

‘THE MELODY LINGERS ON’:  
DANCE, MUSIC, AND FILM IN  
F. SCOTT FITZGERALD’S SHORT FICTION

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Jade Adams  
School of English  
University of Leicester

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Jade Adams

**Abstract**

This thesis explores the role of 1920s and 1930s popular culture in the short stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald. My original contribution to knowledge is to show how Fitzgerald’s use of dance, music, and film - at the level of both form and content - impact upon his literary aesthetics. By situating Fitzgerald’s work in the context of the short story as a genre, I consider the modernist features of his short fiction in relation to short-story cycles by James Joyce, Sherwood Anderson, and Ernest Hemingway. I argue that Fitzgerald’s lyrical style can be deceptive, and his stories are often more experimental, even subversive, than often recognised. This thesis argues that it is in Fitzgerald’s subtle use of ambiguity and parody that these experimental aspects of his fiction often manifest themselves. Reading the short fiction with a view to elucidating this parodic mode, and thus exploring Fitzgerald’s social and cultural critique, we encounter Fitzgerald parodying both his own fictive traits and his earlier stories, which sheds new light on his frequently disdainful remarks about the value of his magazine fiction. As ambiguity and parody are key features of African American cultural practices of the period, the thesis also re-examines Fitzgerald’s engagement with primitivist modernism, offering a broader perspective on how he navigated between his roles as literary novelist and popular short-storyist. Popular cultural references in Fitzgerald’s short fiction do not simply serve as temporal markers or to provide scenic tone, but often function subversively, to destabilise our expectations of a commercial Fitzgerald story whilst sitting in tension with Fitzgerald’s lyrical prose style. Themes of disguise and identity are of paramount importance to Fitzgerald’s literary modernism, and his use of these cultural media, centred around the concept of performance and leisure, show Fitzgerald subtly subverting our expectations of his short fiction.

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## List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used to refer to Fitzgerald's short story collections and editions of his short stories and essays. These references will be incorporated into the text. All editions are from the Cambridge Edition of the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald, edited by James L. W. West III, unless otherwise specified. References to West's Introductions and critical apparatus will be incorporated into footnotes.

Note that the Cambridge editions of each of Fitzgerald's four collections (*Flappers and Philosophers*, *Tales of the Jazz Age*, *All the Sad Young Men*, and *Taps at Reveille*) contain 'Additional Stories' that are included in the volume but which did not appear in Fitzgerald's original selection for each volume. See Appendix A for Fitzgerald's original selections.

<i>ASM</i>	<i>All the Sad Young Men</i>
<i>BJG</i>	<i>The Basil, Josephine, and Gwen Stories</i>
<i>F&amp;P</i>	<i>Flappers and Philosophers</i>
<i>MLC</i>	<i>My Lost City: Personal Essays, 1920-1940</i>
<i>PWH1</i>	<i>The Price Was High, Volume 1 of the Last Uncollected Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald</i> ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli (London: Pan Books, 1979)
<i>PWH2</i>	<i>The Price Was High, Volume 2 of the Last Uncollected Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald</i> ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli (London: Pan Books, 1979)
<i>TAR</i>	<i>Taps at Reveille</i>
<i>TJA</i>	<i>Tales of the Jazz Age</i>
<i>TLD</i>	<i>The Lost Decade: Short Stories from 'Esquire', 1936-1941</i>



## Introduction

### **Not ‘a Sincere and Yet Radiant World’ but ‘Trashy Imaginings’: Representations of Popular Culture in Fitzgerald’s Short Fiction<sup>1</sup>**

Updating his editor, Max Perkins, about his progress on *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote, ‘So in my new novel I’m thrown directly on purely creative work - not trashy imaginings as in my stories but the sustained imagination of a sincere yet radiant world.’<sup>2</sup> Fitzgerald’s classification of his stories as ‘trash’ recurred throughout the course of his twenty-one-year professional career, but taking these comments at face value inevitably leads to a reductive reading of the complex interplay between art and commerce in Fitzgerald’s oeuvre. Fitzgerald resented having to pause his novel-writing efforts in order to earn cash from the magazines to which he sold his stories, but he was also proud of the high fees his work commanded, reaching his peak price, \$4,000 per story, at the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1929. Though often written out of financial need, Fitzgerald’s short fiction served vital purposes in his career: he built a brand with his early, effervescent flapper stories, and he began to use the medium to develop ideas and to workshop characters that were to appear in his novels, even exporting phrases from stories verbatim. From 1937 until his death in 1940, working in Hollywood, he experimented with the medium, adopting a distinctive terse style of writing and turning to a fragmentary short story form that reflected an intensifying exploration of the themes of alienation and loneliness.

Especially in his later years, when he struggled to sell stories to the magazines that had once paid him their highest fees, Fitzgerald spoke highly of his short-story writing career, acknowledging the hard work they required. Upon first reading, they can seem effortless, not betraying evidence of the revisions and re-revisions that were Fitzgerald’s trademark. There are problems, and weaknesses too, but these are mediated by his characteristically lyrical prose and render the most uneven story deserving of critical attention.

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<sup>1</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *A Life in Letters*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 67 [c. 10 April 1924].

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 67 [c. 10 April 1924].

Fitzgerald's reference to 'trashy imaginings' apparently shows him dismissing the popular culture that infused these short stories, despite the fact that it is this same vivid interpretation of popular culture which he uses to create his 'sustained imagination of a sincere and yet radiant world'. There is a complex and fragile interplay between Fitzgerald's short and long fiction, and this thesis will elucidate the value of examining the 'trash' in order to show how three major popular cultural leisure pursuits of the interwar period - jazz music, dance, and film - impacted upon Fitzgerald's literary aesthetics. In his integration of these media into his short fiction, we can trace a recurring ambivalence towards them: Fitzgerald is torn between embracing these modern leisure pursuits and rejecting them on account of their hedonism. This ambivalent response to modernity can be elucidated through readings of his invocations of music, dance, and film as parodic. Often, Fitzgerald presents the enticing glamour and (inherent) moral vacancy of these pursuits simultaneously, and this tension manifests itself, for example, in his exaggerated portrayals of jazz performers, his satirical treatment of those 'reformers' opposed to the proliferation of jazz expression in its many guises, and in the complex and shifting parody of the flapper figure that pervades his fiction, especially in the 1920s.

Fitzgerald's relationship with the popular culture of the 1920s and 1930s was not dissimilar from his relationship with the genre of short fiction: he was alternately dismissive of it and excited by it. In the modern dances that led to rising hemlines, and new degrees of publicly-displayed corporeal intimacy, Fitzgerald simultaneously saw progress and moral decay. Jazz music, its near-ubiquitous syncopation punctuating daily life, seemed to Fitzgerald both quintessentially native and resolutely foreign. His ambivalence reaches its apex in his intellectual and artistic assessments of the film industry, which seemed to him to embody the best and worst of American cultural practice, but which he believed had the potential to be 'a more glittering, a grosser power' than the novel (*MLC*, p. 148). This ambivalence has not been fully accounted for in Fitzgerald studies, being re-named 'double vision' and often accepted as a given. Five years after Fitzgerald's death, Malcolm Cowley originated the term 'double vision' to describe how Fitzgerald 'surrounded his characters with a mist of admiration and simultaneously he drove the mist away'.<sup>3</sup> Identified by leading Fitzgerald scholar

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<sup>3</sup> Malcolm Cowley, 'Third Act and Epilogue', in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Arthur Mizener (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 64-69 (p. 66). This essay originally appeared in *The New Yorker* (30 June 1945).

Jackson R. Bryer as being amongst the earliest and ‘best serious critical essays’ about Fitzgerald’s work, Cowley’s conception of this ‘double vision’ denotes Fitzgerald’s ability to simultaneously function as an observer and a participant, which stemmed from a deep-seated insecurity about being ‘a poor boy in a rich man’s club at Princeton’.<sup>4</sup> John Kuehl asserts that ‘it was the author’s ability to participate in his fiction and at the same time to stand aside and analyze that participation that gave his work maturity and power’.<sup>5</sup> Nowhere is this duality more present than in Fitzgerald’s representation of the leisure pursuits of the interwar social worlds he inhabited, the three foremost among them being dance, music, and film.

The representations of these popular cultural forms in the ‘trashy imaginings’ of Fitzgerald’s short fiction tell us more than what he thought of the Charleston, of ‘Cheek to Cheek’, and of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921): they encapsulate Fitzgerald’s racially and sexually coded response to modernity itself, a response which permeated deeply into his literary aesthetics of both novel- and story-writing. The following extract from ‘Myra Meets His Family’ (1920), shows how Fitzgerald’s work is infused with the popular culture of his day:

As she sang a spirit of ironic humor slowly took possession of her - a desire to give them all a run for their money. And she did. She injected an East Side snarl into every word of slang; she ragged; she shimmied; she did a tickle-toe step she had learned once in an amateur musical comedy; and in a burst of inspiration finished up in an Al Jolson position, on her knees with her arms stretched out to her audience in syncopated appeal (*F&P*, p. 244).

The ‘East Side snarl’ with which Myra enunciates her slang words references ‘the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where working-class immigrants lived’ and Al Jolson, a famous Lithuanian immigrant himself, had recorded his signature song, ‘Swanee’, in

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<sup>4</sup> Jackson R. Bryer, ‘The Critical Reputation of F. Scott Fitzgerald’, in *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Ruth Prigozy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 209-34 (p. 211); Letter from Fitzgerald to Anne Ober, in *A Life in Letters*, p. 352 [4 March 1938].

<sup>5</sup> John Kuehl, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Study of the Short Fiction* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), p. 152.

January 1920, just two months before 'Myra' was published.<sup>6</sup> Myra's familiarity with dance steps like the Tickle Toe show her engagement with musical theatre, this particular step having featured in the 1918 musical comedy, *Going Up*. Her Shimmy shows an engagement with the very latest dances, as the Shimmy had been introduced to white New Yorkers for the first time in 1919, despite having existed in African-American communities for much longer.<sup>7</sup> The 'spirit of ironic humor' that Myra is possessed by is apt: it undermines the 'burst[s] of inspiration' she experiences as she presents her jazzy repertoire, rendering readers somewhat confused and perhaps reluctant to respond to her performance - in other words, mirroring the reaction of her audience in the story. Kuehl regards irony as a method by which Fitzgerald can mediate his 'double vision' and protect it from rendering his work contradictory: 'This personal ambivalence or double-mindedness is kept under control by irony, Fitzgerald's means of achieving distance in third-person narratives.'<sup>8</sup> Here, the irony becomes a feature of Myra's performance - she is giving her audience what they requested, regardless of their reactions. This results in an enthralling one-woman vaudeville show in microcosm.

Nearly a century later, we are still intrigued by this wave of popular culture that came to prominence after World War I, and have canonised Fitzgerald as a representative of it.<sup>9</sup> His reputation is inseparable from the excesses and hedonistic pursuits of 'the roaring twenties', a double-edged accolade never afforded to his American and European contemporaries such as Ernest Hemingway or James Joyce.<sup>10</sup> Yet, as much as we identify Fitzgerald with the 'Jazz Age', he is also a permanent feature of western culture nearly a hundred years later. In Ruth Prigozy's words, the celebrity of Scott and his wife, Zelda Fitzgerald, is 'indissolubly tied to [present day]

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<sup>6</sup> James L. W. West III, 'Explanatory Notes', *Flappers and Philosophers*, ed. by James L. W. West III, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1920] 2012), pp. 351-80 (p. 373).

<sup>7</sup> See Lewis Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1981, repr. 1984), pp. 149-50.

<sup>8</sup> Kuehl, p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> See Ruth Prigozy, 'F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald in American Popular Culture', in *Zelda & Scott/Scott & Zelda: New Writings on Their Works, Lives and Times*, ed. by Donald R. Noble (Albany, NY: Whitston Publishing, 2005), pp. 63-91.

<sup>10</sup> Note that in present-day popular culture, Fitzgerald is associated much more strongly with the 1920s than with the 1930s, which was a decade that encompassed personal and national despair and financial peril, including the lukewarm reception of *Tender is the Night* (that had gestated for nine years), but also remunerative employment and periodic contentment in Hollywood, where he lived with columnist Sheila Graham.

American popular culture'.<sup>11</sup> Whether it is because Fitzgerald was writing at the dawn of modernity, with a savvy eye on self-publicity, or because we see parallels between the financial crises of our own age and the boom and bust of the 1920s and 30s, or perhaps simply because of the sheer quality of his writing, Fitzgerald is a prominent fixture in our contemporary popular culture. This thesis will examine how the popular culture of Fitzgerald's own time impacted on and, in turn, was inflected by his literary aesthetics.

An examination of Fitzgerald's short stories, of which there are 178, yields perceptive insight into the historical complexion of the United States of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>12</sup> Fitzgerald's influence as a cultural commentator created a reciprocal relationship between the stories and the times, and this thesis argues that popular cultural forms informed Fitzgerald's literary aesthetics to a greater degree than has been previously acknowledged. Through an analysis of popular music of the 1920s and 1930s, the dances that were popular during this time, and the growing maturity of the film industry with its transition from silent to sound, we can re-examine the stories and deepen our understanding of the work for which Fitzgerald was best known in his own lifetime. By examining the popular cultural forms of dance, music, and film, I will recontextualize certain stories from Fitzgerald's oeuvre and elucidate how Fitzgerald's popular culture references are racially and sexually coded to be, perhaps paradoxically, both representative of and atypical of his times.

I have chosen to focus on the three related popular cultural forms of dance, music, and film because Fitzgerald's career spans two decades in which there was a great upheaval of cultural values, and in these three artistic forms we can witness responses to these changes. The interwar period bears witness to a national debate about leisure and its purpose in society, and the widening chasm between popular culture and so-called 'high' culture - a distinction which I will address later in this chapter. Contemporary criticisms of jazz music and dance reflected 'anxieties about rapid and monumental cultural changes,' whilst the rise of celebrity as a cultural currency consolidated ideas around the importance placed upon social success, and fortified the

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<sup>11</sup> Prigozy, 'F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald in American Popular Culture', in *Zelda & Scott*, ed. by Noble, pp. 63-91 (p. 63).

<sup>12</sup> This figure includes all published and unpublished stories, and includes several pieces that are sometimes considered to be essays. It includes posthumously published stories as well as those sharing a joint byline between Scott and his wife Zelda Fitzgerald. Jackson Bryer counts 178 in the Appendix of *The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald: New Approaches in Criticism* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982).

idolisation of youth.<sup>13</sup> As Paula S. Fass has demonstrated, the early 1920s heralded the ascendancy of youth culture for the first time. Young America was listening to jazz, dancing new dances, many of which had emerged from African American culture and were enthusiastically adopted by African Americans and white Americans alike, and people of all ages were watching (and, by 1927, listening to) motion pictures, that celebrated innovation whilst revolutionising social and cultural life.<sup>14</sup>

To examine how popular culture impacted on Fitzgerald's literary aesthetics in his short fiction, this introduction will explore several strands of his dynamic response to modernity. Firstly, I explore complementary socio-historical contexts for Fitzgerald's work, including the Depression, the emergence of cultural hierarchies, and the centrality of disguise to interwar culture. Next, in analysing Fitzgerald's engagement with popular culture, I consider the racial coding of Fitzgerald's popular cultural allusions, and introduce how they are related to Fitzgerald's ongoing conflicts of self-perception, as a commercial short storyist nursing deep-seated ambitions for critical acclaim. I provide a brief review of the existing criticism on the topics of leisure and parody in Fitzgerald's short fiction, before outlining the content of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

## **I. Socio-historical Contexts**

There is a natural midpoint in Fitzgerald's two-decade career: the Wall Street Crash of October 1929. The Fitzgeralds' finances did not suffer directly, but Fitzgerald's career (and indeed his posthumous reputation) was deeply affected by his widespread association with the years of excess he so glamorously depicted: 'Fitzgerald came to symbolise the excesses of the boom decade. The Twenties had spoiled and rewarded him. The Thirties would disparage him.'<sup>15</sup> Fitzgerald's own personal crash began with Zelda's deteriorating mental state and hospitalisation in Spring 1930, and continued until the mid-thirties, his self-assessment of his 'Crack-Up' published in early 1936. As Prigozy identifies, 'the parallels between his life and American history continued with

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<sup>13</sup> Kristin K. Henson, *Beyond the Sound Barrier: The Jazz Controversy in Twentieth-Century American Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> See Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

<sup>15</sup> Matthew J. Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. edn (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), p. 286.

the national recovery and the author's artistic renewal, but Fitzgerald's physical resources were depleted and he died with his new novel [*The Last Tycoon*] incomplete and his fame far in the future'.<sup>16</sup> In terms of this 'national [...] and artistic renewal', it is tempting to interpret Fitzgerald's more moralistic depictions of modern vices leading up to the Crash as warnings (especially if we focus on his much-quoted 1931 essay 'Echoes of the Jazz Age'), but the reality was more complex than this reading suggests. Despite Fitzgerald's personal life being especially fraught in the period between 1929 and 1936, stories like 'The Bridal Party' (1930) show a sense of optimism in the wake of the Crash. However, such depictions of wealthy American expatriates did not sit well with all of Fitzgerald's large reading public: the conservative, commercial magazine, the *Saturday Evening Post*, had an audience of approximately 2.5 million people in the mid-1920s. Fitzgerald himself acknowledged, in an abandoned preface to his final collection of short stories which were composed between 1927 and 1935, 'Before the last of these stories were written the world that they represented passed' (*TAR*, p. 402).<sup>17</sup> Fitzgerald's unique combination of qualifications for writing about the pre- and post-Crash worlds are manifold: he is writing from the perspective of someone who has lived in the United States and in Europe, viewing problems at home with the unique perspective of an expat; by 1929 he had been both very wealthy and had struggled to pay his bills; his constant geographical transit, even within the United States, gave him an insight into multiple areas of the country, East and West; and his role on the proscenium of public life, as a celebrity author who saw his books fall out of print in his lifetime gave him a privileged insight into this seven-year transitional period.

Only six months after writing 'The Bridal Party', Fitzgerald wrote another story that gives a different reading of life in the Depression, 'The Hotel Child' (1931), in which he addresses:

the erosion of old values, the gulf that had arisen between the generations during the boom, the new morality which appeared to lack definition or recognizable goals and he felt was reflected in the activities of corrupt and rootless Americans, sycophants of a decadent European aristocracy.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ruth Prigozy, 'Fitzgerald's Short Stories and the Depression: An Artistic Crisis', in *New Approaches*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 111-26 (p. 111).

<sup>17</sup> This Preface was composed in December 1934.

<sup>18</sup> Prigozy, 'Fitzgerald's Short Stories', in *New Approaches* ed. by Bryer, pp. 111-26 (p. 117).

A satire, ‘The Hotel Child’ complicates a simple reading of Fitzgerald’s work pre- and post-October 1929, in its meditation on the differences between Americans and Europeans. Set in Lausanne, ‘the continually sagging American stock exchange’ is cited as the reason ‘so many hotels [were] begging to be filled (*TAR*, p. 290), and although the Schwartz family are still prosperous in the wake of the Crash, they find themselves surrounded by and preyed upon by bogus and impecunious aristocrats, and rejected by their fellow Americans. Fifi’s naïveté and innocence initially assure a sympathetic interpretation of her character, but as the story unfolds, she is increasingly associated with what Thorstein Veblen coined as ‘conspicuous consumption’, especially of the sartorial variety.<sup>19</sup> At the story’s conclusion, ‘as [Fifi] went out looking for completion under the impression that she was going to the *couturier*,’ her status as distinct from the ‘corrupt and rootless Americans’ is somewhat undermined (*TAR*, p. 309). Other stories Fitzgerald wrote in this period, also depicting expatriates, such as ‘One Trip Abroad’ (1930) and ‘Indecision’ (1931), feature expats blithely continuing about their business, either ignorant of or unmoved by the plight of their compatriots. After October 1929, Fitzgerald’s depictions of the wealthy, and especially the expatriated wealthy had a new and contentious cultural resonance given that the very legitimacy of leisure itself as a pursuit was now being debated at home, while Fitzgerald spent the period of the Crash living in Europe.<sup>20</sup>

Susan Currell analyses how the discussion of the ‘new “problem of leisure”’ during the Depression led to leisure becoming ‘a battleground for widespread ambivalence about technology, social change, economic change, and new social habits, as well as a domain in which older ideas about individuality and democracy could be mediated or challenged’. The majority of Fitzgerald’s stories were written between 1920 and 1933 and were marketed to widely-circulating magazines, and, in as much as they frequently depict members of the leisured class – as well as middle- and working-class citizens partaking in leisure activities – we can read them in Currell’s terms, as ‘narratives of crisis that can be fruitfully dissected to reveal the class, race, and gender

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<sup>19</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, ed. by Martha Banta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 49-69.

<sup>20</sup> The Fitzgeralds lived in France and Switzerland between March 1929 and September 1931; following her breakdown in April 1930, Zelda was treated in a clinic near Paris, before discharging herself eighteen days later. She was readmitted to a clinic near Montreux, Switzerland, and promptly transferred to Rives de Prangins, near Nyon, where she remained for fifteen months.



discourses contained within them'.<sup>21</sup> Far from being frivolous ephemeral pastimes, the popular cultural forms that this thesis examines provide insight into perceptions of national identity in this period, as well as responses to modernity and the mechanisation of culture.

Felicia McCarren's work on dance and its relationship with mechanisation, especially following Taylorist principles of minimum gesture and maximum productivity, is a fruitful way of exploring how new industrial practices of streamlining had analogues in, and in turn influenced, modern dance. Frederick Winslow Taylor's influential 1911 book, *Principles of Scientific Management*, adopted a scientific approach to improving efficiency and productivity in the workplace, and thus sought to refine processes to the minimum gesture that retained maximum efficiency.<sup>22</sup> The often tense relationship between movement and machines, McCarren argues, culminated in the creation of the cinematograph, which 'would seem to return to dance its mechanical, time-transcending, perpetual movement while promising to safeguard the anti-mechanical naturalness of dancing'.<sup>23</sup> We can see, in turn, how these social and economic pressures exert influence over a range of Fitzgerald's characters.

In effect, when Myra does the 'Shimmy' in 'Myra Meets His Family' (as described in the passage above on p. 3) – that is to say, when she shakes her shoulders and chest without moving any other part of her body – she is enacting Taylorist-Fordist principles by distilling movement to one gesture: we can read her Shimmy as either 'a minimalist machine aesthetic or a parody of mechanistic madness'.<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere in Fitzgerald's oeuvre, the Shimmy is associated with a heightened sense or display of sexuality, such as when Marcia Meadows in 'Head and Shoulders' (1920) 'did a shaky, shivery, celebrated dance' that provoked 'remarks about [her] bosom' from the audience, causing her to 'blush fiery red' (*F&P*, p. 62, pp. 69-70). Also, in 'Benediction' (1920), Lois declines one of the seminarians' requests to 'show us what the shimmy is' on the basis that 'the Father Rector would send me shimmying out the gate' (*F&P*, p. 144). Both examples show a strange cohabitation of minimum

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<sup>21</sup> Susan Currell, *The March of Spare Time: The Problem and Promise of Leisure in the Great Depression* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> For an analysis of Taylor's impact on American culture, see Martha Banta, *Taylorized Lives: Narrative Productions in the Age of Taylor, Veblen, and Ford* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> Felicia McCarren, *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 20.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

movement with maximum impact. Although both Gilda Gray and Mae West took credit for its invention, the Shimmy had in fact existed ‘as a staple of black dance routines for more than a century’ before it made it onto the New York stage in the early 1920s.<sup>25</sup> As with many new dances of the 1920s, it was considered risqué, and even faced various bans voted for by dancing masters across Europe and the United States, as dramatised in the film *Stop That Shimmie!* (1920). In August 1919, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported on proceedings at a convention of dancing masters: ‘One of the prime objects [...] is to strike a blow at the shimmie and other dances of that ilk [...] Since the members of these associations have steadily been opposed to vulgar or suggestive dances.’<sup>26</sup>

Myra’s performance is also consistent with a major feature of 1920s self-presentation: theatrical identity. The story calls to mind Kirk Curnutt’s assessment of what he calls ‘performative personality’:

Identity in the 1920s assumed an unprecedented performative dimension [...] What flappers were ‘performing,’ of course, was an unabashed embrace of their sexuality. [...] As much as Fitzgerald celebrated performative personality, he also cautioned against the identity confusion arising from its theatricality.<sup>27</sup>

Whilst many scholars have identified the repeated presence of performance in Fitzgerald’s short fiction, this is seldom related in detail to the popular culture of the 1920s and 1930s themselves. One of the central aims of this thesis is to situate Fitzgerald’s engagement with performative identity in the context of the popular culture of his time, in which performance, in all its guises, was almost ubiquitous. Myra’s performance is one of multiple performances in the story, which is full of actors and disguise. Beyond demonstrating that she is a good sport for having the song performance unexpectedly thrust upon her and going through with it anyway, Myra’s performance of the song ‘Wave That Wishbone’ presents her as a character who is able to take on personae, and to switch between roles easily. This raises questions about who the real Myra is, and also how genuine she is, in a story that is built on the suspicion of whether or not she is a fortune hunter. She is introduced as a kind of archetypal figure:

<sup>25</sup> Ian Driver, *A Century of Dance* (London: Hamlyn, 2000), p. 38.

<sup>26</sup> “‘Ware Shimmie! Dancing Masters Are After You!’, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 26 August 1919, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Kirk Curnutt, *The Cambridge Introduction to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 31-33.

one of 'the Myras', who 'live on the Eastern colleges, as kittens live on warm milk' (*F&P*, p. 229). Fitzgerald describes her life as a progression of predictable actions, from attending Ivy League proms, to taking a suite at the Biltmore where 'invariably she has a somnolent mother sharing a suite with her' (*F&P*, p. 229). Having introduced the exemplar, Fitzgerald sees fit to introduce 'the particular Myra', Myra Harper, by giving her 'a paragraph of history'. In a playful authorial interjection that draws our attention to the literariness and therefore mimetic function of the story (another type of performance), he adds that 'I will get it over with as swiftly as possible' (*F&P*, p. 229). It is apparently difficult for Fitzgerald to begin to explain the real Myra, as he seems to feel that she expresses herself more effectively through the roles she plays, both wittingly and unwittingly.

Ironically, the people in the audience of Myra's impromptu recital are also actors as she has been tricked, but Myra has the last laugh, participating in a fake wedding and then surreptitiously deserting her 'husband' on a train heading to their 'honeymoon'. It is a twist ending that has frustrated some critics whilst being celebrated by others.<sup>28</sup> It is only through performative personality that Myra gains the self-understanding she needs to realise that she does not want to marry Knowleton Whitney, despite his wealth and her advancing years (she has reached the grand old age of 21), revealing herself - through layered role-playing - not to be a fortune-hunter after all. The twist ending recurs throughout much of Fitzgerald's early fiction, especially when the trick involves a beautiful young woman. In many of Fitzgerald's stories based around disguise motifs, the expression of the authentic self through role-playing leads to crisis. To take three examples: Bernice's performance and scripted interactions with her peers results in an act of destruction and Bernice fleeing the scene in 'Bernice Bobs Her Hair' (1920); Betty's having been tricked into marriage in 'The Camel's Back' (1920) provides her with great anxiety, only assuaged by being tricked into marriage again ("Don't say 'dear girl' to me!" Save that for your real wife if you ever get one after this

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, John A. Higgins' interpretation of 'Myra' as a 'mildly enjoyable [...] farce' despite its 'structural difficulties', reading Myra herself as a '*femme fatale*' in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Study of the Stories* (Jamaica, NY: St. John's University Press, 1971), p. 20. Ruth Prigozy, by contrast, finds the plot 'ingenious', while Kirk Curnutt reads the ending as a justified but failed attempt to 'resolve the inequities between men and women' that earns Myra our sympathy. See Ruth Prigozy, 'Fitzgerald's Flappers and Flapper Films of the Jazz Age: Behind the Morality', in *A Historical Guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Kirk Curnutt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 129-61 (p. 139); and Curnutt, *Introduction to Fitzgerald*, p. 85.

disgraceful performance' [*TOTJA*, p. 58]); and Van Tyne in 'The Unspeakable Egg' (1924) becoming so carried away by his impersonation of a wildly uncivilised man that he loses control of himself momentarily, throwing sand in the faces of the heroine's two concerned aunts.

As we will see, disguise in the 1920s is a broad concept that affects numerous areas of life. As Irving Berlin's 1919 song admonishes, 'You Cannot Make Your Shimmy Shake on Tea', and the prohibition of alcohol brought with it a culture of disguise and concealment that had social and political repercussions.<sup>29</sup> The Wilson Administration hoped that the Eighteenth Amendment of January 1920, known as the Volstead Act, would reignite an apparently 'American' work ethic, strongly associated with Protestantism, in the face of the perceived influx of (mainly Catholic) immigrants, whose cultural imports included the tendency to spend more time socialising in public places like the saloon. Contrary to this stated aim of assimilating immigrants into the productive and sober American workforce, Prohibition actually resulted in the pervasive undermining of legitimate businesses, many of whom established clandestine speakeasies in their basements and back rooms, and welcomed both men and women (who rarely patronised saloons in the 1910s) to imbibe contraband liquor. The speakeasy, along with the cabaret and nightclub, functioned as 'sites of opposition' according to Linda De Roche, who saw the patrons as citizens 'determined to resist government attempts to define morality and impinge on personal freedoms'.<sup>30</sup> The Volstead Act, born as an act of apparent patriotism, in fact resulted in widespread rebellion, with otherwise law-abiding citizens flouting the law and imbibing alcohol.

Such subversion had to be disguised rather than overt in light of the government's paranoia about insurrection and radicals. Whereas the hardline response to Prohibition violation was unenforceable, the Wilson Administration's response to the 'Red Scare' of 1920 to 1921 was disproportionate in its force. Fearing repercussions owing to the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the potential for revolutionaries in Germany and Hungary to inspire similar uprisings in the US, Wilson's Attorney General saw to it that 'Political prisoners went behind bars by the thousands. Some of

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<sup>29</sup> This song was featured in the 1919 *Ziegfeld Follies* and was one of three Berlin songs chosen to appear in a 'semi-symphonic arrangement' at Paul Whiteman's 1924 Aeolian Hall concert. See *The Complete Lyrics of Irving Berlin*, ed. by Robert Kimball and Linda Emmett (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), pp. 186-87.

<sup>30</sup> Linda De Roche, 'Prohibition in the Age of Jazz', in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Bryant Mangum (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 205-14 (p. 210).

the smaller newspapers were shut down for publishing items deemed to be critical of the regime'.<sup>31</sup> Fitzgerald dramatises this climate in his 1920 novelette 'May Day', describing what he calls 'the general hysteria of that Spring which inaugurated the Age of Jazz' (*TJA*, p. 6). Violent raids on suspected radicals contributed to a growing sense of unrest, in part due to the 'Red Summer' of 1919 which had seen African Americans killed and injured in the United States, soon after hundreds of thousands of African American troops had served on the Western Front, in both support and combat roles.

In 1920, the Italian-born anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were arrested and charged with robbery and murder. Fitzgerald described how 'it was characteristic of the Jazz Age that it had no interest in politics at all' and how 'our idealism only flared up when the newspapers made melodrama out of such stories as Harding and the Ohio Gang or Sacco and Vanzetti' (*MLC*, p. 130). Currell identifies how their 1927 execution 'became a symbol of civil and political repression throughout the decade and into the 1930s,' and indeed, their case emphasised how imperative disguise was in the expression of subversive actions or ideologies.<sup>32</sup> From secreting gin in teacups to evade prohibition laws to performers in blackface makeup, and from immigrants Anglicising their names to the millions of Ku Klux Klan members (many of whom wore masks and hoods), conspicuous disguise was rife.<sup>33</sup>

When Myra lands in 'an Al Jolson position', she is drawing upon shared popular knowledge of Jolson's signature move at the end of a performance, iconically captured on film in *The Jazz Singer* (1927; see Figure 1). Jolson, born Asa Yoelson, famously appears in blackface in the film, a practice that obviously calls upon its historical use in minstrelsy to bring its complex significations into play. Myra's reference to Jolson, the Shimmy, and her 'East-side snarl' all contribute to the richness of her performance, but these references also serve to demonstrate the palimpsest of past and present in the era. Even in the most modern of pursuits, like Al Jolson's crowd-pleasing song and dance routines, or the Shimmy's scandalous quivering, the American cultural practice of minstrelsy, and therefore by association, slavery, sit just below the surface, latent

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<sup>31</sup> Paul Sann, *The Lawless Decade: A Pictorial History of a Great American Transition: From the World War I Armistice and Prohibition to Repeal and the New Deal* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1957; repr. Mineola: Dover Publications, 2010), p. 29.

<sup>32</sup> Susan Currell, *American Culture in the 1920s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Ann Douglas places the membership of the Ku Klux Klan at between two to five million during the 1920s. See *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (London: Picador, 1996), p. 315.

**Figure 1** Al Jolson performs in blackface in *The Jazz Singer* (1927)  
reminders of American entertainment's complex issues of authorship, ownership, and cultural inheritance.

Lawrence Levine reminds us that culture does not exist in a vacuum, and is constantly in flux, with intertextualities abounding: 'Culture is a process not a fixed condition; it is the product of unremitting interaction between the past and the present.'<sup>34</sup> This thesis proceeds from the same viewpoint. By the time of Fitzgerald's birth in 1896, there was an increasing gap between amateurism and professionalism that was a contributing factor to the growing manifestation of a chasm between popular and so-called 'high' culture. Over the first two decades of his lifetime, this chasm continued its growth, feeding off racially-inflected (and from today's perspective, outright racist) ideas about perceived 'civilisation' that were being debated in relation to the influx of immigrants bringing different and seemingly strange cultural practices into American cities.

The debate about cultural hierarchy also invoked the rise of mechanisation and mass-production, a topic that the German cultural critic Walter Benjamin famously theorised in his 1936 essay, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. He used the word 'aura' as a shorthand for the transcendent power innate in works of

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<sup>34</sup> Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (London: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 33.

art, which he finds to have been compromised in the ‘Age of Mechanical Reproduction,’ the authenticity of ‘aura’ devalued, and undermined by the availability of representations of the originals. Benjamin’s thoughts on how the ‘masses’ consume art are relevant here:

Reproductive technology, we might say in general terms, removes the thing reproduced from the realm of tradition. In making many copies of the reproduction, it substitutes for its unique incidence a multiplicity of incidences. And in allowing the reproduction to come closer to whatever situation the person apprehending it is in, it actualizes what is reproduced. [...] ‘Getting closer to things’ in both spatial and human terms is every bit as passionate a concern of today’s masses as their tendency to surmount the uniqueness of each circumstance by seeing it in reproduction.<sup>35</sup>

Conceiving of the ‘masses’ as seeking to ‘absorb’ and ‘receive’ the work of art rather than actively engaging with and interpreting it as befitting something of inherent value, Fitzgerald’s stories that were printed in mass-produced magazines (marketed to the middle classes) and featured characters who appreciate and consume songs, dances and films voraciously, would undoubtedly have provided Benjamin with fertile ground for analysis. Benjamin acknowledges that film’s response to the death of the aura was to engineer the rise of ‘the cult of stardom’.<sup>36</sup>

The circumtextual frames of magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post*, along with industry-focused magazines, such as *Variety* and *Photoplay*, fed this nascent celebrity culture. The *Saturday Evening Post* was a widely circulating publication that specialised in delivering to the American public what Jan Cohn has described as ‘an image, an idea, a construct of America [...] a model against which they could shape their lives’.<sup>37</sup> This model included a mixture of fiction and non-fiction articles, its glossy pages heavily punctuated by advertisements, which also contributed to the aspirational model. During the period between 1920 and 1937, Fitzgerald placed sixty-six stories in the *Saturday Evening Post*, which had a circulation of over 2.5 million in

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<sup>35</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. by J. A. Underwood (London: Penguin, [1936] 2008), p. 7, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33, p. 21.

<sup>37</sup> Jan Cohn, *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the ‘Saturday Evening Post’*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), p. 5.

the 1920s. By 1929, he was paid \$4,000 per story, and his name regularly appeared on the cover, but his success as a short storyist failed to translate into book sales, because his magazine and book audiences were, in the main part, discrete, as Matthew Bruccoli has identified.<sup>38</sup> Bryer has characterised the *Post* as ‘a middle-class low-brow periodical that demanded artistic compromises of its authors’ which firstly invites an investigation into what those artistic compromises were, at the same time as echoing Fitzgerald’s often quoted misgivings about being known as a *Post* man.<sup>39</sup> In a letter to Zelda of October 1940, he worried that ‘the nine years that intervened between the *Great Gatsby* and *Tender* hurt my reputation almost beyond repair because a whole generation grew up in the meanwhile to whom I was only a writer of *Post* stories’.<sup>40</sup> Yet Fitzgerald also went to great lengths in his personal correspondence to emphasise the amount of work these stories required, as is discussed in further detail in Chapter One. The very fact that Fitzgerald wrote in a medium that polarised opinion on the hierarchy of popular and ‘high-brow’ artistic endeavour, in a form that was both criticised as formulaic and heralded as an ideal vessel for exploring modernist themes is fascinating in itself. But the fact that he chose to write about popular cultural forms in these stories invites serious critical attention that has hitherto been underexplored.

In his exploration of this cultural hierarchy, Levine echoes Gilbert Seldes in lamenting that:

Too many of those who considered themselves educated and cultured lost for a significant period - and many still have not regained - their ability to discriminate independently, to sort things out for themselves and understand that simply because a form of expressive culture was widely accessible and highly popular it was not therefore necessarily devoid of any redeeming value or artistic merit.<sup>41</sup>

Yet the purpose of this thesis is not a solely revisionist one: whilst the stories do deserve to be judged on their own individual merits rather than being dismissed as potboilers,

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<sup>38</sup> *The Price Was High: The Last Uncollected Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli, 2 vols (London: Pan Books Ltd, 1981), I, p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> Jackson R. Bryer, ‘Introduction’, in *New Essays on F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Neglected Stories*, ed. by Jackson R. Bryer (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996), pp. 1-6 (p. 2).

<sup>40</sup> *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. by Jackson R. Bryer and Cathy W. Barks (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), p. 370 [11 October 1940].

<sup>41</sup> Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, p. 232-33.



rough sketches for his novels, or merely formulaic magazine stories, this thesis is concerned with how the stories manifest Fitzgerald's subtle tendency towards literary experimentation. Riddled with parody, ambiguities, and narrative experiments, Fitzgerald consistently uses songs, music, dances, and film references to subvert our expectations of his lyrical style, and the conventions of the magazine short story itself, such as when, at the end of 'The Offshore Pirate' (1920), the heroine Ardita is described 'reaching up on her tiptoes [and] kissing [Curtis] softly in the illustration' (*F&P*, p. 35). Fitzgerald is also a fan of playful narratorial interjections, regularly breaking the fourth wall and addressing the reader directly, as in 'Porcelain and Pink' (1920), in which the narrator playfully enquires, 'You begin to suspect the plot?' (*TJA*, p. 115).

Although in recent decades there has been a concerted effort to encourage academics to attend more critically to Fitzgerald's short fiction, there is still much work to be done on elucidating the significance of his work in the medium. This thesis, concerned as it is with popular cultural forms, contends that short magazine fiction provides a rewarding lens through which to examine contemporary contexts. Short magazine fiction also allows us to address the question of how cultural media function as models of identity for consumers and to explore how Fitzgerald uses some aspects of these popular cultural forms in slightly different ways in his short fiction compared to their treatment in his novels. Of the three areas this thesis considers, the short fiction has been given most critical attention in the arena of film, followed by a relative lack of criticism in the fields of dance and music. Anthony Berret in particular has sought to redress this balance, with his 2013 volume *Music in the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, but there is still much to be done in the understudied area of Fitzgerald's musical fictions.

Fitzgerald wrote in 'Echoes of the Jazz Age' that 'the word jazz in its progress towards respectability has meant first sex, then dancing, then music' (*MLC*, p. 132). Jazz in all of these senses was the defining feature of popular culture of the 1920s and into the 30s. Theatre historian David Savran sees the advent of jazz as a turning point in American culture, remarking that,

during the 1920s, jazz represented far more than a new musical style. For the producers and consumers of culture, jazz was the portal to a new world. It described and

emblemized the most exhilarating and controversial ways of making music, love, poetry, race, and America.<sup>42</sup>

As we shall see, enthusiastic practitioners like the dancers Vernon and Irene Castle, and later, the bandleader Paul Whiteman harnessed these exciting cultural forces, and sought to ‘legitimise’ them, thereby making them ‘safe’ for the consumption of middle-class white audiences, whilst at the same time enjoying the commercially lucrative possibilities inherent in being at the forefront of the mass dissemination of this ‘portal to a new world’.

## II. Fitzgerald’s Engagement with Popular Culture

In his groundbreaking 2007 study, *F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Racial Angles and the Business of Literary Greatness*, Michael Nowlin defines the parameters by which he classifies Fitzgerald as a modernist writer: ‘his tendency to denigrate his commercially lucrative story writing for mass-market magazines’ and to seek for his novels (from *Gatsby* onwards) to be ‘the model for the age’.<sup>43</sup> Nowlin notes how ‘[Fitzgerald] promoted his “art” to as broad an audience as he could’, which led to ‘the fruitful tension’ between Fitzgerald’s sense of authorship as ‘inspired by a romantic individualist sense of vocation’ and ‘more insurgent modes of cultural possibility that were becoming defining features of the modern American scene’.<sup>44</sup>

Fitzgerald expresses a spectrum of responses to these ‘modes of cultural possibility’ over the course of his career. His characters are by turns enthralled by, and disgusted by, the popular cultural trends that were engulfing the country, starting with the young. Sometimes, in a humorous tone, both reactions are expressed concurrently, such as when ‘the voluptuous chords of the wedding march done in blasphemous syncopation issued in a delirious blend from the trombones and saxophones’ in 1920’s ‘The Camel’s Back’ (*TJA*, p. 54). This complex relationship to popular culture is central

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<sup>42</sup> David Savran, *Highbrow/Lowdown: Theater, Jazz, and the Making of the New Middle Class* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Michael Nowlin, *F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Racial Angles and the Business of Literary Greatness* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 8, p. 7 (Original letter quote from *Life in Letters*, p. 108).

<sup>44</sup> Nowlin, *Racial Angles*, p. 9, p. 7, p. 10.

to understanding Fitzgerald's professional and vocational self-conception, for two reasons.

The first of these reasons is that Fitzgerald was acutely aware of the literary marketplace from a commercial perspective, and thus knew that if he wrote about certain 'defining features of the modern American scene,' like jazz for example, he would sell more magazines and books. The concept of 'Early Success', so important to Fitzgerald, and analysed in the eponymous essay of 1937, was intricately associated with being the chronicler of the age and its modern fashions, and as Fitzgerald reminds us in 'Echoes of the Jazz Age': 'It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire' (*MLC*, p. 131). Any attempt to stereotype a decade that was so fundamentally pluralistic in focus as having one dominant mode would surely be misleading. Long accustomed to seeing parallels between the development of the twentieth century and their own lives (in his ledger for 1929, Fitzgerald wrote 'The Crash! Zelda + America'), Nowlin finds that Fitzgerald, with an ever-analytical eye, identifies an analogue between his own early success and a more generalised sense of 'American success' and decides that the best way to secure his literary reputation is to begin to 'writ[e] against himself' and to make 'irony toward American success - his "early success" in particular - an informing principle of his art'.<sup>45</sup>

Secondly, Fitzgerald's seemingly ambivalent relationship to popular culture could be reflective of more personal factors. Fitzgerald openly acknowledges how much his fiction is made up of the same few personal experiences, reinterpreted and retold in different ways in his 1933 essay, 'One Hundred False Starts': 'we learn our trade, well or less well, and we tell our two or three stories - each time in a new disguise - maybe ten times, maybe a hundred, as long as people will listen' (*MLC*, p. 87). It is hardly surprising, then, that Fitzgerald's protagonists enjoy the same popular cultural pursuits as he enjoyed. When we read about enticing music, or exciting dances, the emotional responses described could be read as representing authentic emotional engagement on Fitzgerald's part. Whilst dangerous to veer towards overly biographically-informed criticism, Fitzgerald's notebooks and scrapbooks support this reading, containing as they do lists of songs and films, and his letters also contain many references to music and film. At the end of his life, in 1940, Fitzgerald still owned a 1926 recording of

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<sup>45</sup> *F. Scott Fitzgerald's Ledger: A Facsimile* (Washington, D. C.: NCR/Microcard Editions, 1972), p. 184; Nowlin, *Racial Angles*, p. 34.

Jolson singing Berlin's song 'Blue Skies'. Marrying this genuine enthusiasm for popular culture with Fitzgerald's pragmatic sense of vocation and desire for critical acclaim engenders the ambivalence that his references to popular culture are often enshrouded in.

In other words, we can read the presentation of popular culture in the stories as an outlet for Fitzgerald's complex emotional wrangling over what kind of an author he was. Ann Douglas conceives of Fitzgerald as one of several writers who, early in their careers, embraced the possibility of being 'at once status-soaked elite author, conscientious craftsman, and mass artist or mass image'.<sup>46</sup> In order to fully comprehend this aspiration, Nowlin correctly insists, we must analyse the recurrence of 'Fitzgerald playfully identifying with a figurative 'black' America to represent his enmeshment - by both desire and economic necessity - in the entertainment business and America's mass culture of celebrity'.<sup>47</sup> This 'enmeshment' illustrates how Currell's conception of leisure in the period as 'narratives of crisis' applies to Fitzgerald's work: Fitzgerald's enjoyment of jazz dance, music, and film informs the waging of an internal battle between his conflicting personae as 'moralist' and hedonist (he described himself as 'too much of a moralist at heart'), but this very ambivalence is key to understanding his presentation of his age, as well as his self-conception.<sup>48</sup> Jazz, invoked both musically and gesturally, in dance, was a central facet of this ambivalence. These references are not merely inconsequential pieces of period detail, and this project does not seek to provide a glossary of explications, song lyrics and release dates for films: James L. W. West III's *Cambridge Edition of the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald* is doing a wonderful job of this in the explanatory notes of each volume. Instead, in this thesis I will examine the popular culture references in Fitzgerald's short stories in their racially and sexually coded contexts. I will turn to these discourses now as a method for understanding Fitzgerald's ambivalent response to the proliferation of dance, music, and film that characterised the cultural milieu of the interwar period in the United States.

Racial politics are difficult to untangle when reading Fitzgerald, but the fact that so many of Fitzgerald's popular culture references were to music and dances originating in African American culture is significant. In Fitzgerald's work we can read a dramatisation of the phenomenon of white modern America simultaneously defining

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<sup>46</sup> Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>47</sup> Nowlin, *Racial Angles*, p. 34.

<sup>48</sup> *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Andrew Turnbull (London: The Bodley Head, 1964), p. 63 [4 November 1939].

itself against ‘the Other’, whilst of course, ‘the Other’ is, and has long been assimilated into Americanness itself. On this theme, Toni Morrison succinctly writes: ‘One can see that a real or fabricated Africanist presence was crucial to their sense of Americanness.’<sup>49</sup> More specifically, Sieglinde Lemke’s assertion that ‘black, or African-inspired, expressions have played a seminal role in the shaping of modernism’ is upheld in Fitzgerald’s choice of allusions and referents.<sup>50</sup> As Nowlin explains, while Fitzgerald does often associate (almost as a byproduct of his identification with black America in his fiction that is concerned with entertainment) ‘artistic purity and literary immortality’ with a kind of racist ‘transcendental whiteness’, even in this instance, the persona of the white, poor, Romantic artist is never fully accepted into the rich worlds in which he may have gained apparent entry.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the persona of the artist still identifies with the parvenu, and also the African American ‘Other’ who is at the same time part of America’s conception of itself: as Nowlin writes, ‘Fitzgerald’s art would ultimately keep distinct the (white) modernist aspiration to cultural domination and the (black) entertainer’s aspiration to cultural and social equality.’<sup>52</sup> In Fitzgerald’s short fiction we frequently encounter the ‘aspiration to cultural and social equality’ and in his references to popular culture this theme usually realises itself in a physical and mental state of anxiety when encountering music or dance. Douglas classifies Fitzgerald as one of the authors who was ‘eager to capture mass acceptance and elite adulation in a single stroke,’ and in Nowlin’s reading, this requires melding the black entertainer ‘mask’, with the white (often Southern-inflected) artist.<sup>53</sup>

It is impossible to continue this analysis without a consideration of the tradition of minstrelsy which directly or indirectly infused much of the entertainment of the 1920s. Douglas explains:

Minstrel shows were first performed for largely white audiences by white actors in blackface who claimed to have learned their art by observing Southern blacks. Then, in the 1860s, black minstrel artists began to put on shows for white and black audiences.

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<sup>49</sup> Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (London: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Nowlin, *Racial Angles*, p. 12.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>53</sup> Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, p. 70.

[...] But for black minstrels to succeed, they had to meet the expectations of their white audiences. [...] The Negro minstrel performer donned blackface himself and performed, imitated, with variations, the white performers playing, and distorting, blacks.<sup>54</sup>

The layers of performance and disguise are multifarious. Minstrelsy was built upon the mimicry of others for artistic and oppressive reasons, and remained central to American artistic expression throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, its influence to some extent diverted into vaudeville at the turn of the twentieth century. Mimicry and impersonation were deep-rooted aspects of the nation's drive to create its own, native, art and the influence lingered on into the 1920s and 1930s, when improvisatory practice became mainstream thanks to the influence of the new music. Repetition, ragging, variations and quotations are all essential facets of jazz in both musical and dance forms, and these techniques were appropriated by white performers and marketed to white middle-class Americans. Repetition was a major feature of the song lyrics in the period, partly to encourage sales of sheet music and radio airplay. Even the film industry indulged in extensive quotation of itself, from repeated plots, to serial installments of film franchises, and remakes of films released only a few years before. The quotation of culture was not a mutually exclusive process: black culture called upon white, as well as white drawing upon African American influences. But the power dynamics involved in a country where slavery had been abolished only fifty years before meant that cultural appropriation was of significant concern when black culture was invoked for white pleasure and profit.

As a site of 'safe' interaction with African American culture, minstrelsy was the precursor to the Harlem nightclubs of the 1920s that catered to a mainly white clientele. To enhance the performance of primitivist modernist spectacle, many of these clubs, as Lewis Erenberg has demonstrated, created colonial and antebellum settings.<sup>55</sup> Though, in Paul Gilroy's phrase, 'performance was central to the process of cultural intermixture' in the United States, tracing a diachronic genealogy of such performative cultural forms is unfeasible because of the slippery synchronic and diachronic borrowings and influences that have been practiced over the years, or as Gilroy phrases

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, The Cotton Club in Harlem, and the Plantation Club on Broadway, as discussed in Erenberg, *Steppin' Out*, pp. 254-58.

it, mixing racial and sexual encodings: ‘promiscuity is the key principle of [black performance culture’s] continuance.’<sup>56</sup>

Fitzgerald, then, in his popular cultural references, is drawing upon an already ‘promiscuous’ set of cultural media, a set of cultural media that originates in a culture other than his own. His use of what Nowlin terms ‘the minstrel mask’ is problematic for scholars in several ways. It is hard to untangle Fitzgerald’s creative decisions from the widespread cultural appropriation that is present in this period. His often seemingly ambivalent references further complicate the significance of his allusions. Aside from this sense of ambivalence also being characteristic of the age, as Douglas’ survey of the centrality of performance and disguise demonstrates, ambivalence also serves as a strategy of black resistance in some African American cultural contexts.<sup>57</sup> In Fitzgerald’s work, ambiguity has two functions: it operates as a representation of his inability to reconcile his identity as an entertainer and as a ‘moralist’ (which itself is ineffably linked to his two identities as a commercial short storyist and a critically acclaimed novelist); and secondly, ambiguity as expressed in his literary technique destabilises our readings of Fitzgerald because it makes it difficult to interpret his popular cultural references. These include the use of disguises, personae and stereotypes.

‘Myra’, for example, opens with a description of one such stereotype: the flapper, or to be more specific, the husband-hunter flapper. Rena Sanderson and Curnutt have both written about Fitzgerald’s ambivalent portrayal of the flapper, detecting a response in which Fitzgerald was both drawn to, and recoiled from, the ‘modern young woman who was spoiled, sexually liberated, self-centered, fun-loving, and magnetic’.<sup>58</sup> Both critics reach the conclusion that Fitzgerald ultimately feared the moral confusion that the flapper represented.<sup>59</sup> A major plot pattern in flapper films of the 1920s concludes with flappers being ‘domesticated’, the protagonists returning home after ‘Running Wild’ in order to be married and to settle back into the established order that

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<sup>56</sup> Paul Gilroy, “‘...to be real’: The Dissident Forms of Black Expressive Culture’, in *Let’s Get It On: The Politics of Black Performance*, ed. by Catherine Ugwu (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1995), pp. 12-33 (pp. 15-16).

<sup>57</sup> See Michael Borshuk, ‘An Intelligence of the Body: Disruptive Parody through Dance in the Early Performances of Josephine Baker’, in *emBODYing Liberation: The Black Body in American Dance*, ed. by Dorothea Fischer-Hornung and Alison D. Goeller (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 2001), pp. 41-57.

<sup>58</sup> Rena Sanderson, ‘Women in Fitzgerald’s Fiction’, in *Cambridge Companion to Fitzgerald*, ed. by Prigozy, pp. 143-63, (p. 143).

<sup>59</sup> See Kirk Curnutt, ‘Introduction’, in *A Historical Guide*, ed. by Curnutt, pp. 3-19 (p. 6).

they had previously rebelled against. This common plot arc is visible in the film titles of the popular Joan Crawford trilogy *Our Dancing Daughters* (1928), *Our Modern Maidens* (1929), and *Our Blushing Brides* (1930). Zelda Fitzgerald, in a *McCall's* essay from October 1925, describes how

the flapper has come to none of the predicted “bad ends”, but has gone at last, where all good flappers go - into the young married set, into boredom and gathering conventions and the pleasure of having children, having lent a while a splendor and courageousness and brightness to life, as all good flappers should.<sup>60</sup>

There is an analogue to be drawn with Scott Fitzgerald's portrayals of dance, music, and film. He fears the moral repercussions of these jazzy innovations, but is still irresistibly drawn towards them. However, there was no such domesticating precedent in these forms. In fact, ragtime dance and music had become even more wild and revolutionary by the 1920s, the First World War having instilled a new attitude of *carpe diem* opportunism in Fitzgerald's generation, and youth culture was ascendant. He celebrates these at the same time as fearing the results.

Fitzgerald's ambivalence towards popular culture has been noted by several critics such as Berret and Curnutt, but has not been fully interrogated, especially not with regard to the short stories. The vast majority of scholarship on Fitzgerald has historically focused on the novels, and mostly on *The Great Gatsby*. As a response to this tendency, in 1981 Bryer published a collection of specially commissioned essays entitled *The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald: New Approaches in Criticism*, the introduction of which serves as a manifesto for the revisionist movement that sought to bring more critical attention to the short stories. Beginning his introduction with a general comparison of Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's short fiction outputs compared with the critical attention these oeuvres garnered, Bryer moves on to the ‘alarming specifics’, stating that: ‘The number of serious critical essays on the stories is probably no greater than 20.’<sup>61</sup> Welcoming the publication in 1974 and 1979 respectively of *Bits of Paradise* and *The Price was High* (including dozens of stories previously only

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<sup>60</sup> Zelda Fitzgerald, ‘What Became of the Flappers?’, in *Zelda Fitzgerald: The Collected Writings*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli, (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), pp. 397-99 (p. 399).

<sup>61</sup> Bryer, ‘Introduction’, in *New Approaches*, ed. by Bryer, pp. xi - xviii, (p. xii).



accessible in ephemeral copies of the magazines they originally appeared in), Bryer appeals for a long-overdue critical engagement with the short fiction. He warns that the scant previous attempts have been repetitive, and have done little more than restate familiar themes in Fitzgerald's work: namely, 'ambivalence towards money and the wealthy, his "double vision," his attitudes towards women and man-woman relationships, romance versus realism in his fiction, the East and West contrast.'<sup>62</sup> Tellingly, in Bryer's next edited collection of Fitzgerald's short fiction, which appeared in 1996, he acknowledges the appearance of Kuehl's *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Study of the Short Fiction* (1991) and Alice Hall Petry's *Fitzgerald's Craft of Short Fiction: The Collected Stories, 1920-1935* (1989), but laments how 'relatively speaking, scholarly neglect of Fitzgerald's short fiction has continued unabated' since his 1982 collection.<sup>63</sup>

Also appearing between Bryer's two collections, in 1991, was Bryant Mangum's *A Fortune Yet: Money in the Art of F. Scott Fitzgerald's Short Stories*, which authoritatively demonstrated that being a professional author necessitated participating in the commercial marketplace. Analysing every story 'in the context of their composition, marketing, and publication history', Mangum's study focuses on the interaction between the stories and novels, showing, amongst other things, how the stories serve as workshops for characters and themes later developed in the novels.<sup>64</sup> Mangum demonstrates the financial importance of short fiction for Fitzgerald by explaining details such as how, 'During the year in which *The Great Gatsby* appeared, Fitzgerald earned \$11,025 from short stories as opposed to the \$3,952 he received in royalties that year for all his novels combined.'<sup>65</sup>

The impetus to resituate Fitzgerald in his sociocultural context has long been an aim of Curnutt, whose scholarship addresses both the stories and the novels, and seeks to resist over-reliance on the biographically-informed criticism that once predominated in Fitzgerald studies. The collection of essays Curnutt edited in 2004, *A Historical Guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, includes an influential chapter by Prigozy dedicated to Fitzgerald's flappers and their filmic counterparts.<sup>66</sup> Curnutt's wide-ranging analysis in 2007's *The Cambridge Introduction to F. Scott Fitzgerald* includes an examination of

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. xiv.

<sup>63</sup> Bryer, 'Introduction', in *Neglected Stories*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 1-6, (p. 2).

<sup>64</sup> Bryant Mangum, *A Fortune Yet: Money in the Art of F. Scott Fitzgerald's Short Stories* (London: Garland, 1991), p. xix.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> Prigozy, 'Fitzgerald's Flappers', in *A Historical Guide*, ed. by Curnutt, pp. 129-61.

Fitzgerald's literary style, and finds him to be ultimately adaptable, though a master at the lyrical prose he naturally favours. Fitzgerald's stylistic flexibility is explored in Chapter Four of this thesis. The dialogue between short stories and novels is foregrounded by the integrative structure of the book, separated as it is into overarching groupings such as the analysis of main themes, major characters, and recurring plots and motifs, rather than adopting the more common approach to Fitzgerald monographs that analyses each novel in turn, with a discrete chapter on the stories.

As previously mentioned, Nowlin's 2007 book, *F. Scott Fitzgerald's Racial Angles and the Business of Literary Greatness*, explores Fitzgerald's use of and reactions to racial stereotypes in a pioneering study that marries Fitzgerald's literary ambitions with his desires to be a popular entertainer as manifested in his relationship with the 'slicks': magazines so-named because of their high paper quality and family-friendly content. Nowlin examines both the novels and the stories, finding Fitzgerald's treatment of the artist figure to be consistently racially and sexually coded. Nowlin deftly examines Fitzgerald's portrayals of individuals in the entertainment business in his stories and novels, exploring Fitzgerald's position on a spectrum between art and commerce. Building upon Nowlin's work on the characterisation of entertainer figures in Fitzgerald's oeuvre, I will explore the concept of parody as a way of interpreting Fitzgerald's self-conception and literary modernism.

Brian Harding's 1989 essay in A. Robert Lee's edited collection addressed Fitzgerald's work for the *Post*, and suggested that he self-consciously parodied himself in some of his love stories, habitually criticised for being 'formulaic'. He suggests that 'gestures towards romance that were made "for the trade" were undercut by ironies of characterization and plot' and that there is 'a tendency towards self-parody in the commercial fiction'.<sup>67</sup> Using Harding's ideas as a starting point, in this thesis I will argue that parody performs a wider function in Fitzgerald's work than simply assuaging the potential tedium of conforming to formulaic expectations, and that it is in fact a central facet of his literary modernism, in commercial and non-commercial stories alike.

In his references to popular culture, Fitzgerald operates on two levels: he calls upon the cultural media to demonstrate their attractiveness, their glamour, and their fun; and secondly, he shows how they can be dangerous, over-relied upon, and misused. As

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<sup>67</sup> Brian Harding, "'Made for - or against - the Trade": The Radicalism of Fitzgerald's *Saturday Evening Post* Love Stories', in *Scott Fitzgerald: The Promises of Life*, ed. by A. Robert Lee (London: Vision Press, 1989), pp. 113 - 30 (p. 114).

discussed above, this has been usually read as evidence of ambivalence, or as characteristic of Fitzgerald's habitual 'double vision', but a reading of these references as parodic can enhance our understanding of Fitzgerald's literary aesthetics. Parody dictates that one has a mastery of the subject being parodied, before revealing something new about it by showing it from a different, or exaggerated angle. Even if it is not always intentional, this is what Fitzgerald does with his popular cultural references, and applying this reading can yield transformative insights into his commercial short fiction.

Fitzgerald's use of parody is more common than current criticism has acknowledged, not only in his parodic treatment of popular cultural forms, but also in his self-parody, both in the short fiction and in the non-fiction representations of his public persona as manifested in his essays. In non-fiction pieces such as 'How to Live on \$36,000 a Year' (1924) and 'How to Live on Practically Nothing a Year' (1924) Fitzgerald lampoons his own spendthrift tendencies: 'I was now a successful author, and when successful authors ran out of money all they had to do was to sign checks [...] it was impossible that I should be poor! I was living at the best hotel in New York!' (MLC, p. 28).

Additionally, metafictional devices are a prominent feature of Fitzgerald's modernism, and his forays into metafiction are often enriched by his use of parody. Through his parodic and self-parodic allusions, he draws attention to the conventions of short-story writing, and literature itself, and so we notice the literariness of the works, especially through comparison with the other modes of expression he draws on, such as the cultural forms examined here. In this parodic mode, Fitzgerald often writes about writing, just as professional dancers, singers, and actors consciously perform their performances.

In *Terrible Honesty* Douglas argues that 'American popular arts had originated in parody, a parody in which high European art was spoofed and replaced by low American art'.<sup>68</sup> Levine, writing about the emergence of popular culture, agrees, demonstrating that in the nineteenth century, rather than segregating art into high and low, promoters in the United States ensured that their programmes were mixed in order to try and appeal to as many spectators, and thus sell as many tickets, as possible.<sup>69</sup> In the early twentieth century, in the 'symphonic jazz' of Whiteman's 1924 Aeolian Hall

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<sup>68</sup> Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, p. 348.

<sup>69</sup> See Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, p. 21.

concert, we can witness a similar mingling of traditionally respectable, high culture in the form of classical music with apparently ‘low’, popular music, known as jazz. Douglas identifies the songwriter Berlin in strikingly similar terms: ‘Like Jolson and Whiteman’ she writes, ‘Berlin was a parodist, a splicer of high and low art.’<sup>70</sup> In his short fiction, this is homologous to the role that Fitzgerald often played. He draws upon the popular arts, he writes in the formats that are acceptable to popular magazines, building on the character archetypes they solicit, but it is possible to see Fitzgerald’s serious, ‘high’ treatment of the short fiction, if we analyse his stylistic and thematic achievements, especially as they pertain to the performance and consumption of popular culture.

### III. Thesis Structure

Fitzgerald celebrates performative identity but also cautions against the identity confusion that ensues. Ronald Berman suggests that in his fiction, Fitzgerald creates ‘alternate selves from the arts: actors, dancers, directors, musicians’.<sup>71</sup> These alternate selves offer conflicted views on the appeal of popular culture. Fitzgerald’s use of parody on both micro- and macro-levels, in fiction and non-fiction, contribute to his occasionally experimental style. These experiments in parody, his interest in primitivist modernism, and his intermittently quirky narrative presence combine to form an idiosyncratic and layered narrative style. Intrinsically eclectic, by turns lyrical and experimental, intimately chatty and distantly omnipresent, this thesis seeks to explore how music, dance and film informed and shaped this style.

Dance, music, and film references in the short fiction can be read as expressive of Fitzgerald’s conception of his own commercial writing career, as well as of how these cultural media function as racially and sexually coded responses to modernity. In order to trace the discourses and themes established here, in the first chapter of the thesis I introduce Fitzgerald as a short storyteller, since we are more familiar with him as a novelist, and establish the parameters around each of these roles as Fitzgerald viewed them. The ongoing battle between artistic and commercial ambitions in Fitzgerald’s

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<sup>70</sup> Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, p. 356.

<sup>71</sup> Ronald Berman, *Translating Modernism: Fitzgerald and Hemingway* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), p. 8.

career is considered, as are the publication contexts of his short fiction in the 'slicks'. I explore some critical contexts of short story theory, and consider the short story form as it manifests itself in Fitzgerald's work, as an apparently ideal conduit for modernist experimentation. Through a comparison of Fitzgerald's short fiction with the early short story cycles of three of his peers, Hemingway, Joyce, and Sherwood Anderson, I consider several modernist features of Fitzgerald's stories.

In Chapter Two I focus on the dances popular in the 1910s and 1920s and Fitzgerald's portrayal of them. I examine Fitzgerald's response to modernity as expressed in the syncopated musical forms that inspired a multitude of dance crazes, as well as in the portrayal of Josephine Baker, whose 'chocolate arabesques' were an instrumental part of Fitzgerald's expression of primitive modernism, and his interest in the interaction of 'high' and 'low' culture. I interrogate some of the concepts of movement and figurative modes of expression in his work, such as the arabesque and the chorus line, giving a reading of the skyscraper as representative of a geometric, vertical aesthetic of the cityscape, in contrast to the Charleston's perpetual mechanistic motion. In doing so, I explore Berret's assertion in his essay on dance in the series of stories featuring Basil Duke Lee that 'Through the cracks of their dances, the plight of a wider society can be observed'.<sup>72</sup> The dangers and anxieties that attend Fitzgerald's dancing characters is given critical attention, in comparison with the lack of anxiety experienced by Josephine Baker, whose influence was widely felt across the world of dance. Using three early stories containing flapper heroines as case studies, I demonstrate Fitzgerald's technique of self-parody in his early fiction, and I suggest a reading of his portrayal of dance as a metaphor for his feelings towards his short fiction writing.

In the third chapter I focus on music, and on how Fitzgerald's literary modernism is expressed through structure as well as the syncopation and 'ragging' of short story convention. The concepts of disguise, repetition and imitation are central here, as the work of Irving Berlin and Paul Whiteman is discussed, addressing issues of appropriation and ownership of performance. In this chapter I show how Fitzgerald's use of music changes over the course of his career and explore how music is used differently in the short fiction as compared to the novels, suggesting how parallels can be drawn between 'formulaic' Tin Pan Alley songwriting and Fitzgerald's commercial

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<sup>72</sup> Anthony Berret, 'Basil and the Dance Craze', *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 3 (2004), 88-107 (p. 105).

short fiction that was ‘too obviously made for the trade’.<sup>73</sup> I demonstrate how Fitzgerald subverts our expectations of the genre, using his own previous stories as a frame of reference against which to pit readers’ expectations.

In Chapter Four, I turn my attention to film, and explore Fitzgerald’s response to a new way of seeing in the mechanical age of mass production. I analyse how Fitzgerald self-consciously imitates filmic practices in several stories, using focusing and pacing techniques, structural devices, and cinematic framing, as well as calling upon well-known generic plots and characterisation from 1920s and 1930s film. I consider Fitzgerald’s response to Hollywood as a site of modernity, in terms of the potential inherent in the flourishing medium to offer a means of achieving both commercial success and creative fulfillment. Finally, I revisit the concept of performative identity in the form of Hollywood’s pervasive artificiality, and relate this commodification of the self to the convergence of Fitzgerald’s parodic interests around the concept of performance.

Whilst the thesis is focused on distinct cultural forms that had particular prominence in the interwar period - dance, music, and film - the conclusion offers several suggestions for broadening this exploration of popular culture, such as by evaluating Fitzgerald’s depictions of sports, and considering the use of the parodic mode in contemporary hip hop music. I consider ways in which the thesis could be extended, such as by analysing Fitzgerald’s satiric play, *The Vegetable, Or From President to Postman* (1923), and exploring the impact of expatriation on Fitzgerald’s attitudes to popular culture. Finally, I rearticulate how rewarding it is to study the short fiction, and I seek to reignite a critical dialogue that allows Fitzgerald the novelist and Fitzgerald the short story writer to profitably coexist.

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<sup>73</sup> *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli, Margaret M. Duggan and Susan Walker (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 406 [26 March 1935].

## Chapter One

### **‘The 40 Positions’: F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Art of the Short Story**

F. Scott Fitzgerald’s attitude to his 178 short stories oscillated between pride and shame, and can be read as an articulation of his inner battle between his desire for literary acclaim and courting the popularity that paid him handsomely enough to facilitate novel-writing. His famously vivid grumble, in a letter to Ernest Hemingway of September 1929, recounted that ‘the *Post* now pay the old whore \$4000. a screw. But now its [sic] because she’s mastered the 40 positions – in her youth one was enough’.<sup>1</sup> Read in isolation, this is a damning incitement of the short story market – both magazine editors and readerships – as he rails at them for the prostitution of literary talent. But read in context, it appears as a postscript to a letter in which Fitzgerald confesses to ‘nervous depressions’, ‘moods of despair’ and ‘collaps[ing] about 11.00 [...] with the tears flowing from my eyes or the gin rising to their level and leaking over’. Hemingway, his old friend and rival, had sent him the promising typescript of his novel *A Farewell to Arms* in June, and Fitzgerald, who had not published a novel since *The Great Gatsby* in April 1925, was understandably feeling frustrated and depressed. This was the context in which his dismissive boast appeared.

Elsewhere, he sometimes accords his story-writing a higher esteem. An undated notebook entry from around 1934 reads:

I have asked a lot of my emotions – one hundred and twenty stories. The price was high, right up with Kipling, because there was one little drop of something not blood, not a tear, not my seed, but me more intimately than these, in every story, it was the extra I had. Now it has gone and I am just like you now.<sup>2</sup>

Fitzgerald acknowledges, albeit privately, the great effort that producing short stories for the ‘slick’ magazines cost him, emotionally and creatively. He shows a vulnerability that contrasts greatly with his self-styling as a ‘whore’ turning tricks, acknowledging the story-writing process as one that taps into the most vital essence of his being.

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<sup>1</sup> *Life in Letters*, p. 169 [9 Sept 1929].

<sup>2</sup> *The Notebooks of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich/Bruccoli Clark, 1978), p. 131.

Though in his early career he encouraged the image of himself as a facile author – claiming, for example that the story ‘The Camel’s Back’ (1920) ‘was written during one day [...] with the express purpose of buying a platinum and diamond wrist watch which cost six hundred dollars’ – he eventually came to realise that acknowledging the intellectual exertion his fiction demanded was a way of authenticating himself as a professional author (*TJA*, p. 5).

As a newcomer to professional authorship, in 1920 Fitzgerald was getting his bearings amid the potentially lucrative magazine market. He enquired of his literary agent Harold Ober in 1919: ‘Is there any market at all for the cynical or pessimistic story except *Smart Set* or does realism bar a story from any well-paying magazine no matter how cleverly it’s done?’<sup>3</sup> Well-paying magazines were essential to Fitzgerald, because he was entirely reliant on his own earnings from his writing for his, Zelda’s, and his daughter Scottie’s livelihoods. Many of his contemporaries could rely on family money or a benefactor for help, or at least a safety net, but Fitzgerald had neither of these. Others, like Theodore Dreiser, earned money from journalism to support their fiction-writing, but Fitzgerald supported himself on fiction alone to begin with, seguing into an intermittent reliance upon an increasingly fraught and interminable series of advances and loans from Ober, and his editor, Max Perkins, who kept him afloat when his writing could not. Fitzgerald quickly established that the ‘slicks’, like the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier’s Weekly* and *Liberty*, offered the most profitable home for his fiction and set about establishing what they enjoyed in a story, by going through back issues and noting down recurring themes and patterns.<sup>4</sup> He diligently completed his homework in a similar way when appointed as a screenwriter in Hollywood in the 1930s. Writing stories with a particular publication in mind, often the *Saturday Evening Post*, led to a mutually beneficial and profitable relationship, but also to great personal anxiety for Fitzgerald, who feared being known as ‘only a writer of *Post* stories’.<sup>5</sup> The genre of ‘*Post* stories’ which Fitzgerald contributed to in his early career was anointed flapper ‘confections’ by H. L. Mencken, who published some of Fitzgerald’s more heavily realistic efforts of the period in the magazine he edited, along with George Jean

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<sup>3</sup> *As Ever, Scott Fitz-: Letters Between F. Scott Fitzgerald and His Literary Agent, Harold Ober, 1919-1940* ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli and Jennifer McCabe Atkinson (London: The Woburn Press, 1973), p. 7 [19 December 1919].

<sup>4</sup> See Andrew Turnbull, *Scott Fitzgerald* (London: Vintage, 1962, repr. 2004), p. 287.

<sup>5</sup> *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda*, p. 370 [11 Oct 1940].



Nathan, the *Smart Set*.<sup>6</sup> Flapper ‘confections’ habitually made use of mistaken identity tropes, or twist endings, and involved glamorous young debutantes who were courted by handsome young men. Such storylines satisfied the editorial policies of George Horace Lorimer in the *Post*, positioned itself as a family-friendly publication marketed to middle-class Americans who, in the 1920s, delighted in reading about Fitzgerald’s young, beautiful, and rich flappers. Yet, as early as the mid-1920s, Fitzgerald began to resent the stigma attached to being a successful ‘*Post*’ author. He felt that this label meant his stories would be automatically judged as being formulaic - evidence of him ‘master[ing] the 40 positions’. In any case, by the mid-1930s, he struggled to produce this ‘formulaic’ fiction that had appealed to the *Post*’s editors in the peak years of his close association with the magazine, between 1925 and 1933.

Seven months before his death in December 1940, he wrote to Zelda:

As soon as I feel I am writing to a cheap specification my pen freezes and my talent vanishes over the hill and I honestly don’t blame them for not taking the things that I’ve offered to them from time to time in the past three or four years. An explanation of their new attitude is that you no longer have a chance of selling a story with an unhappy ending (in the old days many of mine *did* have unhappy endings – if you remember). In fact the standard of writing from the best movies, like *Rebecca*, is believe it or not, much higher at present than that in the commercial magazines such as *Collier’s* and the *Post*.<sup>7</sup>

Ironically, whilst Fitzgerald chided himself for being unable to ‘writ[e] to a cheap specification’, the Chekhovian model of story favoured by writers such as James Joyce and Sherwood Anderson was becoming increasingly commonplace, and was also accused of being formulaic, despite its association with literary modernism. According to Charles May, ‘the inconclusive incident and the unresolved impasse’ became customary features of what many critics regarded as ‘a new formula to replace the old

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<sup>6</sup> H. L. Mencken, ‘Two Years Too Late’, *Smart Set* (December 1920), p. 40. Reprinted in *H. L. Mencken’s ‘Smart Set’ Criticism*, ed. by William H. Nolte (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1987), p. 286.

<sup>7</sup> *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda*, p. 343 [18 May 1940].

trick-ending story of O. Henry'.<sup>8</sup> Fitzgerald was undoubtedly influenced by O. Henry, and yet, as we shall see, despite charges of being hackneyed, Fitzgerald actually innovatively parodied himself in his short fiction.

O. Henry (William Sydney Porter) was a prolific short storyist born in 1862 and living until 1910, at one point producing a short story every week for the *New York World*. He is famous for his frequent use of the trick ending, in which a plot twist occurs. This fame was cemented by the many imitators who seized upon the surprise ending as the fundamental feature of 'the O. Henry story'.<sup>9</sup> What is less often remembered is his virtuosic grasp of rhetorical devices, his humour, and his sensitive portrayals of multiple strata of life. O. Henry's stories usually involve simple plots that are nonetheless carefully constructed to feed into their habitual 'sting in the tail' twist endings, which, along with his fast rate of production, inevitably necessitated some repetition and reuse of plot, setting and character. The commercial appearances of his prodigious output in newspapers and magazines combined with his fondness for twist endings earned him the reputation, which has persisted today, of being a 'formulaic' short story writer. Critics often compare Fitzgerald's use of twist endings to O. Henry, but less frequently connect Fitzgerald's work to Henry's use of parody, which provides a precedent for Fitzgerald's testing of the limits of the short story formulae within which he worked.<sup>10</sup> Boris Èjxenbaum, writing in 1925, identified O. Henry's 'general parodic bent' and characterised it as O. Henry 'intrud[ing] into the events of his own story'. Èjxenbaum explains: 'O. Henry often enough annotates the progress of the plot, taking each instance as an opportunity for [...] parodying a cliché, for making palpable the conventionality of art, or showing how the story is put together.'<sup>11</sup> This reading can

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<sup>8</sup> Charles E. May, *The Short Story: The Reality of Artifice* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 18-19.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Scofield has argued, however, that this exaggerated emphasis on O. Henry's endings is unwarranted, given that endings are universally important in the abbreviated form that characterises the short story. See *The Cambridge Introduction to the American Short Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 117-18.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Matthew Bruccoli's explanatory notes introducing 'Two for a Cent' in F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Price Was High: The Last Uncollected Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli, 2 vols (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich/Bruccoli Clark, 1979; repr. London: Picador, 1981), I, p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> Boris M. Èjxenbaum, 'O. Henry and the Theory of the Short Story' [1925], in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, ed. by Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971; repr. Chicago and Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2002), pp. 227-70 (p. 255).

also be applied to Fitzgerald's '40 positions', in which he subtly undermines the readers' expectations of his commercial fiction, as this thesis will explore.

O. Henry's style of writing contrasts greatly with the short stories of his contemporary, Anton Chekhov, who was born two years after O. Henry, in 1860 and died in 1904. Chekhov's stories are most frequently described as 'plotless'. They explore the stasis between character and action in the seemingly mundane lives of ordinary people. This leads to an interrogation of the properties of language itself, as well as to an exploration of the episodic nature of experience, which, taken together, are fundamental concerns of later writers such as Joyce, Hemingway, and Sherwood Anderson. The plotless Chekhovian model was in large part a reaction to the modern condition in which artists turned inward to depict interior experiences of reality rather than demonstrating a reliance on social authority over phenomenological factors. Though Chekhov's first collection of short stories was published in 1884, around 20 years before Joyce finished the stories in *Dubliners*, Chekhov's short stories shared many concerns with this group of authors and their influence was felt by Fitzgerald for his whole career: he recommended that Zelda read Chekhov's story 'The Darling' (1899) in a letter of May 1940, six months before he died.<sup>12</sup> In his book on Fitzgerald's short fiction, John Kuehl succinctly maps the relationship between Chekhov, Joyce and Anderson. He argues that Chekhov 'offered the episode focused on a static situation, and James Joyce [...] offered the epiphany derived from a sudden revelation', whereas each tale in Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) 'combined Chekhov's episode and Joyce's epiphany to dramatize a single bizarre moment of small-town life'.<sup>13</sup> Kuehl's trajectory could be further extended by including Fitzgerald, who combined the use of so-called 'formulaic' constructed plots favoured by O. Henry, complete with forays into trick endings, with a new, modernist emphasis on introspection and an interrogation of the possibilities that were inherent in the form of the short story itself.

Conspicuously, though common ground can be found, Fitzgerald's short fiction does differ from both schools described above, and it is important to note that his style varied over the course of his career between his more commercial, traditional, fiction that was published in the 'slicks' (mainly the *Saturday Evening Post*) in the period between 1920 and 1934, and his later fiction, from 1934 to 1940 which was published in several magazines leading up to an almost-exclusive association with *Esquire* from

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<sup>12</sup> *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda*, p. 340 [4 May 1940].

<sup>13</sup> Kuehl, p. 10.

1936 to 1940. Whilst O. Henryan plot twists do feature in Fitzgerald's early fiction, and a Chekhovian approach to plotting is dominant in his later stories, the Chekhovian and O. Henryan schools of practice outlined above have another important differentiating factor: they represent the increasing perception of a schism between popular and serious short-story writing during the period of its peak popularity in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> Milton Stern argues that the modernist movement generally used irony to 'replace[...] coincidence, contrived twist, and dramatic convenience', but here we can see Fitzgerald straddling both schools of thought. He uses, in Stern's terms, 'conventional and chronological development of narrative progress', and does not exclusively focus on the 'episodic and epiphanic nature of experience', but his use of irony is extremely important in understanding the intertextual dialogue that took place in the 1920s and 1930s between Fitzgerald and other modernists' attempts to confront modernity.<sup>15</sup> In this thesis, I am focusing on Fitzgerald's attempts to confront modernity as it is expressed in three popular cultural forms: jazz dance, popular music, and film. Fitzgerald's use of irony, parody, and satire is vital to an understanding of his modernist aesthetics, though it is often obscured or even latent.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into two parts. Firstly, I consider the relationship between Fitzgerald and the magazines for which he wrote, and I explore Fitzgerald's occasionally rebellious flaunting of editorial guidelines, particularly in the *Post*. I then consider the impact of Fitzgerald's increasingly problematic relationship with the *Post* in the mid-1930s and return to the concept of parody as a central facet of Fitzgerald's literary modernism. In the second part of the chapter, I give a brief survey of the history of the short story, considering Fitzgerald's literary strengths in his short fiction in the context of some of his peers' achievements in the genre.

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<sup>14</sup> Early stories such as 'The Camel's Back' and 'The Popular Girl' (1922) utilise plot twists, whilst the Chekhovian lack of plot can be identified in later stories, such as 'Thank You for the Light' (1936) and 'The Lost Decade' (1939).

<sup>15</sup> Milton R. Stern, 'Will the Real Pat Hobby Please Stand Up?', in *Neglected Stories*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 305-38 (p. 320).

## I. Fitzgerald and the ‘Slicks’

Out of the 178 stories that Fitzgerald wrote, only forty-six were collected in book form before his death.<sup>16</sup> Collaborating with Fitzgerald on his selections for each volume, Scribners released a collection of stories after each of his novels were published, as was common practice for the publishing house.<sup>17</sup> *Flappers and Philosophers* (September 1920) followed *This Side of Paradise* earlier that year, and contains eight stories; *Tales of the Jazz Age* which followed *The Beautiful and Damned* (September and March 1922) contains eleven; *All the Sad Young Men* (February 1926) which followed *The Great Gatsby* (April 1925) contains nine stories; and finally *Taps at Reveille* (March 1935), which followed Fitzgerald’s long-gestating novel *Tender is the Night* (April 1934), contains eighteen stories (see Appendix A). Aside from these forty-six stories, Fitzgerald’s short fiction had much more ephemeral publication contexts, which sometimes suited his needs. He used many of the magazine stories to workshop character, theme and setting, and often ‘stripped’ stories, mining them for detail that was usable in his novels, sometimes exporting passages verbatim. Regardless of his perceived quality of a story, if he felt that it duplicated material in his novels, he refused to reprint it in his collections, marking his copy of the story ‘stripped’ or ‘stripped and permanently buried’.<sup>18</sup>

As discussed above, the relationship between Fitzgerald and the magazines he published in was complex. His attitude towards them was sometimes dismissive, and sometimes fiercely proud. Fitzgerald’s first biographer, Arthur Mizener, noted Fitzgerald’s conflicted attitude to his short fiction in *The Far Side of Paradise* (1951):

his best work was hard to sell. But it was frighteningly easy to sell his competent, mediocre, and even his bad work. He never stopped trying to write good stories, but

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<sup>16</sup> The figure of 178 depends on how certain pieces are classified – whether as essay or fiction; sketch or story. Bryer counts 178 stories in the Appendix of *The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald: New Approaches in Criticism*, which includes the nineteen stories identified by Jennifer McCabe Atkinson in ‘Lost and Unpublished Stories by F. Scott Fitzgerald’, *Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual* (1971), 32-63.

<sup>17</sup> See West, ‘Introduction’ in Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, pp. xi-xxxi (p. xi).

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, his annotations of his *Smart Set* tearsheets of ‘The Smilers’ (1920): ‘This story has been stripped of any phrases of interest and is Positively not to be republished in any Form!’, in *Ibid.*, p. 386.

when he became desperate for money, he found it hard to resist selling stories he was ashamed of.<sup>19</sup>

Though such value judgments are inherently subjective, Mizener aptly summarises the major problems of examining Fitzgerald and the short story: Fitzgerald often resented the magazine fiction he produced for sapping time and energy he could have spent on writing novels, and thus compromising his self-perceived artistic integrity, at the same time as providing him with a means of developing his craft. Mizener draws our attention to the economic obligation Fitzgerald was under to sell stories, and few other authors of the time relied so completely on their own capacity to create and sell fiction for their livelihoods.

Fitzgerald's practice of 'stripping' his stories, discussed above, suggested that novels were the most important endeavour and his stories were valuable only as a means of producing and supplementing novels. Fitzgerald felt that 'stripping' from a story that was only available in an old copy of the *Post* was an acceptable practice, but subsequently reprinting the story in book form was unthinkable and could incite criticism of his compositional techniques by allowing the novel and story to be closely compared. Another compositional practice facilitated by Fitzgerald's magazine work was described by Matthew Bruccoli as 'workshopping' in 'cluster stories': a method whereby Fitzgerald worked out aspects of character and situations in stories rather than in his novel drafts or notebooks.<sup>20</sup> So christened in Bruccoli's study of *The Composition of 'Tender is the Night'*, the 'cluster stories' are groups of stories composed and published whilst a novel (most frequently, *Tender*) was gestating. In these stories, we see Fitzgerald developing themes and workshopping characters that would go on to appear in his novels. Reading the cluster stories is a fascinating insight into the writer at work, and in reading them as an analogue to the novels we gain an insight into the professional author in the marketplace. Bryant Mangum argues that Fitzgerald 'regarded his commercial magazine stories as drafts of work in progress', but this is an overstatement. Whilst his magazine work was an undoubtedly welcome (and vital) form of income - Mangum reminds us that in 1930, \$25,529 of his \$29,331 income (or 87 per cent) was from short story writing – these stories also performed genuine artistic

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<sup>19</sup> Arthur Mizener, *The Far Side of Paradise: A Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1951), p. 94.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew J. Bruccoli, *The Composition of 'Tender is the Night': A Study of the Manuscripts* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), p. 70; Mangum, *A Fortune Yet*, pp. 4-5.

functions for Fitzgerald, beyond their use as ‘dress rehearsals’ for aspects of his novels.<sup>21</sup>

The professional short story writer and the literary novelist are one and the same, and the relationship, long thought of exclusively as a creatively draining interchange, is now acknowledged as also constituting a helpful counterpoint. Writing a decade after his ‘works in progress’ assessment, Mangum concedes that:

[Fitzgerald] was at his best as a novelist during the time he was also writing his best short stories, during those periods when solving the problems of the professional writer seemed quite often to coincide with solving the problems of the literary artist.<sup>22</sup>

Many of these professional problems occurred during the period of his close association with the *Saturday Evening Post*, from 1920 to 1934.

Fitzgerald published stories in sixteen magazines during his lifetime, including *The Smart Set*, *Metropolitan*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Scribners*, but his longest and most lucrative relationship was with the *Saturday Evening Post*.<sup>23</sup> The *Post* was unique in its longstanding and pervasive influence on early twentieth-century American society, being read by as many as one in nine of America’s adult reading public by 1908, according to Jan Cohn. It perpetuated an ideology of America around which readers could shape their own lives – before movies and radio.<sup>24</sup> In her comprehensive 1989 study, Cohn summarises the ambitious intended audience of the *Post*:

Geographically, as a national magazine, it was intended to transcend local markets dominated by newspapers. Intellectually, as a general-interest magazine printing both fiction and non-fiction on a wide variety of subjects, it was designed to reach audiences

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 9, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Bryant Mangum, ‘The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald’, in *Cambridge Companion to Fitzgerald*, ed. by Prigozy, pp. 57- 78 (p. 64).

<sup>23</sup> In his lifetime, Fitzgerald published stories in the *Nassau Literary Magazine*, *The Smart Set*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Scribner’s Magazine*, *Metropolitan*, the *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, *Collier’s Weekly*, *Hearst’s International* (absorbed by *Cosmopolitan* in 1925), *The American Mercury*, *McCall’s Magazine*, *Liberty*, *Woman’s Home Companion*, *Redbook*, *The Century Magazine*, *Esquire*, and *The American Magazine*. After his death, further stories were published in *Collier’s Weekly*, *Redbook* and *Esquire*, and his stories were also published in *Furioso*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, and *The Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual*.

<sup>24</sup> Cohn, p. 5.

ignored by 'highbrow' magazines like *Harper's* and *the Atlantic*. Commercially, as a magazine that carried national advertising and allied itself with the newest business economics of standardization and national distribution, the *Post* was created to echo and reinforce in its contents the emerging concept of America as a nation unified by hard work in order to facilitate the consumption of standardized commodities.<sup>25</sup>

Fitzgerald's fiction that was sold to the *Post* thus had an enormous readership, and a remit to adhere to the values of the *Post*. Whilst he followed most of their editorial protocol, as we will continue to explore, Fitzgerald managed to subtly circumvent and even subvert some of these requirements during his lucrative relationship with the magazine. During Fitzgerald's association with the magazine throughout the twenties and into the mid-thirties, the *Post's* editor was George Horace Lorimer, whose lengthy tenure ran from 1899 to 1936, Lorimer saw America as a country in which consumption was the common ground. His philosophy of business pervaded the pages of the magazine, espousing his adamant theory that hard work could accomplish any aim. Fitzgerald's own theories about good character (encompassing a strong sense of morality with a strong sense of duty) seemed extremely well suited to such an ethos, but Fitzgerald's favoured subject matter – the rich and leisured upper middle and upper classes – sits in tension with Lorimer's ideas about America being classless, and leisure being the enemy because of its propensity to divide people into 'those who worked and those who did not'.<sup>26</sup> Ironically, given their frequent appearances in Fitzgerald's stories, wealthy and unemployed expatriates were looked upon particularly unfavourably by the *Post*.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 10; *Letters of Fitzgerald*, p.63 [4 November 1939].



**Figure 2** Taken from the *Saturday Evening Post*, 4 July 1931, showing the conclusion of 'A New Leaf' amongst advertisements

The United States in the 1920s was dedicated, in Lorimer's view, to work and to money.<sup>27</sup> Work denoted striving for success, and work enabled consumption, which, according to Lorimer, was the road 'to perpetual prosperity'. The encouragement of consumption 'did not come principally through occasional pieces on business and economic values but through advertising and through the constant, subtle, and pervasive appearance of lighthearted articles that offered readers a window on high living'.<sup>28</sup> Fitzgerald, on occasion, authored articles in this vein, such as his April 1924 piece, 'How to Live on \$36,000 a Year' which flippantly describes the Fitzgeralds' efforts to be more economical with their money, leading to Zelda's metafictional suggestion that 'the only thing you can do ... is to write a magazine article and call it "How to Live on \$36,000 a Year"' (MLC, p. 39). These articles sat in the context of pages of advertisements, most of which were full-page ads. Moreover, the advertisements bisected Fitzgerald's writing, creating an interruptive reading experience in which the circumtextual material forced a reader to leaf through advertisements in order to continue reading the story (see Figure 2). By 1926, advertising made up between fifty-six and sixty-one per cent of each issue of the *Post*, and Fitzgerald's wealthy socialites shared pages with ads for Valspar Varnish and the Stutz Motor Car Company of America Inc.<sup>29</sup>

Fitzgerald had first-hand experience of the advertising business, having spent four months working at the Barron Collier agency in New York in 1919. In addition to this, Fitzgerald was writing during the period in which 'consumer culture as we now know it developed'.<sup>30</sup> It is not surprising, then, that Fitzgerald's insights into what he termed 'the greatest, gaudiest spree' in history (MLC, p. 188), the 1920s boom years, are actually 'more varied and nuanced than those of his chief rivals'.<sup>31</sup>

In March 1924, the month before sailing to France, where Fitzgerald was to finish *The Great Gatsby* over the summer and autumn, he published an article called 'What Kind of Husbands Do "Jimmies" Make?'<sup>32</sup> One of several articles Fitzgerald

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<sup>27</sup> See Cohn, pp. 10-11.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 165-66.

<sup>30</sup> Lauren Rule Maxwell, 'Consumer Culture and Advertising', in *Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, pp. 311-20 (p. 312).

<sup>31</sup> Kirk Curnutt, 'Fitzgerald's Consumer World', in *A Historical Guide*, ed. by Curnutt, pp. 85-128 (p. 90).

<sup>32</sup> Originally appearing in the *Baltimore American* on 30 March 1924, the piece was syndicated by Metropolitan Newspaper service and reproduced under varying titles. See *F. Scott Fitzgerald*

published in 1924 on the subject of love and marriage, the piece, according to Bruccoli, 'is an attack on the American "wasting class."'”<sup>33</sup> Fitzgerald disdainfully observes:

While at no period in the world's history, perhaps, has a larger proportion of the family income been spent upon display, an even worse phenomenon is observable in those who come into direct contact with the irresponsible rich. Every wealthy set in the big cities has many couples who, from their inability to pay the heavy financial cost of post-prohibition entertaining, have become nothing more than sponges and parasites.  
[...]

Here we come to something that sets the American 'leisure class' off from the leisure class of all other nations - and makes it probably the most shallow, most hollow, most pernicious leisure class in the world. It has frequently no consciousness that leisure is a privilege, not a right, and that a privilege always implies a responsibility.<sup>34</sup>

These 'wealthy set[s]' of 'the irresponsible rich' clearly fascinated Fitzgerald, who always retained a sense of being an outsider, explaining: 'That was always my experience - a poor boy in a rich town; a poor boy in a rich boy's school; a poor boy in a rich man's club at Princeton.'<sup>35</sup> In some of Fitzgerald's early fiction, as Kirk Curnutt has identified, 'entrepreneurial young men discover that, despite a talent for mimicking the fashions and leisure of the wealthy, they are not accepted by that class but can only achieve instead what Thorstein Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1898) calls "pecuniary emulation."'”<sup>36</sup> Curnutt is thinking of Jim Powell in 'Dice, Brassknuckles, and Guitar' (1923); of Dexter Green in 'Winter Dreams' (1922); and of course, of Jay Gatsby, in Fitzgerald's 1925 novel. Although these examples are all taken from Fitzgerald's early works, pecuniary emulation was a lifelong concern of Fitzgerald's. In 1936, he wrote in 'Pasting It Together' that he 'would always cherish an abiding

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*In His Own Time: A Miscellany*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli and Jackson R. Bryer (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1971), pp. 186-92 (p. 186).

<sup>33</sup> Bruccoli, *Epic Grandeur*, p. 188.

<sup>34</sup> Fitzgerald, 'What Kind of Husbands', in *In His Own Time*, ed. by Bruccoli and Bryer, pp. 186-92 (p. 188).

<sup>35</sup> Letter from Fitzgerald to Anne Ober, in *Life in Letters*, p. 352 [4 March 1938].

<sup>36</sup> Curnutt, 'Fitzgerald's Consumer World', in *A Historical Guide*, ed. by Curnutt, pp. 85-128 (p. 99).

distrust, an animosity, toward the leisure class - not the conviction of a revolutionist but the smouldering hatred of a peasant' (*MLC*, p. 147).

In the quote from 'What Kind of Husbands Do "Jimmies" Make?' above, Fitzgerald's emphasis on the importance of 'display' amongst supposedly rich couples who struggle to pay for their entertainment recalls Veblen's explanation of pecuniary emulation: 'In order to stand up well in the eyes of the community, it is necessary to come up to a certain, somewhat indefinite, conventional standard of wealth.' Veblen reads this standard as 'a necessary condition of reputability, and anything in excess of this normal amount is meritorious'.<sup>37</sup> In Fitzgerald's description, the rich are imitating the rich, to all intents and purposes, aside from actually spending money. This preposterous situation reinforces the importance of display and appearances, whilst de-emphasising the actual economic prerequisites of membership of the 'wealthy set'. Fitzgerald separates the rich into two tiers, differentiating the 'sponges' from the rest of the 'irresponsible rich'. Finding them to be of the 'most pernicious leisure class in the world', their very leisure incriminates them: 'leisure is a privilege, not a right', Fitzgerald reminds us. Here Fitzgerald subtly deviates from Veblen's assertion that leisure is an inherited aristocratic responsibility: Veblen argues that 'with the inheritance of gentility goes the inheritance of obligatory leisure'.<sup>38</sup> In differentiating between the leisure class of America and 'all other nations', Fitzgerald implies that Americans are preoccupied with the hedonistic and conspicuous aspects of their wealth, and ignore the responsibilities that the aristocrats of some other countries are born with.

The theatricality of this 'shallow, [...] hollow' class is evident in their desire to participate in entertainments regardless of their lack of the required means: never has such a large percentage of 'family income been spent upon display'. The packaging of the self with the use of products and projection of a chosen style is an enduring phenomenon, and fascinated Fitzgerald, who mocks these tendencies in his portrayal of Rags Martin-Jones' 'small purple dogs' and monocle ('Rags Martin-Jones and the Prince of Wales' [1924], *ASM*, p. 94), and Emily Castleton's lavish range of four wedding bands from which her proxy chooses one only an hour before her wedding ceremony is scheduled, in 'Majesty' (1929). John Irwin convincingly relates Fitzgerald's preoccupation with the theatrical display of the self to Veblen's theories, as well as to

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<sup>37</sup> Veblen, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Fitzgerald's fascination with performers and 'the world of the picture actors' (*MLC*, p. 110):

Fitzgerald would have understood many activities of the leisure class as essentially matters of 'display' [...] And he saw that these displays required a degree of social stagecraft in their presentation, as well as a certain type of acting ability on the part of people wishing to play a role in this society.<sup>39</sup>

Fitzgerald is profoundly visual in his representation of these 'matters of "display"', and nowhere is this more apparent than in Fitzgerald's rendering of the world of professional performers, and those who work within the performance industries more broadly. The focus in 'What Kind of Husbands do "Jimmies" Make' on emulation and display as inauthentic concerns expressed Fitzgerald's rapt disdain for the rich.

The emergence of a culture of 'conspicuous consumption', defined by Veblen as 'the means of showing pecuniary strength, and so of gaining or retaining a good name', was one Fitzgerald struggled to make sense of, even as he himself participated (in the 1920s) in the ostentatious displays of wealth he depicts so vividly in his fiction.<sup>40</sup> For Fitzgerald, the American expatriates of the 1920s (amongst whom he numbered) served as fascinating representations of this leisure class, and he returns to them in his fiction throughout the 1920s and well into the 1930s, culminating in the publication of *Tender is the Night* in 1934. By the time he came to adapt his 1931 story 'Babylon Revisited' into a screenplay, in 1940, he still felt sufficiently strongly about 'the most pernicious leisure class in the world' to include the following exchange between Charlie Wales and his young daughter Victoria (a reimagining of Honoria) when they encounter two drunken American expats in Paris:

VICTORIA: Who are they?

WALES (in a stage whisper): Parasites.

VICTORIA: From Paris?

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<sup>39</sup> John T. Irwin, *F. Scott Fitzgerald's Fiction: 'An Almost Theatrical Innocence'* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), pp. 58-59.

<sup>40</sup> Veblen, p. 59.

WALES: No, a parasite is something you find everywhere.<sup>41</sup>

Recalling the distaste expressed towards the ‘sponges and parasites’ in ‘What Kind Of Husbands Do “Jimmies” Make?’, the pun in the screenplay works to highlight the expats’ self-serving exploitation of their hosts, as well as to draw attention to their prevalence.

Fitzgerald’s predilection for stories of the glamorous, the rich, and worst of all, the expatriated, was quite an exception in the pages of the *Post*. An analysis of the stories themselves reveals the expatriates in question to be (usually) damaged in some way, or presented in a critical light. This may be to comply with Lorimer’s editorial preferences, but more likely, it is a reflection of Fitzgerald’s own views about the expatriate experience, which was both a blessing and a curse for him in terms of what he called his own ‘dissipation’: the heavy emotional and spiritual toll of leading a life ‘spent [...] uselessly, neither in study nor in contemplation but only in drinking and raising hell generally’.<sup>42</sup>

‘The Rough Crossing’, published in June 1929, is a good example of Fitzgerald’s portrayal of expatriates as shallow, selfish, and morally objectionable. By the story’s close, Mr & Mrs Smith, who have been involved in acts of infidelity, drunkenness, and the cavalier propulsion of a pearl necklace into the ocean, nonetheless reassure themselves that their transatlantic ocean voyage was ‘a nightmare’ and that, in any case, ‘there are better pearls in Paris’ (*TAR*, p. 206). Mangum finds it unlikely that the typical *Post* reader would interpret this ending as a happy one since that would mean ‘sanctioning the expatriate act by recognizing it as a miracle cure-all’.<sup>43</sup> John Higgins disagrees, concluding that ‘the typical reader might accept this ending at face value, but the irony behind it is potent’.<sup>44</sup> The debate over the degree to which a typical reader might find the ending ironic, or accept it at ‘face value’ shows Fitzgerald’s skill at creating a story in which irony serves as the differentiating factor between endorsing the hedonistic lifestyle of wealthy expats and criticising it. The story’s close, in which Adrian decides to distance himself from his behaviour on the ship by creating fictive

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<sup>41</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Babylon Revisited: The Screenplay*, ed. by Budd Schulberg (New York: Carroll and Graf, [1940] 1993), p. 179.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from Fitzgerald to Perkins in *Dear Scott/Dear Max: The Fitzgerald-Perkins Correspondence*, ed. by John Kuehl and Jackson R. Bryer (London: Cassell, 1973), p. 69 [c.10 April 1924].

<sup>43</sup> Mangum, *A Fortune Yet*, p. 89.

<sup>44</sup> Higgins, p. 111.

doppelgängers for the couple, contains a satirical double meaning which foregrounds Fitzgerald's critique of American expatriates:

'Who do you suppose those Adrian Smiths on the boat were?' he demanded. 'It certainly wasn't me.'

'Nor me.'

'It was two other people,' he said, nodding to himself. 'There are so many Smiths in this world' (*TAR*, p. 206).

Subtextually, Fitzgerald uses the common surname 'Smith' to serve as a symbol of the increasingly widespread American expatriates: in his 1931 essay 'Echoes of the Jazz Age,' Fitzgerald notes that by 1927, 'Americans were wandering ever more widely' (*MLC*, p. 136). In the same essay, he describes Paris in 1928 as 'suffocating. With each new shipment of Americans spewed up by the boom the quality fell off, until toward the end there was something sinister about the crazy boatloads' (*MLC*, p. 137). Combined with the doppelgänger motif alluded to at the end of 'The Rough Crossing', Fitzgerald explored this 'sinister' note in the expatriates in 'One Trip Abroad' (1930), in which expats Nelson and Nicole Kelly are punished through the loss of 'peace and love and health, one after the other', before coming face to face with their ghostly doppelgängers during a suitably atmospheric thunderstorm (*TAR*, p. 286). Other expatriate stories, such as 'The Swimmers', published in October 1929, contain characters who have been redeemed through their choice to return to America. Though his depictions of expatriates are often disparaging on the surface, Fitzgerald is far less critical than the *Post's* general view, but Lorimer still published the stories, and paid Fitzgerald highly for his contributions.

Fitzgerald's close relationship with the *Post*, who published over 80 per cent of his stories between 1925 and 1934, showed that, in Mangum's analysis,

he had learned to read the pulse of the largest magazine-reading audience in the nation and by economic necessity had geared his short story output to their specifications; he had established a group of followers from this audience to which he would always feel a moral obligation; and he had faced the economic reality that in order to earn a regular

income writing for the slick magazines one needed, at least verbally, to espouse the American Dream.<sup>45</sup>

Yet, as Fitzgerald's subversive testing of editorial boundaries has signaled, this was not sustainable. From 1934 Fitzgerald found it harder to place his stories in the *Post*, and by turns blamed himself and the new editor, Wesley Winans Stout, who replaced Lorimer in 1936. Fitzgerald began to find it impossible to churn out the 'confections' that he thought the *Post* wanted, and even if he could, Depression-era America had little use for them. Escapism in the movies worked; in short fiction, in the *Post* at least, it did not. The title of a 1934 review of *Tender is the Night*: 'You Can't Duck Hurricane Under a Beach Umbrella,' gives a flavour of the public's reception of glamorous Riviera tales at this time, and between December 1934 and his death in December 1940, Fitzgerald published only four more stories in the *Post*, his last appearance occurring in the 6 March 1937 issue.<sup>46</sup>

As outlined above, Fitzgerald published in sixteen different magazines over the course of his lifetime, and whilst the *Post* was undoubtedly his most enduring and lucrative relationship up until 1934, he also cultivated a near-exclusive relationship with *Esquire* magazine, from January 1935 until his death in December 1940.<sup>47</sup> After the *Post* and *Esquire*, the next most frequent homes for his short fiction were the *Smart Set* and *Redbook*, in which he published nine and seven stories respectively.<sup>48</sup>

A literary monthly magazine, the *Smart Set* published 'more highbrow literary fiction'<sup>49</sup> than the *Post*. The magazine in which 'Fitzgerald first announced himself as the spokesman for the Jazz Age,' with his first four professional pieces of writing, in the run up to the publication of *This Side of Paradise* (1920), the *Smart Set* was edited by

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<sup>45</sup> Mangum, *A Fortune Yet*, p. 77, p. 58.

<sup>46</sup> Philip Rahv, 'Tender is the Night: You Can't Duck Hurricane Under a Beach Umbrella', in *In His Own Time*, ed. by Bruccoli and Bryer, pp. 383-84.

<sup>47</sup> These stories were 'Trouble', published in the *Saturday Evening Post* on 6 March 1937; 'Strange Sanctuary', published in *Liberty* on 9 December 1939; and 'The End of Hate', which appeared in *Collier's* on 22 June 1940. In fact, from the beginning of 1937 until his death, he only published three stories in magazines other than *Esquire*, in which he placed twenty stories during that period.

<sup>48</sup> Founded in 1903 as *The Red Book Illustrated*, the magazine changed its name in the summer of 1929 to *Redbook*. Fitzgerald's contributions span both magazine titles. See Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 5 vols (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938-1968), IV (1957), p. 116; V (1968), p. 143.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Beuka, 'Magazines', in *Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, pp. 283-92 (p. 284).



Mencken and Nathan during Fitzgerald's appearances, between 1919 and 1922.<sup>50</sup> Sharon Hamilton has argued that Fitzgerald's relationship with the *Smart Set* was instrumental to the success of his first novel, and helped to secure his meteoric rise in the literary scene of the early 1920s.<sup>51</sup>

*Redbook* was one of the 'slicks' with a high author fee, and Fitzgerald published in the magazine during two distinct phases of his career: his industrious and prolific pre-*Tender is the Night* period (publishing four stories between 1925 and 1932), and also, towards the end of his career, *Redbook* accepted his four 'Philippe' stories (from 1934 and 1941) which followed the adventures of a medieval knight, and constituted a departure from Fitzgerald's usual subject matter.<sup>52</sup> Apart from paying well, *Redbook* also fulfilled one of the functions that the *Smart Set* had served at the outset of Fitzgerald's career, providing him with a 'most hospitipal [sic]' home for his 'more serious work'.<sup>53</sup> Despite both of these strong relationships, and the other magazines he occasionally published in, when his relationship with the *Post* began to sour around the middle of 1934, his stories underwent a shift in technique that Fitzgerald described in 1936 in terms of 'losing his touch':

I think that if one cares about a metiér (sp.) it is almost necessary to learn it over again every few years. Somewhere about the middle of 'Tender is the Night' I seemed to have lost my touch on the short story - by touch I mean the exact balance, how much plot, how much character, how much background you can crowd into a limited number of words.<sup>54</sup>

His stories from this period of decline in relations with the *Post* are often denigrated as being critically weaker than his early work.<sup>55</sup> Mangum blames 'too many characters, too

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<sup>50</sup> William Blazeck, 'Literary Influences', in *Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, pp. 45-55 (p. 48).

<sup>51</sup> See Sharon Hamilton, 'Mencken and Nathan's *Smart Set* and the Story behind Fitzgerald's Early Success', *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 4 (2005), 20-48.

<sup>52</sup> The 'Philippe' stories are: 'In the Darkest Hour' (1934), 'The Count of Darkness' (1935), 'A Kingdom in the Dark' (1935), and 'Gods of Darkness' (published posthumously, in 1941).

<sup>53</sup> See Mangum, *A Fortune Yet*, p. 68; Letter from Fitzgerald to Ober, in *As Ever, Scott Fitz*, p. 82 [received 30 November 1925].

<sup>54</sup> Letter from Fitzgerald to Adelaide W. Neall, a *Post* fiction editor, in *Life in Letters*, p. 301 [5 June 1936].

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Bruccoli, who subtitles a section of his biography of Fitzgerald '1934-1937: In the Darkest Hour' (*Epic Grandeur*, p. 381), and writes that 'structure and plotting became a

much implausibility, and too much unrelated action'.<sup>56</sup> Most importantly, for a popular magazine's target audience, they were simply not entertaining enough. The screwball slapstick of early stories like 'The Camel's Back' in which mistaken identity, disguise, and excitement abound, gave way to nostalgic, almost melodramatic stories such as 'No Flowers' (1934) in which, despite the story being set in a college, there is a discernible drop in energy, perhaps reflecting their author's weary and precipitous mental state. In this later period, Fitzgerald found his inability to connect with the *Post* audiences deeply frustrating. He tried a new approach with his old material, but as Mangum identifies, this sometimes led to 'moralizing, and [...] padding to make his subjects fit the 6,000-word *Post* requirements'.<sup>57</sup>

The *Post* was an enormously important influence on Fitzgerald, but so was his publishing house, Scribners. West argues that Scribners were the right publisher for Fitzgerald because they facilitated his ongoing internal battle between art and commerce. Their conservative business strategy in marketing and acquisitions caused Fitzgerald to rely on magazines for a steady income. West believes that without being compelled to sell stories in this way, Fitzgerald would have been tempted to rest on his laurels and would have 'indulged his facility for the lightweight and flashy' with which he began his career so auspiciously.<sup>58</sup> As West posits, in Fitzgerald's work, the interactions between his desire to make great art and his concerns over relying on the world of commerce can be clearly perceived. Although rarely critically acknowledged, the oscillation between 'the lightweight' and the serious pervades his work, more obviously in his short fiction, but it is an omnipresent feature of his oeuvre. It is in fact more subtle than an oscillation: it is an intricate weaving of variegated motifs, allusions, named brands, snippets of song, descriptions of fads, and universal emotions – it is, as Curnutt describes his writing style, rhapsodic.<sup>59</sup>

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problem in Fitzgerald's stories after 1934. They no longer came to him as 5,000-word units, and he had to fill them in with nonfunctional incidents or scenes' (Ibid., p. 393). Kenneth Eble, writing about the years 1935-1940, simply states, 'there are few good stories from these last years' and cites 'a major decline in Fitzgerald's ability to control the many events with which his long stories often swarm', in *F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational, 1977), p. 144.

<sup>56</sup> Mangum, *A Fortune Yet*, p. 118.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>58</sup> James L. W. West III, 'Did F. Scott Fitzgerald Have the Right Publisher?', in *Making the Archives Talk: New and Selected Essays in Bibliography, Editing, and Book History*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), pp. 88-101 (p. 98).

<sup>59</sup> Kirk Curnutt, 'Literary Style', in *Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, pp. 34-44 (p. 37).

In amongst this polyphony, we can trace Fitzgerald's use of the parodic mode in his representations of the three cultural media this thesis focuses on. As explored in the Introduction, parody was an essential aspect of culture in the 1920s, and was a means by which Americans could seek to make sense of the new cultural climate of the machine age and articulate themselves as distinct from Europeans.<sup>60</sup> Consequently, parody is vital to any consideration of Fitzgerald's navigation between popular and high culture: not only is it a vital component of his literary inheritance, but it is also relevant in light of his affinity with African American creative expression, as the roots of American parody lie in the cultural practice of minstrelsy, as discussed above in relation to Myra's performance. Simon Dentith stresses that 'parody includes any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice'.<sup>61</sup> Fitzgerald's use of parody thus elucidates his response to certain aspects of modernity and popular culture, as I will explore with recourse to the cultural media of dance, music and film.

Fitzgerald enjoyed parodying popular culture of his time: to take his first full year of professional authorship, 1920, he satirises pamphlets that condemn the modern dancing styles in his characterisation of the chorus of older women in 'Bernice Bobs Her Hair'; he spoofs the craze for orchestras with unique attractions, in 'May Day', when he describes an orchestra 'headed by a famous flute-player, distinguished throughout New York for his feat of standing on his head and shimmying with his shoulders while he played the latest jazz on his flute' (*TJA*, p. 91); and he brutally satirises the flapper film vogue in 'The Offshore Pirate' when Ardita insolently suggests: 'Have it filmed. Wicked clubman making eyes at virtuous flapper. Virtuous flapper conclusively vamped by his lurid past. Plans to meet him at Palm Beach. Foiled by anxious uncle' (*F&P*, p. 8).

In addition, Fitzgerald's own writing style was itself parodied in the 1920s: in 1921, Dorothy Parker wrote a parody of the first verse of 'Old Mother Hubbard' in the style of *This Side of Paradise* (1920) for *Life* magazine; and *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922) found itself lampooned by Christopher Ward as 'Paradise Be Damned! by F. Scott Fitzjazzzer' in 1923.<sup>62</sup> The incorporation of 'jazz' into Fitzgerald's name in Ward's

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<sup>60</sup> See Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, p. 356.

<sup>61</sup> Simon Dentith, *Parody* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000), p. 8.

<sup>62</sup> See *In His Own Time*, ed. by Brucoli and Bryer, pp. 447-48; *Ibid.*, pp. 456-64.

piece emphasises the centrality of jazz in this period, with its multiple cultural resonances.

As I will explore in more detail, Fitzgerald indulged in two modes of parody throughout his career: firstly, as Brian Harding has identified, Fitzgerald adopted parodic plotting and characterisation practices that subtly undermined the formulaic constraints of magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post*; and secondly, as Ruth Prigozy has suggested, Fitzgerald embarked upon self-parody, both intentional and subconscious, in an effort to ensure his stories would continue to be sold and enjoyed.<sup>63</sup> However, Fitzgerald's self-parody exists in the context of a difficult and conflicted relationship with the short fiction genre: he cannot quite reconcile the commercial with the critical in terms of his aims for the stories, but even at their most 'formulaic', they provide fertile ground for literary analysis.

The final section of this chapter opens with a brief overview of the short story genre, to which Fitzgerald contributed so prolifically. Secondly, through an analysis of Fitzgerald's use of some of the features associated with the modernist short stories of his peers, Anderson, Joyce, and Hemingway, I begin to explore Fitzgerald's shifting responses to modernity.

## **II. The Short Story: Fitzgerald's Literary Inheritance**

In the nineteenth century, the short story began to generate theoretical commentary, notably in the United States from Edgar Allen Poe, who praised its capacity to give a sense of 'unity' to an economical literary narrative.<sup>64</sup> Although there were a number of key exponents of the short story during the course of the nineteenth century, popularity exponentially increased during the opening decades of the twentieth century, with an

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<sup>63</sup> See Harding, "'Made For - or Against - the Trade'", in *The Promises of Life*, ed. by Lee, pp. 113-30; and Prigozy, 'Fitzgerald's Short Stories and the Depression', in *New Approaches*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 111-26.

<sup>64</sup> It is noteworthy that the term 'short story' does not appear in print until 1885, in an article by Brander Matthews: see Kasia Boddy, *The American Short Story Since 1950* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p.1; Edgar Allen Poe, 'Review of "Twice-Told Tales"', in *'The Fall of the House of Usher' and Other Writings*, ed. by David Galloway (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 387-97 (p. 392).

accompanying proliferation of short-story writing manuals marketed to the general public.<sup>65</sup>

Edgar Allen Poe's 1842 review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales* served as his manifesto of short story composition, and argued that the short story can achieve a 'unity of effect' distinct from the novel, because a short story can be consumed 'at one sitting' and thus 'avail itself of the immense benefit of totality'.<sup>66</sup> Poe's theory of the short story advises that a writer begin with the effect they seek to achieve in their mind, and then work backwards, adding incidents and events only if they help to establish the chosen effect. Poe suggests that every word must contribute to the overall unity of effect: 'In the whole composition there should be no word written of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design.'<sup>67</sup> His 1842 review had a lasting impact on short story theory: according to Martin Scofield, 'it was not seriously challenged until the twentieth century, and then rather more by the practice of writers who apparently ignored unity in Poe's sense than by any explicit theorizing.'<sup>68</sup> However, the influence of Poe on Fitzgerald's craft as a short-story writer should not be overlooked; Fitzgerald inherited from his mother a copy of the 1881 edition of Poe's *Works*, which included his critical writings, and kept it until his own death in 1940.

From Poe onwards, certain critics have differentiated between 'authentic' literary short stories as distinguished from popular magazine versions. Brander Matthews, writing in 1901, differentiates between the 'short-story', a 'high and difficult department of fiction', and 'the story which is short, which 'can be written by anybody who can write at all'. To explain this latter type, Matthews cites 'the brief tales to be seen in the British Monthly magazines and in the Sunday editions of American newspapers'.<sup>69</sup> In a 1926 review of *All the Sad Young Men*, this pejorative shorthand is again invoked when 'Gretchen's Forty Winks' (1924) is described as 'a magazine story about a young man who got on well in the advertising business'.<sup>70</sup> A 1935 review of *Taps at Reveille* echoes Matthews' emphasis on the apparent facility with which

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<sup>65</sup> See May, *Reality of Artifice*, p. 109.

<sup>66</sup> Poe, pp. 387-97 (p. 392), (p. 395).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 396.

<sup>68</sup> Scofield, p. 32.

<sup>69</sup> Brander Matthews, 'The Philosophy of the Short-Story' [1901], in *Short Story Theories*, ed. by Charles E. May (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), pp. 52-59 (p. 54).

<sup>70</sup> Frances Newman, 'All the Sad Young Men: One of the Wistful Young Men', in *In His Own Time*, ed. by Brucoli and Bryer, pp. 368-70 (p. 370).

virtually ‘anybody who can write’ can produce magazine fiction: certain of Fitzgerald’s stories, writes Elizabeth Hart, constitute ‘a group of tinkling cymbals [...] that might have been played by any of a dozen pat performers for the big-circulation magazines’.<sup>71</sup>

In between Matthews’ conception of the ‘story which is short’ and these reviews of Fitzgerald’s ‘magazine fiction’, the transition to the modernist short story is evident. In works such as Sherwood Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), his ‘arresting experiments in style and subject’ and exploration of ‘the inability of words to convey meaning satisfactorily’ exploit the brevity of the form to achieve modernist literary effects.<sup>72</sup> In short story criticism, the form has often been cited as being an ideal conduit for modernist innovation, and cited as innately representative of episodic experiences of modernity.<sup>73</sup> Modernists’ interest in the possibilities of symbolism are accommodated by the short form which, as many critics repeat, implies the typicality of a specific episode, and the ensuing compression demands use of image and symbol, which are more economic methods of narrative exposition, to suit the abbreviated form.<sup>74</sup>

The brevity of the short story can be circumvented through the use of the short story cycle or sequence. Forming a group of stories linked by character or theme, the short story cycle appealed to modernists such as Hemingway and Joyce because of its capability to ‘captur[e] the many points of view that constitute an objective reality without either dissolving the text altogether or subsuming these multiple perspectives within the homogenising tendency of the realist novel’.<sup>75</sup> Susan Garland Mann pushes this description further by arguing that the short story cycle lends itself to the exploration of isolation and the fragmentation of experience because of the paradoxical status in which stories ‘are both self-sufficient and interrelated’.<sup>76</sup> These features were capitalised upon in modernist works such as Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), which meditates upon a whole town’s inability to meaningfully connect with one another; and *Dubliners* (1914) by Joyce, which uses the stories of individuals in states

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<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth Hart, ‘Taps at Reveille: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Looking Backward’, in *In His Own Time*, ed. by Brucoli and Bryer, pp. 393-95 (p. 393).

<sup>72</sup> Glen A. Love, ‘Introduction’ [1997], in *Winesburg Ohio*, by Sherwood Anderson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1919] 2008), pp. vii-xxvi (pp. ix, xxii).

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Scofield, p. 108; and Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, May, *Reality of Artifice*, pp. 16-19.

<sup>75</sup> Paul March-Russell, *The Short Story: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 103.

<sup>76</sup> Susan Garland Mann, *The Short Story Cycle: A Genre Comparison and Reference Guide* (London: Greenwood Press, 1989), p. 15.

of emotional paralysis to cumulatively assemble a synchronic portrait of Dublin. Fitzgerald's peer Hemingway also wrote an influential short story cycle, *In Our Time* (1925), that showed the influence of Anderson and Joyce in his exploration of fragmented experience, isolation, and composite characterisation, channeled into an experimental form that interspersed stories with 'vignettes' that both sit in tension with and illuminate the stories they precede.<sup>77</sup>

Whilst Fitzgerald did not publish a short story cycle in quite this manner, there are groups of stories in his oeuvre that could be read as such, and have been published as self-contained books since Fitzgerald's death, most notably the series of fourteen stories featuring Basil and Josephine (1928-31), and the seventeen Pat Hobby stories (1940-41).<sup>78</sup> Such sequences of stories were marketable to magazines, and Fitzgerald's reluctance to publish them as standalone short story collections reflects their status as stories crafted for the magazine market, rather than specifically as cycles. Although Fitzgerald's Pat Hobby and Basil/Josephine series of interrelated stories focus on protagonists, rather than the archetypal story of a city or town, they share features with these other works, such as the use of the Bildungsroman (in the Basil stories and in *Winesburg, Ohio*); the composite portrait of a place (Joyce's early century Dublin, and Hollywood in the late 1930s in the Pat Hobby stories); and the depiction of an isolated individual in a community (Pat Hobby and George Willard in *Winesburg, Ohio*). Along with Fitzgerald's reluctance to publish them as collections, the commercial publication contexts of the Basil, Josephine, and Pat Hobby stories have also contributed to their preclusion from being considered as modernist short story cycles.

As Lucy Evans observes, contemporary critics tend to limit discussions of short stories to an elitist, modernist tradition, in some ways enabling the persistence of Poe's hierarchical critical judgements about the aesthetic value of the 'true' or 'genuine' short

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<sup>77</sup> In fact, according to Charles A. Fenton, Hemingway told Fitzgerald that *Winesburg, Ohio* was his 'first pattern'. See *The Apprenticeship of Ernest Hemingway: The Early Years* (London: Vision Press and Peter Owen, 1954), p. 149.

<sup>78</sup> In 1934, Fitzgerald considered publishing the Basil and Josephine stories as a cycle, adding a final story in which the protagonists would meet, but worried that readers would interpret the collection 'almost as a novel'. Conscious that his novels and magazine fiction had two discrete audiences, Fitzgerald thought his novel-reading audience 'might think I was stringing them by selling them watered goods under a false name' and decided against the project, stating that the stories 'are not as good as I thought' and 'it's too damn risky'. *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, p. 196 [15 May 1934]; *Ibid.*, p. 199 [21 May 1934].

story.<sup>79</sup> The modernist middlebrow is beginning to garner more critical attention of late, in scholarship by Nicola Humble and Melissa Sullivan, amongst others, but the field of magazine fiction by writers such as Fitzgerald who published more ‘literary’ work alongside their popular careers remains lacking in critical analysis. Indeed, Sullivan and Sophie Blanch’s recent work on the relationship between modernism and the middlebrow could serve as a manifesto for Fitzgerald’s short fiction:

the hybridity of the middlebrow is not mimicry of the highbrow, but a sophisticated integration of a range of cultural practices in order to provide an entertaining and intellectual understanding of modernity.<sup>80</sup>

In Fitzgerald’s case, this range of cultural practices includes popular dance, jazz music, and references to film.

Sullivan and Blanch do not focus exclusively on the short story genre, but when confronted by the output of those writers working in the form in the 1910s and 1920s, it is hard to disagree that the short story was an ideal mode for modernist literary experimentation. It is described by Paul March-Russell as a fragmented, restless form that unwaveringly deals with social change and the break-up of community in the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>81</sup> Modernist themes that habitually feature in short stories include ‘individual human isolation’, and ‘dislocation’ (noted by Nadine Gordimer and Adrian Hunter, respectively).<sup>82</sup> Dominic Head finds that the constricted space offered by the form leads to a more plastic concept of spatiality, and an abandonment of temporality of narrative sequence. The form’s innate brevity, extolled by Poe, renders it an ideal mode in which to explore the fragmentation and discontinuity of the modern condition.<sup>83</sup> Even in their commercial publication contexts, Fitzgerald’s stories explore these themes.

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<sup>79</sup> See Evans’ Introduction to *The Caribbean Short Story: Critical Perspectives* ed. by Lucy Evans, Mark McWatt and Emma Smith (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2010), pp. 11-25.

<sup>80</sup> Melissa Sullivan and Sophie Blanch, ‘Introduction: The Middlebrow - Within or Without Modernism’, *Modernist Cultures*, 6.1 (2011), pp. 1 - 17 (p. 5).

<sup>81</sup> See March-Russell, pp. 25-6.

<sup>82</sup> See Nadine Gordimer, ‘The Flash of Fireflies’ [1968], collected in *The New Short Story Theories* ed. by Charles E. May (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), pp. 178-181 (p. 181); Adrian Hunter, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Story in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 46.

<sup>83</sup> Head, pp. 1-9.



Fitzgerald's ambivalent attitude to his story writing was for many years mirrored by critics, save for a few stories that have been consistently anthologised and accepted as worthy of critical attention. Since the 1990s, Fitzgerald scholars, led by Jackson Bryer, have sought to redress this and bring to light the seldom-studied stories, with some success. Yet there is still a relative lack of criticism that situates Fitzgerald's short stories in the context of what his peers were accomplishing in the same genre, criticism tending to focus on the magazine contexts and audiences of Fitzgerald's short fiction. By briefly analysing some of the major stylistic features of Fitzgerald's short fiction in relation to his peers, Anderson, Hemingway and Joyce, it is possible to situate his stories in more balanced contexts.

The modernist short story writers encountered above tend to understate (or even obscure) plot in their work. Anderson's brief story, 'Tandy' (1919), for example, contains very little in the way of actual plot, being made up of a cryptic and unnerving conversation with a drunkard. Fitzgerald leans much more heavily on the Aristotelian notions of structure, crafting stories that build carefully to a climax and conclude with the dénouement. Curnutt suggests that Fitzgerald actually called upon German novelist Gustav Freytag's pyramid in his composition of short stories, and has demonstrated that Fitzgerald would have had access to Freytag's *Technique of the Drama* (1865, translated into English in 1895) – since Zelda requested to borrow it from him in 1930.<sup>84</sup> Freytag's pyramid consists of a five-part structure: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and dénouement. Fitzgerald favoured the five-part story structure and in many of Fitzgerald's stories we can witness the Freytag technique in action.<sup>85</sup>

Many other magazine short storyists followed a similar pattern – but some followed the pattern too prescriptively and were thus accused, as noted above, of producing formulaic fiction, a charge levelled at both Fitzgerald and the prolific O. Henry, whose 1905 story, 'The Gift of the Magi', follows the five part structure and builds towards a twist ending. As mentioned above, Harding's 1989 essay on the 'Radicalism of Fitzgerald's *Saturday Evening Post* Love Stories' mounts a convincing defence against such charges of structural formalism, suggesting that Fitzgerald self-

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<sup>84</sup> See Kirk Curnutt, 'The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald: Structure, Narrative Technique, Style', in *A Companion to the American Short Story*, ed. by Alfred Bendixen and James Nagel (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 295-315 (p. 298).

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, such diverse stories as 'Bernice Bobs Her Hair' (1920), 'Babylon Revisited' (1931), and 'Too Cute for Words' (1936). Freytag's pyramid was indebted to Aristotle's writings on Tragedy in his *Poetics*.

consciously parodied himself through his ‘ironies of characterization and plot’ and use of ‘the ominously happy ending’, which technically fulfilled the *Post*’s requirements but allowed discerning readers to appreciate their ironic nuances.<sup>86</sup> In the chapters that follow, I will explore this hypothesis in further detail, developing Harding’s argument in order to apply it more widely to Fitzgerald’s short fiction, rather than focusing on a small group of love stories.

Another trend in the criticism of Fitzgerald’s commercial fiction is to denigrate his plotting ability, pointing out inconsistencies and oversights (which, one might argue, were often deliberate).<sup>87</sup> Though we know that he was a meticulous reviser of his novels, even using galley proofs as an opportunity to make significant revisions, Stephen Potts has noted inconsistencies and apparent problems in the plotting of four of Fitzgerald’s five novels, and finds ‘inherently weak’ plotting in his short stories.<sup>88</sup> Yet as Head argues, it is important not to seek to ‘solve’ ambiguity in the modernist text, and in many ways, we might in fact seek a third way between Harding’s and Potts’ analyses. Indeed, I would argue that discontinuity in timings or ellipsis in plotting contribute to the ambiguity that forms a vital part of modernist writing, and can actually enhance the stories. For example, in ‘Babylon Revisited’, the ambiguity over whether Charlie left his address for Duncan and Lorraine innocently, or in an unconscious moment of self-sabotage, informs our assessment of Charlie’s moral character. A perceived ‘weakness’ in plotting therefore does not necessarily make for a ‘weak’ story.

Arguably, one of the major features of the modernist short story is that it delights in undermining the efficacy of perfect plotting. Joyce, Anderson and Hemingway also use plot prescriptions in their work, especially in their invocation of the aforementioned Freytag pyramid. Authors can emphasise certain elements of the structure at the cost of others, and omit certain stages entirely, to achieve differing effects. For example, Curnutt finds that ‘Hemingway’s celebrated technique of omission [...] is apt to do away with climax, so that a story consists entirely of either exposition or rising conflict,’ and this is visible in such stories as ‘Cat in the Rain’ (1925), in which the climactic rescue of the cat is effaced from the narrative and re-worked into the

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<sup>86</sup> Harding, “‘Made For - or Against - the Trade’”, in *The Promises of Life*, ed. by Lee, pp. 113-30 (p. 114).

<sup>87</sup> See, for example, Potts; and Henry Dan Piper, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Critical Portrait* (London: The Bodley Head, 1966), p. 171.

<sup>88</sup> Potts, p. 118.

denouement.<sup>89</sup> In the right hands, the pyramid is a malleable form rather than a prescriptive one.

Fitzgerald was not alone in negotiating his way through the *Post*'s and other magazines' expectations of his work. As James West explains:

Many authors of novels and short fiction chafed under the formal and structural limitations imposed on them by mass-circulation magazines. They disliked the simplistic, undeviating pattern of the 'formula' story: it began typically with action or dialogue in order to capture the attention of a reader paging through an issue; it was rigidly plotted and moved relentlessly toward an artificial climax; and it ended with a 'final suspiration,' often faintly saccharine in tone, usually in the advertising pages at the rear of the magazine.<sup>90</sup>

To apply West's summary to an example, Fitzgerald's story 'Two Wrongs' appeared in the *Post* on 18 January 1930. It opens with the exclamation, 'Look at those shoes' on page 8 of the magazine, and the story continues onto page 9 before breaking and resuming on page 107, alongside an article about the Federal Government's efforts to stimulate construction and a column advertisement: '17 shades of Venus black provide the perfect pencil for the business man, the architect, engineer, artist and other craftsmen' (See Figure 3). After this half-page continuation, the story again pauses for a page to accommodate a full-page advertisement for Champion spark plugs, continues for another page and then is again interrupted, this time for a double-page spread advertising Philco Radios, immediately succeeded by a one-page ad for 'The New Elgin Lady Watches'. The story finally concludes on page 113, alongside a column ad for Dixon's Ticonderoga – another brand of craft pencils. The effect of these circumtextual interruptions is to disrupt the story quite significantly, and Fitzgerald is thus tasked with gaining and maintaining his readers' attention over the course of a 105-page span between the story's opening and its conclusion.

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<sup>89</sup> Curnutt, 'The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald', in *American Short Story* ed. by Bendixen and Nagel, pp. 295-314 (p. 303).

<sup>90</sup> James L. W. West III, *American Authors and the Literary Marketplace Since 1900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), p. 113.

**Figure 3** Page 107 of the *Saturday Evening Post*, 18 January 1930, showing the continuation of 'Two Wrongs' and an advertisement for Venus Pencils

Fitzgerald organises the story in his favoured five-part structure: the opening of the story tells how Bill and Emmy (a producer and an aspiring actress) meet and start work on a show together. The show is declared a hit, and the ninety-eight-page break occurs. As the story continues, they are married, and the climax builds: Bill stays out all night, drunk, and Emmy goes into labour alone, tripping as she exits the cab at the hospital and losing the baby. The falling action (here ironically following a fall) describes Emmy's determination to take up dance, and the story breaks again. When it resumes, we find that Bill has been diagnosed with tuberculosis and sent to Denver for the winter to recover. The short dénouement – Part V consists of just three paragraphs – relates that by allowing Emmy to stay in New York and take up a role she has been offered in the ballet, he considers them to be even, the two wrongs of his drunken spree and her selfishness in taking the job cancelling each other out. The morose ending suggests that Bill half hopes that he will die in Denver because that will ensure that Emmy comes back to him. The melodramatic story adheres to the fairly rigid plotting of which West complains: the patterning of job offers, deaths, and ebbing vitality are neatly inversed by the story's end, and Bill's melodramatic wish for death sits incongruously next to an advertisement for pencils, inadvertently undermining the melodrama. The familiar five-part structure gives readers an anchor amid the potentially confusing and destabilising reading experience.

The other major means of retaining readers throughout such a potentially disruptive reading experience was through an appealing and idiosyncratic style, an aspect of authorship at which Fitzgerald undoubtedly excelled. The other short storyists discussed in this chapter, Joyce, Hemingway, and Anderson, enjoy utilising innovative points of view, including stream of consciousness, internal monologues, and the camera eye technique. They usually try to eliminate authorial presence so as to provide no intervention between the reader and character and to retain an objectivity in their presentations. A reader is rarely able to gauge how the author feels about their subjects. Fitzgerald, however, enjoys using omniscient narrators, who interject, comment on the action and break the fourth wall on occasion (especially in his early fiction). For example, in 'The Smilers' (1920), Fitzgerald introduces Sylvester Stockton in a playfully irreverent way: 'Accusing eyes behind spectacles - suggestion of a stiff neck - this will have to do for his description, since he is not the hero of this story' (*F&P*, p. 254). He thus creates a playful rapport with the readership which was useful in a popular magazine context, where his authorial voice was a valuable commodity. He has

a strong authorial presence, and displays both authorial subjectivity and objectivity: indeed, he is rather anti-modernist in his affinity for Romanticism and his association with the mass-marketed magazines that served as an advertisement-ridden embodiment of mass culture.

Rather than trying to cloak his authorial presence, Fitzgerald chooses to employ double vision in his work. Famously, he wrote that ‘the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function’ (*MLC*, p. 139). Malcolm Cowley more succinctly calls it his ‘double vision’.<sup>91</sup> The object of this narrative stance is to ensure the reader’s simultaneous emotional immersion and objectivity. This is a pervasive image in the stories themselves – for example, Dexter Green in ‘Winter Dreams’ is both within and without the world he aspires to. The image of the poor boy looking through the window at the prom is a poignant one that Fitzgerald revisits in various stories. This division of self results in dramatic tension, but also a unique authorial point of view. Head finds this duality of voice to be a modernist trait, invoking Mikhail Bakhtin to explain this dual perspective as a feature of modernist discord: ‘Bakhtin’s concept of dialogics is employed to show how the modernists frequently cultivate a dialogized style – involving a conflict of voices – as an integral part of their disruption and complication of narrative.’<sup>92</sup>

Kuehl, writing specifically about Fitzgerald, feels differently, relating the chasm of perspective to Fitzgerald’s preponderance for writing about himself:

Fitzgerald was an autobiographical writer and thus needed distancing devices to minimize his subjective involvement in his fiction. Accordingly, he often invoked the first-person observer point of view. [...] Another device that permitted him to blend intimacy and detachment was composite characterization, whereby fictional figures fused traits from more than one actual person.

Kuehl continues, drawing parallels between Fitzgerald’s use of narrators and the short story’s innate propensity for the symbolic and the representative: ‘Internalizing narration through first-person observers and third-person consciousnesses helped

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<sup>91</sup> Malcolm Cowley, *A Second Flowering: Works and Days of the Lost Generation* (London: André Deutsch, 1973), p. 31.

<sup>92</sup> Head, p. 33.

Fitzgerald merge private and public phenomena, so that the microcosmic individual would reflect the external world and the macrocosmic group would reflect the personal psyche.’<sup>93</sup> Andy, the narrator of ‘Last of the Belles’ (1929) thus comes to represent not just himself, but all of the suitors of Ailie Calhoun, and indeed of all of the Belles: through Fitzgerald’s rendering, he becomes archetypal. Fitzgerald poignantly ends the story with Andy’s acceptance that he cannot relive the past: ‘I stumbled here and there in the knee-deep underbrush, looking for my youth in a clapboard or a strip of roofing or a rusty tomato can.’ Andy contemplates how ‘in another month Ailie would be gone, and the South would be empty for me forever’ (*TAR*, p. 66).

Echoing earlier critics, Heidi Kunz Bullock finds Fitzgerald’s portrayal of Southern belle Ailie Calhoun to be ultimately satiric.<sup>94</sup> Ailie’s entrance into the story, on ‘the obligatory white-pillared, vine-covered veranda’ sets the scene for a cavalcade of Southern ‘clichés appropriated from popular fiction and regional convention’.<sup>95</sup> The narrator’s proclamation, ‘There she was - the Southern type in all its purity’ (*TAR*, p. 51) recalls the introduction of Myra as an archetype, but here, Ailie fails to assert the individuality that would emancipate her from such a stereotype. Unlike Myra, who rebels against her label, Ailie’s ‘mythic stature’ renders her vulnerable to misreadings: when Andy laments that ‘the South would be empty for me forever,’ his metonymic use of Ailie as a representative of the South leaves her open to the projection of meanings onto her (*TAR*, p. 66). Such deciphering drives miss the distinctly satirical note with which Ailie is presented in the story. Bullock convincingly argues that ‘Like Andy, everybody “knows” that Ailie Calhoun is “The Last of the Belles” - until Fitzgerald’s satire reminds us that, like Andy, nobody really knows Ailie’.<sup>96</sup> In 1929, the South is empty for Andy, but this parallel, satiric reading shows how the golden-girl flapper, especially in her irresistible Southern incarnation, has evolved a great deal since her outings as Myra and Ardita. Both losses are difficult blows to bear, this sense of bittersweet nostalgia pervading many of Fitzgerald’s stories, and in such lyrical fragments we can perceive that his tone differs markedly from his peers.

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<sup>93</sup> Kuehl, p. 123, p. 125.

<sup>94</sup> See Alice Hall Petry, *Fitzgerald’s Craft of Short Fiction: The Collected Stories, 1920-1935* (London: UMI Research Press, 1989), p. 156; see also Scott Donaldson, ‘Scott Fitzgerald’s Romance with the South’, *Southern Literary Journal*, 5:2 (1973), 3-17 (pp. 7-8).

<sup>95</sup> Heidi Kunz Bullock, ‘The Southern and the Satirical in “The Last of the Belles”’, in *Neglected Stories*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 130-37, (p. 132).

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

For example, in *In Our Time* (1925), Hemingway favours the mode of shellshocked detachment: it is filled with vignettes of uncomprehending observers of incomprehensible modern life. Fitzgerald, conversely, prefers more emotional responses and descriptions in much of his short fiction. Incomprehensible as it may be, Fitzgerald finds the modern world nonetheless exciting. He prefers ambiguity over bewilderment or condemnation, and the staccato reportage associated with Hemingway undoubtedly sits in stark contrast to Fitzgerald's habitually lyrical metaphors and whimsical comedy. In April 1920, Fitzgerald wrote to Perkins with his selection of seven stories for the collection, *Flappers and Philosophers*, along with six poems that he also wanted to include.<sup>97</sup> As West notes, this 'mixing of literary forms was logical, since *This Side of Paradise*, though technically a novel, was in fact an experimental book made up of fiction, poetry, and long passages of drama dialogue'.<sup>98</sup> Such an eclectic mixture tapped into the frenzied and contradictory zeitgeist of the early 1920s, and also overlapped with the ascendancy of the collage aesthetic in fine art, which was a medium that was a subversive influence in literature of the Harlem Renaissance. Rachel Farebrother finds that, in collage, 'techniques of juxtaposition and stylistic incongruity' and 'the democratic mixing of disparate components, is inevitably subversive'.<sup>99</sup> Farebrother goes on to relate the collage aesthetic to African American vernacular culture such as jazz and blues, finding 'the practice of incorporating musical quotations into early American jazz' to be a musical impulse that is reflective of the collage aesthetic.<sup>100</sup> Though Fitzgerald was not labouring under the extreme oppression that African American practitioners of the collage aesthetic operated within in the interwar years, his interest in eclectic form, whether in a novel peppered with playlets and poetry, fiction imbued with snippets of song, or a short story collection that oscillated between prose and poetry, demonstrates an intellectual investment in 'the democratic mixing of disparate components'.

Fitzgerald's style was deeply infused by modernism, romanticism, realism, and for a period in the early 1920s, naturalism. As Curnutt observes, 'that Fitzgerald's works are often categorized within opposing literary traditions testifies to the diversity

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<sup>97</sup> *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, p. 30 [29 April 1920].

<sup>98</sup> West, 'Introduction', in *Flappers and Philosophers*, ed. by West, pp. xi-xxxi (p. xiv).

<sup>99</sup> Rachel Farebrother, *The Collage Aesthetic in the Harlem Renaissance* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), p. 1, p. 9.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5; see also Philip Furia, *The Poets of Tin Pan Alley: A History of America's Great Lyricists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 11, in which he compares the verbal collages of e. e. cummings and Cole Porter.



of his talent'.<sup>101</sup> His forays into heavily symbolic didacticism in stories such as 'The Cut-Glass Bowl' and 'The Four Fists' (both 1920) usually ended up in lower-paying magazines with smaller circulations and less commercial outlooks, such as *The Smart Set* or *Scribners*, but these stories demonstrated the extent of Fitzgerald's proficiency with symbol even though they failed to command large fees. 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz' (1922), now recognised as one of Fitzgerald's most successful stories, commandeered a mere \$300 from the *Smart Set* (as compared to \$1,500 for 'The Popular Girl' which appeared in the *Post* in 1922 in two parts, written in November 1921, only a month after 'Diamond') and demonstrated the ongoing influence of the Romantics on Fitzgerald: Coleridge's poem 'Kubla Khan' informing descriptions of the family home, and the diamond itself standing as a symbol of modern avarice, complete with its self-destructive loneliness. The story's climax sees the family destroy their home rather than revealing the secrets of their wealth.

In the early twentieth-century renaissance of short stories there was a tendency to focus on the individual in the confusing modern world. Instead of aiming for unity to attempt to impose order, modernist writers such as Joyce in Europe and Anderson in the American Midwest instead explored the use of destabilising symbols and ciphers, to represent the arena of individual perception. These writers tried to find a mode of representing the inexpressible inner life through experimental techniques, such as stream of consciousness. Experience was acknowledged to be subjective, and multifaceted. The narrative continuity and social focus of the realist novel was rejected as an adequate means of expressing modern experience, and the short story provided an opportunity to demonstrate the fragmentary nature of existence. And yet, despite this emphasis on discontinuity and fragmentation in the 'effect' they sought to convey, to use Poe's terminology, in terms of form there was an emphasis on connections and patterns. Symbols, motifs, parallels and palimpsest all formed vital parts of the early twentieth-century short story. A story such as Anderson's 'Hands', from his short story cycle *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), for example, with its layered perspectives and palimpsestic shifting of meaning in the portrayal of the metonymic hands of Wing Biddlebaum, cannot be easily reconciled with Poe's theory of the 'unity of effect'.

Head focuses on this disparity in his 1992 study, arguing for 'disunifying devices' in place of the short story's 'supposed reliance on [...] a single event,

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<sup>101</sup> Curnutt, *Introduction to Fitzgerald*, p. 97.

straightforward characterization, a coherent “moment of revelation” from which an easily identifiable “point” can be recognized’.<sup>102</sup> Head seeks to reconceptualise the ‘unity’ concept established with Poe’s theories and instead to read the genre as an interruptive, disruptive mode utilised by many significant literary modernists, deserving of critical attention. He rejects the imposition of artificial unity on stories (or collections of stories) and argues that the short story’s intensity and ‘exaggerated artifice’ are its key elements, and that the latter ‘intensifies the modernist preoccupation with formal innovation’.<sup>103</sup> Ellipsis, epiphany and ambiguity should preserve their uncertainty, argues Head, rather than being decoded and standardised into a scheme that ‘solves’ the meaning of the story.

In Fitzgerald’s fiction, in a story such as ‘The Ice Palace’ (1920), polarising images of the North and the South mount to create a scheme that dramatises Sally Carrol’s decision-making process. The symbolism is clear, repetitive and easy to decode, forsaking the ambiguity that Head writes of. A story such as ‘The Dead’ by Joyce, the final story in his *Dubliners* (1914) short-story cycle, contains a much more complex use of symbolism, the snow in this case progressively amassing several meanings over the course of the story. The snow eventually comes to stand for Gabriel’s state of consciousness, having taken on meanings almost too profound for the simple relationship between signified and signifier. ‘The Dead’ is an example of Joyce interrogating his own use of the symbolic mode: the protagonist, Gabriel, in free indirect discourse, wonders about the possibility of capturing his pensive wife, transfixed by ‘distant music,’ in a painting: ‘He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of. If he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude.’<sup>104</sup> Here, Joyce combines fine art along with the theatrical medium of tableau, and the presence of evocative music pervades the scene. Such an intermingling of artistic media contribute to the story’s meditation on symbolism by reminding us of its fundamental multimodality. The procurement of an emotion effected by an aural memory is difficult, if not impossible, to accurately represent in the written medium of the short story. As for other modernist writers, this symbolism is a technique by which Joyce seeks to express the inexpressible.

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<sup>102</sup> Head, p. x.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>104</sup> James Joyce, *Dubliners*, ed. by Terrence Brown (London: Penguin, [1914] 1992, repr. 2000), p. 211.

Marcia Meadows, the ‘shoulders’ of the 1920 *Post* story, ‘Head and Shoulders’, is thus referred to metonymically because of her job dancing the shimmy, but later in the story, when questioning her choice of career and gravitating towards becoming a professional author, Marcia exclaimed, ‘These shoulders of hers – these shoulders shaking – were they hers? Were they real? Surely shoulders weren’t made for this!’ (*F&P*, p. 74). Fitzgerald here gently criticises the dance at the same time as imbuing Marcia with an awareness of her potential and unfulfilled ambitions, and her apparent detachment from her body signifies her emotional paralysis. The signifier-signified relationship is abstract, but intact. ‘Head and Shoulders’ is one of Fitzgerald’s earliest stories. To take a story from towards the end of his career, ‘Thank You For the Light’, which was written in 1936 but only published in 2012, we can witness a more Chekhovian symbolism, the light representing such diverse signifiers as the Holy Spirit, relief from manual labour, and the flame that would light up a cigarette.<sup>105</sup> The story of a lonely, weary saleswoman, in an unfamiliar place and seeking relief in the opportunity to quietly smoke a cigarette between appointments, the protagonist, Mrs. Hanson, falls asleep in a Cathedral pew. ‘In her imagination, the Virgin came down, like in the play ‘The Miracle,’ and took her place and sold corsets and girdles for her and was tired, just as she was’ (*TAR*, pp. 400-01). Awakening to find her cigarette lit, she says ‘Thank you for the light’. Mrs. Hanson felt that ‘That didn’t seem quite enough’ and gets down on her knees to say ‘Thank you very much for the light’ (*TAR*, p. 401). As West has noted, ‘The first line is literal and straightforward; the second line is open to other interpretation’.<sup>106</sup>

When compared with Hemingway’s use of symbolism and realism, Fitzgerald’s deftness in weaving symbols into his lyrical style is made clear. In a form that maximises the potential of symbols through its abbreviation, Hemingway’s crystallised and carefully distilled language invites the reader to meditate on the meaning of each detail, and encourages links to be drawn between stories and the vignettes that are scattered between the stories. For example, in the penultimate story of his 1925 collection, *In Our Time*, ‘Big Two-Hearted River Part One’, demobilized soldier Nick

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<sup>105</sup> Fitzgerald submitted the story to the *New Yorker* in 1936, but it was declined on the basis of being ‘so curious and so unlike the kind of thing we associate with him and really too fantastic’. (*As Ever*, Scott Fitz, p. 275 [2 July 1936]). Re-discovered by Fitzgerald’s grandchildren, they resubmitted it to the *New Yorker*, who published it on 6 August 2012. West calls the story a ‘Chekhovian vignette’ in ‘Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and “Thank You for the Light”’, *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 11 (2013), 1-9 (p. 2).

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Adams sits against a tree stump, 'legs stretched out in front of him'. This echoes the vignette earlier in the collection, when Nick 'sat against the wall of the church where they had dragged him to be clear of machine-gun fire in the street. Both legs stuck out awkwardly. He had been hit in the spine'.<sup>107</sup> We instantly recognise this description as significant because it echoes the earlier event that took place during the war, creating a palimpsest. Nick cannot escape his past, but in his uncertain present he finds some comfort in nature and in challenging himself through physical exertion, even though the stump is charred, which of course echoes the war-time context of his seated position against the church. Fitzgerald has to work harder to delineate the symbolic and isolate these pregnant details from the lyrical surges they are sometimes surrounded by.

In Fitzgerald's oeuvre, we see modernist short story features being engaged with on a regular basis. For example, plastic spatiality and the abandonment of temporality are explored in stories like 'Babylon Revisited', while the past and present exist in a precarious palimpsest, constantly threatening to collapse into each other, and 'The Ice Palace' in which the South is temporarily psychically transplanted into the North, with disastrous results. These two stories recourse to musical references to achieve these spatial and temporal effects. In terms of loneliness in a competitive society, as we shall see, this can be fruitfully analysed in the stories which depict Hollywood, such as 'Jacob's Ladder' (1927), 'Magnetism' (1928), and the Pat Hobby Stories (1940 - 1941). Dislocation from collective experience is often present in stories that contain dancefloor scenes, which cultivate a sense of social belonging and exclusion experienced by characters in stories such as 'Dice, Brassknuckles, and Guitar' and 'The Perfect Life' (1929). Fitzgerald thus calls upon popular cultural forms to explore these modernist aspects of the short story.

Additionally, epiphanic moments occur in Fitzgerald's oeuvre, for example in 'The Ice Palace', where Sally Carrol realises that she has made a mistake whilst watching a vaudeville performance of 'Dixie' at a Minnesotan theatre, and in 'Emotional Bankruptcy' (1931), when Josephine Perry realises her incapacity to feel love, only an hour after she had been 'singing for the first time in weeks' (*BJG*, p. 282). Such epiphanic moments in Fitzgerald's short stories are often provoked by aspects of popular culture, specifically dance, music, and film, and in exploring these elements we

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<sup>107</sup> *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The Finca Vigía Edition* (New York: Scribner, 2003), p. 165, p. 105.

can observe that Fitzgerald is more experimental than his ostensibly lyrical style might suggest.

Working within the constraints of his commercial employers (whilst playing to his strengths as a literary craftsman), Fitzgerald achieves many modernist aims. He interrogates authorship and choreography, questioning the purpose of art in a modern world in his representations of dance in his short fiction. The episodic and epiphanic experience of modern life is encapsulated in the micro-narratives of quoted songs in his stories. His representations of film show him exploring the juxtapositional marriage of visual, auditory, and linguistic art, as well as interrogating the relationship between art and commerce in a modern mass-market setting. Representations of these kinds of leisure activities in the short stories are an under-explored angle from which to interrogate Fitzgerald's responses to modernity.

Fitzgerald harnesses the extravagance of his characters to interrogate how money affects morality, and he repeatedly explores the dangers inherent in the conflation of the material and the spiritual. His world is filled with natural and manufactured objects that he can use as symbols to convey emotion, and in the magazine contexts of his stories, his characters were likewise surrounded (on the page) by advertisements for consumer goods and services.

Several of Fitzgerald's contemporary critics fashioned an opposition between Fitzgerald's style and the commercial medium of his short fiction, invoking the emotive language of volition and 'dignity' to imply that Fitzgerald's style was suited to loftier climes than the *Saturday Evening Post* and the other slicks. Reviewing the 1926 collection, *All the Sad Young Men*, Frances Newman laments, 'Mr. Fitzgerald is really a poet himself, and [...] only the twentieth century could have forced him into the more profitable medium of prose'.<sup>108</sup> As we shall see, the magazine fiction served multiple purposes beyond the financial in Fitzgerald's career. His 'mastery of style', according to another reviewer, this time of *Taps at Reveille* (1935), 'swift, sure, polished, firm - is so complete that even his most trivial efforts are dignified by his technical competence'.<sup>109</sup> Evidently, for most of his career, Fitzgerald was capable of achieving the double aim of satisfying the demands of his marketplace, and developing his own distinctive and appealing literary style.

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<sup>108</sup> Frances Newman, 'All the Sad Young Men: One of the Wistful Young Men', in *In His Own Time*, ed. by Brucoli and Bryer, pp. 368-70 (p. 369).

<sup>109</sup> Edith H. Walton, 'Taps at Reveille: Scott Fitzgerald's Tales', in *In His Own Time*, ed. by Brucoli and Bryer, pp. 395-96 (p. 396).

With these literary, cultural, and publishing contexts in mind, each of the chapters that follow will explore Fitzgerald's contrapuntal short story prose, examining in turn how he uses jazz dance, popular music, and film references to subvert our expectations of a commercial short story, at the same time as engaging with popular culture by utilising the parodic mode that was so central to his modernist literary aesthetics.

## Chapter Two

### **‘Dancing Modern Suggestive Dances That are Simply Savagery’: Dance and Identity in the Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald<sup>1</sup>**

‘There were couples dancing flat-footed in the corner to a phonograph record made by Rastus Muldoon’s Savannah Band; there were couples stalking a slow Chicago with a Memphis sideswoop solemnly around the room’ (*TJA*, p. 463).<sup>2</sup> Taken from F. Scott Fitzgerald’s 1923 story, ‘Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar’ which introduces Jim Powell’s aptly-named academy, this quotation exemplifies the need for annotation within scholarly editions of Fitzgerald’s works. Who is Rastus Muldoon? And what is the difference between a slow Chicago and a Memphis sideswoop? These details are important: they establish the socio-cultural situation in which we find these characters, and as a ‘social realist’, in Matthew Bruccoli’s phrase, Fitzgerald was constantly drawn to the popular culture of the 1920s and 1930s in his fiction.<sup>3</sup> He was especially interested in leisure activities: popular music, musical theatre, film, dance, and sport references litter his stories. When Fitzgerald refers to the musical *The Midnight Sons* in ‘The Captured Shadow’ (1928), his contemporary audience would presumably have known that the famous British dancer Vernon Castle is one of the ‘three men in evening clothes and opera hats sauntering jovially along Broadway’ (*BJG*, p. 101). For the modern reader, these references need to be teased out for a full appreciation of Fitzgerald’s artistry, and to ensure that Fitzgerald’s own playfully stated aim of writing ‘for the youth of his own generation, the critics of the next, and the schoolmasters of ever afterwards’ is fulfilled.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Basil, Josephine, and Gwen Stories*, ed. by James L. W. West III, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tales of the Jazz Age*, ed. by James L. W. West III, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 463. This description appeared in the magazine version of the story (*Hearst’s International*, April 1924), but Fitzgerald revised the story at some point between 1924 and 1926, minimising the similarities to *The Great Gatsby* (1925). West reproduces this revised version in his edition, but includes Fitzgerald’s excisions in the Record of Variants.

<sup>3</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Love of the Last Tycoon*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. lxxxiv.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters of Fitzgerald*, p. 459 [Early April 1920].

James West has written about the difficulties associated with annotating Fitzgerald's works, since Fitzgerald clearly intends for his readers to appreciate his references to song lyrics, dances, films, and celebrities, but identification is the tip of the iceberg, and the particular resonance Fitzgerald was reaching for by selecting a reference often lies dormant within the annotations. Although determining Fitzgerald's intentions presents West with an unwelcome (and editorially precarious) task, investigation of these references yields new readings. West writes of his difficulties in deciding how much readers needed to know about the references he had identified, but he also had to consider more practical factors such as the number of pages the publisher would print, as well as the anticipated shelf-life of the editions in libraries around the world. Tasked with taking over as general editor of the Cambridge edition of Fitzgerald's works, West began with a conservative strategy focused only on elucidating lost references with facts, and over the past twenty years has gradually moved towards notes which flirt with literary analysis. In his later editions, from the year 2000 onwards, he has 'slipped in a few hints about how a reference might illuminate a passage'.<sup>5</sup>

West's explanatory note glossing the above quotation from 'Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar' reads: 'These steps and styles of dancing [...] were southern dances, often of African American origin, performed to jazz or ragtime music.'<sup>6</sup> Indeed, 'flat-footed' dancing was a Southern phenomenon, which evolved into flatfoot tapdancing. Combined with the Savannah Band, the dance's Dixie origins are clearly presented. The reader is thus shown that Jim Powell is introducing Southern musical and dance influences to his prosperous Hamptons students. The slow Chicago, a bluesy slow dance actually born in Harlem, has its Northeastern roots violated by the Memphis sideswoop, a kick and dip step which originated in New Orleans. The name Rastus Muldoon combines a common Irish surname with a reference to the racist portrayal of an African American character named Rastus, who is lazy and unreliable, in a series of films from 1910 to 1917.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> James L. W. West III, 'Annotating Mr. Fitzgerald', *The American Scholar*, 69:2 (2000), 82-91 (p. 86).

<sup>6</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, 'Explanatory Notes', *Tales of the Jazz Age*, ed. by James L. W. West III, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 499-528 (p. 523).

<sup>7</sup> These films included *How Rastus Got His Turkey* (1910), and *Rastus' Riotous Ride* (1914). One of the flatfoot tapdancing greats was an African American man called King Rastus Brown, a virtuoso who mixed flatfoot tap and shuffle styles. See Marshall and Jean Stearns, *Jazz*



In his study of the five ‘mythic type[s]’ of stereotypical African American characters portrayed in film, Donald Bogle identifies the Rastus figure as belonging to the ‘coon’ racist stereotype: ‘Those unreliable, crazy, lazy, subhuman creatures good for nothing more than eating watermelons, stealing chickens, shooting crap, or butchering the English language.’<sup>8</sup> Fitzgerald’s Rastus is certainly meant to evoke the stereotypically racist Rastus of the 1910-17 film shorts, but his Irish surname renders him representative of both racial otherness and immigrant stock. In a letter of 1933 to John O’Hara, Fitzgerald described his own family heritage as ‘half black Irish and half old American stock’; though ‘black’ here refers to brunette and dark-eyed Irish, it is clear that Fitzgerald identified with the ethnic outsider, as Michael Nowlin has identified.<sup>9</sup>

Fitzgerald’s seemingly innocuous scene-setting reveals an artist who is conscious of the influence of new cultural developments upon modernist aesthetics. Jim Powell’s dance school is a place where the African American band facilitates dancing, which in turn is inspired by dance-steps originating in African American communities. What initially appears to be a description of couples dancing modern dances in a room is actually a complex interplay between North and South, showing imitative identity in action. The description is subtly critical of the popular trends: the somnambulant dancers fail to live up to the Fitzgeraldian stereotype of flaming youth, instead embodying the move from individualist craftsmanship to production-line philosophy popularised by Henry Ford’s ideas on mass production which filtered down into the arts. Felicia McCarren has explored this intersection between philosophies of work and the arena of leisure. In *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, she analyses the ‘fragmented gesture’ of modern dance as performed by artists such as Josephine Baker, in the context of ‘the European Science of work and American Taylorism’, finding that Baker’s ‘clowning’ and riffing on industrial streamlined and optimised gesture can be read ‘as a parody of modern times: imitating

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*Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (New York: Macmillan, 1968; repr. London: Collier Macmillan, 1979), p. 176, p. 187. King Rastus Brown never achieved fame outside of the dancing community, and it is unlikely, although not impossible, that Fitzgerald knew him.

<sup>8</sup> Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Continuum, 1989), p. 4, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Letters of Fitzgerald*, p. 522 [July 18, 1933]; Nowlin, *Racial Angles*, p. 12.

the frenzy of the assembly line; mimicking the chorus-line engine; dancing the human motor that made these industry and entertainment teams run' (see Figure 4).<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 4** Josephine Baker and Joe Alex perform the 'Danse Sauvage' at the *Revue Nègre* (Paris, 1927), and Baker rotates like a cogwheel

The relationship between machines and the new jazz dances was complex, but the most important common ground they occupied was their democratising drive along with their very novelty. Sieglinde Lemke asserts that 'modernist aesthetics and the assembly line were often conflated in the popular imagination', and Ann Douglas compares the cabaret revues of Broadway in the 1920s to 'the new accelerated assembly lines'.<sup>11</sup> As Ford's production lines began to displace individual craftsmanship, dances and music that were once improvisatory began to be packaged and prepared for the

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<sup>10</sup> McCarren, *Dancing Machines*, p. 190, p. 160.

<sup>11</sup> Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism*, p. 5; Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, p. 526.

mass market, through mechanistic standardisation of organic dance steps via dance manuals. Though the music and dance originated in African American communities, white dancers, such as Vernon and Irene Castle, authored such manuals.

Fitzgerald persistently uses descriptions associating ‘savage’ or ‘primitive’ impulses with modern dance, and this is symptomatic of wider criticism in the 1920s of dances of African American origin. In Fitzgerald’s description of Jim Powell’s dancing school, the pervasive influence of African American-derived music and dance manifests itself in lazy, entranced shuffling rather than the hot-blooded and frantically sexualised ‘vulgar’ movements pamphleteers had warned against. Fitzgerald makes clear that the parents disapprove of his school, but his narrator fails to clarify whether the parents fear the vulgar Southern influence on their prosperous Northeastern children, or whether it is the African American influence that bothers them. By the early 1920s, it was clear that Harlem was to be the centre of African American artistic innovation during this decade, which worries these wealthy WASP parents, who feared their children were practicing what Basil, the protagonist of ‘The Perfect Life’ (1929), condemns as ‘modern suggestive dances that are simply savagery’ (*BJG*, p. 134).

It is Jim Powell’s African American manservant, Hugo, who provides him with his teaching materials, which Powell then markets under his own name. The appropriation and labeling of black culture by white performers and spectators was not unique to the 1920s, but the new influence of Freud’s theories, resonant in the United States during this decade, prompted a reconsideration of the primitive and the civilised. Douglas explains the dissonance inherent in white Americans’ labeling of African Americans:

It is one thing to be in search of the ‘primitive,’ as white artists of the 1920s were; another thing to be told, as the black New Yorkers were, that you *are* the primitive, the savage ‘id’ of Freud’s new psychoanalytic discourse, trailing clouds of barbaric, prehistoric, preliterate ‘folk’ culture wherever you go.<sup>12</sup>

The concept of ‘primitivist modernism’ offers a chance to interrogate racist assumptions such as those linking African Americans to the performing arts, whilst at once asking

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<sup>12</sup> Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, p. 98.

how modern trends such as ragtime dances can be considered simultaneously hyper-modern and primitive.

Of course, for Fitzgerald, dance is a complicated concept, tied up as it is with his wife Zelda's mental illness. In January 1927, partly prompted by Fitzgerald's admiration for a hard-working and ambitious young actress he had recently met, Zelda decided that she would become a professional ballet dancer. By the summer of 1927 she was practising for ten hours a day, and was treated for exhaustion. Understandably, dance features heavily in Fitzgerald's fiction produced during the period of Zelda's obsession, from 1927 to 1931. In this period, dance was very much imprinted upon the public consciousness, as in these four short years the dance world mourned the premature loss of Rudolph Valentino (in 1926), Isadora Duncan (1927) and Anna Pavlova (1931). As I shall explore, Fitzgerald consistently linked dance with identity, and as he chronicles the new dance trends he also shows the dangers inherent in the imitative model of identity that was emerging in the new celebrity culture of the 1910s.

Using Irene and Vernon Castle as an example, I will first explore the appeal of the ragtime dance craze, which launched a model of self-improvement and performative identity that have become defining features of early twentieth-century popular culture. The backlash against the modern dances from the social reform movement, and Fitzgerald's portrayal of both sides of the debate in his short fiction is considered. This raises important questions about the status of primitivist modernism in the early twentieth century. I then examine Josephine Baker's modern dance and the intersection of performative identity and primitivist modernism.

### **I. Irene and Vernon Castle:**

#### **'The Tall Englishman and the Girl in the Dutch Cap'**

Jim Powell's dancing school, in 'Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar' was inspired by establishments such as Castle House, the dancing school Vernon and Irene Castle opened in 1914 opposite the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in New York City. Businesses such as these were extremely profitable, cashing in on the desire of thousands of people who wanted to keep up to date with the new dances. Fass has explored the shift in early 1920s youth culture from one imitative of the previous generation, to one that looked to peers for models of behavior. This shift coincides with a younger generation who had

an unprecedented amount of leisure time to fill: the telephone, the automobile, the movie theatre, and the dancehall offered young adults new means of self-expression. Fass explores the emphasis on homogeneity amongst this group, with peer culture stressing the importance of conformity.<sup>13</sup> This ascendancy of youth culture developed subsequent to what Douglas has called 'the feminization of American culture' - an unprecedented increase in women's influence and representation in the public sphere at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The flapper represented the intersection of these two phenomena. Initially seen as a radical departure from conformity, the rebellion of flappers who smoked, drank, wore short dresses, and were sexually liberated quickly became widespread. Conformity was again the victor, and the popularity of the flapper can be gleaned from Fitzgerald's letters and essays. Declaring her 'over' as early as 1922, Fitzgerald nonetheless felt pressured into producing stories featuring flappers throughout the decade, despite complaining to his agent and his editor multiple times.<sup>15</sup> There were other reasons for Fitzgerald's concerns beyond fearing being typecast: he grew increasingly ambivalent towards his fêted flappers. As Rena Sanderson has established, he feared 'that the flapper embodied not freedom but moral anarchy and lack of direction'.<sup>16</sup> These concerns are still visible in the Basil and Josephine stories, written almost a decade after his first flapper characters were written.

Kathleen Drowne has written about how the flapper, as a widespread stereotype, served as the scapegoat for myriad cultural anxieties of the period. Far removed from the previous ideal of beauty and sophistication, the corseted, full-skirted Gibson Girl, the flapper's irreverence was both refreshing and threatening: 'sometimes portrayed as the saviour of modern womanhood, and other times as the harbinger of cultural decline.'<sup>17</sup> Newly visible in the public sphere thanks to the culture of women joining

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<sup>13</sup> Fass, p. 220.

<sup>14</sup> See Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977; repr. London: Papermac, 1996); see also Sanderson, 'Women in Fitzgerald's Fiction', in *Cambridge Companion to Fitzgerald*, ed. by Prigozy, pp. 143-63.

<sup>15</sup> As both Sanderson and Sarah Churchwell have noted, this was a gendered narrative, Fitzgerald conceiving of his talent being prostituted out to a commercial audience conceptualised by Churchwell as masculine, jeopardising the (feminine) critical acclaim he sought. See *Ibid.*; and Sarah Churchwell, '"\$4000 a screw": The Prostituted Art of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway', *European Journal of American Culture*, 24:2 (2005), 105-29.

<sup>16</sup> Sanderson, 'Women in Fitzgerald's Fiction', in *Cambridge Companion to Fitzgerald*, ed. by Prigozy, pp. 143-63 (p. 143).

<sup>17</sup> Kathleen Drowne, 'Postwar Flappers', in *Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, pp. 245-53 (p. 250).

their beaux at *thé dansants*, cabarets, and nightclubs, the work of the Castles and other professional dancers encouraged the transition of dancing from the private arena of the ballroom into the public eye. Fitzgerald portrayed these transitional years in ‘The Perfect Life’, which is set immediately prior to the First World War, when the flapper was ascendant, and the Castles’ fame was at its peak.

The story is seventh in the series of nine stories that follow the exploits of Basil Duke Lee, a young Minnesotan who bears a striking resemblance to Fitzgerald himself during his St. Paul adolescence. In ‘The Perfect Life’, Fitzgerald satirises the critics of dance who wrote articles such as ‘Where is Your Daughter This Afternoon?’ and ‘From the Ballroom to Hell’, when Basil is accosted by an alumnus of his prep school and beseeched to give up all morally imperfect activities and encourage others to live ‘the perfect life’ free from smoking, drinking and dancing.<sup>18</sup> Basil proceeds evangelically to spread this moral syllabus, alienating his friends as he preaches, but eventually he relents in order to win the affections of a love interest.

During the story, Basil and the object of his affection, Jobena, visit Castle House for an afternoon of dancing, but Basil studiously avoids the modern dances in favour of Waltzes and Tangoes: the former because of its comfortingly Victorian formality, and the Tango on the basis that it is Spanish and therefore a form of cultural exploration rather than a modern American sexualised abomination.<sup>19</sup> The dances popular in the Victorian era had reassuring rules to follow, and fixed patterns of social etiquette, inherited and modified from previous generations, whereas most of the modern dances had grown out of unfamiliar, African-influenced traditions, and were built around improvisation, with fragmentary rather than regimented routines. This transition from the Victorian to the modern era is metafictionally on display in Fitzgerald’s work. Some of his magazine fiction has been accused of being formulaic, as it was written for specific audiences (usually the readership of a popular magazine, such as the *Saturday Evening Post*), and can be read as following specific rules of structure and characterisation.<sup>20</sup> But, as explored in Chapter One, he does employ many modernist

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Joshua Zeitz, *Flapper: A Madcap Story of Sex, Style, Celebrity, and the Women Who Made America Modern* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006), p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> Basil’s recourse to the apparent safety of the Tango provides a sense of dramatic irony in light of Rudolph Valentino’s erotic Tango exploits, epitomized by the opening sequence to Rex Ingram’s hit film, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921), in which the sensual dips and twists of the Tango culminate in a kiss.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Robert Roulston, ‘Rummaging Through F. Scott Fitzgerald’s “Trash”: Early Stories in the *Saturday Evening Post*’, *Journal of Popular Culture*, 21:4 (1988), 151-63.

features in his short fiction as well as in his novels, and he incorporates several innovative literary techniques into his stories. In ‘Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar’ Fitzgerald even subverts the narrative voice, breaking the fourth wall and commenting ‘Now if this were a moving picture (as, of course, I hope it will someday be) I would take as many thousand feet of her as I was allowed’ (*TJA*, p. 278). Fitzgerald knows what the magazine rules are, but chooses to challenge them, just as Jobena chooses to break with the Victorian propriety of the Waltz in favour of the new dances. Even clothes followed this subversive pattern: the ‘long, cruel corsets’ and restrictive hobble skirts of the Victorian period gave way to ‘a girdle-like corset with elastic’ and ‘skirts [which] are subtly cut so that they fall freely’, as Irene Castle explains in *Modern Dancing*.<sup>21</sup>

Social critics feared that these new dances heralded sexual dangers, especially for working-class women in urban, unchaperoned dance halls.<sup>22</sup> The new dancing postures of ragtime dances such as the Turkey Trot, Grizzly Bear and Bunny Hug involved all of the prohibited physical movements the Castles legislated against in their 1914 manual, *Modern Dancing*.

**Figure 5** Irene and Vernon Castle’s ‘Suggestions’ for Correct Dancing Technique, from *Modern Dancing* (1914), p. 177

<sup>21</sup> Irene and Vernon Castle, *Modern Dancing* (London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1914), p. 145.

<sup>22</sup> See Susan C. Cook, ‘Passionless Dancing and Passionate Reform: Respectability, Modernism, and the Social Dancing of Irene and Vernon Castle’, in *The Passion of Music and Dance: Body, Gender and Sexuality*, ed. by William Washabaugh (Oxford: Berg, 1998), pp. 133-50.

**Figure 6** 'The Tango of To-Day' from  
*Modern Dancing* (1914), p. 36

The Castles' clientele were a mixture of high society and the upper middle classes: 'Vernon and Irene's glamour drew old and young alike,' as long as they could afford the \$2 (\$3 on Friday or Saturday) admission charge.<sup>23</sup> The Castles gave their patrons a means of perpetuating the social ritual of European ballroom dances without falling foul of the strict codes of conduct and insistence on desexualised bodily movement. The pictorial demonstration of the Tango from *Modern Dancing* (Figure 6) depicts the Castles with poker-straight backs, Vernon's hands by his sides, and Irene's low on her hips, with no contact between them whatsoever, and the only aspect of the picture which deviates from the vertical line of their bodies are their nearside legs, which are neatly deployed at a 30-degree angle, parallel to each other with no contact. The only intimacy suggested by the image is his intense gaze, which is directed at her face. Irene, haughtily as a Fitzgerald heroine, and sporting her signature 'dutch cap', avoids Vernon's gaze, staring directly into the camera lens. This pose was carefully

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<sup>23</sup> Eve Golden, *Vernon and Irene Castle's Ragtime Revolution* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), p. 87.



choreographed so as to assuage objections by social reformers who felt that the new ragtime dances amounted to a threat to social order. Ragtime dancing ‘was judged as “indecent” and “vulgar” for the kind of wiggling, shaking, swaying and pivoting motions it permitted,’ according to Susan C. Cook.<sup>24</sup> The ‘Castle House Suggestions for Correct Dancing’ (Figure 5) address these concerns, advocating the strict avoidance of any such ‘wriggl[ing]’ and ‘twist[ing]’.

The Castles sought to ‘uplift dancing, purify it, and place it before the public in its proper light’, as they explained in the Foreword to *Modern Dancing*:

When this has been done, we feel convinced that no objection can possibly be urged against it on the grounds of impropriety but rather that social reformers will join with the medical profession in the view that dancing is not only a rejuvenator of good health and spirits, but a means of preserving youth, prolonging life, and acquiring grace, elegance, and beauty.<sup>25</sup>

This promise of health, vitality and beauty significantly differs from contemporary discourse on dance which adopts a lexis of disease.

The pre-war years were a dance ‘craze’. The youths had gone ‘dance mad’, and the epidemic was spread through close physical contact such as that which the Castles warned against, lest it cause the dancers to become infected with dance ‘fever’. Cook links social reformers’ concerns with changes to the American urban population at this time: ‘As ragtime dance was initially seen as a product of urban and largely immigrant working-class population, this discourse of dance pathology perpetuated notions of the growing “immigrant menace.”’<sup>26</sup> Approximately 28 million immigrants arrived in the United States between 1880 and 1920. The Harding administration responded to these concerns with the 1921 Emergency Quota Act and the Immigration Act of 1924, which severely limited European immigration, and effectively prohibited Middle Eastern and Asian immigration. The concern with foreign influence on modern dancing extended to the African American origins of most modern dances. From 1915 to 1930, around 1.5 million African Americans moved north, in what was termed the Great Migration, and

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<sup>24</sup> Cook, ‘Passionless Dancing and Passionate Reform’, in *The Passion of Music and Dance*, ed. by Washabaugh, pp. 133–50, (p. 137).

<sup>25</sup> Castle and Castle, p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> Cook, ‘Passionless Dancing and Passionate Reform’, in *The Passion of Music and Dance*, ed. by Washabaugh, pp. 133–50, (p. 138).

in the 1920s, African Americans populated urban centres in hitherto unseen numbers, in what Douglas has called ‘a seismic sociological shift,’ and ragtime and jazz music (and dance) spread around the country, North and South.<sup>27</sup>

Fitzgerald depicted the spectrum of responses felt by the critics as well as practitioners of the modern dances in his portrayal of female characters in his short stories. He details how they danced themselves ill, provoking predictions that they would dance themselves to death (‘Bernice Bobs Her Hair’ [1920]); they danced into ghostly states (‘The Offshore Pirate’ [1920]); and they danced into the semblance of being under, or even casting, a witch-doctor’s spell (‘The Scandal Detectives’ [1928]; ‘The Offshore Pirate’). It is Ardita of ‘The Offshore Pirate’ who exclaims how the natives of the mysterious island she has been kidnapped and taken to would not approve of her dancing: ‘I’ll bet the cannibal women are saying that we dance too close, and that it was immodest of me to come without my nose-ring’ (*F&P*, p. 30). She is powerless to resist dancing, and enchantment and compulsion occupy related lexical sets in Fitzgerald’s presentation of dance.

Disease and enchantment punctuate Fitzgerald’s dance descriptions with the regularity of the syncopated beat which provokes the dances, and heroines from Amanthis in ‘Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar’ to Imogene in the Basil story ‘He Thinks He’s Wonderful’ (1928) all exclaim the impossibility of sitting still and resisting the urge to dance when the orchestra was playing a rag. This notion of spontaneous movement echoes Vernon Castle’s own description of how the rhythm of ragtime affected him: ‘When a good orchestra plays a ‘rag’ one has simply *got* to move’ he confessed.’<sup>28</sup> As I will discuss in Chapter Three, the word ‘jazz’ became interchangeable with ‘ragtime’ when referring to the new music. Thus when Ardita hears ‘the sound of weird ragtime [...] drifting softly over on the warm breath of the night’, there is no contradiction when she goes on to exclaim ‘I can’t sit still with that perfect jazz going on’ (*F&P*, p. 27, p. 29). In ‘Presumption’ (1926), Noel Garneau hears ‘a tune they had danced to’ and ‘the wings of a trance folded about her’ (*ASM*, p. 254). Although there is an ‘inscrutable someone who waited always in the middle distance [...] with [...] dark romantic eyes’ ‘loom[ing]’ over her, Noel’s reaction to the music is machine-like: she is compelled to engage with the car she is in: ‘Almost mechanically,

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<sup>27</sup> Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, p. 74, p. 304; and Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in A. H. Franks, *Social Dance - A Short History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 176.

she started the engine and slipped the gear into first' (*ASM*, p. 254). This recalls the vogue for Tayloristic chorus lines and mechanistic dance troupes such as the precision-orientated Tiller Girls. By 1915, Jayna Brown writes, 'hundreds of women danced in perfect unison, forming a corridor of mirrors, the poetic reflection of the avenues of the city, the factory assembly lines, and the military maneuvers of marching soldiers'.<sup>29</sup> For Fitzgerald, whether dancers were mechanistic or they were enchanted, the physical compulsion provoked by ragtime and jazz music was the same. This compulsion is often related to the music's African roots, in order to describe dancers who are enchanted, in both senses of the word. Girls like Marcia Meadows in 'Head and Shoulders' (1920) have lost control of themselves, and are seemingly being controlled by another, whether in the witch-doctor metaphors or through the African American provenance of the music; Fitzgerald conflates the two. Cook summarises the social ramifications feared by dance reformers:

Ragtime dance – like TB – spread through touch. And its music held the potential to cause this very bodily response to take place. Thus at the heart of the matter was the ultimate fear of touch and contact – the mixing of blood, of miscegenation.<sup>30</sup>

This fear was reflected by the eugenicist movement's concerns with the prevention of inter-racial breeding, as well as breeding amongst those deemed unfit, and the avoidance of 'race suicide', a pseudo-scientific concept which was famously built upon by Lothrop Stoddard in his 1920 book, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*, parodied by Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby* (1925).<sup>31</sup> Josephine Perry, the anti-heroine of a series of stories written just after the Basil stories, in 1930 to 1931, (unsuccessfully) pursues a man with an African American wife in 'A Nice Quiet Place' (1930). In 'A Snobbish Story' (1930), set in Summer 1916, Josephine is recruited to star in a play called *Race Riot* in which the role requires her to appear alongside African American actors, and she considers whether she would be playing the 'high yellow' lover of an African American man. Josephine has no qualms about this, but her parents

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<sup>29</sup> Jayna Brown, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* (London: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 165.

<sup>30</sup> Cook, 'Passionless Dancing and Passionate Reform', in *The Passion of Music and Dance*, ed. by Washabaugh, pp. 133–50, (p. 139).

<sup>31</sup> See Currell, *American Culture in the 1920s*, pp. 22–32; and Suzanne del Gizzo, 'Ethnic Stereotyping', in *Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, pp. 224–33.

do. Whilst this speaks more of her proto-flapperish desire to shock her parents and eschew social convention than of her need to assert racial equality, Fitzgerald's retrospective viewpoint, writing about the 1910s from the vantage point of the 1930s, has the perspective Mr & Mrs Perry lack.

This transition from Victorian to Modern is an overarching theme of the Basil and Josephine series of stories, which have often been considered as a cycle, not least by Fitzgerald himself.<sup>32</sup> Fitzgerald conjures up this transitional period with a combination of evocative period detail and grand sweeping judgments in 'The Perfect Life':

They were going dancing – for those were the great days: Maurice was tangoing in “Over the River,” the Castles were doing a swift stiff-legged walk in the third act of “The Sunshine Girl” – a walk that gave the modern dance a social position and brought the nice girl into the café, thus beginning a profound revolution in American life. The great rich empire was feeling its oats and was out for some not too plebian, yet not too artistic, fun (*BJG*, p. 128).

The Castles themselves are described as a single asexual entity, and their 'swift stiff-legged walk' is awkward in cadence and possessing of a sibilliance that unsettles the ear. Fitzgerald's description of their Castle Walk could easily be applied to a military march: they bring about a 'revolution' in the 'empire' which is focused on avoiding the 'plebian', yet this radicalism is undermined by the militaristic marching cadence. Such a tension between establishment and rebellion is one that recurs in Fitzgerald's depiction of his flappers, and their (eventual) domestication narratives. The First World War breaks out over the course of the Basil and Josephine stories, but it fails to register on either of their consciences beyond the appearance of Josephine's final beau, who was a military aviator (as was Vernon Castle), and the war's absence subtextually criticises Basil and Josephine's self-absorption.

In the passage on 'the great days', above, Fitzgerald anonymises and universalises the changes effected by the increasing respectability of the café with the epithet 'the nice girl', while he prioritises the music, identifying the musical comedies

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<sup>32</sup> See Fitzgerald's letter to Max Perkins in which he proposed collecting the stories and suggested that the public might interpret them 'almost as a novel', in *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, p. 196 [15 May 1934].

by name, despite the fact that they were staged twenty years previously. By granting the music the esteem of being named (and thus recognised by his readership on an aural level, perhaps even provoking an emotional response), Fitzgerald allies himself with the youth – who just want to dance. He subtly satirises the perceived threat to social power posed by the ascendancy of black music and culture, focusing on the desired outcome of ‘fun’.

By speaking of ‘the nice girl’ in a singular context, he universalises the experience, inferring that all nice girls were brought into the café. This hints at the imitative model of identity amongst the youth: all the nice girls were following suit. Though writing about Britain at the *fin de siècle*, Sally Ledger explores the shift of the modern city at the turn of the century in terms of its provision, in certain places, of a welcome public arena for the middle-class woman previously virtually confined to her domestic sphere.<sup>33</sup> These welcoming spaces included ‘the music halls in London and in other cities [...] [where] women featured both as performers and as members of the audience’.<sup>34</sup>

In providing ‘the nice girl’ with a further public space in which to develop her confidence and increase her mobility (on both micro and macro scales – as a dancer and as a *flâneuse*), the Castles, for all their emphasis on propriety and self-control, offered the archetypal ‘nice girl’ a socially acceptable fun time, in public. In the final sentence of the passage, Fitzgerald unselfconsciously unites all Americans under the banner of the ‘great rich empire’ before conflating self and nation by singularising the empire, adding the pronoun ‘its’. But whilst he is one of them, he employs his classic double vision of separating himself from Americans and looking at the country with fresh perspective.

He introduces the concept of Americans seeking ‘not too plebian, yet not too artistic fun’, and this statement is class-loaded and wry at the same time. Fitzgerald’s description anticipates the intent, explored more fully by Lewis Erenberg that, by the mid-1920s, adventurous white Americans wanted to experience the ‘authentic’ atmosphere of being at a wild, African American dance, whilst retaining the reassurance that they were profoundly distinct from the performers, even when the proscenium became blurred, as dance-halls and cabarets began to encourage professional dancers to

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<sup>33</sup> Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the ‘Fin de Siècle’*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 150-76.

<sup>34</sup> Ledger, p. 155; see also Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992), p. 45.

mingle with the dancing clientele.<sup>35</sup> One of the main aspects of this perceived ‘fundamental’ difference between white spectator and black performer was the racist assumption that black entertainers were ‘natural, uncivilized, uninhibited performers, naturally smiling, because they had what whites lacked: joy in life’.<sup>36</sup> Erenberg explores how the changing format of the cabaret encouraged the impulse for self-expression which was being fostered by other areas of modern life such as advertising and the movies. Yet in the pre-war setting of ‘The Perfect Life’, it was important that this class of the ‘great rich empire’ did not traverse the barrier into the realm of the ‘artistic’, as this realm still connoted a lack of refinement, and lower class Bohemianism: relics from popular opinion at the turn of the century. Here, Fitzgerald can be perceived to be subtly satirising ‘the great rich empire’.

The Ragtime dance craze lasted from 1912-1916, and by the time Vernon Castle was killed in a military training exercise in 1918, popular dance culture had moved on to jazz dance proper: the Turkey Trot and ‘Tango of To-Day’ had given way to ‘the swinging cadences of the Charleston’ and the agitated hops of the Black Bottom, and the rags of Scott Joplin and James Scott were displaced in popularity by songs such as W. C. Handy’s ‘Beale Street Blues’ (1916) and the Original Dixieland Jass Band’s recording of ‘Darktown Strutters’ Ball’ (1917).<sup>37</sup> In 1914, the Castles wrote that ‘the gray-haired matron and the sedate man of affairs are seen dancing as often now as the younger generation’.<sup>38</sup> Fitzgerald more vividly captures the inclusiveness of this revolution in dancing habits, and the desire not merely to participate, but to excel at dancing: ‘sedentary stockbrokers, grandmothers of sixty, Confederate veterans, venerable statesmen and scientists, sufferers from locomotor ataxia wanted not only to dance but to dance beautifully’ (*BJG*, p. 129). The sibilance in this quotation underscores the despondent subtext of Fitzgerald recalling the dance craze, from the 1929 perspective of writing ‘The Perfect Life’. The reference to the confederacy in 1929 bears an unmistakably racial angle, whilst the reference to the illness ‘locomotor

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<sup>35</sup> Erenberg, *Steppin’ Out*, p. 255, p. 157, p. 123.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>37</sup> Catherine Morley, *Modern American Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 154; See Anthony J. Berret, *Music in the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald: Unheard Melodies* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013), pp. 124-25 for a discussion of an early draft of *The Great Gatsby* in which Fitzgerald includes both of these songs.

<sup>38</sup> Castle and Castle, p. 40.

ataxia', which resulted in a loss of control of one's body, is a side effect of tertiary syphilis, introducing a sexual angle to the dance craze discourse.

For the dancers, talent and industriousness are rewarded: 'Fantastic ambitions bloomed in hitherto sober breasts, violent exhibitionism cropped out in families modest for generations. [...] Because of a neat glide or an awkward stumble careers were determined and engagements were made or broken, while the tall Englishman and the girl in the Dutch cap called the tune' (*BJG*, p. 129). The emphasis is on drastic change and inevitability: people are unleashing their previously suppressed potential, and the employment of floral imagery reinforces the sense of a natural, inevitable process. However, the bloom does inherently imply the eventual fading of the bloom, and this embedded negativity is repeated in the description of 'exhibitionism crop[ping] out in families' after 'generations'. This fear of crop[ping] out' is contemporary with the idea of recessive traits suddenly becoming prominent characteristics, which was a central concern of the pseudo-science of eugenics, which 'permeated modern cultures and societies on a global scale' by the 1920s, according to Susan Currell.<sup>39</sup> The uncontrollable genetic element is paired with the importance of hard work and ambition, and imitative identity rears its head again when Fitzgerald tells us that the Castles are 'call[ing] the tune'.

Given such wide-ranging implications of modern dancing, it is not surprising that Basil, in 'The Perfect Life' is 'attacked' by 'sudden anxiety' on the dance floor (*BJG*, p. 129). The atmosphere becomes tense, Basil 'trying to pretend to himself that he disapproved of it all' whilst the dancers of 'all ages and several classes of society shuffled around tensely to the nervous, disturbing beats of "Too Much Mustard."' Basil is transfixed by watching Jobena dance, but only minutes later unwisely counsels her against 'dancing modern suggestive dances which are simply savagery' (*BJG*, p. 134). Basil feels torn between his true feelings and those he feels he ought to have, in order to imitate the Princetonian John Danby. By the end of the story, Basil has started smoking again, and has imbibed his first ever cocktails, all in an attempt to save Jobena from a hasty elopement with the wonderfully named, but eminently unsuitable Skiddy De Vinci. However, we do not see him dance again in the story. His anxieties about his

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<sup>39</sup> Susan Currell, 'Introduction', in *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s*, ed. by Susan Currell and Christina Cogdell (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), pp. 1-16 (p. 2).

body persist to the stage where he even asks Jobena to leave the lights off when they finally embrace: 'Just for this once we don't need the light' (*BJG*, p. 144).

Basil is uncomfortable in his own body: the expectation that he would dance provokes a violent attack of anxiety. It is not the first time Basil has been uncomfortable in his own skin. In the second (but first published) Basil Duke Lee story, 'The Scandal Detectives', Basil feels sexually challenged by Hubert Blair, a new boy in town who dazzles the girls with his 'lithe, stylish, athletic torso' and his 'virtuosic athletic ability', which includes extremely advanced roller-skating, and leads Basil and his friends to hatch a plan to surprise Hubert, in disguise, and ruthlessly bundle him into a garbage can (*BJG*, p. 24). But when Basil hears Hubert whistling the tune to the 'Grizzly Bear' (a popular ragtime dance song drawing upon African American musical innovations with lyrics containing physical and verbal sexual innuendoes), Basil changes his opinion of Hubert wholeheartedly, his jealousy turning to admiration, and they abandon the attack.<sup>40</sup> The disguises Basil and his friends choose are telling: Basil dresses with a 'confederate moustache' as a 'Southern planter of the old persuasion', his friend Bill 'with a long Balkan mustache', and the third in their party, Riply 'in a full rabbinical beard'. In recounting his tale to their parents, Hubert gains more sympathy because of the ethnic 'otherness' of his would-be 'assailants' (*BJG*, p. 28). Anthony Berret explains, 'In the story, both parents and children see the "foreigners" as a threat, but the children also imitate them and disguise themselves as them. They do the same thing on the dance floor'.<sup>41</sup> For Basil, this leads to a state of profound anxiety.

The dance-floor anxiety which Basil experiences in 'The Perfect Life' is made up of three parts: a racial dimension of fearing that which is other, an anxiety about the sexual dimension of the new popular dances, and a resulting sense of identity confusion. Basil and his peers try on different masks to sample each identity. Basil tries out being a prudish critic of all things modern, but this only serves to highlight his innate adolescent anxieties about his body and sexuality. The boys dress up as ethnic others to intimidate Hubert but literally take off their masks before they carry out the deed. Hubert Blair is described in racialised terms throughout the story. Whistling the 'Grizzly Bear' with its

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<sup>40</sup> Irving Berlin's 1910 song, 'Grizzly Bear' instructs readers on how to do the dance, and references Buffalo, a popular destination for elopements: 'Hug up close to your baby/ Throw your shoulders t'ward the ceiling / Lawdy, lawdy, what a feelin' / Snug up close to your lady / [...] Something nice is gwine to happen / [...] Show your darlin' beau / Just how you go to Buffalo / Doin' the Grizzly Bear'. See *Lyrics of Irving Berlin*, p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Berret, 'Basil and the Dance Craze', p. 95.



lyrics supposedly written in African American ‘dialect’, showing extraordinary physical prowess and showmanship stereotypically associated with the African American entertainer in the 1920s, Hubert is eventually described as ‘making little rhythmic jumps and twirls on his toes, like a witch doctor throwing a slow hypnosis over an African tribe’ (*BJG*, p. 25). Basil dislikes him but admires him almost in spite of himself.

In his seminal 2007 study exploring Fitzgerald’s ‘racial angles’, Nowlin is particularly interested in Fitzgerald’s portrayal of African American characters as simultaneously highly desirable and ominous. Writing about ‘Head and Shoulders’, the story of a chorus girl who becomes a successful author, and an academic who becomes a popular entertainer, Nowlin explains that the narrative

reveals, in effect, that the story of the Fitzgerald hero’s ambivalent relation to American popular culture and to contemporaneity is inseparable from the story of his anxious relation to his own body, for it is precisely that body that heeds the call of the pleasure principle to which American popular culture gives voice.<sup>42</sup>

The story of Horace and Basil’s anxious relation to their own bodies is not just sexually, but also racially coded, and is explored by Fitzgerald through the personally poignant medium of dance. Fitzgerald’s exploration of modern dance significantly evolves in his portrayal of Josephine Baker in his 1931 story ‘Babylon Revisited’. His criticism of cultural media as a dangerous model of identity is developed by his consideration of how celebrity culture distorts self-perception. By exploring Baker’s performances in Paris, Fitzgerald has a unique perspective from which to assess American culture, and he does this by considering how Baker’s dance bisects both issues of performative identity in the age of celebrity, and primitivist modernism.

## **II. Josephine Baker’s ‘Chocolate Arabesques’**

In ‘First Blood’ (1930) Fitzgerald’s rebellious teenage protagonist, Josephine Perry, gives her parents grave cause for concern and begins to show signs of the ‘Emotional

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<sup>42</sup> Nowlin, *Racial Angles*, p. 20.

Bankruptcy' (1931) with which she will end the cycle of short stories. Emotional bankruptcy, closely linked to the concept of dissipation found in 'Babylon Revisited', is the act of calling upon emotional resources that have already been spent, and finding oneself devoid of any capacity for experiencing emotion. It is a condition Fitzgerald self-diagnosed in the 'Crack-Up' essays of 1936, as well as a state he attributed more widely to certain flappers of the late 1910s and early 1920s, such as Josephine. 'One cannot both spend and have', realises Josephine, after being kissed by her true love (*BJG*, p. 286). She is devastated to perceive that she feels nothing.

Fitzgerald's first use of the term 'emotional bankruptcy' is in the title of the 1931 story that concluded the five-story Josephine sequence which in turn are linked by socio-historical context and theme to the nine Basil stories, published between 1928 and 1929. Recent commentators have drawn attention to Josephine as a product of her time – her rebelliousness and flirtation are ultimately quashed by her lack of skills and education.<sup>43</sup> By the end of the 'quietly terrifying little morality "play"', she still has no visible prospect of future emotional fulfillment, despite her epiphanic self-knowledge.<sup>44</sup> Reader sympathy for her is limited, especially in comparison to Basil, who repents for his selfish behaviour and matures, but Josephine (who ages only two years in the sequence of stories, compared with Basil's six) remains vain, shallow and often spiteful right up until her dramatic realisation with which the sequence ends.

Josephine considers dances, and the music that accompanies them, to be of paramount importance in her life. The social whirl in which she operates gives rise to several instances of her theorising on the gender relations of her society. When attending a dance at Yale, she becomes 'abruptly aware' that 'a girl took on the importance of the man who had brought her' and realises that 'the more beautiful and charming she was, the more she could afford to disregard public opinion' (*BJG*, p. 230). Her sexuality becomes her bartering power, she realises, in a society in which she is dependent on who chooses her: in other words, she is limited by how desirable a product she renders herself. It is hardly surprising that she too, echoing Basil, imbues the dance floor with danger. Josephine views the dance-floor as a scene of battle, or

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<sup>43</sup> See Quentin E. Martin, 'The First Emotional Bankrupt: F. Scott Fitzgerald's Josephine Perry', *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 1, (2002) 177-95; and Mary McAleer Balkun, "'One Cannot Both Spend and Have": The Economics of Gender in Fitzgerald's Josephine Stories', in *Fitzgerald in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Bryer, Prigozy and Stern, pp. 121-38.

<sup>44</sup> Robert L. Gale, *An F. Scott Fitzgerald Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 122.

sporting clash: ‘the field of feminine glory [was] the ballroom floor’, she muses, in free indirect discourse. Paradoxically, the objective in such a battle was actually to leave the ‘field’ of combat: ‘[it] was something you slipped away from – with a man’ (*BJG*, p. 191). It was Josephine’s fluid sense of self, and embrace of imitative identity shifts that enabled her to become so successful with the opposite sex, leading her to expend all her emotional capital so early in life. Demonstrating the centrality of imitation to interwar culture, Josephine repeatedly mimics her love interests to make herself more attractive to them, taking up various political stances or even copying body language, as Quentin E. Martin has identified: she affects ‘continual submersion of her identity in order to attract the man she wants. The values, thoughts and even words of her current love interest become her own.’<sup>45</sup> Josephine is clever and willful, but as Mary McAleer Balkun has noted, she is ‘brought to the realization that it is only through men that she has any power or authority, and she must agree to lose herself in a man’.<sup>46</sup>

She is, however, a teenager, and does not fully articulate what she has discovered, instead delivering gems like: ‘Nobody thinks of anything but boys and dances from morning till night’ (*BJG*, p. 222). Josephine’s blinkered pursuit of ‘feminine glory’ has caused her to become disconnected from her mind: she becomes lazy in articulation of her thoughts, choosing instead to indulge in ‘much quoting of lines from current popular songs, as if they expressed the writer’s state of mind more fully than verbal struggles of her own’ (*BJG*, p. 198). Going from dance, to party, to luncheon, she heeds Nowlin’s call ‘of the pleasure principle to which American popular culture gives voice.’<sup>47</sup> Yet this *enfant terrible* ends up disconnected from her body, incapable of feeling emotion when she is kissed. This puts her in a great state of anxiety, like Basil, and like Zelda.

In letters written during Zelda’s first breakdown, Fitzgerald clearly sees himself as Zelda’s parent figure, and as part of her treatment he writes to her dancing teacher, Madame Egrova, seeking a ‘report’ on her progress and potential in the summer of 1930.<sup>48</sup> It is not surprising that the parent-child relationship is central to a story of 1931 that links these themes of dancing, dead or unresponsive romantic partners, and the conflation of the fiscal and the emotional: ‘Babylon Revisited’. Written in December

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<sup>45</sup> Martin, ‘The First Emotional Bankrupt’, p. 185.

<sup>46</sup> Balkun, “‘One Cannot Both Spend and Have’”, in *Fitzgerald in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Bryer, Prigozy and Stern, pp. 121-38 (p. 131).

<sup>47</sup> Nowlin, *Racial Angles*, p. 20.

<sup>48</sup> *Life in Letters*, p. 185 [22 June 1930].

1930 while Fitzgerald was staying in Switzerland, near Zelda's hospital, 'Babylon Revisited' is a story that opens with absence and stillness. Charlie Wales makes enquiries in the Ritz Bar in Paris, finding all his friends of 18 months prior to be absent. The subject of the enquiry that opens the story, Mr. Campbell, is recuperating in Switzerland, where Fitzgerald was writing the story. The lack of movement in the bar unsettles Charlie and assaults his national identity: 'the stillness in the Ritz bar was strange and portentous. It was not an American bar any more' (*TAR*, p. 157). Wandering through Montmartre, Charlie comes across a nightclub which is static until the maître d'hôtel notices him and 'Immediately an eager orchestra burst into sound, a pair of professional dancers leaped to their feet' (*TAR*, p. 161). He rejects this inauthentic display, alluding to the Parisian cabaret tradition drawn upon by the Castles for their Manhattan cabaret *Sans Souci*, and moves on.

When he visits his daughter, who is being cared for by his sister-in-law, he begins to assert his own corporeality: he 'grip[s] the sides of the chair' to disperse his frustration physically rather than verbally, and his sister-in-law sees that 'Charlie's feet were planted on the earth now' (*TAR*, pp. 168-69). He is reconnected to his body after the period of wild partying which was the successor to Josephine Perry's tea dances. Yet significantly, Charlie's pain at his past behavior manifests itself in the form of dancing and movement. He dreams of his dead wife, whom he neglected, 'in a swing in a white dress and swinging faster and faster all the time' until she is unintelligible to him (*TAR*, p. 171).

The effect of such manic dance practice on Zelda permeates her letters of this period, writing to Fitzgerald in Autumn 1930: 'Dancing has gone and I'm weak and feeble and I can't understand why I should be the one, amongst all others, to have to bear all this – for what?'<sup>49</sup> These biographical details help to explain the centrality of bodily movement to 'Babylon Revisited'. At the story's close, when Charlie is denied custody of his daughter due to drunken friends from his past ruining his reformed image, his brother-in-law 'swing[s] Honoria back and forth like a pendulum from side to side' (*TAR*, p. 175). The child is swinging to mark the time, as a record of its relentless passage, and Charlie's helplessness. Time, for Charlie, has lost its linearity: his past mistakes haunt and infect his present, and the future he longs for is constantly held just outside of his grasp. The child, Honoria, is oblivious to this, feeling no anxiety

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<sup>49</sup> *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda*, p. 96 [Fall 1930].

about her body being used to symbolise such past, present, and future despair: ‘They couldn’t make him pay forever’ Charlie thinks, at the story’s close (*TAR*, p. 177). The mirroring of Honoria and her mother Helen’s repetitive physical movements suggests a reiteration of the past. Helen’s swinging is of her own volition, although she seems to lose control of herself, ‘swinging faster and faster’ which contrasts with Honoria’s steady pendular oscillation, the very purpose of which is to regulate and measure time. Honoria’s swing, whilst alluding to the out-of-control past of her parents, simultaneously establishes a symbol of safety, or even entrapment, as she is not moving of her own free will, but rather is being swung by her surrogate father. Her lack of agency in her living arrangements is symbolised in her corporeal compliance.

The story offers other visions of dancers: in fact, performative identity is a pervasive presence throughout - and functions both at the level of form and content – not least when Charlie attends a Josephine Baker performance:

He bought a strapontin for the Casino and watched Josephine Baker go through her chocolate arabesques [but he felt that her stuff was poor - she followed the same contorted patterns but they lacked something. She needed America, she needed refreshment - the bloom was going because the roots were dry] (*TAR*, p. 161).<sup>50</sup>

Although Fitzgerald’s final version of the story cuts the encounter down to Charlie watching Josephine ‘go through her chocolate arabesques’ and leaving after an hour without comment, in an earlier working typescript of the story, Charlie feels that her performance is inauthentic: she is literally just going through the motions. In the more detailed analysis of Josephine Baker that follows, I contextualise Fitzgerald’s fascination with primitivist modernism whilst seeking to show how parody is a central concept of Baker’s art.

Josephine Baker had a fascinating life spanning the roles of dancer, actress, singer, humanitarian, civil rights activist, and Resistance spy, but it was her first role, as dancer, for which she is most famous. Baker’s semi-nude performances on Paris stages grew out of her training in New York as a chorus-line dancer. Dancing at the end of the line, Baker followed the tradition, said to originate with Ethel Williams, of incorporating humorous nuances into the routines, using slapstick physical comedy as

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<sup>50</sup> The passage in square brackets appeared in an earlier draft of the story, but was deleted by Fitzgerald before publication.

well as comic facial expressions to draw attention to herself. Her mix of eroticism and comedy proved irresistible to French audiences, and Baker went on to claim French citizenship in 1937. In the 1920s, she became a muse to modernist figures across the arts, including, according to Anne Anlin Cheng, Le Corbusier, who wrote a ballet for her; Matisse, who made a life-size cut-out of her that he kept in his bedroom; and Alice B. Toklas, who invented a pudding named after her, completing the assimilation of her public persona into popular culture.<sup>51</sup>

As Christa Daughtrey and West have explored, Charlie is insinuating that Baker needs to reinvent herself and refresh her identity, just as Charlie himself seeks to do.<sup>52</sup> Ironically, that was the exact function of the Casino de Paris show, which Terri J. Gordon and others have identified as a turning point in Baker's career in which she began to cultivate her multiple talents and diva persona, from adopting elaborately bejewelled and feathered costumes, to developing her bilingual singing voice, and acting in comedic sketches.<sup>53</sup> A solo show, Baker's *Paris qui Remue* opened in October 1930, just three months before Fitzgerald wrote 'Babylon Revisited'. The name of the show literally translates as 'Paris that moves, with connotations of wriggling' or, more elegantly, 'bustling Paris'. As we have seen, this title is apt since Parisian movement and stasis are also important themes in 'Babylon Revisited'.

In deleting the latter half of his description, Fitzgerald leaves us only with the distilled gesture of 'chocolate arabesques,' a deceptively simple phrase. Within the story, dance figures as a shorthand for the painful past, and Baker's arabesques in part serve as a bridge between the past and present. Like Jim's production line jazz academy, the distilled gesture of 'chocolate arabesques' recalls Taylorist philosophies, and constitutes an important motif in the story: Honoria swings like a pendulum, and her mother swings with increasing speed that obscures her speech. Both have been severed from Charlie, who feels increasingly disembodied, at one point attempting to re-assert his corporeality by firmly gripping the chair in Marion's house, and 'plant[ing]' his feet 'on the earth' as he fights to regain custody of Honoria (*TAR*, p. 169). When he judges that Baker needs America to affirm her sense of self, and reignite

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<sup>51</sup> See Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) for a fuller exploration of Baker as a modernist muse.

<sup>52</sup> Christa E. Daughtrey and James L. W. West III, 'Josephine Baker, Petronius, and the Text of "Babylon Revisited"', *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 1 (2002), 3-15 (p. 8).

<sup>53</sup> See Terri J. Gordon, 'Synesthetic Rhythms: African American Music and Dance Through Parisian Eyes', *The Scholar and Feminist Online*, 6.1-6.2 (2007-08), 1-8  
<[http://sfonline.barnard.edu/baker/gordon\\_01.htm](http://sfonline.barnard.edu/baker/gordon_01.htm)> [accessed 8 October 2015] (p. 4).

her authenticity, it is possible to read that as Charlie's self-diagnosis and tempting to read it as Fitzgerald's own desires, as expressed from Switzerland, where he anxiously awaited news of Zelda's psychiatric treatment.

**Figure 7** Zelda Fitzgerald performing an arabesque whilst a patient at Prangins Hospital, Switzerland, c. 1930-1931. *The Romantic Egoists*, p. 176

Zelda herself was familiar with the technicalities of the arabesque position, whether performed *en pointe*, *demi pointe*, or with flat feet. Baker also studied ballet in the early 1930s, fusing what she learned of classical ballet with the modern dance traditions of vaudeville, the ragtime dances that the Castles adapted, and jazz dance.<sup>54</sup> In fact, Bruccoli reports that in early 1930, a scout attended one of Zelda's ballet recitals. She thought he was from Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*, (despite the company closing in August 1929 after his death), but in fact he was from the *Folies Bergère*, Baker's old employers, and was apparently 'interested in making [Zelda] a shimmy dancer'.<sup>55</sup> It was Baker who went on to receive private ballet lessons from George Balanchine of *Ballets*

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<sup>54</sup> According to biographer Patrick O'Connor, Baker studied ballet in the early 1930s in private lessons with George Balanchine, ballet master and choreographer of the Ballets Russes. See Bryan Hammond and Patrick O'Connor, *Josephine Baker* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1988), p. 118.

<sup>55</sup> Bruccoli, *Epic Grandeur*, p. 289.

*Russes* fame, in the early 1930s.<sup>56</sup> The arabesque, as a ballet position, requires the dancer to balance on one leg and extend the other behind their body, usually at a 45 or 90 degree angle (see Figure 7). It is a controlled, almost static movement, with emphasis on straightened knees and controlled poise. In essence, it is the very opposite of the Charleston which Baker was famous for, with its swinging limbs and soft, flexed knees. Regardless of the shared balletic interests of Zelda and Baker, given that the peak of Zelda's ballet obsession and Baker's solo show occurred in the months directly preceding the composition of 'Babylon Revisited', his choice of phrase demonstrates a nuanced engagement with popular culture. Aside from referring to her skin colour, the use of the word 'chocolate' in 'chocolate arabesques' may seek to recall the series of all-black revues such as the *Chocolate Dandies*, which built on the success of the 1921 show *Shuffle Along*, which had launched Baker's career, and brought jazz dance into the international spotlight.

Josephine Baker's fame arose from a complex mix of admiration and objectification that was racially coded, but complex and inconsistent. In Baker's autobiography, she recalls being rejected at auditions in the US for being both too light-skinned and too dark-skinned: 'To the whites I looked chocolate, to the blacks like a "pinky"; there was no place I belonged.'<sup>57</sup> After another chorus girl was injured, and Baker took her place, she soon found out that there was a place she belonged: the City of Light. As Angela Carter has observed, Baker's reception in Paris was distinctly different from her American reception: 'She left behind nascent Broadway stardom as a comic dancer, an elastic-limbed, rubber-faced clown, grimacing, grinning, crossing her eyes, to find herself freshly incarnated as a sex-goddess without, it would seem, changing her act very much at all.'<sup>58</sup> She succeeds in Paris with the same skills she displayed in New York City because Paris was fascinated with the concept of defining the modern condition through that which is ancient, or 'primitive'.

The transatlantic differences in the reception of Baker's performance convey differing reactions to African American cultural traditions, as well as America's reaction to its own 'native' medium of vaudeville. Nowlin draws upon Eric Lott's distinctions of 'love and theft' in describing 'white America's relation to black culture

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<sup>56</sup> See Hammond and O'Connor, p. 118.

<sup>57</sup> Josephine Baker and Jo Bouillon, *Josephine*, trans. by Mariana Fitzpatrick (New York: Paragon House, 1988), pp. 24-27.

<sup>58</sup> Angela Carter, 'Review of Phyllis Rose: *Jazz Cleopatra*', in *Expletives Deleted: Selected Writings* (London: Vintage, 2006), pp. 193-95 (p. 193).



and black bodies as encoded in the minstrel tradition'.<sup>59</sup> In stories such as 'Dice, Brassknuckles & Guitar', Fitzgerald shows how white Americans' appreciation and enjoyment of African-American cultural traditions is complex, and he situates his story in a context that elicits tensions between the social classes. The compliment paid by the imitation of dance, musical style and African American dances of the time is revealed to be a double edged sword: 'such cultural appropriation represents another mode of enslaving African Americans', as Nowlin puts it, but he is careful to point out that this conclusion is immediately problematised by Fitzgerald's 'too evident lack of interest' in African American characters in this story. Jim Powell has a 'manservant', Hugo, to whom he owes his knowledge of African American culture, yet who remains virtually mute throughout the story – professionally and narratively subservient to Jim. The story's denouement confirms that there are inherent dangers in appropriating African American culture for a living as Jim does, as a dance teacher: Powell loses his livelihood and in a twist reminiscent of the 'secret identity' strand in the earliest Fitzgerald story which explicitly confronts the issue of race, 'The Offshore Pirate', Powell discovers that his love interest, Amanthis, who he had hoped to integrate into high society, already numbers amongst them, having tricked Jim into believing them to be peers. Having taught the youths of Southampton what he knows about the culture he appropriates, he cannot prevent them from using this knowledge once he and his services have been unceremoniously rejected from the community, and this anxiety of reception can be related to Fitzgerald's self-conception as an artist. Nowlin elegantly summarises this anxiety: 'For a white artist such as Fitzgerald, able to conceive of himself as an outsider seeking the cultural recognition of the powerful, affiliation with black culture carries with it the risk of either cultural ephemerality or cultural illegitimacy.'<sup>60</sup> In America, at least, this may have been the case.

In Europe, and specifically in Paris, affiliation with black culture did not carry such strong risks of cultural ephemerality or illegitimacy – and this is why Josephine Baker could take the same skillset to Paris and elicit much more artistic legitimacy and permanence than she found in the United States. The reasons for this warm reception lie in the complex cultural atmosphere described by Petrine Archer-Shaw as 'Negrophilia' (from the French '*négrophilie*'). Literally denoting a love for black culture, the word

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<sup>59</sup> Nowlin, *Racial Angles*, p. 75.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

describes the Parisian desire to embrace all things African and the avant-garde's intentions to 'co-opt black culture to promote their ideas about modernity'.<sup>61</sup>

There are of course inherently racist assumptions involved in attempting to understand some kind of universalised African experience of identity. Stereotypes of Africans as 'pure', 'uncivilised', highly sexual and instinctively musical invaded popular culture of the 1910s and 20s, and in France, these racist assumptions were coupled with fierce debate about France's colonial territories, such concerns making their way into popular culture via such revue sketches as *La Folie du Jour* (1926-27). Baker appeared as 'Fatou, a native girl, bare-breasted and clad in a skirt of rubber bananas [...] and [who] encounters a white explorer'.<sup>62</sup> Remembered for the presence of Baker's signature comically phallic banana skirt, the role spoke to a French audience at a time when their country's colonial empire was at its height, including territories in Northern and Western Africa.

Debate continues over the degree to which Baker was complicit in creating (as well as performing) French colonial imagery, as well as the degree to which her performances were parodic. Mae Gwendolyn Henderson argues that, read incorrectly, Baker's work can be read as 'reproducing gender and race clichés, caricatures, and stereotypes as they are produced by the dominant and hegemonic discourse'.<sup>63</sup> Take, for example, Baker's own description of her 1925 debut in *La Revue Nègre*: 'Driven by dark forces I didn't recognize, I improvised, crazed by the music [...] My teeth and eyes burned with fever [...] I felt [...] intoxicated.'<sup>64</sup> This recalls the lexis of disease that Fitzgerald and others used to describe ragtime dance. Though Baker often worked within the confines of expected racial stereotypes and clichés of this period in her performances, she also asserted herself through subtle choreographic means that became her trademark: from her crossed eyes and clowning, to parading her pet cheetah around Paris, she mocked the roles she played at the same time as redefining them. Daphne Ann Brooks finds that Baker even transforms iconic minstrel caricatures into tools of

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<sup>61</sup> Petrine Archer-Shaw, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), p. 51.

<sup>62</sup> Andrea D. Barnwell, 'Like the Gypsy's Daughter, Or Beyond the Potency of Josephine Baker's Eroticism', in *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. by Joanna Skipwith, Richard J. Powell, and David A. Bailey (London: Hayward Gallery, 1997), pp. 82-89, (p. 84).

<sup>63</sup> Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, 'Colonial, Postcolonial, and Diasporic Readings of Josephine Baker as Dancer and Performance Artist', *The Scholar and Feminist Online*, 6.1-6.2 (2007-08), 1-8 <[http://sfoonline.barnard.edu/baker/henderson\\_01.htm](http://sfoonline.barnard.edu/baker/henderson_01.htm)> [accessed 8 October 2015] (p. 8).

<sup>64</sup> Baker and Bouillon, pp. 51-2.

farce that could dissolve authority.<sup>65</sup> Such subversive reimaginings of the roles assigned to her runs the risk of misinterpretation, and his reference to Baker performing a classically balletic move hints that Fitzgerald may have been aware of Baker's work to redefine the role of the jazz dancer through parodying caricatures. Although Fitzgerald's ambivalent portrayals of popular culture are vulnerable to misreadings, Fitzgerald is often actually using these references to critically engage with ideas about leisure. In 'Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar', the 'Slow Chicago with the Memphis Sideswoop' sounds exciting - Fitzgerald reminds us in 'The Perfect Life' that 'because of a neat glide or an awkward stumble, careers were determined and engagements were made or broken', but Jim's elite clientele make their ennui apparent through their near-somnambulance (*BJG*, p. 129). The dancers in Jim's academy are merely 'going through the motions': it is this same assessment that causes Charlie to regard Baker's performance as inauthentic.

Elsewhere, we see Fitzgerald using dance as a measure of authenticity, and punishing his characters for falling short and displaying inauthentic feelings on the dance floor: Marcia Meadows, as mentioned earlier, has a mid-shimmy epiphany and leaves the stage for good. Basil Duke Lee, in 'The Perfect Life' is 'attacked' by 'sudden anxiety' on the dance floor (*BJG*, p. 129). In 'The Dance' (1926), the Charleston is even used as a false alibi by a murderess, who performs the Charleston to attract attention and prevent anyone from discovering the murder she has committed upstairs. Fitzgerald describes her gingham 'country girl's dress' with a 'wide sunbonnet' and her face 'stained yellow with powder [...] with rolling eyes and a vacant negroid leer' (*ASM*, p. 303). Fitzgerald seems to be referencing Topsy, the child slave from Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), a mischievous character featuring in numerous play adaptations and often played by white actors in blackface. Described by Jayna Brown as constituting 'a lesson in physical contact with "primitives"', she argues that 'the project of civilising Topsy was a metaphor for colonial missionary programs and their paternalist agendas'.<sup>66</sup> It is a curious allusion for Fitzgerald to make in a story set in a country club in a small Southern town, but interestingly, Baker had played a Topsy role in the 1924 revue *Chocolate Dandies* (see Figure 8).

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<sup>65</sup> Daphne Ann Brooks, 'The End of the Line: Josephine Baker and the Politics of Black Women's Corporeal Comedy,' *The Scholar and Feminist Online*, 6.1-6.2 (2007-08), 1-6 <[http://sfonline.barnard.edu/baker/brooks\\_01.htm](http://sfonline.barnard.edu/baker/brooks_01.htm)> [accessed 8 October 2015] (p. 3).

<sup>66</sup> Brown, p. 86, p. 65.

**Figure 8** Josephine Baker as 'Topsy Anna' in  
*Chocolate Dandies* (1924)

In her breakthrough role in the chorus of *Shuffle Along* (1921), Baker's dancing played with notions of authenticity. She imitated Ethel Williams' disruptive practice of seeming unable to perform the correct steps, before dazzling the audience in the encore by surpassing the skills of the other dancers.<sup>67</sup> Her dancing combined graceful, controlled movements with madcap 'mugging', wild limbs, and crossed eyes. The surprise element in Baker's routines destabilised expectations of identity, to the delight of her audiences. Baker's apparent unpredictability was part of her performances, whereas when Zelda's dance mania revealed itself, this was not a controlled manipulation of expectation, but something more dangerous.

It has already been established that within 'Babylon Revisited', dance figures as a shorthand for the painful past, and Baker's arabesques also serve as a bridge between the past and present. Fitzgerald implies that she is going through the motions of a set routine, 'the same patterns' yielding a different reaction in Charlie from his previous response to Baker's dancing. Similarly, in the 'novelette', 'May Day', published at the

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<sup>67</sup> See Brooks, 'The End of the Line', p. 3.

outset of Fitzgerald's literary career in 1920, the word 'arabesque' has again been used as a temporal bridge, recollecting a dead love:

The affair had died, drowned in the turmoil of the war and quite forgotten in the arabesque of these three months, but a picture of her, poignant, debonnaire, immersed in her own inconsequential chatter, recurred to him unexpectedly and brought a hundred memories with it (*TJA*, p. 70).

It is telling that Fitzgerald chooses to use dance to represent temporal trauma in two stories a decade apart. It seems that he sees potential in dance gestures to convey temporal markers beyond those available in the vocabulary of language. In 1924's "The Sensible Thing", he envisages dancers as a literal bridge, pre-empting the architect Le Corbusier's fascination with Baker as a representative of modernist aesthetics of display and the cityscape:

All his life he had thought in terms of tunnels and skyscrapers and great squat dams and tall, three-towered bridges, that were like dancers holding hands in a row with heads as tall as cities and skirts of cable strand (*ASM*, p. 152).

The image is an arresting one, and the story proceeds to hinge around the impenetrable chasm between the past and the present, and the failure of the hero to reignite his past love. It also associates the figure of the dancer with the new vertical aesthetic of city skyscrapers and grand-scale bridges. Dancers, here, are a fundamentally modern feature of the cultural and literal landscape; architects and choreographers are conflated.

Fitzgerald is positioning Baker's artistic expression as a bridge: her arched body links the 'high' artistic impulses of ballet with the popular treat embodied by both chocolate and a cabaret show. As well as referencing confectionary, the word 'chocolate' is used to describe Baker's skin colour, which was itself the subject of much discussion in the 1920s, with rumours of her use of natural (lemon juice and milk) and chemical (creams and treatments) skin-lightening techniques, complemented by her strategic use of cosmetics.<sup>68</sup> Coming from an entertainment background steeped in the

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<sup>68</sup> See, for example, accounts in Archer-Straw, pp. 94-97; and Jean-Claude Baker and Chris Chase, *Josephine: The Hungry Heart* (New York: Random House, 1993), p. 137.

traditions of minstrelsy, and having appeared in *Shuffle Along*, which specifically recruited lighter-skinned African American women to appear in their chorus line, Baker frequently mentions an early dissatisfaction with her skin colour in her memoirs, and though the subject of her skin tone is too broad in scope to explore here, (and has been examined in depth by Cheng amongst others), one aspect in particular is relevant to this discussion.<sup>69</sup>

Baker appeared in the musical revue *Chocolate Dandies* (which itself had grown out of a Broadway show called *Chocolate Kiddies*) from September 1924, leaving the United States in September 1925 to star in the *Revue Nègre* in Paris. In Fitzgerald's September 1924 piece, 'How to Live on Practically Nothing a Year', he satirises the public's impressions of Americans in Europe, describing himself and Zelda on a Riviera beach thus: 'Both of them were burned to a deep chocolate brown so that at first they seemed to be of Egyptian origin' (*MLC*, p. 53). This trope had appeared months earlier in "'The Sensible Thing'" when George returns from Peru 'almost black with tan, but it was a romantic black' (*ASM*, p. 160). In 'How to Live', accompanied by their 'small black child with cotton-white hair', Fitzgerald tells us that 'closer inspection showed that their faces had an Aryan cast' (*MLC*, p. 53). Mistaken identity is a favoured device in Fitzgerald's magazine fiction, often enabling characters to express their true desires and traits before returning to more socially acceptable personas, as in 'The Offshore Pirate', 'Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar' and 'Rags Martin-Jones and the Prince of Wales' (1924). Nowlin has shown how Fitzgerald's complex identification with the African American entertainer as a fellow artistic outsider permeated his fiction deeply. Here, the Riviera setting also invokes contemporary debates around tanning, explored by Susan L. Keller who states that 'Suntanning constituted an unprecedented change in how the body was conceptualized, a new form of self-construction wherein white skin as a symbol of prestige was replaced with dark skin as an index of one's wealth and leisure'.<sup>70</sup> Fitzgerald's description of his suntanned family situates this wealth and leisure in the foreground of a scene in which: 'Out of the casino nearby drifted weird rococo music – a song dealing with the non-possession of a specific yellow fruit in a certain otherwise well-stocked store' (*MLC*, p. 53). Pre-dating Baker's famous banana-skirt in her 'Danse Sauvage' by a year, Fitzgerald's reference to the song 'Yes, We

<sup>69</sup> See Cheng; and Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, 'Josephine Baker and *La Revue Nègre*: From Ethnography to Performance', *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 23:2 (2003), 107-33.

<sup>70</sup> Susan L. Keller, 'The Riviera's Golden Boy: Fitzgerald, Cosmopolitan Tanning, and Racial Commodities in *Tender is the Night*', *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 8 (2010), 130-59 (p. 130).

Have No Bananas' highlights their exotic setting, counterpointing it with this popular musical revue number from 1922. Fitzgerald's facetious treatment of race here sits in tension with his serious, creative identification with the African American entertainer elsewhere.

Baker's alleged desire to bleach her 'chocolate' skin and the tanning of the Fitzgerald's to a 'deep chocolate brown' were concurrent: a photo of Baker from 1926 (which the Fitzgeralds spent on the Riviera) reveals an elegantly dressed and beaming Baker to be caked in light-toned make-up, and looking ghostly. She is with 'Count' Pepito Abatino, her fiancé and manager, who holds a Josephine Baker doll that is costumed in a much more revealing outfit than the demure Baker.<sup>71</sup> Baker, it seems, tries to lighten herself whilst simultaneously having achieved phenomenal success in the same black body which she tries to lighten. Fitzgerald, on the other hand, identifies with the black outsider as a means of validating his artistic mission, whilst enjoying the privileges attendant in being a white male. Archer-Shaw recognises that whilst 'many blacks in Paris bleached their skin...in order to assimilate better', the white 'negrophiles' of Paris 'compromised their racial purity for the sake of contact with blacks. Parisian women even used Bakerfix, the hair product named after Josephine Baker, to give their hair the same short, shiny lacquered look'. Archer-Shaw finds that this black mimicry was borne of necessity (and the memory of slavery, when lighter-skinned slaves could qualify as house slaves rather than field slaves), whereas white mimicry 'resulted, at best, from spiritual deprivation, and at worst, from whim'.<sup>72</sup> Linda Mizejewski describes how, in the US, 'café au lait [light-skin effect blackface] makeup became a standard sexual mask for the more daring Ziegfeld Girls' performances, a way to appropriate but also distance a racially structured, forbidden sexuality'.<sup>73</sup>

There is something to be said of that curious image cluster: Baker's attempts to lighten her skin resulting in chalky dryness, Charlie Wales remarking that her roots were dry when he saw her perform at the Casino de Paris theatre, and the Fitzgeralds, taking pleasure in bronzing themselves to 'a deep chocolate brown', listening to music about bananas emanate from a casino. Previously rigid categories and classifications of race are being eroded. The purposefully discordant combination of the balletic, historically white-dominated, 'arabesques' with the description 'chocolate' which

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<sup>71</sup> The picture is reproduced and discussed in Archer-Shaw, p. 96.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>73</sup> Linda Mizejewski, *Ziegfeld Girl: Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema* (London: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 11.

recalls the European vogue for all-black revues (*Chocolate Dandies*, *The Blackbirds*, *Tan Town Topics*, amongst others) situates Josephine in a liminal space. She is performing at the Casino de Paris music hall: a famous and historic venue, hosting many mainstream stars in its time, and the cheap, foldable ‘strapontin’ seat Charlie Wales purchases could either suggest a seediness which the *Saturday Evening Post* editors may have picked up on, or conversely, could indicate a sell-out performance. Fitzgerald is ambiguous about this, indicating only that Charlie remains for an hour of the performance, which would have been likely to constitute about half of the act.

Fitzgerald counterpoints the familiar and desirable, but racially-loaded ‘chocolate’ with the white-dominated and socially elevated ‘arabesques’, both words appropriately coming to English via the French: *les arabesques chocolats*. Charlie then imagines the restorative affect that America would have on Baker, uprooting her from her Parisian success and returning her to her origins (to which she was not to return until a brief 1936 visit that proved disastrous in the wake of segregation’s continued enforcement in the United States). Charlie renders her an outsider on her own stage by judging that she ‘lacks America’.

The reasoning for this is complex: Fitzgerald was, firstly, angry at dance in general at this time, especially ballet, given Zelda’s condition. He identified, as Nowlin has shown, with black entertainers, because of his own anxieties about his social status, as well as because of the great artistic potential which he saw in himself. Charlie Wales is displaced from America just as Josephine Baker is. Though Charlie’s business success is back on track after his lost Babylonian years, his life is not complete: it is Lincoln and Marion’s home that is ‘warm and comfortably American’, while Charlie spends time in the Ritz Bar which ‘was not an American bar any more’ (*TAR*, p. 159, p. 157). As Baker’s act appears tired to Wales, Fitzgerald’s ‘act’, his writing, was becoming more of a struggle. It is possible that in his identification with Baker, Fitzgerald transfers some of his own feelings of inadequacy and anxiety on to her, through his loaded allusions to popular culture.

Fitzgerald is clear to point out, in this story and elsewhere, that too much dancing, or the wrong kind of dancing, can cause a splintering between the cognitive and corporeal functions of dancers - a split that Zelda, ever representative of the age, experienced firsthand. Dancers who feel disconnected from their bodies form a motif that conveys Fitzgerald’s ambivalence towards dance. It is fun, expressive and artistic; it is also hedonistic, immoral, and dangerous. These same conflicting traits can be



applied to Fitzgerald's commercial fiction-writing enterprise. The bodily disconnected dancer can be read as a representation of Fitzgerald the *Post* writer. Jim's dance academy can be read as a metaphor for the strictures and conventions of popular short stories, within which Fitzgerald worked. Baker's arabesques can be read as representing inauthentic artistry: rather than using her creative talents to fashion something innovative, Baker is described as merely going through the motions - Charlie perceives her as being uninspired.

It is in Emmy Pinkard McChesney in 'Two Wrongs' (1930) that we find the best example of an authentic dancer who is connected to her body: we are told that 'she wanted to use herself on something she could believe in', and she works hard at her training: 'four hours a day at bar exercises, attitudes, *sauts*, arabesques and pirouettes' (*TAR*, p. 39). She is rewarded for her efforts by the chance for professional and personal success, her neglectful husband being banished to the mountains with tuberculosis. The story is an emotionally-charged imagining of the Fitzgeralds' future in the wake of their changed dynamic - in 1930, Zelda was industriously pursuing her newly-discovered vocation for dance, while Scott's novel production stalled. It is pertinent that Emmy is a classical ballerina rather than a jazz dancer - in contrast to Baker, she is not trying to mix popular and high culture. Without wanting to overstretch the metaphor, it may be relevant to consider the extended narrative of a ballet compared to that of the novel, as opposed to dance numbers lasting the length of a popular song, and revue sketches that could be read as more closely aligned with the short story form.

In Fitzgerald's later stories, from the mid thirties onwards, significantly fewer dancers appear. In 1935, Fitzgerald clear-sightedly assessed his story output in a letter to Max Perkins, remarking that of those which had not been republished in book form, 'This is in some measure because the best of these stories have been stripped of their high spots which were woven into novels - but it is also because each story contains some special fault - sentimentality, faulty construction, confusing change of pace - or else was too obviously made for the trade'.<sup>74</sup> This assessment is pertinent: Fitzgerald's stories are insistent that dance must come from a genuine place that is expressive of authentic and true selfhood, in order to avoid the risk of psychic and corporeal schism. When dancers are just 'going through the motions' with 'dry roots', and fall short of this ideal, they are punished. The problem for readers of Fitzgerald - and Baker - is how

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<sup>74</sup> *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 406 [26 March 1935].

far we are supposed to read their stances as literal, or satiric. In other words, does Fitzgerald really want to punish his dancers for falling short of the ideal of perfect synchronicity between intent and gesture? What, in fact, does this perfection look like? To approach this question from another angle, we might ask whether you can create brilliant artistic expression whilst working within rules and guidance for dancing, or writing?

On multiple occasions, Fitzgerald sets up ragtime and jazz dance as being formulaic by establishing set expectations (as taught in dance schools and in manuals) and then presents dancers who blindly follow these precepts as being out of touch with their authentic selves, as ‘lacking something, in need of refreshment’. If we can interpret this contradiction as an articulation of Fitzgerald’s own efforts to create authentic self-expression under the formulaic constraints imposed upon him by the commercial magazines, then Fitzgerald’s ambiguous portrayal of modern dance takes on new resonance. In writing about his commercial short fiction, Fitzgerald often frames his comments in terms of authenticity, writing in his notebooks: ‘The price was high, right up with Kipling, because there was one little drop of something, not blood, not a tear, not my seed, but me more intimately than these, in every story, it was the extra I had.’<sup>75</sup> In 1930 he wrote to Harold Ober, ‘these *Post* stories [...] they’re honest and if their *form* is stereotyped people know what to expect when they pick up the *Post*’.<sup>76</sup>

By turns expressing tantalising glamour and dangerous moral consequences, Fitzgerald’s exploration of the ‘slow Chicago with a Memphis sideswoop’ and his evaluation of Baker’s ‘chocolate arabesques’ show a writer who is exploring his own critical and commercial resonance, by way of interrogating the concept of an authentic, inspired creative self. Jim is teaching students how to perform an assumed identity; Baker gives a masterclass in subversive performed identity, and through his descriptions of both, Fitzgerald demonstrates that although he is working within the generic expectations of the commercial short story in which he describes stories as being ‘built’ rather than ‘written’, he sees authenticity as being of paramount, redeeming, importance.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *The Notebooks of Fitzgerald*, p. 131.

<sup>76</sup> *Life in Letters*, pp. 182-83 [received 13 May 1930].

<sup>77</sup> In 1936 he wrote to Adelaide Neall, a fiction editor at the *SEP*: ‘In the last two years I’ve only too often realised that many of my stories were built rather than written’, see *Life in Letters*, p. 301 [5 June 1936].

Contrary to their efforts to obscure their true selves (through lightening creams or suntanning and disguise motifs), both Fitzgerald and Baker used their authentic identities in their art. Fitzgerald famously used his own life as material for his writing, whilst Josephine played versions of herself on stage and in the motion pictures she starred in. Developing a performative persona served Baker well as she built her brand through the 1920s, and performative identity itself was something of a phenomenon in the 20s, as Kirk Curnutt asserts: ‘Identity in the 1920s assumed an unprecedented performative dimension with the traits one *possessed* suddenly less important than how (and how well) they were *presented*. [...] The presentational self did not manufacture personality but externalized innate but untapped traits.’<sup>78</sup> In other words, the theatrical self was a means of presenting innate talents to the world, purposely performing them. In expressing their theatrical selves, both Baker and Fitzgerald are producing products to be consumed for leisure.

Arguably, this is what the fictional Josephine Perry is doing as well: delivering a product to market. But in crafting and projecting her proto-flapper identity she comes to the realisation that she would rather choose than be chosen. Unfortunately, her serial seductions leave her without any emotional reserves to call upon when she finally does meet the man who she chooses as her true love.

Josephine is the product of her time, the ragtime era when young women were forced to compete socially for male validation that was finally conferred by marriage. This social competition was often facilitated by organised dances in clubs and ballrooms. This began to change by the 1920s, but not soon enough for Josephine, who wears herself out in the pursuit of admirers and is rendered old before her time by the end of the final Josephine story, in which she is declared ‘emotionally bankrupt’. Balkun provides a gendered reading of the emotional bankruptcy the story depicts: ‘she poses a threat to the social order because she attempts to move from the position of product to that of conspicuous consumer in the marriage market.’<sup>79</sup> Fitzgerald makes clear that for all the liberation afforded to the New Woman of the ragtime era, she was still fundamentally dependent on the patriarchy she tried to assert independence from.

Josephine’s generation were identified by Fitzgerald as being at the heart of the ‘Era of the Flapper’, which began in 1912, when ‘the Castles, by making modern

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<sup>78</sup> Curnutt, *Introduction to Fitzgerald*, p. 31.

<sup>79</sup> Balkun, “‘One Cannot Both Spend and Have’”, in *Fitzgerald in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Bryer, Prigozy and Stern, pp. 121-38 (p. 132).

dancing respectable, brought the nice girl into the cabaret and sat her down next to the distinctly not-nice girl' and was over 'by about 1922' when it became too widespread a counterculture. Fitzgerald explains in his 1930 essay 'Girls Believe in Girls':

roughly speaking the girls who were or would have been debutantes in 1917-1919 were the nucleus of the wild generation – their numbers were swollen by older and younger girls who were determined not to miss anything, for the wild ones seemed to be having a good time (*MLC*, pp. 100-01).

Wild as she may be, Josephine is unfulfilled by her relentless mission to find a partner ('I don't care about anything in the world except men' she tells us) and the sheer number of men she has targeted ultimately negates her capacity to emote (*BJG*, p. 275).

Another environmental cause of her emotional bankruptcy can be read as a side-effect of the postwar society in which the emerging fields of advertising, movies, and efficiency experts encouraged women to reinvent themselves through leisure activities. In 1914's *Modern Dancing*, Irene and Vernon Castle had promised that dancing would make women more beautiful, more graceful, healthier, and would stop them (and their *beaux*) from drinking.<sup>80</sup> A dance manual with self-help undertones, the book became a bestseller. By moving beyond the Victorian sensibility of settling for the first good match she encounters, and instead entering the marketplace as a consumer whose choice of acquisition speaks of her own authentic self and style, Josephine fares much worse than other Fitzgerald heroines who conflate the material and the emotional, such as the bored heiress Rags in 'Rags Martin-Jones and the Prince of Wales'. Rags ends up figuratively 'patroniz[ing]' the 'best bazaar in the world' to buy "some perfectly beautiful love" (*ASM*, p. 99). Josephine's unhappy ending stems from her failure to budget, just like Charlie Wales. She is not a discerning shopper.

Fitzgerald had a unique insight into consumerism as he anxiously toed the line between literary craftsman and *Post* writer courting mass appeal. As a celebrity, he consciously manipulated his own public image – despite his faux innocent protestations in 1932's essay 'My Lost City' that he was shocked at the attention: 'to my bewilderment, I was adopted [...] as the very archetype of what New York wanted' (*MLC*, p. 109). Fitzgerald knew about the imitative tendencies consumer culture

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<sup>80</sup> Castle and Castle, p. 33, p. 146, pp. 150-54, pp. 173-76.

heralded – and he recognised the inherent dangers for the authentic expression of identity the advertisers promised they would enable. As discussed in Chapter One, the idea of the pecuniary emulator fascinated Fitzgerald (partly because he feared being one himself) and while Jay Gatsby is his fullest exploration of the *nouveau riche* who mistakenly conflate the material and spiritual pre-crash, Charlie Wales, post-crash, shows how the blinkered pursuit of prosperity is just as dangerous a concept as the relentless pursuit of hedonism.

Disposability, as demonstrated both by Josephine's carousel of suitors and Charlie's outrageously extravagant tips, led to increased consumption, but also to decreased resources. Curnutt summarises the notion, propagated by the advertising industry, that 'without the satisfaction of 'using up' an item ... consumers would have little motivation to spend their disposable income on a continuous basis'.<sup>81</sup> Josephine is still attractive to her ideal man though she is used up emotionally. She has already begun the process of substituting her authentic feelings and thoughts for other market products, such as song lyrics. Curnutt continues: 'As Fitzgerald implies, if consumerism encourages individuals to view themselves as commodities, it only stands to reason that the same satisfaction to be had in using up and throwing away a marketplace good can be derived by wasting one's own assets.' It is a class issue: Thorstein Veblen gives a name to the impulse to show 'conspicuous waste' as a mark of wealth and prosperity. Josephine tries to become a consumer too soon: she is a commodity, and is driven to use herself up in a perverse fulfillment of the hedonism Fitzgerald condemned on the dance-floor. Her gender disadvantages her, for though Zelda Fitzgerald recognises herself, and the flapper in general, 'as an artist in her objective field, the art of being – being young, being lovely, being an object', it is Scott Fitzgerald who complains of being 'not only ... spokesman for the time but... the typical product of that same moment' (*MLC*, p. 110).<sup>82</sup> The men are allowed to sell and market themselves, but women, navigating their way from Victorian to modern sensibilities, were there to be chosen, not choose. After all, Zelda writes this piece in 1922, the year after the first Miss America competition crystallised the old social ritual of choosing partners that used to take place in ballrooms in bustles, and now took place in hotels, wearing swimsuits. Lest we forget, Zelda's piece, which playfully recommends a dabble in flapperdom as good preparation for

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<sup>81</sup> Curnutt, 'Fitzgerald's Consumer World,' in *A Historical Guide*, pp. 85-128 (p. 115).

<sup>82</sup> Zelda Fitzgerald, 'What Became of the Flappers?', p. 398.

settling down to marriage and motherhood, was published in *McCall's* under a joint byline with her husband's name.<sup>83</sup>

In the transition from the ragtime dances (presided over by the Castles, and practised by Basil), to the jazz and blues dances (engaged in by the students of Jim Powell's dance school, and reimagined by Josephine Baker) it is possible to trace Fitzgerald's portrayal of dance as a racially and sexually coded response to modernity. However, Fitzgerald is unable to disguise his fundamentally moralistic stance which criticises empty hedonism, and sends his dance teacher, Powell, dejectedly back to the South with no plans to continue with dance instruction. He has Basil ultimately reject modern dancing, leaving him standing on a verandah outside a dance in the final story in the series, 'Basil and Cleopatra' (1929), looking up at his stars: 'symbols of ambition, struggle and glory'. In the original ending of the story (Fitzgerald having sent the new ending directly to the *Saturday Evening Post* as they considered the purchase), Basil 'replaced his pride in his pocket for safe keeping and hurried back to the dance' (*BJG*, pp. 373-74). By having Basil reject the dance, Fitzgerald is able to suggest the nobler purposes to which Basil can aspire. Fitzgerald offers Josephine Baker the option of returning to America, but Josephine Perry is left with no such option.

Ultimately, it seems that though Fitzgerald shows the modern dances to be both 'suggestive' and 'savage', what irks him is not the sexual or racial content of the dances, but rather the hedonistic 'not too plebeian, yet not too artistic, fun' (*BJG*, p. 128) that Fitzgerald resents at this emotionally turbulent time in his career, and the practitioners of self-indulgence who fail to reform themselves are punished with the 'emotional bankruptcy' that Josephine eventually suffers, and with which Fitzgerald diagnosed himself in 1936's 'Crack-Up' essays.

Fitzgerald's treatment of Josephine Perry is rather unforgiving, but although she possesses all the qualities West lists as embodying Fitzgerald's early 'famous heroine', who was 'strong, willful, selfish, beautiful, alluring, independent, [...] ruthless [and] young', these traits somehow fail to translate into the captivating heroine of his early

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<sup>83</sup> In its original magazine context in *McCalls*, the joint byline is followed by Scott and Zelda's individual essays in separate columns, each headed by their name, although in much smaller print. See *The Romantic Egoists: A Pictorial Autobiography from the Scrapbooks and Albums of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli, Scottie Fitzgerald Smith, and Joan P. Kerr (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), pp. 132-33.

love stories.<sup>84</sup> Rather, she is something of an anti-heroine, representing the transition between Fitzgerald attempting to produce more stories of young love, and giving up on ‘rework[ing] his old romance formula’.<sup>85</sup>

By bestowing on Josephine the epiphany of self-knowledge, Fitzgerald ‘de-romanticized the girl and de-emphasized the glory of the quest’: for Josephine, love is no longer romantic nor is the quest for love glorious.<sup>86</sup> There is an aspect of this gradual de-romanticisation that invites further consideration. Fitzgerald treats certain of his flapper heroines (and sheik heroes) in a parodic way. As this chapter has demonstrated, parody involves restating the status quo, whilst repeating it *with a difference*, and by tracing something of a brief genealogy of Fitzgerald’s parodic portrayals of three heroines that precede Josephine Perry, it is possible to show how Fitzgerald was not only parodying the flapper as a popular cultural mainstay, but how he was specifically parodying his own inventions.

‘Rags Martin-Jones and the Prince of Wales’ was published in July 1924, and relates the romance between Rags, a bored heiress, and John M. Chestnut, who concocts a scheme in which he fakes being a fugitive murderer to elicit excitement from Rags, who marries him on discovering the truth (after having ‘fainted from excitement’ [ASM, p. 110]). The characterisation and plot parallels with 1920’s ‘The Offshore Pirate’ are clear, and John Higgins has also identified thematic ‘parody, probably unconscious’ of *The Great Gatsby* (1925) in the portrayal of Chestnut, who longs after Rags for five years before making a fortune and putting on an ostentatious display (in which he poses as a criminal) to attract her attention and secure her affections.<sup>87</sup> In the textual analysis that follows, I argue that Rags herself also serves as a parody of Fitzgerald’s dancing, singing, movie-infused flapper heroine. Her nonchalant unconventionality surpasses quirkiness and become ridiculous, symbolised by her purple dogs and errant monocle.

In ‘Rags’, Fitzgerald parodies Ardita’s boredom and willingness to love a proven liar in ‘The Offshore Pirate’. The opening of ‘Rags’ takes place at a New York City port as Rags’ transatlantic liner is docking. This echoes the memorable opening of ‘The Offshore Pirate’: ‘This unlikely story begins on a sea that was a blue dream’

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<sup>84</sup> James L. W. West III, ‘F. Scott Fitzgerald: Professional Author’, in *A Historical Guide*, ed. by Curnutt, pp. 49-68 (p. 56).

<sup>85</sup> Higgins, p. 68.

<sup>86</sup> Scott Donaldson, *Fool For Love: F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. edn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. 102-03.

<sup>87</sup> Higgins, p. 70.

(*F&P*, p. 5). Rags is identified as being the personification of the sea, wearing ‘a dress made in great splashy checks of sea-blue and grey’ (*ASM*, p. 96). When she pushes John off the disembarkation gangway into the Hudson River, she is symbolically pushing John into herself. Rags, then, in the subtext of her story, is in fact far more in control of her fate than John would acknowledge. Ardita is described contemplating how the people ‘she had known were but driftwood on the ripples of her temperament’ (*F&P*, p. 14). The ‘blue dream’ of ‘The Offshore Pirate’ is also echoed in ‘Rags’ when ‘the music seemed to come from far away [...] with the added remoteness of a dream’ (*ASM*, p. 102). Not only did the original ending of ‘Pirate’ involve Ardita realising the whole story was a dream, but this faraway music trope directly mirrors how ‘the sound of weird ragtime was drifting softly over on the warm breath of the night’ in ‘Pirate’ (*F&P*, p. 27). In ‘Rags’, they enjoy entertainment in a heated roof garden in Manhattan, open to the sky. In ‘Pirate’, Curtis Carlyle claims to have recently been engaged to perform at The Midnight Frolic, Florenz Ziegfield’s ‘sumptuous cabaret, serving superb food, dancing, and elaborate chorus girl productions’ on the roof of the New Amsterdam Theater on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street.<sup>88</sup> Such close echoes ensure that we read Rags in comparison to Ardita, and find Rags to be somewhat more enfranchised than Ardita. True to her name, Rags is being used by Fitzgerald to ‘rag’ Ardita: as I explore in the next chapter, ragging was the musical practice of taking a tune and performing it in ‘an unpredictable and percussive manner’.<sup>89</sup> In his book, *Jazz* (1926), the bandleader and dubiously self-appointed ‘King of Jazz’, Paul Whiteman, describes how ‘to rag a melody, one threw the rhythm out of joint making syncopation’.<sup>90</sup> I am arguing for a reading of these heroines, who share certain traits and situations without outright duplication, as syncopated flappers. Of course, since Fitzgerald’s stories originally appeared in ephemeral magazine contexts, the comparisons I have made here might have been difficult, but significantly he chose to include ‘Pirate’ and ‘Rags’ in *Flappers & Philosophers* and *All the Sad Young Men* respectively, allowing for readers to easily make these comparisons. Alongside this reading of Rags as more empowered than Ardita, we could read this intertextual teasing as Fitzgerald subtly criticising the public’s voracious demand for flapper stories.

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<sup>88</sup> Erenberg, p. 207.

<sup>89</sup> Kathy J. Ogren, *The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 14.

<sup>90</sup> Paul Whiteman, and Mary Margaret McBride, *Jazz* (New York: J. H. Sears, 1926; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1974), p. 117.



Another of Fitzgerald's stories that has been identified as relying on a 'gimmick', accused of being a 'pot-boiler', and foreshadowing elements of *Gatsby* is 'Diamond Dick and the First Law of Woman' (1924).<sup>91</sup> In this story, a World War One veteran is restored from his amnesic state by Diana 'Diamond Dick' Dickey, in order for him to remember that she is his wife. As in 'The Offshore Pirate', Diana and Rags are chronically bored, Diana feeling that the war was the pinnacle of excitement, and Rags also missing Europe. Recalling how Ardita effectively became an accomplice to a criminal gang, both Rags and Diana are associated with the criminal world to stoke their excitement: Rags' bob is twice described as being of convict's length, Diana imagines herself to be a gangster as a child, and in the story's climax, engineers a scene in which she holds her husband and his lover hostage at gunpoint.

Additionally, all three stories employ scenes in which jazz music is depicted as 'melancholy', primitive, and intoxicating. In 'Diamond Dick' the 'sad, dissonant horns were telling a melancholy story' and the voices had a 'barbaric urgency' (*TJA*, p. 309-10); Rags witnesses a singer in a 'barbaric light' singing in a 'wild minor' (*ASM*, p. 103); and Ardita hears a melody 'haunting and plaintive as a death dance from the Congo's heart' (*F&P*, p. 29).

The cumulative effect is for us to read Diana in the context of Rags and Ardita, and in doing so we discover that Diana is in fact a different breed of flapper. She seeks, rather than being sought, and masterminds the climactic gunpoint hostage scene herself. Echoing Rags' fainting spell at discovering the ruse, in 'Diamond Dick', it is Diana's husband Charley who faints, in a swoon described in floral terms: 'his whole body seemed to wilt under him' (*TJA*, p. 316). The eventual happy ending of 'Diamond Dick' has been derided as a potboiler. Higgins suggests that: 'This is a quick-money story for a popular magazine, and undoubtedly for that reason Fitzgerald tacks on the happy ending ostensibly showing that if one perseveres and packs a .44, one can repeat the past after all.'<sup>92</sup> Having put 'Diamond Dick' in the context of these other stories, it is possible to argue that, whether or not his primary concern is a marketable story, Fitzgerald is undoubtedly stretching his literary muscle by indulging in some subtle self-parody.

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<sup>91</sup> Fitzgerald amended the title in his copy of *Hearst's International*, where the story appeared in April 1924, to 'Diamond Dick'; Mangum, *A Fortune Yet*, p. 50; Higgins, p. 68.

<sup>92</sup> Higgins, p. 70.

There is a critical precedent for interpreting this self-parody. Both Ruth Prigozy and Brian Harding have analysed tendencies in the plots of Fitzgerald's stories focusing on young love and have found evidence of self-parody. In an essay published in 1982, Prigozy identifies a transitional period in Fitzgerald's story-writing between 1930 and 1936, when his plots became 'outworn, stale, mechanical - unintentional parodies of the exuberant accounts of young love and romantic longing that so captivated audiences during the boom years', going on to concede that some of the self-parody may actually be deliberate.<sup>93</sup> In comparing *Rags*, *Ardita*, and *Diamond Dick*, this self-parody becomes apparent. Higgins himself has suggested that the dream sequence that opens the Basil story 'The Freshest Boy' (1928) echoes the climaxes of 'Rags' and 'Diamond', showing Fitzgerald 'ridiculing his own earlier stories'.<sup>94</sup> In a 1989 essay, Harding suggests that Fitzgerald uses several tactics to subvert and undermine the formulaic expectations placed upon him by being a *Post* writer: the use of the unhappy (or 'modif[ied]' happy) ending; 'ironies of characterisation and plot' to undermine 'the gestures towards romance that were made "for the trade"'; and implausible plot resolutions that 'create instant fortunes and remove class barriers that would otherwise block the way to 'happy' marriages'. He argues that certain of the features for which Fitzgerald's commercial fiction has been criticised are actually examples of Fitzgerald subtly subverting magazines' expectations in order to '[expose] the conventions on which that story depended'.<sup>95</sup> This thesis seeks to extend this hypothesis beyond the handful of love stories Harding identifies, and to argue that parody is in fact a central facet of Fitzgerald's modernism, as well as American (and especially African American) culture of the 1920s and 1930s. Fitzgerald employs the popular cultural forms of dance, music, and film to enhance his use of parody and self-parody, and such a reading thus enriches our appreciation of his literary aesthetics.

In the examples above, we find *Rags* and *Diana* in ostensibly very different situations, but each of them have their selfhood called into question by Fitzgerald's intertextual parody. Recognising the centrality of parody to Baker's performances enriches our understanding of her disruptive ingenuity. Yet, this chapter has also examined how Baker was criticised for apparently losing her sense of self: her roots

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<sup>93</sup> Prigozy, 'Fitzgerald's Short Stories and the Depression', in *New Approaches*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 111-26 (p. 113).

<sup>94</sup> Higgins, p. 136.

<sup>95</sup> "'Made for - or against - the Trade'" in *The Promises of Life*, ed. by Lee, pp. 113-30 (p. 114, p. 123, p. 129).

going dry, as Fitzgerald phrased it. Fitzgerald was not the only one to criticise Baker's Parisian incarnation, and three years after 'Babylon Revisited' was published, Ethel Waters performed a parody of Baker in Irving Berlin's 1933 'topical revue', *As Thousands Cheer*. Waters played Baker, 'still the Rage of Paris', singing a song that referenced the drive to 'sanitise' and elevate music and dance cultures, that the Castles had engaged in twenty years before:

I've got Harlem on my mind,  
And I'm longing to be low-down;  
And my parlez-vous will not ring true  
With Harlem on my mind.  
I've been dined and I've been wined,  
But I'm headin' for a showdown,  
'Cause I can't go on from night till dawn  
With Harlem on my mind.  
I go to dinner with a French marquis  
Each evening after the show;  
My lips begin to whisper "mon chéri,"  
But my heart keeps singing hi-de-ho.  
I've become too damned refined,  
And at night I hate to go down  
To that highfalutin flat  
That Lady Mendl designed  
With Harlem on my mind.<sup>96</sup>

Berlin's parody of Baker has her 'longing to be lowdown' because she has 'become too darn refined'. Thus, the reciprocal relationship between Fitzgerald's stories and the cultural climate of the 1920s and 1930s remained intact, but the controversy of jazz endured, across the spheres of both dance and popular music.

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<sup>96</sup> *Lyrics of Irving Berlin*, p. 288.

## Chapter Three

### **‘Satyre Upon a Saxaphone’: Music in the Short Fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald<sup>1</sup>**

*Tales of the Jazz Age*, F. Scott Fitzgerald’s second collection of short stories, was published in September 1922, six months after his second novel, *The Beautiful and Damned* was published. Fitzgerald’s editor Max Perkins was critical of Fitzgerald’s chosen title for the collection, explaining in a May 1922 letter to Fitzgerald that Scribners’ book salesmen ‘feel that there is an intense reaction against all jazz and that the word whatever implication it actually has, will itself injure the book’.<sup>2</sup> Fitzgerald replied, defending his choice of title, and assuring Perkins that the book

will be bought by *my own personal public*, that is by the countless flappers and college kids who think I am a sort of oracle. [...] If I could think of a wonderful selling title unconnected with Jazz I’d use it but I can’t so we better use a safe one that has a certain appeal.<sup>3</sup>

Almost a decade later, Fitzgerald himself would go on to explain, in *Scribner’s* magazine, that ‘The word jazz in its progress towards respectability has meant first sex, then dancing, then music’ (*MLC*, p. 132). What Fitzgerald’s brief survey seeks to demonstrate is the variety of meaning denoted by the word ‘jazz’, and thus there are difficulties in associating the mantel ‘chronicler of the Jazz Age’ solely with the musical definition of ‘jazz’. That being said, musical jazz forms an important part of Fitzgerald’s literary enterprise, as critics such as Ruth Prigozy, T. Austin Graham, and Anthony Berret have shown in their respective studies.<sup>4</sup> Allegedly originating from the word ‘jass’, one theory posits that the orthographic change was prompted by the ‘Original Dixieland Jass Band’ who had their posters defaced in 1916 (vandals

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to Perkins, in *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, p. 60 [ca. 20 June 1922].

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 271-72 [8 May 1922].

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59 [11 May 1922].

<sup>4</sup> See Ruth Prigozy, “‘Poor Butterfly’: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Popular Music”, *Prospects*, 2 (1977), 40-67; T. Austin Graham, *The Great American Songbooks: Musical Texts, Modernism, and the Value of Popular Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Berret, *Unheard Memories*.

obfuscated the ‘J’).<sup>5</sup> The bandleader, Nick LaRocca decided to change the spelling. There are countless theories on where the word ‘jass’ itself came from, but most agree that the word probably originated in African American slang. The first appearance in print was in San Francisco, as Krin Gabbard has identified: ‘In 1913, Ernest J. Hopkins offered this definition [in a San Francisco newspaper]: “something like life, vigor, energy, effervescence of spirit, joy, pep, magnetism, verve, virility, ebullieny, courage, happiness – oh, what’s the use? – JAZZ.”’<sup>6</sup>

Theories of origin focus on the French linguistic influence upon New Orleans, as well as the various surviving African dialects spoken there, finding possible etymology along both branches, as well as the possibility that ‘jass’ was an abbreviation denoting jasmine-scented perfumes which were apparently popular in the bordellos of New Orleans, where jazz in both sexual and musical senses was to be found. As with the music, the word eventually acquired more respectability, and could be used in polite society to refer to energetic dancing and its attendant music. By the time Fitzgerald was deciding whether to call his second collection of stories ‘In One Reel’, ‘Youth and Death’, ‘Sideshow’, or, ‘Tales of the Jazz Age’, in 1922, ‘jazz’ hovered between connotations, simultaneously evoking the salacious and the innocent, as Perkins’ trepidation attests.

Fitzgerald’s novels are peppered with jazz in all of the senses he identified: sex, dance, and music. Prigozy counts seventy-one song titles and ‘innumerable lyrics’ in his novels and stories, remarking that Fitzgerald was a ‘keen analyst of the effects of popular culture on American lives’ who ‘acknowledged his debt to popular culture’ and ‘used it with meticulous care’.<sup>7</sup> Prigozy’s groundbreaking 1977 essay was the first serious attempt to investigate Fitzgerald’s relationship with music, cataloguing his use of song titles, tracing their composers, publication date and source (whether musical comedy, film, or neither), though the same has yet to be done for the lyrics Fitzgerald was so fond of quoting. Prigozy identifies the key ways in which Fitzgerald uses music: to help his characters articulate their feelings; to act as an analogue for characters’ moods and relationships; to provide background music and intensify setting; and in his later novels, *Tender is the Night* (1934), and the unfinished *The Last Tycoon* (1941),

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<sup>5</sup> See Gary Giddins, *Visions of Jazz: The First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 635.

<sup>6</sup> Krin Gabbard, ‘The word jazz’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, ed. by Mervyn Cooke and David Horn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Prigozy, ““Poor Butterfly””, p. 41.

Prigozy finds Fitzgerald's use of music to be markedly more sophisticated. He uses music to develop themes, to comment on the action, and specific songs serve as leitmotifs for relationships (especially in *Tender*).

Prigozy's scholarship was complemented in 2013 by Graham's study, *The Great American Songbooks: Musical Texts, Modernism, and the Value of Popular Culture*, in which he devotes a chapter to Fitzgerald and pervasively argues in favour of recognising Fitzgerald's use of a 'literary soundtrack' whereby extra-literary responses are evoked through Fitzgerald's invocation of songs from a communal bank of material which his initial reading public knew well, commonly known as 'The Great American Songbook'. This approach relinquishes a certain degree of authorial control, relying on the reader to make the right connections between lyric and aural experience. Furthermore, this extra-literary device deteriorates in effectiveness as the fictions, and the pool of music to which they allude, age. Graham finds that this mixture of immediacy and ambiguity reaches its apex in *The Great Gatsby*, where the erosion of contemporaneity and the half-life of recognition actually propels the literary technique, creating a haunting sense of the half-remembered that chimes with Gatsby's selective memory and persistent tendencies to conflate the past and the present.<sup>8</sup>

Fitzgerald's trust in his readership to interpret his references to songs and lyrics shows his awareness of the role audience reception plays in determining the relative value of pop culture. As Prigozy reminds us, he had the utmost respect for popular culture, but it is difficult, especially for a modern reader, to untangle the occasions when we are meant to draw serious inferences from those times when Fitzgerald is burlesquing the very idea of seeking serious meaning from popular entertainment. Songs can provide comic relief (such as when Basil is eagerly trying to woo a girl who is distractedly humming 'My little lovin' - honey man-', [*BJG*, p. 90]) and they can incite life-altering epiphanies (like Sally Carrol's soundtracked revelation in 'The Ice Palace' [1920]). However, in stories like 'One Interne' (1932), the use of a vaudeville style song with the chorus of 'Bum-tiddy-bum-bum,/Tiddy-bum-bum' is more problematic, and destabilises the tone of the story (*TAR*, p. 130). Prigozy sees a general diachronic development in the sophistication of Fitzgerald's musical allusions, suggesting his use of music was problematised as his career progressed. Graham, with space only to analyse the novels, finds that Fitzgerald's use of music is playful and

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<sup>8</sup> See Graham, *Great American Songbooks*, pp. 106-10.

varied, except in the final two novels in which it becomes depressing and even absurd, creating dramatic irony by pairing light love songs with Dick Diver's 'torturous memories' in *Tender is the Night*, and counterpointing a soprano repeatedly recording a line of a song in *The Last Tycoon* during the midst of an earthquake.<sup>9</sup>

Focused as this thesis is on the short stories rather than novels, it is necessary to take a slightly different approach: there are two discrete phases of Fitzgerald's use of popular music, between which his treatment differs markedly. The first phase encompasses his early and prolific period, and spans his association with the *Saturday Evening Post*, from 1920 to 1933. The second is a more concentrated and dramatic period from 1934 to 1940, during which time he went through his famous 'Crack-Up'. There is a clear transformation in Fitzgerald's approach to popular music between these two periods – the main difference being that he championed popular music in his early career, continued to utilise it in the early 1930s, and then began to interrogate its value in later years. By examining a series of stories from each period, this chapter shows how Fitzgerald's treatment of popular music in his short stories differed from his approach in the novels which has been analysed by Prigozy and Graham.

Fitzgerald's understanding of popular music was extensive – ever since his youth he had been fascinated by musical theatre, appearing in several productions in his native St. Paul as a teenager, and going on to write the libretti for three Triangle Club productions at Princeton.<sup>10</sup> His passion for music was not limited to musical comedies, however, as his musical allusions are by no means limited to the stage. Some twenty years after Fitzgerald's Princeton exploits, Andrew Turnbull recounts his rendition of 'Goodnight, Sweetheart' one evening as Fitzgerald bade his future-biographer good night (though admittedly, Turnbull notes his voice was 'weak [and] rather tuneless').<sup>11</sup> Fitzgerald took an interest in the public's changing musical tastes throughout his life. In the posthumously published *The Last Tycoon*, set in 1936, Fitzgerald's protagonist, Monroe Stahr, reflects:

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>10</sup> See Bruccoli, *Epic Grandeur*, pp. 28-29, p. 32, p. 37, p. 45, p. 51, p. 56, p. 65. The Triangle Club libretti are collected in F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Spires and Gargoyles: Early Writings, 1909-1919*, ed. by James L. W. West III, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 47-100.

<sup>11</sup> Turnbull, *Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 231.

I turned the dial and got either *Gone* or *Lost* – there were good songs that year. The music was getting better again. When I was young during the depression, it wasn't so hot, and the best numbers were from the twenties.<sup>12</sup>

We should be wary of identifying Stahr's voice too closely with Fitzgerald's, but it is clear from Fitzgerald's oeuvre that the two shared similar feelings. Attuned to the exports of Tin Pan Alley, the New York street that formed the epicentre of the songwriting and music publishing industries in this period, Fitzgerald's notebooks contained lists of his favourite songs and lyrics, as well as his own creations.<sup>13</sup> In the first period that I will be examining, 1920 to 1933, Fitzgerald's use of song was contemporary (invoking either new songs or 'standards' that were well known at the time). A notable exception to this occurs between 1928 and 1931, when Fitzgerald adopts an atavistic approach in the Basil and Josephine series, recounting the music of his own teenage years leading up to the First World War.

Music critics have suggested that Tin Pan Alley's relentless marketing strategies reached saturation point around the time Fitzgerald was writing the Basil and Josephine stories, which could have been a factor in Fitzgerald's decision to feature the music of the 1910s so prominently in the stories. Of course, the changed outlook of a nation plunged into the Great Depression affected its appetite for diverting music, a development identified by Hughson F. Mooney in 1954:

In the late 1920s, on the heels of the smartly daring generation whose naïve faith in rebellion and thrills had been stamped since 1895 on popular music, came satiation and disillusion. Relaxation rather than rebellion, indifference rather than enthusiasm, introspection rather than activity, became the order of the day.<sup>14</sup>

This shift reflects an introspective period for Fitzgerald and his creative practices, in which he was feeling confused and uninspired, and financially obligated to focus on the

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<sup>12</sup> *The Last Tycoon*, p. 68.

<sup>13</sup> For his own creations, most likely written between 1932-1940, see *The Notebooks of Fitzgerald*, pp. 115-37, and for lists of songs see p. 287 and p. 290. Also see intermittent song references in the 'Autobiographical Chart' section of *F. Scott Fitzgerald's Ledger*, ed. by Bruccoli, pp. 151-89.

<sup>14</sup> Hughson F. Mooney, 'Songs, Singers and Society, 1890-1954', *American Quarterly*, 6:3 (1954), 221-32 (p. 228).



commercial certainties of short stories for the slicks in place of the long-gestating novel he was unsuccessfully trying to refine. This creative impasse prompted Fitzgerald to reflect on the comparative ‘golden age’ of ragtime music in his adolescence in which the Basil and Josephine stories are set. Other reasons for Fitzgerald’s dependence on the soundtrack of his youth during this period are the fact that he was in Europe from March 1929 to September 1931, where American songs clearly still had an influence (as the European courtship via American phonographs in *Tender is the Night* demonstrates) but hits were disseminated more slowly and sparsely. The emergence of Zelda’s mental illness could also have been a catalyst for Fitzgerald to revisit his generally happy youth in his work, whilst the bills that Zelda’s illness generated certainly caused Fitzgerald to crave the financial stability that regularly published short stories afforded.

Although jazz served as a constant for Fitzgerald in this tumultuous period, music has notoriously amorphous evolutionary tendencies. Especially in the vernacular cultural spheres of jazz and blues music, divisions into temporal segments, or into distinct genres, can be confusing or even arbitrary. To drastically over-simplify the music of the American interwar period collectively known under the loose umbrella of ‘jazz’, the following account seeks to give an overview of the generic transitions of the music that influenced Fitzgerald so profoundly.<sup>15</sup> The demise of the syncopated dance music known as ragtime by around 1917 led into the age of jazz, the popularity and dissemination of which was fuelled by the Great Migration of African Americans from southern states to northern urban centres, bringing half a million African Americans north between 1916-1919, and continuing into the 1920s. Divisions and subdivisions of jazz are of limited usefulness given that they often directly or indirectly rely on racial divisions into trying to establish musical genealogy. The notions of ‘hot jazz’ as a shorthand for music performed by black musicians such as Cab Calloway, Bessie Smith, and Jelly Roll Morton, and marketed on a relatively small scale as ‘race records’ has given way to a more plural and less segregated understanding of the production and dissemination of this music. Nonetheless, in 1931 Fitzgerald refers to these as ‘bootleg

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<sup>15</sup> This discussion is indebted to the excellent overviews of the precariousness of jazz definitions in David Savran, *Highbrow/Lowdown: Theater, Jazz, and the Making of the New Middle Class* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), pp. 22-35; and Nicholas M. Evans, *Writing Jazz: Race, Nationalism, and Modern Culture in the 1920s* (London: Garland Publishing, 2000), pp. 10-20.

negro records with their phallic euphemisms that made everything suggestive' in 'Echoes of the Jazz Age' (*MLC*, p. 135).

'Sweet jazz', which 'enjoyed widest distribution on recordings and the radio and signified jazz for almost all white Americans and Europeans,' was typified by much of Tin Pan Alley's 1920s output, and incorporated the work of bandleaders such as Paul Whiteman, whose concerts are often also described as belonging to the genre of 'symphonic jazz'.<sup>16</sup> It is important to emphasise, in these discussions and citations of the resultant critical trends, that jazz undoubtedly originated in African American traditions, despite the porous intermingling of musical style and influence at this busy historical moment. David Savran identifies four loosely distinctive features of jazz music: fast tempo duple or quadruple time signatures; an emphasis on brass and woodwind instruments; syncopation; and the use of blue notes.<sup>17</sup> Kathy Ogren also includes in her definition: improvisation; antiphony, or 'call and response' exchanges; and polyrhythms.<sup>18</sup>

The cusp of the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century was characterised by the rise of 'swing' music. Gradually, accolades shifted from the songwriters and composers onto the arrangers of this rhythmically propulsive music, designed for big bands that included multiple soloists. Sigmund Spaeth states: '[Swing] was nothing more than carefully organised, prearranged "hot jazz," lacking in spontaneity, but impressive as an exhibition of individual and collective skill [...] the average tune was merely a starting point for jazz or swing treatment of varying complexity.'<sup>19</sup> This shift is analysed in the German émigré cultural critic Theodor Adorno's essays on music. Adorno's brutal criticism of the industry in his 1941 essay, 'On Popular Music' characterises it as a rather sinister force perpetuating mental and economic enslavement, and links Tin Pan Alley, as what Adorno would go on to coin a 'culture industry', to social change (or rather the lack thereof). He writes, 'the "escape" provided by popular music actually subjects the individuals to the very same social powers from which they want to escape'.<sup>20</sup> Adorno's view was that music (as an art

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<sup>16</sup> Savran, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 28-29.

<sup>18</sup> Ogren, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Sigmund Spaeth, *A History of Popular Music in America* (London: Phoenix House, 1948, repr. 1959), p. 477.

<sup>20</sup> Theodor W. Adorno (with the assistance of George Simpson), 'On Popular Music' in *Essays on Music*, ed. by Richard Leppert, trans. by Susan H. Gillespie (London: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 437- 69 (p. 462).

form) should provoke critical thought and inspire an awareness of the individual's place in society: 'Listening to popular music is manipulated [...] into a system of response-mechanisms wholly antagonistic to the ideal of individuality in a free, liberal society.'<sup>21</sup> The formulaic lyrics, melodies and structures of 1920s and 1930s music prompted Adorno to conceptualise 'deconcentrated listening' which rendered listeners 'childish' in their simplistic consumption of the familiar, and rejection of the unfamiliar.

In 'On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening' (1938), Adorno explains how listeners 'listen atomistically and dissociate what they hear', defining 'deconcentration' as:

the perceptual activity which prepares the way for the forgetting and sudden recognition of mass music. If the standardized products, hopelessly like one another except for conspicuous bits such as hit lines, do not permit concentrated listening without becoming unbearable to the listeners, the latter are in any case no longer capable of concentrated listening. They cannot stand the strain of concentrated listening and surrender themselves resignedly to what befalls them, with which they can come to terms only if they do not listen to it too closely.<sup>22</sup>

The way Fitzgerald uses these 'mass music' songs in his stories is a mixture of quoting the 'conspicuous bits such as hit lines' and quoting the repetitive aspects of chorus, such as in 'The Offshore Pirate' (1920), when he quotes the repetitive chorus of a song (of his own invention):

Blow us a breeze,  
Blow us a breeze,  
Blow us a breeze,  
With your bellows (*F&P*, p. 9).

He repeats the chorus in its entirety after giving the song's second verse. The effect of this on the page is reliant on the reader to supply a tune, otherwise it reads like a strange incantation, or a nursery rhyme. The child-like effect of the repetition of simple phrases

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 442.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 305.

in this manner was also theorised by Adorno, who describes ‘deconcentrated listening’ as a near-infantile means of consuming music. He describes how ‘deconcentrated listening makes the perception of a whole impossible’ and how ‘a sort of musical children’s language is prepared for [such listeners]; it differs from the real thing in that its vocabulary consists exclusively of fragments and distortions of the artistic language of music’.<sup>23</sup> However, writing in 1938, Adorno does make an exception of sorts for deconcentrated listening to ‘the usual commercial jazz [which] can only carry out its function because it is not attended to except during conversation and, above all, as an accompaniment to dancing’.<sup>24</sup> Clearly not a fan of the popular music of the 1930s, Adorno famously thought that ‘improvisation’ was pre-planned and therefore unspontaneous, also deriding the loss of individuality that one suffered on a crowded dance floor.

Whilst Adorno’s writings should be understood, in part, as a response to the rise of European fascism in the 1920s and 1930s, his cynical vision of the music industry is to some extent supported by revisionist accounts of the 1920s that challenge our inherited stereotypes of the decade. Notably, Paul A. Carter contends that ‘the history of the twenties that we have read about in books cannot be squared with the experience of the twenties about which we have been told’.<sup>25</sup> He raises pertinent questions about how certain periods of history, especially the 1920s, come to be reinterpreted by each subsequent generation who ‘take from – or react against – whatever in that earlier timespan speaks most clearly to its own condition’.<sup>26</sup> This is precisely what Fitzgerald is doing in his portrayal of the ragtime generation in the Basil and Josephine stories. Music’s strangely self-cannibalising relationship is a practical example of this reinterpretative tendency, with standards of yesteryear being covered and reimagined by new generations, often with new time signatures or performance styles. As Spaeth reminds us, ‘the average tune was merely a starting point’.<sup>27</sup>

Carter insists that whilst a minority of Americans were enjoying the new cultural freedoms of the 1920s, millions more were working too hard to notice, especially in the rural population, amongst whom poverty was widespread. In fact, Howard Zinn

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 305, p. 307.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 305.

<sup>25</sup> Paul A. Carter, *Another Part of the Twenties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. ix.

<sup>26</sup> Carter, *Another Part*, p. x.

<sup>27</sup> Spaeth, p. 477.

contends that ‘One tenth of one per cent of the families at the top received as much income as 42 per cent of the families at the bottom’ such as ‘the tenant farmers, black and white, the immigrant families in the big cities either without work or not making enough to get the basic necessities’.<sup>28</sup> Fitzgerald does not focus on this forty-two per cent of families in his fiction, but that is not to say that he was not aware of their struggles, and of the inequity of his country. Peter L. Hays notes that ‘Fitzgerald did not write about the poor. There are no manual laborers or shopgirls among his main characters, few farmers or truck drivers’.<sup>29</sup> He instead represented the interactions between old and new money, and the upper-middle classes. In the 1920s, it is true that Fitzgerald focused on what the narrator of *This Side of Paradise* (1920) called ‘a new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success’, but by the 1930s, especially in light of the national struggles, he was undoubtedly more sensitive to the plight of the poor.<sup>30</sup> Writing about the 1920s in ‘Echoes of the Jazz Age’, Fitzgerald reflects that ‘It was borrowed time anyhow - the whole upper tenth of a nation living with the insouciance of grand ducs and the casualness of chorus girls’ (*MLC*, p. 138).

As scholars such as Matthew Bruccoli have identified, although Fitzgerald grew to rely on loans and advances to maintain financial security, he also worked hard, one of the only major American authors of his time to support himself solely on the proceeds of his literary output. Most others had a secondary source of income, through marriage or other family resources.<sup>31</sup> His sheer output – over 170 stories and four completed novels in a twenty-year career – confirms the apocryphal nature of Fitzgerald’s supposedly all-consuming hedonism.

Such reassessments of the ‘Roaring Twenties’ can better help us to understand the seemingly strange relationship between Fitzgerald the *bon vivant* and Fitzgerald the professional author. Fitzgerald does not intend for his protagonists to be read as being straightforward representatives of the United States, especially during the Depression,

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<sup>28</sup> Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States* (New York: HarperCollins, 1980; 4<sup>th</sup> rev. edn 2003, repr. 2005), p. 382.

<sup>29</sup> Peter L. Hays, ‘Class Differences in Fitzgerald’s Works’, in *Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, pp. 215-23 (p. 216).

<sup>30</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, ed. by James L. W. West III, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 260.

<sup>31</sup> See Matthew Bruccoli’s Introduction to *The Price Was High: The Last Uncollected Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 2 vols (London: Picador, 1981), pp. 9-17. See also West, ‘F. Scott Fitzgerald: Professional Author’, in *A Historical Guide*, ed. by Curnutt, pp. 49-68.

but they served a specific purpose in the marketplace. Revisionist accounts of the 'Roaring Twenties' like Carter's can remind us that the vast majority of people reading the *Saturday Evening Post* in the 1920s were ordinary people, enjoying a return to normality after the First World War, rather than flappers and sheiks. These readers were eager to hear all about the escapades of the Flaming Youth, Fitzgerald's stories, two fifths of which were published in the *Post*, and almost all of which were offered to the *Post's* editors first between 1925 and 1936, form a narrative of the few for the entertainment of the many.<sup>32</sup> One of the key ways in which Fitzgerald earns the trust of the white-collar worker and suburban housewife is through his use of popular music. He displays an air of authenticity by knowing exactly which songs young people are listening to, but selecting and representing them judiciously enough not to alienate his readership. In the second period I examine, when Fitzgerald was too old to un-ironically participate in youth culture, his daughter Scottie provided his lens through which to interrogate and review proceedings. In his later stories such as 'No Flowers' (1934) and the Gwen stories (1936), he shows how easily he is able to tap into this new generation coming of age in the 1930s, and their leisure pursuits.

In order to explore the symbolic and structural place of music in Fitzgerald's short stories, this chapter continues with an analysis of two of Fitzgerald's early stories: 'The Ice Palace' and 'Porcelain and Pink' (both 1920). I examine how Fitzgerald viewed his stories as bridges between strictly commercial and more literary art, and how he saw a place for popular culture and high culture to coexist in a less combative form than in Adorno's formulations. Music of the 1920s and 1930s embodied racial issues and prejudices of the time, and as such this discussion complements the primitive modernism dialogue explored in the previous chapter. In the second part of this chapter, two later stories that demonstrate Fitzgerald's changing stance towards popular music are considered, revealing him beginning to interrogate music for its cultural value and

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<sup>32</sup> In 1932, Harold Ober made a sworn deposition to the Internal Revenue Service, trying to have Fitzgerald classified as, to all intents and purposes, an employee of the *Post*: 'For the past seven years virtually all of Mr. Fitzgerald's work has been done for and at the request of the *Saturday Evening Post*. The stories which he first submitted to that magazine were of a type desired by the editors and were accepted, published and paid for and an arrangement made through me that I would submit all of Mr. Fitzgerald's work to the *Post*. During 1929 and 1930 Mr. Fitzgerald wrote a total of fifteen stories at the request of the editors of The *Saturday Evening Post*, all of which were copy-righted by that publication and published therein. The arrangement, pursuant to which these stories were written for The *Saturday Evening Post*, specified the length of each, subject matter, avoidance of certain topics and at an agreed price for each.' *As Ever, Scott Fitz*, pp. 192-93 [26 April 1932].

finding it to be lacking, and realising the dangers of music over-exposure, just as he had done with dancing. Finally, by employing the genre theory of Robert Warshow, I propose a reading of Fitzgerald's stories in the context of their original audiences' collusion in creating their meanings and furnishing their allusive contexts.

### **I. 'When Caesar Did the Chicago': 'The Ice Palace', 'Porcelain and Pink', and Fitzgerald's Early Use of Popular Music**

In 'The Ice Palace', written in December 1919, two months after *This Side of Paradise* was accepted for publication, there are two instances of musical interlude. Published in the *Saturday Evening Post*, it is the story of Southern belle Sally Carrol Happer's first (and only) visit to her one-time fiancé Harry's northern city, which was based on St. Paul, Minnesota, Fitzgerald's home town. Choosing to visit in January, when Minnesotan temperatures seldom rise above -5°C, Georgian Sally Carrol is out of her comfort zone in more ways than one, disliking the cultural differences she encounters as much as she despises the weather. She becomes lost in the eponymous labyrinth constructed of ice blocks; the main feature of the St. Paul winter carnival. Traumatized by her experience, and thoroughly fed up of ice and snow, Sally Carrol retreats back to the South, we infer that the engagement has been broken off, and the story languidly concludes in the Georgian sunshine with which it began.

The story has fascinated critics who examine Fitzgerald's juxtaposition of North and South, past and present, and stasis and vigour. The first musical interlude occurs when Sally Carrol is on the train up to Minnesota. She is already very cold, but takes her newly visible breath in her stride with 'naïve enjoyment'. She is moved by her excitement at being in 'the North – her land now!' to 'exultantly ... chant' 'then blow, ye winds heigho! / A-roving I will go' (*F&P*, p. 44). This is part of the chorus of a sea shanty called 'Ten Thousand Miles Away' which was popular in the 1910s. The chorus continues:

I'll stay no more on England's shore,  
To hear sweet music play,  
For I'm on the move to my own true love,

Ten thousand miles away!<sup>33</sup>

The parody version of the song, 'A Capital Ship' (c.1890) blends elements of the sea shanty with a nonsense poem called 'The Walloping Window-Blind' by Charles Carryl. Sally Carrol's name may purposefully echo Charles Carryl's, and Fitzgerald draws attention to her fondness for her double-barrelled forename, and dislike of being called merely 'Sally'. The lyrics of 'A Capital Ship' modify the chorus to:

So, blow ye winds, heigh-ho

A-roving I will go

I'll stay no more on England's shore

So let the music play-ay-ay

I'm off for the morning train

To cross the raging main

I'm off to my love with a boxing glove

10,000 miles away.<sup>34</sup>

It is impossible to know whether Fitzgerald was thinking of the sea shanty or the parody when he has Sally Carrol chant the song, though the setting, on a train, and the imminent hostilities which are about to befall her and her 'love', would suggest the latter version, based around Charles Carryl's poem for children. Sally Carrol is associated with childish pursuits throughout the story, from painting paper dolls to wanting to toboggan in Minnesota, and then swim in waterholes and eat green peaches in the South. The song reflects her optimism and spirit of adventure in this moment, but also undermines this confidence with the hint of foreboding, suggesting that when she reaches Minnesota, known as the land of ten thousand lakes, things may not go entirely according to plan.

Singing a song based on a nineteenth-century sea-shanty on a train in 1920 puts Sally Carrol in a strangely palimpsestic position. She is a rather morbid girl, spending

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<sup>33</sup> See Stan Hugill, *Shanties from the Seven Seas: Shipboard Work-Songs and Songs Used as Work-Songs from the Great Days of Sail* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961, rev. 1984), pp. 312-13.

<sup>34</sup> There are many variations of these songs: for this version of the chorus see 'A Capital Ship', in *The Mudcat Café Digital Tradition Folk Song Database* <<http://mudcat.org/@displaysong.cfm?SongID=11>> [Accessed 8th October 2015].



time in the graveyard back in Tarleton, Georgia amongst the rows of Confederate dead, who make her 'happy', and hallucinating the appearance of a long-dead girl in the Ice Palace whose gravestone she visited back in Georgia. Shanties themselves came into prominence in the US in the years leading up to the American Civil War. By the end of the nineteenth century, steam power and machinery rendered motivational work-songs unnecessary on ships, but luckily, this coincided with the vaudeville circuit's growing prominence and the rise of new recording technologies of the twentieth century, which preserved these cultural artifacts, though their contents and authorship became slippery. Singing a sea shanty while on a train can be read as a representation of the conflict in Sally Carrol between older processes, and the relatively new industrialism of the North, as well as subtly echoing the influence of the Civil War context on Sally Carrol.

By quoting an old song with plainly antiquated lyrics, to pledge her allegiance to the progressive North, we have a hint that all will not end well, a suggestion that is corroborated by the melody's melancholy key of B  $\flat$  minor. The choice of the verb 'chanted' solidifies Sally Carrol's invocation of the song as a hymn to hard work; though spirituality has a large presence in the story in the form of ghosts and graves, the chanting here suggests a group identity, and the etymology of 'shanty' itself, rather than an incantation or prayer. Just as she calls upon the confederate dead in the graveyard for 'strength', Sally Carrol finds fortification in numbers by singing the song, even though she is singing alone. In a tactic repeated later in the story, by inciting contemporary readers to join in and hear the chorus as they read it (for it was a well-known song in 1920), Fitzgerald provides Sally Carrol with an extra-literary companionship. She finds antiphony within the narrative also, when in the typical call-and-response style of a shanty, the confused Pullman porter replies to her chorus by 'politely...enquiring' what she had said, and Sally answers with a lie and a command: 'I said, "Brush me off"' (*F&P*, p. 44). Associated with the Civil War through George Pullman's loan of a car to house Abraham Lincoln's coffin in 1865 (and Pullman's own use of a hired substitute in the Union Army), the Pullman Company employed a large number of African American men as Pullman porters in the 1910s and 20s, whose duties included brushing off the clothes and coats of the passengers, as well as shining their shoes. Another connotation of the phrase 'brush me off' is 'just ignore me', and this works well as a narrative signal that Sally Carrol's impromptu performance has ended.

Sally Carrol is met at the station by Harry and his family, but finds herself unable to shed the performative identity she assumed in singing her song on the train,

and when Harry enquires whether she is glad to have made the trip, she replies, 'Where you are is home for me, Harry', but the narrator tells us that 'as she said this, she had the feeling for the first time in her life that she was acting a part' (*F&P*, p. 51, p. 47). Charm comes naturally to her in her capacity as a Southern belle, but in the North, Sally Carrol finds artifice. She has a mixed day, with Harry's racist criticism of the South driving her to tears, when he exclaims 'Those damn Southerners! ... They're sort of – sort of degenerates – not at all like the old Southerners. They've lived so long down there with all the colored people that they've gotten lazy and shiftless' (*F&P*, pp. 52-53). They have a quarrel, which leads to a hasty resolution, and a reconfirmation of their impending March wedding date.

That evening they go to a vaudeville performance, which concludes with an orchestral rendition of the song 'Dixie'. This stirs up 'something stronger and more enduring than her tears and smiles' within Sally (*F&P*, p. 54). Though there is no vocalist, as the final or 'chaser' acts of vaudeville performances were usually 'dumb' to accommodate patrons noisily leaving the theatre, Sally joins the performance, at least in her mind, where she provides the lyrics – 'Away, away, away down South in Dixie' – and stages a ghostly production, all whilst 'gripping the arms of her chair until her face grew crimson'. Her extra-literary companionship is restored through Fitzgerald's quotation of four lines of the extremely recognisable chorus, but not before Sally Carrol retreats into her Confederate dream world watching 'her own old ghosts marching by' (*F&P*, p. 54). This prefigures the later appearance of the ghost of Margery Lee, whose gravestone Sally Carrol and Harry had visited near the rows of Confederate dead back in Georgia. Lee appears to Sally Carrol as she realises she is trapped within the 40cm-thick walls of the Ice Palace, and Sally Carrol imagines herself nestled amongst Margery Lee's plentiful hooped skirts. The anthemic, march-like tempo of 'Dixie' is again revisited when marching soldiers parade outside the Ice Palace before they enter it. Sally Carrol realises her emotional entrapment in the vaudeville theatre just as her physical entrapment is realised in the Ice Palace. Both events profoundly affect her, and Fitzgerald uses 'Dixie' to stir the readers' emotions and sympathy for Sally Carrol, who defends her Southern countrymen as some of 'the finest men in the world' (*F&P*, p. 53).

A favourite of Abraham Lincoln, who played it to mark General Robert E. Lee's surrender in 1865, 'Dixie' was reportedly originally written by Daniel Emmett around 1859. Beginning as a minstrelsy song, it was later assumed as an anthem of the Confederacy, and became emblematic of the old South. The racist stereotype of the

homesick slave is utilised in the narrative of the song, and when minstrelsy was gradually eclipsed by the rise of vaudeville, it became a vaudeville standard. In Sally Carrol's viewing of the spectacle in the Minnesotan vaudeville theatre, she transcends the role of observer and becomes part of the performance. She disappears from the conventional narrative, and thus she cannot hear Harry's whispers to her as she watches her own parade of 'ghosts marching by'.

Alice Hall Petry has identified Sally Carrol's struggle to choose between North and South as a psychic schism in which she is trying to decide between marriage (represented by the North) and Southern spinsterhood.<sup>35</sup> The song choices of these two musical episodes, with their solo/group dynamic, show that even though Sally Carrol ultimately chooses spinsterhood (at least for now), she is not actually alone. They also serve to underpin the thematic links in the story between the contemporary setting of the action and the Civil War. The songs enhance Fitzgerald's characterisation of Sally Carrol - the shanty portraying her adventurous spirit, while 'Dixie' reinforces the image of her as a sentimental girl whose character is inextricably linked to her provenance - but they also deepen Fitzgerald's presentation of theme. Relying on communal knowledge of songs passed down in the oral tradition, he invites these associations to be brought to a reading of the text, though here he makes sure that reader participation is an enhancing, rather than essential, aspect of the reading experience.

In 'The Ice Palace', we find that Fitzgerald uses songs to fulfill a number of the same aims for which he uses them in the novels: he creates a contrast between the immediate moment of the song, and an ambiguous relationship with the past; he evokes an extra-literary response from readers; he trusts his readers to interpret references (although arguably the songs in 'The Ice Palace' are much less obscure than some of those encountered in the novels); and he uses lyrics as a substitute for characters' articulation of their own feelings. Where 'The Ice Palace' differs from his use of song in the novels is in the lack of irony or uncertainty in the way that the song is deployed - there are no confusing scenes like the bathtub scene in *The Beautiful and Damned*, in which Anthony Patch, imitating the musical theatre star Hazel Dawn, confusingly pretends to be a woman who herself is pretending to be a man, playing the violin.<sup>36</sup> Rather, Fitzgerald's intention in alluding to a particular song is always made relatively clear. The songs alluded to are chosen not from the bank of popular song Fitzgerald

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<sup>35</sup> Petry, pp. 43-47.

<sup>36</sup> See Berret, *Unheard Memories*, p. 100; and Graham, *Great American Songbooks*, pp. 96-99.

knew of, but from older, more traditional songs transmitted across the generations, perhaps demonstrating Fitzgerald's awareness of the wider readership that the *Post* offered.

To extend this hypothesis on Fitzgerald's use of song in the short stories as compared with the novels, Fitzgerald does not seem to interrogate the value of popular culture in his early use of songs in the short story. Looking at other Fitzgerald stories through the 1920s, he often shies away from criticising or interrogating the value of popular culture, even when he includes a reference to a song. In 'Myra Meets His Family' (1920), for example, 'Wave That Wishbone' serves as a vehicle for Myra to show her deftness at assuming another identity at a moment's notice, but the song's complicit guilt in aiding Myra to disguise herself is unexamined. As we will see, in 'Porcelain and Pink' Fitzgerald's song references a host of real-life products, but his satire is directed at the advertising industry and consumer culture rather than in exploring the medium of popular song itself. It may be that Fitzgerald was conscious that the magazine contexts of these fictions would place them in close proximity with other aspects of popular culture such as the advertisements that enabled magazines like the *Post* to pay Fitzgerald such high prices. As we shall see, in the later years of his career Fitzgerald returns to the issue of the value of popular music, in stories such as 'The Intimate Strangers' (1935) and 'Three Acts of Music' (1936).

'The Ice Palace' is a pertinent example of this reluctance to explore the value of popular culture, because though it was only the fifth story Fitzgerald had published in the lucrative *Saturday Evening Post*, it was the first story in which he chooses not to focus on the 'jazz-nourished generation' who are the protagonists of the other five stories Fitzgerald published in the *Post* in a flurry between February and May 1920, appearing in three of May's four issues (*F&P*, p. 111).<sup>37</sup> Though Sally Carrol is clearly a teenager in the story, which has a contemporary setting, we do not hear any ragtime or jazz in the story – only the sea shanty and the old standard, *Dixie*. Sally Carrol smokes and drinks, the usual markers of the 'jazz-nourished generation', but Fitzgerald chooses not to associate her with popular music. Arguably, this hints at an imperviousness to the charms of Tin Pan Alley that speaks to the strength of character Sally Carrol possesses. On the other hand, as Graham remarks, in *This Side of Paradise*, it is when music

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<sup>37</sup> These five stories were: 'Head and Shoulders' (21 February 1920), 'Myra Meets His Family' (20 March 1920), 'The Camel's Back' (24 April 1920), 'Bernice Bobs Her Hair' (1 May 1920), and 'The Offshore Pirate' (29 May 1920).

disappears from the novel that Amory makes his most irresponsible and regrettable decisions, having no outlet for his transient emotions, and thus being forced to see through each whim and fancy, with disastrous results.<sup>38</sup> Following this reading, the lack of popular music in 'The Ice Palace' could symbolise Sally Carrol's fragmented and tormented state of mind. While she is trying to decide what to do with regard to her engagement, she retreats into what she knows – the traditional songs which have endured for generations, rather than the transient Tin Pan Alley lyrics. Unlike Josephine Perry, Sally Carrol does not rely on popular cultural fragments to assemble her sense of self.

Yet it is not just Sally Carrol who is deprived of popular song in Fitzgerald's early work. In tracing Fitzgerald's use of popular songs, it is striking that he does not use many specific song titles in his early magazine fiction even though he makes use of popular song in all three of his novels composed during this period: *This Side of Paradise* (1920), *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922), and *The Great Gatsby* (1925). He goes on to make profuse use of popular songs and their lyrics in later stories such as the Basil and Josephine series (1928–1930), but the early stories, especially in the *Saturday Evening Post*, curiously contain fewer song titles and quoted lyrics than we might expect. Fitzgerald instead invents his own songs and lyrics, or occasionally quotes brief and carefully selected lyrics from popular songs. He also draws on a 'safer', more mainstream genre of songs that have come from musical comedies: 'Head and Shoulders' (1920) is a notable example of this. There are three potential reasons for this: firstly, Fitzgerald might be conscious of the significant number of people yet to acquire a radio in the early 1920s. The first radio broadcast was in 1920, but it was not until 1922 that pre-assembled radio sets were even marketed, and it was later in the decade that radio really flourished, propelling Tin Pan Alley to another dimension. Fitzgerald might not want to alienate parts of his audience through inviting them to recall specific songs and lyrics that they may not know. Even in 'Diamond Dick' (1924), the song he alludes to is 'Beale Street Blues', a 1916 W. C. Handy song that would have been well-known by 1924, and Fitzgerald 'strips' the story of this reference in order to reuse it in *The Great Gatsby*. Finally, it could be a question relating to the short-story form: in the novels, Fitzgerald often devotes at least a paragraph to

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<sup>38</sup> Graham, *Great American Songbooks*, p. 92.

exploring his song allusions, and perhaps the condensed form of the short story failed to afford him this space in which to explore music.

Instead, he chooses to perfectly tailor his musical allusions by inventing his own lyrics, drawing on his skills gained in his undergraduate Triangle Club years. In the one-act play, 'Porcelain and Pink', collected in *Tales of the Jazz Age*, we meet two sisters, one of whom, Julia, is in the bath, while her sister Lois is waiting to get into the bathroom. Lois's beau, calling up to her through a high window, mistakes the bathing Julie for his beloved. Julie sings while she is in the bathtub, imagining 'wild applause' after her rendition of 'The Imperial Roman Jazz'

When Caesar did the Chicago  
[...] He gave them an awful razz  
They shook in their shoes  
With the Consular Blues  
The Imperial Roman Jazz (*TJA*, p. 116).<sup>39</sup>

Just before Julie hears Lois's boyfriend at the window, she gives a rendition of this strange little song, penned by Fitzgerald:

When the Arrow-collar man  
Meets the D'jer-Kiss girl  
On the smokeless Santa-Fé  
Her Pebeco smile  
Her Lucile style  
De dum da-de-dum one day — (*TJA*, p. 120).

The references here are taken from the world of advertising, and show how Julie is immersed not just in the bath but in the world of consumerist pleasures. 'The Arrow-Collar man' of Arrow shirts fame, was a series of illustrated advertisements from 1920

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<sup>39</sup> In the magazine version of the story, which appeared in the *Smart Set* in January 1920, Julie instead sings 'The Blundering Blimp', a song of Fitzgerald's invention which Marcia Meadows performs in 'Head and Shoulders' (*F&P*, p. 69). Written in October 1919, only a month before he composed 'Head and Shoulders', Fitzgerald's original lyrics in 'Porcelain and Pink' include 'Quiver like a jelly in a shimmy-shakers' dance', but he decided on 'The Imperial Roman Jazz' for the story's inclusion in *Tales of the Jazz Age*. See Fitzgerald, *Tales of the Jazz Age*, p. 430.

onwards that were successful enough to warrant fan mail. He also features briefly in *This Side of Paradise* when Myra's attraction to Amory is described as 'arrow-collar taste' and 'the quintessence of romance'.<sup>40</sup> The song imagines this man (actually based on a series of different men) meeting the D'jer Kiss girl, an illustrated Kerkoff perfume advert with bobbed hair, drawn by Malaga Grenet, and described by James West as 'epicene and nymphlike'.<sup>41</sup> The place for this union is given as 'the smokeless Santa Fé': that is, the cross-country Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé railroad line, powered with bituminous (and thus supposedly smoke-free) coal. Her smile is courtesy of Pebeco toothpaste, who secured a full-page advertisement on the back cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1920, and her modern style comes care of Lucile, the couture house of Lady Duff-Gordon, the designer and socialite whose modern designs lowered necklines and split skirts. The lyrics are then obscured by onomatopoeic humming, and so we never do find out what happens when these two characters meet. Such obfuscation fits in with the theme of concealment of both identity and the female body, and as Sharon Hamilton has noted, 'this story announced an author unafraid to take chances in the subject matter he chose for his art. Naked girls in bathtubs were *not* the stuff of standard magazine fiction in those days'.<sup>42</sup> It is worth noting that this vaudevillian sketch appeared in the *Smart Set* rather than in the *Post*.<sup>43</sup>

The references all need glossing for the contemporary reader, but for Fitzgerald's 1920 audience, these companies' advertisements would have provided regular paratextual interruptions to the reading experience itself, especially in the ad-heavy 'slick' magazines. Responding to these ads, Julie sees herself as the desirable 'Djer-Kiss girl', and begins a flirtation with her sister's boyfriend under false pretenses, before fleeing the scene when her sister arrives. The boyfriend is undoubtedly confused, and the obscured lyrics at the song's close could signify the uncertain resolution of this case of mistaken identity.

Though he is being flippant in tone, and the song's situation creates physical humour through Fitzgerald's satire on consumption practices (this consumerist girl is naked rather than clothed in a Lucile gown), Fitzgerald seriously posits that these ads

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<sup>40</sup> *This Side of Paradise*, ed. by West, p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> West, 'Annotating Mr. Fitzgerald', p. 88.

<sup>42</sup> Hamilton, p. 28.

<sup>43</sup> Petry calls 'Porcelain and Pink' 'a sexually suggestive vaudeville playlet' in Petry, p.55. Fitzgerald himself refers to it as a 'vaudeville sketch' in a letter to Ober, in *As Ever*, Scott Fitz, p. 55 [21 June 1923].

have been assimilated into modern life and are fair game for allusive purposes. He economises on description through the short but evocative phrase ‘the Arrow-collar man’ and creates a shared interpretative space with his readers. As a writer of song lyrics, Fitzgerald frequently calls upon contemporary popular culture in this way, naming brands as well as summoning up images of the advertisements themselves. The Arrow Collar man was immortalised by his allusive appearance in *The Great Gatsby* but also in Irving Berlin’s song, ‘Puttin’ on the Ritz,’ in which Berlin asks:

Have you seen the well-to-do,  
Up and down Park Avenue?  
On that famous thoroughfare  
With their noses in the air  
High hats and Arrow Collars,  
White Spats and lots of dollars,  
Spending every dime  
For a wonderful time.<sup>44</sup>

The Arrow Collar here serves as shorthand for a well-dressed rich man, interested in ‘a wonderful time’ at any cost.<sup>45</sup> However, these lyrics are modified lyrics that Berlin added to the song for the 1946 Fred Astaire film, *Blue Skies*. The original lyrics for the 1929 song (as featured in the 1930 eponymous film) describe ‘the well-to-do / up on Lenox Avenue’ and ask ‘why don’t you go where Harlem sits / Puttin’ on the Ritz’.<sup>46</sup> Laurence Bergreen writes ‘At the time singer Harry Richman [in the 1930 film] made a hit of it - the dying days of vaudeville - “Puttin’ on the Ritz” was unmistakably a “coon” song. In faintly condescending terms, the lyrics evoked well-dressed blacks and “high browns.”’<sup>47</sup> The terms are more than faintly condescending, and racist, but Philip Furia identifies in the song extreme innovation stemming from its embodiment of mixing: mixed rhythms, mixed accents (musical and verbal), and the so-called ‘misfits’

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<sup>44</sup> *Lyrics of Irving Berlin*, pp. 262-63.

<sup>45</sup> See Thomas Dilworth, ‘The Great Gatsby and the Arrow Collar Man’, *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 7 (2009), 80-93.

<sup>46</sup> *Lyrics of Irving Berlin*, pp. 262-63.

<sup>47</sup> Laurence Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer: The Life of Irving Berlin* (London: Viking, 1990), p. 287.



of the song, black Harlemites dressed in ‘spangled gowns,’ that recall the depiction of Josephine Baker in *As Thousands Cheer* discussed in Chapter Two.<sup>48</sup>

Though ‘Puttin’ on the Ritz’ itself fails to feature in Fitzgerald’s oeuvre, his admiration for Berlin is cemented through the many mentions of Berlin’s other songs. Moreover, ‘Puttin’ on the Ritz’, offers an insight into both the music industry and what Ogren aptly summarises as the commercial ‘appropriation of black musical idioms’.<sup>49</sup> The song has an infectiously destabilising rhythm, described by music critic Alec Wilder, as:

a rhythmic device that is probably the most complex and provocative I have come upon, by any writer. It is, naturally, in a form of 4/4, but cut time. If one wishes to break this into time signatures which indicate more simply the stressed notes, it could be done this way: 3/4, 3/4, 4/4, 6/4.<sup>50</sup>

The song confounds aural expectations not only by utilising syncopation, hardly a new tactic by 1929, but by further disguising the beat through a seemingly shifting time signature. By relying on the audience’s complicit, even instinctive, understanding of 4/4 time, Berlin deconstructs it and confuses it, then pauses, before re-anchoring the listener with the title phrase (in quavers forming a simple descending scale [see Figure 9]). It is thoroughly modern, almost avant-garde, and Furia’s description, that ‘the musical accents break down sentence, phrase, and word into tiny Cubistic fragments fitted “mosaically” to musical shards’, speaks to this destabilising element.<sup>51</sup> It is difficult to reconcile this analysis of Berlin’s work with Adorno’s criticism of Tin Pan Alley songs as having ‘interchangeable’ elements. Indeed, Berlin’s malleable treatment of an established formula for popular songs is reminiscent of Fitzgerald’s clever and subtle manipulation of the *Post*’s expectations of the short story genre. Destabilisation of genre is reliant on audience complicity in agreeing upon the characteristics of that genre, and I will address this complicity in more detail later in this chapter.

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<sup>48</sup> Furia, p. 62.

<sup>49</sup> Ogren, p. 149.

<sup>50</sup> Alec Wilder, *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900-1950*, ed. by James T. Maher (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 104.

<sup>51</sup> Furia, p. 62.

**Figure 9** ‘Puttin’ on the Ritz’ by Irving Berlin (1929)

The call-and-response antiphonal style so fundamental in hot jazz, as well as energetic syncopated rhythms, are here cleverly manipulated into a neatly repetitive AABA structure by Berlin, and marketed successfully to a mass audience.<sup>52</sup> Part of the song’s success is due to the way in which Berlin’s lyrics capture a specific moment in the history of American life. Harlem, by 1929, was extremely overcrowded and was beset by attendant sanitation and health problems. Nicholas Evans explains that by 1930, ‘approximately 72% of Manhattan’s African American population lived in Harlem’.<sup>53</sup> Berlin’s lyrics describe well-dressed African Americans spending ‘their last dime’ on entertainment, but Harlem was also famous for the nightclubs and cabarets to which Manhattan’s white populations flocked for ‘authentic’ experiences of jazz, as discussed in the Introduction.

The question of why ‘Negrophilic’ whites were so interested in experiencing (and appropriating) African American culture is a complex one. Discourse of the time posited that African American culture provided a link to primitive states of being. For

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<sup>52</sup> Fred Astaire made a recording of the song for Columbia in 1930, but it did not appear in the 1930 film. He again performed the song, with revised lyrics replacing Lenox Avenue with Park Avenue, in the 1946 film *Blue Skies*.

<sup>53</sup> Nicholas Evans, “‘Racial Cross-Dressing’ in the Jazz Age: Cultural Therapy and its Discontents in Cabaret Nightlife’, in *Hop on Pop: The Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture*, ed. by Henry Jenkins, Tara McPherson and Jane Shattuc (London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 388-414 (p. 393).

example, in 1923 Gilbert Seldes assessed jazz music and segregated it into white jazz and ‘Negro jazz’, the latter of which he considered to be a natural expressive asset of the ‘Negro’, differing from more ‘intellectual’ white jazz:

In words and music the negro side expresses something which underlies a great deal of America – our independence, our carelessness, and our frankness, and gaiety. In each of these the negro is more intense than we are, and we surpass him when we combine a more varied and more intelligent life with his instinctive qualities.<sup>54</sup>

Some white Americans were keen to sparingly indulge these ‘intense’ and ‘instinctive’ qualities, rationalising that they needed to address their ‘primitive’ impulses in order to keep them in check: in effect, ‘civilising’ them.<sup>55</sup> Irving Berlin and Fred Astaire are two examples of this ‘civilising’ force at work, taking two traditionally African American leisure activities – jazz and tapdancing – and ‘sanitising’ them for mass consumption, as the Castles had done with dance just before the First World War. Though undeniably talented, self-taught Berlin lacked the keyboard skills of the great ragtime pianists such as Scott Joplin, and he greatly benefitted from the innovation of the ‘transposing piano’ which allowed him to access different keys by moving a lever, rather than confining himself to his proficiency with solely the black keys, and thus the solitary key of F# major.

In his plundering of African American rhythms and harmony as established by composers such as Joplin and James Reese Europe, Berlin thought he was acting respectfully. As Robert Dawidoff explains:

Berlin, Kern, and the Gershwins did not intend racism, as they understood it. A genuine part of their project was to eliminate what they felt was American race prejudice, to respect what they recognized as African-American racial genius, to express a fellow feeling as victims of oppression.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Gilbert Seldes, *The Seven Lively Arts* (New York: Perpetua, 1924, rev. edn 1957; repr. 1962) p. 96.

<sup>55</sup> Erenberg, *Steppin’ Out*, pp. 255-59.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Dawidoff, ‘The Kind of Person You Have to Sound Like to Sing “Alexander’s Ragtime Band”’, in *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism*, ed. by Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 293-309 (p. 299).

All three were first- or second-generation European immigrants, and their tendencies towards appropriation emerged from the tradition of minstrelsy that had so profoundly influenced vaudeville. Both these media were heavily populated by European immigrants who made use of blackface, both literally and figuratively. African Americans were largely effaced from this apparent representation of their culture – it was a white performance of African American identity as seen through the perspective and projected desires of white performers. In his classic study of minstrelsy, Eric Lott summarises this cultural praxis thus: ‘What was on display in minstrelsy was less black culture than a structured set of white responses to it which had grown out of northern and frontier social rituals and were passed through an inevitable filter of racist presupposition.’<sup>57</sup> When Berlin writes about ‘the well to do [...] high browns [...] all misfits’ in ‘Puttin on the Ritz’, he actually tells us more about himself than he does about well-dressed Harlemites of the late 1920s.

Seldes imagines Irving Berlin as: ‘A neat, unobtrusive, little man with bright eyes and an unerring capacity for understanding, appropriating, and creating strange rhythms in the foreground, attended by negro slaves.’<sup>58</sup> The image of the attendant slaves is an uncomfortable one. Berlin himself rose from immigrant poverty to great wealth, and amassed his fortune, as Seldes has identified, from ‘appropriating’ musical and rhythmic idiom, but to portray the Belarusian Jewish immigrant, born as Israel Beilin, as a slave-master is rather incongruous. Interpreting the image in another way, it is possible to see Berlin as the controller of a culture industry in his musical empire. Adorno would argue that Berlin disenfranchised his listeners, who became powerless against the production and dissemination behemoths under his control, which by 1921 included a New York City theatre exclusively showing Berlin-penned musicals, but Berlin’s popularity endured, throughout his 101 years.

Evans argues that Fitzgerald’s work shows evidence of his protagonists “‘borrowing” the behavioural inflections of the socially disempowered [in order for] Fitzgerald’s protagonists [to] gain access to the masculinity that revitalizes their manly authority’.<sup>59</sup> By situating the cultural appropriation debate in the context of masculine insecurities and anxieties, which recalls Basil’s anxieties on the dance floor, Evans calls

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<sup>57</sup> Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 101.

<sup>58</sup> Seldes, *The Seven Lively Arts* (New York: Perpetua, 1924, rev. edn 1957; repr. 1962), p. 70.

<sup>59</sup> Evans, *Writing Jazz*, p. 148.

upon the work of T. J. Jackson Lears, who argues that the pursuit of an ‘authentic’ identity became the task of many Americans who felt that they were in a cultural crisis provoked, for the most part, by the accelerating speed of the modern world and its technologies.<sup>60</sup> Rather than turning towards more conventional ‘antimodernist’ avenues such as the artisanal, for Fitzgerald, this authentic identity can be constructed in kaleidoscopic, or collage, fashion: through assembling various selves collated from popular culture influences, as the song from ‘Porcelain and Pink’ has shown. This collage aesthetic has been examined in Chapter One. In his later stories, rather than showing characters experimenting with jazz in a comic fashion, the influence of music becomes more oppressive and inescapable, going some way to fulfill Adorno’s prophesy. The second part of this chapter explores this shift in Fitzgerald’s post-*Post* career.

## **II. ‘Everything We’ll Ever Know About Life’:**

### **Fitzgerald, Berlin, and the Function of Popular Music**

In ‘The Intimate Strangers’, a wife and mother named Sara leaves her family to go and live with another man, Killian, in a cabin in the North Carolina woods. They spend a week there together, constantly making music in a bid to assert their identities: ‘they had at least six concert hours a day from sheer exuberance, sheer desire to make a noise, to cry “here we are!”’ (*PWH2*, p. 229). Sara experiments with this identity, though briefly, and then returns to her old life, where she felt that ‘it seemed to her that she had no particular self’ (*PWH2*, p. 233). The story, which opens just before the First World War, is peppered with popular music, and the adulterous couple play duets on the piano, sharing special moments where they ‘rag’ on songs and sing a saccharine love song ‘with his baritone following four notes and four words after her little contralto – that was the fad then’ (*PWH2*, p. 228). Sara is described as an actress who can mould her personality as the occasion dictates, reserving her true self ‘for the few’ (*PWH2*, p. 233). They are bound together by their interest in music, which though it brings them pleasure, is also described in slightly portentous terms:

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<sup>60</sup> See T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981; repr. London: University of Chicago Press, 1983, 1994).

No one would ever let Killian and Sara stop, no one ever had enough, and as they sang on, their faces flushed with excitement and pleasure like children's faces, the conviction grew in Sara that they were communicating, that they were saying things to each other in every note, every bar of harmony. They were talking to each other as surely as if with words – closer than any two people in the room (*PWH2*, p. 245).

Fitzgerald implies that the over-exposure and over-reliance on music has replaced language for Sara, recalling Josephine Perry's disastrous substitution of emotional song lyrics for authentic emotion. She has reneged on the spoken words of her marriage vows and responsibilities, caring only about Killian, and therefore music, and vice versa. Their audience will not let them stop, and Sara seems happy to be thus enslaved. Fitzgerald does not introduce humour into the situation, but merely presents it to us for our judgement. It is one of Fitzgerald's most challenging endings, and was understandably rejected by the *Post*, given its adulterous theme.

Music-induced entrapment also features prominently in Adorno's theories on music. For example, in 'On Popular Music', he suggests that the listener becomes ensnared in standardised sets of responses to industrially-created songs, and that emotions generated by such songs are at best, inauthentic, and at worst, immature. Interchangeability and disposability in Tin Pan Alley products are criticised: 'the beginning of the chorus is replaceable by the beginning of innumerable other choruses. [...] Every detail is substitutable; it serves its function only as a cog in a machine.'<sup>61</sup> This description, referencing substitutable parts, recalls Fitzgerald's confession to Adelaide Neall, discussed in the previous chapter, in which he expressed his fear 'that many of my stories were built rather than written'.<sup>62</sup>

By placing so much importance on popular song in their relationship, Sara and Killian have built an ominous foundation on impassive ground, each of them, perhaps, 'substitutable', as the title suggests. Sara complains about how 'she felt life crowding into her, into her childish resourceful body' (*PWH2*, p. 226). The pair are described as childish throughout the story, in a subtle judgment of their extra-marital actions. Popular music has caused Sara to become childlike, shirk her responsibilities, and cease

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<sup>61</sup> Adorno, 'On Popular Music', pp. 437-69 (pp. 439-40).

<sup>62</sup> *Life in Letters*, p. 301 [5 June 1936].

to question her place in the world, which it is hinted, is immoral and potentially insecure. Interestingly, we do not hear from Killian until near the end of the story, and do not get a sense of whether he similarly feels that they are transcending language in their musical communications.

Prigozy was unable to identify where the song 'To Let' was taken from in her otherwise comprehensive study, and therefore perhaps Fitzgerald included a song of his own design in order to make a subtle statement about the dangers of reading too much into music. It is the first song of the story, which is set in 1914, and the lyrics suggest that Sara's heart is 'to let': "The key is in the door," she sang. "The fire is laid to light, But the sign upon my heart, it says "To let"" (*PWH2*, p. 226). This sets up a sense of romantic foreboding and also, in its use of the domestic image, hints at the familial chaos to follow. Sara's abandonment of her husband and children undermines this domestic image and calls into question the security of the domesticity the song describes.<sup>63</sup> It is unusual for Fitzgerald to mix genuine songs with his own inventions, but here he seems to depart from his usual allusive tactics. By undermining his own use of songs and lyrics to create a shared understanding with the reader, and instead providing deliberately ironic lyrics which are probably his own, Fitzgerald can be seen to be potentially critiquing the popular music, and criticising Sara for her reliance on it to express her emotions. This could be read as a subtle instance of self-parody, Fitzgerald betraying the trust of the reader to dramatise his character's untrustworthiness and fickleness. At the end of the story, having returned to her family, been widowed, and subsequently reunited with Killian by their love of music, Sara's new life is far from secure: Killian confesses that when they had run away together initially, he had not been in love with her, but was still mourning his dead wife.

Two stories that pick up on this theme of musical communication are 'Too Cute for Words' and 'Three Acts of Music', both published in 1936. In each of these stories, Fitzgerald uses the songs of Berlin to explore ideas about his own successes and failures as an artist, his potential and lack of fulfillment, and to ultimately interrogate the value of popular culture, whether in popular music or popular short stories. 'Too Cute for

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<sup>63</sup> Whilst the story is partly based on Fitzgerald's friends Nora and Maurice 'Lefty' Flynn, Sara's abandonment of her husband and children recalls Nora Helmer's act of desertion in Henrik Ibsen's 1879 play, *A Doll's House*, which was included in Fitzgerald's first installment of the reading list he recommended to Sheilah Graham in her 'College of One', albeit with the slightly misremembered title of 'The Dolls House'. See Sheilah Graham, *College of One* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1967), pp. 204-05.

Words' was written in December 1935 whilst Fitzgerald was staying in Hendersonville, North Carolina. It appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1936, intended to be the first in a series of Gwen stories that were based on his teenaged daughter, Scottie, who was fourteen at the time. 'Too Cute' is a five-part story that chronicles Gwen Bowers' visit to Princeton for the Harvard football game – a trip that results in her gatecrashing the prom only to run into her father, who is serving as a chaperone. It is a story palpably about father-daughter relationships, and teenagers' obsessions with popular culture, but at its heart is a fundamental concern with the limitations of language.

The story opens with an uncertainty: 'Bryan didn't know exactly why Mrs. Hannaman was there' (*BJG*, p. 289). The very title speaks to the inexpressible: 'Too Cute *For Words*.' 'Cute' is Gwen's latest slang, overused to the point that her father Bryan utters it ironically at the story's close, to Gwen's horror. Uncertainties of expression and shortfalls of language characterise Bryan and Gwen's relationship, the story meditating on the politics of listening and silence, and offering music as a potential alternative method of communication. The 1935 Irving Berlin song 'Cheek to Cheek' becomes a leitmotif in the story, appearing five times. Gwen is encouraged to 'play music of her own choice' on her phonograph, though she is not allowed to listen to the radio, in an effort to encourage her to be a discerning consumer of popular culture. However, Gwen has secretly seen the 1935 film *Top Hat* several times, and her obsession with the film's score permeates the narrative. Gwen's record of 'Cheek to Cheek' has been broken, though its remains 'preserved to remind her to get another' – she retains the totemic object and plays the abbreviated remnants of the record, much to her father's bemusement (*BJG*, p. 292).

Music serves as a guide in the story, as Gwen and her friends follow the audio trail to reach the Princeton prom, where they '[huddle] silently' while 'a sonorous orchestra proclaimed a feeling that someone was fooling, announced that someone was its lucky star, and demanded if it wasn't a lovely day to be caught in the rain' (*BJG*, p. 299-300). These references each foreshadow events to follow: 'Fun to be Fooled' (1934), ruminates on the ability to trick oneself into believing that the fleeting is eternal. The lyrics proclaim that it is 'fun to be fooled, / fun to pretend, / fun to believe / love is



unending'.<sup>64</sup> Marion Lamb, a debutante from the girls' school is caught in this practice when the girls witness the following exchange on having found Marion alone with a boy outside the prom:

'I went to school with these girls and I know they won't tell. Anyhow, they know it's not serious – that I get engaged every few weeks or so.'

'Marion,' cried the young man, 'I can't stand hearing you talk like that!'

'Oh, Harry, I didn't mean to hurt you!' she gasped, equally upset. 'You know there's never been anyone but you.'

He groaned (*BJG*, p. 301).

Marion's words lose their value for Harry. 'Too Cute for Words' can be read as a satire on the conventions of romantic song as well as formulaic love stories found in the *Post*. The 1935 song 'You Are My Lucky Star' describes the singer's 'starstruck' reaction to seeing – 'from afar' – his 'four-star feature', his 'Harlow' and 'Garbo'.<sup>65</sup> Gwen and her two friends engage in this kind of celebrity worship as they find themselves an unobserved vantage point at the prom, described as 'an orchid-colored dream in which floated prototypes of their future selves, surrounded, engulfed, buoyed up by unnumbered boys' (*BJG*, p. 300). Being 'buoyed up by unnumbered boys' gives a rather Busby Berkley-esque image, and the anonymous proliferation of dance partners recalls the Tayloristic dance troupes and chorus lines discussed in the previous chapter.

'Isn't This A Lovely Day (To Be Caught in the Rain)', the third *Top Hat* number mentioned in the story, is a playful *pas de deux* in its film context. A jodhpur-clad Ginger Rodgers and characteristically dapper Fred Astaire, trapped by a rainstorm under a park gazebo, perform a mirrored tap routine, without making any physical contact until the last thirty seconds of the four and a half minute sequence. The song prefigures the lack of contact with boys in 'Too Cute' (who have remained in New York unexpectedly), as well as the entrapment in a small physical space, and the story emulates the lighthearted screwball tone of the film. RKO's most profitable film of the decade, *Top Hat* infiltrated Scottie Fitzgerald's life profoundly, as she remembers in

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<sup>64</sup> Lyrics by Ira Gershwin and E. Y. Harburg, see *The Complete Lyrics of Ira Gershwin*, ed. by Robert Kimball (London: Pavilion, 1994), p. 225.

<sup>65</sup> Lyrics by Arthur Freed, 'You Are my Lucky Star', performed by Eleanor Powell and the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra (Victor 25158, 1935).

Eleanor Lanahan's biography, *Scottie*: 'Our whole little group went to see *Top Hat* seven times, saying the lines with the actors which infuriated the people sitting near us. Astaire and Rogers seemed the epitome of grace and beauty, all that we wanted to be.'<sup>66</sup> When Bryan 'facetiously' suggests dancing to the song, Gwen looks at him 'with infinite compassion' and enquires 'Who do you imagine you are, Daddy? Fred Astaire?' (*BJG*, p. 294). Fitzgerald went on to exonerate Bryan in summer 1937, arranging for Scottie to meet Fred Astaire when she visited her father in Hollywood. In the story, 'Cheek to Cheek' represents the romantic possibilities of future selves, the pull of imitative identity, and the lure of celebrity culture.

As a leitmotif, the recurrence of the song is not as problematic as some of Fitzgerald's other 'formulaic' story devices, such as the multiple coincidence or mistaken identity plots. Its repeated appearances serve to illustrate the saturated market of music and film of this period – the song is heard everywhere. For Gwen, though, the song is imbued with a romance and nostalgia found frequently in Fitzgerald's oeuvre, and at the story's close, when Bryan remarks on the Harvard band 'jazzing old marching songs' when Gwen would prefer them to play what he calls 'Cheek by Jowl', Gwen disappears from the moment, like Sally-Carrol, instead listening 'to that sweeter and somehow older tune' (*BJG*, p. 307). For Gwen it summarises the limitless romantic potential of her future – a future she glimpsed at the prom, when she danced 'in a breathless trance' to the same music. Contemporary music is tied up with this kind of forward-looking nostalgia in several of Fitzgerald's stories from this period, including 'No Flowers' which is also set at Princeton, though music is explored most extensively, and intriguingly, in 'Three Acts of Music', Fitzgerald's May 1936 piece from *Esquire*.<sup>67</sup>

'Three Acts of Music' is a curious piece: written to cover an advance from Arnold Gingrich at *Esquire*, it consists of three stark scenes, or 'acts', which are separated by undetermined lengths of time, charting the bungled relationship between two unnamed protagonists, a nurse from Yonkers and a doctor from 'a conservative old Vermont family' (*PWH2*, p. 336). The story shares with 'Too Cute' a fixation on the inability to make oneself understood. The difference here is that this obscuring of

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<sup>66</sup> Eleanor Lanahan, *Scottie: The Daughter Of...The Life of Frances Scott Fitzgerald Lanahan Smith* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), p. 87.

<sup>67</sup> Although Princeton is not named in 'No Flowers', Brucoli's introduction to the story in *The Price Was High* asserts that "'No Flowers" is clearly set there; and this story is informed by Fitzgerald's identification with Princeton' see F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Price Was High: The Last Uncollected Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Matthew J. Brucoli, 2 vols (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich/Brucoli Clark, 1979; repr. London: Picador, 1981), II, p. 143.

meaning is often willful: the doctor withholds information several times. He corrects the nurse's pronunciation and grammar, and the missed connections, revisions and false starts in their interruptive and fragmentary speech serve as a metaphor for their stillborn relationship. By the third scene, they accept that 'it's too late' for them (*PWH2*, p. 338).

In this story, we can see examples of what Adorno referred to in 'On the Fetish-Character in Music' as 'atomistic listening': the selection of melodic fragments in lieu of appreciation of the whole piece.<sup>68</sup> This was a key marketing tool of course, and since many radio stations played songs without announcing their titles, songwriters began to ensure that the title was a heavily repeated part of the chorus or refrain so that audiences would remember it, and be able to find the record in stores. The story shows the consequences of such earworms, which pervasively substitute actual love between the two unnamed characters. Graham goes as far as to argue that Fitzgerald uses soundtracks to accompany and interact with the narratives of his novels.<sup>69</sup>

The opening 'Act' of the story has them humming along to Vincent Youmans' ebullient 'Tea for Two', in the flush of young love. The simplistic lyrics and two-note melody fit their situation, and the song's two-step rhythm is mirrored by their snappy repartee in their terse exchanges. Since they are both poor, just beginning their careers, the man suggests flippantly, 'lets spend the rest of our lives going around and listening to tunes' (*PWT2*, p. 335). The next 'Act' opens with the explanation, 'This was now years later but there was still music. There was "All Alone" and "Remember" and "Always" and "Blue Skies" and "How About Me"' (*PWH2*, p. 336). All of them Irving Berlin songs, this list comprises four songs explicitly about lost love, and 'Blue Skies' which contrasts the speaker's former 'blue days' with his current joy.<sup>70</sup> The man turns on the radio, and 'Remember' is playing. Fitzgerald quotes the opening of the chorus, 'Re-mem-ber / the night / the night / you said-' but readers would presumably recall the other lyrics, which include 'deep regret', 'longing to forget' and 'but you forgot to remember' (*PWH2*, p. 336).<sup>71</sup> This soundtrack lends the scene a degree of melancholy, and implies the doctor's culpability. The couple then dance to 'Blue Skies', though it is clear that they have not been together in the intervening years, and the class boundary has proved too prohibitive, despite the woman's promotions at work. It is a 1927 song,

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<sup>68</sup> Adorno, 'On the Fetish-Character', p. 303.

<sup>69</sup> The chapter on Fitzgerald in Graham's book is titled, 'The Literary Soundtrack: F. Scott Fitzgerald's Heard and Unheard Melodies', in *Great American Songbooks*, pp. 76-110.

<sup>70</sup> See *Lyrics of Irving Berlin*, p. 226, pp. 228-29, pp. 231-32, p. 254.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

and moves repeatedly from E minor to G major, the minor key qualifying the upbeat lyrics with a tentative optimism. It is a song that fights against itself, the lyrics melding happy emotion with a strangely semi-melancholy music.

The woman asks a series of questions about whether Irving Berlin is happy with his new wife, ‘the Mackay girl’ (*PWH2*, p. 336). Ellin Mackay, heiress, and Catholic, was in love with the Jewish Berlin, whose first biographer described him as ‘a dirty, little, barefoot newsboy’ as a child, before he amassed his fortune, and the match was violently but futilely opposed by her father.<sup>72</sup> In a situation that is paralleled in the story, though with the genders reversed, Mackay was sent to Europe where her family hoped she would find other suitors. In ‘Three Acts’ it is the man who has been in Europe, but both him and Mackay returned to America alone.<sup>73</sup>

In the third scene, we meet the couple again, when ‘both of [them] are fat and – sort of middle-aged’ (*PWH2*, p. 339). The musical accompaniment comes courtesy of Jerome Kern: ‘Smoke Gets in Your Eyes’ and ‘Lovely to Look at’ play. The former serves to underline the estrangement of the couple, who have ‘heart[s] on fire’ now that it is ‘just too late’ (*PWH2*, p. 338). The lyrics are interspersed with the dialogue, in italics, to express feelings that the characters cannot quite express in words. Since the pair have not managed to realise fully an actual relationship, they are allowing the songs that play in the background to serve as substitutes for feelings they have missed out on. The music changes, to ‘Lovely to Look At’ (which Fitzgerald misquotes slightly, perhaps deliberately, in order to emphasise their fundamental mismatch): ‘Lovely / to look at / Romantic / to know’, and the man asserts that the woman is both of these things, but she angrily retorts ‘You should have told me that fifteen years ago’ (*PWH2*, p. 338). The man has finally found a way of communicating these feelings to the

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<sup>72</sup> Alexander Woolcott, *The Story of Irving Berlin* (London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1925), p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> Fitzgerald and Mackay had playfully sparred in print in 1925, eight months after she had returned from her trip to Europe, and a month before she was to marry Berlin: she had written an article in the *New Yorker* entitled ‘Why We Go to Cabarets: A Post-Debutante Explains’. She wrote that society’s disapproving elders ‘have swallowed too much of Mr. Scott Fitzgerald’ when they criticise ‘the quality of our taste’ in choosing to attend a cabaret. Fitzgerald’s riposte is playfully addressed to ‘that celebrated intellectual, Miss Ellin Mackay’. Interviewed by the *Chicago Tribune European Edition*, he sardonically empathises that ‘people simply have to escape from a milieu largely composed of young women who write articles for the newspapers about the necessity of escaping from such a milieu’. See Ellin Mackay, ‘Why We Go to Cabarets: A Post-Debutante Explains’, *The New Yorker*, 28 November 1925 (pp. 7-8); and ‘Ellin Mackay’s Bored Debutantes Are Satirized by Scott Fitzgerald’, originally in the *Chicago Tribune European Edition*, 7 December 1925, and reprinted in *Conversations with F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli and Judith S. Baughman (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), pp. 75-76.

woman, by quoting popular song, but it is too late for both of them. At the story's close, the woman reflects on the music that they have heard over the course of their meetings: 'All those people – that Youmans, that Berlin, that Kern. They must have been through hell to be able to write like that. And we sort of listened to them, didn't we? [...] It was all we had – everything we'll ever know about life' (*PWH2*, p. 339). The songwriter has a specific function here – not just to entertain, but to provide a means of emotional support, almost therapy, for people going through the experiences being written about. It is a bold claim to make about any artist, and significantly Fitzgerald's short piece is published in *Esquire* rather than the *Saturday Evening Post*, where such an experimental, strange piece would have been inconsistent with the general tone of the magazine. Here, as West has identified, Fitzgerald appears to be writing about himself when he writes about the popular songwriter: he argues that real experiences, clothed in song (or fiction) can provoke genuine emotional responses and forge an intimacy between artist and consumer. West finds that:

The story is almost an *apologia pro vita sua* for Fitzgerald himself. He reveals here his function as a popular artist and tries to explain something about his own tumultuous life. He also expresses the closeness he feels towards the thousands of unknown lovers whose emotions he must have moved over the years through his fiction. Fitzgerald is saying that many popular artists like Youmans, Kern, and Berlin must feel this same closeness.<sup>74</sup>

This is especially true of Irving Berlin in 'Three Acts of Music'. The unnamed woman feels connected to Berlin because of the class boundary he traversed in marrying his second wife – she feels this kinship despite their differing genders and circumstances. It is the social barrier that she was unable to break, and has led to a life of emotional emptiness, with only her professional life for enrichment. Because Berlin's experience is first hand, and he has lived the heartbreak and the romance that he writes about, the woman finds his songs more genuine: 'it was all that we had – everything we'll ever know about life.' It is telling that Fitzgerald chooses Berlin for this task, since there are many similarities between their lives that can also be related to their art.

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<sup>74</sup> James L. W. West III, 'Fitzgerald and *Esquire*' in *New Approaches* ed. by Bryer, pp. 149-66 (p. 160).

Aside from both marrying women who were their financial and social superiors, there are a number of interesting parallels between the lives of Berlin and Fitzgerald. Both experienced vast success at a young age – by 24. Both were relatively small in stature, and both enlisted in the First World War without actually reaching the Western Front or seeing active service. Both men endured the belittling of their achievements by being popularly considered to be ‘naturals’ and ignoring the hard work that went into their compositions (although Fitzgerald encouraged this in his early years). Also, each of them were prodigious but also prolific talents, Fitzgerald producing a staggering 178 stories and five novels (one incomplete) in a career that spanned only twenty years. Berlin’s first biographer, Alexander Woollcott (of Algonquin Round Table and *New Yorker* fame) as early as 1925 notes that Berlin was ‘the man who has written more than any one man’s share of the songs this land has liked’.<sup>75</sup> The same could be said of Fitzgerald’s short stories, though no biography of him appeared until 1951. Finally, both men struggled with the delicate balance between creative inspiration and financial necessity. As Woollcott comments on Berlin:

It may be a shock to the ingenuous to learn that scarcely a song in all his long, eventful catalogue was written because his heart was singing and the song could not be kept from bursting out of him. Nearly all of them were written deliberately and a little sulkily by one whose business associates stood around him in a reproachful circle and assured him that, if he did not give birth to something at once, the dear, old publishing house would go on the rocks.

The artist in him may be tickled mightily by some neat, unexpected phrase in the chorus he has just written, but the publisher in him will ruthlessly strike it out in favor of some quite routine threadbare word with no disconcerting unfamiliarity about it to stick in the crop of the proletariat.<sup>76</sup>

Fitzgerald certainly felt the pressure to produce stories to fund his initially lavish, then increasingly dissipate lifestyle, and clearly viewed the short-story writing and novel writing experiences as independent. The stories were not simply hackwork, but

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<sup>75</sup> Woollcott, p. 35.

<sup>76</sup> Woollcott, p. 152-53.

undoubtedly there were certain constraints within which he had to work, just as Berlin had to consider the marketability of his own creative decisions.

‘Three Acts of Music’ functions as evidence of Fitzgerald wrestling with longstanding issues of marketability alongside his vocation as an artist, in an experimental mode that Milton Stern argues was innate in his writing all along:

the Pat Hobby stories [...] Along with others of his 1930s prose pieces [...] signal the marketplace dominance of Hemingwayesque modernism that had always been *a part* of Fitzgerald’s own style. [...] [They] are a stripping away of evocative lyricism, largely in a diminution of descriptive passages.<sup>77</sup>

There was also a financial aspect to this new terse experimentalism in Fitzgerald’s work – he would be paid the same fee regardless of the length of the piece in *Esquire*, so Fitzgerald opted to write a short piece. ‘Three Acts of Music’ differs from most of Fitzgerald’s work in that the stark structure takes the form of three scenes, presented in succession without a link between them. He intended it as a kind of postscript to his ‘Crack-Up’ pieces which were published in *Esquire* in February to April 1936, with ‘Three Acts’ appearing in May. These essays had meditated on the role of the artist and concluded that Fitzgerald was a ‘cracked plate’. He was, by this point, more famous as a *Saturday Evening Post* short storyist than he was as a novelist, and this undermined his own confidence in his literary capabilities. The critical reception of the ‘Crack-Up’ pieces was mainly frosty, however, and Fitzgerald returned to Hollywood for a third and final time to try his hand at screenwriting.

Fitzgerald’s use of popular music and his concurrent concern with his own marketability as an author again recalls the theories of Adorno. Adorno’s critique of choruses and melodies that were interchangeable across the varying output of Tin Pan Alley in ‘On Popular Music’ could arguably be levied at Fitzgerald’s short stories. Adorno writes: ‘It would not affect the musical sense if any detail were taken out of the context; [...] The beginning of the chorus is replaceable by the beginning of innumerable other choruses.’<sup>78</sup> It is occasionally tempting to criticise the frequent use of mistaken identity in the *Post* stories; the use of twist endings, disguise, or ‘dream coda’

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<sup>77</sup> Milton R. Stern, ‘Will the Real Pat Hobby Please Stand Up?’, in *Neglected Stories*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 305-38 (pp. 321-22).

<sup>78</sup> Adorno, ‘On Popular Music’, p. 439.

conclusions provoke similar reactions. Yet it is vital to remember that Fitzgerald was working within the confines of a specific genre – the commercial short story, and he managed a surprising amount of subversion for such a genre. His narratorial interjections fulfill Daniel Albright's definition of modernism as: 'a *testing of the limits of aesthetic construction*' (italics in original).<sup>79</sup> He conspires with the reader, in 'Porcelain and Pink', cheekily explaining, in a stage direction: 'Yes, you've guessed it. Mistaken identity is the old, rusty pivot upon which the plot turns' (*TJA*, p. 116). He makes reference to the illustrations which he knew the *Post* would add to his story, without having seen them in advance, as in 'The Offshore Pirate' (1920) when Ardita leans up and kisses Toby 'softly, in the illustration' (*F&P*, p. 35). Especially in his later stories, he often managed to avoid overtly happy endings, leaving hints that all may not in fact be well, and sometimes is more insistent on doleful conclusions, as in 'Three Acts of Music'.

Fitzgerald was well aware of the expectations readers brought to a Fitzgerald story, especially as a *Post* author. He had cultivated an image of himself that was so closely entwined with his fictional creations that it was inevitable that as his own life became unhappy his stories would follow suit. In a letter to Zelda of May 1940, he admitted that 'I lost the knack of writing the particular kind of stories they wanted'.<sup>80</sup> He began, subtly at first, to defy reader expectations of his work, and on closer inspection his sassy, bright heroines can appear morally questionable and vacant; the pulsating rhythms of jazz giving way to hollow repetitions of lyrics and half-remembered melodies.

Fitzgerald repeated and reworked themes over multiple stories. Whilst his novels, especially *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*, gestated, he did indeed 'workshop' theme and character in the stories he published during these times. As a professional author reliant on selling his work as his sole source of income, he was conscious of his buyers' preferences and conditions. Yet as West's edition of *Taps at Reveille* has shown, 'during the late 1920s and early 1930s, Fitzgerald was writing mature stories on adult themes for the *Post* but [...] these stories were being edited at that magazine to remove forbidden elements' (*TAR*, p. xxiv). Fitzgerald's stories still sold in this period, but he was pushing the boundaries of salability to this audience.

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<sup>79</sup> *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources* ed. by Daniel Albright (London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 11.

<sup>80</sup> *Life in Letters*, p. 444 [18 May 1940].



West's collation of Fitzgerald's final typescript versions of his stories against the stories as published in the *Post* show that even though Fitzgerald knew that references to 'sex, race, and alcohol' would be cut, and profanities cut or toned down, he submitted stories including them anyway (*TAR*, p. xxv). West lists 'alcoholism, suicide, open adultery, incest, racial prejudice, mental illness, homosexuality, and violent crime', commenting that 'One does not find frank treatments of these subjects in very many of Fitzgerald's commercial stories' (*TAR*, p. xxiv).

I would argue that Fitzgerald manages to refer, subversively, to several of these banned topics through his musical allusions. For example, the song 'Boulevard of Broken Dreams' featured in 'No Flowers' refers to 'Gigolo and Gigolette' on the streets of Paris.<sup>81</sup> The 'Beale Street Blues', that appears in 'Diamond Dick' warns that 'if Beale Street could talk, / Married men would have to take their beds and walk' and cautions, 'You'll find that bus'ness never closes till somebody gets killed!'<sup>82</sup> When, as in 'The Intimate Strangers', Fitzgerald creates his own lyrics to serve his purpose, this demonstrates his confidence in the unspoken contract he had with his audience. He relied on the reader to make appropriate connections between lyric and aural experience, but here, there is no aural content and so the reader has only the story, and indeed, the wider context of the 'typical Fitzgerald story' to supply the context. In 'The Intimate Strangers', when Sara struggles to express herself without songs, Josephine Perry's emotional bankruptcy is called to mind, as a partial consequence of Josephine's quotation of song lyrics in lieu of genuine emotion. This self-referential genre is key to allowing Fitzgerald to create parodic currents in which he references his previous stories.

The film critic and genre theorist Robert Warshow, writing about the convention of Gangster movies, aptly summarises the situation Fitzgerald's short stories found themselves in:

For such a type to be successful means that its conventions have imposed themselves upon the general consciousness and become the accepted vehicles of a particular set of

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<sup>81</sup> Lyrics by Al Dubin, 'Boulevard of Broken Dreams', performed by Deane Janis and Hal Kemp's Orchestra (Brunswick 6734, 1933); also performed by Constance Bennett in the film *Moulin Rouge*, dir. by Sidney Lanfield (Twentieth Century Pictures, 1934).

<sup>82</sup> 'Beale Street Blues', in *Blues: An Anthology*, ed. by W. C. Handy (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1972), pp. 116-19 (p. 118).

attitudes and a particular aesthetic effect. One goes to any individual example of the type with very definite expectations, and originality is to be welcomed only in the degree that it intensifies the expected experience without fundamentally altering it. Moreover, the relationship between the conventions which go to make up such a type and the real experience of its audience or the real facts of whatever situation it pretends to describe is of only secondary importance and does not determine its aesthetic force. It is only in an ultimate sense that the type appeals to its audience's experience of reality; much more immediately, it appeals to previous experience of the type itself: it creates its own field of reference.<sup>83</sup>

In this context, an alternative and complementary reading of Fitzgerald's thematic repetitions, character workshopping, and 'for the trade' concessions, repositions these repetitions as conscious (as well as unconscious) self-parody.

Although Warshow is writing about Gangster films, if we consider his argument in terms of, for example, the flapper of Fitzgerald's early fiction, like Ardita, or the 'poor boy success story' of his mid-period fiction, such as Dexter Jones in 'Winter Dreams' (1922), their conventions *have* 'imposed themselves upon the general consciousness'. We do 'go [...] to any individual example of the type with very definite expectations' but even though certain of these narratives appear to be unoriginal, Fitzgerald's clever but subtle subversions of formulaic expectation, and musical allusions to prohibited themes, show that Fitzgerald's 'own field of reference' is wider than once thought. I have shown that repetition, variation, and 'ragging' the formulae he worked within are a vital part of Fitzgerald's literary aesthetics, and such self-parody finds an especially effective home in his stories that engage with the formulaic structures of Tin Pan Alley even as they undermine them. Writing about the interaction between classical and popular music in the 1920s, in the works of Whiteman and others, Susan Currell conceptualises this exchange as a dialogue that 'creatively explored the construction of modern American identity'.<sup>84</sup>

Fitzgerald utilises a similar idea: in his magazine writing, dance and music were in dialogue in an interrogation of the value of popular culture and its ability to enrich an

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<sup>83</sup> Robert Warshow, 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero', in *The Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theatre and Other Aspects of Popular Culture* (London: Harvard University Press, 1962; rev. edn 2001), pp. 97-103.

<sup>84</sup> Currell, *American Culture in the 1920s*, p. 87.

understanding of modern American identity. Fitzgerald's exploration of the authentic dancer as a metaphor for the literary craftsman is also present in his veneration of the songwriter who can teach 'everything we'll ever know about life'. But in giving his readers shared ownership of his allusions, as Fitzgerald does in his evocative use of popular music, he risks this audience allowing their genre-bound expectations to outweigh or misinterpret the actual words on the page. It would be easy to read Sally Carrol from 'The Ice Palace' and Julie from 'Porcelain and Pink' as two-dimensional Fitzgerald heroines, but each in her own way has transcended the genre through their use of popular music. Just as syncopation and changing time signatures can confuse audience expectations before lulling them back into a sense of familiarity and security, so Fitzgerald aptly manages the expectations that attend his stories, whilst at once self-consciously defying them, to produce some of his best and most challenging work. Music is the cultural measure by which Fitzgerald reassures himself that there is still quality to be found in the popular, whether it is a popular song or a popular short story, and that readerships are fundamentally plural in their interpretations. It was this conviction that led him back to Hollywood to interrogate the value of the newest commercial venture in storytelling.

## Chapter Four

### ‘A More Glittering, a Grosser Power’: Film in Fitzgerald’s Short Fiction

‘I’m too much of an egoist and not enough of a diplomat ever to succeed in the movies’

[April 1925].<sup>1</sup>

F. Scott Fitzgerald was born just eighteen months after the Lumière Brothers created their pioneering 1895 film *Sortie de l’Usine Lumière de Lyon*, which laid the foundations for modern cinema. He was fascinated by the movies throughout his youth, and despite his irrepressible passion for musical theatre, film was a pervasive influence on Fitzgerald. Alan Margolies recounts how a young Fitzgerald met with director D. W. Griffith at his Mamaroneck, New York studios and unsuccessfully submitted script suggestions to Griffith as well as to David O. Selznick, although Fitzgerald did go on to write intertitles for a 1923 Paramount picture and the scenario for a Clara Bow vehicle, *Grit*, released in 1924.<sup>2</sup> Far from turning to Hollywood as a last resort, Fitzgerald had been interested in the movie industry from the very outset of his career, and he spent brief periods in Hollywood working on screenwriting projects in early 1927 and late 1931. These forays into the industry were described by him as ‘failures’ in 1937, when he was on the train to Hollywood for his third and final screenwriting stint which was to affect him, and his work, profoundly.<sup>3</sup> Far from embodying the stereotype of the alcoholic Hollywood hack, Fitzgerald’s final days in Hollywood were spent in productive work on his final, unfinished, novel, which was to have been an exploration of the inner workings of the film industry – both decent and sordid.

This chapter’s opening quotation, taken from a letter to his Princeton contemporary, John Peale Bishop, shows that by April 1925, Fitzgerald was already conscious of the emerging studio system’s lack of democracy – he was aware that his temperament as an artist would not be happily reconciled with the Taylorian mass-production line in which contributions were valued only in so far as they formed part of a process, with little (if any) individual ownership of the created product for the vast majority of contributors. This must have been disheartening advice for Bishop, who was

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to John Peale Bishop, in *A Life in Letters*, p. 101 [April 1925].

<sup>2</sup> See Alan Margolies, ‘Fitzgerald and Hollywood’, in *Cambridge Companion to Fitzgerald*, ed. by Prigozy, pp. 189-208 (p. 190).

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Scottie Fitzgerald, *Life in Letters*, p. 330 [July 1937].

undertaking a stint at Paramount Pictures in New York at the time. But despite knowing this in April 1925, Fitzgerald still took screenwriting jobs in Hollywood on multiple occasions. Unsited to collaborative authorship, Fitzgerald inevitably struggled with the demands placed upon him as an author in Hollywood. As his satirical hack Pat Hobby remarks in ‘*Mightier Than the Sword*’ (1941): ‘They don’t want authors. They want writers’ (*TLD*, p. 200), and Fitzgerald’s tempestuous reconciliation of his novelistic authorship with his writing of short stories has been considered at length in the preceding chapters of this thesis. In February 1939, Fitzgerald explained to Perkins: ‘Conditions in the industry somehow propose the paradox: ‘We brought you here for your individuality but while you’re here we insist that you do everything to conceal it.’<sup>4</sup> In spite of these struggles, Fitzgerald’s response to Hollywood and the film industry offers us a means of reading Fitzgerald’s use of the parodic mode to describe leisure activities.

Following on from the self-contained ‘field of reference’ Fitzgerald’s short stories create for themselves as examined in the previous chapter, in the summer of 1939, Fitzgerald wrote to a fiction editor at *Collier’s* magazine, reflecting on the trajectory of his self-referential love stories:

it isn’t particularly likely that I’ll write a great many more stories about young love. I was tagged with that by my first writings up to 1925. Since then I have written stories about young love. They have been done with increasing difficulty and increasing insincerity. I would either be a miracle man or a hack if I could go on turning out an identical product for three decades.<sup>5</sup>

Fitzgerald’s consciousness of one of his major themes being revisited with decreasing levels of success shows his objective professionalism as well as his acknowledgement that the stories lost their originality due to ‘increasing insincerity’. Simultaneously part of his love-story ‘field of reference’ and separate from it, Fitzgerald marks out his later, more ‘insincere’ love stories as inferior. Reading these post-1925 stories in terms of their relationship with Fitzgerald’s earlier stories can actually illuminate his disruptive tendency towards self-parody, as we have seen in Chapter Two in the analysis of

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<sup>4</sup> *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, p. 255 [25 February 1939].

<sup>5</sup> *Life in Letters*, p. 402 [c. Late July 1939].

Ardita's reappearance in 'Rags Martin-Jones and the Prince of Wales' and 'Diamond Dick' (both 1924).

Even in the later period of Fitzgerald's career, when he had given up on flapper stories, parody was still an important facet of his work. As critics such as Michele Hannoosh explain, parody requires a mastery of a subject before revealing something new about it by showing it from a different, or exaggerated, angle.<sup>6</sup> As the preceding chapters of this thesis have shown, in Fitzgerald's use of dance and music, he both appropriates the cultural forms to demonstrate their innate power and desirability, and also takes the forms in a different direction – to show how they can be misused, how there are dangers inherent in over-reliance upon them, and how there is potential that sits within them, unfulfilled. Nowhere is this tendency more apparent than in Fitzgerald's use of film and the filmic in his short fiction.

A further recurring feature of this study is Fitzgerald's ambivalence to popular culture forms. He sometimes calls upon the enticing glamour of music, dance, and film, and is highly critical of them at other times, mocking those who build their identities on such consumerist foundations. Fitzgerald's apparent 'double vision' in writing about these cultural forms, that is to say, his ambivalence, can be read as a simultaneous presentation and rereading of these cultural forms' contribution to popular culture, and indeed, national identity. In Chapter One, we established that parody was an essential force at the root of much of American popular culture, especially as created by and participated in by African Americans, and Chapter Three offered a reading of Fitzgerald's ambivalence as a type of a self-parody.

Simon Dentith uses the term 'parody' as 'the generic term for a range of related cultural practices, all of which are imitative of other cultural forms, with varying degrees of mockery or humour'.<sup>7</sup> Fitzgerald imitates other cultural forms on two levels – by seeking to accurately portray the dances, songs, and filmic tendencies of his day, but also, he imitates their distilled essences to reveal something new and sometimes disturbing – the dry roots and Parisian arabesques of Josephine Baker tell us about the vertical but oppressive psychology of New York City. The formulaic assembly line of Tin Pan Alley demonstrates the ubiquity of mass-marketed leisure products, the consumption of which operated as the means 'of gaining or retaining a good name', as

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<sup>6</sup> See Michele Hannoosh, 'The Reflexive Function of Parody', *Comparative Literature*, 41:2 (1989), 113-27.

<sup>7</sup> Dentith, p. 193.

the average American moved away from producing (things, fun, entertainment) towards an unstoppable culture of consumption.<sup>8</sup> The previous chapters have shown how Fitzgerald creates his own advertising jingles and song lyrics (in ‘Porcelain and Pink’ [1920] and ‘The Intimate Strangers’ [1935]), his own dances (‘the Florida Drag-Out’, ‘Memphis Sideswoop’ and ‘slow Chicago’ in ‘Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar’ [1923]), but it is in his use of film that his parody of popular culture is most pronounced, visible in his satire of studio hacks, producers, actors, and screenplays in the Pat Hobby series of stories, as well as in ‘Jacob’s Ladder’ (1927) and ‘Magnetism’ (1928).

In the remainder of this chapter, I analyse two central aspects of Hollywood in Fitzgerald’s short fiction. Firstly, I explore Fitzgerald’s intellectual conception of the film industry and his response to Hollywood as a site of modernity. He theorises Hollywood’s importance as an American art form several times over the course of his career, and is characteristically ambivalent about the film industry’s potential. Rereading this ambivalence in light of Fitzgerald’s use of the parodic mode in his fiction sheds more light on his responses to Hollywood. Secondly, with recourse to ‘Magnetism’ and ‘Jacob’s Ladder’, I analyse Fitzgerald’s adept use of filmic techniques, recalling the deftness with which Fitzgerald imported cross-generic stylistic features from the arenas of dance and music, and used them for his own (often experimental) literary ends.

## **I. ‘A Mechanical and Communal Art’: Fitzgerald’s Response to Hollywood as a Site of Modernity**

Fitzgerald was interested in Hollywood from an early age, and was quick to recognise the earning potential inherent in the medium for an author. When *The Great Gatsby* (1925) failed to sell as many copies as he expected on its release in April, Fitzgerald wrote to Max Perkins explaining:

In all events I have a book of good short stories for the fall. Now I shall write some cheap ones until I’ve accumulated enough for my next novel. When that is finished and published I’ll wait and see. If it will support me with no more intervals of trash I’ll go

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<sup>8</sup> Veblen, p. 59.

on as a novelist. If not I'm going to quit, come home, go to Hollywood and learn the movie business.<sup>9</sup>

As Walter Raubicheck has noted, in this period, the film industry and the popular story market were similar in their lucrative production of popular culture.<sup>10</sup> At this point, in 1925, Fitzgerald is contemplating (perhaps humorously) learning a new trade that he thinks will be both financially and artistically rewarding: filmmaking. One prevalent Hollywood narrative suggests that writers were lured West by the promise of easy money, only to find their talents underappreciated, and eventually eroded. Tom Cerasulo formulates this as 'the vampire myth' in his study.<sup>11</sup> He questions the validity of this Hollywood myth and reformulates the relationship between scriptwriting work and these writers as a dialectic exchange that was actually beneficial to them rather than a one-way, crushing relationship. As he points out, writers do not go to Hollywood to be writers; they become screenwriters, which means something quite different to any conception of authorship. The studio system did not permit the Romantic notion of singular, inspired authorship that Fitzgerald especially identified with. Screenwriters were fundamentally collaborative (in practice if not in temperament) and were fairly low in the filmmaking hierarchy, despite the cachet studios capitalised upon of having a certain famous author working for them. Cerasulo argues that contrary to popular belief, 'that they were workers in the culture industry was never artistically devastating, and it was never a vocation killer'. 'In fact', Cerasulo continues, there was a 'shift in the vocation of authorship, from a late modernist pose of the disaffected genius who stands outside of society to a later role as an engaged laborer in industrial America'.<sup>12</sup>

Whilst it is true that Fitzgerald underwent something of a political awakening during his last years in Hollywood, Fitzgerald also cherished occupying the position of the outsider. In writing *The Last Tycoon* (1941), with a privileged insight into the workings of the studios, despite his lack of screenwriting success, Fitzgerald emulates his 'poor boy' heroes of his early fiction, being simultaneously granted entry to this

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<sup>9</sup> *Life in Letters*, p. 107 [c.24 April 1925].

<sup>10</sup> Walter Raubicheck, 'Hollywood Nights: The Filmmaker as Artist in "Crazy Sunday"', *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 7 (2009), 53-64 (p. 54).

<sup>11</sup> See Tom Cerasulo, *Authors Out Here: Fitzgerald, West, Parker and Schulberg in Hollywood* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.



glamorous new world, all the while perceiving its flaws and vanities with clarity. In January 1927, during his first Hollywood sojourn, Fitzgerald's stance towards Hollywood is quite lighthearted: he writes to his cousin Mrs. Richard Taylor that 'this is a tragic city of beautiful girls - the girls who mop the floor are beautiful, the waitresses, the shop ladies. You never want to see any more beauty. (Always excepting yours)'.<sup>13</sup> His crystallised fictional response to Hollywood began to appear in stories like 'Jacob's Ladder' and in 'Magnetism', written in June and December 1927 respectively, and in the latter, he uses darker language, describing the landscape as hellish, and the studio workers as 'souls in purgatory' (*ASM*, p. 410).

Perhaps it was Fitzgerald's lack of success as a screenwriter that began to colour his perception of Hollywood; more likely it was the simple fact of spending longer in the industry. He feuded with a collaborator in 1931, returning home \$6,000 richer, but more disillusioned. In January 1938, he felt deeply betrayed by Joe Mankiewicz's rewriting of his and Ted Paramore's script for *Three Comrades*. But there was discipline as well as disappointment: prior to the *Three Comrades* debacle, Budd Schulberg remembers Fitzgerald having 'plunged into a study of film-making that even included a card file of the plot lines of all the pictures he had seen,' and Margolies writes of how directly after finishing on *Three Comrades*, Fitzgerald began an intensive viewing of Joan Crawford's films, dividing them into acts and noting montages in particular when preparing to write a script for her in February 1938.<sup>14</sup> In his three years, nine months of work in Hollywood, Fitzgerald shockingly managed only one screen credit: a sought-after measure of worth second only to salary.

In his introduction to the published screenplay of 'Babylon Revisited', Budd Schulberg diagnoses Fitzgerald's screenwriting failures as being ultimately hubristic:

Instead of rejecting screenwriting as a necessary evil, Fitzgerald went the other way and embraced it as a new art form, even while recognizing that it was an art frequently embarrassed by the 'merchants' more comfortable with mediocrity in their efforts to satisfy the widest possible audience.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Letters of Fitzgerald*, pp. 415-16 [Winter 1927].

<sup>14</sup> Budd Schulberg, *The Four Seasons of Success* (London: Robson Books, 1974), p. 97; Margolies, 'Fitzgerald and Hollywood', in *Cambridge Companion to Fitzgerald*, ed. by Prigozy, pp. 189-208 (p. 199).

<sup>15</sup> Budd Schulberg, 'Introduction', in F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Babylon Revisited: The Screenplay*, ed. by Budd Schulberg (New York: Carroll & Graf, [1940] 1993), pp. 7-14 (p. 9).

Fitzgerald put a lot of pressure on himself to succeed in this ‘new art form’: he thought that screenwriting could finally provide the mutually beneficial coexistence between art and commerce that he chastised himself for failing to effect in his commercial short story writing. Fitzgerald aimed for both literary acclaim and ‘satisfy[ing] the widest possible audience’, but previously, he had only managed to accomplish this in his two separate personas of novelist and short storyist. In Hollywood screenwriting, he tried to combine the two, despite the fact that since he left Princeton, he had had limited success with playwriting: his political satire, *The Vegetable; or, From President to Postman* (1923) closed after disastrous Atlantic City tryouts, and Linda Paterson Miller describes it as ‘lack[ing] unity as either political satire or burlesque’.<sup>16</sup> It is an entertaining and ambitious piece, but the surviving script is unfortunately uneven.

Christopher Wixson finds that the play ‘possess[es] a Marx Brothers lunacy and anarchy’ and finds it ‘emblematic of the paradox of the Jazz Age itself, replete with corruption, experimentation, vigor, and the loss of the center’.<sup>17</sup> Such experimental features are only now beginning to be appreciated for their ambitious complexity, rather than being criticised for their apparent flippancy, and in Fitzgerald’s detailed, idiosyncratically elaborate stage directions, we can anticipate the criticisms of his approach to screenwriting. Fitzgerald seems to have channelled his dramaturgical aspirations into his Hollywood work. Despite referring to ‘the never dying lure of another play’ in 1924, Fitzgerald never completed another play after *The Vegetable*’s lacklustre critical reception.<sup>18</sup> This means of working through his failures as a screenwriter, when the ‘merchants’ were rejecting and revising his work, was a route he had taken before: to rationalise an artistic crisis, he began writing about the writing process. Reaching its crescendo in *The Last Tycoon*, this method of processing his Hollywood shortcomings began after his 1927 trip, with stories such as ‘Jacob’s Ladder’, ‘Magnetism’, and ‘Crazy Sunday’ (1932).

Fitzgerald’s third and final period in Hollywood began optimistically: he aimed to write a screenplay that would be so wonderful on its own that no collaborators would be needed and no revisions requested. In July 1937 he wrote to Scottie that ‘I

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<sup>16</sup> Linda Patterson Miller, ‘Avant-garde Trends’, in *Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, pp. 191-202 (p. 192).

<sup>17</sup> Christopher Wixson, ‘Ragged Edges: The Curious Case of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Vegetable*’, *American Drama*, 15.2 (2006), 48-60 (p. 56, p. 59).

<sup>18</sup> *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, p. 88 [c. 20 December 1924].

must be very tactful [...] until, in fact or in effect, I'm alone on the picture'.<sup>19</sup> He hoped that he would even be able to direct what he had written, to become what we would now recognise as an 'auteur'. In 1950, his ex-supervisor and screenwriting adversary, Joe Mankiewicz, succeeded in writing and directing a film, *All About Eve*, but by then Fitzgerald had been dead for six years.

Despite his shortcomings as a screenwriter becoming evident on each of his three visits to Hollywood, Fitzgerald was drawn repeatedly nonetheless to analysing Hollywood's artistic potential. He was especially fond of identifying with Hollywood as the locus of celebrity and the lucrative marketing of talent. In 'My Lost City' (1932) he conceptualises his early professional life as living 'in my own movie of New York', and describes how he fails as an actor, as 'it was demonstrated that I was unable to play the role' (*MLC*, p. 109). Thinking of his early days in terms of a film alludes to the arc of overnight success that some movie stars enjoyed. Fitzgerald also enjoyed dramatically sudden notoriety, recounted in 'Early Success' (1937), when 'all in a space of three days, my book was published, I married my girl, and they were pounding out copies as they pound out extras in the movies' (*MLC*, p. 188). He conceptualises his books as extras in the film of his life. Furthermore, his self-diagnosis in 'My Lost City' (1935) of being 'not only [...] spokesman for the time but [...] typical product of that same moment' aligns himself with the movie stars of the era (*MLC*, p. 110). In 1936's 'Crack-Up' essays, he speculates that 'It seemed a romantic business to be a successful literary man – you were not ever going to be as famous as a movie star but what note you had was probably longer-lived' (*MLC*, p. 139). This acerbic tone reveals, through his satiric jibes at the film industry, an innate desire to dominate it.

His most famous assessment of the film industry comes from the 1936 *Esquire* essay, 'Pasting It Together', second in the series of three articles known as the 'Crack-Up' essays, which were written the year before Fitzgerald's final, and longest foray into the Hollywood 'dream factory'. He writes:

I saw that the novel, which at my maturity was the strongest and supplest medium for conveying thought and emotion from one human being to another, was becoming subordinated to a mechanical and communal art that, whether in the hands of

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<sup>19</sup> *Life in Letters*, p. 331 [July 1937].

Hollywood merchants or Russian idealists, was capable of reflecting only the tritest thought, the most obvious emotion. It was an art in which words were subordinate to images, where personality was worn down to the inevitable low gear of collaboration. As long past as 1930, I had a hunch that the talkies would make even the best selling novelist as archaic as silent pictures. People still read, if only Professor Canby's book of the month – curious children nosed at the slime of Mr. Tiffany Thayer in the drug-store libraries – but there was a rankling indignity, that to me had become almost an obsession, in seeing the power of the written word subordinated to another power, a more glittering, a grosser power. . . . (MLC, p. 148).

Filled with binary phrases, and making copious use of oppositions posed between 'and' and 'or' compounds, Fitzgerald's assessment of the unstoppable rise of film is both scathing and self-congratulatory. He credits the 'subordinat[ion]' of the novel to the film with contributing to his 'Crack-Up' but simultaneously credits himself with having foreseen this predicament 'as long past as 1930'.

Although the influence of cinema pervades Fitzgerald's work, early and late alike, there is a middle ground between the novel and the film that Fitzgerald fails to mention in this essay: the theatre. Specifically, musical theatre, which, as critics such as T. Austin Graham have shown, was a vital influence on Fitzgerald's novels, both formally and thematically.<sup>20</sup> Early stories directly alluding to theatre productions, such as 'Head and Shoulders' and 'Porcelain and Pink' (both 1920) are complemented by stories that highlight the limitations of the theatre, such as 'Two Wrongs' (1930) and 'The Captured Shadow' (1928). This fascination with the theatre fuelled Fitzgerald's interest in participative, even immersive, media. In the passage above, he implies that the general purpose of the novel is to 'convey' thought and emotion from one person to another, whereas Fitzgerald's own manifesto, heavily influenced by Joseph Conrad's more impressionistic notions of the role of the novel, emphasised a model of 'conveying thought and emotion' that was more interactive than Hollywood's 'mechanical and communal art'. Expressed in the Preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, Conrad distinguishes between thinkers and artists:

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<sup>20</sup> See T. Austin Graham, 'Fitzgerald's "Riotous Mystery": *This Side of Paradise* as Musical Theatre,' *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 6 (2007-08), 21-53; and Catherine Kunce and Paul M. Levitt, 'The Structure of *Gatsby*: A Vaudeville Show, Featuring Buffalo Bill and a Cast of Dozens,' *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 4 (2005), 101-128.

The thinker plunges into ideas. [...] They speak authoritatively to our common sense, to our intelligence, to our desire of peace, or to our desire of unrest; not seldom to our prejudices, sometimes to our fears, often to our egoism – but always to our credulity.

The artist appeals ‘to our less obvious capacities [...] His appeal is less loud, more profound, less distinct, more stirring — and sooner forgotten. Yet its effect endures for ever’. Conrad goes on to explain that the task of the writer is to appeal ‘primarily to the senses’, and

by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel — it is, before all, to make you *see*! That — and no more: and it is everything! If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm — all you demand; and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask.<sup>21</sup>

Conrad’s formation of the writing of fiction formed the keystone of Fitzgerald’s literary philosophies. In a letter to H. L. Mencken of 1934, Fitzgerald called this Preface ‘the greatest “credo” of my life, ever since I decided that I would rather be an artist than a careerist’.<sup>22</sup> In the same year, he paraphrased Conrad in a letter to Hemingway: ‘the purpose of a work of fiction is to appeal to the lingering after-effects in the reader’s mind as differing from, say, the purpose of oratory or philosophy which respectively leave people in a fighting or thoughtful mood’.<sup>23</sup> Allowing his readers to hear, feel and see these performative leisure activities in his short fiction is an effective way to accomplish this. Whilst critics such as Kirk Curnutt link Fitzgerald’s allegiance with Conrad’s aesthetic principles to Fitzgerald’s capacity to move his readers with the lyrical beauty of his prose, causing it to linger in the mind after reading, this thesis seeks to extend that assessment by demonstrating how Fitzgerald sought to accomplish Conrad’s manifesto through the vivid incorporation of dance, song, and film references into Fitzgerald’s fiction.

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<sup>21</sup> Joseph Conrad, *The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’*, ed. by Robert Kimbrough, A Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, [1897] 1979), pp. 145-47.

<sup>22</sup> *Life in Letters*, p. 256 [23 April 1934].

<sup>23</sup> *Letters of Fitzgerald*, p. 309 [1 June 1934].

For Curnutt, the clearest evidence of Fitzgerald's esteem for Conrad's prescription is found in his effusive, elaborate lyricism, which is at its peak in what Curnutt describes as 'rhapsodic' passages. He continues: 'Rhythmically propulsive, these passages are often built out of chains of conjoined sentences, sometimes cadenced for parallelism, or else they link appositives and subordinate clauses to structure a crescendo in emotion.'<sup>24</sup> Curnutt cites the ending of 'My Lost City', which uses the rhetorical technique of apostrophe, favoured by the Romantic poets Fitzgerald so admired to serve as a climax for a concluding section that virtuosically alternates between humour and 'rhapsody': 'Come back, come back, O glittering and white!' (*MLC*, p. 115). In the passage about the 'mechanical and communal art' of film, from 'Pasting it Together' quoted above, we find evidence of such 'rhythmic propulsion', parallel cadence, and 'structured crescendo in emotion'.

But when Fitzgerald describes the purpose of film with the negative superlatives 'tritest' and 'most obvious', he denigrates the studios' target audience. Fitzgerald spent a great deal of time lamenting how difficult it was to marry popularity with critical esteem, but here he chastises the film industry for courting large sales without giving enough thought to the quality of the product, its 'worth' and its success in representing 'truth'.

Fitzgerald's almost parenthetical observation of 'personality worn down to the inevitable low gear of collaboration' fails to make it clear whether the 'personalities' are writers or other movie professionals, such as producers or actors, but there is a convenient lack of recognition of his own dependence on a kind of pop cultural intertextuality to help him follow Conrad's prescribed path of appealing 'primarily to the senses'. Perhaps this is because of Fitzgerald's conscious ebbing away at the idea of stable identity in 1930s America. In criticising the lack of subtlety in the movies' appeal to the senses, and the 'indignity' inflicted upon the novel in the process, Fitzgerald ends up sounding rather old-fashioned and Victorian - the opposite of his profligate 'chronicler of the Jazz Age' mantle. It is possible that this antiquated pose is deliberate, serving the purpose of distancing himself from his perceived reputation as a Riviera Playboy during a time of national economic crisis. However, it is important to note that this entire diatribe is prefaced by Fitzgerald's admission that this was the

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<sup>24</sup> Curnutt, 'Literary Style', in *Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, pp. 34-44 (p. 36).

‘obsession’ of his dark nights during his ‘Crack-Up’, his time of mental despair and instability. ‘It was strange to have no self,’ he writes (*MLC*, p. 149).

It is not the first time Fitzgerald has shown insecurity when confronted with ‘glittering [...] power’: he prefaces his admonishment of the film industry with his confession that ‘I have never been able to stop wondering where my friends’ money came from, nor to stop thinking that at one time a sort of *droit de seigneur* might have been exercised to give one of them my girl’ (*MLC*, p. 147). Despite eloquently professing that he is ‘rankled’ at the ‘indignity’ of ‘seeing the word subordinated to a more glittering, grosser power’ (*MLC*, p. 148), Fitzgerald in this moment is reminiscent of his ‘Winter Dreams’ (1922) protagonist Dexter Green, the poor boy ‘who could not afford the luxury of proms, and [who] had stood outside the gymnasium and listened’ (*ASM*, p. 50). Professional success in screenwriting would prove to be just as elusive and frustrating for him.

Fitzgerald’s filmic metaphors in his essays thus reveal an author who is both excited and intimidated by the industry. The ‘glittering, grosser power’ that Fitzgerald writes of actually served positive social purposes despite its conspicuous use and display of wealth (*MLC*, p. 148). Paula Marantz Cohen explains how early film, from the late teens and early twenties, served an important role in terms of disseminating American culture to its newest settlers.

The consumerism generated by film was of special value to Americans in the first three decades of the twentieth century. A large immigrant population had deluged the cities and, lacking the skills necessary to express themselves in words, were seeking alternative routes to becoming American as quickly and efficiently as possible. Women were also poised on the brink of changing roles, and the consumerism they learned from films gave them a leverage in the marketplace that would help them to gain the vote. The stars operated as representatives and guides for these groups.<sup>25</sup>

The importance of women in the marketplace of the interwar period should not be underestimated. As consumers of leisure and material goods, women helped to contribute to the emerging culture of display embodied by department stores. The

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<sup>25</sup> Paula Marantz Cohen, *Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 160.

shopgirl narratives of early silent films such as *The Shop Girl* (1916) as well as later films such as *It* (1927) show how the culture of display was bisected by issues of consumerism and desire. Carmen M. Mangion explains: ‘The shopgirl becomes a part of, as well as a consumer of, this gendered culture of pleasure through the display and presentation of seductive consumer goods.’<sup>26</sup> Fitzgerald explores these issues through his meditations on the instability of identity and the increasing theatricality of quotidian life, both of which are themes that feature heavily in his fiction about Hollywood.

In the early 1920s, Fitzgerald had performed a similar function as ‘representative and guide’, not for immigrants but for his readership, who wanted to vicariously experience the leisure pursuits of his young and wealthy protagonists. His celebrity was assured by the enormous success of *This Side of Paradise*, published in March 1920, the same month that Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks were married, and as we have seen, Fitzgerald conceptualised this success in filmic terms: ‘they were pounding out copies as they pound out extras in the movies’ (*MLC*, p. 188). In a 1922 interview Fitzgerald recognised that ‘the movies are here to stay,’ and described ‘the feet of Charlie Chaplin’ as ‘lyrical’, perhaps expressing his early stylistic affinity with the silver screen, as well as with the parodic mode in which Chaplin excelled.<sup>27</sup> As Cohen observes, alongside escapism, early film served the important function of facilitating naturalisation and cultural acclimatisation. Fitzgerald’s parodic interests have been shown in this thesis to centre on the performative, and film provided him with exciting opportunities to explore various facets of identity, such as the impact of theatrical identity on self-knowledge, that he was simultaneously exploring in his use of references to dance and music. In these early films, as Cohen emphasises, a particularly American inflection of identity is invoked because of the cultural assimilation that they offered, in tandem with their mandate of entertainment.

The byproducts of imbuing film with the authority to disseminate guidance on American cultural identity are explored in Fitzgerald’s Pat Hobby stories. The Pat Hobby stories dramatise the tribulations of the unsuccessful screenwriter over the course of 17 short pieces sold to *Esquire* between September 1939 and June 1940. Pat

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<sup>26</sup> Carmen M. Mangion, review of Lise Shapiro Sanders, *Consuming Fantasies: Labor, Leisure, and the London Shopgirl, 1880-1920* (2006), *Journal of British Studies*, 47:1 (2008), 239-41 (p. 240).

<sup>27</sup> Thomas A. Boyd, “‘Hugh Walpole Was the Man Who Started Me Writing Novels’”, in *In His Own Time*, ed. by Brucoli and Bryer, pp. 245-54 (p. 249).



had once been a successful screenwriter, but in the story sequence, he ‘scavenges a living as a hanger-on at the studio’.<sup>28</sup> He has been read by Milton Stern as ‘a metaphor for the national fatuities of a culture that determines and dissolves human identity; and the stories are a chronicle of the connection between the culture and the tenuousness of identity’.<sup>29</sup> Pat Hobby functions as a critique of an industry, and by metaphoric association, Stern suggests, he also operates as an indictment of the national culture, circa 1939-40.

The most striking feature of the Pat Hobby stories is their style, which markedly differs from the well-known lyrical style of his earlier work. Stern has shown that Fitzgerald, ever the professional, adapted his style to suit his publication contexts, as he had done with regard to the *Saturday Evening Post* more than a decade earlier: ‘Fitzgerald limited himself to one aspect of his stylistic capacities, not because the subject was Hollywood but because the context was *Esquire*’.<sup>30</sup> The aspect of his stylistic capacities to which Stern refers was Fitzgerald’s tightly controlled prose, much closer to cablese than anything else in his oeuvre, and described by James West as ‘compressed’ (*TLD*, p. xvi). Such a ‘compressed’ style works well to metafictionally satirise the voice of Pat Hobby, consummate Hollywood hack who contributes the minimum possible effort to each project, composed by Fitzgerald whilst he was simultaneously working on *The Last Tycoon*, his unfinished magnum opus.<sup>31</sup>

Because of their length, critics sometimes refer to the Pat Hobby stories as vignettes, sketches or simply ‘pieces’, but Fitzgerald was clear that he considered them to be short stories. He wrote to Arnold Gingrich, *Esquire*’s editor, to say ‘I wish to God you could pay more money. These have all been stories, not sketches or articles and only unfit for the big time because of their length’.<sup>32</sup> Fitzgerald referred to the ‘Crack-

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Lehan, ‘The Romantic Self and the Uses of Place in the Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald’, in *New Approaches*, ed. by Bryer (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), pp. 3-21 (p. 20).

<sup>29</sup> Stern, ‘Will the Real Pat Hobby Please Stand Up?’, in *Neglected Stories*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 305-38 (p. 306).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

<sup>31</sup> It is notable that the film producer Monroe Stahr, protagonist of *The Last Tycoon*, is the only protagonist who manages to marry popular and critical artistic success in Fitzgerald’s oeuvre, although Fitzgerald planned for him to die prematurely in the novel, as had his model for Stahr, MGM producer Irving Thalberg. Walter Raubicheck and Steven Goldleaf describe Stahr as ‘[Fitzgerald’s] one real artist-hero’. See, ‘Stage and Screen Entertainment’, in *Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, pp. 302-10 (p. 310).

<sup>32</sup> Arnold Gingrich, ‘Introduction’, in F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Pat Hobby Stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), pp. 7-23 (p. 10) [21 September 1939].

Up' essays as 'sketches', creating a cloud of generic doubt that leaves one reluctant to use 'sketch' to describe a piece of short fiction such as the Pat Hobby stories.<sup>33</sup> Since being published in *Esquire*, the Pat Hobby stories have appeared in standalone collections, the first of which was the 1967 Penguin collection, which includes an introduction written by Gingrich. This inevitably implies that the stories are a collection to be read in sequence. There are some problems with this approach however: despite the fact that they were written with the intention of being read in sequence, this sequence would have been punctuated by monthly breaks and would have welcomed new readers to each new story with restatements of major plot points and setting and deft character sketches. Fitzgerald spent time and effort advising the *Esquire* staff on his intended publication order, revising it when he thought necessary, but publishing the Pat Hobby stories in book form means that a reader will encounter the same introductory material, the same type of plot twist that serves Hobby his comeuppance and the same cynical descriptions of the movie world in such close proximity as to cause the stories to seem clichéd and overly repetitive.<sup>34</sup>

Fitzgerald did write the Basil and Josephine stories as a sequence, which appeared at intervals in the *Saturday Evening Post* over 1928 to 1931, but the major difference here is that Basil and Josephine develop as characters, in a way that pays homage to the Bildungsroman genre.<sup>35</sup> The *Post*'s subscription rates were much more stable than the newcomer *Esquire*'s, and Fitzgerald knew that there was a precedent in the *Post* for series that revisited a character. Tim Prchal differentiates the Pat Hobby stories from other such sequences because 'Hobby does not evolve psychologically, morally, or in virtually any other way'.<sup>36</sup> When the stories are read individually, as intended, this lack of evolution does not pose a serious problem. But this stasis is an overwhelming flaw when the stories are read sequentially. The fact that the style and tone of the Pat Hobby stories could be read as closer to *In Our Time* and *Winesburg*,

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 13, p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> Fitzgerald also wrote two more sequences of stories: one was loosely based on his daughter Scottie, featuring a protagonist named Gwen. Fitzgerald wrote a series of five but struggled to place them in the *Post*, who only accepted two of them. He also wrote four unusual stories based around a medieval count named Philippe, which were published in *Redbook*. Additionally, three of the stories he wrote shared the same setting of Tarleton, Georgia (based on Zelda's hometown of Montgomery, Alabama): 'The Ice Palace', 'The Jelly-Bean' and 'The Last of the Belles'. Jim Powell, of 'The Jelly-Bean' is also the protagonist of 'Dice, Brassknuckles, and Guitar'.

<sup>36</sup> Tim Prchal, 'Tune in Next Month: Fitzgerald's Pat Hobby and the Popular Series', in *Fitzgerald in the Twenty-First Century* ed. by Bryer, Prigozy and Stern, pp. 291-300 (p. 291).

*Ohio* than his earlier work does not indicate that Fitzgerald was capitulating to a slow-burning aesthetic reassessment, but rather than he was writing to his audience.

In the Pat Hobby stories, Fitzgerald shows his skill in being able to write in a more pared down, crystallised mode, which John Kuehl describes as ‘functional rather than figurative’.<sup>37</sup> The theme and setting of the Pat Hobby stories, however, offer us further examples through which to interpret Fitzgerald’s ambiguities as parodic. Writing about the performance industry, in the Pat Hobby stories we witness the full spectrum of parodic material Fitzgerald has encountered elsewhere, in his earlier short fiction: performative personality reaches its apex in tersely but vividly sketched actresses who, divas off the set, stand in almost metonymically for all actors. Disguise features both in the farcical plots, like ‘Pat Hobby and Orson Welles’ (1940), but also in the costumes and sets that saturate Hobby’s world. The industry is built upon exploiting the chasm between popular and high culture, and though Fitzgerald addresses this more fully in *The Last Tycoon*, here we find evidence of Fitzgerald exploring his longstanding conflict between art and commerce, albeit through the presentation of a cautionary, self-parodying possibility of a future identity. The significance of these concise pieces is wide-ranging.

Far from being autobiographical, some critics have found the overarching mode of the Pat Hobby stories to be satirical. Stern finds them to be ‘episodes in satiric revelation’ whose overriding theme is ‘an exploration of belonging, of the precariousness of personality in a world in which one’s very identity is dependent upon modes of behaviour and appearance most shallowly conceived’.<sup>38</sup> Christopher Ames finds that the stories function as a metafictional commentary on the state of screenwriting and motion pictures themselves:

The intentionally clichéd and predictable plots of the stories satirize the hackneyed nature of Hollywood storytelling at its worst [...] We must not forget that *The Pat Hobby Stories* are stories about a writer, fictions about a fiction maker, and thus are inevitably self-referential and metafictional. So when we identify the narrative characteristics of these stories - their brevity, their clichéd plots, their predictable structures - we should get the ironic point: they satirize similar conventions in motion

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<sup>37</sup> Kuehl, p. 118.

<sup>38</sup> Stern, ‘Will the Real Pat Hobby Please Stand Up?’, in *Neglected Stories*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 305-38 (p. 319, p. 327).

pictures and they satirize, by example, the degraded state of Pat Hobby's narrative imagination.<sup>39</sup>

This concept of metafiction makes related appearances in popular culture of the postwar era, such as in songs like 'Alexander's Ragtime Band' in which the singer sings about hearing the song 'The Swanee River'.<sup>40</sup> It recurs in Josephine Baker's self-referential parodic performances of performance, and in the Ragtime 'barnyard' dances like the Turkey Trot in which their accompanying songs narrate instructions of how to dance their dances.

Additionally, Fitzgerald's work often recurs to the metafictional mode, in which we are reminded of the stories' literariness. He refers to the material contexts of his serial texts, in 'The Offshore Pirate' (1920), when Ardita 'reach[es] up on tiptoes' to kiss 'him softly in the illustration' (*F&P*, p. 35).<sup>41</sup> He gleefully pushes narratorial voice to the limits, encouraging the reader to embrace the tale as an artificial rendering of reality, and thus invites questions about the purposes of fiction. This narrative voice sometimes encourages readers to acknowledge the intertextuality inherent in his works. Though not controlled by Fitzgerald, he nonetheless invites us to consider how our reading experience is necessarily mediated through the lens of our knowledge of popular culture forms. In 'Dice, Brassknuckles, and Guitar,' he interjects, 'Now if this were a moving picture' (*TJA*, p. 278), encouraging us to read his work not only in the context of the available contemporary material in that medium, but also giving us a hint to look out for other filmic devices he has included in his fiction. In encouraging us to read stories filmically, Fitzgerald thus invites us to read, watch, and hear his stories as an immersive experience.

As Brian Harding has suggested in relation to selected love stories, Fitzgerald's use of parody extends to the most metafictional and self-conscious kind: that is to say, he

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<sup>39</sup> Christopher Ames, 'Pat Hobby and the Fictions of the Hollywood Writer', in *Fitzgerald in the Twenty-First Century* ed. by Bryer, Prigozy and Stern, pp. 279 - 90 (p. 280, pp. 284-85).

<sup>40</sup> See Furia, pp. 49-50.

<sup>41</sup> The ending of *The Offshore Pirate* was discussed above, on p. 17. In fact, in the *Post* version of the story, no mention is made of the illustration, and, in any case, the final paragraphs of the story are accompanied by an advertisement for Coleman Quick-Lite Gasoline Lamps, rather than a kissing couple. In *Flappers and Philosophers*, Fitzgerald modified the ending to reference the illustration, perhaps calling to the reader's mind the magazine context of the story, despite *Flappers and Philosophers* being a non-illustrated book.

parodies himself.<sup>42</sup> He frequently sets up generic expectations and then subtly undermines them. This is evident in his use of parody in portraying his Hollywood characters: in ‘Jacob’s Ladder’, Jenny Prince enacts the stereotypical starlet at the same time as operating as a critique of directors such as Griffiths’ borderline emotional exploitation of actresses. The actor George Hannaford seems too good to be true – and is so proven, in ‘Magnetism’. Pat Hobby demonstrates the precariously rotten foundations of the industry in his hapless adventures. All three characters can be read as parodies of archetypal Hollywood figures: starlet, matinée idol, and Hollywood hack writer.

Through parodic portrayals such as these, Fitzgerald exposes the conventions of Hollywood. Fitzgerald had witnessed the transition from an age supposedly famed for celebrating excess to one in which the emphasis had shifted to the protection of ‘fine arts’ and emphasising their distinction from popular culture.<sup>43</sup> In ‘Echoes of the Jazz Age’ (1931), Fitzgerald reminisces: ‘It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire’ (*MLC*, p. 131). The movies represented all of these features, tentatively balancing the aesthetics of ‘art’ and ‘excess’, and Fitzgerald imported several aspects of filmic technique into his stories. In the previous chapter I have demonstrated how Fitzgerald’s ambivalent depiction of jazz functioned as a metaphor for his views on commercial short-story writing, and here, in his last phase of writing in Hollywood, I argue that he calls upon the satiric world of Pat Hobby to explore, through parody, the shortcomings and inherent potential of the film industry, and uses it as a vehicle critically to explore performative leisure pursuits.

The Pat Hobby stories are indeed brief, around 1,800 words each, with ‘clichéd plots’ and ‘predictable structure’, but this assessment does not do them full justice. ‘Between 1934 – 1941, Fitzgerald appeared [in *Esquire*] 45 times, more than any other writer in the history of the magazine,’ as West reminds us.<sup>44</sup> There was a practical, as well as aesthetic reason for their brevity: *Esquire* paid between \$200 and \$250 regardless of the length of piece submitted, so Fitzgerald knew that it made no

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<sup>42</sup> Harding, “‘Made For – or Against – the Trade’”, in *The Promises of Life*, ed. by Lee, pp. 113-30.

<sup>43</sup> Levine writes about the emergence of such cultural classifications in the United States beginning in the nineteenth century, see Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*.

<sup>44</sup> West, ‘Fitzgerald and *Esquire*’, in *New Approaches in Criticism*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 149-66 (p. 149).

professional sense to turn in his usual 6,000 to 8,000 word stories that had earned him \$4,000 at the *Post*.

Fitzgerald's earlier short fiction was also accused of having 'clichéd plots'.<sup>45</sup> Ames seems to imply that Fitzgerald intentionally makes his stories' plots clichéd in order to satirise the 'worst' kind of 'Hollywood storytelling' in the movies. Yet, in the context of Fitzgerald's earlier sustained accusations of being 'formulaic', Fitzgerald can be seen as self-parodying, drawing parallels between his job working as a *Post* writer and Hobby's job in Hollywood. Both aim to produce stories that would appeal to the masses, working within clearly agreed editorial guidelines of decency, and both are (or at least have been) handsomely paid for their work. Ultimately, since Fitzgerald failed to find success in screenwriting, it was a bold and self-assured move to begin a series about a hack writer in Hollywood who is down on his luck after having had prior success. Kenneth Eble rightly identifies as a creative strength the fact that Fitzgerald experienced the ability 'to view himself with some irony and detachment' and infused the Pat Hobby stories with this tone.<sup>46</sup>

John Higgins takes a related viewpoint, reading the Pat Hobby stories as a chance for Fitzgerald to redeem himself for some of his previous story-writing weaknesses: 'split character focus, too-close aesthetic distance, involved and overlong plots, saccharine endings, lack of indirection, [sic] and overuse of rhetoric and introspection'.<sup>47</sup> However, in mastering these 'problems', Fitzgerald creates further ambiguities and reiterates his characteristic ambivalence about film. In Chapter One we encountered the tendency of some modernist short story writers to deprioritise plot, instead focusing on internal psychological action. By contrast, Fitzgerald's stories are occasionally criticised for being overly plotted. For example, in 'May Day' (1920), Henry Dan Piper finds almost a surplus of plotting, describing 'three independent episodes tied together by an unconvincing plot'.<sup>48</sup>

'Crazy Sunday' has been criticised for several of the weaknesses Higgins attributes to some of Fitzgerald's pre-Pat Hobby stories. Ostensibly the story of

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<sup>45</sup> For example, John Higgins refers to Fitzgerald's 'popular romance formula' in his early stories, see Higgins, p. 14. Kenneth Eble finds that in his early magazine work, 'His reliance upon plot often forced the conclusion of a story or led it to a final twist that might have embarrassed O. Henry' in Eble, *Fitzgerald*, p. 62.

<sup>46</sup> Kenneth Eble, 'Touches of Disaster: Alcoholism and Mental Illness in Fitzgerald's Short Stories', in *New Approaches*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 39-52 (p. 47).

<sup>47</sup> Higgins, p. 177.

<sup>48</sup> For example, see *Ibid.*, p. 150; Piper, p. 70.

screenwriter Joel Coles, critics have found the split focus between Coles and the director Miles Calman (a precursor of Monroe Stahr, and partly based on Irving Thalberg) to detract from the story. Based in part on Fitzgerald's own experiences in Hollywood on his 1931 writing assignment at MGM, it has been described by Kuehl as 'Fitzgerald's last major story,' and by Ruth Prigozy as a 'masterpiece,' save for 'Fitzgerald's division of focus: Joel Coles is the central consciousness, Miles Calman the center of interest'.<sup>49</sup> This results in a 'limited omniscient point of view' that mediates the action of the story through the perspective of Joel Coles, who freely admits at the story's outset that he had spent his peripatetic childhood 'trying to separate the real from the unreal' (*TAR*, p. 5).<sup>50</sup> Though it raises the spectre of narratorial reliability, and the limits of fiction to accurately represent lived experience, this mediated focus also gives us an insight into life as a junior screenwriter, in which the directors' (and producers') presence can be keenly felt even in lieu of their physical presence.

Prigozy finds the plot of 'Crazy Sunday' to be 'simple', while Kuehl describes it as 'more structured than plotted,' which recalls Fitzgerald's verdict, discussed in the previous two chapters, of his 1934-36 stories often being 'built rather than written'.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the story essentially consists of two parties followed by an outing to the theatre, peppered with discussion of infidelity and the climactic news of Calman's death. Raubichek offers a valuable reading of the structure in which he suggests that 'the love triangle appears to be a parody of the romantic plot typical of both the short story and of Hollywood film in the early 1930s'.<sup>52</sup> This parody delicately coexists with Fitzgerald's sparing use of romantic rhetoric (deemed 'happily' absent by Prigozy), but arguably present in the climactic description of Calman's untimely demise: 'Meshed in an industry, he had paid with his ruined nerves for having no resilience, no healthy cynicism, no refuge, only a pitiful and precarious escape' (*TAR*, p. 21). Whilst not in the same league as his rhetorical 'rhapsody' in stories like 'The Swimmers' (1929), here the emphasis on human vulnerability and illness sits in tension with the commercial demands forced upon Calman by his state of being 'meshed in an

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<sup>49</sup> Kuehl, p. 87; Prigozy, 'Fitzgerald's Short Stories and the Depression', in *New Approaches*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 111-26 (p. 113, p. 123).

<sup>50</sup> Raubichek, 'Hollywood Nights: The Filmmaker as Artist', p. 57.

<sup>51</sup> Prigozy, 'Fitzgerald's Short Stories', in *New Approaches*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 111-126 (p. 122); Kuehl, p. 92; *Life in Letters*, p. 301 [5 June 1936].

<sup>52</sup> Raubichek, 'Hollywood Nights: The Filmmaker as Artist', p. 58.

industry'. Connoting a predatory spider's web, or a fishing net, as well as the industrial image of cogs and engaged gearwheels being meshed together to power a machine, Calman's 'escape' from the industry that had, perhaps ominously, 'not *yet* broken' Coles (emphasis mine), represents Fitzgerald's own predictions of the sublimation of the novel by 'a mechanical and communal art' reliant on 'the inevitable low gear of collaboration' (*MLC*, p. 148). It is for this reason that Fitzgerald is careful to emphasise Calman's 'artistic conscience', investing potentially mundane decisions with a moral dimension.

Following Raubichek's reading of the story as parodic, as we have seen, parody entails repetition with a difference. In alluding to 'the romantic plot typical of both the short story and Hollywood film in the early 1930s,' Fitzgerald subverts our generically-conditioned expectations by writing a 'startling' ending 'that render[s] any clear-cut assessment of the outcome impossible'.<sup>53</sup> In Joel's refusal of Stella's grief-stricken advances, he reflects on how Calman 'made her a sort of masterpiece' (*TAR*, p. 22), in a subtle nod to the nascent star system that had also produced Jenny Prince in 'Jacob's Ladder'. Raubichek's assertion that Coles' future will include "'making love," in both sense of the term to the art object created by Miles Calman' invokes both the Pygmalion myth and the ending of 'Jacob's Ladder', in which Jacob Booth is 'wedded' to Jenny Prince 'for an hour' whilst he watches her film play 'in the vast throbbing darkness' (*ASM*, pp. 357-58).<sup>54</sup> Coles' ambiguous oath, uttered 'with a certain bitterness' at the story's conclusion dramatically references an implied sequel in which he will return to Stella's life: 'Oh, yes, I'll be back - I'll be back!' (*TAR*, p. 23). The ambiguity of his statement draws upon the position of Coles in his relationship with Calman: in their appositional partnership, if Calman is the 'artistic conscience', Coles, the survivor, represents the inauthentic artist. However, this position is complicated by Stella's existence, perhaps alluding to the sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella*, as beloved 'art object', in Raubichek's phrase. Thus we are left to judge whether the production of Calman's artistic labours, Stella, is worthy of his sacrifice. This reading justifies her centrality in the narrative, which has been criticised for its

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 61; for a discussion of the Pygmalion myth in Fitzgerald's work, see Chapter 5 of John T. Irwin, *F. Scott Fitzgerald's Fiction: 'An Almost Theatrical Innocence'* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2014).



shift of focus away from Miles.<sup>55</sup> Ultimately, the use of self-parodic undertones in the destabilising ending serves to draw attention to the difficulties of resolving Fitzgerald's artistic crisis of art versus commerce. By paring down plot and limiting his recourse to rhetorical rhapsody, Fitzgerald conveys his predicament, negotiating the path between his artistic and commercial needs, whilst beginning to interrogate the potential of the medium of film to provide some resolution to these deep-seated concerns.

By the time Fitzgerald comes to write the Pat Hobby stories, he is still interrogating the potential of film to marry artistic and commercial ambitions: in focusing exclusively on a few key characters, with an appropriately objective aesthetic distance, with clear and succinct plot development (though arguably without much development at all in some individual stories), and without his characteristic rhetorical flourishes and lyrical evocation, the Pat Hobby stories invoke - in both form and content - the medium of film. Higgins, drawing on the work of Ellen F. Moers, even likens the terse stories to silent screen comedies.<sup>56</sup> As a whole, the Pat Hobby series could be read as individual scenes constituting a whole film, albeit a fairly badly edited and poorly paced film, due to the terse, sparse style and repeated story elements from story to story. This terse style has been remarked upon by many critics, including Stern who finds that several of the stories 'seem deceptively plotless'. He argues that 'the "plotless" style of these stories is a foreshadowing of what came to be the norm in popular magazines of literary sophistication such as the *New Yorker*'.<sup>57</sup> Once more, Fitzgerald's work appears to be straddling the commercial, performative arts, and literary art.

One of the most sophisticated features of the Pat Hobby stories, aside from their brevity, is their voice. Stern continues: 'There are moments in ['Pat Hobby's Christmas Wish' (1940)] when the satiric quotidian style of a character's dialogue becomes that of the invisible narrator.'<sup>58</sup> Known as 'free indirect discourse' or *libre indirect*, this is a narrative technique often employed by Fitzgerald, as well as many other modern writers, such as Joyce, who used free indirect discourse in *Dubliners* as a symbolic motif as well as a narrative technique, representing the struggle of characters to assert

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<sup>55</sup> For example, see Prigozy, 'Fitzgerald's Short Stories', in *New Approaches*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 111-26 (pp. 122-23).

<sup>56</sup> Higgins, p. 173; Ellen F. Moers, 'Fitzgerald: Reveille at Taps', *Commentary*, 34 (1962), 526-30 (pp. 528-29).

<sup>57</sup> Stern, 'Will the Real Pat Hobby Please Stand Up?', in *Neglected Stories*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 305-38 (p. 319).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

their choices and individuality, as Mark Corcoran has analysed.<sup>59</sup> The ambiguities brought about by the use of free indirect discourse remind the reader of the impossibility of omniscience, emphasising the narratives as a series of representational and interpretative decisions. Though free indirect discourse features heavily in the Pat Hobby stories, Fitzgerald had in fact been proficient in its usage for many years. As Curnutt explains,

Fitzgerald no doubt felt comfortable writing in FID [Free Indirect Discourse] for a very simple reason: its main attribute is that it creates ambiguities of motive and morality that perfectly enabled the author to plumb his ambivalence toward the ethical balance between self-control and indulgence. [...] [It] requires readers to assess the moral valence of the protagonist's thoughts without benefit of an authorial baseline. [...] As such, FID is a device not only for engaging audiences in the narrative but for layering it with the formalist complexity that was a hallmark of modernism.<sup>60</sup>

In imbuing the Pat Hobby stories with ‘ambiguities of motive and morality’, Fitzgerald again enters into an unspoken contract with his readership just as he does with his musical allusions: he devolves responsibility for ‘assess[ing] the moral valence’ and creatively exploits the ensuing ambiguity to his advantage. In ‘Jacob’s Ladder’ (1927), Fitzgerald demonstrates his agility with free indirect discourse in describing Jacob Booth’s infatuation with Jenny Prince: ‘His own well-ordered person seemed for the first time in his life gross and well-worn to him as he knelt suddenly at the heart of freshness’ (*ASM*, p. 335). This contrasts greatly with our introduction to Jacob, sitting in the sweaty courtroom for want of anything better to do, and marks the turning point in Jacob’s inner life, as he feels himself being drawn to the vibrant shopgirl. The parallelism of the compound adjectives ‘well-ordered’ and ‘well-worn’ encapsulate and foreshadow Jacob’s present and future emotional states. But are we to read Jacob’s concern with his appearance in the face of ‘freshness’ as an indication of his superficiality? Or are we to interpret his captivation by Jenny as genuine? By the end of the story, he has only her image, ‘in the vast throbbing darkness’ of the movie

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<sup>59</sup> Mark Corcoran, ‘Identity Crisis in James Joyce’s *Dubliners*’, *Journal of Franco-Irish Studies*, 2:1, (2011), 57-72 (p. 69).

<sup>60</sup> Curnutt, ‘The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald’, in *American Short Story* ed. by Bendixen and Nagel, pp. 295-315 (p. 306).

theatre: are we therefore to interpret this as a just ending? (*ASM*, p. 358). Fitzgerald is playing with the idea of seeking serious meaning from the filmic image, even invoking religious imagery to parody the worship of celluloid goddesses: Jenny has ‘the face of a saint, an intense little madonna’, and at the story’s close, Margolies notes a potential allusion to the Song of Solomon in the narrator’s description of Jacob’s interpretation of the sign announcing Jenny Prince’s name: “‘Come and rest upon my loveliness,” it said. “Fulfill your secret dreams in wedding me for an hour”” (*ASM*, p. 357).<sup>61</sup> Such hints of blasphemy, along with the story’s unhappy ending, makes it all the more surprising that it was published in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Margolies also notes a tendency for critics to place ‘too much emphasis on the story’s autobiographical characteristics’ given Fitzgerald’s alleged romance with the actress Lois Moran, and it seems that Fitzgerald’s Hollywood fiction is particularly vulnerable to this autobiographical overemphasis, perhaps because in these writings he interrogates performative personality and the cult of celebrity in a way that overwhelmingly focuses on the individual.

In the Pat Hobby stories, Fitzgerald is once more prompting a specific reader response and then indulging in self-parody. Having recently written such ‘exposed’ and ‘confessional’ pieces in the ‘Crack-Up’ essays, Fitzgerald must have known that some would read Pat Hobby as a self-portrait. By penning these stories in a terse, controlled style, absent of his previously favoured lyrical descriptions, he is flexing his literary muscle, whilst risking an overly-literal interpretation of his parodic depiction of Pat Hobby. Though there was an undeniable financial function served by the Hobby pieces, Matthew Bruccoli also finds in them a cathartic function: ‘The character’s grotesque adventures in Hollywood provided a kind of therapy for the author and purged the bitterness that might otherwise have found its way into the novel.’<sup>62</sup> This may be true to an extent, but another reading situates Fitzgerald as a professional author writing saleable stories to the appropriate magazine. His bitterness about being an ostensibly unsuccessful screenwriter plays very little part in the Pat Hobby stories. Indeed, Pat Hobby himself was once a successful screenwriter, even meeting the President, as recounted in ‘A Patriotic Short’ (1940). Fitzgerald’s screenwriting failures were, paradoxically, his fiction-writing strengths. He cared about mood and the

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<sup>61</sup> Alan Margolies, ‘Climbing “Jacob’s Ladder”’ in *Neglected Stories* ed. by Bryer (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996), pp. 89-103 (p. 101).

<sup>62</sup> Bruccoli, *Epic Grandeur*, pp. 469-70.

almost intangible aspects of a scene as well as its dialogue: this is a trait of the fiction writer, not the screenwriter. As Ronald Berman writes of Fitzgerald's fiction, he sometimes even expresses colours as 'possibilit[ies] rather than characteristic[s]':

One of Fitzgerald's most important stylistic techniques is the replacement of description by perception. Given that this novel is often romantic and lyrical, we expect it also to be intensely evocative. But it is often denuded of description, focused not affectively but on line, mass, space, and motion. It deals with color, as in the brief description of Daisy's hair, as a possibility rather than as a characteristic.<sup>63</sup>

'Possibilities' do not translate well into screenplays, but Fitzgerald's modernist assumption of a spectrum of interpretative possibilities is a destabilising and even disruptive force when read in light of his parodic presentation of dance, music, and film in his stories. An examination of the filmic techniques Fitzgerald imports into his fiction will illustrate these interpretative possibilities.

## II. 'Now if this Were a Moving Picture': Filmic Technique in Fitzgerald's Stories

En route to Hollywood for the final time, Fitzgerald expressed the belief that he could forge a new path as a writer who oversaw a film from a raw idea through to production as a kind of proto-auteur, but this belief was held only briefly. He wrote to Scottie in July 1937, reflecting on his two earlier visits to Hollywood:

I want to profit by these two experiences - I must be very tactful but keep my hand on the wheel from the start - find out the key man among the bosses + the most malleable among the collaborators - then fight the rest tooth + nail until, in fact or in effect, I'm alone on the picture. That's the only way I can do my best work.<sup>64</sup>

He had in fact been profiting from the film industry since as early as 1920. Much of his early work was - by coincidence or design - suitable for adaptation to the filmic

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<sup>63</sup> Ronald Berman, *The Great Gatsby and Modern Times* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996) p. 101.

<sup>64</sup> Letter to Scottie Fitzgerald, *Life in Letters*, p. 331 [July 1937].

medium, and several of his early stories were indeed made into films. Three 1920 stories were adapted: ‘Head and Shoulders’ became Metro’s *The Chorus Girl’s Romance*; ‘Myra Meets His Family’ (1920) became Fox’s *The Husband Hunter*; and ‘The Offshore Pirate’ was produced by Metro in 1921, retaining Fitzgerald’s title, and ‘The Camel’s Back’ (1922), became a 1924 Warner Brothers production called *Conductor 1492*. Critics such as Margolies have argued that Fitzgerald actually wrote some of these stories with a view to selling them to Hollywood, and whilst that may be true, he was under a more immediate pressure to make the stories saleable to the ‘slicks’ like the *Saturday Evening Post*.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, incorporating filmic attributes does not necessarily denote a desire for the fictions to be filmed. In some cases, such as in ‘Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar’, film could be being deployed to show off his familiarity with the innovative conventions of film, and develop his idiosyncratic narrative presence, without actually angling for the film to be made. Fitzgerald audaciously explains:

Now if this were a moving picture (as, of course, I hope it will be some day) I would take as many thousand feet of her as I was allowed – then I would move the camera up close and show the yellow down on the back of her neck where her hair stopped and the warm color of her cheeks and arms (*TJA*, p. 278).

Jesse Meyers labels the importation of filmic technique as ‘subliminal screenwrit[ing]’ in his analysis of Joyce’s story ‘Araby’, and cites a strikingly similar passage in Joyce’s 1914 story: ‘The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing.’<sup>66</sup> John McCourt finds that Joyce took ‘inspiration from cinema’s capacity to absorb other art forms’, and this integrative impulse is also on display in Fitzgerald’s work’.<sup>67</sup> Of course, Fitzgerald self-consciously draws our attention to the filmic potential inherent in the scene, although such brazen asides are relatively rare in his stories, and generally he

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<sup>65</sup> See Alan Margolies, “‘Kissing, Shooting, and Sacrificing’: F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Hollywood Market”, in *New Approaches* ed. by Bryer (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), pp. 65-73.

<sup>66</sup> Jesse Meyers, ‘James Joyce, Subliminal Screenwriter?’, in *Roll Away the Reel World: James Joyce and Cinema*, ed. by John McCourt (Cork: Cork University Press, 2010), pp. 174-85 (p. 175).

<sup>67</sup> John McCourt, ‘From the Real to the Reel and Back: Explorations into Joyce and Cinema’, in *Roll Away the Reel*, ed. by McCourt, pp. 1-11, (p. 8).

is more subtle with his use of the filmic, even in the stories that were adapted into films. He incorporates a range of filmic technique in his fiction for their aesthetic effects, from camera angles to montage.

The example above, from ‘Dice, Brassknuckles and Guitar’, shows Fitzgerald’s familiarity with the concept of the close-up, which he also deploys in ‘Magnetism’. The story of actor George Hannaford, who cannot help but attract and charm women, encompasses a foiled blackmail plot and the averted adultery of his wife. Set in Hollywood, it is a story that makes use of several filmic techniques. In establishing the character of Kay Tomkins Hannaford, the narrator describes how ‘her face was round, young, pretty and strong; a strength accentuated by the responsive play of brows and lashes around her clear, glossy, hazel eyes’ (*ASM*, p. 413).<sup>68</sup> This is a shot familiar to us from silent films, for example the iconic close-up of Garbo’s face in the 1926 film *Flesh and the Devil* (see Figure 10), which was directed by Clarence Brown, and produced by Irving Thalberg, whom Fitzgerald greatly admired. The face and the eyes, in particular, are highlighted as the main means of expressivity for actors in a theatrical medium that for the first time provided the entire audience with the same intimate view, of the simultaneously accessible and remote stars.

**Figure 10** Still of Greta Garbo from *Flesh and the Devil* (1926), directed by Clarence Brown

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<sup>68</sup> André Le Vot suggests that the cover of *The Great Gatsby*, by Francis Cugat, may have been inspired by a close-up of Lillian Gish’s eyes in the D. W. Griffith film *Enoch Arden* (1911). On seeing Cugat’s cover art, Fitzgerald famously incorporated Doctor T. J. Eckleburg into *Gatsby* and begged Perkins, ‘For Christ’s sake, don’t give anyone that jacket you’re saving for me. I’ve written it into the book’. See André Le Vot, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Biography*, trans. by William Byron (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 154.

Another example of a close-up occurs later in the story when would-be blackmailer Margaret Donovan describes George's head in terms that read almost as stage directions: 'your hat has squashed your beautiful hair down on one side and you've got dark circles, or dirt, under your eyes' (*ASM*, p. 424). There are several more filmic techniques used in the story, from the slapstick physical comedy of Dolores the housekeeper, who 'tripped on the broom and fell off the stoop' (*ASM*, p. 407), to the use of a soundtrack to accompany the confrontation with Margaret: 'George felt as if a band which had been playing for a long time in the distance had suddenly moved up and taken a station beneath his window' (*ASM*, p. 425). In contrast, we are also provided with two silent sequences in the story, that was written in December 1927, three months after the premiere of *The Jazz Singer*, which was 'the first feature-length picture incorporating spoken dialogue,' and also included songs, such as Fitzgerald's favourite, 'Blue Skies'.<sup>69</sup> The second silent scene is described brusquely: 'They dined in silence' (*ASM*, p. 414), whilst the first is more explored in a more filmic manner:

She stood a long time with her back to him at one point, and when she turned at length, their eyes swept past each other's, brushing like bird wings. Simultaneously he saw they had gone far, in their way; it was well that he had drawn back. He was glad that someone came for her when the work was almost over.

Dressed, he returned to the office wing, stopping in for a moment to see Schroeder. No one answered his knock, and, turning the knob, he went in. Helen Avery was there alone.

Hannaford shut the door and they stared at each other. Her face was young, frightened. In a moment in which neither of them spoke, it was decided that they would have some of this out now. Almost thankfully he felt the warm sap of emotion flow out of his heart and course through his body (*ASM*, p. 412-3).

This scene describes George's emerging realisation of the unintended effects of his effortless charm. By removing dialogue, Fitzgerald calls upon the reader to recognise the nonverbal forces at work, as well as to convey an intensity of attraction and withdrawal that would perhaps be belittled in its transposition into words. George's life

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<sup>69</sup> David Puttnam, *Movies and Money* (New York: Vintage, 2000), p. 109.

is frequently described in terms of ‘scenes’ and ‘actors’, and this scene belongs to a silent melodrama. The fixed point of view (or camera angle) affords a stasis to their encounter that would, in George’s recent past, have been dictated by the large, immobile cameras of early cinema. The emphasis on the expressivity of eyes is also typical of silent film, especially melodrama, and is an aspect of body language that Helen and George, as actors, would spend much of their professional day focusing on. Helen and Kay in particular are associated with emotionally demonstrative eyes throughout the story, almost to the point of metonymically signifying George Hannaford’s watched status as a movie star (*ASM*, p. 411, p. 415). Cohen describes how ‘facial expressiveness was most closely identified with women in silent films [...] where it complements the bodily expressiveness of men’. She goes on to suggest that the close-up offers the audience ‘intimacy without involvement’, which dovetails well with a plot in which all of the protagonists happily continue acting after their working day at the studio has ended.<sup>70</sup>

D. W. Griffith was especially famous for his use of the close-up in his films, and became known for creating an acting style that bridged the near-histrionic gesturing of the earliest silent films (most of the actors having come directly from the stage) and the more naturalistic style that became common during the mid-1920s.<sup>71</sup> The last aspect of the early style to disappear was the exaggerated facial expressions focused on during close-ups. This cemented a narrative semiotics in which audiences interpreted motivations and reactions through the mere movements of a seemingly unobserved face. Audiences thus projected their interpretations onto the literal projection of the film. Writing about Greta Garbo, Roland Barthes reflects,

Garbo still belongs to that moment in cinema when capturing the human face still plunged audiences into the deepest ecstasy, when one literally lost oneself in a human image as one would in a philtre, when the face represented a kind of absolute state of the flesh, which could be neither reached nor renounced.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Cohen, p. 113.

<sup>71</sup> Ronald Berman finds traces of Griffith’s ‘film iconography’ in *The Great Gatsby*, and links both Daisy and Myrtle to the Griffith heroines’ iconic exaggerated acting style. See Berman, *Gatsby and Modern Times*, p. 146, pp. 148-49.

<sup>72</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘The Face of Garbo’, in *Mythologies* ed. and trans. by Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, [1957] 2000), pp. 56-57 (p. 56).



Barthes' analysis of Garbo could also be applied to Fitzgerald's description of the starlet Jenny Prince in 'Jacob's Ladder': 'Her face, the face of a saint, an intense little madonna, was lifted fragilely out of the mortal dust of the afternoon' (*ASM*, p. 335). Just as with the Griffith heroines, the audience (including Jacob Booth, the story's protagonist) project their beliefs and desires onto the giant porcelain faces on screen. Lewis Erenberg identifies a similar process in the interaction between chorus girls and patrons at Broadway revues: 'their ever-present smiles invited customers to project their desires onto their faces'.<sup>73</sup>

As well as close-ups, another filmic technique Fitzgerald uses is the dream sequence, which is related to the disguise-laden twist-ending story he favoured in his earliest works such as 'The Offshore Pirate'. In fact, 'The Offshore Pirate', in its original version, contained a coda (cut by the Post) in which Ardita awakens to discover the events of the story had been a dream.<sup>74</sup> Returning to 'Magnetism', the dream sequence begins unannounced, leaving the reader to gradually deduce that the described events are not real: 'Mechanically he went upstairs, undressed and got into bed. Just before dawn Kay came to him in the garden' (*ASM*, p. 419). We are told that there was a river, with boats moving by, but given Fitzgerald's opening descriptions of Hollywood's lavish incongruity of architecture and population, a garden moat of some sort does not strike the reader as impossible. Two thirds of the dream sequence are given over to setting: the starlight, the damp grass, and the tableau of Kay '[holding] up her face as one shows a book open at a page' (*ASM*, p. 419). It is one of several passages that Fitzgerald reused in *Tender is the Night*, which led to his description of 'Magnetism', along with 'Jacob's Ladder' in his Ledger as 'Stripped and - Permanently Buried'.<sup>75</sup> Fitzgerald is borrowing from himself even at the same time as borrowing techniques from a different (and happily intertextual) medium.

In the dream, Kay is submissive, adoring and fragile – a far cry from the real Kay, in whom he saw only that evening 'something veiled and remote in [her] eyes that he had never seen there before' (*ASM*, p. 416). The dream sequence plays on the layers of selves we find in the story – private, public, acted, imagined, demonstrated, and impersonated. The studio system of the 1920s was notorious for its slippery attitude to

<sup>73</sup> Erenberg, *Steppin' Out*, p. 216.

<sup>74</sup> See 'Appendix 3: Original Ending for "The Offshore Pirate"' in Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, ed. by West, pp. 395-96.

<sup>75</sup> *F. Scott Fitzgerald's Ledger* ed. by Bruccoli, pp. 8-9.

biography, as we see in ‘Jacob’s Ladder’, where Jenny Delehanty is expertly groomed into becoming Jenny Prince. As Brooks Robard has noted, though popular in films of the twenties, such as the Buster Keaton vehicle *Sherlock, Jr.* (1924), (which also purposefully blurs the boundaries between dream and reality in a film-industry setting), dream sequences were even more popular in the 1910s: ‘The fact that half as many of the films made in the twenties use dreams as a plot device as those in the teens suggests that the early popularity of dream sequences as a narrative device was gradually exhausted.’<sup>76</sup> The declining popularity of the dream sequence by the twenties (before its renaissance in the big-budget musicals of the 1930s) situates George Hannaford in transition between the Griffith films and the imminent ‘talkies’. His liminal situation between an older and a younger actress supports this reading.

To continue exploring the extensive use of filmic techniques in ‘Magnetism’, at the story’s climax, George mentally adds a soundtrack to the pivotal scene in which he realises and accepts some culpability for the events that have unfolded: ‘George felt as if a band which had been playing for a long time in the distance had suddenly moved up and taken a station beneath his window’ (*ASM*, p. 425). The following enigmatic sentence hints that Fitzgerald is referring both to the film industry and to George’s dawning consciousness of how his charm affects women: ‘He had always been conscious that things like this were going on around him.’ Yet he struggles to separate his own application of the film industry to his daily life from real life itself. He cannot easily ascertain where film ends and his life begins: ‘the faint music of these emotions in his ear seemed to bear no relation to actual life. They were phantoms that he had conjured up out of nothing; he never imagined their actual incarnations’ (*ASM*, p. 425). Fitzgerald subtly demonstrates that George Hannaford’s ‘magnetism’ is illusory.

More than acting as a quintessential ‘rags to riches’ leading man, plucked from obscurity as a one-time movie lot electrician and forced to fill in as an actor, George Hannaford can be read as a satiric metaphor for the motion picture industry itself (*ASM* p. 411). He ‘was young and extraordinarily handsome’ but aside from his aesthetic appeal, he also has charm and good character (*ASM*, p. 407). If we read George as one aspect of the film industry – representative of the potential that emerged through the values of ‘rags to riches’ aptitude, good character, and desire to work hard enough to

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<sup>76</sup> Brooks Robards, ‘California Dreaming: Dream Sequences in Hollywood Musical, Melodramas and Horror Movies’, in *Beyond the Stars: Studies in American Popular Film*, ed. by Paul Loukides and Linda K. Fuller, 5 vols (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1990-1996), II, pp. 114-29 (p. 116).

feel one's success was 'solid beneath his feet' in a notoriously fickle industry, Helen Avery can be read as representing a contrasting aspect of the business. She is a star who attracts, generates, and demands attention, but also displays selfish and difficult behaviour on set and shows little respect for George's marriage, telephoning him multiple times at home. We do not find out about her background, but we know that both George and Kay fell into movies accidentally, and turned out to be very talented. They embody the Romantic notion of the artist whose talents are innate and natural, and find themselves fulfilled through an expression that brings joy to others – except, they clearly are not fulfilled, as the cracks in their marriage begin to reveal. Helen, younger than both George and Kay, can be read as representative of the Hollywood that had 'offended' George at first: 'the almost hysterical egotism and excitability hidden under an extremely thin veil of elaborate good fellowship' (*ASM*, p. 411). We are told that 'he was critical of Helen Avery' and despite his almost involuntary gravitation towards her, he manages to check himself, sacrificing the romantic epiphany he anticipates: 'He had felt that they both tolerated something, that each knew half of some secret about people and life, and that if they rushed towards each other there would be a romantic communion of almost unbelievable intensity' (*ASM*, p. 411). It turns out that he is not in love with Helen Avery, and this expression may be no more than a role he tries on for size, or a virtuosic exploration of the power he knows is latent in the loaded glances and stylised gesture he has capably learned in the silent film industry.

George is clearly worshipped by the public, and well-respected by his peers. When visiting the set, 'An actor in evening clothes, his shirt front, collar and cuffs tinted a brilliant pink, made as though to get chairs for them but they shook their heads and stood watching' (*ASM*, p. 410). This respect is amplified by Fitzgerald to an almost comic degree that does in fact accurately represent the state of awe such celebrities commanded: 'figures [...] turned up white faces to George Hannaford, like souls in purgatory watching the passage of a half-god through' (*ASM*, p. 410). In this curious mixture of Catholic doctrine ('purgatory') and classical mythology ('half-god'), we are reminded of the allure of the potential union of mortals and divine beings for which Jacob waits, in the liminal space of the movie theatre, at the close of 'Jacob's

Ladder’.<sup>77</sup> George settles the situation with his charm just as he tries to heal the rift in his ‘perfect’ marriage with his characteristic ‘magnetism’, but ultimately this is only accomplished when Kay confronts the thought of losing not George, but \$50,000. By the story’s close Kay loses some of our sympathy, but so too does George. When Kay tries to end things with George and starts to cry, we are told that ‘Face to face with what was apparently a real emotion, he had no words of any kind’ (*ASM*, p. 421). This implies both that Kay rarely presents him with authentic emotion, but also that he rarely calls upon his genuine empathetic responses, coasting through life on an automatic charm offensive. Fitzgerald punishes both. Though we are told that ‘[George] had come near to making something bright and precious into something cheap and unkind’, by the story’s end, we are no longer convinced of the solidity of the Hannaford marital situation, nor the integrity of any of the protagonists (*ASM*, p. 61).

George is ‘a star of the new “natural” type then just coming into vogue’ and in the story’s binary opposition of old ‘Griffith era’ stars, and their modern counterparts, George thinks himself philosophically aligned with ‘the old crowd’ of ‘the early Griffiths pictures’ who ‘had a dignity and straightforwardness about them from the fact that they had worked in pictures before pictures were bathed in a golden haze of success. They were still rather humble before their amazing triumph’ (*ASM*, p. 413-15). He was, in fact, in a Griffith Western as a boy, and so straddles the old crowd and the vanguard, embodying the conflicts inherent in technological progress in the industry, if in a fractured way, with multiple George Hannafords pervading the story. His appeal is not lost on Dolores the housekeeper, who fantasises about having a relationship with him, and we hear that old ladies ‘believed in him’ (*ASM*, p. 416). Dolores, her association with gesture bookending the story, represents the early days of silent film, specifically comedy, with her slapstick stumble over her broom and ambiguous closing gesture, ‘express[ing] either ecstasy or strangulation’ (*ASM*, p. 429). This gesture takes place on the stoop of the Hannaford home, proscenium between private and public versions of the Hannafords.

Finally, George is established as more than an actor; more than acting royalty, even. When he is en route to Margaret’s house and is confronted by Kay’s would-be

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<sup>77</sup> This celebrity-infused genre straddling also recalls the biblical movies of Cecil B. De Mille, who converted biblical texts into epic entertainment in such films as *The Ten Commandments* (Paramount, 1923), which moves between the biblical and modern eras.

lover, he assumes the role of writer, or even producer. He reads the scene, surveys his theatrical options, and rejects them all:

In a flash the scene that would presently take place ran itself off in George's mind. He saw himself moving through the scene, saw his part, an infinite choice of parts, but in every one of them Kay would be against him and with Arthur Busch. And suddenly he rejected them all (*ASM*, p. 421).

Parts of his daily life end up on the cutting room floor even as he experiences them, as he lives a selective reality. It is an enticing kind of power, but as the story's title reminds us, magnetism both attracts and repels. By the end of the story, when he discovers Margaret's suicide attempt, not even George can bear to look himself in the eye: 'he closed his eyes with a sudden exclamation of distaste, and abandoned the intention of brushing his hair' (*ASM*, p. 429). His face, the canvas for the projection of people's hopes and desires, as the Griffith heroines' faces had been in the 1910s, is concealed by the closing of his eyes and symbolic avoidance of his reflected image. He ultimately rejects his role and status, unable, we infer, to respect himself in his embodiment of such an artificial industry.

All is not what it seems in Hannaford's world: the pink-shirted actor from 'Magnetism' was attired thus so that the early film cameras could pick up the shirt sharply, and it would register on the black and white screen as a pure white. This artificiality pervades silent cinema, and is in fact symptomatic of the industry itself, whose innate contradiction stipulates that we accept artifice as reality for the duration of the film – that we willfully substitute the reel for the real. There are two aspects of this artificiality that warrant further discussion here. Firstly, the way Fitzgerald uses film, in Bilton's phrase, 'as a metaphor for artificiality and falseness,' and secondly, the link between falseness and parody.<sup>78</sup> 'Magnetism' is a good example of Fitzgerald using the characters as metaphors for the industry's inherent artificiality. Characters describe themselves as living 'scenes' and being 'actors'. The theatricality of self is a theme that is more fully explored in *Tender is the Night* (1934), but performative identities also permeate the stories, varying from the polishing of Jenny Delehanty into Jenny Prince in 'Jacob's Ladder', to the spontaneous skit Joel Coles stages on his

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<sup>78</sup> Alan Bilton, 'The Melancholy of Absence: Reassessing the Role of Film in *Tender is the Night*', *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 5 (2006), 28-53 (p. 32).

‘Crazy Sunday’. As with so much in Fitzgerald’s work, this was an autobiographical trait: in *The Far Side of Paradise*, Arthur Mizener quotes a *New York Tribune* review by Heywood Broun in which Fitzgerald is castigated for his demonstrative performance of identity:

The self-consciousness of Fitzgerald is a barrier which we are never able to pierce. He sees himself constantly not as a human being, but as a man in a novel or in a play. Every move is a picture and there is a camera man behind each tree.<sup>79</sup>

This was published in 1920 and Fitzgerald is certain to have read it, since he pasted it into his scrapbooks. Curnutt quotes the same review as evidence of a larger cultural shift towards ‘the art of personality’ promulgated and marketed by early film stars like Pickford and Fairbanks. Curnutt notes that some of the public were rightly skeptical about the relationship between, for example, the celebrity endorsement of cosmetics and the ‘externaliz[ation] of innate but untapped traits’. Fitzgerald (himself having acted as a celebrity beauty contest judge in 1926) explored the idea of performative identity, as Curnutt notes, though the disguise motif in his work, but also in his own approach to authorship.<sup>80</sup>

As a *Post* writer, Fitzgerald played his role, with his own ‘marks’ to hit. He was sufficiently talented to vary the formulae enough almost to obscure them, but found certain other stipulations of a *Post* author’s role difficult to adhere to creatively. This can be witnessed in the 2014 Cambridge edition of *Taps at Reveille* which restores content in the stories that was deemed unfit by the *Post* editors at the time. Despite this editorial censorship, Fitzgerald was much more adept at working within the confines of his role in story writing than he was in screenwriting. Early arrogance aside, when he went to Hollywood for the third time, in 1937, he seriously prepared (or perhaps, rehearsed) for his role which included making index cards recording plots and noting montage sequences.<sup>81</sup> The fact that he failed to succeed in scriptwriting despite applying himself so industriously is usually attributed to his apparent inability to cede authority to the image in motion pictures; for him, despite stating in 1936 that ‘film

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<sup>79</sup> Heywood Broun, in a *New York Tribune* article, c. 1921, pasted into one of Fitzgerald’s scrapbooks and quoted by Mizener, *The Far Side of Paradise*, p. 104.

<sup>80</sup> See Curnutt, *Introduction to Fitzgerald*, p. 31.

<sup>81</sup> Margolies, ‘Fitzgerald and Hollywood’, in *Cambridge Companion to Fitzgerald*, ed. by Prigozy, pp. 189 - 208 (p. 199).

was an art in which words are subordinate to images' (*MLC*, p. 148), his 1937-1940 stay was spent interrogating that notion, in both his stories and in *The Last Tycoon*.<sup>82</sup>

The tension between the written and the gestural, as embodied by Fitzgerald's depictions of the artificiality of the pink shirts and exaggerated facial expressions familiar to silent film are linked to pantomime, burlesque, and above all, parody. Alan Bilton identifies a critical tendency to see Fitzgerald's use of filmic metaphor and descriptions as 'a kind of literary inoculation, an ingestion of the cultural poison of the age only so as more effectively to repudiate it'.<sup>83</sup> This is a fascinating choice of metaphor, recalling the lexis of disease encountered in criticism of dance and jazz music. This literary inoculation can be expressed in parodic forms – taking on a little of the culturally significant established norms in order to push forward into new territory and to fashion new meanings.

Fitzgerald's 'self-consciousness' may be just that in 1920, but before long, he learns that in order to truly 'make it new', he needs to show he is adept at the old. The problem with parody, as Josephine Baker found, was that by demonstrating confidence with the rules of the status quo, one runs the risk of being seen to endorse them. In his exploration of film, calling into question 'the dominant and hegemonic systems of signification' in Henderson's phrase, Fitzgerald invites us to interrogate these cultural practices and generate more nuanced responses to them.<sup>84</sup> What appears initially to be ambivalence can be read more usefully as Fitzgerald's attempt to convey through language the multiple strata of intertextual interpretative possibilities inherent in each dance, song and filmic allusion. Far from mere period details, his references to popular culture serve to remind us of the very complex ways in which people perform, enact, and consume popular culture in order to derive pleasure. Through his work, we can see Fitzgerald trying to explore the inexpressible disconnect between what dance, music, and most fluently, film, can achieve in comparison to and in partnership with, literature.

Cohen writes of D. W. Griffith: 'The close-up was the means through which Griffith reconciled a literary concern for the subtleties of feeling and thought with a

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<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Schulberg's Introduction in Fitzgerald, *Babylon Revisited: The Screenplay*, pp. 12-14; Cerasulo; and Wheeler Winston Dixon, *The Cinematic Vision of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986).

<sup>83</sup> Bilton, 'The Melancholy of Absence', p. 42.

<sup>84</sup> Henderson, 'Colonial, Postcolonial, and Diasporic Readings of Josephine Baker as Dancer and Performance Artist', p. 8.

medium that favoured action and spectacle.’<sup>85</sup> A lifelong admirer of Griffith, Fitzgerald’s version of Lilian Gish’s eloquent porcelain face is his invocation of loaded allusions to popular cultural forms. As this chapter has shown, through textual context and intertextual inference, the reader projects and imbues these references with meaning, all the while having been guided by Fitzgerald to see a ‘Memphis Sideswoop’ as much more than just a dance, ‘Blue Skies’ as more than a disposable Tin Pan Alley production, and the burgeoning film industry as the most exciting and terrifying cultural site of all: the place where Conrad’s manifesto - ‘to make you hear, to make you feel [...], to make you *see*!’ - could be achieved, and ‘the replacement of description by perception’ could be most fully realised.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Cohen, p. 117.

<sup>86</sup> Berman, *Gatsby and Modern Times*, p. 101.



## Conclusion

### **‘All my Stories are Conceived Like Novels’<sup>1</sup>**

In ‘Rags Martin-Jones and the Prince of Wales’ (1924) there occurs a curious and filmic interlude in which a blues singer appears, to sing a song. Rags does not recognise her, and the entertainment continues with a comedian, the blues singer having been but an interlude in Rags’ impatient anticipation of the royal arrival:

A negro girl, thin as a reed, emerged suddenly from a masked entrance into a circle of harsh barbaric light, startled the music to a wild minor and commenced to sing a rhythmic, tragic song. The pipe of her body broke abruptly and she began a slow incessant step, without progress and without hope, like the failure of a savage insufficient dream. She had lost Papa Jack, she cried over and over with a hysterical monotony at once despairing and unreconciled. One by one the loud horns tried to force her from the steady beat of madness but she listened only to the mutter of the drums which were isolating her in some lost place in time, among many thousand forgotten years. After the failure of the piccolo, she made herself again into a thin brown line, wailed once with a sharp and terrible intensity, then vanished into sudden darkness.

‘If you lived in New York you wouldn’t need to be told who she is,’ said John when the amber light flashed on (*ASM*, p. 103).

The fact that Rags has no idea who the singer is serves to undermine the episode’s captivating description, and emphasises the disjointedness of the interlude. The story progresses without further comment on the singer or her act, marking out the episode as self-contained and isolating it from the story. Fitzgerald chooses not to make links between the performance and the protagonists explicit, but if he had done, there would have been parallels to be drawn between the enchantment of the singer, stuck in monotonous madness, and Rags herself, who is characterised by her boredom and ennui, until this very evening. The musicians, trying to break the singer out of her fixed state of mind, are creating entertainment to try and cause an awakening in her, just as

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to Harold Ober, *As Ever*, Scott Fitz, p. 221 [14 February 1935].

John tries to entertain Rags and break the spell of her apathy. The melodic instruments are anthropomorphised into concerned bystanders, trying one by one to rescue her from the rhythm of the drums, which represent ‘the steady beat of madness’. The presence of primitivist modernism in the descriptions of the ‘barbaric light’, the ‘savage insufficient dream’ and the ancient ‘lost place in time’ collectively undermine the modernity and glamour of the performance - traits that Rags is noted for on both sides of the Atlantic. The fact that the songstress sings herself into oblivion, ‘wail[ing]’ before ‘vanish[ing]’ is a worrying premonition of what will happen to the ‘old’ Rags. She is destined to fulfill the traditional flapper trajectory of decreasing conspicuousness: adventure, domestication, and marriage. The story’s inclusion in a collection palpably about ‘All the Sad Young Men’ but which also includes stories about women’s transitions into married life and motherhood (most obviously, ‘The Adjuster’ [1925]) is pertinent.

Another, more radical reading of this passage could interpret Fitzgerald’s reference to the ‘negro girl, thin as a reed’, who performed with ‘a slow, incessant step’ and sang of losing ‘Papa Jack’ as an allusion to the blues singers of the early 1920s such as Bessie Smith and Ethel Waters. Waters in particular, standing at five feet nine and a half inches, and known as ‘Sweet Mama Stringbean’ is a good candidate for an analogue to the singer here, especially in the early 1920s when she was particularly slim.<sup>2</sup> In the early 1920s it was rumoured that Waters had a relationship with the dancer Ethel Williams.<sup>3</sup> This detail could add an extra layer to our interpretation of Rags and her expression of (heterosexual) love as a purely financial transaction, that is conveniently, readily available. ‘It looks like a bargain to me’, she says, choosing John at the story’s close (*ASM*, p. 112).

As it stands, the episode serves as a self-contained pastiche of female blues singers in the early 1920s. It is a pastiche rather than a parody because Fitzgerald chooses not to comment on the links between the performance and the story, so we instead encounter ‘an imitation of another critical style’ - that of female blues singers, ‘without critical distance’, in Simon Dentith’s phrase.<sup>4</sup> The effect of this self-contained performance is rather postmodern, and in addition, the musicality on the page draws our attention to the limitations of a written story to convey music with sensory

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<sup>2</sup> Erin D. Chapman, *Prove It On Me: New Negroes, Sex, and Popular Culture in the 1920s*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> See Donald Bogle, *Heat Wave: The Life and Career of Ethel Waters* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2012), p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> Dentith, p. 194.

verisimilitude. As we have seen, Fitzgerald is rather fond of such forays into metafiction.

As the above example shows, the aim of this thesis is to explore how popular culture richly impacted upon the literary aesthetics of Fitzgerald's short fiction. Whether in his groups of linked stories or in his discrete stories, there are several unifying features of a Fitzgeraldian story that help to create a self-referential field of reference through which Fitzgerald can enact his self-parodic techniques.<sup>5</sup> These unifying patterns include the conceits of disguise and mistaken identity, and the recourse to dance, music, and film references to explore what it means to be a modern American. Through the preceding chapters I explore Fitzgerald's response to modernity, as well as the intertextual dialogue that took place in the 1920s and 1930s between Fitzgerald's short stories and several other modernists' attempts to confront modernity as manifested in popular culture. In this process, I elucidate how a reading of the parodic mode in Fitzgerald's short fiction can enrich our understanding of his stories and their foundations in early twentieth-century culture, beyond their role in facilitating Fitzgerald's composition of novels. I provide a reading of Fitzgerald's habitual ambiguity that situates it in the realm of parody: his interrogation of dominant cultural practices simultaneously risking endorsement or acquiescence through their faithful reproduction of their parodied targets. My analysis has scrutinised this reproduction itself, finding that it meets the criteria of what Linda Hutcheon coined as 'complicitous critique', and I argue that it is through these parodic portraits that Fitzgerald offers a more nuanced response to these cultural practices than is initially apparent.<sup>6</sup>

With recourse to case studies of songs, dances, and films, I analyse ambiguity and parody as key features of African American cultural practices in the period between 1920 and 1940. It was during this same period that the Harlem Renaissance, in particular, was helping black writers, artists, and performers find new subject matter that could speak to their early twentieth-century lives at the level of both form and content. Jazz music and dance celebrated imitative and improvisatory practices in radical new ways, and the aesthetics of repetition, ragging, and variation are key elements of Fitzgerald's aesthetics, as shown by his subtle self-parody in portraying flapper figures. Hybridisation and cultural exchange inform Fitzgerald's literary

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<sup>5</sup> Warshow's formulation of the self-perpetuating 'field of reference' is analysed above, on p. 155.

<sup>6</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 95-97.

experimentation, and I explore these through an analysis of Fitzgerald's primitivist modernism and a consideration of how his lifelong appreciation of popular music and dance infused his stories.

Michael Nowlin has suggested that: 'Fitzgerald playfully identif[ies] with a figurative 'black' America to represent his enmeshment - by both desire and economic necessity - in the entertainment business and America's mass culture of celebrity.'<sup>7</sup> My analysis demonstrates that this identification, outlined in Nowlin's *F. Scott Fitzgerald's Racial Angles and the Business of Literary Greatness*, is particularly visible in Fitzgerald's allusions to dance, music, and film of the interwar period. It is in Fitzgerald's depictions of dance and music that his racially-inflected parodic portrayals are most clearly delineated: in Josephine Baker's 'chocolate arabesques', Myra's Al Jolson-inspired 'syncopated appeal', and in Charlotte's Topsy-infused Charleston.<sup>8</sup> Fitzgerald also explores dancers as metaphors for the literary craftsman: the authentically inspired artist attaining critical acclaim, whilst the uninspired performer receives only paychecks.

As I have shown in Chapter Three, music influences Fitzgerald's literary aesthetics on both a thematic and formal level: repetition, ragging, variation, and quotation are integral to jazz music, and Fitzgerald adopts these techniques in his subtle self-parody, destabilising our expectations of what a typical Fitzgerald story entails. Fitzgerald reinterprets the formulaic strophic structures of Tin Pan Alley in his treatment of his flapper heroines, providing inviting song-like 'hooks' of characterisation that appeal to his readership, whilst subtly undermining the prescriptions he laboured within to create memorable, marketable fictions that on closer analysis transcend their formulae.

My analysis of Fitzgerald's presentation of the film industry shows how cultural media can function as models of identity for consumers, a theme common to all three cultural practices I examine, but perhaps reaching its apex in Fitzgerald's depictions of Hollywood. As I discuss in Chapter Four, his parodic representations of the film industry, especially in the vehicle of Pat Hobby, expose Hollywood conventions whilst satirising archetypal figures such as the hack screenwriter, ingénue starlet, and the matinée idol. Fitzgerald imports filmic techniques into his fiction, interrogating the

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<sup>7</sup> Nowlin, *Racial Angles*, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> In 'Babylon Revisited' (1931), 'Myra Meets His Family' (1920), and 'The Dance' (1926) respectively.

capabilities of the new medium through stories that incorporate the use of filmic techniques such as montage, dream sequences, and close-ups. The film industry also offers Fitzgerald the opportunity to explore more fully the impact of the cult of celebrity and performative personality, as well as to evaluate Hollywood as the potential site for the union of the commercial success and creative fulfillment that he had so relentlessly sought.

I begin this thesis with a quote in which Fitzgerald distinguishes ‘purely creative work’ from ‘trashy imaginings’. My analyses of the representations of popular culture in his short stories have suggested that his commercial fiction is often imbued with an experimentalism that, though subtle, betrays a more nuanced engagement with popular culture than the term ‘trash’ suggests. Popular cultural references in Fitzgerald’s short fiction thus do not simply serve as temporal markers nor solely to set the tone and mood of a scene, but actually often function as subversive agents that destabilise our expectations of a commercial Fitzgerald story whilst sitting in tension with Fitzgerald’s lyrical prose style. The tropes of disguise and performance are of paramount importance to Fitzgerald’s literary modernism, which I have argued is often racially coded. Fitzgerald’s use of these cultural media, centred as they are around the concept of performance and leisure, show his subtle subversion of our expectations of his short fiction.

My work contributes to the existing scholarship on Fitzgerald’s short fiction by investigating parody and elucidating how Fitzgerald is surprisingly experimental and even, on occasion, subversive. Building on an essay by Brian Harding in the collection *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Promises of Life* (1989), my analysis extends more widely than the few love stories Harding selects, and I develop a broader cultural argument by investigating Fitzgerald’s conscious and unconscious self-parody in presentations of recurring characters such as the wealthy flapper across several stories, as well as his use of dance, music and film references in innovative, and sometimes experimental ways. Harding focuses on Fitzgerald’s subversion of the *Post*’s editorial expectations of his stories, but I extend this to consider how Fitzgerald sets up a field of reference in which his reading public have very definite expectations of a Fitzgerald story, but in which he manages subtly to subvert these expectations without losing his mainstream readership, using self-parodic ambiguity to create latent meanings in the text. This subversion is not limited to his fiction published in the *Post*. Harding examines a group of *Post* love stories, but I have also analysed groups of stories utilising mistaken identity and

disguise motifs, as well as stories using dance, song and music as aesthetic conduits for Fitzgerald's responses to modernity. Dance and music in particular have long been neglected in Fitzgerald studies, and my study begins to redress this imbalance.

I develop the discourse surrounding Fitzgerald's struggle to reconcile his artistic and commercial needs by demonstrating that popular and high culture could profitably coexist in his short fiction, through his efforts to situate popular cultural references in the context of serious literary craftsmanship. I show Fitzgerald contributing to the leisure debate that was topical in the 1930s, and have offered a reading of his treatment of dancers, musicians, and those working in the film industry as a metaphor for his conception of the popular short story genre. In doing so, I critically reconceptualise the well-worn notion of Fitzgerald's 'double vision' and 'ambiguity', reading the palimpsest and conflict between contrasting ideas as symptomatic of this parodic mode. Overall, in this thesis I seek to clarify that Fitzgerald was not merely faithfully portraying his era, but rather evaluating and critically engaging with it. Like Joel Coles and George Hannaford, who serve as actors and directors in their daily lives on and off the set, Fitzgerald assembles his surroundings into an artistic response to his lived experience, even as he lived it. Moreover, this thesis argues that the short stories should be appreciated not merely in their function as supplementary to novel-writing, but rather as interdependent entities valuable for their own aesthetic merits and for the valuable insights they give us into Fitzgerald's writing processes and aesthetic techniques.

Fitzgerald's work can also fruitfully be considered alongside more obviously innovative cultural practitioners. Gertrude Stein, for example, sought to make language achieve that which visual art could accomplish, and D.W. Griffith 'wanted to turn the literary into the visual - to find objective correlatives for what literature could do'.<sup>9</sup> Whilst critics have noted how *The Great Gatsby* can be read as a Cubist novel, this thesis interrogates a similar, but so far unexplored, prospect: throughout his career Fitzgerald explored the disconnect between what language can undertake and what dance, music, and film can achieve.<sup>10</sup> Fitzgerald's fondness for Conrad's exhortation to use fiction to make readers hear, feel and see, as well as his respect for his friend Gilbert Seldes' defence of the 'lively' arts, supports this argument.<sup>11</sup> Moving beyond the limitations of language, through his invocation of dance steps, song lyrics, and

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<sup>9</sup> Cohen, p. 117.

<sup>10</sup> See Miller, 'Avant-garde Trends', in *Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, pp. 191-202.

<sup>11</sup> Conrad, *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, pp. 145-47.

filmic techniques, Fitzgerald makes his readers hear, feel, and see in a modern, multimodal way, that draws upon the collage aesthetic which had characterised his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*. In alluding to these popular cultural forms on a formal, as well as thematic, level, Fitzgerald seeks to represent the interrelated layerings and fragmentation of experience that were being explored by other modernists such as James Joyce and T. S. Eliot. In fact, having established the innovation of Fitzgerald's incorporation of popular culture into his literary aesthetics, further study would surely benefit from putting Fitzgerald's work in the context of Joyce's and Eliot's narrative experiments in musical allusion and the integration of popular culture into so-called 'high' culture. In 1923, Clive Bell famously described Eliot as 'a product of the Jazz movement', and Eliot's use of the collage aesthetic in *The Waste Land* (1922) offers a fruitful starting point for comparison.<sup>12</sup>

My research in this thesis is timely, as other scholars are beginning to give more critical attention to similar areas in other spheres of the arts, such as David Savran's 2009 study on how the phenomenon of jazz transformed American theatre and went some way to addressing class and racial tensions, *Highbrow/Lowdown: Theatre, Jazz, and the Making of the New Middle Class*. In addition, earlier this year, Darryl Dickson-Carr published *Spoofing the Modern: Satire in the Harlem Renaissance*, arguing that the Harlem Renaissance heralded the first wave of African American satirists.<sup>13</sup>

My study is deliberately interdisciplinary and wide-ranging: Fitzgerald's literary modernism is explored, via Fitzgerald's references to dance, as a response to the vertical aesthetic of city architecture in the 1920s, and his dancers express his reaction to the quintessentially modern mechanistic movement. But I have also tried to be attentive to form and certain leitmotifs (such as the phrase 'chocolate arabesques' in 'Babylon Revisited') that function on multiple levels in and beyond the text. In this way I interrogate Fitzgerald's literary modernism as expressed in the syncopated musical forms that were punctuated with issues of cultural appropriation, and I explore the optimism and trepidation of his generation about the new ways of seeing enabled by film.

This thesis has limited the study of popular culture and leisure to ragtime and jazz dance, popular music, and film in Fitzgerald's short fiction, but further exploration

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<sup>12</sup> Clive Bell, 'Plus de Jazz', *The New Republic*, 21 September 1921, pp. 92-95 (p. 94).

<sup>13</sup> See Savran, *Highbrow/Lowdown*; and Darryl Dickson-Carr, *Spoofing the Modern: Satire in the Harlem Renaissance* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2015).

of this topic could fruitfully consider clusters of stories that are grouped thematically, such as those dealing with the expatriate experience; those featuring sports and sportsmen and women; and the surprisingly large group of stories in which swimming and bodies of water feature. The depiction of fashion and clothes in the stories would offer a means of fruitfully extending my analysis of performative identity; and Fitzgerald's interest in travel, particularly transatlantic travel, would complete another thematic grouping through which to analyse how popular culture impacted upon Fitzgerald's literary aesthetics. Further studies could also consider Fitzgerald's business-orientated stories in the wider context of the *Post* business story genre. A longer study could incorporate both Fitzgerald's use of popular cultural references in the short stories and in the novels, showing how Fitzgerald crafted his references with different audiences in mind. Fitzgerald's play *The Vegetable* (1923) is the only one of Fitzgerald's works to be even more under-studied than the stories, and an exploration of Fitzgerald's extensive use of satire and parody in this play would be a welcome addition to Fitzgerald studies, and would complement many of the theories advanced in this thesis.

Writing about musical jazz, Kristin K. Henson shares Savran's view on the potential of jazz culture to enact explosive social and political change. Henson writes: 'when sound crosses social barriers - as jazz and ragtime did in early twentieth-century America - questions about the way the social hierarchy is constructed inevitably arise.'<sup>14</sup> Henson is writing about what she terms 'the jazz controversy', and in more recent years, we have witnessed what could be termed a 'hip hop controversy' in which many of the same issues this thesis has considered recur, such as the question of cultural appropriation, the issue of authenticity and ownership of art, commercialisation, the cult of celebrity, and consumer culture. When Baz Luhrmann's 2013 adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* was released, its coupling of 1920s visuals with modern hip hop music proved controversial with some viewers. At a *Vogue* lunch to publicise the film, Luhrmann defended his choice: 'I wanted the audience when they see this film to feel like these people who read *Gatsby* in the twenties. And when they read it and they saw jazz, it was dangerous; it was of the moment'.<sup>15</sup> It would be fascinating to analyse this

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<sup>14</sup> Henson, p. 124.

<sup>15</sup> Joel Edgerton, Isla Fisher, Baz Luhrmann, Tobey Maguire, Catherine Martin, Tony Marx, Carey Mulligan, David Remnick, and Anna Wintour, '*The Great Gatsby*' - *New York Public Library Conversation*, online audio recording, SoundCloud, (Warner Bros., 16 May 2013),



soundtrack using the theoretical framework of this thesis, in terms of how the music interacts with, or destabilises, Fitzgerald's narrative. Furthermore, this could be compared with a song-for-song analysis of the actual music Fitzgerald refers to in *The Great Gatsby*.

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In 1939, Fitzgerald wrote to his daughter: 'I guess I am too much a moralist at heart, and really want to preach at people in some acceptable form, rather than to entertain them.'<sup>16</sup> In punishing several of his fictional consumers of popular culture for their inauthentic performances and reception of popular dance, music, and film, Fitzgerald surely succeeds in moralising and entertaining simultaneously and, in so doing, finding some resolution for his deep-seated anxiety about the fracture between his work's artistic and commercial success. In the concluding pages of his final scrapbook, dating from the mid-1930s, he pasted a selection of clippings that referred to F. Scott Fitzgerald tangentially, comparing other writers to him, or even invoking his name as a shorthand for the hedonistic 1920s. His handwritten title for this page was: 'The Melody Lingers On.'<sup>17</sup> As this thesis has proven, framing his contribution to literature in such enduring - and musical - terms was a pertinent choice of phrase.

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<<https://soundcloud.com/warner-bros-pictures/the-great-gatsby-new-york-public-library>> [accessed 8 October 2015].

<sup>16</sup> Letter to Scottie Fitzgerald, in *Letters of Fitzgerald*, p. 63 [4 November 1939].

<sup>17</sup> *The Romantic Egoists*, ed. by Bruccoli, Smith, and Kerr, pp. 204-05.

## Appendix A: Fitzgerald's Short Story Collections

Fitzgerald's four short story collections contained the following stories:

### *Flappers and Philosophers* (1920)

'The Offshore Pirate'  
'The Ice Palace'  
'Head and Shoulders'  
'The Cut-Glass Bowl'  
'Bernice Bobs Her Hair'  
'Benediction'  
'Dalyrimple Goes Wrong'  
'The Four Fists'

### *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922)

'The Jelly-Bean'  
'The Camel's Back'  
'May Day'  
'Porcelain and Pink'  
'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz'  
'The Curious Case of Benjamin Button'  
'Tarquin of Cheapside'  
'O Russet Witch!'  
'The Lees of Happiness'  
'Mr. Icky'  
'Jemina, the Mountain Girl'

### *All the Sad Young Men* (1926)

'The Rich Boy'  
'Winter Dreams'  
'The Baby Party'  
'Absolution'  
'Rags Martin-Jones and the  
Pr-nce of W-les'  
'The Adjuster'  
'Hot and Cold Blood'  
""The Sensible Thing""  
'Gretchen's Forty Winks'

### *Taps at Reveille* (1935)

'Crazy Sunday'  
'Two Wrongs'  
'The Night of Chancellorsville'  
'The Last of the Belles'  
'Majesty'  
'Family in the Wind'  
'A Short Trip Home'  
'One Interne'  
'The Fiend'  
'Babylon Revisited'

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