PART ONE

Fitzgerald and His Culture

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Fitzgerald, Modernism, and Race

JUSTINE BAILLIE

In engaging with the American dream, most famously through the figure of Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Fitzgerald at once endeavored to define, critique, celebrate, and construct American identity. An examination of Fitzgerald's engagement with American individualism should acknowledge his profound understanding of how formulations of American identity reverberate with the wider concerns of American life, culture, and history. In rejecting the restrictive social structures by which European nation-states had determined themselves, American colonists constructed possibilities for the accumulation of wealth and status and for the creation of new identities. Such ambition formed the basis of American independence and the founding ideals of equality and freedom, allowing the new nation to distinguish itself from Europe and its hierarchies built upon imperatives of inheritance. Gatsby's constructions of identity, his individualistic abandonment of name, family, and home in the quest for the American dream perish under the weight of structures America imposes despite its idealistic origins. Gatsby is ultimately denied full passage into a world that is itself fabricated on mythologies of landscape, possibility, and belonging.

Crucially, however, the formulation and articulation of new and distinctive American identities, including those addressed by modernists such as Fitzgerald, can be traced back to an early American literature that was dependent, in its contemplations of American freedom, on the oppression of indigenous peoples and the existence of an enslaved population. Toni Morrison's theorizations, in 1990, of how the Black presence in America serviced early American literature by providing a "playground" ("Black Matter(s)"147) for the white imagination have enabled revisionist readings of just how the nation's literary tradition was founded on distinctly American tropes formulated in an attempt to distinguish it from European literature:

> Explicit or implicit, the Africanist presence informs in significant, compelling, and inescapable ways the texture and shape of American literature. It is a dark and abiding presence that serves the literary imagination as both a visible and an invisible mediating force. So that even, and especially, when American texts are not "about" Africanist presences, or characters, or narrative, or idiom, their shadows hover there, implied, signified, as boundaries. It is no accident and no mistake that immigrant populations

> (and much immigrant literature) understood their "Americanness" as an opposition to the resident population. (152–3)

Following Morrison, it would be unthinkable not to consider the significance of the existence of the "unfree" (154) as providing, even if unconsciously, the surrogate for discussion of the anxieties, fears, and ambivalences that freedom in the new world brought.

In Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night* (1934) Dick Diver manages his wife Nicole, maintaining her material world while simultaneously negotiating her psychological crises. These crises are themselves born of Nicole's personal traumatic relationship with America's dispensations as represented by the accumulated capital of her father, hers to spend in the old world of Europe after their incestuous relationship. Significant here, as we shall see, is the way in which Fitzgerald situates his exploration of American anxiety in a racialized terrain, Morrison's "playground" ("Black Matter(s)"147). In his essay, "The Crack-Up" (1936), Fitzgerald outlines his personal struggle with his identity as an American writer fearing that he is in danger of becoming the very thing he seeks to critique, namely, a man lost in the cycles of consumption unleashed by a corrupt American capitalist system rapidly enveloping the Western world after the First World War. Such a personal transformation would, he writes, "be a deflation of all my values" (48). Such negotiations of the intricacies of American identity can be seen not just in the context of Fitzgerald's "red, white and blue," but also against considerations of the history of African American experience and appropriations of the aesthetic born of such experience.[1] For Toni Morrison, Euro American modernism and America's early immigrant literature are in fact wholly dependent on the exploitation of the African American experience and the cultural forms it generated. As Morrison writes, "Race, in fact, now functions as a metaphor so necessary to the construction of "Americanness" ("Black Matter(s)" 152–3). The purpose of this chapter is to consider how Fitzgerald's modernism, through which he chronicled the jazz age, is informed by the African American presence. It includes discussion of both Toni Morrison's and Ralph Ellison's reflections on jazz and how, as indicative of the African American presence and as an expression of the modernist experience, jazz music functions metaphorically as being reflective of chaos in Fitzgerald's literary imaginings of American life. This Africanist presence shapes both Fitzgerald's critique and celebration of the jazz age through the "fetishizing of color in the transference of blackness to the power of illicit sexuality, chaos, madness, impropriety, anarchy, strangeness and helpless, hapless desire" (Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 80–1).

MODERNISM

Modernism's fragmentations brought radical modes of expression in which forms merged to reflect new delineations of time and space in representations of the realities of the twentieth century, realities that could not be contained by linear artistic expressions of the previous century. The demarcations of the nineteenth century and its certainties were disrupted by the mobilizations of modernism and its new technologies. Representational rather than strictly realist forms became necessary for the articulation of human consciousness and existence as lived in the wake of the death of the Enlightenment project. A new vocabulary was required to express twentieth-century existence as lived under new conditions of urbanity, migration, and dislocation. Consequently, race, or the adoption of race, became an experiment in the forging of new American identities,

sometimes permanent, but more often than not a temporary state of affairs by which appropriations of the other could be easily abandoned.[2] Fitzgerald mobilizes race at moments of crisis in his fiction as difference becomes synonymous with the chaotic transformations brought by new technologies. Racial difference and technology intersect as the phonogram allows for the mediation of desire and sex by which the consumer can listen in without being in the same physical space as the Black performer. Furthermore, the performer articulates those very emotions Fitzgerald's protagonists cannot themselves express as characters living by proxy, lives by projection in which risk is sublimated by the other's expression of illicit desire. The phonogram itself becomes the focal point of illicit, sometimes extramarital, liaison, if only as a possibility. As Mark Goble argues, the market for modernist recordings and associated technologies encouraged inscriptions of race and projected sensuality irrespective of the performer's origin:

> [R]ace was already so inscribed in the language surrounding new technologies that communicated the immediacy of music like never before, that it was difficult for the musical aesthetic of modernism to register its appeal without recourse to a whole network of racial meanings and iconographies that projected fantasies of blackness onto the medium of recorded sound – making U.S. modernism itself into a kind of feedback loop between race and technology. (158)

In her essay "Gertrude Stein and the Difference She Makes" (1990) Toni Morrison situates Stein as a precursor to Euro-American modernism in her deployment of an "Africanist" other in her work. In the "Melanchtha" section of *Three Lives* (1909) Stein makes therapeutic use of race in a fictionalization of her own unhappy love affair in which she employs the mask of blackness by which to negotiate emotion and experiment with form through appropriations of African American vernacular. Morrison emphasizes how the characteristics of modernism—"the merging of forms, the raveling away of borders, of frontierlessness, the mixing of media, the blending of genres, the redefinition of gender, of traditional roles, the appropriation of various and formally separate disciplines" ("Gertrude Stein" 208)—are dependent upon racial categories for delineations of power, gender, and identity. Stein's experiment with African American voice and character is integral to her modernism and the experimentations of Joseph Conrad, T. S. Eliot, and Fitzgerald himself under modernism depend, in varying degrees, upon Black experience. Eliot evokes jazz rhythms in *The Waste Land* (1922), a precursor to Fitzgerald's "valley of ashes" (27) in *The Great Gatsby*, and all these writers shared a desire to advance a modernist literary aesthetic.[3] Fitzgerald, a writer of what he himself termed "The Jazz Age," engages with African American modernist musical expression and deploys the "Africanist" other but, importantly, he also problematizes whiteness.

Morrison, in "The Foreigner's Home" (2006), refers specifically to Fitzgerald and how he "heroically struggled to delineate the ground of belonging and exile, to tirelessly probe its moral cues" (13). For Morrison, "In terms of literary embraces of modernism, as is also true of the visual-arts move towards modernism, the imaginative terrain upon which this journey took place was and is in a very large measure the presence of the racial 'Other' " ("Gertrude Stein" 207–8). Fitzgerald, in his desire to "write something *new*—something extraordinary and beautiful and simple & intricately patterned," (cited in Turnbull 154, emphasis in original) draws, like Joseph Conrad, T. S. Eliot, and Stein in literature, and like Picasso and Matisse in visual art, on the Black aesthetic and presence. Moreover, Fitzgerald employs the "passing" narrative to articulate Gatsby's journey.[4] To recognize this complicates *The Great Gatsby* as more than an American love story incorporating

a "rags to riches" narrative. The work becomes instead opened up to new possibilities of meaning and interpretation that at once both ignite Fitzgerald's insight as a writer and bring the African American presence in from the boundary to the very center of American life and letters. To countenance such a generous vision of the American past avoids diminishing Fitzgerald as an artist and instead helps us understand him as a man engaged with American concerns other than those of the individual and his dreams.

PASSING

The story of America is one of fluidity, of identity as a shifting and elusive invention, typified by Gatsby's vacillations between extremes of vulgarity and gorgeousness and by which he contains both absurdly optimistic visions of future possibilities and the brutalities of the modern age, its mechanization and its materialism. Gatsby is, as Nick informs us, a "Platonic conception of himself," an American in "the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty" (118). This self-invention constitutes, in essence, an act of passing by which Fitzgerald's character can traverse boundaries of social class, ethnicity, and race. Whether this means passing from the Black to the white world, or from a lower to a higher social status, is somewhat irrelevant; the point is that passing, in *The Great Gatsby*, is essential for realizing any potential the American dream may hold. As Elaine Ginsberg explains, passing is,

> about identities, their creation or imposition, their adoption or rejection, their accompanying rewards or penalties. Passing is also about the boundaries established between identity categories and about the individual and cultural anxieties induced by boundary crossing. Finally, passing is about specularity: the visible and the invisible, the seen and the unseen. (2–3)

In Gatsby's case, endeavoring to attain the American dream means his passing from one world to another and to pass is to transgress social boundaries through the accumulation and consumption of the signifiers of wealth and importance. His excessive performance of selfhood—his car, his "old sport" intimacies of language as an "Oxford man"—renders Gatsby as a figure of suspicion operating in, but not of, the leisure class. Passing becomes emblematic of American identity as fluid, diverse, and improvisational, born out of migration and a belief in the possibilities of transcending the restrictions of birth and geographical origins. As Ralph Ellison puts it, and in relation to the African American experience as *American* experience, existence for African Americans constitutes "a great formlessness … its tempo of development from feudal-forms of the South to the industrial urban forms of the North is so rapid that it throws up personalities as fluid and changeable as molten metal" ("Working Notes and Outline for Invisible Man"). As an African American writer, Ellison admired Fitzgerald's representation of Gatsby as an outsider whose experience as such would resonate with that of the "Little Man at Chehaw Station," the African American everyman as reader and critic who knows his own experience as the American experience—a man "representative of the American audience writ small, the little man draws upon the uncodified *Americanness* of his experience" ("The Little Man at Chehaw Station" 28, emphasis in original). To quote Ellison further in this regard, Gatsby's belief in American affirmations of equality means he confuses "the promises of democracy with the terms governing their attainment" (32). Gatsby's fate rests, ultimately, on the Africanist presence, albeit in its obfuscation, there and not

there at once. The African American witness to the speeding car that kills Myrtle is cut short, his testimony interrupted, and his very presence overridden by Tom's authoritative voice. In Ellison's terms, Gatsby and the little man at Chehaw station cannot be seen to stand together in the same place, both as outsiders vis-à-vis American democracy and its hierarchical structure (33). It takes Ellison's everyman to recognize the significance of race in this scene—had the testimony of the Black witness been heard further, Gatsby and Wilson, outsiders both themselves, may well have lived.[5] To the end, the Africanist presence is felt, even in its negation, and Morrison's deconstructions of American literature are seen to recover the Black presence in Fitzgerald's work.

Despite America's founding ideals of equality and liberty, boundaries are maintained in the formation of a closed-off "leisure" class; the institutions of marriage and inherited wealth ultimately resist Gatsby's transgressions and intrusions into the established order.[6] Tom Buchanan is disturbed by the fluidity of identity embodied by Gatsby, troubled by the unknowableness of the new American living after the First World War. Tom is in effect threatened by miscegenation, fearful of America becoming "utterly submerged" (16) by the other. And yet, as ruptured as they may appear, and despite Tom's fears, the old structures nevertheless hold firm. Daisy is herself somewhat racialized within Tom's diatribe as he hesitates before including her, too, as a member of the Nordic race under threat from the outside. Daisy, the Southern belle, winks knowingly at Tom's inclusion of herself as being of the white race and thereby casts some doubt on her own white credentials and on the legitimacy of Tom's ideals. She, too, is a new American, one of the flapper generation and, perhaps, also passing as she finds it necessary to qualify her girlhood as "white" (24) and thereby draw attention to the possibility she is herself traversing the old demarcations of pseudo-authentic Euro Americanism, what Tom calls the Nordic civilizations (16).[7] Ironically, love may have been so blind as to leave Tom, in his "complacency," delusional as well as being no longer secure, no longer certain of his footing in a changing world (16–17). Tom strikes Nick as pathetic and yet Nick fails to challenge his views on the supremacy of the "Nordic civilization." Morrison notes how "[r]ace talk as bonding mechanism is powerfully on display in American literature … soliciting Nick's support for the 'science' of racism … makes Nick uneasy, but he does not question or refute his host's convictions" ("On the Backs of Blacks" 147).

JAZZ

Tom's willful resistance to the shifting world around him, this new age of jazz, may well belie the fragility of the white masculinity he embodies. As Morrison notes in an interview with Angels Carabi from 1993, the 1920s are very much

> identified with white people, who symbolised the period in literature … But the people who enabled the core and the shape of that were, of course, black people, whose culture was evolving different things and being constantly invented and improvised. You had to stay alert to political changes, because you never knew what people were going to do at any moment. So you had to be always on guard and be able to adjust quickly. That ability was a double entendre: at the same time accommodating the grief we felt and the determination not to let life beat us up completely—you know, the instinct for survival plus "joi de vivre" was very important. (92–3)

So, again, Tom's racist paranoia is the defensive wall erected to protect wealth, power, and privilege against that which is unfolding before him, namely the modernism of the post-First World War period, its fissures and its fractures, and the exhilarations of an emerging African American confidence expressing itself through the jazz aesthetic. Morrison goes on to contemplate not only how Black musical expression is somewhat erased in considerations of the period but also how this expression is "always called something else never called *music*." By merely speaking of this music, white critics proved so intent on its appropriation as an *American* form they would invariably nominate a white man, Benny Goodman, as being the king of swing. As Morrison goes on to say, "I believe the twenties began to be the moment when Black culture, rather than American culture, began to alter the whole country and eventually the western world. It was an overwhelming development in terms of excitement and glamour, and the sense of individualizing ourselves swept the world" (93).

The Great Gatsby was published in the same year as *The New Negro* (1925) and yet Gatsby's guests, unlike Fitzgerald himself (Callahan 133), despite their partying as lovers of life and its music, avoid the Cotton Club and Harlem nightlife. They engage instead in sealed-off reveries of alcohol, music, and sex, seemingly oblivious to the African American origins of the cultural forms of expression that clearly marked American life in the 1920s. Nick Carraway's encounter with three African Americans traveling in a limousine driven by a white chauffeur takes place in what is essentially a liminal space, namely, the Queensboro Bridge connecting Long Island City with Manhattan, and then onward, across Blackwell's Island. Anything is possible in modern America, and Nick's anxiety is manifest as he contemplates new possibilities, namely, the existence of impostors such as Gatsby himself alongside African Americans with sufficient freedoms and resources to have white men in their service:

> A limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish negroes, two bucks and a girl. I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled toward us in haughty rivalry.
>
> "Anything can happen now that we've slid over this bridge," I thought; "anything at all …" Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder. (83)

These are all self-made Americans of the postwar twentieth century taking on new modes of expressive language in acts of self-reinvention designed to persuade the onlooker of their right to belong. Nick's nervous laughter here echoes his earlier, incredulous, repressed laughter when Gatsby likens his own youthful self-invention to that of a "young rajah" (79).

Gatsby's longing for the past is individualistic, not simply a desire to return to his life with Daisy but rather linked to his need to "recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered since then, but if he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was" (133).[8] His solipsistic desire for a version of a lost past in which he can bypass the social exclusions of his present in West Egg is at odds with African American notions of history as collective trauma. Toni Morrison works to unravel the past in order to avoid its repetition while Gatsby's idealized frontier history bypasses Morrison's and Ellison's interrogation of history as the complex and racialized slave past, one that America would rather forget. In her novel *Jazz* (1992) in which she attempts to "reclaim the era from F. Scott Fitzgerald" (interview with Hostetler 204), Morrison

conveys history as a jazz record, as vinyl with a crack in it, the scratch at which point history inevitably repeats itself, stuck in its temporal groove at the fissure from which time is unable to continue on its path. Yet, for Morrison, slavery need not be "an abused record with no choice but to repeat itself at the crack" (Jazz 220). The central motif for Morison is the original trauma of slavery, the source to which, as Ralph Ellison claims, African American musical expression constantly returns in an impulse to "keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience alive in one's aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it" (*Shadow and Act* 78).

Fitzgerald's appropriation of jazz is not, of course, without affection and yet, as the Black experience resonates with chaos in *Tender Is the Night*, so jazz can generally be located at moments of crisis throughout his work. For example, a band playing in the Plaza Hotel ballroom accompanies the calamitous party that foreshadows Myrtle's death and Daisy's rejection of Gatsby (153). In *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922), Anthony Patch hears "the confused harmonies of 'Jazz Mad' " (358) before his final breakdown.[9] Fitzgerald saw himself as the outsider, "half black Irish" (*Letters* 233), and his character Gatsby is unable to secure for himself all that is promised by the American dream. Instead, in comparison to the inherited wealth of Tom and Daisy Buchanan, Gatsby's new money is eclipsed by the old, his outsider status giving lie to the equalities that purportedly define American life.

Fitzgerald appropriates jazz, and the Black experience generally, problematically, and the performance of blackness in his explorations of the anxieties of the period is, as Michael North points out, "rebellion with racial ventriloquism" (9).[10] Toni Morrison writes on minstrelsy in terms of being a performative device by which Americans negotiated anxieties around race and she discusses the minstrel mask as a means for the transferral of such anxieties.[11] Fitzgerald himself made connections between technology, consumption, race, and sex and, in "Echoes of the Jazz Age," he dates the modernist sensibility manifested by this nexus of new excess from the May Day riots of 1919 to the crash of 1929. Listening to recordings of jazz music almost becomes an act of minstrelsy in itself, the appropriation of African American musical expression by which white America could come to know itself. Fitzgerald, again in "Echoes of the Jazz Age," invokes the illegal practice of the bootlegging of alcohol, the production of race records for domestic consumption, and illicit sexuality. He writes, "For a while bootleg Negro records with their phallic euphemisms made everything suggestive" (15). Fitzgerald's description of race records as "bootleg" recordings is an inadvertent slippage by which African American musical expression and the illegal production of alcohol are conjoined as both being unlawful practices. Race records were not, though, "bootlegs" in the strict sense of being manufactured as illegal copies of the real thing; any illicit nature would have to be ascribed to such recordings only once they were introduced into the white domestic scene. This paragraph, beginning with an allusion to sex and ending with execution by electric chair, is—in Fitzgerald's itinerary of celebrity, calamity, and death reminiscent of Nick Carraway's reflections on the fates of Gatsby's party guests as listed by himself in the margins of his railway timetable of 1922 (73)—the year Fitzgerald considered to be the pinnacle of the young generation ("Echoes of the Jazz Age" 11).

MODERNIST TECHNOLOGIES

Such appropriation of an African American cultural form as *the* expression of the American experience par excellence occurred under modernism via the new technologies of the

phonogram and film. Fitzgerald explored blackness in order to understand American identity and advance a new art form appropriate to the age. In "The Crack Up" he considers this medium to be, problematically, that of film rather than the novel and this feeds into the concerns that are central to his unfinished work *The Last Tycoon* (1941). We see there a British writer being given a writing lesson by the film producer Monroe Stahr, an early insight into how film could be the equal of novelistic literary expression. Stahr is, however, dependent on the judgment of the African American he encounters on the beach for a reconsideration of his art as a film maker (113). Emblematic of American experience, the encountered Black man in *The Last Tycoon* may be seen as again being analogous to Ralph Ellison's "little man at Chehaw station," the African American as the quintessential American with insight into the truth of American experience "offering or rejecting the work of art on the basis of what he feels to be its affirmation or distortion of American experience" (28). Stahr, after this encounter, discards four "trash" productions as they do not meet the criteria for artistic merit as set out by the Black man he meets at the beach (116).

In *Tender Is the Night*, the courtship of Dick and Nicole is conducted in the company of the phonograph, a machine for the articulation of their repressed selves in sublimation for the expression of what they cannot say to each other. Nicole ventriloquizes the Southern song. She is a "waif of disaster" who brings, through her American recordings, the whole continent to Dick in "thin tunes, holding lost times and future hopes in liaison" (156). She sings the old song of the silver dollar thereby conflating wealth and desire and the "essence of a continent" (157).[12] For Toni Morrison, and for Ralph Ellison, this essence is essentially African American in its modern delineations, the song at once slight and silly and yet profound, both a shallow commodified entertainment and the expression and manifestation of unspeakable desire. In their early correspondence, Nicole writes to Dick invoking a song about a Black child excluded from the company of white children, an outsider in isolation that she herself identifies with. This constitutes an allusion to her own suffering at the hands of her father, trauma that once more plays out against African American cultural expression projected here onto popular song as sublimation of the return of the repressed. Nicole's moments of psychological crisis that have their origin in her incestuous relationship with her father are articulated in racial terms. After the birth of her daughter, Topsy, Nicole's postnatal crisis is manifest in terms of her imagining her baby as being a Black child, the result of an imagined liaison with a Black man. Her imagined experience in Africa constitutes a delusional and paranoid breakdown that is a heavily racialized crisis of identity (185). Race becomes the metaphor for chaos and madness, the Africanist presence representative of nothing more or less than the fear of the unknown reaches of the modern mind. Nicole's breakdown when in Paris is ignited by a deathly Black presence, namely the corpse of Jules Peterson and the bloodied coverlet hurriedly transferred to her room. Dick, faced with Jules's death, manages the scene in filmic, farcical quick cut time. Again, chaos reigns and the Black body is central to the scene. Dick shifts rapidly to protect the film star Rosemary and her wholesome whiteness. By extension, he also works to maintain America, Fitzgerald here working through the infamous Fatty Arbuckle case that so scandalized the Hollywood film industry.

Nicole must be saved, as must Rosemary, as they are the purest of representations of America as consumerism, of all that America produces by its labor, white women as beneficiaries of sweat and toil. As Chris Messenger writes, "[w]hen Jules Peterson dies, Dick does not care, Rosemary is protected, and Nicole grieves for herself" (191). America

is in thrall to the woman who must, at all costs lest the world fall down, be maintained in ribbons and bows, as far away as possible from the Black presence lest it signals to her, should it encroach onto the sanctity of her skin:

> Nicole was the product of much ingenuity and toil. For her sake trains began their run at Chicago and traversed the round belly of the continent to California; chicle factories fumed and link belt screw link by link in factories; men mixed toothpaste in vats and drew mouthwash out of copper hogsheads; girls canned tomatoes quickly in August or worked rudely at the Five-and-Tens on Christmas Eve; half-breed Indians toiled on Brazilian coffee plantations and dreamers were muscled out of patent rights in new tractors—these were some of the people who gave a tithe to Nicole, and as the whole system swayed and thundered onward it lent a feverish bloom to such processes of hers as wholesale buying. (*Tender* 65–6)

Before the events in Paris, preceding that moment of crisis by which race threatens to overwhelm Rosemary and Dick, Rosemary's dalliance with him is described by Fitzgerald as "playing around with chaos" (120), chaos inscribed with Black blood and the threat of racial intermingling that is only narrowly averted, illicit desire transferred onto the dead body lying on Rosemary's coverlet.

American female identity is here implicated within a complex matrix whereby race is deployed as the backdrop against which incest is cast, the texture upon which female vulnerability is thrown into relief. Psychosexual dramas are transferred onto blackness as the Africanist presence is put to use as a distraction from the truthful confrontation of the complexities underlying American identity. The site of this scene, the city of Paris, throws the Americans into confusion brought by mistaken identity, alcohol, and face-to-face "entangling" with Black characters—interactions that result in wrongful arrest and the incarceration of Freeman, a Black restaurateur, within a French prison (122). These slapstick encounters are the tragic consequence of careless and disdainful individualism as exhibited by Americans abroad and represent the transposition of America's race relations into Europe. Dick, "as a psychologist," is invited to intervene in Abe North's predicament as a potentially interesting case, but chooses instead to smooth things over, thereby abstaining from any meaningful consideration of this complex interplay of race, sexuality, alcohol, and violence (113). By the end of *Tender Is the Night* Dick has affected Nicole's cure, successfully performing the task for which he is professionally qualified. Having now served his purpose, Nicole divorces him and marries Tommy Barban, not a Black man but, nevertheless, closely associated with blackness in his "depigmentation by unknown suns," a man "so dark as to have lost the pleasantness of deep tan, without attaining the blue beauty of Negroes" (302). Cured of her racial anxieties Nicole now has command over blackness and its potential as the source of psychological instability, and chaos is absorbed and tamed, not least by her wealth and status. Spent, and having given his benediction to those bathing below—"with a papal cross he blessed the beach" (351)—Dick finally finds himself adrift back in America and we are left to consider racial difference as the source of both malady and cure, of sin and its redemption.

Fitzgerald's explorations of American identity are assisted by excursions into blackness that rely upon readily available clichéd versions of the Black presence that are etched into the American psyche, a submerged presence that enables stability and order to exist at the surface of American life. Nicole's eventual serenity is dependent upon the repression of

the uncontrolled Black presence that must remain suppressed if the modernist machine is to be maintained, "link by link" (65). In this sense, this presence is, as Ellison writes,

> an image of the organised, irrational forces of American life, forces through which, by protecting them in forms of images of an easily dominated minority, the white individual seeks to be at home in the vast unknown world of America. Perhaps the object of the stereotype is not so much to crush the Negro as to console the white man (*Shadow and Act* 41).

Such consolation was found by Fitzgerald himself at the point of his own personal "crack-up," his realization that "all life is a process of breaking down" (39), "that the natural state of the sentient adult is a qualified unhappiness" (55). Any consolation to be had could only be found by Fitzgerald aligning himself with the lot of the African American in order to withstand the horror of this revelation, the truth of his "new dispensation" (56). He concludes "[a]nd just as the laughing stoicism which has enabled the American Negro to endure the intolerable conditions of his existence has cost him his sense of the truth—so in my case there is a price to pay" (56). Fitzgerald's discontent is coupled to his awareness of the African American experience as integral to the American imagination and its contemplations on democracy, freedom, and identity. This recognition, born of personal and professional duress is, in the words of Ellison, no less than "a reminder of the unfinished details of this powerful nation … a linguistic product of the American scene and language, and a manifestation of the idealistic action of the American Word as it goads its users toward a perfection of our revolutionary ideals" (Ellison, "The Little Man at Chehaw Station" 28).

NOTES

1 In his biography, *Scott Fitzgerald* (1962), Andrew Turnbull notes that shortly before publication of *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald suggested changing its title to *Under the Red, White, and Blue* (156).

2 In the first major sound movie, *The Jazz Singer* (1927), we see how race, or the adoption of race, through Al Jolson's blackface performance as a jazz singer becomes an experiment in forging a new American identity. Michael North argues, in *The Dialect of Modernism* (1994), that for the white rebel, "the very mask that makes this rebellion possible also guarantees that it will not go beyond mime. The blackface masquerade can give himself up to the insurrectionary rhythms of jazz and at the same time identify these with another race" (81–2).

3 Michael North notes that

> Stein and Picasso take the first steps into cubism and literary modernism by performing uncannily similar transformations on the figure of Gertrude Stein herself. Placing a painted mask over his naturalistic portrait [of Stein], Picasso duplicates the linguistic mask Stein was just devising for herself [in the Melanchthon section of Three Lives] … In each case, in painting and in literature, the step away from conventional verisimilitude into abstraction is accomplished by a figurative change of race (61).

4 Meredith Goldsmith, in a landmark essay, "White, Skin, White Mask," reads "Gatsby's mode of self-invention … against those of the protagonists of Harlem Renaissance and Americanization fiction of the late tens and twenties" (177).

5 Meredith Goldsmith, in her reading, claims that "Ellison correctly notes, but overstates, Fitzgerald's flattening of the eyewitness" (196).

6 In "The Crack-Up," Fitzgerald considers his outsider status as being that of a "peasant" excluded from the "leisure class," writing, "The man with the jingle of money in his pocket who married the girl a year later would always cherish an abiding distrust, an animosity, toward the leisure class—not the conviction of a revolutionist but the smouldering hatred of a peasant" (47).

7 Sinead Moynihan compares Daisy Buchanan's passing with that of Clare Kendry's in Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929). Moynihan believes that "Larsen's *Passing* makes so many allusions to Gatsby that the similarities cannot be coincidental" (41). For other comparisons of *Passing* with *The Great Gatsby*, see Charles Lewis and Shama Rangwala. Tom Phillips focuses on the character of Jordan Baker in *The Great Gatsby*, arguing that "an accumulation of detail marks her also as a person of color, presenting herself as white" (150).

8 For Adam Meehan, "Daisy is only an object-manifestation of Gatsby's deeper desire; because it is not Daisy, but a reconstituted version of *himself* that he seeks, Gatsby's dream inevitably 'fails' shortly after he and Daisy reunite" (84, emphasis in original).

9 Ruth Prigozy itemizes the seventy-one song titles and numerous song lyrics in Fitzgerald's work, noting that "to Fitzgerald, popular music meant emotion: the songs of this year or yesteryear had power to revive memories, recreate lost loves, reunite past and present feelings" (41).

10 Greg Forter, in his study of mourning and race provides a critique of Fitzgerald in relation to melancholia as being "the aesthetic means by which Fitzgerald transforms an incipient critique of modern (racial) capitalism and misogyny into a resigned capitulation to them" (25).

11 Morrison writes:

> [Minstrelsy's] obvious function was entertainment, but its less obvious one was masking and unmasking social problems … The form worked literally as, and only as, a black façade for whites: whites in blackface. The black mask permitted whites to say illegal, unorthodox, seditious, and sexually illicit things in public. In short, it was a kind of public pornography, the main theme of which was sexual rebellion, sexual license, poverty, and criminality. In short, all of the fears and ambivalences whites had that were otherwise hidden from public discourse could be articulated through the mouth of a black who was understood to be already outside the law and therefore serviceable. ("A Race in Mind" 37)

12 Brendan L. Shapiro notes that "[a]lthough she deploys black culture to amuse herself and her friends, the threat of actually *being* black—of physical contact with blackness—provokes Nicole's worst moments of psychological collapse" (156, emphasis in original).

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