



ZELDA FITZGERALD'S MAGAZINE ARTICLES IN SPAIN: *LA VIDA MODERNA* (2019) AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

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Zelda Fitzgerald (1900-1948) started her literary career as a magazine article writer. However, rarely were these articles credited to her since they were either published as by Scott Fitzgerald or as by Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. Her increasing popularity from the 1970s has led several feminist scholars to focus on her life and work, but little in-depth analysis about her magazine articles has been hitherto published. In fact, the four Spanish publications reviewed in this note—“Zelda Fitzgerald: La realidad como fantasía artística” (2003), “La lucha de Zelda Fitzgerald por convertirse en artista” (2012), *La vida moderna* (2019), and “‘Hermosa y maldita’: La prosa miscelánea de Zelda Fitzgerald” (2003)—provide readers with a vast amount of information about Zelda’s life; yet, as this note attempts to show, most of them lack a thorough analysis of Zelda’s magazine articles. Thus, the aim of this work is to explore these publications in order to decide to what extent they acclaim Zelda as a competent author—and, particularly, as an article writer.

Keywords: Zelda Fitzgerald; magazine articles; Modernist women writers

1. Introduction

In 1923, Zelda Fitzgerald was interviewed by the *Courier-Journal* for the first time in her life. When asked about her writings, she responded: “My stories? Oh, yes, I’ve written three. I mean, I’m writing them now. Heretofore, I’ve done several magazine articles. I like to write” (Brucoli 2004, 46-47). Indeed, Zelda Fitzgerald did like to write, and throughout her life, not only did she write magazine articles, but also short stories, sketches, diaries, letters, two novels, and a play. While it is true that scholars in the United States have often focused on her fictional works, little research has been done on her magazine articles for they have been considered frivolous and amateurish. However, it is precisely through these articles that we can analyze Zelda’s dual personality as flapper and writer—and, more specifically, as an intellectual woman of the Roaring Twenties willing to speak out. Zelda’s witty and ironic style demonstrates she was much more than the ‘frivolous’ and ‘schizophrenic wife of’ Scott Fitzgerald. These negative labels have no doubt contributed to underestimate her writings, as well as to place her under the shadow of her famous husband. Despite the frivolous touch so-often attributed to Zelda’s articles, these writings deserve to be closely read, delving into the themes, style, and language Zelda Fitzgerald makes use of. Thus, the aim of this note is to give an updated overview of a selection of Spanish publications—which either refer to or focus on Zelda’s magazine articles—in order to decide to what extent these works have highlighted or underrated Zelda’s literary potential as a magazine article writer.

The four Spanish publications reviewed here include two articles—“Zelda Fitzgerald: La realidad como fantasía artística” (2003) by Rosa María García Rayego and “La lucha de Zelda Fitzgerald por convertirse en artista” (2012) by Antonio Daniel Juan Rubio; a book chapter—“‘Hermosa y maldita’: La prosa miscelánea de Zelda Fitzgerald” (2003) by Juan Ignacio Guijarro González; and a Spanish translation of Zelda’s magazine articles—*La vida moderna* (2019), edited and translated by Miguel Ángel Martínez-Cabeza. They all comprise very valuable information about the life and writings of Zelda Fitzgerald, and, throughout this note, I will scrutinize to what extent Zelda’s writing talents are emphasized

above all the widely known labels and biographical facts that haunt this female author—namely, her flapper attitude, her mental breakdowns, her tumultuous marriage to Scott Fitzgerald, and her amateurish efforts to become an artist. While García Rayego and Juan Rubio provide readers with a broad outline of Zelda's life and artistic skills, Guijarro González specifically focuses on the examination of a selection of Zelda's magazine articles. In the case of Martínez-Cabeza's *La Vida Moderna*, apart from the translation itself, it is essential to closely read the introduction he includes at the very beginning of the book, for it is useful to analyze how Zelda Fitzgerald's magazine articles are currently approached in our country. In order to bring about a well-organized and analytical overview of the above-mentioned works, García Rayego's and Juan Rubio's articles will be firstly commented on due to the similarities that can be found between them. Secondly, the analysis will turn to explore Martínez-Cabeza's translations paying attention to the presentation of Zelda's articles in the introductory section. Finally, Guijarro Gonzalez's book chapter will close this note as the most thorough analysis of Zelda's articles hitherto published in Spain.

2. On Zelda's Hectic Life and Artistic Career: "Zelda Fitzgerald: La Realidad como fantasía artística" (2003) and "La lucha de Zelda Fitzgerald por convertirse en artista" (2012)

Throughout the seventeen pages of "Zelda Fitzgerald: La realidad como fantasía artística", Rosa María García Rayego summarizes Zelda's main biographical facts, focuses on her mental illness as well as on her writings and paintings, and draws her attention to Scott's controversial right to the couple's personal material. One of the most striking features of this work lies in the extensive amount of information divided into eight sections: "Introduction", "Psychotic Crisis", "Zelda Fitzgerald's Paintings", "Letters to Scott", "Appropriation of material on behalf of Scott", "Literary Production", "Short Fiction", and "Save Me the Waltz".¹ In the

¹ Translated by the author from the article in Spanish: "Introducción", "Crisis Psicótica", "Pinturas de Zelda Fitzgerald", "Cartas a Scott",

introduction, García Rayego devotes several pages to the explanation of Zelda's life together with that of her famous husband Scott Fitzgerald. Zelda's artistic aspirations as a way to express herself are also mentioned in these introductory pages where García Rayego pays special attention to Zelda's ballet obsession. She then moves on to the description of Zelda's mental breakdowns, and provides readers with accurate sources about the schizophrenia Zelda was diagnosed with. In fact, Zelda's paintings and correspondence with her husband are properly pointed out here as a representation of Zelda's complex emotions and artistic frustrations. In addition, García Rayego elaborates on Scott's appropriation of Zelda's material for his own novels, a fact that illustrates the patriarchal relationship of the muse and the maker (Lawson 2015). As for Zelda's writings, we find a general overview of Zelda's short stories and magazine articles, as well as a more specific commentary of her only published novel *Save Me the Waltz*. Nonetheless, although Zelda's magazine articles are listed as part of the author's literary productions, García Rayego does not delve into the style and themes of these often-neglected publications.

In the same thread of thought, in "La lucha de Zelda Fitzgerald por convertirse en artista", Antonio Daniel Juan Rubio focuses on Zelda Fitzgerald as a competent writer, but he does not provide a thorough analysis of Zelda Fitzgerald's magazine articles. He does, however, descriptively comment on the following articles written by Zelda from 1928 on: "The Changing Beauty of Park Avenue" (1928), "Looking Back Eight Years" (1928), "Who Can Fall in Love After Thirty?" (1928), "Paint and Powder" (1929), and "Show Mr. and Mrs. F. to Number—" (1934). Juan Rubio explains that these articles were either published as by Scott Fitzgerald or as by Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald—but written by Zelda. In fact, it should be noted that both García Rayego and Juan Rubio include Zelda's so-often quoted assertion about plagiarism from the review "Friend Husband's Latest" (1922): "Mr. Fitzgerald—I believe that is how he spells his name—seems to believe that plagiarism begins at home". Zelda made this statement in a review about Scott's novel

"Apropiación del material por parte de Scott", "Producción Literaria", "Ficción Breve", and "Save Me the Waltz".

The Beautiful and Damned (1922) since she realized Scott had used material from her diaries and letters; in her own words: "It seems to me that on one page I recognized a portion of an old diary of mine which mysteriously disappeared shortly after my marriage, and also scraps of letters which, though considerably edited, sound to me vaguely familiar" (Fitzgerald 1991, 388). Thus, it is undeniable that Juan Rubio and García Rayego try to place Zelda's artistic skills in the spotlight as it is demonstrated throughout the different examples and explanations given about Zelda's role as a writer, dancer, and painter. Nonetheless, both researchers rely on Zelda's life extensively, and though biographical facts are essential to understand the artist's creation of the self, these life references might also perpetuate the 'wife of' and 'flapper' labels that have so long prevailed.

It goes without saying that García Rayego's "Zelda Fitzgerald: La realidad como fantasía artística" stands as an ambitious and well-informed research work with appropriate bibliographical references. Furthermore, her consistent arguments along with the in-text citations provide readers with a comprehensive overview of Zelda Fitzgerald's life, mental health symptoms, and artistic aspirations. The competent works cited list is somehow a tribute to a female author whose complex personality, inner struggles, and literary productions do still amaze those who are willing to find out more about her role as a writer. However, using such a vast amount of information in such a short format entails two major flaws: firstly, in-between-section transitions are not as fluent as they should, and, secondly, García Rayego's research lacks a conclusion *per se*. On the other hand, Juan Rubio's "La Lucha de Zelda Fitzgerald por convertirse en artista" begins with a coherent abstract where he explains the goal of his research: he attempts to praise Zelda Fitzgerald for her artistic talents rather than for being a symbol of liberation in the Roaring Twenties. Yet, it must be said that the structure and style of this article do not do justice to the extensive data covered throughout. Firstly, chapters three and four have quite similar titles: "La faceta creativa de Zelda" and "El periodo creativo de Zelda". Secondly, on page four, Juan Rubio refers to Zelda Fitzgerald's "Our Own Movie Queen" (1925) as a novel, when it should be classified as a short story. Thirdly, it is noteworthy that there are no in-text citations in the slightest.

While it is true that he includes a list of bibliographical references at the very end, Juan Rubio does not follow a consistent citation style (e.g. titles are not written in italics). Finally, he paradoxically concludes his paper referring to both Scott and Zelda, when he initially aimed to exclusively focus on Zelda's talents and artistic productions.

3. On Zelda Fitzgerald's Magazine Articles: *La Vida Moderna* (2019) and "Hermosa y maldita': La prosa miscelánea de Zelda Fitzgerald" (2003)

Apart from the above-reviewed articles, there are two other Spanish publications that deserve close attention for they are entirely devoted to Zelda Fitzgerald's magazine articles. Hence, I will firstly comment on Ángel Martínez-Cabeza's translation of Zelda's articles to later focus on Ignacio Guijarro Gonzalez's analytical book chapter. The latest publication about Zelda's articles—*La vida moderna* (2019)—offers a brief introduction to Zelda's life and literary career along with the translation of eleven articles written by Zelda between 1922 and 1934. To start with, the title selected for the introduction—"La triste historia de Zelda Fitzgerald"—might not be very accurate for an edition that is expected to emphasize Zelda Fitzgerald's magazine articles over her personal life. In fact, although there are examples of Zelda Fitzgerald's growing popularity, Martínez-Cabeza does not seem to praise Zelda Fitzgerald's writing talents at all. Instead, he draws his attention to Zelda's dependency on her husband Scott Fitzgerald, as well as to her self-destructive and complex personality. He even shows some skepticism about Nancy Milford's and other biographers' view of Zelda Fitzgerald as an artist whose husband undervalued her artistic skills.² Regarding Zelda's overreliance on Scott, Martínez-Cabeza

² Apart from Nancy Milford's *Zelda* (1970)—known as the first-ever-published biography on Zelda Fitzgerald—there are other thoroughly-researched biographies such as Sally Cline's *Zelda Fitzgerald: The Tragic, Meticulously Researched Biography of the Jazz Age's High Priestess* (2002), or Linda Wagner-Martin's *Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: An American Woman's Life* (2004).

claims that “Zelda cannot be understood leaving her role as the ‘wife of Francis Scott Fitzgerald’ aside” (2019, 7).³ Yet, in a translation of Zelda Fitzgerald’s magazine articles, one can only wonder why the editor does not focus on Zelda’s role as a writer instead of perpetuating the widely-spread stereotype of Zelda’s role as the “wife of Scott Fitzgerald”. In a similar vein, although *La vida moderna* is the first-ever-published Spanish translation of Zelda’s magazine articles, the introduction does not really do justice to Zelda’s writings since they are rarely mentioned, and much less commented on. As for Zelda’s personality, Martínez-Cabeza asserts that Sara and Gerald Murphy grew away from the Fitzgeralds due to Zelda’s self-destructive behavior (2019, 12).⁴ Unfortunately, no bibliographical references are included here to support such a startling assertion. In fact, there are several sources that prove how the Murphys liked Zelda much better than Scott, and felt a great deal of sympathy for her, as they stated in an interview for *The New Yorker* in 1962: “I don’t think we could have taken Scott alone (...) She [Zelda] was a good woman, and I’ve never thought she was bad for Scott, as other people have said” (58-59). Furthermore, with regards to the bibliographical references, only a few sources such as Nancy Milford’s *Zelda* are included as footnotes in the introduction, and the selection of Zelda’s paintings and pictures found in between the translated articles do not acknowledge the original source.

Lastly, as for the translations themselves, neither does Martínez-Cabeza explain the approach he has followed, nor does he justify some of the specific word choices. In particular, Zelda’s quotation about plagiarism from “Friend Husband’s Latest” has not been properly translated. “Mr. Fitzgerald—I believe that is how he spells his name—seems to believe that *plagiarism* begins at home” has been translated into “el señor Fitzgerald—creo que así es como escribe su nombre—parece creer que *el plagio bien entendido* empieza en casa” (emphasis added). The difference lies in the two words that positively modify the word plagiarism; that is, the word

³ Translated by the author from Spanish: “la figura de Zelda no se puede entender dejando a un lado su papel de ‘esposa de Francis Scott Fitzgerald’” (Martínez-Cabeza 2019, 7).

⁴ The Murphys were the Fitzgeralds’ friends in the French Riviera.

“plagiarism” has been translated into “well-understood plagiarism”—a translation that might entail patriarchal implications. Overall, although *La Vida Moderna* is a significant contribution for the general audience, it lacks academic rigor in both form (e.g. lack of bibliographical references) and content (e.g. biased information and word choices). Thus, despite being a work on and by Zelda Fitzgerald, her writing career has been relegated to a secondary position.

Last but not least, as of 2021, Ignacio Guijarro González’s “‘Hermosa y maldita’: La prosa miscelánea de Zelda Fitzgerald” can be ranked as the most thoroughly researched and well-written analysis of Zelda’s magazine articles published in Spain. Contrary to the above-mentioned publications, Guijarro González does not exclusively rely on Zelda’s biography. Since he is willing to provide readers with a critical analysis of Zelda’s “miscellaneous prose”, as he calls it, Guijarro González pays attention to a selection of Zelda’s magazine articles, only referring to major biographical facts when relevant within the analysis. In order to support his line of argumentation, he draws on the work of Zelda’s biographers and scholars such as Nancy Milford, Victoria Sullivan and Koula S. Hartnett, as well as on the work of feminist theorists such as Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. Following Showalter’s work, Guijarro González begins and ends his book chapter echoing Showalter’s concept of “The Other Lost Generation”. According to Showalter, “The Other Lost Generation” was formed by the talented—but silenced—wives of the American expatriates. Unfortunately, as Guijarro González regrets, Showalter failed to include Zelda Fitzgerald within her analysis, when Zelda in fact followed the pattern of the ambitious female artist who remained under the shadow of one of the most popular writers of the Lost Generation (2003, 89).⁵ Furthermore, following Gilbert and Gubar’s explanation on the common practice by canonical male authors to silence and possess their wives’ creative voices, Guijarro González elaborates on the Fitzgeralds’ controversial rivalry alluding to the

⁵ In her analysis, Elaine Showalter includes writers of the 1920s such as Sara Teasdale, Amy Lowell, or Edna St. Vincent Millay (Guijarro González 2003, 89).

quotation on plagiarism from Zelda's "Friend Husband's Latest" (2003, 93-94). To exemplify Scott's appropriation of Zelda's material, Guijarro González refers to two crucial aspects in Zelda's literary career: a) a number of Zelda's articles were either published as by Scott Fitzgerald or as by Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald; b) Scott got furious over the publication of Zelda's *Save Me the Waltz* (1932) as she was apparently using what he considered to be *his material* (2003, 90-91).⁶

Regarding the analysis of Zelda's articles, Guijarro González explains how Zelda wrote about popular themes such as the flapper of the Roaring Twenties, or the consumerism and materialism the Fitzgeralds were used to. As it is stated, there is a clear literary evolution in Zelda's themes and narrative style from these early articles to the ones she wrote in the late 1920s and all through the 1930s (2003, 92). Zelda's late articles are no doubt more complex in style, ideas, and themes. Thus, in such a brief format, Guijarro González is able to provide readers with a meticulous analysis of the following articles: "Looking Back Eight Years" (1928), "Show Mr. and Mrs. F. to Room Number" (1934), "Auction-Model 1934" (1934), and "On Francis Scott Fitzgerald" (1940). As Guijarro González argues, these essays nostalgically represent the disintegration of the Fitzgerald marriage along with the longing for the successful and glamorous years of the Roaring Twenties. More specifically, Guijarro González wittily points out how both the hotel decadence Zelda describes in "Show Mr. and Mrs. F. to Room Number—", as well as the auction where the Fitzgeralds try to sell their possessions described in "Auction-Model 1934" stand as metaphors that symbolize how the Fitzgerald marriage gradually falls apart (2003, 97-99). In fact, as Guijarro González claims, the first object the Fitzgeralds want to get rid of in "Auction Model 1934" is Zelda's ballet mirror, which actually has a double metaphorical meaning: on the one hand, it reflects the Fitzgeralds' life, and, on the other hand, it illustrates Zelda's artistic frustrations. After a thorough analysis of Zelda's essays, Guijarro González

⁶ After *Save Me the Waltz* was published in 1932, Scott prohibited Zelda to write anything else until he finished his novel *Tender Is the Night* (1934).

concludes his work praising Zelda Fitzgerald's literary talents and demanding more critical attention to her magazine articles.

4. Conclusion

The four Spanish publications reviewed throughout this note provide readers with a wide range of biographical details about the life and works of Zelda Fitzgerald. As we have seen, they all differ from one another in style, content, and academic rigor. While García Rayego, Juan Rubio and Martínez-Cabeza seem to place more emphasis on Zelda's biography, Guijarro González concentrates on Zelda's literary career *per se*, drawing his attention to a selection of essays. Thus, although all these publications contribute to enrich the discussion about Zelda Fitzgerald in our country, we could safely conclude that it is only through Guijarro González's book chapter that we delve into the literary potential and artistic skills of Zelda Fitzgerald as a magazine article writer whose unique literary voice is yet to be further listened, supported, and analyzed.

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