her goals, even when it draws her into dubious relationships. Niel's memorialization of Marian Forrester's

grace and class, his happiness that she was "well cared for, to the very end" (ibid. 174) mutes criticism of her infidelity. Finally, despite her triviality and vanity, Marian Forrester's appetite for life and independent spirit are applauded.

A Lost Lady focused on female sexuality within marriage, without the punitive consequences found in Fitzgerald's treatment of the same subject in The Great Gatsby. However, the impact of single women's liberated sexual practices also attracted Cather's attention, as it did male authors of the Twenties. Indeed, even before writing A Lost Lady, Willa Cather had explored this subject in My Antonia. In My Antonia Cather examined, as she would later in A Lost Lady, "the implications" for women trapped by male definitions of appropriate female roles, including sexual ones (Rosowski, Voyage 265). Both novels revolve around idealized female characters whose sexual acts lead to temporary male disillusionment. Although major female characters are shown in traditional roles--Marian Forrester as a civilizing influence in A Lost Lady, and Antonia Shimerda as an archetypal mother figure in My Antonia--they are also shown in untraditional roles, expressing their own sexuality, as perhaps Cather wished she could in her own life.

Although O'Brien argues that in My Antonia and A Lost Lady, "men project meaning onto women," this interpretation is questionable ("Mothers" 279). For in My Antonia and A Lost Lady, Antonia Shimerda and Marian Forrester are shown as women who create meaning by manipulating traditional female roles. While "the subtle nuances" of Mrs. Forrester's personality oppose Antonia's "uncomplicated nature," both women define their own

lives by subverting male notions of femininity (Robinson 238). Sometimes this disregard comes from ignoring conventional female sexual practices. However, Antonia Shimerda and Marian Forrester are not subject to punitive consequences as are women in novels written by male authors of the period. Gelfant contends that liberated female sexual conduct leads "almost axiomatically" to death in Cather's novels (52). Rather than leading to death, Marian Forrester's adulterous affairs and Antonia Shimerda's premarital affair lead to renewed life.

My Antonia is similar to A Lost Lady in its exploration of the consequences of illicit female sexual activity. It is also similar to The Sound and the Fury by William Faulkner in its recording of a young girl's journey into maturity. In The Sound and the Fury, seven-year-old Caddy Compson's charm and innate kindness had been detailed. By the novel's conclusion, the child's portrait had receded into the background, becoming a faint but unforgettable echo. In its place is a picture of a sexually driven woman whose pregnancy eventually penalized her family and made her a social outcast.

At the novel's start Antonia's warmth and unselfishness recall Caddy Compson in her childhood. Like Caddy Compson, Antonia is the "novel's center of energy and vitality" (Lambert 43). Like Caddy Compson, Antonia finds herself unmarried, abandoned and pregnant. Yet Antonia's fate as shown by Willa Cather differs from Caddy Compson's. Caddy's sexual transgressions ultimately defeat her and destroy her family. Antonia Shimerda's disgrace is a bridge to happiness and success.

Reviewers noted that Antonia's "almost horrible" early life

(Mencken "Fiction" 141), did not prevent her from becoming "free and warm and glorious" (Bourne 146). Despite her impoverished background, in childhood Antonia is seen racing through the prairie, happily chattering to her sister, constantly asking questions, continually excited by what she sees. She is connected to nature, alive with desire to learn and master her new surroundings, overflowing with energy. Her enthusiasm for life and desire to learn heighten her awareness to the prairie lands which shape her life (Gerber 30). Deprived of her remaining childhood by her father's death, Antonia tries to remain cheerful and life affirming. By the novel's end she has succeeded on a grand scale. Recognized as a powerful, life-giving figure, she has overcome her early difficulties, transforming them into a life of moral authority and heroic strength.

After her father's death Antonia becomes increasingly androgynous. The question of gender ambiguity had already been suggested by Antonia's nickname, "Tony." Now her appearance also becomes masculinized as she begins to wear her father's old clothes, working in the fields like a hired hand. Losing her feminine ways, she starts becoming "rough," (MA 125) and even her appearance changes as she becomes "sunburned," "sweaty" and "dust-plastered" (Ibid. 126). She is on her way to becoming a "man-in-woman heroine" whose masculine strength helps her tame the land, but whose "feminine impulse" leads to her seduction (Cooper 32).

Jim's grandmother helps Antonia get a job in Black Hawk to keep Antonia from losing her feminine ways altogether. When

Antonia starts working for the Harlings, her "insinuating title" of hired girl, along with her innate sexual aura sets her apart from the townspeople's drab daughters for whom she is a foil (Lambert 44). The middle-class town girls are required to be chaste. There is a moral code which "requires 'purity' in wives and mothers" but thinks of hired girls like Antonia not in terms of marriage but in terms of sexual availability (Fetterley, "Antonia" 138). Because of such thinking, Antonia's independence and energy become suspect (along with that of the other hired girls), and she is seen as menacing to the "social order," and morals of Black Hawk's youth (MA 201).

When the dancing tent arrives (Black Hawk's answer to urban dance halls), Antonia begins to take advantage of the social life and entertainment provided by its presence. Although she is usually unselfish, for the first time in her life she begins thinking of her own pleasure. Recalling her sad past makes her determined to have a "fling," and she immerses herself in the social scene, knowing that she has to enjoy "the good times" when she can (MA 208).

As a result of going to dances, Antonia is confronted by the complexities and dangers of sex. At the dances she attracts male attention, and her "barely contained" energy has been interpreted as spilling over "in animal heat" (Rosowski, Voyage 83). Although Antonia is only having a good time and is not sexually involved with anyone, and although the moral standards are more relaxed for hired girls than for the townspeople's daughters, Antonia's employer, Mr. Harling, is alarmed at Antonia's behavior. When he asks her to stop going to the dances, her

refusal provokes him to fire her. This is Antonia's first lesson in learning how even false perceptions of sexual misconduct can affect women.

When Antonia goes to work for her next employer Wick Cutter, she continues to go dancing. When she dances with Larry Donovan, she is sensually described as "lovely to see, with her eyes shining and her lip always a little parted," with "constant dark colour in her cheeks" (MA 223). Her beauty and sexuality are unmistakable, but they are also shown as unintentionally provocative when they excite Wick Cutter's lust. In a comical encounter that also reveals the dark side of sexual experience, Cutter plans to rape Antonia but finds Jim sleeping in her bed instead.

Jim's disgusted reaction foreshadows Niel Herbert's when he discovers the sexual relationship between Ellinger and Marian Forrester. It also supports James Woodress' speculative comment that Cather gave Jim (and Niel Herbert) "her own aversion to sex" (299). Deborah Lambert's differing viewpoint centers around Cather's possible homosexual attraction to Bohemian farm girl, Annie Sadilek Pavelka, the real life model for Antonia. Lambert speculates that Cather found it acceptable to project her feelings onto the fictional Jim Burden, allowing him to mirror Cather's own erotic feelings toward Annie/Antonia (676-690).

Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant recalled Cather's desire to portray Antonia "like a rare object" which could be examined "from all sides" (139). However, Cather does not achieve her goal. Antonia's seduction has important consequences, but it is glossed over in the novel, and at times is barely credible.

Although Antonia would not allow the town's boys even so much as a kiss, she is irresistibly attracted to Larry Donovan. Impulsive by nature, she naively believes Donovan's false promises of marriage, and runs off to Denver with him. The unconditional love she had shown to Jim when they were children, like the unconditional love she will later show toward her husband and children is wasted on Donovan. When she becomes pregnant, he deserts her. Although she philosophically accepts what has happened, Antonia also learns the steep price of premarital sex. Her "brief moment of eroticism" is followed by a "painful conclusion" (Fetterley, "Antonia" 137).

Shamed by her pregnancy, Antonia returns to her brother's farm and resumes working in the fields. She becomes an object of pity, and although people try to treat her as if nothing has happened, she becomes withdrawn. In the description of Antonia as "crushed and quiet" (MA 314) there is a hint of Antonia's suffering. However, her baby's birth after a physically difficult pregnancy marks the end of this "dark period" (Murphy 89).

Although Antonia blundered by having an illegitimate child, she neither regards her daughter's birth nor her own unwed status as sinful. She is as proud and unashamed of her baby as if she "had a ring on her finger" (MA 318). She refuses to be humbled, and for Clara Cooper, she now represents a "mother-figure infused with a 'masculine' strength" (33). Devoted to her daughter, Antonia is determined to give her the chances she never had.

After her father's death Antonia had boasted that she could work like a man. After her baby's birth she resumes working and

dressing like a man, taking on the appearance of an "ultimately strange bisexual" whose "thoroughgoing masculinization" has been viewed by Gelfant as punishment for having premarital sex (60). However, there is also safety in her male attire and masculinized appearance. They serve to keep Antonia's "sexuality under wraps" (Lambert 45).

Lambert writes that Antonia is thrust "entirely out of the social world of the novel" and "virtually banished," implying that isolation is the price Antonia pays for her sin (44). However, if she pays any price, it is the loss of her looks. The beautiful young girl has vanished completely, to be replaced by what Susie Thomas describes as a "dull middle-aged housewife" physically worn out by child bearing and farming (96). No longer womanly, lacking all sex appeal, and virtually toothless, she is nevertheless an embodiment of fecundity. An aging, unattractive woman, she is described in the novel as "flat-chested," her beautiful hair now "a little grizzled" (MA 331).

Although Fetterley questions how Antonia can be an "earth mother idealized both for her fecundity and for her asexuality" ("Antonia" 139), she does become both in the novel. Her marriage, defined in non-sexual terms, focuses on the friendliness and good humor she and her husband have for each other. Despite there being "only the vaguest hint of physical contact" between her and her husband (Shaw 31), she has become the mother of a huge family. Through her marriage, she comes to represent the source and secret of plains' abundance, conscientiously nurturing her children and her garden with her love. As an earth mother Antonia is unthreatening, embodying

"immemorial human attitudes" recognized as "universal and true" (353).

Critics have tried to minimize Antonia's success. Linda Martin argues that Antonia is merely a "male appendage" (18). Shaw demeans her accomplishments by calling her a "stereotypical frontier woman" who hides her "mannish qualities" in traditional female roles (66). Such criticism cannot detract from Antonia's indisputable success. By the novel's end, Antonia has found a vital role for herself as a woman who creates myths that men like Jim can only hope to "record" (Rosowski, "Women" 268).

Antonia is shown as a survivor whom life has neither humbled nor diminished. She has prospered on the prairie, becoming "a rich mine of life like the founders of early races," and her life is just cause for celebration (MA 353). As an Earth Mother figure, she is indisputably triumphant. Amazingly fertile, she compensates for her premarital affair by fulfilling her assumed biological destiny. With the birth of each of her children "she legitimizes and relegitimizes" her firstborn's illegitimate status as well as her own tarnished reputation (Shaw 66).

Earlier Jim had said he wanted to remember Antonia as a "Snow-white" in a "fairy tale" (MA 215). Now the novel's happy ending takes on a fairy-tale flavor. Antonia has survived hard times without soiling herself" (Gerber, Cather 46). She appears to be ageless, united to the land through her large farm and family, a woman whose role as mother has transformed her into a "Madonna of the Wheat Fields" (Woodress 293).

Willa Cather and her contemporary Ellen Glasgow belonged to an older generation seemingly removed from modern concerns.

However, in the Twenties their novels, like Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's, were characterized by a "spirit of revolt" which often revolved around gender questions (Kazin, Grounds 248). Where Cather's representation of character may have arisen from an uneasiness about her own female identity and sexual orientation, Glasgow's perspective emerged from a strong reaction to the southern tradition's restrictive influences on women. Glasgow's final ambivalent assessment of Dorinda Oakley in Barren Ground and Milly Burden in They Stooped to Folly contrasts to Cather's warmly sentimental responses to Marian Forrester and Antonia Shimerda.

Like Antonia Shimerda, Dorinda Oakley in Barren Ground falls in love with a man who deceives her, leaving her pregnant and unmarried. However, only the outward shape of Dorinda's experience is similar to Antonia's. Dorinda is permanently scarred by her pregnancy and unable to put the past behind her. As she shrugs off cultural definitions of femininity and adopts a role more fitted to a man, Dorinda's life becomes defined by her unconventional choice. Antonia rebounds from disaster by relying on traditional female roles of marriage and motherhood to achieve happiness. However, while Antonia's successes are indisputable and seem effortless, Dorinda's are tinged with ambiguity and are hard won. Antonia's mastery of the land is equated with fertility and contentment while Dorinda's prosperity is linked to disillusion and loss.

Recognizing its strong sexual theme, Glasgow labeled Barren Ground a "human drama of love and hatred, of passion and disillusionment" (Measure 161). Dorinda is first seen as a

twenty-year old, described by one critic as a "creature of passion" (Wagner, Convention 71). Despite her mother's cautionary definition of love as a "struggle to get away from things as they are," Dorinda longs to find excitement and romance (BG 105).³ When Jason Greylock starts paying attention to her, she hopes that what she had only dared to imagine was about to become true. Jason becomes a focal point for her fantasies, and she centers her restless energies on him. Because Dorinda is emotionally starved, she sees in Jason the opportunity to escape a dreary existence, and projects on to him the "potential self" she seeks (Anderson 385).

In his review of Barren Ground, Carl Van Doren wrote of Dorinda's response to Jason that "love takes her like a flame and burns her" (271). The novel supports his perceptions. Dorinda initially responds to Jason freely and sensually, and surrenders to the "clear golden light of sensation" (BG 27). Full of sexual longing, she feels her body grow "softer, lighter, more intensely alive" when she thinks of him (BG 36). Equating sexual excitement with love, and allowing passion to influence her, Dorinda blinds herself to Jason's faults and allows her romantic streak to dominate and "alienate her from conventionality" (Raper Garden 83). Within three months Dorinda and Jason are engaged to be married. Dorinda is also pregnant. When Dorinda learns that Jason is already engaged to someone else, she secretly leaves for New York City, which in terms of the Persephone-Demeter myth has been seen as a patriarchal underworld for fallen women (Donovan 148-150).

In his review of Barren Ground, H.L. Mencken labeled

Dorinda's seduction and flight pieces of "stage business," ("Fiction" 383) while another reviewer wrote that the accident leading to Dorinda's miscarriage that it "strains credulity" (268). Indeed, her miscarriage is so vaguely presented that it is easy to "forget it ever happened" (Godbold 141). Nevertheless, despite the short shrift given Dorinda's pregnancy and miscarriage, these events have serious novelistic repercussions.

Dorinda is still capable of intense sensual if not sexual response after her miscarriage. At a concert in New York, she notices how her body vibrates with repressed passion in response to the music, recalling the passion previously experienced with Jason. But when her escort holds her hand, his touch sickens her. Her employer, a doctor, has already explained that emotional shock often produces a psychologically based "nervous revulsion" toward sex (BG 237). Such knowledge does not alter the fact that Dorinda feels "as if she were dead, turned into stone or wood" (BG 222). When her escort later proposes, she rejects his offer, as she will reject all future thoughts of romance, asserting, as she will many times in the novel's course, that she is finished with love. However, her frequent denials of love and her determination to dismiss any sexual relationship show how powerfully premarital sex has affected her life (Frederick McDowell 153-155).

Although Dorinda tries to recover from her sexual mistake, for Maxwell Geismar her story becomes "a study of thwarted and twisted emotions . . . driven underground" (Rebels and Ancestors 262-3). She resolves to succeed, relying on the sustaining vein

of iron at the core of her being. As she learns to tap reservoirs of strength even she is initially unaware of possessing, her struggles away from failure and shame toward success turn her into a "vengeful heroine" (Godbold 145)

When she returns home, Dorinda renounces her former hopeful romanticism. She immerses herself in the routine chores of the farm with the same passionate intensity she had felt for Jason (Santas 159). As she substitutes work and ceaseless activity for the emotion she felt for Jason, she finds strength and renewal in her father's barren land. However, by ruling out the possibility of another physical relationship, by ignoring the more traditional options of marriage and motherhood, Dorinda also "denies her female self" (Winniford 151). Nevertheless, the farm represents a new start for Dorinda, and she is determined to prevent any man from spoiling her life again.

Dorinda's interest in life is rekindled through her drive to make Old Farm a success, and as a successful farmer she can be seen as a rebel who asserts her independence in a male sphere (Myer 13). Glasgow may also have been attempting to make Dorinda into an "earth goddess" with a "mystique of the land" (Thiebaut 144). She may have wanted to show her as a woman who keeps "in touch with her selfhood" through Nature (Pratt 21). She may have even been thinking of Dorinda as an epic "hero engaged in a struggle with the entire history of women in culture" (Anderson 385). If Glasgow does not quite achieve these lofty goals, she does show Dorinda achieving more modest but nevertheless indisputable material success as she evolves into one of the region's most prosperous farmers.

Having been betrayed, Dorinda would be expected to follow traditional novelistic patterns and immediately "seek either forgiveness or vengeance" (Wagner, Convention 74). Indeed, as she struggles to put the past behind her, Dorinda goes through various stages, motivated at different times by hate, bitterness, and unconscious revenge. Her feelings spur her on to succeed in a male-oriented society (Seidel 85), and her "outward success" ultimately disguises what Julius Raper calls her "failed vengeance" ("Transition" 158).

Although Dorinda's love for Jason turns to hate, she cannot erase the memory of their physical intimacy, and the novel's conflict can be explained in terms of Dorinda's struggle to erase the sexual desires she now finds "unacceptable" (Raper, Garden 91). Dorinda tries to cleanse Jason's image from her conscious mind, but it is imprinted deep within her subconscious. While Dorinda manages to repress her feelings for Jason during the day, at night his reappearance in her dreams reveals the sexual need and hurt she has unsuccessfully tried to repudiate.

Even as Dorinda ages, Jason will remain an unseen but significant presence in her adult life. His betrayal has made Dorinda insensible to emotion, and her feelings are driven so deep within her heart that she is virtually separated from them (Raper, Garden 91). Despite what she says to herself, Dorinda still has "unfinished business with Jason" (Raper, "Transition" 137).

Years later Dorinda's success enables her to buy Jason's farm. She appreciates how patience and hard work have allowed her to come to terms with youthful failure, denying, however, the

role her "aggressive hostility" and desire for vengeance played (Richards 186). When she later nurses a dying, alcoholic Jason, her actions seem almost to be a "final vengeance against a man who had done her wrong" (Godbold 144). Ironically, Jason remembers almost nothing about their earlier relationship, and Dorinda now realizes she has wasted her life trying to get even with a man who has forgotten their affair. While Jason has almost ruined her life, she has had no influence on his.

By the time she reaches middle age Dorinda is able to see her youthful experience in perspective. She mourns for the loss of love and for the failure of her youthful hopes and dreams. She candidly admits that her expectations have not been met, and her present contentment has little relation to youthful happiness. She restlessly seeks to define what she has missed, knowing only that it was a need that lay so deep "down in her hidden life, that the roots of it were lost in the rich darkness" (BG 355).

There has been some argument over what the novel's "barren ground" really refers to. Matthews sees the "barren ground" not within Dorinda but within a larger society in which women are defined by a patriarchally controlled ideology and culture (152-66). Wagner argues that Dorinda's ability to reclaim the land represents promises for the future that are the opposite of barrenness (Convention 74). But more likely the barren ground is within Dorinda herself. Indeed, a reviewer noted that while Dorinda had conquered the "barren soil of her home," she was unable "to retrieve her own barren life" (Hopkins 254). Dorinda's triumphs are dubious, perhaps even sterile. By

hardening herself against love, she has become as barren as the soil she once reclaimed.

In A Certain Measure Glasgow wrote that she had meant Dorinda to be seen as a "spirit of fortitude" triumphing "over the sense of futility" (154). However, where Glasgow intended strength and vitality it is easy to find repression and vindictiveness. By the novel's conclusion Dorinda has achieved material success, along with her community's respect and admiration. However, Glasgow also acknowledges the price Dorinda has to pay, writing that Dorinda had to "learn to live gallantly, without delight" (Measure 155), and her rewards are far from the "fairy-tale happiness" she had dreamed of as a young girl (Wagner, Convention 76).

While Dorinda recognizes her triumph, she also knows she has been cheated of love. Scarred by Jason's betrayal, she bitterly analyzes her past, concluding, "Three months of love, and you pay for it with all the rest of your life" (BG 412). To become independent and to keep from ever being hurt or betrayed again, she has closed herself off from love and sexual experience, and her life has been harshly colored by her "determination to live free of sexual entanglement" (Thiebaut 120). Although Anderson believes that Dorinda's frigidity is counteracted by her association with nature (387), and Matthews sees in Dorinda's female companion Fluvanna Moody a satisfactory replacement for heterosexual union (159-62), their arguments seem weak when placed alongside Dorinda's one-dimensional life.

Dorinda has gained in stature, yet there is a sense of futility and incompleteness about her life because her victories

remain largely unshared. In the course of time she has "renegotiated her sexuality, swinging all the way to the opposite end of the gender spectrum" (Winniford 151). By thinking and acting like a man she has protected herself from being hurt, but she has also lost her girlish dreams. She has prospered, but realizes that persistence and endurance neither relieve loneliness nor substitute for love. She vacillates between triumph and doubt, and mourns the waste of her potential for passion and love, aware that "destiny had defeated her, for it had given her none of the gifts she had asked of it" (BG 525).

Dorinda is finally portrayed as a fallen woman who overcomes adversity, a strong woman who controls her fate, and in this role her achievements are impressive. Reviewer Stuart Sherman summed up her accomplishments, writing, Dorinda "fights for a life which shall be independent of the admiration of men, fights for a successful life . . . and wins it" ("Romance" 244). However, Dorinda's proud facade hides such sadness that another reviewer described Dorinda's life as "a stark story" lacking "gayety" and "enthusiasm" (Boynton 249). At the end her victory is bittersweet, and although her misgivings may be fleeting, they are nonetheless real.

In Barren Ground and They Stooped to Folly, Glasgow reacted to Southern Victorianism's unreal idealization of women by writing about women who differed from the womanly woman stereotype. Frequently Glasgow's heroines opposed traditional "romantic standards for beauty and charm" and found identities outside of marriage (Myer 33). In Barren Ground and They Stooped to Folly she added still another element, creating scenarios

which also revolved around premarital sex and the specter of illegitimate babies.

The events in Barren Ground are completely removed from the war scene. However, They Stooped to Folly takes place in the post-war era, allowing Glasgow to contrast Queenboro's atmosphere of "forsaken standards and distorted values" with new ways of thinking created by the war (Glasgow, Measure 238). By using Milly Burden to embody "one of the immemorial woman myths"--the myth of the ruined woman, Glasgow shows how hypocritical such myths are (Ibid. 234). Although Milly Burden is not the novel's central character, as a representative of liberated young women of the Twenties she is, according to Schulz "an important figure" (95).

Responding to her character, reviewer H.L. Mencken wrote that Milly was "completely appalling" (251). While she is described by Glasgow in the novel as "too flippant" and "too brazen... to awaken romantic desire" (TSF 5), she is also characterized as overflowing with "youth," "magic," and "carnal appeal" (Ibid. 235), "the kind of woman . . . who has power over men" (Ibid. 234).⁴ Although Milly is presented as unlikable and has been called "brittle and one dimensional" (Thiebaut 143), she is also presented as independent, courageous, and determined to find happiness.

In They Stooped to Folly, Milly Burden, like Dorinda Oakley in Barren Ground, has a premarital affair which results in an out-of-wedlock pregnancy. As was true for Dorinda, Milly loves "passionately but indiscreetly" (Frederick McDowell 167) and is initially "betrayed by the romantic love-marriage-happiness

equation" (Schulz 98). Like Dorinda, her parallel "vein of iron" allows her to cope with and free herself from the consequences of her sexual behavior (TSF 115).

Dorinda Oakley's perception of herself as a fallen woman contrasts with Milly Burden's belief that "being ruined is not a biological fact but a state of mind" (TSF 212). While Dorinda had been humiliated by her pregnancy, Milly unrepentantly feels no such embarrassment. Refusing to be chastened by her premarital affair, she treats her fallen situation with a "casual modern touch" (TSF 6). She scorns the older morality with its emphasis on female chastity and openly disdains public opinion about her so-called sin. While Dorinda's life is permanently blighted by her transgression, Milly Burden shrugs off any consequences, protesting against changing her behavior to conform to outmoded moral standards. When asked why she didn't wait until she was married to have sex, she almost hysterically insists on the "right" to live her life (TSF 39). For Milly, this includes both "sexual freedom" and "a career" (Matthews 173).

Refusing to be defeated by the circumstances surrounding her pregnancy and the early death of her baby, Milly picks up the threads of her life, encouraged by the laxer Twenties moral climate. When her former lover expresses renewed interest in her, she rejects him, partly because she has learned "to define herself apart from men" (Matthews 174), and partly because she realizes she deserves more than what he has to offer. Unashamed that people know about her fallen status, (in contrast to Dorinda, who conceals hers all her life) Milly looks forward to a

second chance at finding both happiness and "something worth loving" (TSF 348). Milly's emphasis on "something worth loving" rather than "someone worth loving" shows an awareness that planning a future around a man may be too limiting for her.

In A Certain Measure, Glasgow had written that she intended to allow Dorinda to overcome her betrayal and "become the victor instead of the victim" (160). By the novel's ambiguous ending, her goal had been only partially achieved. Milly, on the other hand, embodies Glasgow's goal. She is "saved," and becomes more than a merely "helpless victim of life" (TSF 342). By refusing to be victimized or to accept others' definitions or expectations of her, particularly in regard to her fallen status, Milly shows faith in herself and in a "new tradition of womanhood" (Matthews 173). Convinced that she is free to start life over again, determined to have pleasure, if not happiness, she exultantly declares, "the whole world is mine" (349). Milly is brash, abrasive, and at times annoying. However, she refuses to accept a social role which is defined by male expectations, nor will she allow male rules about sexual behavior to determine her fate. Aggressive rather than passive, and economically independent, she envisions her future and then seeks it.

Although Glasgow was a member of Virginia's southern aristocracy, she wrote satirically about women's struggles against limiting roles in such a society. In her portrayal of the mannered, New York upper class, Edith Wharton has also been acclaimed as a social satirist. Both Wharton and Glasgow frequently centered their fiction on the plights of young women. Indeed, Wharton's focus on "erratic spirits and 'illicit'

emotions," prompted women to write her "indignantly asking" whether she had ever known any "respectable women" (Kazin, Grounds 78).

On the surface, Charlotte Lovell in Wharton's "The Old Maid" seems as hard and unbending as Dorinda Oakley and Milly Burden. Like Dorinda and Milly, Charlotte has had a secret premarital affair that resulted in pregnancy, and like Dorinda and Milly she has concealed her pregnancy from her lover. While Dorinda's pregnancy ends with a miscarriage, and Milly's child dies in early infancy, Charlotte's child lives, one of the few out-of-wedlock fictional children to survive. Charlotte's child Clementina now becomes the motivating force in her life.

Charlotte Lovell has a clandestine, on the rebound, affair with her cousin Delia Lovell's spurned beau Clement Spender. When Charlotte becomes pregnant, she is whisked away to a small town in Georgia, where unknown to anyone she has a baby. When she returns to New York, she is transformed, willingly giving up social events to dedicate her energies to the poor and establishing a nursery for orphans.

Just when people have accepted Charlotte as an old maid, she becomes engaged to Joe Ralston, whose second cousin Jim is already married to Delia Lovell. When Joe asks Charlotte to give up her orphans, fearing they might transmit diseases, his wishes precipitate a crisis: one of these children is really the illegitimate child Charlotte has had with Clement Spender. She turns to Delia for help, and her confession will link the two cousins together for the rest of their lives in an attempt to protect the child's real identity.

Charlotte desperately wishes to be married, but believes she cannot have both marriage and her illegitimate child together. This is not quite true. Delia has it in her power to enable Charlotte to have both Joe Ralston and the child. But Delia is offended by Charlotte's revelation and thinks of a solution which will allow Charlotte to keep her baby but prevent her from dishonoring the Ralstons by marrying into their clan. Using Charlotte's lung disease as an excuse for the broken engagement, Delia persuades her husband to finance Charlotte and, in compensation for her severed marriage plans, allow her to choose one of the foundlings. Naturally Charlotte chooses her own daughter, Clementina.

Charlotte leads a reclusive existence with her child at Jim Ralston's farm. When Jim dies, Delia invites Charlotte and Tina to live in her house. In imitation of her cousins, Tina calls Delia "Mamma" and Charlotte "Aunt Chatty." Over the years Tina responds to Delia's warmth and generosity and considers Delia her real mother, while withdrawing from Charlotte's severity and her old maidish ways.

As years pass, New York society, quick to judge people by surface appearances, notes a transformation in Charlotte's character: "she became more and more like the typical old maid: precise, methodical, absorbed in trifles and attaching an exaggerated importance to the smallest social and domestic observances" (OM 92).⁵ She is believable as a prudish spinster who has known neither love nor passion, and she successfully disguises herself to Clementina, who regards her as an old maid deep down "In her inmost soul" (OM 93). Although this

characterization is hurtful, it allows Charlotte to feel secure that her secret will never be discovered.

Although Charlotte looks and acts like an old maid, she knows what it is like to be young and in love. When she sees Lanning Halsey courting Tina, but showing no interest in marrying her, she is alarmed. She sees in his courtship the first of many relationships in which Tina's clouded background will prove an obstacle to marriage. She does not want Tina to be an old maid, and is terrified that Tina's passionate nature will make her duplicate Charlotte's mistakes. Better than anyone else, Charlotte realizes the dangers. Tina may allow her beau Lanning Halsey to persuade her to allow him into the house, and even perhaps her bedroom: indeed, Tina's existence comes from exactly this kind of secretive encounter. Even Delia sees that "The first chapter of the mother's history was already written in the daughter's eyes" (OM 124).

Delia once again intervenes in Charlotte's (and Tina's) life, telling her she will adopt Tina and give her the respectable Ralston last name that will ultimately clear the way for Tina's marriage. The adoption accomplishes its purpose. Tina and Lanning Halsey are engaged. On the eve of their wedding, both Charlotte and Delia admit the need to give Tina some marital advice, but vie with each other as to who will give Tina that advice. At last the unspoken issue that has stood between them for nearly two decades surfaces: which one of them is really Tina's mother. Charlotte ultimately realizes that coming from her, such instruction would make Tina suspicious of the truth.

Throughout this novella there is recurring worry over who will pay for Charlotte's sexual misbehavior. Charlotte worries that Tina "must pay for my imperfections. All I want is that she shouldn't pay too heavily" (OM 105-6). Delia too is aware that "somebody always has to foot the bill" (Ibid. 117) and hopes it won't be Tina. But in the end, Charlotte herself is the one most severely punished for her transgression. Her first punishment is the denial of the coveted role of wife and mother. Her second punishment is that she must accept New York society's assessment of her as an old maid. To protect Tina from discovering her origins, she must submerge her passions in a prim, prudish manner that revolves around "perpetual silence" (OM 97). Charlotte becomes a lonely, even tragic figure, in her third and greatest punishment. She must renounce all overt claims to Clementina as her daughter and acknowledge that she has "no rights" in her child's life (Ibid. 120).

Still, the punishments are tempered with compensations. She sees Tina grow up into a beautiful young woman who charms New York society. Most of all, she sees that Tina escapes the fate of being labeled an old maid. Happily married into one of New York's best families, Tina's future is guaranteed.

Antonia Shimerda's, Dorinda Oakley's, Milly Burden's and Charlotte Lovell's experiences confronted the Victorian myth of women as sexless creatures devoid of physical desires. While their out-of-wedlock pregnancies certainly showed how risky premarital love affairs could be, they escaped the severe consequences befalling sexually active unmarried female characters in male authored novels. They were neither defeated

nor permanently punished for attempting personal fulfillment through sexual gratification. Antonia Shimerda's victory seems most indisputable, but Cather achieves it by buying into the mystique of motherhood. By glorifying Antonia as an earth mother, Cather uses stereotypes that deny Antonia's individuality and diminish her accomplishments.

Milly's and Dorinda's sexual missteps challenged myths of Southern women's sexual repression. Dorinda's transgression propelled her into an agricultural career and ultimately a repudiation of Victorian ideals defining women in terms of marriage and motherhood. Instead, she slipped into what was generally considered a man's role, and by doing this severed herself from the Victorian tradition of female economic dependence. However, while her perseverance earned her independence and financial comfort, it only partially offset her acutely realized disappointments.

Milly Burden's arrogant response to her pregnancy and her refusal to see herself as a fallen woman reflects an extreme response to the shifting code of appropriate female sexual conduct. As a career woman affirming her independence, Milly Burden corresponds to the modern version of the saucy young woman as wage earner. Although Milly's fate is undecided at the novel's end, her optimistic search for a "truth that you could really believe in, not just shams and labels" reveals that her sexual experience has not derailed her life, as it has Dorinda's (TSF 293).

Wharton's treatment of Charlotte Lovell's premarital sexual relationship is still another variation on a theme. Unlike

Antonia, who proudly acknowledged her daughter's birth, Charlotte Lovell is afraid to disclose the facts surrounding her daughter's birth, and chooses to keep her relationship to Clementina secret. Hiding behind an old maid's mask, her emotions concealed within a wall of silence, she pretends she has never known love and passion, while her life is a daily reminder of its effects.

Antonia Shimerda, Dorinda Oakley, Milly Burden and Charlotte Lovell were portrayed as naive young women, unprepared for the realities of male-female sexual relationships. Each plunged precipitously into a premarital sexual relationship, and each had a sexual experience that stripped her of all illusions about love. Their pregnancies forced them to confront the effects of sexually liberated practices, and while they were chastened by their sexual misadventures, their novelistic fates also partially absolved them of wrongdoing. In comparison to their counterparts in male authored novels, Cather's, Glasgow's, and Wharton's heroines found varying degrees of contentment by redefining their roles in a male-dominated society. In Larsen's Quicksand, Helga Crane's struggle with sexual desire and her conventional middle-class belief that sex is only legitimate within marriage lead to very different outcomes.

The novel's epigraph, taken from Langston Hughes' "The Weary Blues," heralds Helga's dilemma as the racially mixed, illegitimate daughter of a white mother and a black father. Partially alienated from both races and cultures, she identifies with neither. "A neurotic . . . unhappy and unfortunate woman" always trying to escape some part of herself, Helga moves between white and black worlds, never quite belonging or finding

satisfaction in either (Arthur Davis 94). In her restless travels between these two worlds, Helga is unaware of the sexual need propelling her. Suffering from "psychic confusion," she denies her sexuality because it opposes her need for respectability and acceptance (Deborah McDowell xvii).

At the novel's start Helga is outlined by a lamp's "light and shade" (Q 2).⁵ This framed image becomes an important novelistic trope which will reflect Helga's attempts to escape containment and confinement by definitions others have created for her (Ammons, Stories 188). Helga's room at Naxos is described as a riot of color and texture, suggesting her sensuality and love for beautiful, exotic things. In the novel's opening pages, Helga is wearing a green and gold negligee which "objectifies" the body and "exotic sexuality" which prove to be her downfall (Thadious Davis 253).

Quicksand is a novel dominated by Helga Crane's insistent sexuality and the problems it presents. At Naxos, the middle-class institution where Helga teaches, sex is thought of as "entirely too repulsive for a lady of delicate and sensitive nature to submit to" (Q 12). Although Helga rebels against Naxos' rigid moral values, she nevertheless takes them seriously enough to closely guard the secret of her illegitimacy. Confused and conflicted about her sexual feelings toward her fiancé, Helga's "uneasy sense of being engaged with some formidable antagonist, nameless and ununderstood," makes her begin to suspect a "quality within herself, which was frustrating her . . . and keeping her from getting the things she had wanted" (Q 10-11). Ultimately her struggle to express her femininity

defeats her (Ramsey 37).

While living in Harlem, Helga attends a cabaret performance, where her primitively sensual reaction frightens her. Listening to the music, she feels "drugged," "blown out, ripped out, beaten out": and when the music ends she is disturbed by "a shameful certainty that not only had she been in the jungle, but . . . she had enjoyed it . . ." (Q 59). Already aroused by the music, when she sees her former principal Dr. Robert Anderson, she experiences a confusing emotion interpreted as an "inner world . . . of . . . sensual pleasure" (Sato 85). Misreading her body's needs in an attempt to control and retreat from those needs, Helga reacts as she usually does when she is troubled. She runs away, this time to Denmark, where she lives with white relatives.

In Denmark, Helga's dark skin fascinates the Danes, and she enjoys the attention her African appearance produces, becoming, in Elizabeth Ammons' opinion, nothing more than a "human canvas" on which white people "work out their racist colonialist fantasies" (Stories 188). Her relatives, although genuinely kind and generous, also use Helga to enhance their social position. In their attempt to attract the attention of white portrait painter Axel Olsen, they merchandise Helga as "a sexual commodity" (Thadious Davis 266).

In Naxos, Helga had been chastised for dressing in bright colors and pressured to wear more conservative clothing. In Copenhagen she bends to her relatives' wishes, accepting their gifts of garish jewelry and outrageous dresses. As Helga is transformed into a sexual object by her relatives, she is also

objectified as bait for men's sexual desires, becoming "an exotic female Other--symbol of the unconscious, the unknowable, the erotic and the passive" (Wall 99).

Olsen is insightful about Helga's character and senses the presence of a sexuality she cannot admit. He sees her as an object of male desire, and his stereotypical belief in African women's exotic primitivism causes him to remark: "You have the warm impulsive nature of the women of Africa, but my lovely, you have, I fear, the soul of a prostitute" (Q 87). While he loves her (or desires her) enough to propose marriage, he is also subtly racist, and his ignorance of African women makes him believe that such comments would be taken for gallantry.

When Helga looks at the portrait Olsen paints of her, she does not recognize herself. She is offended by and denies the image of the "disgusting sensual creature with her features" that she sees before her (Q 89). While Helga is beautiful and cultivated, Olsen has accentuated Helga's sensuality, capturing her in a way that reveals her repressed sexual nature. His perceptions help bring the issue of Helga's sexuality to the surface.

Throughout the novel some unidentifiable and unfronted feeling has been gnawing at Helga. From her earliest days at Naxos it has been present, and as Helga moves from place to place, this sensation follows her. When she returns to America, however, the pieces fall into place, and with a shock of recognition Helga realizes that her restless activity masks a deep, sexual attraction to Dr. Anderson.

From the time she met Dr. Anderson in Naxos, Helga's

reaction has been sexual. When she accidentally encountered him at a Harlem party she felt "a vague yearning rising within her" (Q 50), an "aching delirium" (Ibid. 51). When she meets him again after her trip to Denmark, his kiss unleashes in her "a long-hidden, half-understood desire" (Ibid. 104). Belatedly she understands that her unexplained feelings stem from repressed physical passion, and she suddenly views him as a potential lover. When he rejects Helga, she feels embarrassed that she made a fool of herself, and she is haunted by carnal thoughts.

Helga's repressed desires finally find release in a powerful religious conversion whose aftereffects comfort and soothe her. Her conversion, described in terms similar to a sexual climax, transforms Helga, liberating her from sexual inhibitions, and enables her to yield to both "religious and sexual ecstasy" (Thadious Davis 268). Acting out of confusion, and motivated in part by a desire to revenge herself against Dr. Anderson, she plunges into marriage with the Reverend Green, leader of the revival service.

Legitimacy is an important issue for Helga, and when she marries a preacher, not only is her sexual behavior sanctioned, but she also achieves a reassuring "legitimacy redoubled" (Deborah McDowell xxi). Bone sees an Oedipal component in her marriage because Reverend Green "'fathers'" her at a time when she is feeling overcome with emotion (104). Still, it is hard to understand how cultivated Helga Crane could marry Reverend Green, described as a "rattish yellow man" (Q 118) who eats "audibly," and smells of "sweat and stale garments" (Ibid. 121). Her choice elicits Bone's assessment of Helga as a woman "basically

incapable of love or happiness" (103).

When she settles in Alabama with Reverend Green, she has moved full circle to become "metaphorically buried in the South and unable to move" (Ramsey 32). Although she grows to hate her husband and the Alabama town she now lives in, religion provides a temporary anodyne, an "anaesthetic satisfaction for her senses" (Q 118). The real opiate, though, which becomes her ruin, is desire with its promise of sexual release, graphically described in the novel by Larsen as follows: "Emotional, palpitating, amorous, all that was living in her sprang like rank weeds at the tingling thought of night, with a vitality so strong that it devoured all reason" (122).

Their sexual relationship leads to the birth of four children in quick succession. While recovering from the birth of her fourth child, she grasps the reality of her situation, realizing "with shocked eyes this thing that she had done to herself" (130). Helga begins to understand how she has been trapped by both her sexual appetite and need to abase and punish herself. Unable to abandon her children as she herself had been abandoned, Helga has become a slave to motherhood, sexual desire and its punishing reproductive cycle of pregnancy and poor health. While she had disdained middle-class black culture at Naxos, ironically she produces a generation that will attend similar institutions (Ramsey 37). She blames herself for her dilemma and realizes how dearly she has paid for her mistake. For Helga the consequences stem not from having premarital sex, but from denying her sexual appetite.

In her quest for sexual satisfaction Helga has married a man

who uses her body as a baby-machine. She is trapped in a marriage that "used her up" (Q 123), and it is hard to imagine Helga getting real sexual satisfaction from this union. In the end, Helga is "declassed by her own sexuality" (Bone 105), her fate biologically determined by a womb that "entraps her," leaving her a "tragic life-less shell" (Thornton 301).

Helga's struggle to control her sexual nature and her inability to identify repressed sexual desires result in her precipitous downward spiral. Concealed even from herself beneath a ladylike veneer, her insistent sexual need proved so strong, that once unleashed, it traps Helga. By the novel's end Helga's surrender to a loveless passion ensures that she will be permanently cut off from the luxuries and life she once knew and still desires.

Helga Crane is victimized by the sexual desires she repressed before her marriage. Ultimately she is responsible for her own unhappiness and lost identity, and she becomes a woman who has lost her struggle "against imposed definitions of blackness and woman-hood" (Wall 97). Unlike Antonia Shimerda, Dorinda Oakley, Milly Burden and Charlotte Lovell, who expressed their sexual impulses in premarital relationships, Helga delays sleeping with a man until she is legitimately married. Antonia, Dorinda, Milly and Charlotte are chastened by their premarital sexual behavior, and even suffer because of their out-of-wedlock pregnancies. However, they ultimately put suffering behind them. The price Helga pays for sexual fulfillment is high and unforeseen: she loses the possibility of ever returning to the cultured life that had once been hers. At the novel's conclusion

Helga neither dies from the effects of childbirth nor does she run away from her marriage. Enslaved by her sexual appetite, she becomes pregnant with her fifth child. Helga's life had followed a pattern: "temporary enthusiasm, boredom followed by disgust, . . . a sense of entrapment" and finally "escape" (Bone 104). But now Helga Crane is irrevocably trapped and escape is no longer possible. Imprisoned in poverty by her sexual appetite, she is blocked from returning to the life she once enjoyed. Her life becomes what a reviewer in Opportunity called a "story of a cultivated and sensitive woman's defeat through her own sex desire" (As cited in Thornton 292).

The issue of female sexual expression exists in the novels of many female authors of the Twenties. However, unlike the novels written by male authors such as Dreiser, Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway, novels written by such female writers as Wharton, Cather, and Glasgow did not generally link female sexuality with suffering. Nor is female sexuality coupled with defeat or death. Instead, in Cather's A Lost Lady and My Antonia, Glasgow's Barren Ground and They Stood to Folly, Wharton's "The Old Maid" women's premarital sexual experiences served as turning points from which female characters could emerge as accomplished and successful. While Cather, Glasgow and Wharton's novels point to the importance of female sexual expression, Larsen's Quicksand echoed the same sentiment by showing how catastrophic repressing sexual impulses could be.

The more liberated Twenties social and moral climate made it possible to write about sexually active women without arousing the public outcry that had greeted Dreiser only twenty years

earlier when he wrote Sister Carrie. Moreover, as the decade progressed, sexual women became increasingly portrayed in novels. Yet the startling differences in the way male and female authors reacted to overt female sexual sexuality has made this subject worthy of detailed scrutiny and analysis.

Notes

1. Willa Cather, A Lost Lady (1923; New York: Vintage-Random, 1972) . All references are to this edition.
2. Willa Cather, My Antonia (1918; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977) . All references are to this edition.
3. Ellen Glasgow, Barren Ground (1925; San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1985) . All references are to this edition.
4. Ellen Glasgow, They Stood to Folly (New York: Doubleday, 1929) . All references are to this edition.
5. Edith Wharton, "The Old Maid," Old New York (1924; New York: Berkeley, 1981) . All references are to this edition.
6. Nella Larsen, Quicksand and Passing, Ed. Deborah E. McDowell (1929; New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1986) . All references are to this edition.

Conclusion

In the Twenties some very visible young middle-class women began asserting their right to sexual freedom. Their sexual conduct attracted media attention and became an increasingly controversial topic of discussion. Many Twenties fiction writers also responded to the issue of female sexuality by incorporating young women's more liberated sexual behavior into their novels. As they explored the question of female sexuality, they also examined the impact and appropriateness of new female roles. Female authors such as Glasgow, Larsen and Wharton debated the advantages and dangers of women's new sexual freedoms, while male authors such as Dreiser, Fitzgerald and Hemingway often depicted flappers behaving in ways that paralleled the media's interpretation of the Twenties new woman.

Ellen Glasgow in They Stood to Folly, Edith Wharton in The Age of Innocence and "The Old Maid," and Nella Larsen in Passing considered what breaking away from conventional sexual roles would mean for women. By creating literary doubles consisting of traditional and non-traditional women they were able to question the old social order's relevance, while also recognizing that wholesale abandonment and disregard of traditional standards would involve conflict and struggle. Implicit in their debate was the question of who should define the limits of female sexual behavior.

In The Age of Innocence Wharton compared the free-spirited Ellen Olenska to the more predictable May Welland, contrasting Ellen's emancipated conduct and sexual sophistication to May's

virginal qualities. In "The Old Maid," Wharton balanced Charlotte Lovell's rash sexual act and her later marginal status as a spinster, weighing them against Delia Ralston's sexual restlessness and her hidden disappointment with more traditional roles. In Passing Larsen sees life from Irene Redfield's black middle-class perspective, focusing on marriage and motherhood. She contrasts Irene's need for social respectability to Clare Kendry's recklessness, and Irene's repressed sexuality to Clare's dangerous "'having' nature" (Larsen, Passing 210). Glasgow's treatment of female sexuality in They Stood to Folly centers on three generations of sexually adventurous women. By contrasting differing reactions to their transgressions, Glasgow shows how definitions of female ruin are culturally created.

Despite intense novelistic discussion about the role of new female freedoms, Glasgow's, Wharton's and Larsen's conclusions were ambivalent. While they recognized the inherent flaws of restrictive Victorian sexual codes, they also acknowledged the dangers of unchecked sexual energy. While they tentatively accepted sex as a powerful force, they also shied away from completely endorsing new female sexual freedoms.

Male authors such as F. Scott Fitzgerald in This Side of Paradise, and The Beautiful and Damned, Ernest Hemingway in The Sun Also Rises and Theodore Dreiser in An American Tragedy frequently treated women's new sexual roles in a quite different and even more ambivalent way. Instead of examining issues surrounding emancipated female sexual behavior, they evoked images of flappers, the Twenties' most visibly liberated women. At first glance, Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Dreiser admired and

approved of the flapper's reach for new sexual and social freedoms, and on the surface their novels applauded the glamour and excitement surrounding women's emancipated sexual conduct. On closer inspection, these male novelists were at best ambivalent about the conduct they were ostensibly championing. They frequently tempered their admiration of flappers with contempt, and turned their flappers into unattractive characters, often ruled by hedonistic impulses and moral irresponsibility.

In This Side of Paradise Fitzgerald's most memorable flapper, Rosalind Connage, is extolled for her beauty and high spirits, but derided for her self absorption and materialistic nature. In The Beautiful and Damned, self-centered Gloria Gilbert is admired for her beauty, but criticized for her disagreeable rudeness and vapidty. Brett Ashley's liberated manners and morals in Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises inspired young college women to choose her as a role model. However, Brett's frequent distortion and misuse of flapper freedoms and her thoughtless treatment of men branded her as heartless and self-centered. Dreiser's provincial flappers in An American Tragedy are completely adorable as seen through Clyde Griffith's eyes. Yet Clyde's perceptions are barely supported in the novel. Working-girl Hortense Briggs coolly trades sexual favors for a fur coat, while her upper-class counterpart Sondra Finchley is shown as infantile, superficial and vain.

When writers such as Dreiser, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Hemingway, Cather, Glasgow, Larsen and Wharton examined emancipated female sexual practices, the author's gender influenced the way this issue was perceived and resolved. The

authors of such novels as Dreiser's An American Tragedy, Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury, and Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms reacted fiercely to what they perceived as women's dangerous deployment of sexual power.

Dreiser, Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway created modern female characters whose sexual behaviors defied traditional concepts of chastity and modesty. Despite Roberta Alden's conventional religious upbringing and in spite of her worries about becoming pregnant, in An American Tragedy she allows Clyde sexual liberties that she knows are morally wrong. In The Sound and The Fury, when sexual desire and curiosity become driving forces in Caddy Compson's life, she flouts the established Southern moral code, disregarding its exalted concepts of female virtue and purity. Conventional morality is irrelevant for Catherine Barkley in A Farewell to Arms. Guilt over her fiance's death and her regrets over their unconsummated sexual relationship propel her into an intensely sexual relationship with Frederic Henry. Even before her marriage in The Great Gatsby, Daisy had allowed men sexual liberties. Now, firmly rooted in her husband's corrupt world, Daisy drifts into an adulterous affair both to soothe her vanity and to relieve her boredom.

While characters such as Roberta, Caddy, Catherine and Daisy were often depicted as unselfish and loving, heroic, courageous, or charming, on closer inspection they were ultimately discredited and censured. Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Dreiser and Hemingway seemed drawn to and even excited by their female characters' sexuality. However their responses to these

characters were also punitive and ambivalent. While Fitzgerald portrays Daisy as glamorous and gracious, he nevertheless brands her for her insincerity, her sense of superiority and callous disregard. Roberta's courage is admirable, her moral struggle heart wrenching. Yet ultimately Dreiser criticizes her for giving in to Clyde's sexual demands, and seems to blame her for standing in the way of Clyde's dream. Catherine Barkley's integrity and strength, her devotion and willingness to lose herself in love for Frederic Henry elicit admiration. Yet Hemingway makes her seem spineless in her self-abnegation, an annoying personification of female passivity. Caddy's unselfish love and capacity for compassion grow out of an intrepid spirit. Yet Faulkner's misgivings and uncertainties over female sexuality emerge when he holds Caddy responsible for her family's ruin and finalizes her condemnation by linking her to Nazi depravity.

While Dreiser, Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway seem to be glorifying liberated female conduct, their apprehensions about the new sexual order are reflected in their heavy-handed treatment of sexually daring fictional women. They repeatedly link their female characters to loss and ruin, severely punishing them for the very qualities they appear to be praising. In their novels, when women exercised sexual power, the results were so damaging that recovery or healing became virtually inconceivable.

Male and female characters alike were dramatized as suffering from the consequences of illicit sexual activity. However, Dreiser, Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Faulkner treated sexually active women with undue harshness, dispatching these liberated women more severely than their male characters. Of

course, these exaggerated reactions may have come from perceiving female sexuality as a more formidable force than it actually was. Still, in varying degrees, the implicit message in these novels was that female sexuality was dangerous, and men were simply better off living in a world where they could be "going it alone" (Spilka, "Fauntleroy" 352).

Clyde Griffiths' involvement with Roberta results in his being convicted for her murder, but Roberta's death is more horrible. As she desperately screams for Clyde's help, her final moments are colored by knowledge of Clyde's betrayal and hate. Made vulnerable by loving Catherine, Frederic Henry is left bereft and alone when Catherine dies. However, Catherine, like Roberta Alden, pays with her life for having premarital sex, for her death is directly linked to her pregnancy. Moreover, all traces of Catherine are obliterated when her baby is born dead too. Quentin's suicide, Benjy's gelding and Jason's bitter resentment may be traced to Caddy's sexual voracity. Yet Caddy is the most severely punished character, the cold mask of her face in the novel's Appendix indicating just how lost and damned she has become. Only Daisy Buchanan escapes the severe punishment allotted to sexual female characters. Yet her unprincipled actions turn her into an agent of destruction directly responsible for Myrtle's death and indirectly responsible for George Wilson's and Gatsby's.

Dreiser, Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway's frank treatment of female sexuality is frequently credited with creating new female images in the Twenties. However, in such novels as Dreiser's An American Tragedy, Hemingway's A Farewell

to Arms, Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury, Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, and Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms, ambivalence toward female sexuality also causes these authors to produce portraits of women whose sexual practices render them powerless, disrupting their own lives and those of everyone around them. Roberta Alden and Catherine Barkley are helplessly caught in the throes of a biological destiny they can neither control nor change, and in different ways their pregnancies shatter both their own lives and the lives of their lovers. Caddy Compson's fate is decided when she finds herself pregnant and unmarried. Ultimately she is rendered even more powerless when Jason blackmails Caddy through her illegitimate child, and in his spiteful game of subjection successfully manipulates Caddy through her daughter, Quentin. Only Daisy remains unscathed. Rising above the trail of carnage created by her affair, she carelessly uses the entitlement of the rich to justify her ruthless impulse toward self-preservation. While her wealth shields her from the consequences of her extramarital affair, her lower-class counterpart Myrtle Wilson has no such protection.

By treating their sexually active characters so severely, Dreiser, Fitzgerald, Faulkner and Hemingway reveal their deep-seated anxiety and ambivalence about liberated female sexual practices. Dreiser, Fitzgerald, Faulkner and Hemingway were intrigued by sexually emancipated women. Yet their heroines' violent fates suggested that, at times, these important male authors yearned for the less threatening, more passive behaviors of the traditional womanly woman.

Like their male counterparts, Cather, Glasgow, and Wharton

created characters whose sexual independence defied convention. Although such characters as Marian Forrester, Antonia Shimerda, Dorinda Oakley, Milly Burden and Charlotte Lovell violated Victorian taboos against premarital and extra-marital sex (contradicting the Victorian myth of female sexlessness), the consequences of their love affairs were rarely devastating. Circumventing a "repressive phallogentric system" which denied women's sexual impulses, Cather, Glasgow and Wharton allowed female sexual pleasure not without complications and difficulties, but without the drastic punishment or calamitous results that characterized the novels of Dreiser, Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway (Moi 142).

Although women in the Twenties were beginning to show interest in birth control (Blanchard and Manasses 91,93; Davis 376), novels by male and female authors generally took little note of this new social reality. Instead, in their Twenties novels, Dreiser, Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway, Cather, Glasgow, Larsen and Wharton wrote as if they had barely heard of contraception. In line with older forms of melodrama, they repeatedly examined illicit female sexual practices, often focusing on the resulting consequences, particularly out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Through these fictional pregnancies showing women's biological vulnerability when knowledge of contraception was ignored, Dreiser, Faulkner, and Hemingway, Cather, Glasgow, and Wharton were able to test the limits of female sexual equality.

Dreiser, Hemingway, Faulkner punished female sexuality with death and devastation, frequently exercising authorial power by

linking female eroticism with death, often even transforming women's reproductive wombs into "agents of destruction" (Fetterley, Reader 52). In An American Tragedy and A Farewell to Arms, illicit love is ultimately sterile. Roberta and her baby drown in a boating accident; Catherine and her son die at childbirth. Although Caddy and her daughter survive, their grim, loveless lives foreshadow the Compson family's extinction. When Glasgow, Cather and Wharton described independent women exercising freedom of choice, women whose sexual desires led to out-of-wedlock pregnancies, they were more forgiving than Dreiser, Hemingway and Faulkner, rarely punishing their fictional heroines as strongly for their pre-marital sexual activity as their male counterparts did.

In They Stooped to Folly Milly Burden's illicit passion may have been punished by the death of her baby, but Milly is singularly unembarrassed and untouched by her pregnancy. Disdainful about what others think, refusing to accept reproof or to even consider punishment, she has already started to put her ordeal behind her. In Barren Ground, however, Dorinda Oakley is deeply and permanently scarred by her seduction and betrayal. Yet she is not paralyzed by adversity. Instead she channels her capacity for love into the ceaseless activity that brings her success in a man's world. In My Antonia and "The Old Maid," daughters' achievements exonerate mothers' sins. Although Antonia is crushed by her unwed status, her subsequent marriage restores her tarnished reputation, as well as legitimizing her child's status. Despite her clouded background, Antonia's illegitimate daughter marries, and by having a child of her own

helps make amends for her mother's premarital affair. In "The Old Maid," while Charlotte's life is stunted, her daughter Clementina makes Charlotte Lovell fiercely, if secretly, proud of her. At the novella's end Clementina is on the verge of making a proper marriage that will allow her the social approval denied her mother. In contrast, although Faulkner allows Caddy's child to survive, Caddy's punishment is underlined when her sins are magnified in her daughter, and all that was beautiful and humane in Caddy emerges as twisted, nasty and unprincipled in Quentin.

In A Lost Lady, My Antonia, They Stood to Folly, Barren Ground, and "The Old Maid," Cather, Glasgow and Wharton recognized the risks and complexities of female sexual power, frequently dramatizing how women were adversely affected by their sexual transgressions. As they examined female sexuality in their novels, they envisioned scenarios where their heroines' sexual missteps became turning points through which they discovered previously unrealized strengths. Marian Forrester, Antonia Shimerda, Dorinda Oakley, Milly Burden and Charlotte Lovell are portrayed as autonomous women whose resources allow them to take control of their lives and transcend the impact of sexual misadventures. Glasgow characterizes both Dorinda Oakley and Milly Burden by their vein of iron, while Cather depicts Marian Forrester as a survivor whose independent streak challenges conventional morals. Charlotte Lovell's fortitude makes it possible to hide all traces of passion and emotion behind a wall of silence, while Antonia's role as a powerful, life-giving figure imbues her with heroic strength. By portraying sexual women as courageous and competent instead of

powerless, Cather, Glasgow and Wharton helped define the new social order publicly championed but fictionally subverted by male writers.

Cather's, Glasgow's and Wharton's heroines showed how women's growing power in the Twenties made it possible to look at socially constructed gender roles in new ways and to see beyond the limiting roles that men projected onto women. Rather than accepting definitions promoted by male-oriented ideology, they rejected such "collective assumptions" (Diaz-Diocaretz 260). In the process they expanded female roles by defining women in their own (rather than male) terms. Time after time, they rejected Victorian female stereotypes as destructive to women, showing other viable alternatives (as opposed to male writers who beneath the surface clung, sometimes unconsciously, to the dominant male ideology of marriage and motherhood). While initially their female heroines may have been imagined in one-dimensional roles revolving around men, they often emerged into a world where male support was unnecessary for them to reach their goals. Only Marian Forrester, with her intense sexual appetite and her need to see herself through admiring male eyes, remains dependent on men and marriage for fulfillment.

As Cather, Glasgow and Wharton presented women in new lights, their novels took on unforeseen subversive potential. Antonia becomes a figure of moral authority not through her role as wife, but as an archetypal Earth Mother, whom life has neither humbled nor diminished. Dorinda Oakley hardens herself to love and chooses a life where male admiration has no place. Severing herself from the Victorian convention of female economic

dependence, she succeeds in a traditionally male occupation, and protects herself from further emotional anguish by substituting female friendship for male companionship. Milly Burden rejects her former lover when he expresses renewed interest in her, partly because she believes she deserves more than he has to offer. As an economically independent career woman, she is determined to find pleasure, if not happiness. At the novel's conclusion Milly is still searching for a truth she can believe in, but it is uncertain whether marriage will ever answer that need. By confining herself to a female world and deliberately choosing a role that precludes marriage, Charlotte Lovell allows herself to be pushed to the margins of society. Yet in her disguising role of spinster aunt Charlotte effectively protects what she loves most.

In Quicksand, Nella Larsen shares Wharton's, Glasgow's and Cather's support of female freedoms although she reaches her conclusion differently. In the process, she becomes a strong advocate for the free expression of female sexuality, and an even stronger critic of sexual repression as well as the traps of marriage and motherhood. Unlike her more liberated white fictional counterparts, Helga Crane in Quicksand believes that sexual relationships are legitimate only within marriage, and her confused struggle with a repressed sexual nature leads her into an impulsive marriage with a repulsive man. As she becomes increasingly bogged down by the insistent demands of marriage and motherhood, the consequences of her precipitous decision irrevocably cut her off from the comfortably cultivated existence she had once known.

It can be argued that Cather's, Glasgow's, Larsen's and Wharton's sympathetic, tempered responses, so different from those of their male counterparts, emerged from their own experiences with imposed definitions of womanhood at the time they were writing. Larsen and Cather were marginal figures. Larsen lived on the edges of society, a woman in the essentially male-dominated Harlem Renaissance, a black woman in a white world (Deborah McDowell xii). Cather struggled with her own sexual identity, and her fiction may have attempted to mask a lesbian viewpoint. Wharton's unhappy marriage to Edward Wharton and her passionate affair with Morton Fullerton are well known, as is Wharton's self-imposed exile from upper-class New York society's disapproving reaction to her intellectual and artistic ambitions (Ammons, "Diana" 220). Glasgow, a southern aristocrat who never married, was discouraged (as was Wharton) from becoming a writer. Indeed, in her autobiography, Glasgow notes an editor's suggestion that she "stop writing, and go back to the South and have some babies" (Woman 108). Thwarted in their own lives, and struggling to fulfil literary ambitions, Cather, Glasgow, Larsen and Wharton may have found vicarious satisfaction in creating rebellious characters who transcended traditional definitions of the feminine. Through these fictional heroines Cather, Glasgow, Larsen and Wharton were certainly raising questions about appropriate role models, while also appealing for women to be accepted for their individual abilities and differences.

The postwar atmosphere of the Twenties, with its corresponding cultural and moral changes, had made it possible to present women in new lights and to see women more as erotic

figures rather than in domestic, maternal roles, or as civilizing guardians of morality. At the same time, the liberated social climate and the open treatment of sex in the media helped explain heightened novelistic interest in female sexuality. Still, other vexing questions exist. Why in their study of female sexuality did major male novelists of the Twenties create grim scenarios in which female sexual activity caused so much havoc and distress for themselves as well as others? Why the apparent idealization and subsequent destruction of female characters by male authors? Why did important female novelists assign similar situations such widely varying outcomes?

During World War I there had been a noticeable shift in traditional sexual roles. During this time some middle-class women began acting as they never had before, achieving recognition through their battlefield roles as nurses and munition drivers. On the home front others took jobs previously thought to be beyond female capabilities. Replacing men who had gone off to war, women began working as streetcar conductors, engineers and construction workers (Banner, Women 131). In the last chapters of Sinclair Lewis' Main Street, Carol Kennicott goes off to do war work in Washington, and discovers what many American women had already learned: ". . . she could do office work without losing any of the putative feminine virtue of domesticity" (316). As the war progressed many women began to experience a sense of "self-possession," buoyed up by their growing achievement (Gubar and Gilbert, Sexchanges 34). As female accomplishment in a wider world became a fact of American life, it both reshaped and strained gender relations, creating

gender-related worries among males.

At the same time, Victorian mores were more frequently challenged by young middle and upper-class women. Some had questioned and were now beginning to redefine long established sexual roles revolving around male assertiveness and female passivity. In 1926 one troubled observer complained:

It shocks us to discover that the demand for sex equality, which we supported in the fond belief that women would impose their chaster standards on the men, turns out in practice, and at the moment to mean that women claim and exercise for themselves the freedoms they used to depreciate in the other sex.
(Hamilton 298)

Freud's books and articles had helped create a much greater awareness of female desire. As his theories filtered down to the middle class, they contributed to a climate in which it became possible for men to think of women in sexual terms and for women to experiment with new erotic roles. Margaret Sanger's dissemination of birth control information supported a more permissive sexual environment in which women could enjoy sex without the risk of unwanted pregnancy. These factors challenged Victorian standards and helped to create a climate receptive to female sexual expression. However, they also threatened long-held assumptions of male dominance.

Questions of "masculine invincibility and authority" were raised in this new climate, ushering in a crisis of masculinity and a disconcerting "new awareness" of male vulnerability (Martin, "Woman" 66). Some men began to experience a sense of

"male dispossession," which along with "energized female eroticism" created increased sexual anxiety and anger among upper and middle class white men (Gilbert, "Soldier" 298).

These gradual but irreversible behavioral shifts continued. Daring new clothing styles and new manners contributed to a weakening of the double standard (although it by and large remained in existence for many years to come). Smoking and drinking were no longer considered to be exclusively male prerogatives, but became proving grounds on which women tested their new freedoms with men. Women began entering the work place and universities in increasing numbers, and new career opportunities gave them economic independence. Expanded possibilities existed for women in such male-dominated fields as politics and sports, while movies and confession magazines portrayed women in new sexual lights.

Female sexual license was the most threatening of all freedoms. Now, a small but highly visible group of young middle-class women from junior high school to college age and beyond started experimenting with kissing, necking, petting, and even sometimes "going all the way." Automobiles afforded them the privacy to indulge these behaviors far from chaperons' prying eyes. Because sexual experimentation emerged from the large middle class, it was hard to ignore. It also became difficult to dismissively categorize sexually active middle-class women as fallen women or prostitutes. Thus, unconstrained female eroticism was beginning to change the social structure, even the balance of power between the sexes.

Although the changes to the structure of power because of

these new behaviors were initially quite small, they portended major disruptions for men who believed that even the smallest female gains would undermine their authority. Unquestionably a new, independent and sexually desirous female image was emerging, but it was not paralleled by the emergence of a "New Man" (Gubar and Gilbert, Sexchanges xii).

In this atmosphere, it is not coincidental that male writers of the Twenties tended to become preoccupied with the challenges of female sexuality. What to do with women living by a changing sexual code that was not yet the social norm, but which was becoming a potential threat to the social order became a pressing question, challenging gender stereotypes. If passive women helped preserve the social order, then women's sexual independence, while exciting to some, could also threaten man's comfortable, self-assured place in the universe. If women no longer viewed themselves primarily as wives and mothers, if they no longer accepted sole responsibility for upholding morality, if there was no longer tacit agreement about female duties to men, then the world men had been culturally conditioned to live in was suddenly being turned upside down.

Fitzgerald, Faulkner and Hemingway were part of a new forward-looking generation sympathetic to the rights of female sexual expression, even though these radical ideas threatened traditional concepts of masculinity. Dreiser, although part of an older generation, had been a long-standing pioneer of sexual frankness. Preoccupied with freedoms centering around love and sex, these authors had achieved celebrity, in part, by writing novels in which they discarded outworn conventions while

searching for new moral truths. Time after time they rejected the established patriarchal structures, choosing to celebrate liberated women's behavior instead. Yet their novels also questioned women's sexual behavior, reflecting very real and deep seated uncertainties about female eroticism.

Whether Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Hemingway or Dreiser responded consciously or unconsciously to the inherent threat of new female freedoms, when they portrayed women in new sexual lights, their novels revealed serious misgivings about emancipated female sexual practices. While they seemed to admire their female characters' sexual practices, on closer inspection their superficially acquiescent portraits were ambivalent and colored with underlying hostility. The psychological aspects of male sexuality offer a partial explanation.

Long ago Freud and others noted that while men were attracted to and excited by female sexuality, they were also threatened and repelled by it. Freud traced this conflicted response to ambivalence toward the mother and the need to separate from her. At the same time Freud noted male fear of being enveloped by female sexuality which, besides its procreative power, was not subject to the same physiological limitations as male sexual performance (e.g., detumescence). Male envy as well as the unconscious fear of female sexual and reproductive power further complicated this picture, sometimes making men feel inherently inferior to women.

Such ambivalence may have played a part in creating a male backlash to women's new freedoms. Whether it was done consciously or unconsciously, novels written by some male authors

became vehicles for expressing covert hostility and anxiety toward emancipated female sexual practices. In this context, Fitzgerald's, Faulkner's, Dreiser's and Hemingway's implicit attacks on female sexual independence can be regarded as a way of venting resentment over diminished male power, a socially acceptable way of expressing male hostility toward the perceived dangers of female sexual power, a kind of male catharsis. In such novels as An American Tragedy, A Farewell to Arms, The Sound and the Fury, The Great Gatsby, and The Sound and The Fury, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Dreiser and Hemingway can be seen as vicariously trying to reassert male dominance. By using their fictions to show the dangers of trying to change patriarchal structures, by repeatedly linking instances of female sexual activity to images of female powerlessness and defeat, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Dreiser and Hemingway could symbolically restore their slowly eroding authority and once again, at least at some level, make all women their "subjects" (Fetterley, Reader xvi).

As the animated Twenties spirit withered into that of the depressed Thirties, the sexual revolution fizzled out too. In the freer moral climate, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Dreiser and Hemingway, Cather, Glasgow, Larsen and Wharton had written novels in which they boldly examined new manners, morals, and the consequences of female sexuality. However, in 1929 the stock-market crash summarily put an end to what Fitzgerald termed "the flimsy structure" of the Twenties (Crack Up 21). Financial uncertainty replaced moral perplexity, diverting attention from sexually liberated women and their carefree behavior to more urgent social

problems. The sexual revolution had come and gone, leaving its imprint on American culture and Twenties literature, reshaping both for all times.

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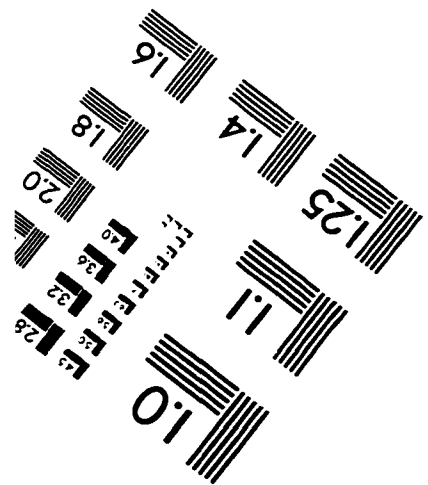
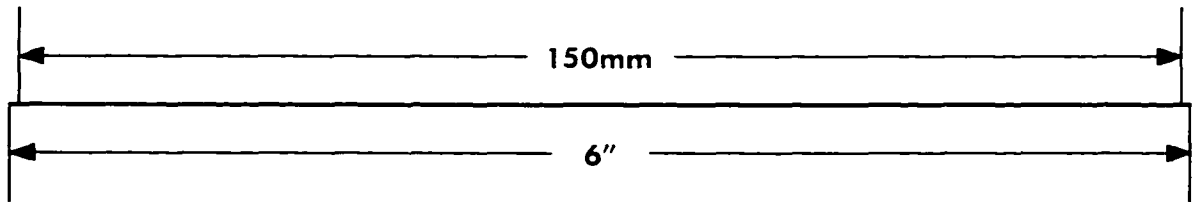
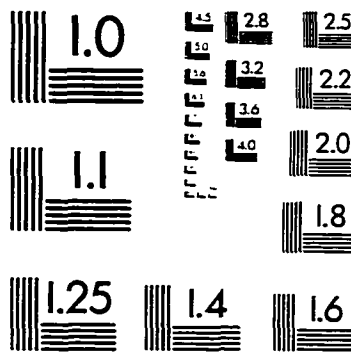
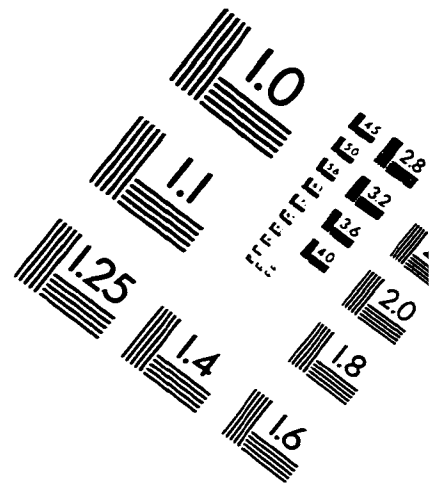
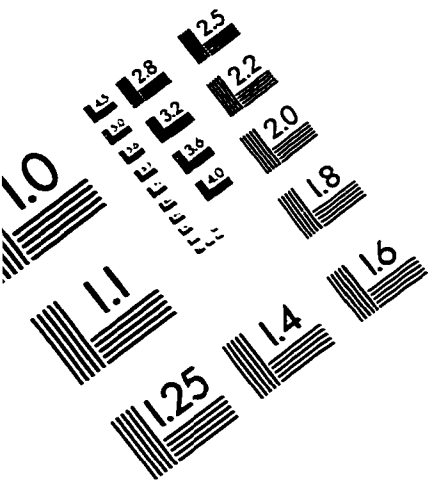
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