THE FEMME FATALE IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

OF THE TWENTIES AND THIRTIES:
BRETT ASHLEY IN THE SUN ALSO RISES
DAISY BUCHANAN IN THE GREAT GATSBY
ELAINE THATCHER IN MANHATTAN TRANSFER
FAYE GREENER IN THE DAY OF THE LOCUST

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This thesis treats the "femme fatale" as it appears in European literature and reappears in American literature of the twenties and thirties. I examine the femme fatale's background in myth and literature from psychological, sociological, and historical perspectives.

The term "femme fatale" was coined in nineteenth-century French literature to denote a woman who consciously or unconsciously seduces and destroys men. She possesses the power and irresistible sexual charms to direct the fates of the men who submit to her charms. Once enchanted by this woman, men cannot free themselves any longer from her spell and become subject to death and destruction. The term "femme fatale" points out the most outstanding feature of this woman—namely her fatality. Wherever she appears, decline and fall become the fate of the protagonist.

"Femme fatale" also connotes a woman who behaves unconventionally, and disregards the traditional feminine role of her time. Instead, she takes on the role of the seductress and thus the destroyer of men. This gives her an ultimate superior status over men. Despite her superiority she is depicted as a rather negative person. A lack of human feelings and typical feminine qualities are characteristic for a femme fatale.
An analysis of the femme fatale in literature shows that she is an extremely complex woman, combining stereotypical qualities of a "bitch" with the archetypal qualities of a goddess. Her coldness and cruelty identify her as a "bitch" whereas the powers with which she can create belief and hope in the men around her elevate her to the status of a goddess, giving her superiority over her victims.

In nineteenth-century European literature, the femme fatale gained such a popularity that even the fine arts took the femme fatale in literature as a model for paintings and sculptures. Soon women in real life began to be labelled as femme fatales according to their life-styles. Actresses especially created their images after the model of the femme fatale at the time that this mysterious woman was celebrated as a fashionable type.

Actually, the femme fatale in nineteenth-century European literature was a revival of the ancient myth of feminine evil which is found in literature throughout the centuries. The latter part of the nineteenth century saw a resurrection of this literary type more frequently than ever before. In that century the sadistic female seducer reached an unexcelled popularity. The femme fatale, in art as well as in life, was en vogue and with her the suffering male hero who voluntarily underwent pain and death because of this woman.

The literary phenomenon of the femme fatale can be examined from the psychological, sociological, and historical points of view. The myth of feminine evil stems partly from the fact that men are afraid of women. At times, when women gain more rights, this fear surfaces and is reflected in literature. Literary creations such as the femme
fatale are evidence of a male fear of female sexuality. They are, in Leslie Fiedler's words, a "revenge on woman."²⁴

The latter part of the nineteenth-century in Europe was a troubled period in which social and political changes as well as shifting sex-roles began to threaten the old order of a patriarchal society. Exactly at that time, the femme fatale became popular in literature and fine arts as the artist's response to the changing society.

Another period full of social and political changes was the American twenties and thirties. American literature of the period reflects a fear of social change and deterioration of sex roles. And again, the creation of the femme fatale as a literary type gives evidence of the author's particular pessimistic attitude.

In the first chapter of this thesis I attempt a broad analysis of the femme fatale tradition; its origins in myth and literature are examined and explanations are given for the presentation of female negative types in literature. Furthermore, the phenomenon of the frequent appearance and popularity of the femme fatale in the latter part of the nineteenth-century European literature is illustrated. A historical examination of the femme fatale's popularity, especially an overview of the history of the women's movement, shows connections between the rise and success of the women's movement and the emergence of the femme fatal in literature.

In the second chapter I show the reappearance of the femme fatale in the American literature of the "wasteland period." The femme fatale in American literature is basically the same type as in European
literature, which sheds light on the interrelationships of the literature of both continents. Of course, the American femme fatale also illustrates distinctive American elements, which will necessarily be mentioned although they do not particularly constitute the focus of this thesis.

The emphasis of this thesis lies not on the differences or the similarities between European and American literature, but rather on the presentation of the complexity of this type and its usage as the author's response to societal changes. Generally, the creation of a femme fatale-type shows the author's negative response to women's demand for emancipation.
Preface Notes


CHAPTER I

The Origins of the Femme Fatale in Myth and Literature

There are many examples of evil and destructive women in literary history. To begin with, the Bible and ancient mythologies provide many sources for later presentations of demonic women figures. In myths about the origin and history of humanity, women serve as symbols for the explanation of unanswered questions about evil and death in the world. Eve, the first woman according to the Bible, is said to have induced the innocent Adam to eat from the forbidden tree, thus causing the downfall of mankind. In Greek mythology the first woman was Pandora. Created by Zeus and equipped with various attributes, including sorrow and trouble, she was sent to the earth to punish mankind. Jewish folklore has Lilith as the world's first woman and Adam's wife. Since she claimed equality and refused to serve Adam, she was expelled from Eden before God created Eve. It was believed that after her expulsion she turned into a blood-sucking demon who, in the disguise of an attractive woman, had intercourse with men after which she gave birth to demons. These and other myths were the models for subsequent portrayals of women as destructive and man-devouring monsters.
Salome and her mother Hérodiade were frequently used in later literature, even as protagonists, for example in Oscar Wilde's *Salome* or in Flaubert's *Hérodiade* in the nineteenth century. After the emperor Herod became enraptured by Salome's erotic dance, he promised to fulfill her every wish. Acting upon the advice of her sadistic mother Hérodiade, Salome demanded the head of John the Baptist. The Oedipus myth in which the Sphinx, an exotic female creature, devoured every man who could not solve her riddle, provided the material for Oriental princess tales like the one about Turandot, a beautiful empress, who killed her wooers if they were not able to solve the riddle. For a successful enterprise, the reward was herself.

Some of these tales became distorted in later versions and a woman who was originally described positively was endowed with negative and destructive qualities. The brave and patriotic Judith of the Bible was transformed into a cold and cruel man-killer during the course of time in literary works as, for example, in Hebbel's drama *Judith*. In modern times, her name is associated with female destructiveness. Not only mythical but also historical female portraits have been changed in order to achieve a negative depiction of some women. A famous example is Cleopatra who is almost always described as a man-consuming, power-seeking beauty who left many victims behind on her way to achieving world power.

Greek mythology has a variety of evil female creatures, like the enchantress Circe, whom Odysseus encounters on his journey and who is feared for her power to turn men into swine. The tale of the Sirens, beautiful mermaids whose enchanting songs inescapably lured sailors to
their deaths, appeared in numerous variations in different cultures.

Death by drowning, caused by a woman, is a favorite literary theme throughout the centuries. It became a dominant symbol for the dangers of the female sex. The German folk-tale of the beautiful Lorelei who sits singing on a rock high above the river Rhine and combs her long, golden hair, mysteriously alluring the boatsmen and causing their deaths in the dangerous waters is similar to the Sirens-tale. Goethe's ballad of the fisherman who is pulled into the depths of the water by a seductive mermaid is another example of that kind. These are the last lines of the poem (1778):

A thrill went through his yearning heart,
As when two lovers kiss!
She spake to him, she sang to him:
Resistless was her strain
Half drew him in, half lured him in
He ne'er was seen again.¹

Sometimes these creatures are half-animal/half-woman like the mermaids or the Sphinx. In other tales they are endowed with exotic and, therefore, mysterious features. They all have in common an extraordinary beauty and an overwhelming sexual attractiveness, coupled with a capacity for destruction.

This common pattern shows that these female figures, which are the more famous representatives of an endless number of similar mythical creatures, belong to one single type. This type, based on those ancient myths, has kept the same shape through time. Even in modern literature there are references back to ancient mythology when such a female type appears. Lady Brett Ashley, for example, at
one point in the novel *The Sun Also Rises*, is described as a "Circe, who turns men into swine". And Elaine in *Manhattan Transfer* receives among others the name "Helena," which is an allusion to the mythical Helen of Troy.

Since the qualities of sexual attractiveness and fatality combine to create this type, many women who were originally described only in terms of evil were later endowed with sexual attributes in order to remain faithful to the two-sided type. Thus, in later versions, Pandora received the significant sexual symbol of the box and Eve, the apple, as a symbolic instrument of her seductive arts. Besides these major sexual female symbols, minor ones such as hair, lips, or the body in general, play an important role in the description of these women. These women's destructive powers are always directed towards men who cannot resist the temptations of their sexual promises. Once enchanted there is no escape, and man is doomed to his death, be it physical or spiritual.

Literature has only very rare examples of men who devour women. Prax identifies Lord Byron's male vampires as one example. Another may be Count Dracula, who seems to be the only mythical figure of that kind. Thus, the literary type of the man-devouring woman apparently is not gender reversible. This indicates the likelihood that the fatal woman is a mere projection of male fantasy.

The question of why female sexuality is so often depicted in literature as evil and destructive can be answered from the sociological and psychological points of view. Both approaches assume a basic fear of women underlying the images of evil women.
Sociological theories provide some insights into the portrayal of women in the literature of our patriarchal society. According to Kate Millett:

Sexual dominion obtains nevertheless as perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power. This is so because our society, like all other historical civilizations, is a patriarchy. She even defines this male/female relationship as political, and she initiated with her statements a new wave of feminist criticism of patriarchy.

In the traditional patriarchal system, men assume the central roles in the family and in society. They are presumed to be superior to women, who are regarded as possessions. The traditional role of women is that of a wife and mother exclusively and she is expected to stay in a submissive relation to men.

In every dominance-submission relationship, be it the male-female relation in a patriarchal society, or a master-servant relation, the party in power is more or less apparently afraid of its inferiors. Behind this fear lies the fear of the superior that power may be lost to the subservient party. If such a power-oriented relationship is not stable, the feeling of distrust and fear, which could have been unconscious, surfaces. In a patriarchy, this fear of women, who are suspected of sapping man's powers, can result in an explicit misogyny.

Psychologists have posited some theories which help to explain the fear of women which underlies the negative image of women in literature. Since the creators of and the spokesmen for patriarchal societies have been almost entirely men, the feminine point of view
has been almost entirely absent from our society, our history, and our literature. Consequently, the female world has come to be regarded as mysterious and frightening. Often women are called riddles and men admit a certain uneasiness or rejection of the mysterious female world. Freud himself, the father of psycho-analysis, concluded from his studies of women that they remain a riddle for him: "In any case, psychology, he says, cannot solve the riddle of femininity." The female world represents the Unknown to men, and therefore it constitutes a natural object of fear.

What Freud could not accomplish with female psychology, he achieved, nevertheless, with male psychology. Thus, the male fear of women, or its ultimate form which is hate, is explained by him as an unresolved Oedipal-complex. Freud says that each child must progress through several psycho-sexual phases, which are necessary for the development of a normal, socially adaptable personality. One of these phases is the Oedipal period where intense ties are built up between the child and the mother. This phase has to be terminated: if not, an Oedipus-complex can be created. If the mother does not loosen the close bonds between the child and herself or if the child does not find the right entry into the phase which replaces the Oedipal phase, he is likely to suffer serious damages, although they might never become evident on the conscious level. One of the results can be the development of an over-intense love for the mother and the rejection of any other love relation with a woman; even hate and fear of other women may result.
According to another of Freud's theories, misogynic feelings can result from an ambivalence of the male child towards his mother in one of the child's sexual phases (in the oral-sadistic phase). This ambivalent feeling has to be repressed and the child has to learn to direct its sexual drives towards the opposite sex in order to be considered adjusted to our society.10 Ambivalence means a love/hate relationship between the child and his mother. If this ambivalence is unresolved and the child never learns to direct his hate feelings towards the other sex this attitude may persist throughout his life. Such a man needs women sexually, but prefers men's society in every other respect. Hemingway expressed this dilemma when he had one of his characters say that men "always feel trapped biologically."11

Fear of women can also be based on an unresolved castration fear, originating in childhood. Hays says:

Actually, beginning with Freud, psychoanalysts have noted that a dread of women frequently appears in neurotic situations and especially, of course, in the case of homosexuality. . . Generally, while at the phallic phase, which occurs at four or five, sexuality crystallizes about the penis, the male begins to identify with his penis, prizes it highly and thus his anxiety about castration is intensified.12

Furthermore Hays quotes Jean-Paul Sartre, the existential philosopher who explains fear of women as follows:

Beyond any doubt her sex is a mouth and a voracious mouth which devours the penis -- a fact which can easily lead to the idea of castration. The amorous act is the castration of the man.13

Karen Horney explains that the dread of the female genitalia is extended to dread of women in general. Furthermore Horney says:
Everywhere the man strives to rid himself of his
dread of women by objectifying it. 'It is not,'
he says, 'that I dread her; it is that she herself
is malignant, capable of any crime, a beast of
prey, a vampire, a witch, insatiable in her desires.
She is the very personification of what is sinister.'¹⁴

Freud implied the archetypal quality of the castration-fear.

According to Mullahy, Freud believed that "the little boy's fantasy
of castration was in prehistoric periods of the human family a genuine
reality when, according to his theory, boys' penises were often cut
off. The fantasy is reminiscent of this prehistoric occurrence."¹⁵

Ancient myths of women who decapitate men, like Salome and Judith, or
the myth of Delilah who cut off Samson's hair before having him killed,
are symbolic expressions of the castration-fear.

The theory of the archetype was further developed by Jung who
went beyond the castration complex and Freud's analysis of infant
sexuality. Jung believed that "the human mind contains archaic
remnants, residues of the long history and evolution of mankind."¹⁶

Jung coined the term "archetype," explaining further that archetypes
are "mental forms whose presence cannot be explained by anything in
the individual's own life and which seem to be aboriginal, innate, and
inherited shapes of the human mind."¹⁷

Thus, according to Jung, the
fear of women is archetypal and the image of the evil and sexually
attractive woman has become an archetype.

Jung's theory of the "anima" adds, too, to the psychological
explanation of the mythical evil woman. He says that:
the anima is a personification of all feminine psychological tendencies in a man's psyche, such as vague feelings and moods, prophetic hunches, receptiveness to the irrational, capacity for personal love, feeling for nature, and, last but not least -- his relation to the unconscious.

There are both positive and negative aspects of the anima. Jung says that "in its individual manifestation the character of a man's anima is as a rule shaped by his mother. If he feels that his mother had a negative influence on him, his anima will often express itself in irritable, depressed moods, uncertainty, insecurity, and touchiness."

He goes on to say:

The French call such an anima figure a "femme fatale"... The Greek Sirens or the German Lorelei also personify this dangerous aspect of the anima, which in this form symbolizes destructive illusion.20

By objectifying their negative attitudes towards women, male writers create female stereotypes such as the "bitch," whose ultimate version is the "Bitch-Goddess"21 or "femme fatale."

A distinction must be drawn between the stereotype of the bitch and the archetype of a Bitch-Goddess, which is neglected by both Millett and Russ. Certainly, both are instruments of a male misogynic view; however, the bitch is the objectification of an apparent male scorn of women. Thus, a bitch is nothing but a stereotype. A Bitch-Goddess is the literary expression of man's inner anxieties and fear of women, which might never come to the writer's consciousness. Thus, according to Jung, she is a true archetype. A bitch is always defeated by the author. He looks down upon her in perpetual contempt. She is a negative female literary invention whose purpose it is to prove male moral or
spiritual superiority. Even if the bitch kills the male protagonist, as in the case of Francis Macomber, it does not represent her final victory. A Bitch-Goddess, however, always remains remote and triumphant in the end. It is through her that the downfall of the protagonist becomes apparent. She achieves superiority through the defect of her victims and she represents the male fear of the loss of all his powers and the recognition of his impotence.

The French created the term "femme fatale," which is defined as "a woman whose fate it is to destroy all those who are irresistibly attracted to her." This woman appears throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century in European literature, especially in France, England, and Germany. Although she appears in different forms with more or less distinctly drawn features, she can always be identified as a femme fatale. She possesses sexual attractiveness and the power to dominate all the men around her. She is self-centered and indulges mostly moody feelings. As far as the fate of her victims is concerned, however, she remains cold, indifferent, or cruel. In her self-absorption, she needs the adoration of the men around her.

From the narrative-technical point of view, she cannot be interpreted psychologically since she is only a type and, thus, her motivations remain unclear. As a literary device, she functions as a mirror for the protagonist, reflecting his moral, physical, or spiritual decline and destruction. She always acts as a trigger or a catalyst for his downfall. His destiny is doom and she, in her vitality, represents this. She is part of the hero, and together they form a unit. As sado-masochistic mates, they match each other perfectly;
she needs victims for her desires and he searches for a subject who victimizes him.

The vogue of the femme fatale, which reached its height in nineteenth century European literature and art, is described in Mario Praz's *The Romantic Agony* and in the recently published *Femme Fatale*, by Patrick Bade. Praz focuses on the demonic and perverted underside of Romantic literature.

He regards the entire nineteenth century as Romantic and does not distinguish between symbolistic, romantic, or decadent movements. Bade focuses on the fine arts and the pictorial representation of femmes fatales. His collection of paintings illustrates Praz's collection of literary examples of demonic women. Bade attempts an analysis of the femme fatale's background from the feminist, psychological, and historical points of view, but neither he nor Praz offer complete explanations. Both portray different sides of the femme fatale: Praz systematically surveys the dark side of the Romanticism and Bade the aesthetics of the fine arts.

The femme fatale of the Romantic writers is elevated to the position of an untouchable and unattainable Goddess, especially by Swinburne. Praz shows numerous examples of this Goddess, one of which is Swinburne's poem "Our Lady of Pain," in which he masochistically adores a cruel woman. This is the last stanza of the poem:

They were purple of raiment and golden,
Filled full of thee, fiery with wine,
Thy lovers, in haunts unheared of,
In marvellous chambers of thine.
They are fled, and their footprints escape us,
Who appraise thee, adore, and abstain,
O Daughter of Death and Priapus,
Our Lady of Pain."
The femme fatale's sinister and gruesome qualities, which are partly symptomatic of the Romantic Age, are emphasized and she is frequently framed in death-imagery. John Keats was the forerunner of this trend with his poem "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" (1819), the theme of which was taken from the German Tannhauser legend, wherein a knight falls in love with a woman, Frau Venus, and, after a struggle, loses his soul to her. In Keats' ode, a knight tells about his dream:

I saw pale kings, and princes too  
Pale Warriors, death-pale were they all;  
Who cried -- "La belle Dame sans mercy  
Hath thee in thrall!"

I saw their starv'd lips in their gloom  
With horrid warning gaped wide,  
And I awoke, and found me here  
On the cold hill side.  

The character of this cold and deadly woman reappeared some forty years later. The Decadent writers devoted many of their female descriptions to the image of the femme fatale. Ancient myths with man-devouring women experienced a new revival. Praz says that "Cleopatra was one of the first Romantic incarnations of the type of the Fatal Woman" since it was believed that "she massacred in the morning the lovers who had passed the night with her." and "For Swinburne, too, Cleopatra is an impersonation of the supreme feminine ideal, as she was for Gautier." Praz says of Swinburne that in his works "this type of Fatal Woman found its most complete form," and that "the various continental literatures took back again from him and from his English successors (Pater, Wilde) the themes which had previously been elaborated by the French Romantics." Huysmans, the father of the Decadence, describes in his novel La-bas this female type.
Wilde's *Salome* (1893) takes the Salome-myth up again and is even later adapted in Strauss' opera *Salome* (1905). Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* (1857) reveals his notion of women, a notion full of female morbidity. Flaubert takes up two femme fatales from ancient times in his novels *Hérodiade* (1877) and *Salammbô* (1863). They even distorted historical images of women in favor of a femme fatale portrait. Swinburne's Mary Queen of Scotland is transformed into a sexually destructive monster in the first book of the trilogy about the queen. Pater interprets the smile of Leonardo Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" as cruel and contemptuous in the style of a femme fatale. Here again, one encounters water-imagery connected with a woman. Pater describes this famous portrait as follows:

All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the reverie of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas.32

In the nineteenth century it is above all the poem in which a femme fatale is celebrated. And in a few cases, as we have seen with Wilde and Flaubert, novels deal with the theme of the femme fatale. She also becomes a favorite theme for operas around the turn of the century.

Near the turn of the century, the femme fatale became less sinister and seemingly more human. She was no longer simply a remote and romanticized goddess, who was adored and celebrated mostly in poems, but a modern woman, though still evil and destructive. Besides
her appearance in novels, she appeared in dramas and short stories, the new literary form which outnumbered poems by the end of the century. Thus, the femme fatale survived the Romantic period and found her way into realistic and naturalistic works, though not as frequently and in a new form.

Zola's *Nana* (1880) was the forerunner of the new femme fatale. She is shown as a prostitute and a woman like her appears again in Wedekind's dramas *Earth-Spirit* (1895) and *Pandora's Box* (1906). Although a modern woman, she is still a mysterious creature and death is her companion. She is still sexually powerful and destructive, in short, a typical femme fatale. Wedekind's Lulu, the "wild, beautiful beast,"\(^{33}\) brings about the doom of many of her admirers. Lulu, an actress as well as a prostitute, is the forerunner of Lola Lola, the femme fatale of Heinrich Mann's *The Blue Angel* (1905). Lola Lola, the actress and singer in the bar "The Blue Angel" alters the destiny of the respectable professor Rath who loses his reputation and undergoes a complete change of personality under the spell of this fatal woman.\(^{34}\) The novel was adapted to the film *The Blue Angel* (1930) which launched Marlene Dietrich to stardom and placed her in the femme fatale tradition under the new name "vamp" in the movies of the twenties and thirties.

In 1897 Thomas Mann created a femme fatale in his first short story "Little Herr Friedemann," a woman, who is the epitome of the modern femme fatale.\(^{35}\) Since she is the personification of the above described new femme fatale, a summary of Mann's short story might illustrate her new appearance: The 30-year old Herr Friedemann, an
upper-class member of society, who became crippled in an accident in his early childhood, devotes all his life to the arts and music after he is rejected in his adolescence by girls because of his physical ugliness and his handicaps. "He learned to understand that to everything belongs its own enjoyment and that it is absurd to distinguish between an experience which is 'happy' and one which is not... He cherished the unfulfilled desires, the longings" (p. 6). He never comes to realize that this philosophy is only a substitute for sexual fulfillment -- until Gerda von Rinnlingen enters the scene. Her husband is the new colonel and they have recently moved to the town and present a good focus for gossip for a while. Gerda is regarded with distrust from the female side and is described by women like this: "She smokes and she rides. That is of course. But it is her manners -- they are not only free, they are positively brusque, or even worse" (p. 8).

From the first sight Herr Friedemann catches of her he feels that he is doomed. Art and music become insignificant in comparison to his longing for Gerda. After a thoughtful look back at his life he concludes that he had had a good life, but:

"Then this woman had come, she had to come, it had to come, it was his fate that she should, for she herself was his fate and she alone. He had known it from the first moment... her coming had roused in him all those forces which from his youth up he had sought to suppress, feeling, as he did, that they spelled torture and destruction... He would go his appointed way, closing his eyes before the yawning void, bowing to his fate, bowing to the overwhelming, anguishy sweet, irresistible power" (p. 18).

Herr Friedemann encounters Gerda three times and each time he feels provoked and humiliated by her behavior. At the same time he is
magically and masochistically drawn to her. After their first encounter, he is disturbed: "How she had looked at him! She had forced him, actually, to cast down his eyes! She had humiliated him with her glance. But was she not a woman and he a man? And those strange brown eyes of hers -- had they not positively glittered with unholy joy?" (p. 12). At their second encounter he recognizes: "'She sees through me,' he thought, 'she will torture and despise me. Her eyes keep flickering...'' (p. 15).

Their third encounter takes place at a garden party of the Rinnlingens. Gerda takes the opportunity to talk to Herr Friedemann alone. She leads him some distance away from the party down to the river which constitutes the border of the garden. When she asks him about his childhood, Herr Friedemann's moment has come. He sobbingly throws himself to Gerda's feet stammering: "'You know, you understand ... let me ... I can no longer ... my God, oh, my God!'" (p. 22), whereupon Gerda "did not repulse him, neither did she bend her face towards him. She sat erect, leaning a little away, and her close-set eyes, wherein the liquid shimmer of the water seemed to be mirrored, stared beyond him into space. Then she gave him an abrupt push and uttered a short, scornful laugh" (p. 22). Herr Friedemann, who is completely broken, drags himself to the water and drowns himself. The last sentence of the story is: "The crickets stopped chirping a moment at the noise of the little splash. Then they went on as before, the boughs lightly rustled, and down the long alley came the faint sound of the laughter" (p. 22).
This masterfully constructed story is full of symbols, and several leitmotifs accompany the plot, e.g. the river-motif runs through the whole story, indicating the life of senses and sexuality which is denied to Herr Friedemann. The river-motif belongs to Gerda, who is associated with many significant symbols, such as the color yellow, a decadence-symbol for death, or a whip, to name only two. The story is mostly told from the view of Herr Friedemann, although in the third person. Thus, it is not clear if Gerda's behavior was really so cruel or if it was only Herr Friedemann's imagination. In any case, Gerda presents the mirror of Herr Friedemann's doom.

A femme fatale, almost the same type as Gerda von Rinnlingen, appears again in Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1904). She happens to be the last woman in the line of a famous family whose decay through four generations is the theme of this novel. Through this woman, the family, once so strong, is bound to decline since she has only borne one child who is soon to die of consumption.

With these examples, the era of the femme fatale reaches its end in European literature. As we have seen, this era lasted approximately sixty years, from about 1850 to 1910. The frequent reappearance of the femme fatale during this particular time period points to the need for an historical explanation of such a phenomenon, in addition to the psychological and sociological analyses.

If we look at the historical background of the literature in which the femme fatale experiences a rebirth, we find that the latter part of the nineteenth century is marked by changes in many respects. It was a period full of political disturbances and social changes.
With the rise of industrialism, century-old values were questioned or overthrown, and a new society rose out of the ashes of the old. The aristocratic hierarchical society came to an end in Europe, and social classes began to shift. Socialism arose on the political scene and with it the demand for more human rights for all social classes.

The fact that a female figure like the femme fatale became a symbol for this age directs attention to the role of a woman at that time. It is not merely coincidental that the image of the femme fatale appeared at the same time as the women's movement. Around 1830 women began to demand equality on several levels. Male dominance came to be questioned, especially by women of the middle class. The first step was the achievement of more education for women. Millett says:

One can say with considerable certainty that the sexual revolution would have little impetus, the women's movement still less, without the growth of higher education for women, one of the major achievements of the period. 37

In the 1840s colleges for women were founded in England, which grew rapidly in number during the following decades, and higher education became almost as accessible for women as for men. "After education, the next step was organization." 38 Women's clubs and associations arose in the middle of the nineteenth century and with them demands for political equality and human rights grew stronger.

Women soon recognized that only equal social and political rights can be the basis for female emancipation. Of course, there were some earlier attempts to make women aware of their underprivileged roles, such as the one of Mary Wollstonecraft in eighteenth century England. She was the forerunner of the women's movement, but her age
was not yet ripe for female emancipation on a broader scale. Up to the middle of the nineteenth century, the traditional roles of woman as mother and wife and her submissive role in a family and in society were hardly questioned. But the French and American Revolutions of the late eighteenth century and the Industrial Revolution of the early nineteenth century began to shake up the female consciousness. The old patriarchal concept was not taken for granted any more under female scrutiny.

With the sexual revolution the male ideas of a faithful, obedient wife or the chaste girl before marriage came into question. The issue of birth control was also more and more discussed until it became a political issue and new laws were passed to prevent illegal abortions.

Since industrialism also required women for factory work, women became aware of concerns other than home and hearth. Since about 1850, the women's fight for equal rights became a revolution which achieved one aim when enfranchisement was reached in 1918 in England and 1920 in the United States. One can say that the women's movements were running parallel in Europe and America. Actually originating in America, it soon came to England from where it spread out over Europe.

During the seventy-five years of fighting for female political equality, male counter-revolutions were born. Thus, men tried to press women back to their traditional roles by persuading them that a woman's natural and only satisfactory role in society was that of a devoted mother and wife. Barbara Welter says that this backlash occurred between 1820 and 1860 when "True Womanhood" became a slogan
encompassing the four cardinal virtues, "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity." Besides those psychological endeavors to bring women back to their subservient, harmless roles, there were also open attacks on women culminating in violent physical attacks on suffragists. Sylvia Pankhurst documents this situation, which was like a war, male against female. 

Despite many defeats, the women's movement grew increasingly strong throughout the nineteenth century. It was accompanied, in some cases, by male anger, indignation, or wrath, and, in other cases, by male acceptance of the changing patriarchal system.

The great fear of the loss of power from which men suffered is reflected in literature. Millett found three different literary responses to the sexual revolution, one of which is the literature with femmes fatales at its center, called by her "the school of fantasy." She explains:

It often expresses the unconscious emotions of male response to what it perceives as feminine evil, namely, sexuality. However much this may resemble the old myth of feminine evil, there is something new about it -- it is painfully self-conscious. Finding that there was much in its culture it could no longer take for granted, The Victorian period tends to exaggerate and be ill at ease in traditional gestures. In its fantasies of feminine evil there is something so uneasily self-aware that a number of tensions and overtones appear which one had not usually met with before in this convention... in no period of Western literature had the question of sexual politics or of woman's experience within it grown so vexing and insistent as it did in this.

The repeated appearance of the femme fatale in literature has its causes in the background of her creator's circumstances, of which
he is sometimes not even aware himself. Furthermore, only a collaboration of psychological, sociological, and historical forces in those circumstances makes the existence of a femme fatale possible. Beyond that, it has to be pointed out that the femme fatale in individual writings is a specific literary technical device. She is often used by the author as an allegorical figure, who stands for much more than feminine evil and her author's revolt against women. She is also used as a powerful literary rhetorical device, as a symbol of the author's criticism of the society depicted in his work.

Thomas Mann's "Little Herr Friedemann," can demonstrate that the femme fatale fulfills several tasks as a symbol: moving to Friedemann's hometown, Gerda embodies the new modern world as it contrasts with Friedemann's old-fashioned world; she represents the realm of sensuality and sexuality whereas he stands for mere spirituality; furthermore she represents life with all its cruel principles, whereas he represents art and music; and she personifies the materialistic world and he the idealistic world. That Herr Friedemann is doomed from the beginning and has to give way to the new world represented by Gerda shows Mann's conception of the incessant decline of ideal values and culture. He also shows the principle of social Darwinism, by which stronger forces defeat weaker forces. Gerda's triumph and Friedemann's death illustrate with what pessimism Mann views the changing world. This story, as well as his novel Buddenbrooks, written in his early period, represent Mann's agreement with the Decadent writers, who revolted against the rising materialism in the world and its decline of cultural values.
Seen as a whole, the literature of the latter part of the nineteenth century was not only a response to the sexual revolution, but a revolt against the new society formed by industrialism. Leslie Fiedler calls the whole of this period in European literature the "Break-through," defining it as a "revolution, viewed as an overturning of ideas and artistic forms."

In the ultimate Romantic revolt against the new society, the femme fatale became a powerful symbol for this literary expression of revolt and a rhetorical mouthpiece for protest.
Chapter One Notes


4 See H.R. Hays, The Dangerous Sex (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1964) p. 79.


7 I define misogyny as male hate of women based on an underlying fear: the psychologist Wertham says that hate cannot exist without fear, in: H.R. Hays, p. 196.


11 Frederick in Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms, answers to Catherine's question if he feels trapped: "You always feel trapped biologically, p. 148.

12 H.R. Hays, p. 56.

13 Hays, p. 57.

14 Hays, p. 53.
15 Mullahy, p. 21.

16 Mullahy, p. 145.


18 Jung, p. 177.

19 Jung, p. 178.

20 Jung, p. 178.

21 This term is used by K. Millett as well as by J. Russ in: *Images of Women in Fiction* (Bowling Green, Oh.: Bowling Green University Press, 1973).

22 See Hemingway's short story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber."

23 According to the "Grande Larousse," "femme fatale: une femme qui semble envoyée par le destin pour perdre ceux qui en sont épris. (The above translation is my own).


26 I restrict myself to a few examples since a satisfactory overview is found in Praz's and Bade's works.

27 Praz, p. 246.


29 Praz, p. 214.

30 Praz, p. 252.
Praz, p. 223.


Thomas Mann, "Little Herr Friedemann" in: Stories of Three Decades (New York: A. Knopf, 1951) pp. 3-22. All subsequent references to this story are taken from this edition and will appear in the text.

This quotation is complete. The ellipses appear in the text.

Kate Millett, p. 106.

Kate Millett, p. 111.


According to Millett, the other two responses are the revolutionary or realistic school who went along with the idea of feminism, e.g. Ibsen, Shaw, Dickens, Meredith, Engels, Mill; and the sentimental and chivalrous school, who presuppose an ideal state of awed reverence toward virtuous womanhood, e.g. Ruskin's Of Queen Garden's. Millett talks about the "school of fantasy" on p. 180.

Millett defines the term "sexual politics" as power-relationships based on sex.


CHAPTER II

The Femme Fatale in American Literature of the Twenties and Thirties

Leslie Fiedler discusses the influence of European prototypes on American literature. In his historical account of the evil woman in American literature, Fiedler explains that: "There had appeared side by side with the Fair Maiden the Dark Lady -- sinister embodiment of the sexuality denied to the snow maiden." This Dark-Lady type owed its characteristics to the "ingrained European habit of identifying evil with blackness," but it soon became an unmistakably American type in literature. Fiedler describes this Dark Lady in the style of a femme fatale. He says that in her "symbolic world, sex and death become one." Hawthorne's Zenobia and Beatrice Rappaccini, Melville's Isabel, or Poe's Ligeia are examples of the Dark Lady-type, to name only a few. All of these derive from the traditional Romantic concept of the Belle Dame Sans Merci, as Fiedler points out, although the Dark Ladies already reveal distinctly American features.

However, the type of the Dark Lady is not yet the type of the femme fatale. In a femme fatale, evil and dark elements are combined with attractive and fascinating ones, whereas in a Dark Lady the evil and dark elements are outstanding. Fiedler rightly notes that the
femme fatale did not appear in American literature until the 1920s. He says:

> During the twenties, however, in a second revolutional shift, Mary Pickford and Theda Bara become one, America's sweetheart and the vampire amalgamated into the bleached blonde.³

The American femme fatale in literature had this amalgamation of sweet and devouring traits. Fiedler adds that her sweetness was regarded with suspicion from the very beginning and that no author presents her with sympathy. He explains the authors' negative attitude as follows:

> The notion that fair hair is the product of the peroxide bottle rather than of race or culture, a disguise rather than an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace, becomes an article of cynical un-faith.⁴

This type of the "bleached blonde" or a similar artificial woman, who traps men and causes their destruction, is the American femme fatale of the twenties and thirties. She is the product of a "whole disillusioned generation,"⁵ a generation of writers who soon became known as the "lost generation."

The femme fatale belonged to the lost generation who, like the Decadents in Europe some thirty years before, felt a deep sense of the loss of idealistic values. And, as for the Decadents before, she became for the lost generation the rhetorical device through which protest could be demonstrated.

The femmes fatales of American literature that I have selected for discussion are Lady Brett Ashley in Ernest Hemingway's **The Sun Also Rises**, Daisy Fay Buchanan in F. Scott Fitzgerald's **The Great Gatsby**, Elaine Thatcher in John Dos Passos' **Manhattan Transfer**, and
Faye Greener in Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust*. The authors of these novels are of one generation, all born around 1900. Growing up in the progressive era of America, they soon realized that America was an "industrial giant," but a spiritual and "emotional dwarf."

The writers saw themselves faced with what they believed was a general deterioration of American culture. Frederick Hoffman explains that the "phenomenon of America's industrial wealth and its spiritual poverty was the subject of one of the most exhaustive examinations in the history of modern criticism." The negative view of America's declining culture was prevalent mostly in intellectual circles whereas, in general, people were enthusiastic about America's economic growth and proud of its achievements without sensing the absence of cultural and moral values. The authors of the "lost generation," however, were extremely sensitive to the loss of values and were pessimistic about America's future.

Furthermore, the war experience increased their sensibility and awareness of lost values. Hoffman points out that it was above all the alienation Americans felt towards the European war, in which America became actively involved in 1917, that caused irreparable spiritual damage:

The shock was immediate and for a long time irremediable. Danger, violence, battle chaos, death were in every case dissociated from both geography and culture. The postwar American was almost abnormally sensitive to a form of experience that may best be described by the term 'violation,' a term that indicates what happened to their sense of dignity and security as the result of events that had little or nothing to do with them.
He concludes that: "One of the most radical changes in modern literary sensibility can be described as the symbolic injury." Nonetheless, as Alfred Kazin formulates it, the post-war generation and especially the ones who actively participated in the war, "the lost generation, the branded victims, the generation that had been uprooted and betrayed," felt in their isolation "their sense of artistic mission."^10

This spiritual attitude was captured by T.S. Eliot's poem The Waste Land, which was published in 1922. It had a strong influence on Hemingway, when he wrote The Sun Also Rises in 1925, as well as on Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby and Dos Passos' Manhattan Transfer, both of which were published in 1925. Warren French states that "the uncannily exact relationship between Eliot's 'Waste Land' period and the 1920s has been surprisingly little noted, despite the heaps of speculation about his work"^11 and he names The Sun Also Rises, Manhattan Transfer and The Great Gatsby as novels in which the impact of The Waste Land is strongly expressed. The influence of The Waste Land reaches even further than the twenties as shown in West's The Day of the Locust, which was published in 1939, but nonetheless reveals the "waste land" influence.

The femme fatale in these novels becomes a perfect wasteland symbol since her negativity, which is the victor in the end, symbolizes the authors' bleak outlooks on America's future. The insecurity and the pessimism which Americans were experiencing was a result not only of the war, but also of the challenge that the women's movement represented to the social structure and the changes in sex-roles which
ensued with the creation of the "new woman" or "flapper" types which appeared as femmes fatales in literature.

In these novels the femme fatales personify the "flapper" or the "new woman" of the twenties who can be seen as the result of the previous struggle for female independence. James McGovern sees a dramatic change in the roles women played in society between 1900 and 1910, as documented in popular magazines:

Women depicted in advertising in or about 1900 are well rounded, have gentle, motherly expressions, soft billowy hair, and delicate hands. They are either sitting down or standing motionless; their facial expressions are immobile as are their corseted figures. After 1910, they are depicted as more active figures with more of their activity taking place outside their homes.¹²

Thus, many women were no longer satisfied with their exclusive housewife and mother roles and wanted to "participate in what men call 'the game of life.'" "¹³

The efforts for female emancipation were indeed increased from 1900 onward and political equality was at the center of the "woman question." The achieved enfranchisement furthered the women's cause for liberation and gave women a new self-assurance and a general confirmation of their struggle for emancipation. The result was that women played a more active role in society and enjoyed greater independence. The "new woman" was much different from the woman of 1900:

She smoked, drank, worked and played side by side with men. She became preoccupied with sex -- shocking and simultaneously unshockable. She danced close, became freer with her favors, kept her own latchkey, wore scantier attire
which emphasized her boyish, athletic form, just as she used makeup and bobbed and dyed her hair.14

But not everyone celebrated the "new woman." The suffrage movement, which entailed the changing of sex-roles, was regarded by many people with suspicion. It became convenient to blame women for social problems such as the increase in alcoholism after the prohibition in 1919 and for what appeared to many to be a decline in morality. Some attributed the change in morality at the beginning of the twentieth century, especially rejection of Puritan values and the endorsement of "free love," to the women's movement. That it was mainly Freud and his disciples who initiated a new attitude toward sexuality was frequently overlooked and women became the scapegoats for moralists and pessimists. The threat that the emancipated woman represented to the social structure and to the individual male ego is reflected in the literature of the time.

In the twenties the femme fatale appeared in American literature along with the "Great American Bitch." Dolores Barracano Schmidt identifies the numerous examples of the stereotyped Bitch in literature as a sexist reaction to the emancipated woman of the twenties and the following decades. She names authors like Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Lewis, and Anderson as the Bitch's literary fathers and explains that these authors take their revenge on the free and independent woman by casting her in the utterly negative role of a Bitch. Indeed, the literary invention of the Bitch is a true act of male revenge, yet this woman is usually depicted so negatively that the pathetic hero only gains sympathy and moral superiority in contrast to her.
A femme fatale, on the other hand, contrasts with the male and reveals his inferiority, his frustration, and his impotence. Thus, it is apparent that there is a question of masculinity here, too. "If women had new rights and powers, men had lost old ones. It is surely no coincidence that the themes of sexual identity, of homosexuality, of proving one's manhood in sexual terms, of impotent and unfulfilled lives dominate the literature of the twenties in America."16

Schmidt does not distinguish between the Bitch-type and the femme fatale-type; however, there is an important difference, as I have demonstrated in the first chapter. In the former case, the authors create a projection of their fears in the character of the Bitch and are able to successfully contain and control them in this way, whereas in the latter case, the authors are never able to transcend their hero's ambivalence and their own feelings of self-hate and self-doubt.

Brett, Daisy, Elaine and Faye are the literary "flapper" types of the post-war period; however, none of them is happy or satisfied with the role of an emancipated woman. Instead, they are shown as self-centered, shallow, cool, and emotionally empty beings in accordance with their destructive function. This serves the purpose of the novels. The fact that this "new woman" - or "flapper" type - brings about the hero's denigration indicates the uneasiness or the disapproval which these authors feel with regard to the emancipated woman.

Freud's psychological theories of sublimation and repression shed light on the description of men's unfulfilled desires in these novels. The femme fatale herself, since she is only a type with
predictable actions that serve a mere function in the novel, cannot be interpreted psychologically. Her evil is not based on motivation which can be explained psychologically. She is a mere trigger or catalyst for the hero's decline, which is often self-created. The femme fatale is the cause of events, such as the hero's violence or his frustration. These events can be analyzed from the psychological point of view, since they belong to the more fully developed male characters. These heroes become frustrated by the femme fatale and they frequently try to overcome their feelings of dissatisfaction, either by indulging a certain kind of masochism or by verbal or physical violence, or by other less apparent substitutes.

The femme fatale herself is a merely passive character. The hero sees in her a possibility of hope; he creates a false icon of her person, which cannot but fail. It is the hero himself and not the woman who is responsible for his failures. She is the person who unmask these false icons and uncovers the hero's lack of positive qualities but is nevertheless also presented as a negative character. Although she remains victorious, her success presents a mere Pyrrhic victory and is ultimately a symbol for destruction and not for creativity, which the heroes falsely see in her.

On the whole, the femme fatale becomes the focus of the author's hostility, and, ultimately, she is the scapegoat of the novel. Even if they are also negatively drawn, the heroes share more of the author's sympathy than the femme fatale does. This arrangement reveals the author's strategy of a presentation of a negative female superiority.
The four novels present basically the same type of a femme fatale. They are the female protagonists and therefore play important roles within the novels. Although the novels have different contexts and accordingly different male protagonists the femmes fatales and the reactions they cause in the male protagonists remain much the same.
1) Brett Ashley in *The Sun Also Rises*

Lady Brett Ashley, the femme fatale in *The Sun Also Rises*, is found in the center of a group of men who all search for love and meaning in their lives. Dissatisfied with themselves, they create in Brett an image for their desires. But she is not supposed to fulfill the men's hopes, and it becomes obvious that Hemingway uses her as a symbolic device through which men's false projections are unmasked.

Hemingway wants Brett to be a goddess who gives hope to the men around her. This is indicated by several motifs. She is associated with the title, as is demonstrated in one of the two epigrams of the novel, a line from Ecclesiastes: "The Sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose." Jake regards Brett as a 'sun' and a goddess-like woman, a creative, powerful source of strength, through which he finds relative stability. He knows that he will regain the firmness which he loses during the nights when Brett is absent from him. When the sun has gone down he indulges in self-pity caused by Brett's remoteness. This is the hour when he accuses Brett of being his fate: "Probably I never would have had any trouble if I hadn't run into Brett when they shipped me to England." He describes his state at night:

I lay awake thinking and my mind jumping around. Then I couldn't keep away from it, and started to think about Brett and my mind stopped jumping around and started to go in sort of smooth waves. Then all of a sudden I started to cry.\(^7\)

He tries to rationalize his nocturnal feelings:
There is no reason why because it is dark you should look at things differently from when it is light,

but concludes:

The hell there isn't. I figured that all out once, and for six months I never slept with the electric light off... To hell with you, Brett Ashley (p. 148).

At daylight he gathers back his mental stability and the irony with which he masters his situation. Although he is attracted to her, he keeps his distance from Brett, whose powers he fears.

Brett is like the sun, superior and remote from the men and hardly moved by anything. She arises untouched out of the emotional turmoil she has caused, as beautiful as ever. At one point in the novel, she is directly connected with the sun. After the fiesta is over and all the men are more or less destroyed Jake describes her as follows: "Brett was radiant. She was happy. The sun was out and the day was bright" (p. 207). And she appears like a goddess "through the crowd in the square, walking her head up, as though the fiesta were being staged in her honor and she found it pleasant and amusing" (p. 206). However, as it turns out, Brett's powers become more destructive than creative for the men around her.

Brett is not only connected with the sun's creative and destructive powers, but also with water, which has the same functions as the sun. When Brett is described, water-imagery appears frequently, associating her with the archetypal femme fatale. Water seems to give her the powers to keep her strength when everyone else breaks down, either physically or emotionally. She drinks heavily, but Jake
says: "Brett did not eat much. She never ate much" (p. 246). The numerous baths she takes during the course of the novel seem to wash her clean of guilt. Also Jake gathers new strength through water to resist Brett's seductiveness, as is suggested through his symbolic dive into the sea, to which he retreats alone after the fiesta is over. Jake has almost lost his mental firmness before confessing to Bill three times: "I feel like hell" (p. 223). After his stay at the sea he has won back his irony. When Brett allures him again sighing: "'Oh, Jake, '... we could have had such a damned good time together,' " he replies ironically: "'Yes '... Isn't it pretty to think so?' " (p. 247). 18

Besides the sun and the water imagery, both of which accompany Brett's description, there are other demonstrations of the author's intention to present Brett as a superior being with archetypal qualities. The natives of Pamplona immediately see in Brett a goddess and do not allow her to be herself: "Brett wanted to dance but they did not want her to. They wanted her as an image to dance around" (p. 155). Brett's archetypal femme fatale qualities are shown when Cohn calls her a "'Circe '... who turns men into swine!' " (p. 144). Cohn is irresistibly attracted to Brett and, as a result, he undergoes a change of personality for the worse.

Brett is described as a typical "flapper," who smokes and drinks very heavily, hangs around in bars with the "chaps," and sometimes uses their tough slang. Nevertheless, Jake calls her "damned good-looking," and "built with curves like the hull of a racing yacht" (p. 22). Cohn finds her a "remarkably attractive woman" (p. 38);
Count Mippipopoulos calls her "charming" (p. 59); and Mike views her as "a lovely lady" (p. 79). She chooses her lovers or companions and drops them whenever she pleases.

However, in the tradition of the femme fatale, Brett is also described in negative terms. Her title, Lady Brett Ashley, suggests an irony concerning her character, since she does not behave at all like a "lady." On the whole, Brett is not a fully developed character. Her few characteristics, like her self-centeredness, her coolness as far as the fate of her admirers is concerned, and her seductiveness serve to define her as a femme fatale who destroys the men around her.

Her self-centeredness consists in her wish to remain desirable. Thus, when she meets Jake in the company of a girl, she asks: "'You're getting damned romantic' " (p. 23). Even when she accuses herself of being a "bitch," she frees herself of guilt and does not care about the feelings of others.

Whenever she meets a new man, she tries to attract him. Her eyes symbolize her magical power as well as the coolness with which she regards her conquests. She focuses her eyes on Pedro Romero and she continuously looks at Bill as she gets introduced to him: "Brett smiled at Bill wrinkling up the corners of her eyes at him...Brett wrinkled up the corners of her eyes at him" (pp. 74-75).

Brett remains utterly cool and careless, as is indicated by her response to Pedro's dedication of the bull's ear to her, which is regarded as a great honor and a sign of his devotion: "She wrapped it in a handkerchief... and left both ear and handkerchief, along with a number of Muratti cigarette-stubs, shoved far back in the drawer of
the bed-table that stood beside her bed in the Hotel Montoya, in Pamplona" (p. 199). Nevertheless, Brett remains always at the center of the men's desires because they care less about her personality than about her sexuality.

The men around Brett are all wounded, either physically or mentally; although it is through Brett that their inadequacies are made apparent, it is not necessarily because of her that they exist. Jake suffers from impotence, Cohn from a lack of self-confidence, and Mike from a lack of self-respect.

Cohn throws himself masochistically at Brett's feet and becomes physically violent, knocking down his rivals Jake, Mike, and then Pedro, when he feels frustrated by Brett. Mike takes to heavy drinking in the course of which he becomes verbally violent. Jake, although he is aware of Brett's indifference and destructive capability gives up his pride at times and submits to her cruel games. His frustration with Brett also has a violent character. When he encounters Brett within a group of young men, he says: "I was angry. Somehow they always made me angry...I wanted to swing on one, any one, anything to shatter that superior, simpering composure" (p. 20).

Rather than confessing their own failures and mistakes, the men attempt to prove their powers by objectifying or victimizing Brett, in the course of which they create an image of her, which turns out to be a false icon; Brett just wants to be herself and cannot fulfill their hopes and desires. She wants to stay independent, and, consequently, she rejects the men's attempts to create an object of her, finally causing their self-destruction. The men, rather than accepting her
as she is, want to possess her or to change her into a creation of their own imaginations.

Jake falsely sees something in Brett which reveals more of his inner motivation than Brett's, when he says of her: "I suppose she only wanted what she couldn't have" (p. 31). Mike falsely believes that she is in his possession and he repeatedly calls her a "piece" or of "thing" of his own: " 'I say, she is a piece...' " (p. 79), whereupon "Brett was looking at him quite coolly," (p. 80).

Pedro Romero, too, cannot bear Brett's independence and wants to take possession of her. This is expressed in his wish to change her into a more feminine woman. Brett tells Jake: " 'He wanted me to grow my hair out'... 'He tried to give me a lot of money'... 'He really wanted to marry me. So I couldn't go away from him. After I'd gotten more womanly, of course' " (p. 242).

Also Count Mippipopoulos, with whom Brett has gone out a couple of times, tries to get hold of her by way of money, as Brett tells Jake: " 'Offered me ten thousand dollars to go to Biarritz with him' " (p. 33). Only Cohn, who is described as weak from the very beginning, does not want to play a power game with Brett. Instead, he voluntarily submits to an imagined self-victimization by her, revealing his strong masochistic tendencies. He defines Brett as a sadistic creature who has complete power over him.

Brett is a femme fatale in the sense that this image is imposed upon her by the heroes. In fact, she only passively leads them to their downfall. She does not actively change their personalities for the worse; she just reveals their weaknesses which already exist.
It is significant that a femme fatale is introduced in this novel. She becomes a symbol for man's weaknesses. The bullfight ritual at the center of the novel is a game of life and death with the ultimate victory of the matador. In this novel, where the protagonists are defined in terms of steers and bulls, according to their potency or impotency, the femme fatale's actions are like the ones of the matador who handles steers and bulls and finally destroys them.
2) Daisy Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*

In *The Great Gatsby*, the femme fatale functions somewhat differently from Lady Brett. Daisy Fay is different from Brett in that she is not fatal to all the men who surround her. She becomes the fatal woman only for Gatsby, who projects his unrealizable dreams unto Daisy's person.

The other men behave towards Daisy either indifferently, like Tom, or contemptuously, like Nick. Nick, the narrator, sees Daisy exclusively as a "bitch;" Tom, her husband, regards her as a possession; for Gatsby, Daisy is the goddess who is supposed to realize his dream; for the reader and for the author, finally, Daisy becomes the femme fatale, the woman who is attractive and at the same time destructive for the man who is so much charmed by her.

Daisy is for Gatsby a goddess to whose level he wants to rise, since he is poor and does not belong to the wealthy class personified by Daisy. For him she is the "golden girl," "the king's daughter high in a white palace." He sees in her his dream embodied, a dream beyond the personal level, since it is not so much Daisy, the person, he loves, but the goddess he sees in her. That he regards his love for Daisy as a supra-personal love is indicated by his remark about Tom's love for her. "'In any case,' he said, 'it was just personal'" (p. 152).

Gatsby has a vision of himself as "son of God," a vision which sprang from his Platonic conception of himself and to this conception he was faithful to the end" (p. 99). He imagined that he could reach
Daisy's level and that she could become his fate. Gatsby needs Daisy, his goddess, as a completion of his vision of himself as God. He never comes to realize Daisy's real character, which is corrupt, as the reader learns through Nick's narration.

Unlike Brett, Daisy Fay is a spoiled rich woman whose married life has become a bore. However, the account of her life before the wedding shows that she is a "flapper" type, like Brett, only with the difference that everything in Daisy's life moves on the level of the wealthy American aristocracy. Daisy, as flapper, is described as a merry girl who remains untouched by the corruption she is exposed to through her husband, Tom Buchanan. Nick says that as a young girl, Daisy was:

keeping half a dozen dates a day with half a dozen men, and drowsing asleep at dawn with the beads and chiffon of an evening dress tangled among dying orchids on the floor beside the bed (p. 151).

At first, Fitzgerald meant Gatsby's love for Daisy to be emotional and human. He identifies his failure to have mentioned more of Gatsby's and Daisy's emotions for each other as a "big fault" in the novel. Fitzgerald "intended Nick to be in love with Daisy, too." However, in his final version, Fitzgerald made Daisy a true femme fatale, which means that he did not endow her with any emotions and emphasized her fatality. And he did not have Nick fall in love with Daisy. Nick, as the narrator, has to depict Daisy in her fatal role since her victim Gatsby never himself realizes her fatal powers.

Thus, Daisy's final role is as the destroyer of Gatsby's romantic ideals, and since he clings to these ideals and does not accept reality,
she indirectly causes his death. Nick describes Daisy according to her role as destroyer. He presents her as a mere type with the functions of a femme fatale. Consequently she is not depicted as a fully developed character. She has a rather "disembodied Face" (p. 81) as well as a disembodied voice, a voice that symbolizes Daisy's magical powers of a femme fatale:

there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered 'Listen,' a promise that she had done gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour (pp. 9-10).

When she comes to visit Nick for the first time "the exhilarating voice was a wild tonic in the air" (p. 86). For Gatsby, her voice is "full of money" (p. 120) revealing the real source of her attraction for him.

Like Brett, Daisy is associated with the sum. Her name suggests this connection, since it means the "day's eye." As the sun represents both creative and destructive powers, Daisy herself has both positive and negative qualities. For Gatsby, she is like the sun in a positive creative sense. For him she has the color of the sun, since he sees her as the "golden girl," and the sun seems to give him the strength to maintain his unfulfillable dream during five years when he does not meet Daisy again. For Daisy herself, the sun becomes a negative force since it endows her with destructive powers, and, thus, makes her into a complete femme fatale.

Sun-imagery appears throughout the novel and is more or less directly related to Daisy. One example is Gatsby's first visit at the
Buchanans' house: a tension is built up when Tom Buchanan recognizes the relationship between Daisy and Gatsby which has been going on behind his back. He remarks: "'I read somewhere that the sun's getting hotter every year,'" (p. 118). At another point of the novel, the sun image links Daisy directly with her destructive powers: Tom tells about his fear of the "Rise of the Colored Empires," meaning his fear of all the colored people and outsiders of the world, which later includes Gatsby. Daisy's response to her husband's fears is described like this: "'We've got to beat them down,' whispered Daisy, winking ferociously toward the fervent sun" (p. 13).

Like Brett, Daisy is connected not only with sun-imagery but also with water-imagery. In this novel water relates to the femme fatale as well as to her victim, Gatsby. Water becomes the combining element between Daisy and Gatsby but ultimately a destructive and death-related element for Gatsby. Water symbolizes Daisy's unattainability as well as her fatality. Gatsby had his house built across the bay from Daisy's house with the green light at the end of the dock. When Nick first sees Gatsby the reader already gets a glimpse of the unrealizable and pitiful mission which Gatsby has imposed upon himself. Nick is going to address him and says:

But I didn't call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was contented to be alone -- he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward -- and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock. (p. 22).

Yet the water also seems to keep Gatsby's dreams alive since he has
lived there for several years without having ever met Daisy. Thus, the water separates him from Daisy but also links him to her. Finally, it becomes fatal for him. He dies in his marble swimming-pool, where, ironically enough, the water is just being drained off.

For Nick, Daisy is not a goddess, as she is for Gatsby. Nick identifies himself with Gatsby since he is, like him, a social climber. But he is more realistic than Gatsby, and he realizes the corruptness of the rich. Thus, he despises Daisy, who represents for him the ugliness of the rich, and she becomes for him a "bitch." The reader who sees Gatsby's view of Daisy as a goddess as well as Nick's view of her as a "bitch" can interpret Daisy as a complete femme fatale or bitch-goddess. Throughout the novel, Daisy remains faithful to this type.

Daisy's behavior is described by Nick as completely artificial. She is unable to feel deep emotions, either for Nick, or Tom, or even for her own child, let alone Gatsby. Nick attributes to Daisy a shallowness and an asexual sterility, which she shares with her friend Jordan. Their sterility and emptiness is symbolized by their chatter "that was as cool as their white dresses and their impersonal eyes in the absence of all desire" (p. 12). Thus, for Nick, she becomes the "white girl" and not Gatsby's "golden girl." The color white, which Daisy prefers in her environment, symbolizes her sterility.

For Nick, Gatsby becomes, consequently, the masochistic dreamer who gets caught in Daisy's nets of wealth. Gatsby is not a fully developed character either. He becomes the dreamer-type, who destroys himself in the attempt to fulfill an unattainable dream. Nick
interprets Gatsby's love for Daisy as unrealizable since "he had no real right to touch her hand" (p. 214). He sees Gatsby drawn to Daisy because she and her house represent for him a "ripe mystery" (p. 148) and because "it excited him, too, that many men had already loved Daisy -- it increased her value in his eyes" (p. 148). For Nick, Gatsby had "committed himself to the following of a grail" (p. 149), a mission that was doomed from the very beginning.

Nick's negative statements about Daisy almost obscure the fact that Daisy is a victim of her society and was partly corrupted by her cruel husband Tom. Before the wedding she cries and refuses to accept Tom's gift, a pearl necklace worth $350.00, which was the measure for him of Daisy's worth as a new possession. Through her marriage, Daisy comes to believe in the disadvantage of women in her society. This is expressed when she tells Nick about the birth of her little girl:

'It'll show you how I've gotten to feel about--things. Well, she was less than an hour old and Tom was God knows where. I woke up out of the ether with an abandoned feeling, and asked the nurse right away if it was a boy or a girl. She told me it was a girl, and so I turned my head away and wept. 'All right,' I said, 'I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool -- that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool.' (p. 17).

Nick, however, interprets Daisy's confessions as "basic insincerity" and, thus, reinforces her image as a femme fatale.

As in Brett's case, it becomes obvious once again that the role of the femme fatale is partly imposed upon Daisy, in this case by the narrator Nick, who feels sorry for Gatsby and his humiliating death. Although Gatsby masochistically creates his own destruction, Nick
concludes, "Gatsby turned out all right at the end" and puts the blame on Daisy, defining her as "foul dust (which) floated in the wake of his dreams."

Ultimately, the evil personified by Daisy is victorious. Through Daisy, Fitzgerald represents his view of the victory of corrupted values over unrealistic romantic ideals and the decline of moral values in American society in general.
3) Elaine Thatcher in *Manhattan Transfer*

Like *The Sun Also Rises* and *The Great Gatsby*, *Manhattan Transfer* focuses on people who are striving for meaningful lives. They live in the city of New York, which Dos Passos portrays as a dehumanized institution and not a place where the dreams that each of the novel's characters tries to realize can come true.

Elaine, the femme fatale in this novel, becomes the hope for the men around her, but she destroys this hope, unmasking it as an unfulfillable illusion. Since these men cannot free themselves from their false hopes, she indirectly causes their decline or breakdown. They create in Elaine an image which promises happiness and fulfillment. For them, Elaine, who is described as a breath-taking beauty, is more a "titan-haired vision" than a normal human being. As with Brett and Daisy, men elevate Elaine to an image which can be adored and a goddess who may fulfill their desires. But Dos Passos' omniscient narrator shows Elaine as a femme fatale, a woman fatal for everyone who is charmed by her.

Like Brett and Daisy, Elaine is described in terms of the archetypal qualities of a femme fatale. Some men view her as a goddess, describing her as "white implacable Aphrodite" (p. 153) or as "Diana," with a "perfect Greek simplicity" (p. 396). Others see her as a superior being and call her "a great lady on a white horse" (p. 153).

Besides the goddess-like qualities which men impute to Elaine, her dangerous destructive powers are recognized as well. Even if the men who are attracted to Elaine recognize her fatality, they cannot
escape and prefer destruction to leaving her. When Stan Emory is intro-
duced to Elaine, he immediately associates her with the image of "a
great lady on a white horse," the image with which Dos Passos associated
her from her youth. Stan also immediately recognizes the danger which
Elaine represents and he adds: "And she shall make mischief wherever
she goes" (p. 140). This foreshadows Stan's fate, which leads him from
alcoholism to suicide.

Elaine's name, too, reveals her destructive qualities. Born as
Ellen Thatcher, her name undergoes various transformations. To her
father, she is Ellie, although she herself prefers the more sophisti-
cated "Elaine." Some of her lovers, however, like to use the signifi-
cant name Helena, which unmistakably alludes to the mythical Helen of
Troy, a femme fatale in Greek myth who is said to have caused the
Trojan war.

The frequent change of names is also an indication of a lack of
identity. As she is differently named by different lovers or friends
and relatives, she becomes for each of these persons a different woman.
As they name Elaine according to their own wishes they project their
own images of Elaine unto her.

Just as the femmes fatales in The Sun Also Rises and The Great
Gatsby are described in terms of sun imagery, Elaine is associated
with fire-imagery, which also embodies both creative and destructive
powers. The fire symbol is here a leitmotif that runs throughout the
novel. It often refers to Elaine, either directly or indirectly
alluding to her femme fatale qualities. For example, men are fascinated
by Elaine's red hair which has the "shine as fire of sunset on western
waters" (p. 153). Her hair evokes desire in Jimmy and makes him feel that he is "soaring like a fireballoon" (p. 228). When a song is played with the text: "'when feminism rises into an insuperable barrier,'" George is reminded in Elaine's presence of fire, of "fire that purifies" (p. 139). Elaine's fire and the fire she evokes in men, however, does not ultimately purify, but destroys.

The fire motif represents the effects Elaine has on the men around her: she herself and her personality are described in terms of a material that cannot be destroyed by fire, namely "unbreakable glass":

She sits up cold white out of reach like a lighthouse. Men's hands crawl like bugs on the unbreakable glass. Men's looks blunder and flutter against it helpless as moths. But in deep pitch-blackness inside something clings like a fire engine (p. 182).

Glass also symbolizes Elaine's emotional coldness, a typical quality of a femme fatale. This coldness and coolness gives her a certain superiority over the desires she causes in men. Since Elaine is cool, she cannot be hurt by anything and is shown to be undisturbed by events which shake others deeply. Elaine is the only one, for example, who stays aloof when her husband's homosexuality is revealed in a public scandal. And it is Elaine who quiets people down when fire breaks out in the salon where she is being fitted for an evening dress. She can remain cool since she does not have real feelings, either for her husbands and lovers or for her own child; she states: "'I don't love anybody unless they're dead'" (p. 345). Men's desires cannot touch her, and, for Jimmy, she becomes the "porcelain figure
under a bellglass" (p. 300). For George Baldwin she is unattainable, too, and her reaction to him is described as follows: "Rigid as a porcelain figure under her clothes, everything about her seemed to be growing hard and enameled, the air blustreaked with cigarette smoke, was turning to glass" (p. 375).

Elaine is described not only in terms of glass, but also in terms of steel; both are materials out of which the city of New York is built, and both are indestructable. Thus, Elaine, with her destructive powers, becomes an allegory for New York, the "City of Destruction" (p. 366). This analogy is established early when her mother reminds Elaine" "'Dear you shouldn't be destructive... We need construction and not de-struction in this world' " (p. 18). Later in the novel, Dos Passos describes Elaine as "an intricate machine of sawtooth steel whitebright bluebright copperbright" with a voice that cuts "coldly like a tiny flexible sharp metalsaw" (p. 228). Glass, in the form of mirrors, also symbolizes Elaine's self-centeredness, since she is frequently depicted as absorbed in herself, whenever she is looking into a mirror.

Elaine works on herself in order to remain superior. Already as a child she discovered the "lack of inhibition and greater freedom society allocated to the male."24 This is shown in the conversation with her father whom she admires for his ease when talking to a seaman:

'when I grow up will I be able to talk to people on the street like that?'
'No deary you certainly will not.'
'If I'd been a boy could I?'
'I guess you could.' (pp. 63-64).

The wish to become a boy (which she had expressed earlier watching her
mother's weakness: "'Ellie's goin to be a boy, Ellie's goin to be a boy'," (p. 23), becomes from this moment obsessive. "As a woman, she evidences her desire for a male identity" by thinking: "'I hate women. I hate women' " (p. 188). She has contempt for emotionality because she considers it a female attitude. Thus, she hates to be identified as an emotional actress and explains:

'I hate it; it's all false. Sometimes I want to run down to the footlights and tell the audience, go home you damn fools. This is a rotten show and a lot of fake acting and you ought to know it.' (p. 212).

The male stage director remarks to another one: "'Didn't I tell ye she was nuts Sol? Didn't I tell ye she was nuts?' " (p. 212). This demonstrates that men do not wish to see Elaine in an equally powerful role.

Like Brett and Daisy, Elaine represents the "flapper" of the twenties. She is ambitious about her career and free with her lovers, wishing to remain as independent as possible. But, as in Brett's and Daisy's case, men do not want Elaine to be independent; they attempt to regain their lost powers by possessing her. However, Elaine refuses to be possessed or to be made into an object. She explains to George Baldwin: "'I don't want to be had by anybody' " (p. 224). When she is with her boss Goldweiser, who sees in Elaine a way out of his self-created unsatisfying life, she feels "caught like a fly in his sticky trickling sentences" (p. 203).

As it turns out, only men who have, in some sense, failed are attracted to Elaine. They try to rid themselves of their anxieties by creating an image of hope in her. However, she cannot fulfill their
hopes and change their self-created mistakes, and, thus, she leads them indirectly to their downfall.

Although the men actually create their own declines and Elaine is only indirectly to blame for their downfalls and destructions, Dos Passos depicts her negatively. Elaine does not receive Dos Passos’ pity, as some of the male characters in the novel do. Dos Passos directs hostility toward Elaine's power, which is a power based on a total lack of positive values. In the same way, Dos Passos directs his hostility toward the city of New York which he sees as a merciless place where corruption reigns and only negative elements triumph.

Only once does Dos Passos endow Elaine with real human feelings. After she has witnessed a fire in which a girl is deformed for the rest of her life, Elaine sits quietly in a taxicab and starts thinking about her life. She suddenly realizes that her life is superficial and empty. But as soon as she has left the taxi, these feelings are repressed and she wonders: "What did I forget in the taxicab?" She becomes cold once again: "Already she is advancing smiling towards two gray men in black and white shirtfronts getting to their feet, smiling, holding out their hands" (p. 400).
4) Faye Greener in *The Day of the Locust*

Whereas Brett Ashley, Daisy Buchanan, and Elaine Thatcher represent the femme fatale of the twenties, Faye Greener, in Nathaniel West's *The Day of the Locust*, personifies the femme fatale of the thirties. West's portrayal of the femme fatale is the most negative and his view of the future the most pessimistic of the four authors.

West's last work, *The Day of the Locust*, is a novel about Hollywood during the thirties, which West himself experienced as a screen-writer. One can call this novel a comic-bitter satire about a world where love means violence and life means emptiness or senselessness. It is a cynical account of Hollywood as a dream factory, where people are as artificial as their dreams and where they are always either cheating or being cheated.26

Faye is a typical product of the Hollywood milieu. Described as a bad actress, she dreams of a future career as a movie star, and creates a vamp-image of herself. That she becomes a femme fatale for the main protagonists, Tod and Homer, also reflects West's cynicism because only men who are outsiders in this society fall for her charms; the perfect Hollywood-lover who matches the vamp on screen does not. The fact that Faye's victims are men who are failures themselves links her again to Brett, Daisy, and Elaine. All four women exercise the same fatal fascination on men who are more or less doomed from the very beginning.

Faye's man-killing qualities are shown from the moment she is introduced to the reader. She is described as an utterly sexy woman
with a "moon face" and "platinum hair." Her "sword-like legs" symbolize castrating powers and introduce the notion of love and sex as violence, which prevails throughout this novel.

Faye's superiority over men, as well as her strategy for maintaining this superiority, are suggested in the song she sings: "'I'm the queen of everything...If you're a viper-- a vi--paah'" (p. 135). This song also contains the description of Faye's fatality, as she herself draws the analogy to a viper, a snake dangerous to anyone who irritates it, with a bite that can be fatal.

Since it is related to the "fay" of fairy-tales, Faye's name (which is almost identical to Daisy's maiden name) suggests her magical powers as well as her elevation to an unreal goddess-like creature. The name "Faye" can also be associated with "Fate," hinting at her fatal powers. Furthermore it is related to "Faith." It is faith that she has the power to create within the men who are attracted to her but that in the fake world of Hollywood turns out to be "murderous and deceptive."28

Like Brett and Daisy, Faye is connected with water. Faye derives her magical power from the water whereas everyone else is subject to drowning, as the following description by Tod suggests:

Nothing could hurt her. She was like a cord. No matter how rough the sea got, she would go dancing over the same waves that sank iron ships and tore away piers of reinforced concrete. He pictured her riding a tremendous sea. Wave after wave reared its tone on ton of solid water and crashed down only to have her spin gaily away... It was a very pretty cork, gilt with a glittering fragment of mirror set in its tope. The sea in which it danced was beautiful, green in the trough of the waves and silver at their tips.
But for all their moondriven power, they could
do no more than net the bright cork for a moment
in a spume of intricate lace (p. 151).

Faye attracts every man she meets with her sexual charms.

However, she destroys only those men who are neurotic or weak, such
as Tod and Homer. Tod creates an image of Faye which can be objectified
and regarded as a fetish. He possesses a picture of her, in which he
interprets what he wants to see, namely a sexual object:

In it she was wearing a harem costume, full
Turkish trousers, breastplates and a monkey
jacket, and lay stretched out on a silken
divan... She was supposed to look drunk, but
not with alcohol. She lay stretched out on the
divan with her arms and legs spread, as though
welcoming a lover, and her lips were parted
in a heavy, sullen smile (p. 12).

Tod surrenders himself willingly to Faye, but he also recognizes the
threat she represents:

She was supposed to look inviting, but the
invitation wasn't to pleasure... Her invitation
wasn't to pleasure but to struggle, hard and
sharp, closer to murder than to love. If you
threw yourself on her, it would be like
throwing yourself from the parapet of a sky-
scraper... If she would only let him, he
would be glad to throw himself, no matter
what the cost (pp. 12-13).

Thus, Faye becomes the death-wish incarnate.

Homer, too, becomes masochistically drawn to Faye. He is full
of neuroses; only the movements of his hands are alive and indicate
his repressed feelings and desires. Once before, he had a sexual
experience with a girl, Romela Martin, from whom he freed himself be-
because he did not know how to handle his own sexuality. As soon as he
meets Faye, he knows that her sexuality will cause his destruction:
"When the days passed and he couldn't forget Faye, he began to grow frightened." He realizes that "he had escaped in the Romola Martin incident, but he wouldn't escape again" (pp. 56-57).

Having given up the rest of his personality, Homer surrenders to masochism. Tod, on the other hand, who has not yet given up his self-confidence, tries to defeat Faye's sexual powers. He attempts to reverse his role as her victim by being the victimizer himself. He expresses this wish repeatedly in his thoughts. For him, sexuality with Faye means violence. It is the instrument through which he wants to prove his male superiority over Faye:

As he watched her, he felt sure that her lips must taste of blood and salt and that there must be a delicious weakness in her legs. His impulse wasn't to aid her to get free, but to throw her down in the soft, warm mud and to keep her there...If he only had the courage to throw himself on her. Nothing less violent than rape would do...It was her completeness, her egglike self-sufficiency, that made him want to crush her. (p. 63).

The perverted wish to rape Faye indicates Tod's own failing sexuality. This becomes for him, and Homer, the basis of his own self-destruction.

Like Brett, Daisy, and Elaine, Faye becomes an image for men who are failures in themselves and have problems with their male identity and sexuality. It is an image of false hopes and desires which can but lead to the men's destruction.

These men reject or ignore Faye as she really is, a person with ambitions and dreams. They prefer to see her as a sexual object and to elevate her to a fetish, an abnormally adored object. When Faye tells Tod about her daydreams, he interprets them as something
which gives "extraordinary color and mystery to her movements" (p. 63). And when Faye displays really deep feelings, crying over the death of her father, Tod tries to convert her weakness into an opportunity, begging her: "'Sleep with me!'" (p. 113). At a party, too, when she tells Claude Estee, a famous screen-writer, about her goal to become a star, he watches, rather than listens to her: "He couldn't help it. Having once seen her secret smile and the things that accompanied it, he wanted to make her repeat it again and again" (p. 131). The other men at this party react similarly:

None of them really heard her. They were all too busy watching her smile, laugh, shiver, whisper, grow indignant, cross and uncross her legs, toss her head so that her platinum hair splashed against the red plush of the chair back...The only move they made was to narrow their circle about her. (p. 131).

The sexual frustration which Faye causes in the men is vented through physical violence. The grotesque dwarf Abe Kusisch, who believes in Faye's sexual promises, attacks his rivals at the party, the Mexican Miguel and the cowboy-actor Earle. Homer, who cannot find an outlet for his frustrations, breaks down physically and retreats into a trance-like state, wishing himself back in his mother's womb. This is symbolized by the fetal position in which he falls asleep. Tod reacts aggressively only in his thoughts, which are his only means of self-defense. He thinks: "If only he had the courage to wait for her some night and hit her with a bottle and rape her" (p. 152).

Faye is afraid of becoming the object of violence and brutality. Her fear of being victimized is projected in the painting "The Burning
of Los Angeles," in which Tod expresses his apocalyptic vision of the future of America and which he is about to complete:

Faye is the naked girl in the left foreground being chased by the group of men and women who have separated from the main body of the mob. One of the women is about to hurl a rock at her to bring her down. She is running with her eyes closed and a strange half-smile on her lips. Despite the dreamy repose of her face, her body is straining to hurl her along at top speed. The only explanation for this contrast is that she is enjoying the release that wild flight gives in much the same way that a game bird must when, after hiding for several tense minutes, it bursts from cover in complete, unthinking panic (p. 65).

Although West shows that these men create their own troubles, he nevertheless regards these characters with pity and sympathy whereas he directs hostility toward Faye, who comes to represent evil. Besides her sexuality, which turns out to be deceptive, Faye does not have any positive qualities. Like Brett, Daisy, and Elaine, Faye is the femme fatale, whose negative qualities are ultimately victorious. Thus, Faye becomes, like her predecessors, a symbol of her creator's pessimistic view of America's future.
Chapter Two Notes


2. Fiedler, p. 297.

3. Fiedler, p. 325.

4. Fiedler, p. 325.

5. Fiedler, p. 325.


In Hemingway's first draft this last sentence is: 'Yes. It's nice as hell to think so' which connects the meaning of this sentence to the state of 'hell' he was in after Brett has left him. Hemingway finally preferred the more ambiguous version.

Her name also suggest her superiority.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925; rpt. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953) p. 120. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition.


Mizener, p. 15.


CONCLUSION

Despite some differences, Brett Ashley, Daisy Buchanan, Elaine Thatcher, and Faye Greener have enough similarities to clearly identify them as representing the type of a femme fatale in literature. All four women are described as irresistibly attractive to men. But beneath the surface of their seductive and alluring behavior, these women are evil and destructive.

The mysterious and dangerous charm of a femme fatale is an archetypal pattern based on the perception of female sexuality as something evil and destructive for men. Thus, the femme fatale in literature becomes a kind of scapegoat on whom negative events can be blamed.

The femme fatale is often connected with water, fire, or sun imagery, which symbolizes female sexuality and female powers. In the case of the femme fatale, however, female sexuality and female powers become more destructive than creative.

The creation of a femme fatale in literature is, as Leslie Fiedler calls it, a "revenge on women."¹ Fiedler, the leading critic of the "dark side" of American literature treats the theme of the femme fatale in American literature at length. He refers to the

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femme fatale by her equivalent name "bitch-goddess" and names Brett Ashley, Daisy Fay Buchanan, and Faye Greener as representatives of this type in American literature. Surprisingly, Fiedler does not mention Elaine Thatcher in his enumeration of bitch-goddesses, although she doubtless belongs to the group of femmes fatales in American literature of the twenties and thirties.

Fiedler describes Brett as "a goddess, the bitch-goddess with a boyish bob... the Lilith of the twenties" and he recognizes her fatality: "No man embraces her without being in some sense castrated, except for Barnes who is unmanned to begin with; no man approaches her without wanting to be castrated..."² In the same way Fiedler criticizes Daisy as "the incarnation of the evil" and as a "prototype of the blasphemous portraits of the Fair Goddess as bitch..." He describes Daisy as the "girl who lures her lovers on, like American itself, with a voice...full of money."³ Faye Greener has for Fiedler "archetypal purity" and he calls her "the most memorable and terrible woman in an American novel of the thirties."⁴

Thus, Fiedler identifies these women as representatives of the archetypal evil woman as she appears in myth and literature throughout the centuries. He also notices that these femmes fatales, instead of being presented as real women, are rather products of a male fantasy of a revenge on women. Fiedler sees the two sides of the femme fatale: her "dream role" and her "nightmare role." He regards both roles as a denial of the humanity of women.

However, Fiedler errs in assuming that the bitch-goddess is an American invention. Although he traces the bitch-goddess back to the
European "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," Fiedler believes that she is an exclusively American product:

Only the fantasies of post-World War I Germany have reflected (in films like The Blue Angel) comparable excesses of male masochism; and Marlene Dietrich, who embodied the cruel woman of those fantasies, soon emigrated to the United States which appreciated even more than Germany the delicious threat of her million-dollar legs.5

But he overlooks the fact that the post-World War I film The Blue Angel starring Marlene Dietrich as the femme fatale Lola Lola Froehlich was only the adaptation of Heinrich Mann's novel, written in 1905. As is demonstrated in the first chapter of this thesis, the novel The Blue Angel was one of many works which had a femme fatale as female protagonist.

Thus, Fiedler seems not to have realized the great influence of the European femme fatale in Nineteenth century literature on the women whom he calls "bitch-goddesses." Had Fiedler noticed that there was such a close relationship between literary creations like Thomas Mann's Gerda von Rinnlingen, for example, and Brett Ashley, Daisy Buchanan, Elaine Thatcher, and Faye Greener, he probably would have designated them all "femme fatales."
Conclusion Notes


2Fiedler, p. 319.

3Fiedler, p. 312.

4Fiedler, p. 326.

5Fiedler, p. 328.
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A Farewell To Arms. 1929; rpt. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957.


