

2012

Country of Illusion: Imagined Geographies and Transnational Connections in F. Scott Fitzgerald's America

Charles Mitchell Frye III

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, mitchfrye@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Frye III, Charles Mitchell, "Country of Illusion: Imagined Geographies and Transnational Connections in F. Scott Fitzgerald's America" (2012). *LSU Doctoral Dissertations*. 764.

https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/764

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.

COUNTRY OF ILLUSION:
IMAGINED GEOGRAPHIES AND TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS IN F. SCOTT
FITZGERALD'S AMERICA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

Charles Mitchell Frye III
B.A., University of South Carolina, 2003
M.A., University of South Carolina, 2006
May 2012

“The gates were closed, the sun was gone down, and there was no beauty but the gray beauty of steel that withstands all time. Even the grief he could have borne was left behind in the country of illusion, of youth, of the richness of life, where his winter dreams had flourished.”

-F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Winter Dreams” (1922)

“We once believed... that there were things one place which did not exist in another.”

-Zelda Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz* (1932)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a debt of gratitude to the many scholars who read or heard portions of this dissertation and generously offered advice for improvement. These include Gerald Kennedy, Brannon Costello, Richard Moreland, Katherine Henninger, Michael Nowlin, Kirk Curnutt, Jackson Bryer, and Park Bucker. Louisiana State University's Graduate School and the F. Scott Fitzgerald Society both provided fellowships that facilitated the research and composition of this project. Thanks, too, to *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* for allowing me to reprint the essay that appears here as chapter four. Lastly, I thank my family, friends, and fiancée for forming the alliterative trio that kept me sane.

PREFACE

I started out intending to write a dissertation on confluences of manhood, economy, and American region in F. Scott Fitzgerald's fiction. I was drawn both to Fitzgerald's dated Algeresque regional stereotypes and his deployment of these static forms in the spastic modernist literary environment. My original project entailed mapping Fitzgerald's representation of the United States through the gender and economic tropes coded in the regional types he so frequently invoked: stock characters like his displaced Southern men (who flee home to pursue wealth up north) and his wide-eyed Midwestern boys (who never fit in with their East Coast peers at prep school). Yet every attempt to write that particular dissertation faltered, for Fitzgerald's America proved at each step to be much broader in historical scope than the first half of the twentieth century and much larger in space than the forty-eight states that formed the Union when he died in 1940.

More often than not, Fitzgerald's sectional stereotypes are indebted to nineteenth-century American regionalist literatures, meaning that any serious consideration of region in his Jazz Age and Great Depression fiction must reach at least as far back as the time of Harriet Beecher Stowe. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain why Fitzgerald's contemporary critics resisted his sentimental caricatures and what political purpose he had in invoking them in the first place. Fitzgerald's cosmopolitanism (and that of his peers) poses another obstacle to an exclusively American, strictly twentieth-century reading of region in his works. When writing about American place, interwar authors made frequent connections between domestic and foreign spaces. H.L. Mencken, along with a number of eugenicist thinkers, blamed the South's economic woes in part on the supposedly bad genes of European immigrants; Fitzgerald himself compared the French Riviera to the American South; and many writers likened the glamor of US

cities to the Orientalized allure of the Far East. The recent Great War had made the world a smaller place, a phenomenon evident in the overlap of these imagined geographies.

Thus, while this dissertation retains an emphasis on American region in the era of Boom and Bust, it incorporates a wide perspective of regionalist literary history and a transnational approach more conducive to explicating Fitzgerald's politicized citations of foreign contexts. In referring to "Fitzgerald's America," the title of the present project alludes both to the places he represented in fiction and to the American/transnational histories surrounding his works. These strategies provide a toolset for analyzing the paradox of American place in the early twentieth century: the country seemed to shrink as a result of syndicated media and the homogenization of culture, but it expanded considerably in terms of global connectivity and the dissemination of US cultural products abroad. What I hope to show is the remarkable extent to which Fitzgerald's fiction capitalized on the blurring of these geographic boundaries.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EPIGRAPH.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
PREFACE.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vii
INTRODUCTION: PLACE IN FITZGERALD.....	1
REGION IN REVERSE: SOUTHBOUND AND BACKWARDS WITH FITZGERALD AND FAULKNER.....	23
ORIENTAL BY OCCIDENT: RAJAHS, SHEIKS, AND SAMURAI IN FITZGERALD’S AMERICAN EAST.....	68
FITZGERALD, MIDWESTERN MODERNISTS, AND THE PLACE OF THE POLITICAL CENTER IN THE URBAN MIDWEST.....	111
WESTWARD EXPANSION, ECONOMIC CONTRACTION: THE “SEMI-COWBOY” POLITICS OF FITZGERALD’S <i>THE LAST TYCOON</i>	149
THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION OF THE PARIS CAFÉ: EXPATRIATE AUTHORS, COCKTAIL CULTURE, AND TRANSNATIONAL NATIONALISM.....	176
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	220
APPENDIX: PUBLISHER’S PERMISSION TO REPRINT.....	229
VITA.....	230

ABSTRACT

The two decades between World Wars I and II were a remarkably isolationist, xenophobic period in the history of American politics and culture. In the era's literature, however, some US authors repurposed regional writing as a medium for rethinking conservative nationalism and for imagining their country's place in the emerging global community. F. Scott Fitzgerald, whose career successes and failures mirrored the parabolic national pattern of Boom and Bust, was one such author. Though his works have seldom been interpreted through a regionalist lens, Fitzgerald lived in and wrote about every major American section, often planting tropes of transregional and transnational significance in his "local color" fictions, using US place to address sociopolitical topics. When Fitzgerald wrote about his native Midwest, he contrasted its pastoral past with its rapidly urbanizing present; in taking up this theme, he linked his works with a body of 1920s fiction and social scientific discourse arguing that newly-booming Midwestern cities presented evidence of a spreading cultural homogeneity. His stories about the South ponder the role of biological determinism in inter-regional debates about defining "progress" and "regress" in the 1920s. In his writings about the regional East, he frequently incorporated nominal "Oriental" elements, juxtaposing the excessive privilege of blue-blooded American "Brahmin" with the plight of Asian immigrants assailed in the era by draconian immigration reform. Fitzgerald's American West came to serve in his late career works as a representation of moribund Western Civilization, beleaguered by fascism and anti-democratic elements; like a handful of other authors in the 1930s, he drew inspiration from the elegiac, apocalyptic tone of the Western film genre, and he combined Western tropes with the philosophy of Oswald Spengler to express his pessimism about the "decline of the West." Even his writings about foreign locales contained traces of American regional and national identities,

for he compared the multiracial French Riviera to the miscegenated American South, and he critiqued American usurpations of French space in 1920s Paris. Fitzgerald's works (and those of his literary peers) provide an invaluable index for reevaluating the significance of regionalist prose in a transnational context.

INTRODUCTION: PLACE IN FITZGERALD

Place is an essential abstraction in literary studies. In her essay “Place in Fiction” (1956), Eudora Welty concedes that the term itself “means little” but nevertheless functions as one of the “beacon lights of literature” (*Stories, Essays, & Memoir* 781, 796). Writers tie themselves and their works to carefully selected geographic keystones, places to which they are linked by birth or circumstance. Often, readers of such works are excited by the prospect of verisimilitude, the accurate artistic rendering of a familiar place in such a way that a geographic section springs to life in fiction as it cannot on a map. But critics and scholars are generally less interested in the idea *that* a specific place has been represented than in the problems of *how* and *why* it has, for, in the works of our greatest American writers, place is nearly always political. Individual regions come to embody social and economic ideals or fantasies about the future of the larger United States. We find authors sparring over the validity of these interpretations, each seeking to reproduce in print a calculated vision of a region that responds to some opponent’s prior insight. Brad Evans observes that around the time of the Civil War regional writers began to value “literature as a synecdoche of the nation” (*Before Cultures* 90). Regionally coded texts were burdened with the paradoxical task of conveying “regionalism’s nationalism,” the idea that a specific geographic part expressed a representative relation to an abstract national whole (86). Following the failed Confederate secession, writers from the Northeast, South, Midwest, and West did not celebrate their difference from the larger nation so much as they argued for their exclusive territorial ownership of an ever-changing, heatedly-debated set of nationalistic values.

Place is nearly as politicized in American culture today as it was almost two centuries ago. During election years, television pundits need little encouragement to roll out their demographic charts (neatly overlaid onto maps of the nation) and draw attention to the regional

implications of our enduring red state-blue state divide. Southern states are, with few exceptions, Republican red, while Northeastern states tend towards bleeding heart blue. The West Coast is a long bar of Democratic indigo, while the Midwestern swing states are increasingly rouge. Stereotypes and barbs ring out between inhabitants of these places. Urbanites who associate social conservatism with rural locales might refer to any place not in the Northeast or on the West Coast as “flyover country.” Conversely, some inhabitants of “flyover country” may regard Eastern city dwellers and Western liberals as “un-American” or, oddly enough, “Canadian.” Politicians themselves draw upon this inter-regional animus to secure support via an “us versus them” mentality. Pandering to the Tea Party, conservative Southern and Midwestern governors regularly refuse relief and stimulus funds from Washington, citing state independence, fiscal responsibility, and regional strength as reasons for their anti-federal stance.

Such debates about the political, ethical, and economic value of place persist in spite of—or perhaps because of—the fact that ideas about place are both abstract and mutable. American notions of sectional identity have changed drastically over the course of history, both as the nation expanded westward and as industry drew portions of the country away from its agrarian heritage. Tennessee, for instance, was in the late 1700s the western frontier, and it was subsequently referred to as “Midwestern” in the early 1800s. But the state’s slave-owning past, its status as a former Confederate state, and its initial resistance to industrial capitalism have left Tennessee staunchly Southern in the modern American mind. There also exist regionally liminal places that defy simple classification. What are we to make of states like Kentucky and Missouri, regional border zones between the modern South and the Midwest? And what about Maryland, which occupies a strange nebulous space between Northeast and South? These are

fundamentally political questions, for regional identity (how a state's citizens envision themselves as well as how the people of other states envision them) helps determine which national leaders will earn the goodwill of the state's electorate. Southern voters perceive shared values in Southern candidates—if none are available, they lean towards conservatives who have earned the support of Southern governors. Interestingly, states in regional transition away from traditional Southern identity—places like Maryland and Florida but also, to a lesser extent, Virginia and North Carolina—have functioned as battleground states in recent presidential elections. Their acknowledged regional ambivalence seems to be reflected in their persistent political ambivalence.

If the regional identity of places proves subject to change, so too does the regional identity of individual people (especially entertainers and politicians). In contemporary American pop culture, Southern humor icon Larry the Cable Guy is actually the fictional creation of Dan Whitney, a Nebraskan stand-up comedian. His ability to affect a rural Southern accent has allowed him to reap millions from comedy tours, television shows, and movies. In politics, we have the example of George W. Bush, who despite hailing from a long line of New England politicians emphasized his Texas upbringing as he pursued state and national office. He strategically downplayed his birth in Connecticut, his prep school attendance in Massachusetts, his undergraduate studies at Yale, and his graduate degree from Harvard. He correctly intuited that the American public would prefer a Southern good old boy to a New England blueblood, a type he would face and trounce in his 2004 campaign against challenger John Kerry. In selectively crafting a salable regional self, Bush was in fine political company. Theodore Roosevelt similarly rose in politics by drawing attention away from his pampered Eastern upbringing and toward his more appealing Western rancher identity. The writer Owen Wister,

Roosevelt's friend and fellow Easterner, applied a similar process of persona formation to his literary career. Born in Philadelphia, he later claimed the West as a second home and essentially invented the modern Western. Wister's contributions to the genre have circulated back into the realm of politics and greatly influenced American ideals of rugged independence and laissez-faire economics. Since Wister, every US president who has donned a cowboy hat for a publicity photo has paid subtle tribute to the puissance of literary regionalism.

In addition to being abstract and mutable, then, place is meaningful. Cited within a contextual network of cultural signifiers, imagined regional geographies convey a wealth of information and assumption. Such citations gesture towards the unceasing discourse between US sections about what is authentically or desirably American. Whether tied to economic realpolitik or to mostly unreal stereotypes, demarcations of region are inherently political divisions. Works by American writers tell us a great deal about how these part-cartographic, part-ideological lines have been drawn at various moments in US history, but often authors work exclusively within a slice of map they stake as their own: William Faulkner's Mississippi, Sinclair Lewis's Midwest, John Updike's New England, et cetera. These are valuable depictions of place because they capture a regional insider's perspective on the relation of a geographic section to other parts of the nation and to the country as a whole. Rarer, however, are works by displaced writers in transit from one American place to another—not one-off travel narratives but writings by authors deprived of area insider status by frequent removals. Through a process Evans describes as “the movement across perspectival frames” (99), such persons acquire unique insight into the conflict between sectional identity and national character. In the nineteenth century, Edgar Allan Poe inherited the gifts and burdens of this special perspective as he careened from place to place: Boston, Richmond, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York City.

His works sought to assess the emerging character of Jacksonian and post-Jacksonian America from a variety of sectional perspectives, from the Southern identity he adopted to the New England hauteur he despised but envied. In the late twentieth century, one observes the impact of regional displacement in the novels of Cormac McCarthy, who abandoned, midcareer, Southern Appalachia and struck out for the American Southwest. His books, which prior to the move had contrasted a deviant South with a normative nation, subsequently began to consider the theme of the frontier in the American present. But it is with Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, the great American writer who never settled in any particular American place, that this project is ultimately concerned.

F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Post-Regionalist American Literary Scene

Few writers saw and wrote about as much of the United States as Fitzgerald. His five novels and hundred-plus short stories feature an impressive range of American settings: the metropolises and suburbs of the Northeast, the humbler burghs of the urban Midwest, the mountains and prairies of the further West, the entertainment industry boom towns of the West Coast, the South's dilapidated old cities, and a number of in-between places that defy regional stereotypes. Appropriately, then, Fitzgerald wrote through a transitional moment in American history, a time when regionalist writing was on the decline and sectional identification was becoming vastly more complicated than it had been in the nineteenth century. Immediately before the Civil War, place had functioned in literature as a convenient means of dividing Americans into identifiable sectional categories with discrete political interests and disparate beliefs, paradoxically depicting a United States of disunion. In the postbellum era, local color writing and regionalist literatures seemed to invoke the same categories for the entirely opposite

purpose. Readers from all around the country eagerly consumed fictions that were marketed as regionally-specific ethnographic documents. The emphasis turned to celebrating geographic and cultural difference as essential to the American character in abstract—romances of reunion. But inter-regional competitiveness often informed these writings, especially as Midwestern authors now argued that their region had inherited the rugged, artisanal aura of American-ness outgrown by the metropolitan Northeast and squandered by the plantocratic South.

However, this literary discourse was in decline when Fitzgerald began his professional career. Sinclair Lewis, himself a Midwesterner, had in *Main Street* (1920) and *Babbitt* (1922) been highly skeptical of the notion that Midwestern pastoralism was the hard-working but liberal-minded face of modern American identity. He portrayed the region as mired in xenophobia and materialism, enamored with the urban East it supposedly opposed. His resistance to regionalist writing was symptomatic of a general downturn; in the urbanized and increasingly globalized 1920s, the market for regional niche fiction (which was typically retrospective in nature) had changed. Furthermore, as Lynn Dumenil has observed, the importance of local and regional politics were changing as well, for interest groups and lobbyists were permitting voters to move beyond geographical boundaries in their efforts to achieve representation (*Modern Temper* 53-54). Nevertheless, many Americans, especially Southerners, continued to find regional identification an important tool for articulating resistance to both nationalism and consumerism. This was the modern America for and about which Fitzgerald wrote: a country clinging to not-quite-vestigial notions of regional difference in an era when technology and politics worked, to varying degrees of success, at minimizing that difference. It was a place in many ways not unlike our present United States.

Mapping the course of Fitzgerald's life reveals a wild confusion of eastward and westward trajectories further complicated by conflicting Northern and Southern social allegiances. In 1896, on the cusp of the twentieth century, Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota to parents of mixed regional heritage: his mother's family was part of the Midwestern nouveau riche, and his father's was old Maryland stock. The Fitzgeralds soon moved to New York state, where they lived until financial concerns forced them to move back to St. Paul in 1908. The family also made semi-frequent trips to visit relatives in southern Maryland. Because Mollie and Edward Fitzgerald were upper-middle-class parents with hopes that their son would rise even higher, in 1911 they sent young Scott east to the Newman School in Hackensack, New Jersey to prepare him for entry into Princeton University. He visited New York City, the metropolis that would inform so much of his fiction, during his prep school and college years. After flunking out of Princeton in 1917, Fitzgerald joined the US war effort and was stationed at three army camps in the American South, first at Louisville, then at Camp Gordon in Georgia, and finally in Montgomery, where he courted Zelda Sayre. World War I ended too soon for him to be sent overseas, so in 1919 he moved to New York City and pursued a career in advertising.

Unsuccessful in this venture, he moved back to St. Paul. There, he revised a draft of the book he had been working on since his army days. When the novel, *This Side of Paradise* (1920), was accepted for publication, he moved to New Orleans (but only stayed for a month) and then to New York City. He married Zelda, and the couple took up residences in Westport, Connecticut and New York. They travelled to Europe briefly in 1921, then again, following a sojourn in Long Island, for an extended stay from 1924 to late 1926. After Fitzgerald worked in Hollywood for a short time in 1927, the family undertook another short trip to France in 1928 and one final long visit from 1929 to 1931. Between trips abroad, the Fitzgeralds lived in

Wilmington, Delaware and visited family in Minnesota and Alabama. In 1931, they settled briefly in Montgomery, though Scott also travelled to Hollywood in another failed attempt to break into the motion picture industry. From 1932-37, the family, coping with Zelda's worsening mental condition, lived near treatment centers in Baltimore, Maryland and Asheville, North Carolina. Finally, Scott moved back to Los Angeles alone to work as a screenwriter so that he could pay for his wife's treatment and his daughter's college education. There he died of a heart attack in 1940.

Fitzgerald wrote from the perspective of Southern "jelly-beans," spoiled Westchester rich boys, starry-eyed Midwesterners, and washed-up Hollywood screenwriters. That he could effortlessly adopt a variety of distinct regional voices in his fiction suggests one of two things: either he sympathized with no particular American region and thought of himself as a special outlier, or he came over time to envision himself as intimately connected with them all. The truth is probably a synthesis of the two. As a native Minnesotan of middle-class background, Fitzgerald was born into a geographic, financial, and cultural midsection, but, like the young protagonist of his short story "Absolution" (1924), he wanted to be where "things go glimmering" (*Short Stories* 270). One intuits from his biography that his definitions of success were tied to place as much as wealth. He coveted American Northeastern pretensions of aristocracy that were themselves absurdly provincial by European standards. He affected, in imitation of his prep school and university peers, an urban East Coast form of detached irony that had yet to catch on in the Midwest, which still touted an increasingly unfashionable sincerity. But in his father's old Maryland lineage, Fitzgerald found the grounds for claiming a special pedigree preferable to material wealth; this Southern heritage was useful as well for counterbalancing the embarrassing newness of his mother's Midwestern money. Further

complicating matters, the film industry's 1911 migration to California, coupled with the skyrocketing popularity of motion pictures, put the West Coast on the map as a new kind of cultural center: tacky but glamorous, brainless but rich. Fitzgerald would spend the greater part of his career half-disparaging, half-desiring a career in Hollywood screenwriting. And, during his famous expatriate years, he pursued in Europe something—perhaps an enlarged sense of history, class relations, or global perspective—he could not locate in America.

All of this information contributes to the paradoxical portrait of Fitzgerald as intimately tied to and apart from the America in which he lived. It is equally telling that he never owned real estate, even in years his income would have easily permitted it. As a descendant of Francis Scott Key, the nineteenth-century lawyer who penned the lyrics to the US national anthem, Fitzgerald was genetically fused to America, but he refused or was unable to put down roots, and his writings reflect his ambivalent feelings about the places he lived. Although his career spanned two World Wars that both found the US employing jingoistic nationalism to downplay sectional difference (and even, temporarily in wartime, racial and gender difference), the author rejected these efforts to conjure up an unrealistically homogenous United States and turned instead to nineteenth-century models of regional identity that had begun to be discarded in popular culture. When writing about Americans abroad, he was usually careful to explain where in the States they hailed from, because he felt this was a fact necessary to understanding their behavior. The pattern holds true even in his fictions set on American soil, for most of his characters are people out of place, individuals displaced from their homes—where, we often learn, they did not fit in in the first place. And yet, in spite of his insistence upon the realities of sectional difference, he was capable of writing lovingly about the US in the abstract, as in the cadenced prose that concludes *The Great Gatsby* (1925) or at the end of “The Swimmers”

(1929), when he proposes to “utter” American-ness as “a willingness of the heart” (*Short Stories* 512). But even in these cases, Fitzgerald’s conceit of the nation is calculatedly ephemeral and retrospective, not unlike the “country of illusion” abandoned by his character Dexter Green in “Winter Dreams” (236). He can only get at its myriad significance by writing about it in parts, and those parts are demarcated by regional boundaries that persist in the face of a totalizing modernity on the verge of globalization.

Imagined Geographies in Fitzgerald’s “Country of Illusion”

For a writer so preoccupied with place, Fitzgerald showed a terrible sense of direction in his prose. Matthew J. Bruccoli has noted that Fitzgerald’s “geography was shaky” and that the author did not “[restrict] himself to checkable, verifiable facts” (*Classes* 91, 189). Virtually all of the Southern towns in his stories—ostensibly located in Georgia, Tennessee, or elsewhere—are modeled on Montgomery, Alabama. Nevertheless, Fitzgerald’s readers recognized early in his career that problems of place played a significant role in his work. Even a lowly undergraduate literary critic for the *Harvard Crimson* appreciated the geographic dislocation that takes place in *This Side of Paradise*. In his 1920 review of the novel, he found “interesting” the narrative of a protagonist “brought through his boyish years by relatives in the Twin Cities, prepared at an expensive eastern school and sent to Princeton” (*In His Own Time* 307). Commenting similarly on the conflict between the Midwest and the Northeast in the writer’s work, Edmund Wilson wrote in 1922 that “[w]hen Fitzgerald approaches the East, he brings to it the standards of the wealthy West—the preoccupation with display, the appetite for visible magnificence and audible jamboree, the vigorous social atmosphere of amiable flappers and youths comparatively untainted as yet by the snobbery of the East” (*In His Own Time* 406). By

the time of *Gatsby's* publication in 1925, reviewers commonly acknowledged Fitzgerald as a writer obsessed with place even if they just as commonly disputed his interpretations of it. A critic for the *New York Herald Tribune Book Review* intuited that “Mr. Fitzgerald identifies... the strange rout of *Gatsby's* incredible parties as ‘the East,’ in contrast to a more solid, integrated society of the Middle West.” But she insisted that in the black market age of Prohibition “these drunken spenders and migratory merrymakers exist proportionately everywhere” (*In His Own Time* 348).

Later, in 1956, Malcolm Cowley would invoke the poetry of Sir Walter Scott to apply a romantic gloss to Fitzgerald's unreal treatments of region. In his tour-de-force essay “Fitzgerald: The Romance of Money,” he characterized the essence of Fitzgerald's fiction as “the ballad of young Lochinvar come out of the West, out with a tragic ending” because the wealthy, non-Western background of the hero's love interest precludes a happy one (*A Second Flowering* 44). Cowley cites the story of Dexter Green and his lost “country of illusion” as an iteration of this ballad, but it is one of many such repetitions in Fitzgerald's work. The critic staunchly rejects the idea that Fitzgerald reported on any empirical difference between Americans from different regions; instead, he argues for a “symbolism of place” in the author's work—a schema nearer to “fable” and “legend” than realism—that diagrams conflicts of class and values in Fitzgerald's time (46). Cowley was a contemporary of Fitzgerald, and in his own autobiography he had earlier evinced skepticism about modern forms of literary, cultural, and political regionalism. He wrote in *Exile's Return* (1934, rev. 1951):

Publishing, like finance and theatre, was becoming centralized. Regional traditions were dying out as capital consolidated itself; all regions were being transformed into a great unified market for motor cars and Ivory soap and ready-to-wear clothes. This process continued during the childhood of the present generation of writers. Whether they grew up in New England, the Middle West, the Southwest, or on the Pacific Coast, their environment was about the same. It

varied less with geography than with the financial situation of their parents, yet even in this respect it was fairly uniform.... [T]hey had the illusion of belonging to a great classless society. (8)

Though Cowley downplays the role of regional difference in experiential American life, he admits that local and regional cultures feature prominently in the period's fictions. Yet he reduces their role to nostalgia, the glassy-eyed desire for a bygone, pre-commercialized past pined for by otherwise avant-garde stylists:

[I]n the midst of their doubts and uneasy gestures of defiance, they felt homesick for the certainties of childhood. It was not by accident that their books were almost all nostalgic, full of the wish to recapture some remembered thing. In Paris or Pamplona, writing, drinking, watching bull fights or making love, they continued to desire a Kentucky hill cabin, a farmhouse in Iowa or Wisconsin, the upper Michigan woods, the blue Juanita, a country they had "lost, ah, lost," the home to which they couldn't go back ever again. (12)

What Cowley suggests is an idea that I will develop at length throughout this book: that Americans like Fitzgerald imagined and maintained, often to strategic ends, the notion of increasing regional difference at a time when the significance of place in American culture was, thanks to developments in transportation and communication technologies, patently on the decline. As Cowley observes, Fitzgerald's representations of American region are by and large unreal, but so too was the early twentieth-century white middle-income fantasy of "belonging to a great classless society" (8). These were not simply two separate illusions; they were intimately related. Consciously and unconsciously, creative individuals drew on illusory nineteenth-century sectionalisms to represent real twentieth-century inequalities, such as the widening income gap, political corruption, and institutional racism. There was a literary tradition of employing regional stereotypes for political purpose, and writers like Fitzgerald continued to tap into it long after its original significations had been exhausted.

Fitzgerald's letters show that he experienced a dispiriting sameness in his travels across America, even as he rhapsodized about invigorating differences in his fiction. In 1936, he wrote his daughter that Americans are "all of one nation and you will find all the lassitude and laziness there [on Park Avenue] that you despise, enough to fill Savannah and Charleston, just as down here you will find the same 'go getter' principle in the Carolinas" (*Letters* 12). Writing his unfinished final novel, *The Last Tycoon* (1941), he used similar language to link the New South (which he had criticized earlier in his career) with the burgeoning West Coast: "There was lassitude in plenty—California was filling up with weary desperadoes. And these were tense young men and women who lived back East in spirit while they carried on a losing battle against the climate" (80). These cultural overlaps between regions suggest that, like Cowley, Fitzgerald evidently recognized mass consumer culture as a homogenizing force. His writings about the fatalistic qualities of regional difference are comparable to imagined geographies of the sort Edward Said identified in Occidental discourses on the Orient. Fitzgerald and a number of his literary peers gazed imaginatively at American regions and emphasized differences between them that had more to do with political, economic, or social desire than with realistic depiction. This was typically a two-part process of enlargement and projection: in some instances, writers creatively enlarged extant (if dwindling) social differences between regions, and in others they projected traits more directly related to racial identity or economic theory than to American regional character. As a reviewer for the Los Angeles *Times* observed in 1921 about Fitzgerald's pseudo-Southern short story "The Ice Palace" (1920), the author's treatments of place are "clever literary productions more than accounts of actual happenings" (*In His Own Time* 316). We seldom encounter attempts to objectively portray American regions in Fitzgerald's work; what we find instead are Fitzgerald's subjective representations of region in America, and these are

part and parcel of his white, middle-class, passively racist worldview. It is this subjectivity that gives us a first-person account of how regionalist writing changed between the two World Wars—changed in a manner that reflected and responded to the firmly isolationist, tepidly nationalistic mood of the era.¹ Modernist fictions about region—produced by Fitzgerald and his circle of friends—capture and resist these forces by expressing skepticism about the endurance of American capitalism in the twentieth century.

Fitzgerald's works also exemplify the strangely transnational quality of American regional discourse in the interwar era. After the trauma of WWI, the majority of US voters opposed their country assuming an interventionist role in foreign affairs. They supported elected officials who opposed the League of Nations, who envisioned draconian immigration reform measures, and who forsook internationalist political rhetoric in favor of insular "business government" nationalism. Writers displeased with the national environment engendered by 1920s Republican administrations and by Prohibition commonly expatriated to war-ravaged Europe, where they tended to cultivate a cosmopolitan perspective on America's place in the global community. While abroad, they wrote about their home country, and many of these expatriates chose to address American region. In doing so, they made explicit and implicit connections between domestic and foreign contexts. Fitzgerald linked the French Riviera's "Arab streak" to the American South's color line (*In His Own Time*, 107, 113-14); Hemingway noted similarities between the Montparnasse and Greenwich Village café scenes (*Dateline* 114); and a number of authors projected Orientalized and Arabicized fantasies onto US settings. These modernist literary strategies for using region to broach international concerns in an isolationist era deserve critical attention, for they prefigure post-WWII reconsiderations of US foreign policy. When American modernists transplanted domestic regional space into a transnational

context, they displayed a canny global awareness that prefigured WWII and post-WWII internationalist discourse, such as the stern warning issued by FDR's financial advisor James P. Warburg in *Foreign Policy Begins at Home* (1944):

Today America has irrevocably become a part of the world society. We can refuse to recognize this and go back to the isolationist illusion, as we did after the last war.

Or, we can reverse the illusion by pretending that the world has become a part of us instead of our becoming a part of the world. If we do this, we shall try to impress upon the world an "American century"—selling our cornflakes, our machine age, our bathroom fixtures, and our business cycle of booms and depressions, along with our poll tax and our pressure groups.

Or, recognizing our own shortcomings, we can overhaul our own system in the process of international co-operation and make the necessary changes and improvements in order to help establish the firm foundations of world-wide justice and peace. (7)

Echoing these sentiments, Nathaniel Peffer claimed in *America's Place in the World* (1945) that "America is no longer insulated geographically.... [It] is now incorporated into the scheme of world forces, fully and beyond possibility of concealment from itself" (220-21). Such statements direct us back to interwar modernist literary discourse, to works by the many American modernists who, like Fitzgerald, mixed regional and transnational themes to form a creative vanguard for internationalist thinkers to come. For our purposes, then, a theoretical framework that combines Said's "imagined geographies" and Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" provides a means for tackling these problems of transnational representation, but Welty merits mention as well for having recognized much earlier that "[s]ometimes two places, two countries, are brought to bear on each other... and the heart of the novel is heard beating most plainly, most passionately, most personally when two places are at meeting point" (794). International intersections, such as those she describes in *Place in Fiction*, feature in this dissertation when they overlap with the modernist regional discourse that informs Fitzgerald's literary context. Close consideration of these moments reveals that, in their fiction, this era's writers often

practiced a creative prototype of the twenty-first century scholarly approach that Paul Giles has termed “critical internationalism,” an interpretive schema “designed to cut across conventional formations of American literature, suggesting how, despite the ways in which it has been buttressed by the ghosts of American exceptionalism, forms of global space have always been inherent within it” (*Global Remapping* 24).

Four chapters in this project examine how an individual US region assumes special political significance in the works of Fitzgerald and his contemporaries; the last chapter treats the effect of these nationalist and regionalist projections on a specific foreign context, 1920s Paris. Although the very process of individuating American regions reveals how nebulous and imaginary such distinctions are, I use the same four general categories employed by the US Census Bureau throughout the twentieth century: Northeast, South, Midwest and West. I refer to these four primary regions for several reasons. Not only are they the geographic delineations with which Fitzgerald and his fellow authors would have been most familiar, but they are the ones that endure in our popular imagination even today as regional identifications continue to mutate. More importantly, the US government’s endorsement of these regions as discrete, non-overlapping zones on the nation’s map means that they are recognized as distinct places that nevertheless contribute to an abstract national character. The troubled relationship between regionalism and nationalism is a theme central to my project.

My first chapter, “Region in Reverse: Southbound and Backwards with Fitzgerald and Faulkner,” is largely about correlations between place and progress in works by the two authors, but it also addresses biological imaginings of regional difference that persisted in an era when the science strongly insisted otherwise. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the South was synonymous with social, economic, and cultural backwardness. It had already been

on the wrong side of history in the slavery debate, and in the postbellum era the region did not share in the prosperity of the larger nation, nor did it support a viable arts movement until around the 1920s. I analyze how Fitzgerald and Faulkner depict the significance of this general backwardness differently in their fictions. I find that Fitzgerald's "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" (1922), which Faulkner greatly admired, excoriates Southern states for not following the economic example of the North, while Faulkner's *The Sound & the Fury* (1928) praises the region's agrarian resistance to industrialization. Interestingly, several of Fitzgerald's other writings about the South seem to participate in the period's eugenic discourse on biological variance between white Americans from different regions. I argue that the writer envisions white Southerners as racial (not just regional) others: they have, he hints, been genetically darkened or tainted by their close proximity to Southern blacks.

In my second chapter, "Oriental by Occident: Rajahs, Sheiks, and Samurai in Fitzgerald's American East," I posit that Orientalist conceptions of the hemispheric East become entangled in the writer's imagining of the urban American Northeast. Such portrayals are not exclusive to Fitzgerald's work but are in fact widespread in an American literary tradition, dating back to the eighteenth century, of gazing at the United States through a fantasized Oriental perspective. Authors including Peter Markoe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Walt Whitman imagined what the young country would look like through the lens of the ancient East, but their efforts were more construction than representation—especially the imaginary distinctions they drew between republican and faux "Oriental" virtues. Similarly, Fitzgerald's attempts to overlay a fantastic Orient atop his American Northeast are constructions designed to other the region. In an era in which it was popular to associate corrupt, business-friendly Republican administrations with the urban US East, Fitzgerald's works invoke Oriental tropes to characterize the latter as dissipated,

dangerous, and alien. These fictions intersect with an isolationist period of intense anti-Asian sentiment, and the author capitalizes upon fear of the Far East to generate distaste for the materialistic preoccupations of the domestic East.

My third chapter, “Fitzgerald, Midwestern Modernists, and the Place of the Political Center in the Urban Midwest,” argues that Fitzgerald’s writings about the American Midwest must be evaluated in the context of an early twentieth-century literary genre, the Midwestern city novel, which came into being during his lifetime. A successor to the turn-of-the-century Chicago novel as envisioned by Theodore Dreiser, this slightly later genre features narratives set in newly-booming cities in Indiana, Minnesota, Iowa, and elsewhere. The authors of such works include Booth Tarkington, Sinclair Lewis, Grace Flandrau, and Ruth Suckow, lesser figures in literary studies today who in their time were widely read and who wrote thoughtfully about the rise of right-wing politics in the urbanizing Midwest, a zone once popularly regarded as the geographic embodiment of the progressive US middle class. Each of these writers also criticized the homogeneity of urban American environments—a uniform waning of difference which they saw spreading to the Midwest, blotting out the identities of local and regional cultures. I identify points at which this line of criticism intersects with the social-scientific discourse of Robert and Helen Lynds’ influential *Middletown* sociological surveys, published in 1929 and 1937. Linking up with the forms of the Midwestern city novel and the Midwestern sociological survey, Fitzgerald’s middlebrow fiction flirts with populist regional nostalgia even as it expresses desire for metropolitan glamor.

My fourth chapter heads further west. “Westward Expansion, Economic Contraction: The ‘Semi-Cowboy’ Politics of Fitzgerald’s *Last Tycoon*” considers the partial but powerful influence of Western genre works on the author’s unfinished final novel. Fitzgerald’s entire

body of work is marked by his divided sympathies for self-interested capitalism (which he felt was the foundation of American ingenuity) and equality-minded socialism (which he believed would solve the problem of income inequity). This dialectic comes to a head in *The Love of the Last Tycoon: A Western*, a novel about a film producer who rejects the ideological lure of communism by insisting upon the virtue of his own success story. I argue that the novel's subtitle, which obviously ties the text to the Western genre of literature and film, also links it to the Western's historic engagement of the capital-versus-labor dialect. Since the publication of Wister's 1901 novel *The Virginian*, Western works have showed deep interest in American social and economic relations. This is to be expected, because in the late nineteenth century the Western region saw some of the worst abuses of capitalistic power in US history: the railroad infrastructure relied on the exploitation of immigrant workers; ranchers took justice into their own hands; and mining barons abused their laborers and used deceit to increase their holdings. The Western narrative, the form of regionalist writing that sprang from this environment, recalls these roots, even if works within the genre vacillate wildly in their allegiances to capital or labor. Fitzgerald's own "Western," written as WWII loomed large on the horizon, bears traces of the genre's split economic interests. This division provides us insight into evolving American conceptions of what the closed western frontier signified during the Great Depression, and it also demonstrates how in this era the Western form emerged as a trope for Western Civilization writ large.

In my final chapter, "The American Revolution of the Paris Café: Expatriate Writers, Cocktail Culture, and Transnational Nationalism," I transition from domestic regional studies to the significance of American regional and national phenomena abroad in an interwar French context. If we take Anderson literally when he writes in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on*

the Origin and Spread of Nationalism that “[c]ommunities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (6), then the “American colony” of 1920s Paris deserves study for its fantastic stylishness alone. But, truer to the intent of Anderson’s words, this community is especially noteworthy for how it has been retroactively re-imagined. Novelists and screenwriters have celebrated the post-WWI Parisian expatriate scene as a transnational “zone franche” in which intellectuals from diverse backgrounds met to exchange ideas on art. While bohemian ideals were certainly part of this environment, historians and critics are now recovering the dark side of the expatriate experience, recognizing its imagined community as sometimes exclusionary, nationalistic, and capitalistic. American permanent residents and tourists altered the commercial landscape of Paris, creating a market for saloon-style bars, cocktails, and a number of other American cultural exports. These exports and the expatriate colony they accompanied were oftentimes tethered to American regional imaginaries; for example, the bars and hotels that practiced informal segregation by turning away French-African colonial subjects borrowed from the exclusionary racial policies of the US South. Fitzgerald and some other members of his expatriate literary cohort, recognizing the conflict between the bourgeois and bohemian elements of their life abroad, critiqued in fiction these strange impositions of American space onto French soil. They responded to instances of “transnational nationalism,” moments when, from within the French Empire’s metropole, Americans imposed US-privileging values on Paris.

I have arranged these chapters in a sequence that proceeds from the domestic to the foreign, starting with inter-regional conflict in modernist and pre-modernist literatures, following through to regional anxieties about interwar nationalism, and concluding with regionally-informed tensions between US and French nationalisms during the 1920s. This order is intended

to convey how Fitzgerald and his peers politicized place, often promoting it from setting to platform, between the two World Wars. By imagining spaces in which regional identifications mustered resistance to the growth of an exploitative, capitalistic, and xenophobic nationalism, these authors inveighed against what they saw as the heinous American excesses of their time. By linking these imagined spaces to foreign contexts, they showed remarkable foresight in recognizing that the interwar US ideal of isolation from foreign politics and culture was and would continue to be unrealistic in the changing modern world.

Notes

¹ The binary “isolationist” and “internationalist” labels entered popular usage during the debate over American participation in the League of Nations, but, as many historians and political scientists have noted, the term “isolationism” can be misleading. Nathaniel Peffer observes, “[T]here has never been any belief in literal nonassociation with the outer world. No American of any responsibility has ever advocated that the United States should shut itself off economically”; what has existed instead is the enduring sentiment that “the Union should steer clear of European affairs” (*America’s Place* 29). In his oft-cited essay “The Legend of Isolationism in the 1920’s,” William A. Williams seeks to qualify the term in light of early twentieth-century American economic expansionism, remarking, “A closer examination of the so-called isolationists of the twenties reveals that many of them were in fact busily engaged in extending American power” (216). Nevertheless, isolationist political practices are readily evident in the American immigration policies during the era and in claims of neutrality and non-intervention in interwar European concerns. Even if the term appears reductive at times, it was

circulated with regularity in the period's political discourse and remained a topic of debate for several decades following the end of WWII.

REGION IN REVERSE: SOUTHBOUND AND BACKWARDS WITH FITZGERALD AND FAULKNER

Few imagined geographies are as flat and uniformly envisaged as the regional fantasy of F. Scott Fitzgerald's South. His fictional Southern settings—whether they ostensibly represent small-town Georgia, semi-urban Kentucky, or rural Mississippi—are typically patterned on Montgomery, Alabama, the Southern town he and his wife inhabited for intermittent periods of time in the 1920s. The Alabama state capital, Zelda's hometown and the site of Scott's former army camp, was the one Southern place the Fitzgeralds returned to frequently, both in person and in prose, throughout the decade. Fitzgerald lifted elements of the Montgomery townscape and set them down in fiction, patching them onto alternative Southern settings. In "The Ice Palace" (1920), he recycles Montgomery's Confederate graveyard, sending it and Zelda's melodramatic speech about the Rebel dead east to Tarleton, Georgia. In *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Judge Anthony Sayre's house migrates northward to Louisville, Kentucky; there, its front porch provides a spot for Jay Gatsby to romance Daisy Fay. And in the fantasy piece "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" (1922), Fitzgerald moves Montgomery's welcome sign, "MONTGOMERY: 'Your Opportunity'" (*Cruise* 3.68), to a sinister-sounding backwater called Hades, Mississippi, where the citizens are considering replacing the current motto, "Abandon all hope ye who enter," with "Hades—Your Opportunity" (*Short Stories* 183). The author's tendency to over-simplify the diverse region by treating its geographies and communities as interchangeable calls to mind Jennifer Rae Greeson's recent assertion that the general creative effort to represent the South "both exceeds and flattens place," thereby producing "a site of national fantasy" (*Our South* 1). Nevertheless, a handful of Fitzgerald's national fantasies and imagined Southern geographies are notably rounder, less static than others. In these represented places, discourses on progress and eugenics meet at the shifting North-South cultural border. Following a nuanced look at the

nationalistic motivations underwriting Fitzgerald's regional reductions, this chapter will focus on the sociopolitical mutability of these dynamic sites—particularly Fitzgerald's Baltimore and his projections of the American South onto foreign settings.

Fitzgerald's career-long fascination with the South has in turn fascinated generations of scholars and critics. Some of Fitzgerald's sharpest readers, including Scott Donaldson and Bryant Mangum, have turned time and again to the problematic place of the Southern region in the author's fiction. In analyzing his family connections to Maryland and Alabama, his friendship with the H.L. Mencken, and his depiction of the section's unique socioeconomic setbacks, these critics have tended to find that for Fitzgerald the South is synonymous with nostalgia and regression, two related forms of endemic cultural backwardness. Robert Roulston speaks for the majority of Fitzgerald critics in describing "two distinct" varieties of Southernness in the author's work: one that embodies the aristocratic "glamour and romance" of the old regime and another that "represents sloth, inertia, failure" in the modern era (158). As a writer who identified both as a Midwesterner and a Northerner—he was only intermittently proud of his family's Southern heritage—Fitzgerald chose to depict in fiction a backwards-facing South cartographically situated at the base of the nation and ideologically relegated to the bottom rung of national progress. Through this coincidence of geography and progressive rhetoric, his works portray a Southern region bent doubly downward against the dominant political sentiment exhorting the nation to progress upward and onward. Due to differences in worldview, work ethic, and even physiological characteristics, his Southern characters fail to commingle with the inhabitants of other regions, thereby confining themselves to the American hinterlands and remaining separate from the larger nation. Fitzgerald captures a conflict, in many ways still resonant today, between nation and region, nationalistic discourse and regionalist literature. For

the purpose of examining these oppositions, this chapter looks at the politically progressive roots that undergird his critique of the retrograde South, and it pays special heed to the author's reification of regional difference as a matter of biological make-up.

In the Progressive Era that formed the historical background for Fitzgerald's literary apprenticeship, the political rhetoric of progress drew on directional metaphors of trajectory to contrast big government social reform with holdout small government conservatism. Progressive politicians synthesized the radical agendas of agrarian populism and Marxian socialism into a tamer liberal ideology that nevertheless broke sharply from laissez-faire conservative capitalism by supporting nationalized welfare programs, anti-trust initiatives, and workers' rights. The American socialist thinker William English Walling described the Progressive movement in 1914 as "State Capitalism," a political form that earmarked national funds to remedy problems of labor and society and to address issues appealing to "the practical and scientific interest of all forward-looking persons" (xviii). For Walling, this forward orientation is what most basically distinguishes the progressive's desire for social change and fair play in the market from the conservative ideal of mutual and immediate self-interest. Progressivism, like Marxism, is a science, thus he explains, "Science looks to the future, not because we are more concerned with the future than with the present, but because that is the only way which we can understand the present. Insight presupposes foresight" (xxi). Walling's fixation on Progressivism's future sight—its anticipation of an increasingly socialized America—finds echoes in the movement's political discourse, as in Teddy Roosevelt's 1912 promise to the National Progressive Party to see "the nation go forward along the path of social and economic justice" (*Social Justice* 362). And, of course, the very word "Progressivism" implies a political investment in progress, in trudging forward as a nation towards vaguely defined goals of fairness, equity, and prosperity.

Yet assertions about progress are contingent upon their distinction from regress.

Progressive nationalism—born about the same time as Fitzgerald at the turn of the century, interrupted in the 1920s by Coolidge conservatism, and renewed in the FDR era—operated not only by encouraging positive identification with forward-oriented institutional components (social welfare programs, support of higher education, etc.) but also by inviting negative identification with alternative and undesirable modes of backwardness. In the US, one finds that the Southern region often served the latter function by providing a foil to the larger progressive nation—a reluctant and sometimes recalcitrant political ally in the cause of national progress. As Leigh Anne Duck writes in *The Nation's Region: Southern Modernism, Segregation, and US Nationalism*, the early twentieth-century US was a country in which region was demarcated chronologically as well as cartographically, “a collection of communities moving at different rates in trajectories characterized by different customs, goals, and belief systems” (5). Political rhetoricians and members of the media promulgated the popular notion of a progressive, industrialized, and liberal American nation while some regions (such as the South) failed to conform to these ideals and were thus deemed regressive, facing backwards in time. For Duck, the most problematic result of this chronotypic rhetoric was the sustaining of a harmful Southern exceptionalism as the region and the nation alike endorsed the idea of a South so backwards that it must be exempted from the more liberal aspects of Progressive reform. This treatment of regional difference as an empirical given and not a social construction permitted the South to practice legalized apartheid and allowed the nation to avoid considering how the example of the South complicated notions of American progress sponsored by men like Woodrow Wilson (himself a displaced Southerner). From the nationalist perspective, the South was a region lost in time: an outlier chronotype alternately meriting legal concessions and political derision. But

national tolerance of these policies also revealed a color-coding of Progressive ideals, providing assurance that forward-thinking would still prioritize middle-class whiteness.

Various strains of American literary modernism address this conflict in ways that speak to the politics of place in the nation's interwar literature. For instance, the broad national scope of Fitzgerald's writing engenders a response to the Progressive Era and post-Progressive South quite distinct from that enacted by William Faulkner's regionally-minded fiction. Fitzgerald, a rootless remover who never owned a home but rented houses across America, favored the progressive goals of the nation. He critiqued the South for its purported indolence and intellectual bankruptcy. His work portrays the South as stubbornly turning away from a body of social and economic reforms intended to promote individual freedoms and collective financial security. But Faulkner, who spent most of his life in the Mississippi home he owned, saw the nation as foisting its destructive crass capitalism on the historically agrarian Southern region, whose "backward" fixation on the past represented a productive rejection of American commercialism. Directionality and place are central to both authorial agendas, for Fitzgerald interrogates the crisis of Southern regress while Faulkner questions the value of national progress.

Fitzgerald's "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" (1922) and Faulkner's *The Sound & the Fury* (1928) are two especially illustrative works for charting the literary eruptions of this political conflict. Not only do the two writers treat in different ways the theme of Southern backwardness but both embed it as a trope in abnormal male bodies. In the physical forms of Benjamin Button and Benjy Compson, the authors embody Southern regression to different political ends. The two Benjamins are similarly displaced in time from the clockwise, progressive logic of American "State Capitalism," but they differ in their manner of

displacement and in how they respectively stand in for the counter-clockwise South. In the case of Faulkner's Benjy, the character's mental retardation, infantilization, castration, and existential experience of being outside the sequential narrative of chronological order coalesce into the wounded cry of a man-child South irrevocably traumatized by Reconstruction. Fitzgerald's "Benjamin Button" likewise features a Southern protagonist pried loose from the conventional experience of progressive time, but Button's reversed aging process articulates a related but distinctly different message about regional backwardness. As Button ages from old to young and eventually disappears, Fitzgerald elegiacally mourns the dwindling imagined geography of the Old South; while the region maintains its empirical presence, its cultural distinctiveness has in places been slowly fading, much like Button, since the Civil War. Faulkner writes about the ruin of the South, while Fitzgerald addresses the possibility its eventual disappearance from liminal spaces like Baltimore. In either text, the retrograde region appears in opposition to the progressive nation, exempt from the nationalistic rhetoric of the liberal American dream and the culture-blending melting pot.

There remains the matter of bodies, since both writers place representations of their troubled Souths in disabled masculine forms. Though Faulkner generally concerns himself with the mind-body crisis of solipsism and the manifold problems of racially coded bodies, Fitzgerald's work evinces a specific fascination with physiological differences that distinguish Southerners from other Americans. In his numerous stories about Southerners failing to be romantically compatible with either Northerners or Midwesterners, we see nature conspiring with culture to keep inhabitants of disparate regions apart. Southern men and women cannot adapt to colder or drier climates; their minds work in a slower, more leisurely fashion; and their bodies bear the traces of an ancestral history they cannot flee. Anxieties about regional

difference assume corporeal form in Fitzgerald's stories, manifesting as regionally distinct bodies that fail to consummate any possible union—reflecting a crisis of cultural unity on the national level. Faulkner, too, gives us characters whose regional associations are encoded in their very genes. We might say that both writers seek the tangential point where memetic (cultural) and genetic (biological) traits meet, and they likewise hypothesize about how this collision informs the political problem of regional difference.

In writing about intersectional conflict between the South and other regions, Fitzgerald addresses the problem of national unification in the Progressive Era and the subsequent Roaring Twenties. He also alludes to crises of Southern regional identification in the earlier periods of Reconstruction and Redemption, historical moments during which the South scanned other regions in search of economic and political structures to buttress the ruin of antebellum paternalism. What he depicts in his fiction is a New South struggling to attain the progressive economic and social goals of the larger nation while still asserting its regional difference and independence. As Fitzgerald writes it, this conflict always favors the side of irreconcilable difference, for his Southern characters are physiologically hardwired to clash with their sectional rivals. To interrogate Fitzgerald's treatment of regional difference as essentially biological in nature, I will implement a three-pronged critical approach: a comparison of his fictional depiction of inter-regional romances with the biographical reality of his marriage to Zelda; an examination of his intellectual investment in Baltimore, a city in transition from Southern regional alignment to Northern; and, lastly, a comparative treatment of disabled Southern male bodies in Fitzgerald and Faulkner. In each instance, I will regard how the politically charged directional tropes of backwardness and forwardness impact nationalistic discourses on regional difference and the literature that replies to them.

Regional Incompatibilities, Political and Biological

Since Fitzgerald's death in 1940, regional diversity in the US has decreased steadily as media technologies such as cinema, television, and the internet have offered access to a shared national (and increasingly global) storehouse of culture. This cultural homogenization is especially pronounced in the case of the American South, which has transitioned from being regarded as a place of outlier upstart politics and presumed intellectual backwardness to being the near the heart of the US mainstream. As Fred Hobson writes it, the modern South contributes to national character much as the nation exerts a larger influence on the region:

Dixie has to some extent become Americanized, but America has absorbed much of Dixie too. Country music, fried chicken, stock car racing, evangelical religion, and opposition to busing children—all these have replaced cotton as Dixie's leading export, not to mention a distrust of analysis, bureaucracy, big government, and impersonality in human affairs. (*Tell About the South* 16)

But during Fitzgerald's life, regional cultures like the varieties of Southern-ness spread from Maryland to Texas remained diverse and identifiable, serving as viable means for recognizing social differences between groups of Americans inhabiting different parts of the country. The highly salable literary genres of American regionalism hung in the recent past both as an effort to memorialize local cultures irrevocably modernized by the railroad industry and, according to Richard Brodhead, provide a form of vicarious travel to the rising upper and middle classes. From a political perspective, Fitzgerald's short life intersected with a golden age of post-bellum regionalist politics. The year of Fitzgerald's birth coincided with the regionally divisive Bryan-McKinley presidential election. Voters from the South and the West showed their support for Bryan's populist "Free Silver" platform, while those from the Northeast largely favored McKinley's pro-capital defense of the gold standard. Such divisions persisted throughout the

author's lifetime. Senators and representatives from the "Solid South" continued to vote as a seemingly indivisible bloc to promote economic security and restored autonomy for the region, even though internal disputes over fiscal policies formed small fissures in the solidity. Labor and agrarian disputes in both the West and Midwest challenged the national government to pass legislation sympathetic to beleaguered workers and impoverished farmers, while the tycoons of the East lobbied for the primacy of capital over labor. Place also played an essential role in education, as the Ivy-fixated mindset of Fitzgerald's early fiction reminds us. The author wrote at a time when, in Arthur Mizener's words, non-Eastern universities "hardly existed for the American understanding" (*Afternoon* 70). Bearing in mind all these sectional considerations, it is unsurprising that Fitzgerald returned so frequently to the theme of region in his writings. He found regional difference an appropriate tool for fleshing out complex characters in correspondence as well as in fiction. In letters, Fitzgerald shows an odd propensity to generalize about social groups using geographical or topographical language. Writing to Carl Van Vechten in 1926, he described African Americans of the North as "virgin soil... dug out of its context" (*Letters* 490). And he remarked to his daughter in 1940 that "the faces of most American women over thirty are relief maps of petulant and bewildered unhappiness" (96). These and other examples (especially his occasional hypothesizing about how habitation in a region affects children's growth) portray Fitzgerald as eager to conflate people and places, to consider habitat as a definitive factor in determining a person's character and physical composition. But the various regional associations he earned by marriage and inherited through blood contributed to a complex set of beliefs about regional difference, and his patriotic self-identification with American ideals of progress complicated matters further, especially when he sought to diagnose the societal woes of the Southern region in fiction.

Many of Fitzgerald's Southern-tinged stories entertain vaguely nationalistic notions even as they insist upon the rigidity of regional difference. At the conclusion of "The Swimmers" (1929), the Virginian Henry Clay Marston looks out over the prow of a ship at the American coast and regards his country as "indomitable and undefeated," secure in the knowledge that "the best of America was the best in the world." He turns optimistically towards the future and praises "the men coming on, the men of the war" who will succeed his "lost generation" (*Short Stories* 512). There is irony in Marston's rhetoric, however, for it enters his mind as he leaves the US for France; his progressive patriotism is actually the product of the expatriate's backwards gaze. Moreover, his national pride is suspiciously out of character, given that he is described early in the story as being "a Virginian of the kind who are prouder of being Virginians than of being Americans" (498). The conflict in ideologies is jarring. Even as Marston distinguishes himself from his fellow Americans first as a proud Southerner and subsequently an expatriate (two subject positions invested in different ways of looking back), Fitzgerald shows us that his character is inevitably enmeshed in the forward-minded rhetoric of progress and patriotism. In this story, as is often the case in Fitzgerald's stories that concern the South, the conflict between region and nation is phrased in bi-directional terms.

In his fiction, Fitzgerald consistently erects romantic barriers between Southerners and the inhabitants of other American regions, contributing to what biographer James Mellow refers to as the author's "unusual theme, the effect of geography on love" (*Invented Lives* 146). If these inter-regional relationships misfired in only a couple stories, one could reasonably dismiss them as incidental plot devices. But Fitzgerald recycled relationships doomed by region in tens of stories and several novels, suggesting either a repetition automatism rooted in biographical trauma or the expression of a biological theory of regional difference. It would require a great

spillage of ink list each fiction of this sort, but a brief summary of the high notes should illustrate the trend. In “The Ice Palace,” Sally Carroll Hopper leaves her Georgia comfort zone to pursue romance with a Northern beau in St. Paul, Minnesota; she returns home in mere weeks after recognizing that she is incapable of loving either a Northerner or the North. “The Last of the Belles” (1929) offers a variation on this schema, as it relates the story of a WWI officer from the Midwest who fails to attract the romantic attention of a Georgian femme fatale. She toys with the affections of her Middle Western and Northeastern suitors, even leading one to kill himself, before finally tying herself to a fellow Southerner. Southern men fare no better in their pursuit of Fitzgerald’s fast and intelligent Northern women. Jim Powell, protagonist of “Dice, Brassknuckles & Guitar” (1923), finds himself outclassed and out-bred by the New Jersey debutante he pursues, though she pities him enough to befriend him. The Virginian expatriate Marston of “The Swimmers” discovers abroad that he and his French wife are incompatible; he makes a better match with a fellow Southerner he first encounters on the Riviera. There is also *Gatsby*, a novel in which virtually all the major characters are displaced from their home regions and none find solace in love. Daisy’s Louisville origins and her class pretensions make Gatsby an especially intolerable suitor. The general idea uniting these examples is the regional-reproductive thesis that Southerners cannot mix productively with Northerners, Middle Westerners, or foreigners. The tension and anxiety resulting from such unions prevents any sort of synthesis. Little cultural blending takes place; not even the couple’s shared national identity as Americans saves the romance. They might as well be different species of an aesthetically similar humanoid stock. What is especially striking about such fictions is how they toy with the short story model Fitzgerald frequently employed, the reiterative tale of the young man going to creative extremes to impress and win his dream girl. In these works, however, no amount of

effort can catalyze the consummation of unions predestined to failure by sectional incompatibility.

Rare exceptions to this rule of irreconcilable regional difference do occasionally surface in Fitzgerald's body of work, but the convolutions of storytelling required to bring these inter-regional matches to bear highlights their irregularity; true to the cliché, they are the exceptions that prove the rule. One of these tenuous romantic alliances appears in the 1940 potboiler "The End of Hate," the plot of which concerns a Union nurse's infatuation with a physically tortured and thumb-less Confederate prisoner-of-war. The odd story, which borrows its threadbare themes from romances of reunion like *The Clansman* (1905), ends with the engagement of kindhearted Josie Pilgrim and crippled Tib Dulany on the night of Lincoln's assassination. But this exception to the rule is hard-earned, reinforcing the realness of the cultural and physical barriers hindering inter-regional romance. The narrator assures us that Josie is an atypically beneficent nurturer and that her love for Tib represents the crossing of "a bridge as definite as the rivers that mark the Virginia border." Even with Josie's Victorian sense of duty, it takes the "shocking news" of the president's death to bring the couple together; the spirit of Lincoln gives "life its impetus again even in the accident of his death" (*The Price Was High* 751). The improbable series of events that conspire to put Josie and Tib together—thumb amputation, presidential assassination, the surprising forgiveness of her Yankee brother—speaks to the nearly insurmountable obstacles of place and politics.

Fitzgerald's repetition of this theme reflects both his marital problems with Zelda and his belief in the biological basis of regional difference—matters that are inextricable because of how deeply his experiences with his wife informed his opinions on the South. The general outline of the tumultuous Scott and Zelda romance, which has captivated scholars, biographers, and the

national reading public for nearly a century, is so frequently rehashed in popular literary history that it hardly bears repeating here. Nevertheless, its regional aspects merit our attention.

Throughout his stressful married life, as he questioned how he had come to make such a bad match with his wife, Fitzgerald believed that regional difference had predestined their relationship to failure from day one. Sectional conflict played a pivotal role in their initial courtship; in 1918, Fitzgerald began courting Zelda as a young US army officer from the Midwest, competing against fellow military suitors brought to Camp Sheridan from across the US as well as local Southern men. His anxiety in measuring up to such sectionally diverse competition was itself facilitated by the Old Southern tradition of belles entertaining multiple suitors, a practice which Zelda melded with the sexual adventurousness of the modern East Coast flapper to produce exhilarating results. Later in life, as Fitzgerald dealt with the financial burden and emotional toll of his wife's schizophrenia, he expressed in private that regional differences, including oppositional work ethics and attitudes towards social change, had made them incompatible all along. In a confessional 1938 letter to his daughter, he lamented,

The mistake I made was in marrying her. We belonged to different worlds—she might have been happy with a kind simple man in a southern garden. She didn't have the strength for the big stage—sometimes she pretended, and pretended beautifully, but she didn't have it.... She never knew how to use her energy.
(Letters 32)

Besides plainly stating that Zelda would have paired better with a non-intellectual Southerner than with a literary-minded Midwesterner like himself, Fitzgerald also alludes to the popular contemporary notion that post-bellum Southerners lacked both intellect and vitality. Zelda's childhood friend Sara Haardt (who later married H.L. Mencken) once remarked, "If you have a mind, and you don't want to use it— or you can't use it—the place to live is the South" (Cline 39). The hero of Fitzgerald's youth, Midwestern industrialist James J. Hill, held that "No man

on whom the snow does not fall ever amounts to a tinker's dam" (qtd. in Smith 8). But the most eloquent and influential articulation of this idea is Henry Adams's pronouncement that the Southerner possesses "temperament" in the place of mind. Fitzgerald met Adams early in life, and he seems to have remained in agreement with the historian on the subject of the vitally sapped, intellectually defunct South.¹ Like Hill and Adams, Fitzgerald saw a connection between temperature and temperament; he believed the intense heat of the Southern region burdened its inhabitants with a predisposition for indolence. Thus in "The Ice Palace" temperature plays a pivotal role in the plot as the Southerners bask luxuriously in their hot climate and the Northerners find themselves motivated by the oppressive cold to move and work. This climatic determinism resurfaces in the author's life and letters as a loose explanation for regional difference. In a 1939 letter to Zelda, Fitzgerald remarked that the lack of genuine entrepreneurial "sink or swim spirit" proved to be "the difference of attitude" between the progressive North and the regressive South (108).

By then, Zelda had reflected publicly on regional differences between Northerners and Southerners in a short *College Humor* piece entitled "Southern Girl" (1929) and in her novel *Save Me the Waltz* (1932), but her opinions were largely indistinguishable from the ubiquitous conventional wisdom that two factors, oppressive heat and dispiriting defeat in the Civil War, had made Southerners uniquely indolent. "Southern Girl" is a dense block of prose devoted mostly to describing the fictional town of Jeffersonville in meteorological terms that echo Scott's Southern reductions: "Nothing ever seems to happen in Jeffersonville; the days pass, lazily gossiping in the warm sun. A lynching, an election, a wedding, catastrophes, and business booms all take on the same value, rounded, complete, dusted by the lust softness of the air in a climate too hot for any but sporadic effort, too beneficent for any but the most desultory

competition” (*Collected Writings* 299-300). In the enervating heat, even cold-blooded murder is burned out, wan and lackluster. Later sections of the story indulge in the familiar Fitzgerald theme of doomed inter-regional romance, as Jeffersonville native Harriet and an Ohioan named Dan discover their mutual incompatibility. This relationship falters, but, interestingly (and in the tight space of two short paragraphs), Zelda has Harriet marry a subsequent Ohioan who comes to town a few years later. Thus, “Southern Girl” ends as a narrative of escape, communicating the message that to be productive one must flee the vitality-sapping, seductive South.

Save Me the Waltz likewise shows overlap between the regional sensibilities of the Fitzgeralds, especially their shared beliefs about the deterministic relationship between region and wealth. The novel’s plot follows the courtship and expatriate life of Southern belle Alabama Beggs and Northern painter David Knight, thinly-veiled caricatures of Zelda and Scott. In the novel, Zelda fictionalizes her father, Alabama Supreme Court Justice Anthony Sayre, as Judge Austin Beggs, the honorable but rash scion of the Beggs family, whose modest income from the state inhibits his ability to provide for his family and himself. An avatar of the Old South right down to his “Confederate gray” hair (*Collected Writings* 184), Austin frets over finances even on his death bed, muttering, “We can’t afford this sickness.... I’ve got to get up. It’s costing money” (187). David, on the other hand, proves to be an inveterate provider for his new family; his success draws the envy of Alabama, who pursues a career in ballet to remain his creative equal. Yet Alabama fails in her endeavor at the exact moment in the narrative that her father falls fatally ill, and the family sulks back home to “the lull of the South” (181)—a plot contrivance that fatalistically attributes Alabama’s failure to her flawed Southern roots. Throughout the narrative, Alabama and, by connection, Zelda express wonder at David’s Yankee ingenuity, his professional pride in his craftsmanship, and his breadwinning proficiency. By

contrast, Zelda imagines the bankrupt, war-ravaged, agrarian South as “a troop of Confederate soldiers who wrapped their bleeding feet in Rebel banknotes to keep them off the snow” (41).

The semi-autobiographical content of *Save Me the Waltz* suggests that Scott’s experience with Zelda’s family reinforced the anti-Southern stereotypes he carried with him from St. Paul and Princeton to Alabama. Other evidence argues that the Sayres’ conventionality on matters of social change and religion further colored Fitzgerald’s perception of the South’s political sensibilities. Tony Buttitta—Fitzgerald’s conversational sparring partner during a mid-1930s stay in Asheville, North Carolina—posits in his memoir that the Sayres’s traditionalism irrevocably skewed the author’s stance on racial issues even as the political trajectory of his life displayed a steady progression towards secular leftist thought (*After the Good Gay Times* 173). Zelda’s family was inextricably tied to Southern political conservatism. Her father briefly headed the Alabama state legislature and oversaw a project to disfranchise illiterate black and white voters by prohibiting aid in marking ballots; the resultant “Sayre Election Law” bore the family name (Woodward 275). Montgomery itself remained, in the words of Zelda’s biographer Sally Cline, a “stronghold of segregation” (22); the former Confederate capital historically touted a political ethos “that ran counter to the moral beliefs of its time” (14). The socially conservative politics of the Sayres stood in marked contrast to those of the left-leaning author who debated socialist ideology with fellow radicals in New York and Hollywood. The subject of religion, however, seems to have been even more volatile. Zelda’s worsening schizophrenia found her increasingly religious (to the point of outright fanaticism) and morally conventional. In a 1940 letter, Fitzgerald pleads with his wife to read something besides “early Hebrew metaphysics”; in the place of the Bible, he recommends Russian fiction (*Letters* 115-16). The primary Southerner in his life had, to his mind, regressed intellectually, and her early religious indoctrination had

metastasized into Bible-Belt evangelism. Fitzgerald took steps to protect Scottie from her potentially detrimental influence by training her in socialist thought. In 1939, he even considered sending Scottie to Russia on an “economically organized tour” to learn firsthand about the communist “experiment” (*Letters* 56).

It is likely that Zelda’s schizophrenia influenced Fitzgerald’s insistence upon the biological foundations of regional difference in his fiction. After marrying Zelda, in whom he had already noticed varying degrees of instability that sometimes manifested as petulance and sometimes as violence, Scott discovered that both sides of her family suffered from mental illness and suicidal tendencies. As a result, he learned that Zelda’s psychiatric problems were more than merely the products of Southern culture and spoiled upbringing; they were physiological in nature by way of genetic heritage, and they would require a life-altering series of treatments and institutionalizations to address. What had previously been attributable in Adams’s terms to “temperament” proved in actuality to be a matter of the body as well as the mind. In an interview with Cline, one of Zelda’s Alabaman friends reflected, “In the South most of our good families are tainted with insanity. We handle it by thinking of the insane as ‘special’” (29). The strange interrelationship between good breeding and poor mental health stuck with Fitzgerald, who addressed the topic most directly in *Tender is the Night* (1934).

Besides his experiences with Zelda, Fitzgerald’s biological analysis of Southern difference finds its most immediate source in the critical work of his friend and mentor, H.L. Mencken. Mencken’s contentious 1917 article “The Sahara of the Bozart” achieved notoriety in its time for lambasting the literary and cultural void of the post-bellum South, but modern readers may well find the text’s casual discussion of regional bloodlines its most curious aspect. Like Fitzgerald, Mencken leads with commonplace observations about Southern intellectual

flight, remarking that after the Civil War “the first-rate Southerners that were left, broken in spirit and unable to live under the new dispensation, cleared out.” His subsequent comment, “A Southerner of good blood almost always does well in the North,” appears innocuous enough, until one discovers soon thereafter that Mencken references “blood” not in the abstract cultural terms of ancestral heritage but in the specific scientific terms of genetic lineage (*The American Scene* 162). Finding reasons for Southern cultural decline in biological make-up, Mencken posits that in the South the Celts, spawned from “some of the worst blood of western Europe,” predominate over their Anglo-Saxon counterparts (163). In addition to this genetic predisposition towards mediocrity, aristocratic male Southerners have poorly disseminated their good genes. Mencken correlates prominent social status with literal good breeding, mocking the “delusion that class distinctions are merely economic and conventional, and not congenital and genuine.” He argues that in an ideal social setting strong genetic traits trickle downward. Rich, well-bred men marry or carry on affairs with poor women, with whom they share an ethnic background. In either case, their progeny unite the best genes of the upper and underclass, improving upon the breeding of the “plebeians” while doing little to harm the aristocrats (164). But in the American South, this ideal has been rendered obsolete by racial interbreeding. White men prefer secretive affairs with black or mulatto concubines, Mencken argues, and this has worked to the genetic detriment of the region’s poor whites. In a passage rife with the spliced terminologies of eugenic pseudoscience and animal husbandry, he explains:

As a result of this preference of the Southern gentry for mulatto mistresses there was created a series of mixed strains containing the best white blood of the South, and perhaps of the whole country. As another result the poor whites went unfertilized from above, and so missed the improvement that so constantly shows itself in the peasant stocks of other countries. (165)

Mencken jarringly transitions from regional literary and cultural differences to biological and physiological distinctions as they pertain to region. His race-baiting observations are clearly intended to rile Southerners with the accusation that they are poorly bred and now culturally impotent—human variations on the mule.

Mencken's biological treatment of regional difference—compounded with the contemporary phenomenon of eugenic discourse circulating in the intellectual ether—seems to have impacted Fitzgerald's writing on the subject as much as did his problems with Zelda.² We know from his own testaments that he found Mencken's intellectual influence inescapable; in his 1934 introduction to the *Modern Library* edition of *Gatsby*, he describes himself and writers of his time as “spoiled” by the critical input of this ratiocinative “lion” with “his bravery and his tremendous and profound love of letters” (*In His Own Time* 155). Fitzgerald freely owns that Mencken's impact upon his work extended beyond the realm of style, and this is most evident in his related discourse on the American Sahara—for, like Mencken, Fitzgerald writes about Southerners who are biologically distinct from their regional counterparts around the nation. In “The Ice Palace,” Sally Carrol's boyfriend Harry Bellamy channels Mencken when he rants about the New South being full of “degenerates” who have “lived so long down there with all the colored people that they've gotten lazy and shiftless” (63). Some even nastier related comments appear in the minor 1931 story “Indecision,” in which a Minneapolis-born banker refers to a white Southern girl from Louisiana as a “pickaninny” and jokes that “all the boys are spics down in New Orleans” (*Price* 301, 295). Against this racially and regionally coded decadence, these narratives position not only the well-bred aristocrats of the Old South but also members of the “Northern races,” ethnic groups of Scandinavian heritage inhabiting the American Midwest (*Short Stories* 60). Of the former party, the best representation one finds in Fitzgerald's fiction is

the character of Henry Marston in “The Swimmers.” By nature a gentleman of discretion and entitlement, he possesses traits “peculiar to old stock” that indicate a congenital predilection to assuming command (505). The latter party, made up primarily of Middle American Swedes, Fitzgerald depicts as remarkably industrious, practical, and unemotional. Between all these groups there exists a considerable amount of racial difference, despite their superficial whiteness. Like Mencken, Fitzgerald associates Southerners (of the new breed especially but also to some extent the old stock) with African Americans, who have apparently acted as a cultural and genetic siphon on white Southern culture.

Mencken explicitly alludes to racial mixing as the most significant factor contributing to Southern backwardness; Fitzgerald more subtly hints at its role in cultural degeneration. Both suggest that the average inhabitant of the New South is simply not as white as his forebears. This is a step backwards, for the cultural logic of race commonly maintained by Fitzgerald and his contemporaries held that blackness was retrograde. Buttitta recalls that racial mixing represented a personal as well as a national threat for Fitzgerald, who recoiled bitterly upon learning that a North Carolinian prostitute he had slept with repeatedly was in fact a mulatto (171-73). According to Buttitta’s account, the writer objected that “our race was superior and we shouldn’t weaken it by mixing” as his lover assured him that in the South “a white boy wasn’t a man until he... had himself a nigger gal in the barn” (172). What we see in the pejorative rhetoric of miscegenation employed by Mencken, Fitzgerald, and others is that race plays a key role in the progressive portrayal of the South as backwards. The reiterative claim is that Southern culture and bloodlines have been polluted by blackness, either through the cultural exchange facilitated by close proximity with African Americans or by interracial relationships between powerful white men and exploited black women. The cost of economic progress would

be further disassociation from blacks and a re-inscribing of the WASP-ish nativism outlined in the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson ruling, adjudicated the year of Fitzgerald's birth.

Just as Fitzgerald's fascination with regional incompatibility in romance paints the problem of sectional difference in physiological terms, so too does his fixation on Southern miscegenation insist upon the firm biological foundations of regional identity. Concerns of race are inextricable from those of region; in these literary and critical discourses, themes of race emerge as strategies for addressing regional matters, and vice-versa. Mencken and Fitzgerald's race-baiting of Southerners hints at the dark side of Progressive nationalism, which promoted national unity and social reform even as the civil rights of American blacks continued to disappear in regional pockets across the country. Modern historians marvel that the rise of national welfare programs was accompanied by state-level disfranchisement acts, anti-miscegenation restrictions, and segregation laws tolerated by the federal government. Eileen L. McDonagh observes that while government flourished in size and scope during the Progressive Era, political participation remained the demesne of white males at or above middle class income (*Progressivism and the New Democracy* 159). That these racist regional policies earned the approbation of progressive politicians and left-leaning idealists like Fitzgerald tells us a great deal about the period's middle class nationalism, which projected a lily-white political body that provided common ground between sectional factions otherwise divided on government spending. As McDonagh reminds us, racially charged pieces of national legislation like the Johnson-Reed Act and the Eighteenth Amendment passed by linking "a broad coalition of southern and northern interests," even if statewide segregation policies remained local affairs (161). The upshot of the political connection is this: Fitzgerald's writing about the South strives to distance the retrograde region from the progressive nation in terms of economic infrastructure and work

ethnic, but it actually draws them together on the uneasy subject of race relations. By insisting that subversive blackness (bred into the region's inhabitants and permeating its culture) is a key factor in the hindering of Southern progress, Fitzgerald unites the interests of Southern politicians ever eager to reverse the civil liberties advancements of Reconstruction with those of national politicians invested in the perpetuation of white middle-class authority. Thus the South, which Hobson has productively referred to as a "mirror image for America's flaws and blemishes," proves to work in tandem with and also reflect the seedy underbelly of Progressive idealism (16).

Baltimore and the Bozart, the Sahara and the Riviera

Even while abroad, considerations of American place and race occupied Fitzgerald's mind. In his 1924 *Saturday Evening Post* article "How to Live on Practically Nothing a Year," he projected elements of the US South onto coastal France, imagining himself and his family racially darkened by "the Arab streak" of the French Riviera (*Afternoon* 107). In one section, we find that the Fitzgeralds have gone native, their skin "burned to a deep chocolate brown, so that they seemed to be of Egyptian origin," and their daughter Scottie appears as "a small black child with cotton-white hair" (*Afternoon* 113). The waiter who serves them, ostensibly a "Senegalese," is revealed by his "accent from well below the Mason-Dixon Line" to be an African-American expatriate (114). For his *Post* readership, Fitzgerald packages the Riviera as a European corollary to the American South: its Moorish heritage implies racial and cultural miscegenation, its high temperatures link it to the South's enervating heat, and the dark-skinned French poor who hassle rich expatriates on the beach call to mind the Southern region's post-bellum African-American underclass. In an earlier letter to Edmund Wilson, Fitzgerald had

referred to impoverished interwar French as “slave[s],” suggesting that not only racial hybridity but also economic devastation linked the American South and the French south of the Riviera (*Letters* 326). In the wake of the Great War, the franc was decimated in value—not so severely as the worthless Confederate dollar after the Civil War, but Fitzgerald’s mocking reference to French currency as “gold-colored hat checks” suggests a comparison (*Afternoon* 114).

Meanwhile, the US emerged from an immediate postwar recession into booming 1920s national economy. The facility with which Fitzgerald’s makes these transnational connections shows that by the early twentieth century the American South had become shorthand for postwar economic ruin and cultural bankruptcy. Its significance was mobile, applicable to other places, other wars, even other countries. Yet, while the South as an abstract entity retained this pejorative meaning, Fitzgerald explored in his fiction the idea that domestic Southern spaces might become un-Southern over time, reversing regional alignments as a magnet reverses its charge, becoming committed to period ideals of progress over the dilapidated aesthetics of regress.

Fitzgerald’s opinions on the South were inevitably influenced by certain nationalistic sentiments of his time, in particular the Progressive and post-Progressive discourse on the region’s position in relation to the nation. But a troubled history of intersectional conflict in the US precedes the author’s 1896 birth, and his fiction frequently demonstrates an engaging awareness of it. Two of Fitzgerald’s most fully developed juvenile short stories—“A Debt of Honor” (1910) and “The Room with the Green Blinds” (1911)—make use of Civil War plots and sympathized with the doomed Confederacy. In adulthood, he published two professional stories specifically about the war, “The Night Before Chancellorsville” (1935) and the aforementioned “The End of Hate.” Moreover, the care he put into contributing script revisions for MGM’s *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and the attention he paid to Margaret Mitchell’s 1936 novel suggest a

continuing interest in the popular perception of Civil War and Reconstruction history. But “Benjamin Button” is the widest in historical scope of his fictions on the South—and it provides his richest exploration of regional mutability. Set in Baltimore, it opens at the beginning of the Civil War; speeds through the eras of Reconstruction and Redemption; and ends at an unspecified moment in the near future following the story’s publication. The strange tale, one of Fitzgerald’s few forays into fantasy, offers an interesting take on the evolving Southern region, and its setting hints that Baltimore, a place to which Fitzgerald returned semi-frequently in life and in writing, might provide insight into political tension between regions during and before the Progressive Era. Fitzgerald’s paternal associations with the state of Maryland (including his distant relation to Francis Scott Key) and his professional connections to the city itself assign Baltimore a special importance in his treatment of the Southern region. Moreover, the sectional politics of post-bellum America affirm that “Charm City” occupied contested territory in the cultural conflict between Northern and Southern interests.

Fitzgerald’s fascination with Baltimore suggests that his interest in the South is tied in part to its cultural and geographic mutability, for the city, once considered quintessentially Southern, became in his time only liminally so. Baltimore’s close proximity to the Mason-Dixon Line speaks volumes about its regional identity; it occupies a borderland between the American Northeast and Southeast, and in the past two centuries the city has increasingly self-identified with the North. In 2010, *The Baltimore Sun* addressed these conflicting identities in an article provocatively titled “Are We Northern? Southern? Yes.” Raising more questions than it answers, the piece ends with a fourteen-point list of Baltimore’s hybrid regional traits as originally outlined by the Maryland State Department of Information in 1956. The fact sheet notes that while the area is the southernmost source of Northern-style maple syrup, it is also the

northernmost location in which Southern cypress swamps may still be found. Though the department concluded in the fifties that “the truth” behind the identity question rested somewhere between the polar “extremes” of absolute North and South, Baltimore’s regional identification has definitely crept northward since the mid-century. Politely unmentioned in the article is the fact that the Baltimore of the 1860s was a hotbed of Confederate sentiment, and Lincoln had some of its most prominent civil servants arrested to ensure that Maryland would not be led to secession. How the city has changed in the span of a century and a half. Once memorialized in Frederick Douglass’s autobiographical writings as a slaveholding port city of the South, in 2012 Baltimore is more recognizable as “Bodmore, Murdaland” on TV’s *The Wire*. David Simon’s gritty modern portrayal of the city invites comparisons to its Eastern Seaboard fellows New York and New Jersey more so than to Charleston, Mobile, or New Orleans, other major Southern ports. Between Douglass’s 1845 treatment of the city and Simon’s 2004 depiction of crime-riddled urban sprawl falls the early twentieth century Baltimore-in-transition of Fitzgerald and Mencken.

Fitzgerald’s biography reveals a lifelong connection to the state of Maryland and to Baltimore in particular, and his citation of this cultural borderland in his fiction is predicated upon his personal understanding of Maryland’s role in the production of regional difference. In 1939, near the end of his life, he wrote an foreword for Don Swann’s *Colonial and Historic Homes of Maryland* in which he testified to being “a native of the Maryland Free State through ancestry and adoption”—a claim as complex as it is accurate. Fitzgerald’s anecdotes as detailed in the foreword suggest that he experienced the state’s Southern heritage secondhand through his father’s anecdotes and firsthand through family trips; he encountered the culturally progressive Baltimore later through his interactions with Mencken and through the years he spent in the city

(*In His Own Time* 158-59). The young Fitzgerald grew up listening to his father's stories of Civil War-era Maryland, learning that, despite the state's refusal to secede, a great number of its citizens sided with the Confederate cause. Edward Fitzgerald regaled the young Scott with stories of childhood rebel heroism; he claimed to have covertly aided Southern soldiers at the tender age of nine. The Fitzgerald family also took great pride in their ancestor Francis Scott Key, whose poem "Defence of Fort McHenry" (1814) provided the lyrics for "The Star-Spangled Banner," the patriotic song that became the national anthem in the early twentieth century.

Later, as a married man, Fitzgerald returned to his family's former home to address Zelda's mental breakdowns. In 1932, while she received psychiatric treatment at the Johns Hopkins University Hospital, Scott moved to Maryland and rented a house just outside Baltimore. One year later, the family moved to a home in the city proper as Fitzgerald began to receive treatment for his alcoholism (also at Johns Hopkins). The same year, Zelda had her play *Scandalabra* performed by an amateur troupe in Baltimore. These incidents and occurrences, spaced out as they are from the beginning of Fitzgerald's life to its near-conclusion, suggest a complex relationship with Maryland that runs the gamut from Civil War-era nostalgia to extensive use of the state's cultural, academic, and medical resources.

As a lifelong resident of Baltimore, Mencken had a privileged perspective on Maryland's displacement from the South, and his intellectual mentorship of Fitzgerald ensured that his views on the region would impact the young author, who at times fancied himself an honorary Southerner by virtue of his father's family history. Mencken's "Bozart" polemic accused the American South of being uncultured, impotent in the practice of the beaux arts and dismally unconcerned with education. Mencken's taunts succeeded in riling the Nashville Agrarians, who responded by writing political tracts, poems, and fictions that reinvigorated the production of

white male Southern literary discourse. Yet Mencken's wrote "Sahara" in Baltimore. From the vantage of a historically Southern city, the critic used his caustic wit to rail against the decline of art and intelligence in the South. This suggests either that Mencken wrote from the perspective of a Southern insider concerned about his region or that he considered Baltimore non-Southern. His biographers, including Hobson, have tended to presume it entails both.

In Mencken's time, Maryland was outside the Southern cultural void he observed in Georgia and Virginia. Home to the esteemed Johns Hopkins University as well as to a respectable arts scene, Baltimore could exclude itself from Mencken's censure by virtue of its sophistication, even if the city had traditionally been associated with the South. But its cultural and economic progressiveness (including the city's affinity for trade unions) further served to distance it from the Southern region, which was more and more coming to be defined in relation to the forward-looking nation as backwards and unrefined. One sees a parallel trajectory in Baltimore's cultural progress and its increasing identification with the North; as the urban center aligns itself first with the commercial promises of Republicanism and later with the tenets of Progressive nationalism, it likewise proceeds to become more commonly associated with the culturally productive, union-tolerant American Northeast. In the directional terms of sociopolitical rhetoric, both gestures proceed forward to progress, on the same track as the upward-tending nation that proceeded through the Progressive Era into the Jazz Age.

Outside Maryland's few urbanized areas, the intertwined problems of progress and regional alignment dogged the economically troubled South as they had since Reconstruction. With the feudal power structure of slavery entombed with the Lost Cause, the repatriated Confederate states scanned the nation's regions for a viable replacement. While Southern Democrats and Republicans alike tended to view the wealthy, industrialized Northeast as a

model for progress, Southern populists admired the radicalized labor politics of the American West and beheld a kindred spirit in Western agrarianism. In miner strikes, in subversive resistance to the cattle barons, and in the rage of Western farmers at the unprofitable national market, Southern agrarians and populists saw their own financial concerns echoed in a different region. The Northeast came to be associated with powerful banks, sprawling factories, big government, and academic institutions far removed from the local concerns of impoverished farmers; it represented progress in the direction of capital and industry, and for many Southerners, especially inhabitants of the urbanizing South, it remained alluring. The labor and agrarian sympathies of the West presented a logical alternative, even if detractors made dispiriting connections between populist movements and communist thought. Whether the ideologically divided “Solid South” would align itself with the North or the West proved to be a major concern in American politics at the turn of the century. At the St. Louis Industrial Conference of 1892, the convention from which the populist People’s Party sprang, organizers arranged a symbolic reconciliation between South and West by inviting a former Confederate colonel from North Carolina to clasp hands on stage with a Union Navy commodore from Nebraska (Kazin 37). An oppositional fascination with the more industrialized Northeast is evident in the pro-business journalistic discourse of popular Southern publications. Newspapers and trade journals evinced in C. Vann Woodward’s terms a “heedless iconoclasm” in promoting a new “Yankee” middle class business ideology over antebellum economic structures that linked agriculture with aristocracy (*Origins of the New South* 150-52). Thus the Southern region mulled two directions for moving forward from the devastation of the Civil War: northern towards capital and industry or westward towards labor and agriculture. But the dawn of the Progressive Era found Washington more amenable to labor concerns, thereby changing the terms

of the debate even as the South continued to remain culturally, economically, and politically distinct from other regions. By renouncing two regionally coded possibilities for social progress, the South risked appearing (and indeed did appear) backwards in the eyes of the larger nation.

This was the backwards South that Fitzgerald, following Mencken's lead, attacked not only in stories but in creative nonfiction articles. In "The Cruise of the Rolling Junk" (written in 1922 but not published until 1924), he deployed some of his sharpest barbs against the region, harping on its economic inefficiencies and its abundant African-American populations. The piece is loosely based on an actual trip undertaken by the Fitzgeralds in July 1920 when they traveled by car from Westport, Connecticut to Montgomery. Fitzgerald initially buys into the arch-tragic Southern myth, writing of Virginia, "Here under the gay wistaria life at its mellowest had once flourished—not as on Long Island with streets and haste and poverty and pain just twenty miles away, but in a limitless empire whose radius was the distance a good horse could travel in a morning and whose law was moulded only of courtesy and prejudice and flame" (2.43). On the very same page, he suffers immediate disillusion: "And at the moment when we became aware of Virginia's picturesqueness we became aware also of its selfconscious insistence on this picturesqueness. It seemed to cherish its anachronisms and survivals, its legend of heroism in defeat and of impotence before the vulgarities of industrialism, with too shrill an emphasis. For all its gorgeous history there was something tinny and blatant in its soul" (2.43). Having intuited a vacuity behind the veneer of Southern honor, Fitzgerald's romance of the South turns to horror; he and Zelda encounter a bandit on the road, and afterwards they can't shake race conscious "images of murderous negroes hiding in bottomless swamps and of waylaid travelers floating on their backs in black pools" (2.58). In South Carolina, they are mocked as Yankees by locals, leading Fitzgerald to comment on "the negative morality of the poor white"

(2.76). Their destination affords them no respite, however, for Alabama is a place where people have “no confidence in Progress” (3.58). Fitzgerald ends the narrative with the ironic image of Montgomery’s motto, “Your Opportunity,” festooned to a burnt-out electric sign (3.68).

But Baltimore—unencumbered by Union occupation or economic devastation after the Civil War—met Northeastern standards of progress while other parts of the South failed to balance mass industrialization with cultural development. During the Redemption period, Southern states often gutted their education budgets as they strove to industrialize. And while many state governments envied Northern prosperity, advocacy of Western agrarianism and nostalgia for the bygone Old South alike cluttered Southern political discourse and complicated the search for regional identity. If the South was to become prosperous by turning to the North for examples of social progress, a position advocated by many Southern Democrats, few states were able to make the realignment quickly—although nearly all professed the desire to move forward with the rest of the nation. Therefore Maryland might be envisioned as the disappearing coastline of the South, the result of Northern waters bearing down for decades on Southern land, effecting irrevocable sea change. When Fitzgerald invokes the city of Baltimore in fiction, it is typically for the purpose of observing great cultural change in the New South, which he saw as steadily losing hold on Southern identity in traditionally Southern areas. “Benjamin Button” is especially invested in this project, for it tracks the history of the city and its reverse-aging protagonist from the beginning of the Civil War to the conclusion of World War I, thereby chronicling the American South’s crisis of regional identification and its coming to terms with progressive nationalism. In some letters and fictions, Fitzgerald treats these fluctuations in identity as the lamentable loss of the Old Southern caste rigidity that once provided the democratic US with its closest approximation to validated aristocratic pretension. More

commonly, however, the author depicts the South as a colonial economy easily capable of sparing some Confederate culture for an injection of Midwestern work ethic and an investment of Northern capital. Yet in his most thought-provoking stories of the Southern region, and we may count “Benjamin Button” among them, Fitzgerald pulled off the Keatsian feat of negative capability he so admired and juggled these contradictory ideas, simultaneously sympathizing with and excoriating the post-bellum South.

Sons of the South: Southern Backwardness in Fitzgerald and Faulkner

For the purpose of interpreting what the titular protagonist of Fitzgerald’s “Benjamin Button” signifies about the changing Southern region, the character of another prominent modernist literary Benjamin, Faulkner’s Benjy Compson, provides a productive comparison. The two characters are both disabled in ways that frame the discourse on Southern identity in terms of regression and chronology. Interestingly, these Benjamins also overlap in Faulkner’s intellectual investment in them. Faulkner greatly admired Fitzgerald’s “Benjamin Button” and in 1943 sought to adapt it into a screenplay. His two letters on the subject to Harold Ober indicate a prior familiarity with the story, though it is difficult to determine whether he read it near its 1922 publication date or much later, perhaps after Fitzgerald’s 1940 death. Regardless, by 1928 Faulkner had created in *The Sound & the Fury* his own disabled Benjamin, saddled like Button with a conflict of time, mind, and body. Whether or not his interest in Fitzgerald’s Southern fantasy influenced this characterization, thematic similarities between the characters persist.

Benjamin Compson suffers from a congenital intellectual disability, while Benjamin Button’s condition of aging in reverse resembles, in its initial state, an exaggerated form of progeria, the aging disease. In both cases, the deliberate selection of the name “Benjamin”

reflects the authors' shared interest in its various translations from the Biblical Hebrew. One such meaning is "child of my sorrow," echoed by Quentin Compson in his stream-of-consciousness narrative as "*Benjamin Benjamin the child of my sorrowful*,"—although this translation actually refers to "Ben-oni," the Biblical character's birth name before it is changed by Jacob (172). Regardless, the Button and Compson families alike regard their Benjamins as children of sorrow, for their disabilities prevent them from participating normally in the various rituals outlined by the social protocol of child-rearing. But the name "Benjamin" possesses an alternative meaning of great significance to these two writers in their grappling with problems of region; religious scholars have translated the name as "son of the south," and, indeed, Benjamins Button and Compson are both children of the American South (McKenzie 88). Faulkner and Fitzgerald use these characters and their inherited backwardness to comment on the role of the South in relation to other regions and to the nation. Yet while the familiar directional tropes of Progressive and post-Progressive political thought are present in both fictions, the two authors employ the concept of regional backwardness to different ends and reach divergent conclusions about the effects of social change on the South.

While the free-association tale related by Faulkner's Benjy Compson suggests an outright rejection of linear time, in another sense the character is more accurately temporally backwards because of the discrepancy between his physical and mental age. He possesses, as each of the novel's four narrators confirms, an adult body and adolescent mind in conflict. Visitors to the Compson property are greeted by a sight described by Jason the younger as "a thirty year old man playing around the yard with a nigger boy" (222). Compounding this inverse or backwards relationship between mind and body, Benjy's disjointed narrative runs in circles and adheres to no set temporal order as the character relates thirty-three years of family anecdotes. As such, his

section of *The Sound & the Fury* hits readers with a dual-cylinder displacement from modern rhetoric of progress and Coolidge-era faith in industrial capitalism. The character's narrative approach to looking and being backwards effects a disassociation from the Progressive emphasis on urban-industrial economies—an important thematic gesture in light of how binary conflicts between nation and region, urban and rural, figure prominently in the novel. Benjy's ever-dwindling cattle pasture represents the clearest impingement of alien ideals of progress onto the hesitant Southern region. To fund Quentin Compson's education at Harvard, the family sells the land in parcels; the bulk of it is eventually turned into the golf course that provides the setting for the novel's opening. The land's transition from practical agrarian plot to business capital and finally to infertile playground is one of the text's many tragic arcs—a tragedy facilitated by regional conflict. In pursuit of a desirable Northeastern education and its attendant social connections for their son, the Compsons divest themselves of their land and displace Quentin from his native soil. These actions reject regional agrarianism in favor of commercial capitalism vitalized by waves of national-level economic reform.

The evolution of the Compsons from a family of agrarian landowners to a brood of petty bourgeoisie culminates in the younger Jason Compson's failed investments on the New York Cotton Exchange. In this section of the narrative, Jason sells short on the national market against the interests of Southern farmer, participating in an economic system that historically devalued the crops grown by local farmers and left them in debt to their lenders.³ As Wayne W. Westbrook explains, men like Jason “have no interest or stake in the underlying commodity but seek to profit by predicting market moves on futures prices” (55). Jason openly mocks the exploited cotton farmers of the South, but he likewise expresses disgust for the “dam eastern jews” who supposedly conspire to control the Cotton Exchange (191). Uninterested in the

agrarian movements of the South or the West and suspicious of Northeastern market capitalism, Jason embodies an ultimately rudderless New South—a devolving region that Faulkner would later embody in the mercenary Snopes clan. On the whole, the novel relates a series of instances in which disassociation from the Southern region and from agrarian economic values results in suffering for individuals, families, and communities. As Faulkner’s readers have frequently noted, Benjy is the human embodiment of this suffering, and his idiosyncratic narrative voice is inflected by concerns of region and time. Gail L. Mortimer refers to the character as a “timeless creature whose present experiences are undistinguished in vividness from his memories” and suggests that his fixation on the past reflects the South’s obsession with the “unrealistic and archaic self-image” of an unbowed Confederacy (233, 235).

One of Faulkner’s grim jokes in the novel is the unintended regional appropriateness of Benjamin’s name change. The Compsons rechristen Benjy, formerly Maurice, to avoid the humiliation of a mentally handicapped son sharing his uncle’s name, leading younger brother Quentin to believe incorrectly that the new name signifies the family’s sorrow at the burden laid upon them. However, because “Benjamin” translates more directly to “son of the south,” the Compsons have accidentally appointed their son to be a regional representative, and his temporally coded disability is part and parcel of this representation. Benjy’s “backwardness” and his displacement from linear time both serve to reflect the unique sociopolitical conditions of the post-bellum South—a proud region infantilized by repatriation, crippled by a young colonial economy. But Benjy’s difference is also expressed in biological terms, some of which may apply to the South writ large. His mental condition—critics disagree ferociously as to whether it is retardation or severe autism—is the most apparent factor contributing to Benjy’s difference, and Faulkner treats it in the narrative as a blessing and a curse; it limits the character’s ability to

communicate through traditional linguistic means and experience the world as his peers do, but it also allows Benjy to remain powerfully attached to his family and to the land. One may read this as a response to Adams's comment on the temperamental and inherently feeble Southern intelligence. What Benjy lacks in mind, he more than makes up for in body, as his sense of physicality, his emotional capacity, and his sensual awareness are almost unbearably heightened. Likewise, Faulkner's idealized conceit of Southern identity devalues commerce and ostentatious scholarship in favor of communal spirit, luxurious corporeality, and attachment to ancestral land. Benjy's condition disassociates him from the commercial interests of the New South and the progressive nation, but it correlates him with traditional Southern agrarian values.

In addition to the general biological distinctions mentioned above, Benjy's physiological difference is articulated specifically in terms of race. In one flashback, Versh Gibson remarks that the Compsons have made a "bluegum" (a pejorative designation of race generally referring to dark, unmiscegenated African-ness) of Benjy by renaming him (69). Versh's pronouncement addresses how the Compsons have made a pariah of their handicapped son, treating him as a second-class family member who fares little better than the blacks of the segregated South. Though white, Benjy is cared for almost exclusively by the Compson's black servants. He is surrounded by and marked by blackness, which irrevocably colors his identity as a mentally handicapped Southerner.⁴

Like Faulkner's Benjamin Compson, Fitzgerald's Benjamin Button is a Southerner whose fractured, backwards experience of time speaks to the region's fitful post-bellum reassessment of identity and its disassociation from the forward-oriented nation. Born on the eve of the Civil War, Button lives his life in reverse as an old man who grows younger year by year. Fitzgerald ties the Baltimorean Button to the Southern region through several narrative gestures.

He presents the well-connected Button family as part of the “enormous peerage which largely populated the Confederacy” (*Short Stories* 160); he marries the character to the daughter of a Confederate general; and he shares a bit of Baltimore gossip positing that Button is actually “John Wilkes Booth in disguise” (172). The implication is that the fantastic story serves as a parable of the South, with the backwards-living Button representing the region and capturing its strange mutations.

For the conceit undergirding the narrative’s exploration of chronological backwardness and Southern regional history, Fitzgerald owes, and in his preface to the story admits, a debt to Mark Twain. Fitzgerald’s interest in Twain rose in 1920 when Max Perkins forwarded him a copy of Van Wyck Brooks’s *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*, published the same year. In it, the critic relates Twain’s “fanc[y]... that life should begin with old age and progress backwards,” and he follows this anecdote with the pronouncement that Twain’s artistic vision was “essentially retrospective” (175). Brooks cites this as the reason why so much of Twain’s work concerns young boys; he rejected the adult desire for “commercial success,” so he bent his gaze backwards to an idealized, childish, pre-capitalistic state. Fitzgerald himself would later praise the retrospective vision of Twain’s Huck Finn, whom he described in 1935 as “the first to look back at the republic from the perspective of the west” (*Correspondence* 424). But what Brooks does not discuss in the 1920 volume—and what has perhaps the greater bearing on Fitzgerald’s “Benjamin Button”—is the regionally coded retrospection of Twain’s *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889). This comedic fantasy is the author’s sendup of Sir Walter Scott’s fictionalized chivalric fictions, but its Camelot setting serves as stand-in for the plantocratic American South. Earlier in *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), Twain had mocked Scott’s influence on the feudal pretensions of Southern plantation owners; here, he follows his criticism through to

a creative conclusion by sending an industrious Northerner back in time to clean the place up. Things do not end well for the Yankee reformer, but this is by and large a fantasy of Reconstruction-done-right, for by the time Twain wrote the book, Southern Democrats had reversed the civil rights gains and political reshufflings of the post-bellum era. As in Fitzgerald's story, the political commentary of *A Connecticut Yankee* hinges on temporal displacement; Twain lampoons the recalcitrant South, positions it backwards in time, as a medieval state in dire need of democracy and industrialization.

As a 1920s update to *A Connecticut Yankee*, the plot of "Benjamin Button" spans the last gasp of the antebellum era to the predicted future of the 1930s. The story depicts the troublesome rebirth of the South in the wake of the Civil War, addressing in particular the pangs of repatriation. Just as the elderly newborn Button must cope with his family's expectations of how a baby boy should behave, so did some of the nation's oldest colonial properties—including Virginia and the Carolinas—deal with the political anxiety of joining the US anew. Most pertinent to the story's gerontological themes, the region's oldest political families were frequently marked as traitors and barred from voting in Reconstruction Era state and national government matters, making way for new politicians from poor white and freed black families—recently empowered groups, young in political history. Button embodies the idea of a Southern region growing younger in political power as its traditional power brokers, men who were more often than not the ideologues behind secession, compete with the new faces favored by the Republican administration. His regressing age also speaks to the section's newly weakened economy. The disestablishment of the South's mature slave-based agricultural economy resulted in the unsteady rise of a new, immature commercial capitalism in the region. Heather Cox Richardson describes the immediate postwar economy as one unable to shake the old trappings

of slave labor as recalcitrant landowners tried to avoid paying free laborers in cash, preferring instead to pay them in room and board, as they had paid slaves, or in crop shares, deferring payment for a day's or week's labor (*West* 83). Local agricultural economies suffered as employers struggled to pay for work and laborers pessimistically questioned whether they would be paid fairly. Button, on the other hand, is able to profit in the post-bellum era because he is not one of these affected rural farmers but is instead a young industrialist in Baltimore. And, a step ahead of the self-destructive Quentin Compson, Benjamin Button finishes his studies at Harvard and returns to Maryland with a degree in hand. As a manufacturer of nuts and bolts and also a graduate of a prominent Northeastern institution, Button is oriented away from traditional Southern agrarianism and toward a promising future in entrepreneurship and commerce.

Despite his generally leftist political leanings (to which he became more and more dedicated over the course of his career), Fitzgerald thought very little of regional agrarian movements or their literary representations; in a 1925 letter to Gilbert Seldes he derided the contemporary interest in "serious" writing about "the Great Struggle the Great American Peasant has with the Soil" (*Letters* 484). "Button" reflects his distaste for rural settings and agrarian themes. Fitzgerald's portrayal of Button as a possible harbinger of change in the South is a selective one that deliberately emphasizes Southern urbanity over far more common Southern rurality. In identifying Button with the increasingly Northern-aligned Baltimore, the author distances his character from the economic devastation of the countryside farmlands, including those just south of the city in the lower parts of Maryland where Fitzgerald's own father grew up. The writer James M. Cain, a Maryland native who spent time with Fitzgerald in Hollywood, described the rural bottom of the state as "poor, backward, and still numb from the slave economy that had riled it for hundreds of years, a world of runt corn, scrub tobacco, and tired

land; of ox-carts, dirt roads, and bucket wells, of saloons, gambling, blood feuds, and dark, clandestine sex” (qtd. in *Cloud Nine* 188). Button’s environment is decidedly not this desperate place but the bustling, ever-developing city of Baltimore.

Nor is Button’s defining war the still-smoldering embers of “our late conflict,” as it is for so many of Faulkner’s characters. Fitzgerald’s hero serves valiantly in the 1898 Spanish-American War, overseen by the Northern-favored McKinley administration. This is, of course, the same war that helped substantiate the gubernatorial and presidential aspirations of Progressive Republican Teddy Roosevelt, and Fitzgerald draws a number of corollaries between BB and TR. The character, who becomes a “lieutenant-colonel just in time to participate in the celebrated charge up San Juan Hill,” shares the same military rank and combat history as the future president (174). Like Roosevelt, Button is nominated for a medal commendation following his heroic participation in the conflict.⁵ Roosevelt, born like Button on the eve of the Civil War, was the son of a New York philanthropist and a Georgia belle. As Fitzgerald’s use of it suggests, Roosevelt’s biography neatly expresses the dynamic repulsion and attraction that the North and South exerted on one another, an antimonial relationship between “rich Yankees” and Southern trophy wives in which Northern-nationalistic values typically paved over Southern decadence. Aside from the Roosevelt connections, Button’s adopted Yankee work ethic plays a significant role in his military career, for it is through “business influence” that Button initially earns his officer commission, and it is because “his business require[s] attention” that he finally leaves the army (174).

The character’s thematic alliance with future Progressive Republicans and successful businessmen stands in contrast to Fitzgerald’s depiction of the story’s other Southern war hero: Button’s father-in-law, the Civil War veteran General Montcrief. These are two wholly different

types of Southern military men. Montcrief is a stereotypically nostalgic, mannered, and fiscally irresponsible ex-Confederate who rears his daughter in the courtly “old tradition” (171). His obsession with the South’s involvement in the Civil War results in his composing an unmarketable twenty-volume history of the conflict, published only through the private investment of his pitying son-in-law. The upwardly mobile Button provides an infusion of energy and money to the downward spiraling Montcrief line, even though the general threatens at first to “fall upon his sword” in response to his Hildegarde’s engagement (172). The industrious Button is, despite his strange condition, an inveterate provider, a responsible family man, and a successful independent businessman. Prosperous but by no means a capitalist magnate, he embodies the Progressive Era upper-middle-class financial ideal and clearly profits from the period’s business boom. Unlike Montcrief, who represents the threat of Southern backwardness in his unhealthy fixation upon the defunct Confederacy and his apparent unwillingness to adapt to industrial modernity, Button is in general terms a progressive, at least in his economic practices and cultural outlook. In the regional borderland of Baltimore, Button identifies with the forward-looking Yankee work ethic and progressive political nationalism over the backwards Sodom-gazing and financial insolvency frequently associated with the post-bellum South. If the terms of the ideological conflict at work here are North and nation versus Southern region, then the narrative makes it clear that Button’s sympathies lie with the former pair, as evidenced by his business scruples, his affinity for modern technology, and his eagerness to serve his country.

But for all his progressive tendencies, Benjamin Button still lives in reverse. Like his corollary in *The Sound & the Fury*, this “son of the south” cannot escape the trappings of a regionally coded backwardness. In Button’s case, his Baltimore home and his forward-oriented

economic outlook, considered alongside his birth on the eve of the Civil War, suggest that Button's experience of dwindling into youth and subsequently disappearing reflects the threatening possibility of cultural change in the post-bellum New South. All of the progressive traits that draw Button into alignment with Northern sensibilities and nationalistic attitudes toward US citizenship also distance him from the traditions and values that historically provided cultural identity for the South after the regionally divisive debates on slavery in the early nineteenth century. By rejecting the paternalistic agrarianism of the past and looking towards a future defined by industry, capital, and technology, Button sacrifices a large portion of his Southern identity and proceeds to dwindle into nothingness—a process we might interpret as the representation of cultural homogenization, the merging of the weakened South into the financially and politically dominant North of the Progressive Era. “Button” finds the author ruminating on the potential erosion of Southern identity much as he would later fret over the possible decline of Western civilization in *The Last Tycoon*. And, given that the setting of the story is the rapidly transitioning city of Baltimore, Fitzgerald's concerns were not entirely unfounded. The Southern port city that had in the 1850s supported the acting career of future assassin John Wilkes Booth and had in the 1860s been such a threat to Union forces that it had been subjected to martial law had by Fitzgerald's time begun to casually lean towards a Northern regional alignment as pronounced as that of nearby Washington, DC. Writing from progressive Baltimore, a fiery intellectual like Mencken could rail against the culturally bankrupt South with little to no cognitive dissonance. Nevertheless, the evidence of Fitzgerald's other Southern stories assures us that Button's transition would be unlikely to take place in a different part of the South; the short works that comprise his Georgia series, for example, argue that industrious

Southerners must migrate northward to actualize their potential. In the Deep South, at least, the regional displacement of intellectual flight is the high cost for success.

Reading the story with an eye to region leads us to consider that perhaps Button does not disappear at the end so much as Fitzgerald propels him and the city forward through history away from the paternalistic agrarian trappings of the Old South towards a repatriation rebirth into the industrialized, capitalistic fold of the progressive nation. As is also the case for Faulkner's Benjy Compson, Button's experience of backwards time signals incongruity between regional, inter-regional, and national standards of progress—but in Fitzgerald's fantasy, social and economic differences dissolve over the course of the narrative, while they remain opposed in Faulkner's novel. The works find common ground, however, in their use of disability and physical abnormality to convey the momentous weight of regional difference. Cultural variance between regions is, the authors insist, so pronounced and of such consequence to the nation that it merits representation in male bodies disabled by its multidirectional force. Of course, the preponderance of Southern male literary characters crippled by sectional conflict extends beyond Fitzgerald's Button and Tib Dulany or Faulkner's Benjy to include the vast assemblage of grotesque and gothic types long recognized as hallmarks of Southern literature. Reflecting the tense experiences of thwarted wage-earners and regionally-minded voters, these damaged or disabled men all speak to the myriad problems of economy and sectional politics in the post-bellum nation. But the particular examples provided by the fictions of Fitzgerald and Faulkner employ temporal narrative tropes, chronotypes, to allude specifically to complex Southern responses to American Progressivism.

For Fitzgerald in particular, the South's shifting regional identity and changing sectional alliances demonstrated the cost of socioeconomic progress. He plainly recognized the

importance of a revitalized Southern economy that would promote industry in the region, as stories like “The Ice Palace” and “The Jelly Bean” harshly censure a purportedly indolent South and praise an industrious North. But Fitzgerald also feared the progressive mutation of Southern character into something unrecognizable. The spread of the urbanized Northeast’s grubby industrial capitalism risked irrevocably altering the gentle aristocratic South of his father’s anecdotes and of sentimentalized history. Fitzgerald favored the popular memory of the Southern planter’s natural aristocratic manners to the petty greed intrinsic to what he called the “Yankee Push,” the vicious upward mobility of men like “Jay Gould who began by peddling bad buttons to a county and ended, with the same system of peddler’s morals, by peddling five dollar railroads to a nation” (*Letters* 12). Thus his fiction articulates the desire for regional progress with minimal consequences, social change mediated by an untenable compromise between antebellum Southern temperament and Progressive bourgeoisie mindset. Although Fitzgerald’s work envisions this ideal synthesis of backwards-gazing regional past and forward-oriented national present, the author leaves it unrealized even in fiction. Rather, the stories commonly portray two alternative outcomes; either Southern-ness is subsumed by larger national or more economically viable Northern influences, or it turns dangerously inward, basking self-satisfied and backwards in its own proud past. This fretting over assimilation and incompatibility is ultimately inseparable from the author’s depiction of doomed inter-regional romances and physiologically distinct Southerners. For while Fitzgerald’s expression of regional difference in biological terms reflects his intellectual investment in eugenic thought and also his marital frustration, it more importantly shows how seriously he regarded the problematic demarcations separating region and nation. Regional identifications transcend mere rhetoric in his work. These are matters of bio-political significance for Fitzgerald, who observes that regional

difference causes tangible change to American bodies, through war or romance, in physical conflict or in reproduction.

Notes

¹ Adams's dismissal of the Southern mind and work ethic is the most memorable, enduring sound bite on the topic, but it is prefigured by a history of post-bellum Northern claims about labor malaise in the South. Richardson reminds us that soon after the Civil War, Northern Republicans were quick to accuse the region's surviving aristocrats of failing to promote agricultural production (*West* 83).

² In March 1921, Fitzgerald reviewed *The Second Series* of Mencken's *Prejudices for The Bookman*. Thus it is the version of "Sahara" reprinted therein with which he would have been most familiar. In the review, Fitzgerald praises the harshness of "Sahara" and its imagining of "all the region south of Mason-Dixon to be peopled by moron Catilines" (*In His Own Time* 120).

³ Woodward observes that dissatisfaction with the national cotton market and with the lien credit system led many Southern farmers to sympathize with labor advocates from the West as well as with homegrown populists.

⁴ Nor was Faulkner the only writer in the 1920s to pair mental deficiency and childlike mannerisms with race consciousness in depictions of the "backwards" South. In "The South" (1922), a poem originally published in W.E.B. Du Bois's literary magazine *The Crisis*, African-American poet Langston Hughes referenced "The sunny-faced South,/ Beast-strong,/ Idiot-brained;/ The child-minded South/ Scratching in the dead fire's ashes/ For a Negro's bones," foreshadowing Faulkner's portraiture of Benjy (*Collected Works* 38). Such representations magnify long-standing charges of Southern anti-intellectualism.

⁵ Interestingly, Fitzgerald also compared Monroe Stahr to Roosevelt in his working notes for *The Last Tycoon*. He wrote that the character “walked softly and carried a big stick.”

ORIENTAL BY OCCIDENT: RAJAHS, SHEIKS, AND SAMURAI IN FITZGERALD'S AMERICAN EAST

During the 1920s and 30s, the two decades that constituted the bulk of F. Scott Fitzgerald's professional career, the global East commonly assumed two contradictory identities in American culture. On the one hand, the word "Oriental" connoted material luxury: Asian silks were in high demand; rich Americans threw Eastern-themed dinner parties, danced Oriental foxtrots, and collected fine china; and entertainment clubs, such as the several owned by Jazz Age entrepreneur Joe Zelli, adopted a mock-Oriental style to erect a façade of fashionable debauchery. On the other hand, the rhetoric of eugenic pseudoscience and the politics of jingoistic nationalism contributed to an ideology in which the Orient was represented as a feudal, barbaric, impoverished zone flooded with undesirables. The twenties saw the passage of immigration reform bills like the Emergency Quota Act and the Johnson-Reed Act, both of which severely restricted the entry of Asian immigrants into the United States. Interwar Americans were eager to appropriate cultural objects of the "mysterious East," but they objectified and derided Asians and Middle-Easterners. The Orient was paradoxically alluring and repulsive, decadent and decrepit, rich and poor. The fiction of Fitzgerald and his literary cohort engages these irreconcilably dichotomous imaginings of the Orient's cultural geography. This chapter, in addition to analyzing such examples, pays special heed to how American regional concerns, reflected in literature and popular discourse, intervened in the era's Oriental imaginary.

To illustrate how easily these geographies could overlap in early twentieth century literature (including Fitzgerald's own works), it may suffice to look first at a 1920s trend in literary humor: the *Rubaiyat* parody. Because Edward FitzGerald's 1859 translation of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* was so widely known, newspapers, literary journals, and humor

magazines regularly used it as a parodic frame for a number of topics, invoking a British translation of a Persian text critique American culture. One of the most famous of these, “The Rubaiyat of Ohow Dryyam,” addresses Prohibition (“Wail! For the law has scattered into flight/ Those drinks that were our sometime dear delight”).

Fitzgerald saved in his scrapbook one such sendup of *This Side of Paradise* (1920). Undated, unsourced, attributed only to “H.W.H.,” “The Rubaiyat of Amory Khayyam, as Translated by F. Scott Fitzgerald” is a savvy bit of doggerel, a versified, Orientalized burlesque of the novel. The piece pivots on a jumbling of Fitzgeralds; Edward, English poet and translator, is swapped for Scott, Jazz Age chronicler and notorious reveler. The textual shift from serious, stoic Victorianism (Fitzgerald’s translation of *The Rubaiyat* is often criticized for pandering to nineteenth-century English values) to dissipated American modernism (“WAKE! For the bun that scattered into flight/ Dead sober reason all the jazz-long night/ has gone”) offers via its humor a thoughtful commentary on culture in transition. The parody thus reinforces *Paradise*’s reputation as a novelistic portrait of the new generation even as it has some fun at the book’s expense. Contrasted with Fitzgerald’s translation, the verse of the parodic Fitzgerald suggests broad changes in the valuation of wealth in society across time and place. Consider, first, Edward Fitzgerald’s translation of *The Rubaiyat*’s twelfth stanza:

“How sweet is mortal sovranty!”—think some:
Others—“How blest the paradise to come!”
Ah, take the cash in hand and waive the Rest;
Oh, the brave music of a distant drum!

To a nineteenth-century British readership, the significance of the poetry might lie in its semi-secular balancing of worldly and spiritual values. This certainly held appeal for the Pre-Raphaelites who were the text’s first serious readers; and, as Daniel Schenker has posited, a wider English audience later appreciated the work’s capacity for pre-industrial “retrospection”

(54). But the early twentieth-century voice of Scott Fitzgerald as imitated by H.W.H. points to a distinctly different side of “paradise” and an oppositional set of fiscal values:

Some for the heavy Wall Street deal, and some
Sigh for the fat inheritance to come.
Ah, take Dad’s Stutz and let the Rolls-Royce Go;
It is the scion’s privilege to bum.

Whereas the FitzGerald translation of the text has the potential to be read as a dismissive response to middle-class capitalistic aspiration, since the English poet himself hailed from a wealthy family of English aristocrats, the “Fitzgerald” parody wryly embraces the seediness of nouveau riche Yankee privilege. In the place of an aristocratic sensibility superior to petty financial concerns, we encounter an American setting in which money and materialism rule, where capital is king in the booming twenties. Much as Fitzgerald’s prose *Paradise* critiques the essential grubbiness of this environment, the poetic parody assembled in his name emphasizes the vacuity of the young American rich who perambulate within it.

What ultimately unites these two *Rubaiyats* is their creative appropriation of an Oriental source for the purpose of addressing Western socioeconomic forces. Omar Khayyam’s actual quatrains and their place within an eleventh-century Persian context become irrelevant in the face of a transliterating modernity. Today, critics regard FitzGerald’s *Rubaiyat* first and foremost as a work of Victorian literature, and in his own time the translator recognized the resultant product as a “transmogrification,” a hybrid text that bore the influences of English culture despite its ostensibly Persian setting. H.W.H.’s *Rubaiyat* is an even stranger animal, for it acknowledges Edward FitzGerald’s liberties with the poem and then proceeds to adapt them in the manner of Scott Fitzgerald, doubly displacing Khayyam’s work from its origin.

I find that the enigmatic H.W.H. exhibited deep insight in linking Fitzgerald’s depictions of a dissipated American East to the idealized Orient of the transmogrified *Rubaiyat*, for the

novelist's fitful love-hate relationship with the region did indeed lead to his mystification of it. Largely because of the anxiety he harbored as a result of hailing from the unfashionable Midwest, Fitzgerald portrayed the urban and collegiate East as filled with enchanted places worthy of pilgrimage. Gatsby's riotous "blue lawn" is one such place, as are the Ivy universities (treated as holy sites by Fitzgerald in poems and essays) and, of course, New York City. But Fitzgerald's fixation on the American East mutates into a strangely Occidental Orientalism in a handful of stories and novels written after *Paradise*. In these works, the author presents hybridized characters rendered rhetorically Oriental by suggestive description, much as H.W.H. had earlier costumed *Paradise*'s protagonist Amory Blain as a turbaned "Amory Khayyam." When writing in these stories about men from the Midwest who head east in search of fortune and fame, Fitzgerald shows a strange tendency to Orientalize them. It is an odd gesture—almost a tic—and it tends to manifest in fictions loosely patterned on or inspired by the writer's own journey east. Jay Gatsby's description of himself as a "young rajah" stands out as one apt example, but this word choice finds a precedent in the earlier story "The Offshore Pirate" (1921), in which the titular rover applies the term to himself. The conclusion of the minor tale "Six of One—" (1932) features similarly jarring use of Oriental terminology; its narrator, describing a group of young Midwestern men bound for college in the East, refers to the students as "samurai" (694). While it is tempting to summarily dismiss examples like these as little more than evidence of the period's fascination with American aesthetics inspired by the Middle and Far East, the incessant recurrence of such tropes in popular culture and literature renders them worthy of study by virtue of volume alone. Moreover, the presence of a pattern and the suggestion of a purpose both encourage us to delve deeper into the Orientalist aspects of Fitzgerald's work in particular. The pattern, as I have previously observed, is that Fitzgerald's

allusions to the hemispheric East often appear in relation to discussions of the American regional East, especially those pertaining to eastbound Midwesterners. As for the purpose—why the writer frequently Orientalizes white characters and what this action signifies—that serves as the topic of this chapter, which reads deeply into Oriental allusions in fiction (by Fitzgerald and others) composed during a transhemispheric historical moment marked by immigration fears and eugenic panic.

In these literary instances, what occurs is a provocative conflation of domestic East and Far East, Occident and Orient. Fitzgerald's white rajahs and rich boy samurais contribute to the fetishization of an East Coast outlook so distinct from his enduring Midwestern sensibilities as to be virtually foreign. Thus in his fictional treatments of differences between US West and US East, he frequently portrays the latter as a luxuriously strange oriental zone in relation to the former's homely occident.¹ To invoke an Orient correlative to the American Northeast, Fitzgerald lumps together a broad assortment of signifiers lifted from non-European cultures in the Eastern hemisphere; these are generally Arabic or Oriental in origin, although he alludes as well to Africa's Barbary Coast, an area situated on the Prime Meridian dividing the hemispheres. This multicultural jumbling suggests that Fitzgerald is less interested in untangling his confusions of ethnicity and identity than in exploring how popular Oriental abstractions might inform our understanding of regional differences and class anxieties in America. From the perspective of a two-pronged, totalizing American Arabism/Orientalism, he critiques the cultural primacy of the East Coast, the geographic hub of public governmental power and home base for the private powers of industry and finance.² Fitzgerald's representations position the class-conscious US Northeast in relation to a purportedly caste-minded Orient for the purpose of depicting the American region as simultaneously alluring and repulsive—much as contemporary

Anglo-American discourse had characterized Arabic and Oriental cultures. In doing so, he contributes to a discursive history of Americans comparing domestic class distinctions to Oriental caste, such as how Bostonians have since the nineteenth century referred to their oldest, proudest, and richest families as “Boston Brahmin.”

Edward Said has treated these mixed emotions as typical of how the Occidental response to the “Orient at large... vacillates between the West’s contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in—or fear of—novelty” (*Orientalism* 59). As I apply Said’s analysis of global-scale Orientalist perspectives to US regional conflict, I focus on instances in which sectional difference is reified as national difference, highlighting political and cultural conflict between parts of the US. I also look to Fitzgerald’s deployment of actual “Oriental” characters in fictionalized US settings. My general goal in doing so is to assess the relation of a hegemonic Eastern region to an American Midwest under the East’s powerful cultural authority: an authority so alternately repellent and attractive that some period writers label it alien, other, Oriental. In assigning additional ethnic significance to this geographic and cultural disparity, the subtext of Fitzgerald’s fiction gives voice to mingled sectionally-motivated fears and desires. The urbanized US East is for him and his characters as alluring as the fabled cities of *The Arabian Nights*, but to become enmeshed in materialistic East Coast culture is to embrace an unstable regional hybridity, one that the author likens to racial mixing with eugenically inferior Asian partners.

“That centre and that brain”

The sepia-toned Midwest of Fitzgerald’s childhood may have been America’s heartland, but the East to which he relocated as a young adult held possession of the nation’s other

important parts—namely, its brain and wallet. Malcolm Cowley writes in his seminal essay “Fitzgerald: The Romance of Money” that “the 1920s were the age when American culture became urban instead of rural and when New York City set the social and intellectual standards of the country” (*A Second Flowering* 25). But that had already been the case for nearly a century. George G. Foster, who published a series of studies on mid-nineteenth century New York City, remarked in 1849 that “every powerful nation must have one intellectual centre, as every one individual must have a brain, whose motions and conceptions govern the entire system” (*New York by Gas-Light* 9). He identified New York as “that centre and that brain” for the US, but his observations are applicable to the American East writ large. The most respected academic institutions in the nation were (and, in large part, still are) Eastern institutions. Despite the massive growth of Midwestern state universities during and after World War I—Matthew J. Bruccoli estimates that their student bodies doubled in population from 1915 to 1930—degrees from Northeastern Ivy League schools retained a special puissance for the American highbrow (“Fitzgerald’s Eras”).

Fitzgerald acknowledges the American intellect’s easterly bent by tying a preponderance of his protagonists to Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Regardless of their respective sectional backgrounds, he sends them east for education, leaving them linked—a short train ride away—by football rivalries and scholastic pride. Likewise, a considerable number of his characters find jobs in Eastern financial institutions such as brokerage firms and banks. The vocationally-mandated eastern migration of figures like Nick Caraway speaks to the power of capital in the American East. The country’s earliest and most powerful financial hubs—New York, Boston, and Philadelphia—were Northeastern cities, and, as their various markets and exchanges provided much-needed economic homogeneity for the developing republic, they rooted the base

of American capital firmly in the East (Geisst 10). Moreover, while Fitzgerald's fiction rarely delves into the details of specific political events, it bears mentioning that turn-of-the-century American politicians naturally looked east, to the seat of governmental authority and colonial prestige, for power. Non-Easterners who ascended to high political office—men like transplanted Southerner Woodrow Wilson—frequently whitewashed their comparatively provincial backgrounds by linking themselves to respected Northeastern educational or financial institutions. The political career of the Virginia-born Wilson, for example, shows an unmistakable northeasterly trajectory: transferring as an undergraduate from Davidson College to Princeton, he subsequently undertook graduate studies at Johns Hopkins, taught at Cornell, became president of Princeton, and ran a successful gubernatorial campaign in New Jersey before becoming a viable Democratic presidential candidate. Though he personally detested what he saw as cronyism and corruption in the East, his regional transition from the South (where his parents had been slaveholders) was essential in securing broad national support during an era in which politics were still somewhat sectional (Cooper 107, 360). In some respects, these cartographic divisions would decrease in political significance over the course of Fitzgerald's career. Lynn Dumenil has observed that the 1920s in particular saw the decline of "political parties based on geographical representation" balanced by the rise of "interest groups" with participants spread across the nation (53-54). But, as the regional interests of Fitzgerald and his fellow literati attest, place retained an abstract cultural value as a tool for articulating competing definitions of American-ness and for imagining communities of socioeconomic peers united by region.

That the East functioned in the early twentieth century as cultural standard-bearer for the rest of the nation is hardly surprising, for it had a considerable head start on its fellow sections.

Few American states boast histories of European settlement dating back to the seventeenth century, so those that do claim a comparatively long sense of political and cultural perspective. These twelve, all situated in the East, founded educational institutions, established publishing centers, and popularized discursive forms of political protest while still colonies, facilitating the creation of an American culture industry in advance of the nation's existence. The political disputes over slavery that would bifurcate Old America also resulted, especially after Northern victory in the Civil War, in the popular identification of the Northeast as the American brain and its writers as the American voice. In *New England: Indian Summer, 1865-1915* (1940), Van Wyck Brooks addresses at length the role of the Northeast as cultural hegemon, and he credits the region's seniority as a major source of its authority:

Two centuries lay behind the New England writers, and, if they were *voces populi*, there were reasons for it. They had grown in the great tradition of the Revolution, they were closely connected with the soil, they were readers and students of the classics,—three elements, deeply related, that explained their power and accounted for their prestige outside. As heirs of the Revolution, they spoke for the liberal world-community. As men who loved the land and rural customs, they shared the popular life at its roots, at its source. As readers and students of the classics, they followed great patterns of behavior, those that Europeans followed also. (13)

Brooks thus portrays a US Northeast eager and able to speak as cultural ambassador, to readers at home and abroad, for the rest of the nation.

In recent decades, scholars have returned to Brooks's regionally-minded analysis of literary history. Critics such as Jennifer Rae Greeson and Betsy Erkkila have looked closely at how the cultural prominence of the East controlled the history of American letters as much as it affected US domestic policy and national economy. In particular, scholars have taken Edgar Allan Poe's lampooning of the Concord "Frogpondians" and his desire to see a real "Republic of Letters" in publishing as earnest expressions of frustration at the Eastern-dominated American

literary scene. Poe longed for the disempowerment of the Northeast as the primary hub of literary production and publishing in antebellum America, but many of his contemporaries actually desired a centralized site of American literary production; even his friend James Russell Lowell lamented that “American literature.... has no centre” (“Edgar A. Poe” vii). But what Poe recognized—and what scholars are acknowledging more and more today—is that the “American” Renaissance was largely an Eastern occurrence, hardly representative of the varied literatures, including those of the South and the burgeoning West, spread across the nation. Though Ralph Waldo Emerson’s coterie couched their philosophy of composition in nationalistic terms, they continued to privilege their New England base of operations as a site of authentic American-ness, much as Emerson himself nationalized Transcendentalism in his 1837 “American Scholar” address. And, as Erkkila has observed, early twentieth-century American literary critics like F.O. Matthiessen tended to take them at their word, citing the Transcendentalist writings of Northeastern authors as vessels of true democratic ideology.

Literature after the Renaissance proved to be as contingent upon the East as that produced before. The body of modernist American literature to which Fitzgerald contributed was recognizably Eastern in its sensibilities. The vaguely snobbish, decidedly metropolitan tone of early modernists such as Henry James, Henry Adams, and Edith Wharton set the pace for later writers, who, outside the Northeast and even abroad, could not escape the erudite, urban, allusion-laden core of the modernist aesthetic. Novels deeply steeped in the cultures of East Coast cities—works ranging from James’s *The Bostonians* (1886) to Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence* (1920)—celebrated an Eastern urbanite cultural norm, a metropolitan expansion of how Emerson’s clique had earlier identified the center of the civilized universe as Concord, Massachusetts. While these regionally coded texts certainly did not preclude contemporary

works rooted in alternative regions—for instance, the urban Midwest of Booth Tarkington’s *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1918)—such settings were widely recognized as special deviations from a standard. And regardless of textual setting and authorial background, virtually all major literary works passed through the sieve of the East, for in Poe’s time and in Fitzgerald’s the East Coast remained the publishing as well as the financial hub of the United States, with Philadelphia functioning as the nation’s print culture capitol until the nineteenth century, when Boston and New York endeavored to succeed it in prominence.

Certainly the Northeast was no cultural monolith, and literary critics have spilled considerable ink in trying to sum up the representative urban characters of these three print capitals. But Lowell succinctly expressed their irreconcilable individuality when he remarked, “Boston, New York, Philadelphia, each has its literature almost more distinct than those of the different dialects of Germany” (“Edgar A. Poe” vii). Despite the significant cultural differences distinguishing major Northeastern cities from one another, politicians, thinkers, and writers from other sections sought to characterize the East as a place of shared regional values, especially after the Civil War polarized sectional distinctions and gave rise to the increasingly broad implementation of the epithet “Yankee.” Historian Stephen V. Ash writes that though many Southerners “defined Northern culture as an alien ‘other’ even before the war,” the act of secession worked to confirm a deeper “sense of separateness” that would only be exacerbated during the periods of occupation and Reconstruction (*When the Yankees Came* 40).

The act of imagining a coherent “Yankee” community glosses over real cultural differences between members of the Union forces to depict the infiltration of a unified Northeastern mentality of commercialism, industry, and opportunism in opposition to an implicit Southern predilection for agrarianism and propriety. This critique of the Northeast as a self-

interested, mercenary region rich in capital but hostile to American democracy remained prominent in Southern political and literary discourses through WWII, after Fitzgerald's death. Westerners and Midwesterners involved in the agrarian populist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries likewise adopted this anti-Eastern rhetoric. In his study on agrarian radicalism, Peter H. Argersinger writes that participants in such movements found common ground in their shared disdain for two socioeconomic forces located in the East: "Wall Street bankers [and] corrupt legislators in Washington" (*Limits* 70). Prior to and subsequently throughout Fitzgerald's lifetime, political agitators in the South, Midwest, and West sought to other the comparatively metropolitan American East, denouncing it as a region that had largely abandoned the nation's agrarian and artisanal roots in the soulless pursuit of capital. Certainly, they would have been aware that the Northeast possessed its own substantial rural subsections and that it yielded no small amount of the nation's produce. But for American writers of all regions, the abstract East functioned efficaciously as convenient shorthand for referring to the nation's bases of political, financial, and collegiate authority. Depending on its context, use of the term could either characterize the region as the foundational, powerful, authoritative seat of national power—or as the home of money-grubbing industrialists, corrupt Harding appointees, and spoiled blue bloods who perverted the nation's historic valuation of labor. In the rhetorical play of representation, this means the difference between the Northeast being lauded as hegemon or criticized as other, although these two aspects are by no means mutually exclusive.

Evaluations of the US East informed a great deal of American literature and political discourse in the massive historical space between the Revolutionary War and World War II. But American writers from Benjamin Franklin onward have also been intrigued by an entirely different East—that of the Orient, the much-mythologized zone spread from North Africa to the

eastern reaches of Asia—and many works of literature posit cultural connections between the Far East and its American corollary. In “An Arabian Tale” (1779), Franklin makes use of the Orient to offer something rare in his work: a critique of human reason. The short narrative relates a conversation between a wise spirit named Belubel and the retired magician Albumazar. Albumazar confesses to his interlocutor that the existence of evil defies reason; Belubel reassures him that the problem is a matter of perspective, reminding the wizard that “there is also a long gradation of beings, who possess powers and faculties of which thou canst yet have no conception” (*Writings* 10.124). The mystical tone of the story contrasts sharply with that of Franklin’s dryly reasonable secular parables, such as his work under the Richard Saunders pseudonym. Poor Richard’s Pennsylvanian aphorisms emphasize with logical assuredness the fungible facility of American capitalism; Belubel’s Oriental wisdom complicates matters by insisting upon an intangible sublime beyond worldly concerns. Franklin, then, presents Oriental asceticism as an alternative other to US economic values, the conflict providing a case study in cultural contrast. The narrative use of an Oriental outsider to comment on the American democratic political system emerged as a literary subgenre. Aside from Franklin’s short, the practice appeared in Peter Markoe’s *The Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania* (1787), Henry Sherburne’s *The Oriental Philanthropist* (1800), and George Franklin’s *The Wandering Philanthropist* (1810). The Orient would remain just such an other in the later writings of the American Transcendentalists, who borrowed from the holistic principles of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism to draw distinctions between disjointed materialism and the mystical unity of what Emerson referred to as “the Over-soul.” The Transcendentalists’ insistence upon a monistic worldview represented a sharp break from traditional Western dualism; and indeed many transcendental works, including Whitman’s “Passage to India” (1870), Thoreau’s *Walden*

(1854), and Emerson's "Days" (1857), directly reference Oriental tropes to transfuse stagnant Western civilization with redemptive Eastern philosophy. Even Poe, Concord's great foe, found a place for the Orient in his writings. Poe's self-designation of his prose as "arabesque" assigns the work a calculated alterity.

"A turbaned 'character' leaking sawdust at every pore"

I have outlined two markedly distinct but tenuously linked American evaluations of Eastern-ness: the one invested in prioritizing the US regional East as the nation's cultural hegemon and the other interested in regarding the Orient as the ascetic, transcendental opposite to a hyper-materialistic America. In several literary instances, these split agendas tentatively brush up against one another—as in the work of Franklin, whose Philadelphian settings briefly dissipate into a fantasized Araby, or in that of Emerson, whose backyard in Concord receives a visitation of Sufi dervishes. By the time of Fitzgerald's Jazz Age, however, both these "Oriental" aspects of American literature had assumed a newly ironic tone and a critical purpose. In *Babbitt* (1922), for instance, Sinclair Lewis jokingly compares his upper middle-class and aristocratic characters to Asian masculine types. In one peculiar scene, Lewis sarcastically declaims the defeat of traditional Western heroic models by the rise of an alienating modern commercialism:

To them, the Romantic Hero was no longer the knight, the wandering poet, the cowpuncher, the aviator, nor the brave young district attorney, but the great sales-manager, who had an Analysis of Merchandizing Problems on his glass-topped desk, whose title of nobility was "Go-getter," and who devoted himself and all his young samurai to the cosmic purpose of Selling—not of selling anything in particular, for or to anybody in particular, but pure Selling. (616)

References to the Far East permeate protagonist George F. Babbitt's upper-middle-class world, generally representing material opulence or opportunities for leisure. When Babbitt visits an

expensive barber shop, Lewis observes that, with a towel on his head in the manner of a “turban,” he looks the part of a commanding “plump pink calif on an ingenious and adjustable throne” (743). Later, his wife joins a quack philosophical movement, the “Theosophical and Pantheistic Oriental Reading Circle,” in an effort to bring meaning to her materialistic existence (806). The city’s rich elite, an exclusive circle to which the up-and-coming Babbitt lacks access, throw exotic “Singhalese” dinner parties with “Oriental decorations” to welcome European visitors (664). These permeations suggest exactly what the Robert and Helen Lynd would later observe about American appropriations of Oriental culture in their first *Middletown* sociological survey: that products from the Orient—things as material as Persian rugs and as immaterial as spiritual concepts—served to distinguish the business class from the working class (102). In early twentieth-century American media, “Oriental” was a byword for leisure, style, and sophistication beyond the earning power of blue collar workers. Writers like Lewis and Fitzgerald recognized its significance to modern consumers and parodied it in prose.

Fitzgerald’s fiction intervenes powerfully into this representational scheme of blending domestic and foreign Easts because it places renewed emphasis on the American regional angle. As a former advertisement writer himself, he captures the unreal qualities that plague American mediations of Oriental culture. Yet his own spare depictions of the Orient are simplistic backdrops rendered in broad strokes, and his allusions to Oriental figures gesture more towards cardboard cutout stereotypes than to their actual referents. Neither should be read as contributing to serious-minded, well-informed political discourse on the socioeconomic struggles of actual Eastern nations. Indeed, relatively few Westerners of the era took the East seriously. Bigotry towards purportedly inferior “yellow” and “brown” peoples was common in popular eugenic thought; in his notorious *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy*

(1920), Lothrop Stoddard stirred up fears of “an Oriental alliance against whites” (23), but he took a contradictory pleasure in citing the petite stature of the “little Nippons” (205). From a cultural standpoint, popular interest in Oriental studies seldom went beyond novelty and shock. The author of a rigorous 1909 study of caste in India lamented that Americans and English tended to reduce the subject to “nice little table-talk”; laughter at its “absurdities and contradictions”; fodder for Christian evangelism; or, at best, “the interest felt by an entomologist observing the habits of ants” (Ketkar 1-2). In the 1920s, the rise of the Japanese military and economy led some in the States to reappraise the industrializing nation, but, as I will show in a later portion of this chapter, these reevaluations were burdened by a racist worldview and tended to infantilize the Japanese. It was not really until after the events of Pearl Harbor and, later, the rise of China as a communist power that Americans finally regarded select Eastern nations as viable military and economic competitors worthy of serious attention.

Fitzgerald died before the Pearl Harbor bombing in 1941 and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, so his political perspective on the Orient is representative of a post-Wilson, pre-WWII isolationist American culture that had little interest in the European-dominated League of Nations and even less in the Middle or Far East. Instead, Fitzgerald’s brand of American Orientalism bespeaks his immersion in a consumer culture that located the proper place for the adjective “Oriental” in front of the noun “foxtrot” and that used stock images of North African, Middle Eastern, and East Asian subjects to sell American products and services. In the early twentieth century, commercial illustrators like Maxfield Parrish, whom Fitzgerald mentions by name in “May Day” (1920) and in various letters, churned out magazine covers, advertisements, and frontispieces that made liberal use of Oriental imagery to sell American products and services. In particular, Parrish’s calendar designs promoting General

Electric's line of Edison Mazda lamps speak to the role of Orientalism in American consumer culture. Several of his 1923 calendar paintings feature Middle Eastern characters in Oriental settings with the "EDISON MAZDA" logo emblazoned above the scene. One piece, simply entitled "Egypt," shows Caucasian-looking Egyptians basking in the glow from nearby sconces. Another, "The Lamplighter of Bagdad," depicts Arabs receiving oil for their brass lamps. The artist's deployment of Eastern imagery reflects the Oriental origin of the product's name (General Electric lifted the word "Mazda" from the Persian god of light, Ahura Mazda). The seemingly arbitrary jumbling of Arabic cultures that one encounters on the Parrish calendar suggests the obvious: here, an alluring and outré East has been assembled by Western hands to spur American consumerism. The represented Orient is little more than a marketing ploy. Fitzgerald's appropriations of Oriental imagery borrow from props and stock footage, echoing Parrish calendar types. But they are highly significant, even if—or perhaps more so because—they are radically divorced from their original referents. Fitzgerald employs Oriental stereotypes, more commonly used to emphasize differences between cultures of the Western and Eastern hemispheres, to highlight cultural variance between the hegemonic US East and the nation's younger regions.

Fitzgerald's work therefore participates in two unique American discursive traditions, one commercial and the other literary, of invoking the Orient to address the Occident.³ But, whereas his predecessors employed the tactic primarily to assess the relation of a totalized United States to an abstract Orient, Fitzgerald maps his own strategy over a divided America cordoned off into recognizably individual sections, with some regions afforded more prestige and authority than others. Similar to how Lowell played with ideas of national difference in likening nineteenth-century America's disparate literary cultures to "the different dialects of

Germany”—and related as well to efforts by rival regions to other the hegemonic US East—Fitzgerald imaginatively conflates the disparate regional cultures of early twentieth-century America with hemispheric difference.

An early expression of the Oriental theme appears in “Myra Meets his Family” (1920). The plot of this strange story concerns an elaborate scheme orchestrated by a rich Easterner named Knowleton Whitney, who uses theatrical trickery to coerce his Midwestern fiancée Myra Harper into breaking off their engagement. Myra visits the Whitney estate in wealth-laden Westchester County, New York, and there Knowleton employs a troupe of actors to convince her that not only is his family undesirably eccentric but that Chinese blood pollutes their genetic heritage. The actors who play the role of his mother and father act the part of mad aristocrats. Myra suspects that something beyond mere eccentricity plagues the family, and Knowleton leads her to believe that it is their mixed ancestry when he reveals a mocked-up portrait of his great-grandmother, “a lady dressed as a European but with the unmistakable features of a Chinese.” Myra’s racism gets the better of her and in a swoon she experiences horrific visions “of reversions to type—of Chinese babies.”⁴ She recalls the patriarch’s “yellowish face, peculiar eyebrows and tiny hands and feet” (*The Price was High* 25-26). Of course, this is part of Knowleton’s gothic-inspired plan to scare her away from his fortune, and Myra gets her revenge at the story’s conclusion when she jilts her suddenly contrite fiancé, but what we encounter here is an early appearance of an oft-recycled gesture in Fitzgerald’s stories: the thematic wedding of Eastern wealth and material luxury to Oriental tropes, a strategy he borrowed from 1920s popular culture but modified to better express inter-regional animus. In many cases, this conflation attends a critical moment of movement between regions, typically a narrative event in which a Midwesterner or a Southerner risks being relocated into the alluring, dangerous East

Coast of the Jazz Age. Myra, a native Ohioan of humble social status and family income, risks such a translation of identity through her engagement to the wildly rich and powerful New Yorker Whitney. Fitzgerald represents the dangers of sectional incompatibility and class incongruity as ethnic difference. Knowleton presents himself to his would-be wife as a member of a race apart—not just a regional Easterner but a bona fide Oriental to boot—forging a weird rhetorical hybridity of global and domestic East. The Westchester rich, “Myra” playfully posits, might be racially different from you and me.

Imbrication between the Orient and the American East recurs in Fitzgerald’s maritime melodrama, “The Offshore Pirate” (1920), which appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post* two months after “Myra.” Like its predecessor, this narrative follows a rich boy’s Orientalist fantasy. The story’s protagonist, a wealthy colonel’s son masquerading as a modern day pirate king to win the affections of a bored heiress, explains to his love interest that he plans to take his ill-gotten gains to India for the purpose of transmuting wealth into class. Toby Moreland, roleplaying in the persona of musician-turned-swashbuckler Curtis Carlyle, claims that he will

Take ship to India. I want to be a rajah. I mean it. My idea is to go up into Afghanistan somewhere, buy up a palace and a reputation, and then after about five years appear in England with a foreign accent and a mysterious past. But India first. Do you know, they say that all the gold in the world drifts very gradually back to India. Something very fascinating about that to me.

After India, he concludes, “comes aristocracy”—presumably ascension to American Brahmin status (*Short Stories* 84). Moreland’s playacting is romantic and calculatedly unrealistic, but the details of his contrived plan reveal a great deal about his regional sensibilities—as well as those of his creator. Moreland’s fantasy of the Far East must be positioned in relation to the American East Coast, for it is with this region that the pirate’s conjured Victorian dreamscape competes. Ardita Farnam is a spoiled New York flapper vacationing in Florida; if Moreland is to win her

heart, the up-from-piracy fiction he weaves must trump her ritzy, sordid experiences in the metropolis. Thus he cites the fabulous Orient to pique her interest, effectively pitting foreign and domestic notions of eastern-ness against one another. Florida is an appropriately game setting for these fantasies, for during the 1920s it was being packaged to investors as America's tropical paradise, a slice of foreign pleasure on familiar soil. New cities springing up during the land grab were being assigned calculatedly European and even Oriental names, including the failed Aladdin City, Florida project of 1925, the plans for which featured streets named after stereotypical Arabic characters and places. Vacationing with her uncle in this new American Riviera, Ardita confesses boredom with the petty controversies and banal comforts of her New York life. She finds herself briefly enticed by the further prospect of taking "Curtis" up on his offer to become a "fabulously wealthy high caste Indian lady"—though in the end it is the real Moreland who amazes her with his imagination (89). Also of interest is Moreland's staging of regional anxieties in the invented character of Curtis Carlyle. Carlyle, as conceived by Moreland, is a Tennessee musician who finds success on Broadway but is nevertheless snubbed by the Northeastern rich for whom he plays.

Moreland has often been read as a prototype for the similarly imaginative James Gatz, and a perusal of *The Great Gatsby* (1925) confirms that the novel is likewise suffused with Oriental imagery. Gatz, adopting the persona of good-natured "old sport" Jay Gatsby, tells his confidant Nick that after his parents died he "lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe... collecting jewels, chiefly rubies, hunting big game, painting a little, things for myself only, and trying to forget something very sad." His rhetoric strikes Nick as feigned: "The very phrases were worn so threadbare that they evoked no image except that of a turbaned 'character' leaking sawdust at every pore as he pursued a tiger through the Bois de Boulogne" (65-66). In

confiding his doubts to the reader, Nick alludes to the old menagerie at the Jardin d'Acclimatation, suggesting that the only tigers this charlatan could have seen were ones in a Parisian zoo—if even that part of his story is true. But after Gatsby produces a few seemingly credible articles of proof, Nick's mind conjures up visions of “the skins of tigers flaming in his palace” and “him opening a chest of rubies” (67). Fitzgerald continues to associate Gatsby with Far Eastern tropes throughout the novel. In the infamous (and awkwardly humorous) wardrobe scene, during which Gatsby seeks to impress Daisy Buchanan with his luxurious collection of imported English shirts, Nick reports that each item is imprinted “with monograms of Indian blue”—an offhand comment that alludes to the indigo dye's historic ties to the Orient.⁵ We later learn that Gatsby, sailing alongside mentor Dan Cody, travelled in his youth to the Barbary Coast, skirting the edges of an African Araby considered Oriental in the early twentieth century. His exotic travels are also vaguely alluded to in the novel's citation of the popular Jazz Age instrumental “The Sheik of Araby,” a snatch of which sneaks into the text during one of Gatsby's parties. Fitzgerald's invocation of the song further Arabicizes the already Orientalized Gatsby, who becomes by association a “sheik” as well as a “rajah,” but the effect proves to be even more interesting if we follow the complex chain of citation leading up to and radiating from the 1925 allusion.⁶ As Fitzgerald and his readers would have known, this Tin Pan Alley song was one of the many popular “oriental foxtrots” of the early twenties; the form, a jazz subgenre which seems to have originated in Turkey, fused foxtrot dance music with vaguely Oriental themes and sounds (*Sufism* 108-09).⁷ “The Sheik of Araby” itself pays homage to the most notable sheik in American popular culture, Rudolph Valentino's titular protagonist in the silent film *The Sheik* (1921). This movie, the immediate source of the song alluded to in *Gatsby*, deals with the fictive life of Sheik Ahmed Ben Hassan, played by Valentino. A hybrid figure, Hassan is culturally

Arabic but biologically European, the son of an English father and Spanish mother. The film contains a subtle but controversial rape scene in which Hassan forces himself on a white woman. His licentiousness carried over to the bawdy pop song quoted in the novel and to Fitzgerald's depiction of dissipated Jazz Age men as sheiks in *Gatsby* and after.

For a detailed consideration of what Fitzgerald implies by labeling the Midwesterner-turned-New Yorker Gatsby a "sheik," we must turn to a two-part article entitled "What Became of Our Flappers and Sheiks?" that he published (with Zelda as co-author) in the *McCall's* October 1925 number, following the publication of *Gatsby* in April. His essay, a piece about debauched youth culture, makes it clear that Fitzgerald uses the term "sheik" taxonomically to refer to a particular masculine type: the "male flapper," a young man who has become dissipated early in life through drink, women, and jazz (*In His Time* 202).⁸ The Middle Eastern title is clearly borrowed from the popular movie, whose eponymous protagonist displays the same sexuality and worldliness as the men who form the subject of Fitzgerald's essay. The author writes about a hypothetical "sheik" named Tommy, supplying him with enough biographical details and mannerisms to sketch a thumbnail image of his dissipation. The geographical trajectory of Tommy's life overlaps rather compellingly with that of Amory Blaine, Jay Gatsby, and their creator. Like Blaine, Gatsby, and Fitzgerald, Tommy is a Midwesterner transplanted onto the East Coast. Much as the author left his home in St. Paul to attend the Newman School in Hackensack, New Jersey, Tommy heads east to "some small prep-school in New York state or New Jersey" and then a tutoring school—"one of those curious institutions that are springing up all over the east"—to prepare for college (203). His weekend alcoholic binges in New York City have desensitized him to the comparatively minor pleasures of his "home town... in the middle west," which "bores him now" (204). Early experiences with wealth and privilege—even that of

the secondhand variety acquired from interacting with rich boys at prep school—have ruined Tommy and predestined him to learn nothing of value in college or in life. Fitzgerald pronounces him “healthy, good-looking, a bit vacuous—perfectly useless” (205). He ends the essay with “no solutions” to the problems of American sheikdom; instead, he concludes that US culture “cannot produce an aristocracy that is capable of surviving” (206).

As Fitzgerald ruminates on the cultural significance of men like Tommy, he clearly has in mind his own experiences, as well as those of the regionally displaced, class-conscious characters of his most recent novel. In his later years, Fitzgerald remarked in letters upon his parallaxic personal vision of class disparity, self-diagnosing the “two-cylinder inferiority complex” he developed in recognizing the powerful differences between his native identity as a middle-class Catholic Midwesterner with Old Southern roots and the leisurely post-prep school Eastern mannerisms he affected (*Letters* 503). In his essay “One Hundred False Starts” (1933), he would characterize himself as possessing “a New England conscience—developed in Minnesota” (*My Lost City* 89). But Edmund Wilson had long before explicated the problem of transregional perspective in a 1922 essay in which he criticized Fitzgerald for transposing Midwestern values onto an alien East. He complained,

It seems to me rather a pity that he has not written more of the West: it is perhaps the only milieu that he thoroughly understands. When Fitzgerald approaches the East, he brings to it the standards of the wealthy West—the preoccupation with display, the appetite for visible magnificence and audible jamboree, the vigorous social atmosphere of amiable flappers and youths comparatively untainted as yet by the snobbery of the East.

But, the critic clarifies, the half-Irish, middle-class Fitzgerald could not consider himself “a typical well-to-do Middle Westerner, with correct clothes and clear skin, who had been sent East for college” (*In His Own Time* 406). Therein lies the problem, according to Wilson, for the real disparity that defined Fitzgerald’s class anxieties was *intra*-regional, not *inter*-regional, in nature.

Yet Wilson misses what must have been a major sticking point for Fitzgerald: the Midwestern elitism he encountered as a youth held as its model a more fashionable and better established Eastern snobbery. Thus in writing imaginatively about America's Northeastern rich, a nebulous community from which he was at a double remove, Fitzgerald struck directly at the reified, idealized source. Heading east for education and vocation allowed privileged Midwestern males to distinguish themselves from their peers, but it also contributed to an obsession with the manners, trends, and institutions of the American East Coast.

This is what Fitzgerald expresses by emphasizing the sheik-ness of the eastbound male flapper. The sheik's Orientalization stages the abandonment of a native regional culture and the adoption of an effectively foreign one—an "Eastern" culture so desired and fetishized that Fitzgerald equates it with the alluring, mysterious Orient. As he relates in the 1932 essay "My Lost City," New York was for a Midwestern boy such as himself "inevitably linked up with Bacchic diversions, mild or fantastic." On his first visits, he felt like a dazzled bumpkin, "Dick Whittington up from the country gaping at the trained bears" (*My Lost City* 107). He admits that he "took the style and glitter of New York even above its own valuation." But as a young writer, he became a part of a New York community that would adopt him "not as a Middle Westerner, not even as a detached observer, but as the archetype of what [the city] wanted": a talented, moldable youth to be urbanized into the environment. But his respect for New York fades as he and his new wife come to sense a moral lack in the place; tellingly, they return to St. Paul for the birth of their daughter. In the essay, Fitzgerald links both initial love for the Eastern city and his subsequent disillusion with it to the Far East. Bridging the hemispheric gap between America and Orient, he recounts how in the glory days of the twenties he enjoyed "cool Japanese gardens at the Ritz" and how later he was "somewhere in North Africa" when he got word of the 1929

stock market crash. It was this economic crisis, here oddly framed in an African-Arab context, which Fitzgerald thinks led the Eastern urbanite to “the awful realization that New York was a city after all and not a universe” (114-15).

The *McCall's* piece and the early 1920s portions of “My Lost City” essay both provide a simple cultural gloss for why Fitzgerald marks Gatsby as a sheik. Although the character is a decade older than the hypothetical Tommy, Gatsby does assume the carefree trappings of a “male flapper” to win Daisy’s admiration.⁹ His West Egg pleasure dome is a haven of gin, jazz, and sexual permissiveness; his gaudy clothes and vehicles betray a crass showmanship; and he forges a background of privilege to align himself with genuinely dissipated Jazz Age types like Tommy and his prep school peers. Gatsby’s pretensions to sheik-ness are all the more pitiable because he is perpetually sober and ten years too old for the role. The one sheik-ish trait he actually possesses is the sense of regional and social transition, eastbound in direction and upwardly mobile in terms of class, common to the type.

Similar to how the filmic sheik proves to be an Occidental variation on an Arabic type, *Gatsby's* Oriental tropes are firmly planted in their American setting, the US Northeast where James Gatz and his lost love presently reside. When at the book’s conclusion Nick ruminates over differences between America’s East and West, he imagines an anthropomorphic East “[sparkling] cold with jewels”—language that sends us back to his fantasy of Gatsby-as-rajah toying with his rubies (176). Indeed, the hemispheric East seldom exists anywhere in the story save for inside Gatsby and Nick’s fantasies, but even there it retains a thematic potency, for Fitzgerald’s Orient participates in an understated critique of postwar US capitalism and the cultural supremacy of the American East. For, in *Gatsby* as well as in the earlier “Myra,” the protagonists’ shared fascination with the East is treated pejoratively as a willingness to sell

oneself into the service of a crude, corrupt American materialism rooted in the urbanized Northeast. Fitzgerald praises the (admittedly stereotyped, decidedly reductive) regional values of the Midwest and the South—a stoic work ethic and an antebellum sense of propriety, respectively—and he lampoons East Coast snobbery and corruption by inscribing an Oriental palimpsest upon it. Because Fitzgerald wrote during an age in which non-white ethnic others were commonly seen as inferior to their Caucasian counterparts, this gesture is inherently critical. But it is also inseparably linked with the author's own class pretensions, his regional allegiances, and his glum take on American politics in the twenties and thirties.

“The bitter selfishness of the ‘Merican peoples”

Viewed from a biographical-psychoanalytic vantage, Fitzgerald's occasional tendency to Orientalize white characters seems to result from the juxtaposition of social position and sectional place: his Midwestern self-deprecation, under the influence of caste-minded class anxiety, responding imaginatively to presumed Eastern snobbishness. The perceived rift between his ancestral roots in Minnesota and Maryland versus his early experiences with the Eastern elite is so great that it warrants representation in Orientalized terms; the effort required for a native Midwesterner to adopt the alternately cultured and crass mannerisms of the East is comparable, at least in Fitzgerald's fiction, to renouncing one's citizenship and adopting a foreign identity. He was, as Cowley put it, “a little Midwestern boy with his nose to the glass, wondering how much the tickets cost and who paid for the music” (*A Second Flowering* 31). To emphasize the ethical implications of betraying one's regional heritage, Fitzgerald inflates the problem so that it resembles more distinctly a crisis of ethnic identity—a decision like the one Midwestern Myra faces when she considers marrying into Whitney's Eastern-Oriental line. In

the *Esquire* version of “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” (1936), Hemingway famously took Fitzgerald to task for worshipping the “very rich” as a “special glamorous race,” but to classify the wealthy, especially moneyed Northeasterners, as a race apart is not necessarily to worship them; the action can be critical, even radical. Karl Marx, who Fitzgerald greatly admired, executed such a gesture by neatly dividing bourgeoisie from proletariat, capital from labor, haves from have-nots. Thus, while it is unproductive simply to regard Fitzgerald as “an idealistic boy with a lot of caste nonsense in his head” (91), as Ardita remarks of Carlyle, it is worthwhile to examine how he uses Oriental conceits of caste to address problems of class distinctions and power distribution across American regions.

This strategy, nascent in the earlier stories, is revived in Fitzgerald’s later “Six of One-,” a minor piece published during the Depression about the mixed results of a wealthy benefactor’s sociological experiment. Ed Barnes, incensed by how his friend Schofield spoils his sons and their rich friends, offers prestigious scholarships to a group of relatively poor young men from his small hometown in Ohio. Barnes turns his philanthropic gesture into a contest, pitting his six scholars against Schofield’s party of six (two sons and four friends). All twelve will head to school in the East (to Yale and Princeton), and in a decade’s time Barnes will measure the success of the wealthy sons against his assemblage. The rich boys would have headed eastward regardless of the experiment, but Barnes’s half-dozen could only afford to do so with his financial assistance. Schofield’s sons and their friends are involved in a scandalous car accident which scars a young actress’s face and results in a highly publicized lawsuit. The spoiled young men all wind up being leeches on their parents’ money. Barnes’s six, on the other hand, turn out well, generally modest and hard-working.

At first glance, the story appears to be another of Fitzgerald's studies on the corrupting influence of ill-gotten or unearned wealth. Ignoring the novelty of the sociological experiment frame, it could be read as "The Rich Boy" (1926) times six. But several regional elements complicate and enrich the story. Both parties, Schofield's rich or upper-middle-class youths as well as Barnes's lower-middle or working-class boys, consist of aspirational Midwesterners hoping for the sublimation of their *outré* tackiness into social poise through the practical magic of geographical transition. This, the accident of being born in the young West instead of the old East, is their shared regional heritage, regardless of family income. The primary goal of attending school and subsequently working in the Northeast means for these men the osmosis of a regionally vested power—the hope that they might internalize the affectations of Eastern metropolitan culture well enough to "pass" in that section's powerful institutions, thereby escaping what the author depicts (rather unfairly) as inconsequential Midwestern life. Fitzgerald had mockingly labeled this tendency the "respect for a New England education which is the bane of all provincial places, which drains them yearly of their most promising young men" a decade earlier in 1922's "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" (*Short Stories* 182), and the gravity with which he treats Barnes's philanthropy here suggests that the donor is not merely footing their Ivy tuition but offering them something like the chance to study abroad in a fantastic foreign nation. The students, rich and poor alike, fix their gaze on the alluring American East very much as if it were the mysterious Orient. But the narrator specifically remembers the eastbound rich boys as "samurai" at the story's conclusion (679). What we have previously seen in the examples of Gatsby, Carlyle, Blaine, and even "Tommy" is all the more pronounced in the hybridized Midwestern-Eastern scholars of "Six": the story reifies regional difference as hemispheric, the transposition of Oriental characteristics onto Occidental subjects, and an intense focus on

characters in the midst of geographical transition. The idiomatic, unspoken completion of the title—the “half-dozen of the other” to which the dash alludes—proves strikingly appropriate, for Fitzgerald strives to other the Easternized six.

When white characters are rhetorically marked as both Oriental and class conscious in these works, the connotations of their caste pretensions tend to be overwhelmingly pejorative and typically part of a sham act. Knowleton Whitney’s strategic false admission of Chinese ancestry reveals his antagonistic attitude towards the American middle class; he is willing to demean his family name and embrace a eugenically problematic identity if it will keep the unworthy Myra out of his hair. Jay Gatsby’s “rajah” loot and his Barbary Coast past are tied to his morally questionable actions as a bootlegging gangster. Schofield’s eastbound “samurai” affect a mannered East Coast collegiate attitude even while slumming in their unfashionable Midwestern hometown. In the schemes and pretensions of these plots, Fitzgerald splices the notorious corruption of the interwar era with a xenophobic caricature of Oriental identity to create characters whose social and financial aspirations mark them as flawed—a flaw expressed through the rhetoric of racial difference. In each case, rhetorical Oriental markers serve as shorthand for a form of cultural decadence represented by materialistic, pretentious, faux-aristocratic industry captains and political leaders in the American Northeast.

By recirculating the popular dichotomous rhetoric of the desired and undesirable Orient—and by directing this rhetoric towards Jazz Age materialism—Fitzgerald was able to write critically about the cultural hegemony of the East and about perceived political corruption. The gesture is especially significant in light of the fact that, though Fitzgerald held largely leftist political beliefs and privately criticized the decade’s Republican administrations, little of his 1920s creative output was expressly political. Some of his least popular, most unprofitable

works made bold statements in support of socialism and against career politicians, as in “May Day” (1920) and *The Vegetable* (1923), respectively. Later, in the dour environment of the Depression, Fitzgerald lamented in print that during the twenties his “political conscience had scarcely existed... save as an element of irony in [his] stuff” (*The Crack-Up* 79). He and Zelda had taken potshots at the Teapot Dome scandal in the pages of *College Humor* but not in fiction. However, his sympathetic, if often racist, writing about Oriental others let him experiment in prose with a political conscience that rebuked American materialism, xenophobia, and isolationism.

Fitzgerald deployed Oriental tropes and characters in the historical context of a pivotal moment in American immigration policy, for this era of growing private power was notable as well for an extreme cultural insularity that resulted in the National Origins Act of 1924, which itself tightened restrictions pre-established in 1907, 1917, and 1921. These “gatekeeping” laws (so termed by historian Erika Lee) severely diminished the possibilities for Asian immigrants to achieve citizenship or even enter the country (37). Japanese immigrants faced even greater scrutiny and were, thanks to a US-Japan “gentleman’s agreement” to severely restrict immigrant passports, largely barred from America (Dumenil 207-09). Children of immigrants might still qualify for citizenship by American birth, but their parents would never be eligible. The period’s Parrish-style romanticizing of the Orient was inapplicable to actual Asian immigrants, who were marked as “permanently alien, threatening, and inferior on the basis of their race, culture, labor, and aberrant gender relations” (Lee 38). Even African Americans, who faced comparable discrimination through institutionalized segregation, at least retained US citizenship as a technicality. If the consequences of xenophobia and insularity seem at a remove from Fitzgerald’s biographical experiences, it should be remembered that in the summer of 1920 he

and his wife hired a non-resident Japanese servant named Tanaka who, likely in the States as a nonimmigrant laborer, worked through the “Japanese Reliable Employment Agency” at a bargain rate (*Epic Grandeur* 142, Taylor 70-71).¹⁰ Both Scott and Zelda fictionalized him in their writings, with the former referring to him as “Tana” and the latter as “Tanka,” and if either *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922) or *Save Me the Waltz* (1932) offer a reasonably accurate account of his daily life, then Tanaka fulfilled the dual role of butler and butt of jokes in their Westport, Connecticut household, suffering an existence somewhere between stoic manservant and alien day laborer. In Zelda’s novel, “Tanka” is a two-dimensional caricature who “construct[s] botanical gardens out of cucumbers and floral displays with the butter” (*Collected Writings* 52). But her husband’s work, in spite of its racist overtones and cheap laughs at Tana’s accent, at least signals an awareness that the Asian non-residents of the 1920s, individuals largely stripped of political agency and earning power, are the polar opposites of the decade’s powerful tycoons, privileged men who used their seemingly inexhaustible resources to influence politics and national economy. Tana, who tells the Patches that many Japanese in his home country go hungry, comments on “the bitter selfishness of the “Merican peoples”” after seeing the moneyed, drunken excesses of the Northeasterners who frequent the residence (236).

Lee writes that the history of Asian exclusion, which contradicts the popular fiction of the immigrant and the American dream, is a “different narrative highlighting the limits of American democracy” (40), and I would argue that, despite his limited social consciousness, Fitzgerald intuitively grasps the subversive aspect of this counter-narrative. If we plot the points at which his censuring of the Eastern rich and the wealthy Northeast intersects with his vaguely racist citation of Oriental types, we see the moments of convergence that this chapter has addressed. In such instances, Fitzgerald uses race humor (likely offensive to modern readers) to confront US

consumer culture, materialism, and democracy with an embarrassment of riches. He paints his hyper-privileged Americans with an Oriental hue, imbuing them with the contrasting characteristics of a large social group that is, at least within US borders, wildly underprivileged. Knowleton Whitney's adoption of Chinese identity for the purpose of scaring off his middle class fiancée seems an especially apt example, but Gatsby's pitifully contrived Oriental pretensions also hover near the mark due to their absurdity. An important scene from *The Beautiful and Damned* follows a similar model. When Anthony Patch's rich, teetotaler grandfather arrives on the scene of a particularly riotous fete at his grandson's Westport home, he decides to disinherit the young man. In the background of this familial/financial conflict between debauchery and prudery, Tana plays away at his Japanese flute, casting a strange musical otherness on the scene. Both Anthony and Adam Patch are implicated by Tana's Oriental soundtrack, for his music insinuates an alien, frequently humiliated powerlessness into the presence of two comparatively powerful (or at least influential) Americans.¹¹

The connection between the Japanese Tana and the capitalist Adam Patch might have held an additional significance for Fitzgerald's contemporary readers, for it was widely assumed by Americans that the Japanese economy was corrupt. In the early 1920s, issues of the popular *Saturday Evening Post* were as filled with praise for the rapidly-industrializing Eastern nation as they were with accusations of its corruption. In conflicts with Russia and China, Japan had asserted its military might; in the silk trade, it had proven to be fiscally savvy. On June 26 1920, commentator Edward H. Smith wrote in the *Saturday Evening Post* that, from an economic perspective, "King Cotton" faced serious competition from "Queen Silk," ninety percent of which entered the States via importation from Japan (10-11). Earlier that year on April 3, financial contributor Floyd W. Parsons had already embraced Japan as an industrialized ally by,

oddly enough, praising their dietary habits: “The various peoples of the earth can be divided into two classes—the bread eaters and the rice eaters... The Japanese, who were once rice eaters, are fast becoming a bread-eating people.” He assured readers that “bread is... the chief food of leading nations” (38).

But, following a sharp rise in silk prices and a series of international market slumps, the *Post*'s attitude toward the Japanese economy turned accusatory. Isaac F. Marcossion wrote on September 2, 1922 that “the one-time so-called political yellow peril is on the verge of becoming an economic menace” (18). He cited the country's backwardness and refusal to make cultural progress commensurate to its industrial developments as the reasons Japan posed such a threat to the global markets: “Western civilization in Japan is a veneer that masks a persistent feudal idea. The whole conduct of business is along feudal lines because most financial and industrial control is vested in a few interlocking families, who make the old American money trust look amateurish.” He observed dispassionately that “the Japanese is inferior to the white man in efficiency” and went on to criticize the country's irresponsible credit economy, its religious superstitions, and its “loyalty to ancestors” (18-19). Even though Marcossion was writing in a decade during which the American government was frequently accused of corruption, nepotism, and excessive conservatism, he and his readers seemed to miss the parallels between the industrializing Japan and the industrialized United States. What they recognized was that Japan was a contradictory place: part-innovative and part-retrogressive, part-religious and part-secular, part-rich and part-poor. They simply failed to acknowledge the reflection of these very contradictions in the West. Thus, Tana's original readers, the 1922 consumers who purchased the first copies of *The Beautiful and the Damned*, would likely have had contradicting opinions about the Japanese—if they really thought about them at all. Japan was the richest, most

“Western” nation in the Far East, but its common people were some of the poorest in the world. Many Americans believed them to be a superstitious and inefficient people, but the business power of Japanese immigrants in California was becoming so great that reformatory state and national laws were being designed to discriminate against them. Yet, while some whites felt threatened at the time by Asian investors, landowners, and laborers pouring in from a seedy Orient, Fitzgerald’s fiction finds fault in a more domestic East, home base of an unchecked capitalism funneling the wealth of the nation into fewer, whiter hands. His sympathetic treatment of characters like Tana, regarded in tandem with his antipathy for men like Patch, suggests that he appreciated the irony inherent in the conservative American critique of economic inequity and corruption in the Far East.

I have so far focused on instances in which Fitzgerald’s region-conscious critique of the American East hinges on an ethnocentric appropriation of already commercialized Oriental tropes. I have sought to convey him as a writer primarily interested in domestic economic and social ills but eager to borrow from American culture’s “stock footage” of the Orient and of Oriental subjects in order to better make his point. However, in rare examples we see in Fitzgerald’s work a more nuanced take on the Orient and on Orientals—a sympathetic approach that seriously considers the value of the global East as a mirror for reflecting American excess. In these cases he remains largely uninterested in Oriental nations and peoples as autonomous agents, opting instead to make their identities contingent on those of the Americans with whom they are contrasted, but he nevertheless stages some provocative conflicts when incorporating actual Asian characters (instead of Orientalized whites) into his work. It bears noting that prior to WWII, Asian and Asian-American identities were nearly voiceless in US art and culture. What little positive representation they received was typically mediated through white American

perspectives that, despite their good intentions, tended to reinforce negative stereotypes. Such was certainly the case for Earl Derr Biggers's Charlie Chan detective stories and the films they inspired. Fitzgerald's efforts to sympathetically represent Oriental characters provide similar examples of this conflicted mediation, though sometimes his cross-cultural comparisons are remarkably insightful.

A handful of scenes involving Tana in *The Beautiful and Damned* are peppered with such insights. In these, his identity is weirdly entwined with protagonist Anthony's; the Japanese servant's relationship to his white master produces a strange cultural mirroring that reflects American exceptionalism back on itself. As Tana acclimates himself to the Patch household, Fitzgerald derives some cheap laughs from the immigrant's accent and naivety, but he also highlights problems of cultural misunderstandings—particularly in one scene about ethnic facial traits. After Tana shows Anthony one of his sketches, “a rather good copy of an etching of Abraham Lincoln, to whose face he had given an unmistakable Japanese cast,” the scene immediately reverses itself as Tana criticizes the cartoon image of a “facetious Japanese butler” in a newspaper for having been sketched with “an American face” (194). The cases are curiously paralleled. In the one instance, Anthony sees Oriental features in the sketching of an American historical figure by a Japanese artist; in the other, Tana sees white traits in the caricature of a Japanese subject rendered by an American artist. The humorous confusion is politically suggestive, for it assigns privilege to Patch's Western perspective and then immediately revokes it by calling its ethnocentrism into question. Fitzgerald's refusal to let Anthony except his perspective as normative is a savvy gesture in an often bland book, and it also serves as a reminder that a hugely complex world lies outside the insular, commerce-driven context of 1920s America.

At the opposite end of Fitzgerald's career appears another instance in which Asian characters (Indian princes, to be specific) function as cultural mirrors to reflect American excess and exception. But, because "Pat Hobby, Putative Father" (1940) is a story of the Bust and not the Boom, these Oriental characters more accurately echo an aporia, a central problem of American wealth: Why, in a country obsessed with money and famous for its tycoons, do poverty and strife persist? Income inequality is embedded implicitly in the story's plot structure, which finds broke screenwriter Pat Hobby tasked by his rich studio bosses with leading fabulously wealthy Indian princes on a tour of the lot. These are real rajahs, the sort of Oriental royals to whom Fitzgerald frequently alluded in earlier fictions but never actually presented. One of them is Sir Singrim Dak Raj, "third richest man in India" and brother to Rajah Dak Raj Indore (*Pat Hobby* 65). The other is Prince John Brown Hobby Indore, Singrim's nephew and adopted son of the aforementioned patriarch. Per Fitzgerald's plot, he is also the son of Pat Hobby and Delia Brown, the latter of whom fled to India and married into royalty after divorcing the boy's biological father. John is, then, a Valentino-esque hybrid figure, culturally Oriental but racially white. In large part, the story is about his attempt to reconcile the materialistic democracy that produced him with the semi-feudal state that has adopted him. Fitzgerald employs this narrative structure as a late-career opportunity to gaze at bankrupt US culture through an Oriental lens.

Much as Fitzgerald illustrates in *Beautiful and Damned* how Patch and Tana are powerfully influenced by their native cultures, here he demonstrates how his American and Indian characters view one another from humorously skewed perspectives. Yet both perspectives are mediated by and filtered through the Hollywood film industry. The studio guide who informs Hobby of his assignment tells him that Singrim "seems to be kind of colored.... like

the extras they had at Paramount for *Bengal Lancer*.” Pat too views the visiting Indian nationals through a filmic lens. Upon meeting Prince John and Sir Singrim, he assumes that the studio he works for is producing a film to rival *Bengal Lancer*, and he fantasizes about being hired to write it. In his mind, he casts Singrim as “the heavy who owns the Khyber Pass.” He then envisions scenes of “British troops wheeling out cannon” on helpless natives (62-63). Hobby and his colleagues at the studio, including the security guards who later arrest the guests, can only see the Indians through the heavily mediated lens of their industry; for them, the foreigners are little more than extras or props, necessary to capture a certain Oriental flavor on screen but themselves possessing little to no agency. Because their sphere of influence exists primarily outside Hollywood, US, and even Western hemispheric contexts, Fitzgerald’s Indians require mediation via film imagery before they can be processed by other characters.

If the story’s Americans possess only as much insight into India as their media consumption affords them, something similar can be said for how John and Singrim try to interpret their American experience through the Hollywood movies they have seen in advance of their visit. John is tempted by American women while Singrim is fascinated by American wealth—though both discover that the big screen fantasies they have in mind are in life little more than facades. John treats star actress Bonita Granville as “an idol more glorious than Siva” (67), though his fervent desire to be near her results only in detainment in the studio guardroom. Singrim’s disillusion in American wealth is more profound. On the studio lots, he assumes he will witness the opulence his film-viewing has encouraged him to expect—luxury commensurate to his own vast riches. What he discovers instead is a series of “false fronts” which he finds “disappointing.” In a deeply symbolic scene, he enters the back lot mockup of a “Fifth Avenue jewelry store” and is chagrined to “find nothing but carpenter’s rubble inside” (65). Fitzgerald

has Singrim discover something that Pat Hobby learned years ago: that the veneer of American privilege is plastered over a dense base of working-class poverty. The Depression-era setting of the story only compounds this message and the narrator's assertion that the ostentatious sets are "all phony" (65). Faced with a rich façade that masks a greater lack, Singrim is disgusted enough to project this emptiness onto Americans themselves, quipping that "perhaps the actresses have a false front too" (66). At the dispersion of his presumptions about wealth in the US, he gains insight into a people whose pride in commerce and industry clashes with a vast disparity in wealth distribution. The proud names of American tycoons and moguls are, by analogy, "false fronts" erected over the commonplace, nameless poor. It is appropriate that Singrim hails from a country of even starker income inequality and caste divisions, for his background allows him to see through the illusion of common prosperity promoted on-screen.

Fitzgerald's most thoughtful treatment of these perspectival problems appears near the end of the story when Pat, John, and Singrim stumble onto a "process stage," a special effects set used for filming an actor against a "moving background." According to the narrator, a device projects a kinetic image onto the back side of a transparent screen, while on the front an actor performs. The director captures the shot in such a way that "the poor eye could only conclude that it was being deluded and never quite guess how" (66). Fitzgerald frames the scene—in which the hapless trio ruin Granville's performance in the process shot—as a study in perspectives, and his description of the events emphasizes how cultural disparity is caught in the take:

From the director's angle something had happened on the screen which, for the moment, was inexplicable. Three gigantic silhouettes, two with huge Indian turbans, had danced across what was intended to be a New England Harbor—they had blundered into the line of the process shot. Prince John Indore had not only seen Bonita Granville—he had acted in the same picture. His silhouetted foot seemed to pass miraculously through her blonde young head. (67)

The sharp cultural contrasts drawn in the passage between light and shadow, blonde hair and turbans, and New England and India are reflected in the characters' relative positions. Granville and the unnamed director are separated from John and Singrim by a dividing screen; the Indians' shadows are projected onto the back of this screen, while the American film crew works at the front. Fitzgerald constructs an imaginative set in which cultural projections manifest literally and figuratively—and these are projected upon (quite literally mediated by) a silver screen. The scene is in many ways a model for the whole story, a diorama that illustrates how real cultural differences between Orient and Occident risk being caricatured via filmic mediation. Moreover, the scene and the story are further evidence of the tolerant, markedly less ethnocentric Fitzgerald hinted at in *Beautiful and Damned*. In this late story, we see a very different Fitzgerald from the casually xenophobic author of "Myra." "Putative Father" finds the author fully willing to—if not apply deep political insight to cultural clashes between the global East and West—at least admit that an Asian perspective on American culture is useful when the isolated nation, like the "poor eye" duped by the process shot, is "deluded" by its split liberal and consumer interests.

"Lands of uncharted promise"

Edmund Wilson's 1922 complaint that "Fitzgerald approaches the East" with "the standards of the wealthy West" waxes doubly important if we take the liberty of reading his comment as applying to global hemispheres instead of American regions, for the writer's American Orientalism insists that political crises in the Arab world and the larger Orient have little bearing on American culture. In his work, abstract representations of a totalized Orient are valuable within a US context almost exclusively as tropes for expressing resistance to capitalistic

materialism. In nineteenth-century American literature, these expressions had generally celebrated Eastern transcendentalist philosophies as correlatives to Emersonian transcendentalism; Fitzgerald updates—even upends—this model by instead presenting Oriental masculine types (sheiks, rajahs, and samurais) as embodiments of moneyed excess. These correspond to a set of American male types located primarily in the US East: business tycoons, spoiled rich boys, and especially transplanted Midwesterners making the requisite pilgrimage to the national seat of culture, finance, and knowledge. The Orient as invoked by Fitzgerald and overlaid onto the American Northeast suggests an impossible opulence, a splendor conjured to represent an exaggerated disparity between the East and the younger, less fashionable sections of the republic. Certainly, the considerable geographic distance separating the US from real political turmoil transpiring in the Orient (the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the extension of British colonial policies in India, and the rapid industrialization of Japan, among other happenings) enabled this fantasy of a Far East suitable for ad copy.

But Fitzgerald's Occidental appropriations of the Orient sometimes manage to elevate this stock footage to something of artistic merit and political comment. The author struggled for much of his life to perfect the successful amalgamation of a popular, commercial, political, and artistic fiction. In his career-long effort to adapt for his own purposes the already heavily-mediated Orient, we see another facet of this struggle. Furthermore, though the author's perspective on the Orient is woefully limited, his attempt to engage it in fiction opens up possibilities for transnational readings of Fitzgerald farther flung than the extant discourse on his European connections. Zelda alluded to her husband's geographic expansiveness when she wrote in an unpublished eulogy that "his heroes were fabulous strangers from lands of uncharted promise" (*Collected Writings* 440). By teasing out the Oriental influences on his Occidental

heroes—and by appreciating how such terms relate to the cultural geography of American regional difference—we begin to chart this promise.

Notes

¹ The particulars of capitalization are significant here, for when I refer to the Occident/Orient binary, I mean to specifically address the relationship between Western and Eastern civilizations. But when I cite the terms in their lower-case variants, I allude instead to the relationship of a non-specific western zone to its eastern counterpart—for instance, the competition between comparatively young cities in the US Midwest and their established rivals on the East Coast.

² Another note on terminology: Arabism and Orientalism are related phenomena tied both to the nineteenth-century study of Eastern cultures and to the later twentieth-century critical discourse of Edward Said. Said uses the broader term, Orientalism, to refer to efforts by Westerners to circumscribe the East in discourse—efforts which often reveal more about Western subjectivity than they do about their intended Eastern objects of study. The Orient alluded to by Said spreads across Asia from the Middle East to the Far East. Arabism refers to instances in which the Western gaze looks upon specifically Arabic objects that may be located in the north of Africa or in western Asia. For the purpose of this chapter, I treat Arabism as a subcategory of Orientalism. I focus my attention primarily on Orientalism writ large, but specific instances of Arabism will be noted.

³ Fitzgerald's contemporary critics and readers did not entirely ignore his appropriation of Eastern tropes. We have already seen H.W.H.'s humorous *Rubaiyat of Amory Khayyam*. In addition to this case, we also have the perspicacious comments of *The Forum*'s Thomas Caldecot Chubb, who in 1925 borrowed a turn of phrase from O. Henry in referring to *Gatsby* as “Bagdad-

on-Subway, a hasheesh dream for a romantic-minded inhabitant of Nassau County” (*In His Own Time* 358). Both critical perspectives look beyond the merely romantic in Fitzgerald to highlight that which suggests an Oriental bent. Adopting uncannily similar rhetoric, Shane Leslie wrote to Fitzgerald in July 1925 that *Gatsby* “brings back to me the world of Long Island like an Arabian Night mixed with a subway swound” (*Correspondence* 174).

⁴ Fitzgerald would toy with “reversion to type” again in “Bernice Bobs Her Hair” (1920), which was published in the *Post* only a few months after “Myra.” In that story, antagonist Marjorie jokes that Bernice’s “Indian blood,” her rumored Native American heritage, prevents her from mixing in middle class white society.

⁵ *Indigofera tinctoria*, commonly known as “true indigo,” is native to Asia and Africa. India and the Middle East supplied the dye to European consumers as early as the twelfth century (*Indigo in the Arab World* 19).

⁶ Jeffery Clymer and Joss Lutz Marsh have both argued that Fitzgerald modeled *Gatsby*’s character in part on Valentino himself. In a similar fashion, Michael Nowlin has interpreted *Gatsby*’s “seduction” of Daisy as being indebted to the rape scene in *The Sheik* (*Fitzgerald’s Racial Angles* 79-80).

⁷ A song in this vein—an “oriental dance on a calliope”—appears in Fitzgerald’s “The Jelly-Bean” (1920). Besides “The Sheik of Araby,” another popular “oriental foxtrot” in the era was Paul Whiteman’s 1921 “When Buddha Smiles.”

⁸ In the Lynds’ *Middletown* sociological survey, they cite the terms “sheik” and “sheba” as referring to fast-living young people, especially those who are also frequent cinemagoers (267).

⁹ Kirk Curnutt notes that these gestures “urged original readers to equate *Gatsby*’s pursuit of Daisy with *The Sheik*’s chase-and-conquer formula,” while they also intentionally drew attention

to the hackneyed quality of Gatsby's romantic strategies ("The Great Gatsby and the 1920s" 642).

¹⁰ A 1920 report by the US Department of Labor indicates that a large number of Japanese immigrants (10,056) entered the country as aspiring citizens in 1919, but roughly half that number (4,848) had entered the country in 1920, and these were all "nonimmigrant" in legal status. The report indicates that the government regarded cheap, illegal Asian labor as a threat to the economy and therefore actively deported such workers and prosecuted their traffickers. The upshot of this is that Tanaka was probably a nonimmigrant worker, legally present in the country but ineligible for citizenship (though, if he dodged deportation, his progeny might be) (*Reports of the Department of Labor* 232-34).

¹¹ From the late nineteenth century onward, the connection between white capitalist and Asian laborer was a politically anxious one, for, as Lee and others have explained, the cheap labor offered by Chinese, Japanese, and Korean workers was a readily exploitable resource that could be used to milk the maximum profit from a project at a fraction of the normal expense. Anthony's employment of low-cost Asian labor participates in an infamous tradition dating back to railroad tycoons' mass hiring of expendable coolies. Into the twentieth century, the popularity of anti-Asian immigration legislation owed as much to whites' fears of joblessness as it did to racist policing of the gene pool.

FITZGERALD, MIDWESTERN MODERNISTS, AND THE PLACE OF THE POLITICAL CENTER IN THE URBAN MIDWEST

This is America—a town of a few thousand, in a region of wheat and corn and dairies and little groves.

The town is, in our tale, called “Gopher Prairie, Minnesota.” But its Main Street is the continuation of Main Streets everywhere. The story would be the same in Ohio or Montana, in Kansas or Kentucky or Illinois, and not very differently would it be told Up York State or in the Carolina Hills.

Main Street is the climax of civilization.

-Upton Sinclair, Preface to *Main Street* (1920)

In his time, F. Scott Fitzgerald leaned left politically even as he wrote sympathetically about his self-interested entrepreneur protagonists. His ability to negotiate in fiction a middle position between socialist desire and free-market conservatism helped him fashion a uniquely American creative voice during his rise to celebrity in the Jazz Age. Fitzgerald made a career out of writing about concepts that occupy in-between spaces: the beleaguered middle class, the changing Midwest, the nation’s middlebrow literature, and the antipathy between the left and right wings of American politics. Publicly shying away from extremes, he feigned neutrality by appearing in his prose to identify with neither labor nor capital, but his left-of-center perspective, which became increasingly pronounced during his twenty-year career, is evident in any close reading of his work. Fitzgerald’s correspondence lends credence to these interpretations. He acknowledged the need for political reform in the corrupt legislative environment of the 1920s, largely favored Democratic presidential candidates throughout his life, thought highly of Marx, and supported government-sponsored relief efforts during the Depression. Fitzgerald wrote for the masses, but he was inspired by and hoped to curry favor from leftist intellectuals like his friend Edmund Wilson.

In our time, the author has a right-wing namesake, a Republican Party doppelganger who also hails from the Midwest: Wisconsin State Senate Majority Leader Scott L. Fitzgerald. In the

spring of 2011, Senator Fitzgerald achieved fame by helping Governor Scott Walker strip collective bargaining rights from state employees. The action, attached to a Republican-favored budget repair bill, became a national news story when Democratic senators fled the state to avoid having to vote on the measure and face inevitable defeat. Fitzgerald served as one of Walker's key mouthpieces while the political drama unfolded, adopting a confident rhetoric of centrism and reformism calculated to downplay the obvious partisan angle and anti-labor sentiment behind this gesture, which through its eventual passing crippled union negotiating power. In Fitzgerald's public statement on Walker's budget address, he observed vaguely that the "system we all know is broken" and promised "real reform to the broken status quo" in addition to "real reform to collective bargaining benefits in Wisconsin." Like his literary namesake, then, Senator Scott Fitzgerald has publically identified himself with the middle of the political spectrum while less publicly associating with its fringe elements. Governor Walker's crusade against Wisconsin's public sector unions was, even as state police pursued those missing Democratic legislators, revealed to be sponsored by David H. and Charles G. Koch, two ultra-right-wing billionaire industrialist libertarians.

The Midwestern region where F. Scott Fitzgerald spent his childhood and where Scott L. Fitzgerald has resided virtually all his life has historically been a place of sharp, strange political divisions. The region as a whole has been more amenable to labor unions than other American sections; the plains states played a considerable role in the rise of the populist People's Party; and Wisconsin's Robert M. La Follette helped lead the dwindling Progressive wing of the Republican Party through the mid-1920s. But by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, consumerism, conservatism, and xenophobia had become significant parts of Midwestern culture. Chicago emerged as a Middle West metropolis; states began to favor

fiscally conservative, isolationist, non-Progressive Republican national candidates; the role of respectability in acquiring credit led to more prevalent social conservatism; and the Ku Klux Klan gained footholds in small Midwestern cities where laborers feared competition from immigrants and minorities. Regardless, since the late 1800s many prominent Midwesterners have, in the manner of both Scott Fitzgeralds, paid lip service to the center. They have insisted upon the Midwest's role as not merely the geographic middle of the nation but its centripetal cultural force—a place where extremes are undesirable and where political, social, and economic differences negotiate a healthy in-between average. It has become, as sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd put it in 1937, the home of “Middletown,” where people take pride in trying “to stick close to the middle of the road, to move slowly, and to avoid extremes” (*Middletown in Transition* 406). So, although the period following the Great War saw the revival of a conservative nationalism that impacted the entirety of America, Midwestern regionalist rhetoric still laid claim to the political center. Some Midwestern businessmen, politicians, and authors even continued to insist that the region's “middle-ness” was an accurate reflection of the supposedly bipartisan, centered, fiscally sound nation to which it belonged. These bickering voices converge at one point: in assigning to the Midwest—and not to the “backwards” South, the “decadent” Northeast, or the “wild” West—the dubious privilege of embodying the American average.

Using Fitzgerald's work as both starting point and frame, this chapter tracks competing literary discourses about the “middle ground” role of the Midwestern region in the generally conservative decades between the late 1910s and the early 1930s. I identify three distinct (if not quite discrete) arguments taking place within this discourse: some authors, such as Fitzgerald, critique American conservatism and consumerism while rhapsodizing about an unspoiled

Midwestern regional imaginary; others, like Booth Tarkington, pine for the Midwest's semi-pastoral past while still praising the region's essential American-ness in moving forward into an industrial present; others yet, like Sinclair Lewis and Grace Flandrau, emphasize the hypocrisy inherent in both Midwestern and national claims of bipartisanship in the face of obvious Republican conservatism. The left-leaning, anti-consumerist agenda evident in most of these literary discourses predates and foreshadows the not-so-subtle politics underwriting the most important sociological texts published on the Midwest during this time: the Lynds' *Middletown* surveys of 1929 and 1937.

This was a time in which the market for classifiably regionalist writing seemed to have bottomed out, facing stiff competition from the rival literature of the metropolis, the homogenizing urban form erected over local and regional considerations of place. Some authors penned elegies to the lost potential of the pastoral Midwest, as Willa Cather did in *My Antonia* (1918). But a closer look at novels in the often-neglected genre of the modernist Midwestern city novel reveals that other authors negotiated a compromise by writing specifically about the expansion of Middle Western urban centers, thereby blending traditional regionalism with new literary forms adapted to address industrial modernity. Awareness of the complex varieties of the era's Midwestern regional literatures helps apply a contextual frame to the deceptively simple nostalgia about the region that pervades Fitzgerald's work. But, even more importantly, cultural geographic readings of literary debates in this vein provide background for our present political conflicts between labor and capital in the modern Midwest—for, as I have hoped to emphasize with the example of Scott L. Fitzgerald, these myths persist and endure in our current political climate.

Midwestern Pastoralism in American Culture

In American history and popular culture, the Midwest has functioned as an ambiguous middle space between the settled East and the rugged West. Its location remained fluid during periods of American expansion. Cultural geographer James R. Shortridge, who has written at length about the region's shifting identity, observes that one of the earliest uses of the term "Middle West" appeared in 1827 in reference to Tennessee, a state now widely regarded as Southern (*The Middle West* 16). Since then, it has more typically connoted "the pastoral ideal—a haven midway between the corruptions of urban civilization and the dangerous, untamed wilderness" (27). Shortridge's research suggests that the appellation "Middle West," later truncated in the portmanteau "Midwest," peaked in popularity between 1912 and 1920. By that point in American history, the word had evolved as a convenient means of dividing the Northwest into two parts; "Middle West" represented the area from Ohio to North Dakota, while anything farther outside the interior remained classifiably Northwestern.

Such geographic distinctions have usually been politically charged—especially in their relation to the South and to the Northeast—for discourses on compartmentalized regional differences often accelerate into heated national debates about collective American identity. In Shortridge's words, "regional labels" commonly function as "depositories for national values" (135), and Brad Evans's more recent work reminds us that in literary discourse in particular "regional writers most frequently staged elaborate engagements with the older structuring categories of nation, race, and environment, in some instances (and often inadvertently) showing their limitations" (*Before Cultures* 85). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, regional classifications in literary texts and political speeches were especially freighted with cultural baggage, though they generally dealt in oversimplifications and exaggerations.

Frequently, debates about sectional space fulfilled two roles: they sought to chronicle the role of a region in the nation's past, and they sought as well to plan what role it should serve in the future. In the nineteenth century, the regional dialectic was dominated by the bipolar split between the irreconcilable values of an urban-industrial North and a rural-agrarian South. But it was shortly past the middle of that century that the notion of a pastoral Midwest offered a means of breaking free from "the old North-South schism created by slavery" (Shortridge 20).

Abraham Lincoln, himself a Midwesterner, saw the agricultural productivity of his home region as proof that the nation could provide for its citizens without relying excessively on either slave labor or industrial urbanity. During and after the Civil War, the Midwest emerged as an ideological symbol of moderation and avoidance of extremes, expanding on its prior identity as a zone between civilization and chaos.

Midwestern politicians like William Jennings Bryan and La Follette helped the region maintain this reputation well into the twentieth century. Many leaders in the People's Party and, later, the Progressive wing of the Republican Party hailed from the Midwest. These political factions in turn remained popular on the plains for supporting the economic concerns of the rising middle class and of beleaguered farmers. But, as Shortridge notes, the Midwest on the whole grew steadily more conservative over "twenty years of prosperous aging" (50), so that by the 1920s its regional interests and political alliances were little different from those of the East from which it had decades earlier struggled to distinguish itself. Oddly, journalists tended to downplay the "the highly visible and successful urban Middle West as represented by Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit," preferring to focus imaginatively on the hearty work ethic and staunch moralism of an unrealistic "rural-only view of the Middle West" (Shortridge 55-56). This imaginary arose in response to a logical contradiction playing out in the popular discourse on the

Midwest; for decades, it had been regarded as a provincial but unspoiled space, yet it was now, like the rest of the nation, rapidly becoming urbanized. If ever there had been any truth to the imagined cultural geography of the Midwest as a place just as sociopolitically centered as it was geographically situated, the conservative American environment of the twenties eroded it. The Progressive wing of the Republican Party was dead; popular sympathy for farmers and laborers had seriously waned; and bustling cities seemed to be paving over rural locales by the day. Conservative Republican presidential candidates won in landslide elections throughout the decade, carrying Midwestern states with ease. The Midwest also became a bastion of isolationist, anti-interventionist sentiment; Manfred Jonas attributes these emergent reactionary politics to “[g]eographic insularity” and “the affinity between the tenets of isolationism and the presuppositions underlying various forms of agrarian radicalism” (*Isolationism in America* 17).

This historical background functioned as an essential component of Fitzgerald’s biographical and literary context, informing his response to the Midwestern region and to the surrounding nation. Fitzgerald, it must be remembered, ascended in literary celebrity prior to the October 23, 1920 publication of Sinclair Lewis’s *Main Street*, the book that sparked a trend of anti-Midwestern novels by Midwestern writers eager to debunk the positive pastoral myth attached to their home region. Writers like Lewis, Grace Flandrau, Ruth Suckow, and Woodward Boyd would be more savage in their mockery of Midwestern provincialism than their forebears Sherwood Anderson and Theodore Dreiser had dared. Anderson’s anti-pastoral *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) had directed its censure towards prejudicial small town environments, and Dreiser’s Chicago novels (including *Sister Carrie* [1900] and *Jennie Gerhardt* [1911]) had addressed moral ambiguity in that Midwestern metropolis. The post-*Main Street* urban novel school avoided these poles and wrote instead about newly-booming Midwestern cities like

Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, and St. Paul. The sardonic strain in these authors' works typically emerges in reply to the spread of urban-industrial environments across the Midwest, a social change accompanied by political conservatism and a new, unhealthy reliance on credit in daily life. Their novels about growing Midwestern cities rage against the popular insistence that the region remains a symbol of centered-ness—of bipartisanship, moderation, and even traditional pastoralism—when it has instead become irrevocably linked to national systems of finance and right-wing politics. Their works in fiction foreshadow the later sociological studies by the Lynds, who would similarly express concern for the outdated, reductive conceit of the Midwest as wholly moderate and somehow different from the presumably corrupt East and the purportedly backwards South.

Fitzgerald's earliest work predates this line of discourse, and his fictions written after the publication of *Main Street* and *Babbitt* struggle, as he noted in correspondence with friends, to overcome Lewis's influence. Fitzgerald admired Lewis's critiques of American consumerism and of Midwestern tendencies towards conservatism, but he believed his second-rate prose targeted "the average type of reader" (*Letters* 128). Similarly, he saw in Flandrau's *Being Respectable* (1923) a response to the urbanization of the Midwest that was both "native and universal" in significance, but in his review for *The Literary Digest* he quipped, with an obvious nod towards his own talent, that "when our Conrad or Joyce or Anatole France comes, books such as this will have cleared his way" (35-36).¹ Fitzgerald came to imagine himself as a competitor within this emergent discursive arena, which specialized in treating the Midwest as synecdoche of middle-class America and its hypocrisies as symptomatic of those shared by the nation. He claimed that he wanted to invent a new approach to writing about place in American culture without succumbing to the pitfalls of agrarian and pastoral thought, philosophies that

could only “[seek] for the static in a world that for almost a hundred years had simply not been static” (*Letters* 187, emphasis in original). Interestingly, Fitzgerald’s own writings would more often treat the Midwest setting parallaxically from the vantage of a different region than address it directly. In his short stories set in the Midwest, characters are eager to flee to the urban Northeast; in stories about displaced Midwesterners, these characters typically wax nostalgic about their abandoned home region. Regardless, the Midwest retains its special privilege of representing wholesome middle-income averageness even in works centered on New York’s suburbs or rural Georgia, places where the standard of living skews higher and lower, respectively.

Fitzgerald and Tarkington: Nostalgia, Place, and Pastoralism

Fitzgerald called St. Paul, Minnesota home for most of his childhood, but he spent considerable portions of time in other cities in different regions, as well. From 1898 to 1908, the family lived in New York (Syracuse and Buffalo) as Edward Fitzgerald tried to advance his career as a salesman for Procter & Gamble. And throughout Fitzgerald’s childhood his parents took him on semi-frequent trips to Maryland to visit his father’s family. The most significant removals began in 1911 when he entered the Newman School in Hackensack, New Jersey; during this time, he would return home from boarding school only on holidays and breaks. Even as a youth, then, Fitzgerald was used to seeing the Midwest in retrospect—a perspective he retained in his adult fiction. He typically set his stories and novels in caricatured locales outside the Midwest (such as the fast-paced urban Northeast; the slow, sultry South; or degenerate Europe); nevertheless, his home region often looms in the background as a pleasant place where unfashionable people retain hardy work ethics. As I will later discuss in detail, the stereotype of

the Middle West as a large, bland zone of earnest plainness was one shared across the nation, but it held special significance for Fitzgerald, who in 1919 returned to St. Paul from New York City a failure, having been rejected by Zelda, given up his career in advertising with Barron Collier, and failed to publish his first novel. Living with his parents in the Midwestern city he thought he had escaped, he revised *This Side of Paradise* (1920) into publishable shape and wrote a handful of salable stories. He moved back to New York as soon as he could, reclaiming Zelda along the way. For the duration of his career, the Midwest would feature in his prose as a nice, boring place in which one worked hard to earn the capital to go elsewhere.

In short stories like “Winter Dreams” (1922) plot events often impel characters to escape the drab Midwest in pursuit of stranger vistas—such as New York City, to which protagonist Dexter Green relocates once his rising fortunes permit it. Yet Fitzgerald’s travelers typically encounter moral corruption, economic exploitation, and a general dearth of sincerity whenever else they go, leaving them to pine nostalgically for their pastoral Midwest, which they remember as a place where things and people were simpler. Tellingly, in his 1932 essay “My Lost City” Fitzgerald calls the Midwest his “warm center of the world out there,” a safe space enshrined in memory to counteract the “essentially cynical and heartless” East Coast (*My Lost City* 107). In Fitzgerald’s remembered and fictionalized Middle West, a Puritan work ethic has survived where elsewhere it has faltered. In meteorological terms, it is a cold place, with the harshness of its climate sometimes reflected in the cool temperament of its people, but it is far from inhospitable. It values efficiency over revelry, utility over ostentatiousness. In no story is this stereotyped depiction clearer than in “The Ice Palace” (1920) in which protagonist Sally Carrol Happer visits her suitor Harry Bellamy in his St. Paul. She finds that as a leisure-loving Southerner she is ill-equipped to cope with what she sees as a Midwestern industriousness wholly devoid of frivolity.

For Bellamy, it all boils down to the warmth of “energy,” something Midwesterners have but other Americans tend to lack. As Fitzgerald writes it, this vital quality is incorruptible on its home turf, but outside of the Midwest it is subject to change. Nevertheless, he often treats these energetic, upwardly-mobile young men less as individuals than the interchangeable, bourgeois products of mass Midwestern cultural production. In one of his earliest short stories, “The Camel’s Back” (1920), he introduces the protagonist as a construction pieced together by an assembly line of upper-crust Midwestern families, prep schools, department stores, and ivy league institutions:

I want you to meet Mr. Perry Parkhurst, twenty-eight, lawyer, native of Toledo. Perry has nice teeth, a Harvard diploma, parts his hair in the middle. You have met him before—in Cleveland, Portland, St. Paul, Indianapolis, Kansas City, and so forth. Baker Brothers, New York, pause on their semi-annual trip through the West to clothe him; Montmorency & Co. dispatch a young man post-haste every three months to see that he has the correct number of little punctures on his shoes.... He looks like the advertisement of the young man rubbing his sunset-colored chest with liniment and goes East every other year to his class reunion.

Fitzgerald’s characterization of the Midwestern business-class man as “advertisement” here prefigures similar ideas in Lewis’s *Babbitt*, but the most significant features of the passage are its regional stereotypes. Fitzgerald’s imagines the Midwestern bourgeois as ubiquitous in the region; varying little from city to city; essentially mechanical in their predictability and efficiency; and representative of a cultural tendency towards the urban, the industrial, and the commercial. He also chronicles the strong influence of Eastern academic and financial institutions on the comparatively young Middle West.

These regional themes are markedly present throughout Fitzgerald’s most enduring work, *The Great Gatsby* (1925), and in the short story “Absolution” (1924), which he originally envisioned as a prologue to the larger book. Set in rural North Dakota during the early 1900s, “Absolution” concerns the James Gatz prototype Rudolph Miller, an eleven-year old boy who

longs to escape his dull Midwest and strike out for a college town or a big city in the East. He keeps a Cornell University pennant in his bedroom, and in his private moments, when he fantasizes he is “too good to be the son of [his] parents,” he pretends he is “Blatchford Sarnemington,” a “suave” young aristocrat (260, 263). Rudolph’s ambitions receive support from a troubled Catholic priest, Father Adolphus Schwarz, who wishes to forsake his own vows and pursue luxury and pleasure “in the center of the world, wherever that happens to be” (270). Schwarz’s “theory” that “when a lot of people get together in the best places things go glimmering all the time” exerts tremendous influence on Rudolph, who realizes that the modern “center of the world” is not the center of the country, site of his present immuration. The implicit connection between Miller and Gatz suggests that the boy will eventually take “Blatchford Sarnemington” to the urban Northeast much as his novelistic counterpart would transport “Jay Gatsby” from Dakota to New York.

As in “Absolution,” contrasts between the Midwest and the Northeast frame *Gatsby*, with narrator Nick Carraway ruminating at the beginning and end on differences between these two distinct American regions. Echoing Schwarz’s language and Rudolph’s realization, Nick’s provincial Middle West is paradoxically a “warm center of the world” and a “ragged edge of the universe” (3). Though it is not a site of cultural production like the urban East, from whence fashions and trends originate and then radiate westward, it is in Nick’s imagination a responsible, honest place. It is the safe zone to which he retreats when, after Gatsby’s death, he wants “the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever,” free from “riotous excursions” (2). Nick is himself an avatar of the balanced, stable Midwestern principles he advocates; *Gatsby* opens with his assurance that Nick is “inclined to reserve all judgments” (1), and it closes with a reminder that he has not lost his “provincial squeamishness” (179).

By contrast, Nick envisions the Northeast as a place perpetually in moral “riot”: he calls Long Island as a “slender riotous island” (4); he describes drunks in the New York City Yale Club as “rioters” (56); and he refers to the state of emotion that led Gatsby to the East as a “constant, turbulent riot” (99). In New York, Nick bears witness to a catalogue of excesses, extremes, and revolts against convention. He sees wealth thrown away on extravagant purchases, bonds of marriage casually violated, crime and corruption openly tolerated, and solid work ethics sunk in revelry. In *Gatsby*, Fitzgerald trots out the regionalist essentialism he evinced more frequently in his short stories. He has Nick remark in the final chapter that “this has been a story of the West, after all—Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life” (176).

Even though the novel deals primarily with Nick’s antagonistic responses to modern New York vice, the narrative ends significantly on a retrospective note of regional identification—one that starts from the pastoral Midwest of Nick’s childhood and recedes into the seventeenth-century discovery of the Hudson River. Nick, like his creator, has a rosy, nostalgia-lensed perspective on his Middle America, which he prefers to recollect as passing by on train rides back to Minnesota when coming home from school:

That’s my Middle West—not the wheat or the prairies or the lost Swede towns, but the thrilling returning trains of my youth, and the street lamps and sleigh bells in the frosty dark and the shadows of holly wreaths thrown by lighted windows on the snow. I am part of that, a little solemn with the feel of those long winters, a little complacent from growing up in the Carraway house in a city where dwellings are still called through decades by a family’s name. (176)

This imaginary place, which as Barry Gross observes “exists on no map” (“Fitzgerald’s Midwest” 125), is where Nick hopes to relocate at the conclusion of his narrative. It recalls Dexter Green’s nostalgic remembrance of his Minnesota hometown as “the country of illusion,

of youth, of the richness of life”—after he has lived in the Northeast for years (*Short Stories* 236). Of course, the urban Midwest of the 1920s, full of various-sized cities seeking to emulate East Coast metropolises, was no place like this indulgent fantasy.² Nor does Nick’s fashioning of himself as the perfect, incorruptible Midwesterner—the perpetual withholder of judgments, the reasonable man slumming amongst a tribe of excessive characters—actually refer to the political identity of his contemporary Middle West, which was with few local exceptions a place as conservative, reactionary, and pro-capital as the rest of the nation. Critics have rightly questioned the validity of Fitzgerald’s reductive East-West binary, often sharing Alexander C. Kern’s opinion that it results simply from the author’s hometown pride (“Dreiser and Fitzgerald” 86). Others, like Gross, have lamented the “narrow world” of Fitzgerald’s Midwest (113), a setting informed by his experiences with St. Paul society and limited by his plains-by-train imagining of an agrarian Midwest. But I believe that Nick’s fantasy, the product of Fitzgerald’s nostalgic vision and antipathy for materialism, has behind it the force of desire: the need to articulate resistance to industrial modernity, even if this response invokes a fiction of regional difference that largely fails to match the objective reality. In Fitzgerald’s fiction, the strategy of pitting regional values against one another and against nationalist creeds emerges as an act of writing back to modernity and laissez-faire capitalism. Such writings certainly deal in abstractions, but they also participate in an evolving regionalist literary discourse that enjoyed a large readership and therefore retained the potential to affect American notions of social change. When this discourse addressed the Midwest, it often did so for the purpose of establishing or reclaiming a political middle ground between the far left and the far right. In many cases, however, socially conscious writers were invested in planting a “center” that happened to lean left or right.

In the early twentieth century, one of the most important authors addressing this topic of American “middle-ness” in the Midwest was Indianapolis native Booth Tarkington, whose work Fitzgerald enjoyed. Born in 1869, Tarkington was a well-established writer long before Fitzgerald entered college. His career plainly served as a model for the aspiring novelist, for Tarkington’s biography reads like a predictive paraphrase of Fitzgerald’s own: born into a prominent Midwestern family that had fallen on hard times, he entered Princeton University after they recovered part of their fortune; he helped establish the Triangle Club, the collegiate musical society that Fitzgerald later joined in his rise to campus celebrity; he, like Fitzgerald, failed to matriculate; and both writers turned their skills to fictions of manners. Tarkington was, however, far more conservative in his political, social, and religious sensibilities than Fitzgerald and most members of the Lost Generation. He was the product of an older, more unselfconsciously patriotic, staunchly capitalistic, and confirmedly Christian generation, one that derived more satisfaction from swimming with the mainstream than against it. From 1919 to 1921, as American intellectuals on the left were becoming fascinated with socialist and communist conceptualizations of government, Tarkington wrote three plays lampooning communist ideology (Woodress 215). These were poorly reviewed by theatre critics, though *The Gibson Upstart* (1919) achieved a measure of popularity with the American public when it was reprinted in *The Saturday Evening Post*.

By the time Doubleday published *The Magnificent Ambersons* in 1918, Tarkington was one of the most influential popular writers in the country. And, though he wrote almost exclusively about Indiana and the Midwest, critics and consumers alike found his ideas in fiction applicable to the larger nation. Writing for *The Dial* in 1919, reviewer Robert Morss Lovett observed about *Ambersons*, “The scene of the story is clearly the Middle West, and the

atmosphere is that of a newly arrived city, Indianapolis, or Cleveland, or Omaha; but the spiritual values are no less current in Boston, or Atlanta, or San Francisco—in short, they are American.” Lovett went on to praise the book’s nationalistic qualities and its avoidance of “foreign influence” (qtd. in *Ambersons* 293). The popular attitude towards Tarkington and his works is perhaps best summed up in the phrasing of a 1920 magazine advertisement for his collected works: “Our foremost living American author today is Booth Tarkington.... Tarkington hears the very heartbeats of the American people. He is simple—direct—startlingly real.” Naturally, some left-leaning critics resisted the hype, finding his fiction sentimental, conventional, and conservative. Francis Hackett’s 1918 review of *Ambersons* for *The New Republic* bemoaned the book’s “American docility” in response to “squalid bourgeois materialism” (qtd in *Ambersons* 291). Still, negative reviews persisted in classifying Tarkington as an American type—representative of a casual, widespread conservative ethic that had become the national norm.

Ambersons revives the spirit of nineteenth-century Midwestern regionalism, a genre Tarkington had previously dredged up in his homey Penrod stories, and hitches it to WWI-era discourses on nationalism and modernity. This is the very sort of hybrid writing that Fitzgerald, Lewis, and Flandrau would subsequently practice, so it is worthwhile to look closely at the sociopolitical arguments nested in the foundation laid by Tarkington. Many of these are arguments about the role of the Midwest as an embodiment or representation of the larger United States. The synecdochic aspect of *Ambersons*’s setting is evident in the name of the fictional city in which the action takes place: Midland, a term that evokes both the Midwestern region and the prospect of normalcy or averageness between extremes. Roughly a decade later, the Lynds would characterize Muncie, Indiana as “Middletown” to achieve a similar effect. Indeed, many of the problems in Muncie that the Lynds would identify as typical across the nation—such as

the instability of the credit economy, the impact of automobiles on the environment, the devotion to bland national culture, and the great migration from the rural to the urban—plague Tarkington’s Midland. His efforts to paint Midland as typical, then, do more than portray the city as wholesome and moderate; they render its symptomatic social problems pandemic instead of merely endemic.

Events in *Ambersons* occur during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a period of great social change for Midland. The city evolves from a quiet Midwestern town to an urban center boosted by the booming automobile industry. The book’s protagonist, George Amberson Minafer, is the young scion of Midland’s powerful Amberson family, whose patriarch made his fortune after the Civil War by investing in the city’s real estate. George finds a rival in Eugene Morgan, an auto engineer who vies for his widowed mother’s affections. Inventions and novelties by industrialists like Eugene propel Midland into a progressive future which sees the magnificence of the Amberson family and their properties swallowed up in grimy urban sprawl. George, who affects the mannerisms of an aristocrat and believes that “being things is rather better than doing things” (*Ambersons* 122), is exceptionally unsuited for this new world. Simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by Eugene’s free-spirited daughter, he purposefully distances his family from theirs in a futile attempt to preserve the haughty integrity of the Ambersons. In the first half of the narrative, Tarkington’s sympathies seem to lie with Eugene and his progress-oriented faith in “the miracles” of “gasoline and electricity” (212), but these sympathies shift in the second half, which advocates the Ambersons’ conservatism as a valid form of resistance to technological changes that wreak havoc on the local environment. In this way, the novel praises the rise of the modern middle class even as it derides the innovations that enabled it.

Tarkington devotes much of the book to mocking George's aristocratic pretensions, which bear the traces of un-American European influences. The Amberson family's landholding power in Midland reeks of feudalism, and, appropriately, George lords his financial and cultural authority over his fellow Midlanders like a feudal baron. Even when he is in a kindhearted mood (a rare occurrence), the narrator reports that "his politeness was of a kind which democratic people found hard to bear" (29). He views his neighbors as tolerable but of inferior "caste"— "[w]orthy middle class creatures... leading dull lives but appreciative of better things when they saw them" (35). He sees the working class as intractable, for skilled manual laborers seldom respect his desire to remain without vocation. Yet George values his idleness as an act of heroism; he envisions himself as a living contradiction of the Southern and Eastern commonplace that the Midwest is provincial and "unyachted" (45). George thus embodies a proud regional elitism founded on family lineage, frontier heritage, and land ownership. This elitist attitude is prejudiced against modern commercialism for two reasons: commercial culture caters to the spending power of the working and middle classes, and it provides tempting access to products and services outside the local sphere, wherein powerful families like the Ambersons exert the greatest influence. The novel illustrates the dual impact of commerce and technological progress by showing the Amberson properties (located mostly in the center of town) bulldozed to make way for cheap apartment housing.

Eugene promises the Ambersons that his inventions and the spread of paved city streets have the power to "to change the face of the land" (151), and his predictions prove true: Midland, no longer a feudal town dominated by one family, becomes an industrialized city reminiscent of a number of such places across the country. Tarkington captures this decline in idiosyncratic "magnificence" using streets as metaphors: "National Avenue met Amberson

Boulevard here at an obtuse angle, and the removal of the pillars made the Boulevard seem a cross-street of no overpowering importance” (242). This homogenizing effect, the result of national influences squashing local and regional traditions, is a theme Tarkington carries over from nineteenth-century local color fictions and regionalist literatures, but it is also one that he would transmit to future Midwestern writers who address urban growth. Fitzgerald, Lewis, and Flandrau would subsequently politicize the conflict between regionalism and nationalism much more so than Tarkington. This is hardly unexpected, however, for his followers wrote their most censorious works during the anti-Progressive Republican twenties, and Tarkington wrote *Ambersons* while his college friend Woodrow Wilson, Progressive Democrat, was president. Tarkington thus tends to neuter the possibility of explicit political critique in his responses to consumerism and to the homogeneity of American place, leading the author to sometimes make the Dickensian gesture of countering materialism with mysticism. In one such passage, he laments that Midlanders have not yet arrived at “the strange and hard discovery that matter should serve man’s spirit” (214). In another, he gives rising capitalist Eugene a ghostly visit from a dead lover who encourages him to put selflessness above self-interest. A different type of clue to the book’s lack of political affect rests in its treatment of George’s uncle, a former US senator whose party affiliation and policy stances remain wholly undocumented by the narrator. However, Tarkington’s most significant gesture towards the political center is his sympathy for the idea that all powerful men are, regardless of their politics, of the same type—that “[i]t’s all the same, in the long run” (218). Behind this idea is the author’s consolation that death makes everyone equals: that “dead Caesar was nothing but a tiresome bit of print in a book” and “[e]ven George Washington is only something in a book” (272). Through these metaphysical concerns, he distances himself from the divisive realpolitik of labor and capital.

Despite Tarkington's efforts at political neutrality, *Ambersons* does feature a number of barbs directed towards the Progressive assurance that advances in technology and commerce are ultimately beneficial. In the long montage scene that fills the middle of the narrative, Tarkington pokes fun at boosterism and consumerism, two forms of idealism invested in worshipping the "god of the market-place" (214). He derides the escalating importance of credit in everyday life, because he views credit as a perversion of "Prosperity" to be exchanged for "nothing which that was not dirty, and, therefore, to a sane mind, valueless" (213). Rendering these effects in spatial terms, Tarkington likens the shift from pastoralism to industry and urbanity to the metastasizing of a cancer:

It was heaving up in the middle incredibly; it was spreading incredibly; and as it heaved and spread, it befouled itself and darkened its sky. Its boundary was mere shapelessness on the run; a raw, new house would appear on a country road; four or five others would presently be built at intervals between it and the outskirts of the town; the country road would turn into an asphalt street with a brick-faced drugstore and a framed grocery at a corner; then bungalows and six-room cottages would swiftly speckle the open green spaces—and a farm had become a suburb, which would immediately shoot out other suburbs into the country, on one side, and, on the other, join itself solidly to the city. (212)

As the geography surrounding the city becomes indistinguishable from it, Tarkington writes, its occupants are likewise infected by the spreading sameness: "The descendants of the pioneers and early settlers were merging into the new crowd, becoming part of it, little to be distinguished from it. What happened to Boston and to Broadway happened in degree to the Midland city" (212). Tarkington's observations suggest that a national culture (one whose primary symbols are factories, apartment buildings, and syndicated media) is rising not to supplement but to supplant local and regional identities. Yet as he documents this social change unfolding in the fin-de-siècle Midwest, he insists that Midwesterners accurately represent "average" Americans. He pairs regional and national identities when he writes, "A new Midlander—in fact, a new

American—was beginning dimly to emerge” (212). This is a claim that most Midwestern writers of the modernist era would repeat; whether writing in praise or in censure of this emergent representative, they would seldom dispute its representational force.

Lewis and Flandrau: Writing Back to the Right

In their responses to Midwestern conservatism and consumerism, both Tarkington and Fitzgerald imagine an idyllic Middle Western past, a bygone historical moment when a regional community seemed to embody political and economic moderation, thereby serving as a model for the nation. Their fictions draw on nostalgia and retrospect to illustrate how far the modern Midwestern city has been displaced from that semi-pastoral ideal. Lewis and Flandrau, on the other hand, fixate on the repugnant urban-industrial present.

Lewis achieved his first major success in 1920 with *Main Street*, the novel that Shortridge credits with being the first to effectively assault the popular conceit of a moderate, pastoral Midwest. That book had functioned primarily as an unflinching gaze at the xenophobic, provincial, and closed-minded rural Middle West—an effort to strip the zone of its much-touted democratic virtues. His 1922 follow-up, *Babbitt*, is more pertinent to this particular study, however, for in it Lewis turns his attention to the shifting political sympathies of the region in a period of rapid urban expansion. He dissects the heartlessness of the American heartland, seeking to demonstrate to readers that the Middle West of the era is guilty of the same excessive, corrupt materialism as was more commonly associated with the urban Northeast and the national government. The support for labor that had decades earlier undergirded the region’s populist movements had eroded by the twenties, and any insistences upon pastoral identity now rang hollow in the increasingly urbanized. No longer a middle ground between the republican

Western frontier and the corporatized East, the Midwest had turned capital-letter Republican in the pro-capital postwar environment. But Lewis does not stop at excoriating the region for betraying the working class in favor of the upper-middle and above; he extends his criticism to the entire country, which he depicts as being united, even homogenized, under a rising credit economy by technological innovations like telephones, appliances, and the automobile.

The product of this materialistic modernity is “the Standardized American Citizen,” an android-like character outlined by Babbitt in a speech before the Zenith Real Estate Board. The sort of American that Babbitt describes, “the ideal type to which the entire world must tend,” is notable primarily for his insistence upon normality and his unwillingness to deviate from social conservative protocol (*Main Street & Babbitt* 650). The “Standardized Citizen,” elsewhere in the speech referred to as the “Sane Citizen,” is a white male who reads newspaper poetry, watches popular films, participates eagerly in the credit economy, votes Republican, despises liberal university professors, and goes about his business with an indelible quality known as “pep.” He is also intensely patriotic and forgetful of whatever foreign country from which his family emigrated. Through these characteristics, Babbitt praises the American melting pot as annihilator of difference, a crucible designed to reduce ethnicity, class, and place of origin to WASP-ish whiteness. Men like this are homogenizing America, and Babbitt sings their praises:

Zenith and her sister-cities are producing a new type of civilization. There are many resemblances between Zenith and these other burgs, and I’m darn glad of it! The extraordinary, growing, and sane standardization of stores, offices, streets, hotels, clothes, and newspapers throughout the United States shows how strong and enduring a type is ours. (653)

American cities are losing their unique character, as are their denizens, but this poses no threat to Babbitt’s pro-business, anti-intellectual philosophy:

[B]y the last census, there were no less than sixty-eight glorious American burgs with a population of over one hundred thousand! And all these cities stand

together for power and purity, and against foreign ideas and communism—Atlanta with Hartford, Rochester with Denver, Milwaukee with Indianapolis, Los Angeles with Scranton, Portland, Maine with Portland, Oregon. A good live wire from Baltimore or Duluth is the twin-brother of every like fellow booster from Buffalo or Akron, Fort Worth or Oskaloosa! (652-53)

Near the end of the speech, Babbitt rhapsodizes about his vision of homogeneity by quoting from a poem by his friend Chum Frink: “[I]n these States where’er you roam, you never leave your home sweet home” (654, emphasis in original). What we are left with is the evocation of a capitalistic utopia, a land in which regional difference has been reduced to flatness of affect by technology and commerce. In Babbitt’s ideal America, every place is or will one day be the same standardized urban environment.

Lewis captures an interesting paradox in Babbitt’s rant. The character’s rhetoric is deeply indebted to left-leaning populist politics in its evangelical mission of spreading “Regular Guy” values around the nation (651), but he has put this style into the service of promoting business class values that are socially, fiscally, and religiously conservative. Babbitt’s speech implies that his views (and those of his cohort) are representative of a “well-balanced” sociopolitical middle, yet in every respect, his actual ideas are far right of center. He has no concern whatsoever for Zenith’s blue collar workers; he insists instead that “it’s the fellow with four to ten thousand a year... and an automobile and a nice little family in a bungalow on the edge of town, that makes the wheels of progress go round” (650). He believes that art has no business criticizing capitalism. Worst of all, his concept of social change is devoid of human sympathy, restricted solely to urban-industrial development. Immigrants and minorities have no place in his worldview, nor do intellectuals who might sympathize with their plight. Women, even white women, fare little better under his gaze, for his “ideal of American manhood and culture” is obviously entrenched in a masculine “He-man” perspective (656).

Men like Babbitt push labor-friendly and socialist ideologies to the far, unreasonable left of popular opinion by insisting that their own political opinions are the products of “sane” compromise in the center. By seizing hold of nationalist rhetoric, they use patriotic boosterism to endorse their pro-capital, racist, and misogynistic ideologies, successfully redefining normal as right of center. But in the homogenized world they advocate, distinct regional identifications suggest possible modes of resistance. The pastoral and agrarian traditions of the Midwest and the South, respectively, were notably anti-capitalist and anti-industrial, even if the reality of those associations changed in the twentieth century, when industrialization was in many places simply inevitable. One salesman Babbitt meets on a train offers a trite summary of the South’s regional economy: “Business conditions not very good down there.” Another chimes in about a different region: “Well, business conditions ain’t what they ought to be in the West, neither, not by a long shot” (613). These places frustrate Babbitt and company because they are accidental pockets of resistance within their hyper-capitalist utopia of technological and financial progress.

Babbitt is a novel that acknowledges the value of difference—be it regional, ideological, religious, or artistic in nature—in resisting the questionable allure of a blandly homogenized American culture. Where, then, is the regional voice in the novel’s Midwest? Where are the traces of Middle Western culture as celebrated by regionalist writers in the nineteenth century? Where is the folksy conventional wisdom Lewis had aptly parodied in *Main Street*? Zenith’s chief literary talent, Chum Frink, produces only limply nationalistic verses wholly devoid of regional character.³ But the city’s advertisements—ubiquitous in newspapers and junk mail—are infused with flimsy Midwestern pastoralism. Babbitt, an author of such ads, considers himself a member of “the new school of Poets of Business.” Dictating a list of available properties to his secretary, he takes a stab at local color advertising, making sure to capitalize on

the rural spelling and pronunciation of certain words: “I just want to know can I do you a whaleuva favor? Honest! No kidding! I know you’re interested in getting a house, not merely a place where you hang up the old bonnet but a love-nest for the wife and kiddies—and maybe for the flivver out beyant (be sure and spell that b-e-y-a-n-t, Miss McGoun) the spud garden” (520). The regional dialect of Midwestern literature is here repurposed to sell real estate. As a realtor, Babbitt’s specialty is the commodification of place, and we find him using a new exploitative form of “regional writing” to advance his practice.

Grace Flandrau’s novel *Being Respectable* (1923) is similarly concerned with the changing role of Midwestern place in the face of industrial progress. Published one year after *Babbitt*, many contemporary reviewers rightly viewed Flandrau’s book as a follow-up to Lewis’s. Reviewing the novel, Fitzgerald compared the two but was careful to make an important distinction: “[*Being Respectable*] is a satirical arraignment of the upper class of a Middle Western city—in this case, St. Paul, Minnesota, as *Babbitt*, generally speaking, was concerned with the upper-middle class of Minneapolis” (“Minnesota’s Capital” 35). Despite these slight variations in setting and focus, Flandrau shares Lewis’s concern for the homogenization of American place and the rise of a bland national culture facilitated by popular media and technology. Columbia—the fictional city in which the novel’s plot transpires—is, like *Babbitt*’s Zenith, a city that functions as a synecdoche for the larger nation. Its name evokes the legacy of Christopher Columbus as well as the utopian vision of the Chicago Columbian Exposition at the 1893 World’s Fair. The novel captures Columbia’s loss of local and regional identity as its citizens become associated with reactionary, conservative nationalism and infatuated by products of American popular culture. Flandrau’s more thoughtful characters express a *Babbitt*-esque disgust at the spreading sameness of people and places in the US of the

early twentieth century, as is evident in this exchange between young capitalist Charles Carpenter and his liberal sister Deborah:

“What’s the matter with Columbia? It’s no different from Kansas City or St. Paul or Minneapolis or—”

“Or Indianapolis or Cleveland or all the rest of them. I guess that’s true. That’s the trouble. They’re like something made by machinery—all exactly the same. And they’re so—uninspired. Columbia’s so uninspired.” (*Being Respectable* 101)

Later, a visiting (and visibly bored) novelist echoes this sentiment, remarking at a party, “The average of American society is everywhere pretty much like this” (193). Flandrau’s narrator insists that the Midwestern Columbia is indeed a typical, middle-of-the-road American city—but it is only through the voluntary sacrifice of regional character and local interests that such places have allowed themselves to be reduced to type.

Like Lewis, Flandrau places the blame for this infectious homogenization on forces of modernity the Lynds would later refer to as “space-binding agencies” (*Middletown in Transition* 380), elements of technological progress and syndicated media that work to make the nation a functionally smaller place. Automobiles, which reduced the significance of spatial distance while simultaneously contributing new demands to the national market (for metals, fuels, and for cars themselves), comprise one such force. Though the autos of the age were somewhat unreliable for travelling long distances, efficient railroad systems made cross-country, inter-regional travel a matter of simply having the money to afford the ticket.⁴ Wireless telegraphy, an invention of the previous century, continued to permit communication across vast physical distances long into the twentieth century. Syndicated newspaper columns, widely read “slick” magazines, and the ubiquitous presence of commercial advertisements were homogenizing forces in their own right. Products of the era, from Campbell’s Soup to Continental Motors, were proudly promoted as parts of an abstract American culture; ads invited consumers to

practice patriotism through purchasing. These technological, media, and commercial interventions are on display in the novel. Though Flandrau is no Luddite, she and her characters plainly recognize that such novelties have fused Columbia and the Midwest to the larger nation, thereby compromising the discrete individuality of city and region. The 1920s America of *Being Respectable* is, thanks to free-market capitalism, the amazing shrinking country—a land in which distance is no object because money is the only object. In one scene, Deborah Carpenter drives her thoroughly modern car through Columbia’s urbanized cityscape and thinks to herself, “Bungalettes, culturette, religionettes, everything in the diminutive. More people having things, so everything was smaller. Was that democracy?” (275) Flandrau’s overarching project, however, is less an indictment of democracy in general than of “our ten-cent store civilization” in a particularly conservative, materialistic, insular, and anti-intellectual era (71). Her goal of critiquing the facile, reactionary conservatism of Middle America—and, by connection, that of mainstream American culture—is one shared by a pair of sociologists who captured in their two major studies portraits of an insular, conservative Midwest and thus corroborated the prose evidence of their literary counterparts.

Middletown: A Midwestern City “Shifting its Centers”

In 1929, after writers like Tarkington and Lewis had been using fiction to contradict flawed conceits of the American “middle” for roughly a decade, sociologists Robert Staughton Lynd and his wife Helen Merrell Lynd published their survey of Muncie, Indiana as *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*. They selected Muncie as the focus of their study because of its utter averageness: geographically, it was part of Middle America and boasted a “temperate climate” (7); in terms of population, it was a mid-sized American city dominated by middle-class

whites; economically, it was a booming industrial town like many others in the country. As they explained in their introduction, “A typical city, strictly speaking, does not exist, but the city studied was selected as having many features common to a wide group of communities” (3). They chose not to study cities with large “negro” populations because they felt these reflected neither national census numbers nor America’s lily-white self-image. From 1924 to 1927, the Lynds performed field work in Muncie (called “Middletown” to mask its actual identity), conducting interviews and collecting data on how a “typical” American city was being affected by forces of modernity in the age of industrial capitalism. As is suggested by their frequent insistence upon the “middle-of-the-road quality about Middletown,” their writings on Muncie often turn into generalized reflections on the larger nation (9). Through the process of analyzing Muncie, the researchers envisioned themselves taking the average of American life and providing readers across the country with insight into modern US standards of living. Thus, it is not inaccurate to read *Middletown* as more generally about 1920s America than specifically about 1920s Muncie (after all, the book is subtitled *A Study in American Culture*), but in doing so it is important to realize that the Lynds participate in the tendency, common in the era, to treat the Midwest as synecdoche of the United States. They do not regard Muncie, the state of Indiana, or the Midwest as places deeply invested in local or regional identity; rather, they find in Middletown evidence arguing for the emergence of a homogenous national character. In large part, *Middletown* chronicles the correlation between widening income disparity between classes and shrinking cultural differences between people and places.

In Middletown and other cities like it, the Lynds observe a dedicated striving for normalcy. Advertising and popular media have contributed to this survival instinct of blending in, but the sociologists attribute its rise primarily to the modern credit economy, which they

describe as “a repressive agent to standardize widening sectors of the habits of the business class—to vote the Republican ticket, to adopt golf as their recreation, and to refrain from ‘queer,’ i.e., atypical, behavior” (47). Getting money from lenders or simply buying expensive items on installment plans requires trust between debtors and debt-holders; the interrelationships formed in these exchanges also require complex interaction between institutions and individuals of different backgrounds. The Lynds argue that cultural homogeneity among members of the business class serves to artificially synthesize a semblance of trust by reducing difference. “Never,” they write, “was there more pressure in the business world for solidarity, conformity, and wide personal acquaintance than exists today under the current credit economy” (278). They contend that boosterism and nationalism contribute to this conformity as part of a “blanket pattern solution” tied to abstract symbols of place and nation that convey little meaningful information but reinforce a constructed in-group identity (486-87, 492). Writing about political sensibilities as well as spending habits and cultural groupthink, the Lynds reach the following conclusion: “An explanation of the tendency already noted for Middletown to link its emotional loyalties together, to vote the good-fellow ticket straight, may probably lie in its increasing sense of strain and perplexity in its rapidly changing world that can be made to hang together and make sense in no other way” (500).

The Lynds’ overarching argument implies that Middletown’s citizens and the larger American population have tended to mistake simplicity for “middle-ness” and even-handed objectivity, when in truth they have simply chosen the political right as the path of least resistance. Towards this end, they comment on the “obliteration of difference” between major American political parties, all of which are essentially conservative (414). *Middletown* shows that in the 1924 presidential election the city’s inhabitants voted overwhelmingly for pro-

business incumbent Coolidge, regardless of socioeconomic background (316). The Lynds attribute the working class's voting against its own economic interests to the general political apathy pervading the nation. After the Harding administration's Teapot Dome scandal, corruption and public office became essentially synonymous to the average American. Voter turnout, the Lynds note, declined sharply in Middletown during the 1920s, reversing an increase in civic participation that began early in the Progressive Era. Even though the modern Republican Party had more or less squandered the goodwill it had earlier generated with reform candidates like Teddy Roosevelt, it survived on voter apathy and the association of both Democrats and Republicans with rampant corruption. Fin-de-siècle Republicans had been more effective representatives of the American middle class than their Jazz Age successors, a shift evident in the third-party defections of Progressive Republican stalwarts like Roosevelt and La Follette. Nevertheless, as the Lynds observe in *Middletown* and its sequel, Americans continued to optimistically link these men and even Lincoln to the modern Republican Party, fantasizing about a middle-of-the-road aspect of the party that had, like the pastoral Midwest, ceased to exist.

In their 1937 follow-up, *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts*, the Lynds trace the decline of Midwestern regional identity to broader access to national media, a change that led consumers to prefer syndicated newspaper columns and radio programs over their local counterparts.⁵ In the twenties and thirties, radio especially served as a vehicle of nationalism and American identity, for it “carrie[d] people away from localism and [gave] them direct access to the more popular stereotypes in the national life” (264). *Middletown in Transition* mourns the city's loss of regional identity and its new awareness of itself not as a synecdoche but as a homogenized node in a homogenous network.⁶ The Lynds write,

What one appears to be witnessing... is a struggle between the old pride in localism, in being Middletown, and the opposed pride in being *en rapport* with the 'newest,' the 'smartest,' the 'most approved by the right people in the big outside world'.... Living as Middletown does today with an unprecedented number of space-binding agencies that bring to it contact with the habits and possessions of authoritative people who 'belong' in the wider national culture, Middletown is shifting its centers of 'belonging' at a number of specific points to conform to these more distant centers of prestige. (379-80)

Per the Lynds observations, this decline in regional difference, part of a "universal toning down of contrasting colors" (381n), was matched by a homogenization of the work force. Due to industrial progress, semi-skilled machine labor rapidly replaced highly trained hand labor—a devolution of aptitude evident in the transition of Muncie's glass industry from a manual blowing process to a machine-enabled one. The relative simplicity of handling such devices eradicated the phenomenon of apprenticeship and switched out trained workers for "quickly interchangeable semiskilled human machine parts" (65). Production increased, profits rose, but unskilled and semi-skilled workers had far less to bargain with in disputes with management and owners, because they were essentially replaceable flesh-and-blood automata. Thus, the impression of Muncie—and, by connection, mainstream America—that the Lynds leave is one of a widespread, infectious cultural homogeneity that pretends at being middle-class, fair-minded, and ambiguously patriotic but is, behind the façade, fanatically pro-business, staunchly conservative, and more on the side of capital than the actual middle class.

There are striking similarities of theme and style shared between the Lynds sociological discourse on the Middle Western region and the earlier efforts in fiction of post-WWI Midwestern authors. Though the Lynds privilege their data-oriented approach over the more abstract critiques of fiction writers, their conclusions on the homogenization of American place are virtually indistinguishable from those of Lewis in *Babbitt* and, to a slightly lesser extent, Fitzgerald in *Gatsby*.⁷ In their 1937 volume on Middletown, the Lynds' closing remarks for their

section on the city's working class read like an apt paraphrase of *Gatsby's* ending, matching the prose cadence and themes nearly note for note: "The Middletown worker may be licked by the economic order now—and now—and now—in the endless series of each day's immediate issues; but the only generalizations about his life that culture has taught him concern *tomorrow*, and 'tomorrow' according to the American formula always means 'progress,' getting closer to whatever it is that one craves" (454, emphasis in original).⁸ The Lynds' fusion of anti-capitalistic sentiment and literary style is, though probably accidental, nevertheless appropriate, for the economic hardships of the Depression had a remarkable impact on American literary genres. Regional genres like the Western experienced a revival, and cowboy tales were frequently adapted as films. Middle Western regionalist prose surged in popularity, and the "Midwestern farm novel" rose from its nineteenth-century grave. Some writers, such as Herbert Krause and Frederick Manfield, used the form to celebrate the Midwest's complex multiracial history. Others, most famously John Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), looked to the dried-out South Central region of the American West to explore how its economic troubles reflected failures of infrastructure on the national level. As the Depression undermined some Americans' faith in capitalism, nationalism, and especially consumerism, creators and audiences seemed to grow more interested in works on local and regional character. Steinbeck's Oklahoman Joad family became the face of the Great Depression, and 20th Century Fox assigned conservative creators (Darryl Zanuck and John Ford) to the 1940 film adaptation project to temper the author's leftist sympathies so as not to offend audiences. Thus, the filmic Joads emerge as a calculated effort to manufacture an artificially moderate West in the 1930s, a synthetic environment similar to the artificially moderate Midwest that modernists had railed against in the 1920s.

From Middletown to Lake Wobegon and back to Fitzgerald

Whenever Garrison Keillor broadcasts homey Midwestern parables live from the Fitzgerald Theater in St. Paul, he reminds us that the notion of a semi-pastoral, politically-centered, middle-class-friendly Midwest endures to this day, even as the governments of Midwestern states like Wisconsin and Ohio work to strip laborers of privileges that have for decades been sacrosanct. Though politics on the national level barrel headlong into irresolvable divisiveness between liberals and conservatives, pundits persist in categorizing American political sympathies as predicated by region: the liberal Northeast, the somehow more liberal West Coast, the conservative South, and, of course, the moderate Midwest. Television shows and feature films promote these reductive identities in popular culture, frequently exaggerating them for comedic value but reinforcing them nevertheless. Is the Midwest really more moderate than other parts of America? If we define “moderate politics” as bipartisan cooperation to ensure a healthy relationship between the interests of labor and capital, then the winner-takes-all game of modern American politics suggests an answer in the negative. As uncompromisingly conservative, business-friendly Republican governors take Midwestern states, the region deviates from its historically Progressive roots. Electoral results from presidential elections since 2000 also show a political rift between Midwestern states in the east and west of the region; those closer to the Northeast tend to go blue, while those further away tend towards red.

Still, as recently as November 2, 2011, trustworthy news stalwart Tom Brokaw could be heard promulgating the “moderate Midwesterner” stereotype on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, assuring the host, “What I find when I go out in the country is they feel that Washington is walled off from them. So, if you go to a mid-sized city in mid-America, for example, you find

the Republican banker working with the Democrat who is a backhoe operator or a contractor of some kind, because they have to get on with their lives.” Brokaw’s imaginary Midwest is oddly reminiscent of the pastoral Middle West of the nineteenth century, a place closer in spirit to Lake Wobegon than to Lake Michigan. It is circumscribed securely within the fantastical zone of wishful political thinking that writers and sociologists sought earnestly to debunk in the twenties and thirties.

America’s Electoral College and two-party political system, both of which reduce presidential elections to matters of cartographic division and state population, have played profound roles in sustaining essentially Victorian regional stereotypes well into the twenty-first century. Their reductive machinations permit news consumers to gaze at a two-toned national map and see what states in which regions choose “red” or “blue” candidates, providing the illusion of “big tent” political affiliations and widespread agreement among party-line voters. But these are deceptive simplicities, for the advent of the internet has facilitated the dissemination of factional movements that defy normative “red” and “blue” labels—like the Tea Party, which blends libertarian economic policies with seemingly contradictory moral conservatism, and Occupy Wall Street, which advocates Progressive-style corporate reform using a populist-anarchic protest framework. Tip O’Neill’s assertion that “all politics is local” seems necessarily dated in an era when social networking sites and gleefully non-objective news media sources invite users to cocoon themselves within their preferred agendas, interacting only with likeminded individuals who may live several states away.

What, then, could literary and sociological discourses on region from the 1920s and 30s possibly tell us about the political significance of American place in our own times? The answer is: quite a bit. Tarkington, Fitzgerald, Lewis, Flandrau, and the Lynds inhabited a context little

different from ours in its overvaluation of regional stereotypes even then being rendered irrelevant by the “space-binding agencies” of technology and commerce. These writers did not invent a means of thinking beyond persistent nineteenth-century definitions of regional identity, but they worked hard to expose how such tropes mask the presence of social unrest, economic ills, and reactionary conservatism. On the surface, their concern for the homogenization of American culture appears unconnected or oppositional to what political commentators fear the most in our time: the irreconcilable bi-polarization of Americans into non-valent liberal and conservative camps. However, efforts by these modernist-era writers to reveal the political agendas undergirding “centrist” positions retain their potency today, as nearly all fringe groups bandy about populist rhetoric and claim to represent the disappearing middle class. The Tea Party, for example, revives the Nixonian conceit of the “silent majority,” while Occupy Wall Street seeks to mobilize the “ninety-nine percent” of non-wealthy Americans against the unfair practices of the rich, elite “one percent.” Their views disseminated over the internet, their proponents courted by nationally syndicated news media, these movements are not rooted in any particular place and are incapable of being categorized in traditional regional-political frameworks. Despite their seeming incorporeality, the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street alike organize traditional protest events in targeted locations to promote their visions of social change on the national level. Thus, their modes of critique in some ways resemble the post-regionalist discourses of Midwestern writers of the modernist era, who invoked bygone notions of place to effect political resistance in a time when the actual significance of place was waning. But their centrist claims also ring familiar, sounding reminiscent of groups as disparate as the People’s Party, the Progressives, and Coolidge-style pro-captial Republicans. It is important to remember that elements from modern fringe groups are steadily being incorporated (much as the Populist

movement was at the turn of the century) by the two major political parties, both of whom are eager to appeal to undecided, middle-of-the-road voters.

There is a final reason why fictions on region by Fitzgerald and his early twentieth-century peers remain relevant: they wrote on the value of place when the nation and the world stood on the verge of economic collapse, as it so often seems today. Region and place in general declined in importance while the Boom economy accelerated the speed at which money moved products and ideas from zone to zone, but these writers accurately predicted that the pace was unsustainable. Access to technology, fuel, and capital dwindled in the Depression, and, for a time, geographic distances seemed less surmountable and more significant. These concerns have resurged somewhat in the current global recession, leading scholars to turn to sustainability studies and many consumers to become distance-conscious (or pro-local) in their purchases. In this light, the nostalgic fictions of Tarkington and Fitzgerald especially emerge as thoughtful considerations of how in the environment of late capitalism definitions of region and valuations of place are functions of the national, as well as the global, economy.

Notes

¹ Fitzgerald knew Flandrau, who lived in St. Paul, personally. Through her, he met Harold Ober, who was to remain his literary agent until near the end of his life (Taylor 63).

² A comparable train scene appears in Chapter 3 of *Main Street*, but Lewis's depiction of the rural-agrarian Midwest is completely purged of the nostalgia that plagues Fitzgerald's writing. Lewis's passengers share space with grimy immigrants who form a new "American peasantry" (26), and out of the train windows they look on rustic chaos, "[t]owns as planless as a scattering of pasteboard boxes on an attic floor" (24).

³ Lewis appears to have modeled Frink on actual newspaper poets like Edgar Guest, who promulgated cardboard Hallmark-ian patriotism in their inspirational poems.

⁴ In *The Global Remapping of American Literature* (2011), Paul Giles treats the emergence of commercial aviation as a major theme in Fitzgerald's late works (131-33).

⁵ Experimental portions of John Dos Passos's *USA Trilogy* (1930-36) emulate the form, style, and content of syndicated media to show how these forces have reduced regional and local differences to what Miles Orvell calls "a ticker-tape sameness" (*Real Thing* 264). Elsewhere, Giles has described Dos Passos's "great theme" as "the new contiguity of near and far, the way in which distant events shape local contingencies" (*Global Remapping* 130). It is worth noting, too, that Dos Passos was himself a Midwesterner, born in Chicago.

⁶ *Middletown in Transition* contains a dig at Fitzgerald that shows how sharply the author's cultural stock had plummeted in the Depression. Discussing morally conservative trends among American youths, the Lynds write, "There is little evidence in Middletown of the conservative reaction among the young to the 'Scott Fitzgerald wave' of the early 1920's that some people believe set in in the United States late in the 1920's" (164). Here, Fitzgerald is reduced to a symbol of excess. To put this reduction in context, it is worthwhile to remember that in 1936, one year before the publication of *Middletown in Transition*, Ernest Hemingway had mocked his old friend in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," quipping that he worshipped the rich as a "special glamorous race." Fitzgerald had somehow become associated with the dispassionate rich he mocked in his fiction.

⁷ Discursive overlaps between social-scientific prose and early twentieth-century creative fiction suggest that many Midwestern modernists were inventing a kind of "urban planning novel." Deviating slightly from traditional realism, novelists like Tarkington, Lewis, and Flandrau

showed an unprecedented interest in city layouts, population demographics, and citizens' spending habits. On network television today, the NBC series *Parks & Recreation* has revived these old themes by mining the topic of Midwestern urban planning for humor.

⁸ Compare to:

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—to-morrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther.... And then one fine morning—

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

(*Gatsby* 180)

WESTWARD EXPANSION, ECONOMIC CONTRACTION: THE “SEMI-COWBOY” POLITICS OF FITZGERALD’S *THE LAST TYCOON*¹

At the end of his short life, after travelling the country and the globe, F. Scott Fitzgerald settled in Los Angeles to eke out a respectable income as a script doctor so that he could pay for his wife’s hospital bills and his daughter’s college tuition. He continued to write and sell stories, including tales of regional flavor, like his Civil War romance “The End of Hate” (1940) and his Hollywood comedy shorts featuring Pat Hobby. But Fitzgerald’s time in LA is most memorable for what he did not write—or, at least, what he could not write to conclusion. His unfinished Hollywood novel, *The Last Tycoon*, has come to be regarded as one of literature’s great fragments. Bolstered by the high regard of critics and its hearty afterlife in popular culture (including two movie adaptations), it has proven to be as enticingly incomplete as Dickens’s *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Nabokov’s *The Original of Laura*, and Hemingway’s *The Garden of Eden*.² From the moment Edmund Wilson published the edited manuscript in 1941, *Tycoon* seemed destined to be viewed as evidence of Fitzgerald’s miraculously untarnished promise. Indeed, Wilson said as much in his preface, applying an aspirational gloss to the fragmented work. But in 1993, Matthew J. Bruccoli offered his own “restored” *Tycoon*, arguing that Wilson’s editing had given readers a false sense of coherence and that the manuscript was in fact far more fractured than the 1941 version implied. Bruccoli broke apart episodes that had been artificially welded together, undid Wilson’s odd emendations, and included portions of Fitzgerald’s working notes to hint at what might have been. He also expanded the novel’s title to *The Love of the Last Tycoon: A Western*, basing his decision on a surviving title page (reprinted in the new edition’s introduction). Readers and reviewers responded positively to Bruccoli’s editorial detective work. In a review for the *Chicago Tribune*, Scott Donaldson lauded his efforts to “deWilsonize” the text as a “service to the author and to American literature.”

Publisher's Weekly praised in particular the restoration of the “ostensible working title, one that implies that Hollywood is the last American frontier.”

But even if the restored title better reflects Fitzgerald's conceptualization of his unfinished project, it is inarguably unwieldy, its components sagging with potential meaning. Thus, I devote this chapter to what a single essential part of it—the subtitle, *A Western*—signifies about problems of region, genre, and economy in the novel. Besides situating this “Western” text in dialogue with Fitzgerald's extant fictional treatment of regional difference, I wish to address how the allusion to the Western film genre allies *Tycoon* with a body of cinematic work as ideologically conflicted as Fitzgerald's own corpus. Because the problematic subtitle applies a calculated inflection to interpretations of the larger work, it is best regarded as what French theorist Gerard Genette has termed a “paratext,” a liminal textual space between work and world (located in dedications, covers, indexes, and the like) that functions as a “privileged space of pragmatics and strategy, of an influence on the public” (*Paratexts* 2). These seemingly extra-textual components irrevocably color the reception of a given work, thereby forming an interpretive crossroads where the disparate politics of reader and writer meet with the material and economic existence of the text. Genette reminds us that a seemingly innocuous subtitle can do additional political work to complement that performed by the text proper.

Brucoli observed in a note on the title that “Fitzgerald was in fact writing a Western—a novel about the last American frontier, where immigrants and sons of immigrants pursued and defined the American dream. It is appropriate that these tycoons made movie Westerns: they too were pioneers” (*Last Tycoon* xvii). An early title page refers to the work-in-progress as *STAHR: A Romance*, so we recognize the shift in genres as a calculated gesture on Fitzgerald's part; it is the gesture's significance that remains contested (xv). Bearing this in mind, I propose to

evaluate the “Western” qualities and paratextual elements of Fitzgerald’s unfinished novel. My goal is to examine how *Tycoon* is a Western of sorts, for here genre is not an arbitrary classification but a producer of socioeconomic meaning. My general argument is that Fitzgerald invoked the Western film genre—the popularity of which had waxed, waned, and waxed once more in its forty years of existence—in part to represent the cyclical, Spengler-inspired model of history discussed in the text and philosophized in his private correspondence. Moreover, *Tycoon*’s ambivalent depiction of the production aspect of American cinema, a division evident in the book’s pro-union concern for blue collar laborers involved in the making of films contra its counterintuitive worship of the moguls and stars who receive primary credit for the finished products, reflects the complex and contradictory views on labor Fitzgerald held at different milestones in his life. As such, the generic collision of labor-conscious Western film and creator-centric great American novel that occurs in *Tycoon* affords us an excellent opportunity to examine historical problems of labor and production as they appear in Fitzgerald’s work. Towards this end, I will explicate the subtitle’s invocation of the Western region, the Western genre, and Western civilization writ large.

Western as Region

The most fundamental act performed by the subtitle *A Western* is its integration of the novel within the network of Fitzgerald’s other observations on region. In a strictly geographical sense, all of his Hollywood stories and a handful of other tales—*Tycoon*, the Pat Hobby series, and “The Diamond as Big as the Ritz” (1922) spring to mind—are literally Westerns by necessity of their setting, and Fitzgerald was more sensitive to regional differences than many of his peers, probably because he lived in so many diverse US locales throughout his life.³

Throughout his writing career, he made a habit of identifying the definitive traits he felt to be unique to certain regions of the US. A thorough consideration of Fitzgerald's work reveals that he often was more regionalist in his biases than he was racist or sexist, a trait perhaps best evidenced by one telling remark in "The Crack-Up" (1936) essays: "Like most Middle Westerners, I have never had any but the vaguest racial prejudices" (*The Crack-Up* 73). This odd comment reveals an author more prone to generalize about regions and their inhabitants than about race, gender, or class. In previous chapters, I have analyzed Fitzgerald's philosophical debts to Adams and Mencken in his conceptualization of climatic determinism in the South and his citation of nineteenth-century Midwestern regionalism in his celebration of the Midwest as the geographic embodiment of the American middle class.

In the writings from the end of his life, however, Fitzgerald bent his critical gaze further west still, to the American West Coast. Fitzgerald's California, much like his Georgia, is a place where temperature adversely affects its inhabitants. But, unlike the melted-in-place people of his fictional South, these Westerners are nearly all regional transplants. The motion picture industry draws in people from across the nation and even the world. It sweats their labor out and leaves them dried in the heat. Fitzgerald describes the process thusly in *Tycoon*:

There was lassitude in plenty—California was filling up with weary desperadoes. And these were tense young men and women who lived back East in spirit while they carried on a losing battle against the climate. But it was everyone's secret that sustained effort was difficult here—a secret that Stahr scarcely admitted to himself. But he knew that people from other places spurted a pure rill of new energy for a while. (80)

Like much of Fitzgerald's earlier work, then, *Tycoon* courts the theme of regional difference and the conflation of temperature and temperament, with special attention paid as usual to the relationship between labor and climate. Aside from their value in understanding how Fitzgerald interpreted regional difference and economy, these features must also, in whatever works they

appear, be regarded as pertaining at least in part to his concern with his own creative output. Throughout his writing career, Fitzgerald envisioned himself as a laborer as much as an artist, keenly aware that sales of his potboiler stories allowed him to provide for his family. Nor did his participation in the Hollywood script assembly line alter his perception of art as a fungible commodity. His brief career in the film business, despite being profitable, appears to have been a prolonged experience of professional failure, comprised mostly of rejected scripts and dropped contracts. He noted his dislike of California's "monotonous climate" and the "flat, scentless tone" of its weather, suggesting that boredom and discontent contributed to his writer's block (*Letters* 118). Elsewhere, he returns to the relationship of temperament and temperature, positing that the monotony of the weather creates a bland society in LA. It is, he writes, "a slack *soft* place... [where] the sin is to upset anyone else.... Everywhere there is, after a moment, either corruption or indifference" (429, emphasis in original). In Fitzgerald's mind, the climate and culture of the American West impaired his ability to write, and his comments in *Tycoon* and in letters find him resorting to his old theories of regional difference to explain his slowed production without placing too much emphasis on his alcoholism. His personal reflections on the intersections of region and labor are significant in two respects: they point to a set of regional distinctions in Fitzgerald's work that help situate *Tycoon* as a Western novel and they also remind us in a roundabout fashion that the author viewed his writings as salable products of labor as much as works of art.

Fitzgerald's negative portrayal of the West as an arid region of malaise and discontent differs considerably from the optimistic treatments churned out by turn-of-the-century fictionalizers of the open frontier and the cowboys who tamed it. As Michael Kimmel observes in *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, the American West as fictionalized by Owen Wister

and illustrated by Frederic Remington functioned as a site of masculine renewal, a playground in which emasculated men might rediscover their animal instincts far away from feminine influence. A frontiersman in such a region was “free in a free country, embodying republican virtue and autonomy” (101). But the West of Fitzgerald’s Hollywood “Western” is no such place, and only his dashing protagonist Monroe Stahr qualifies as such a man. Besides merely reflecting Fitzgerald’s growing dissatisfaction with his work for the studios, this shift in the depiction of regional qualities may be traced in part to Hollywood’s growing reputation as a bastion of anti-capitalistic sentiment (which would in the subsequent decade lead to investigations by the House Un-American Activities Committee and the blacklisting of “uncooperative witnesses”). Robert Westbrook, Sheilah Graham’s son, observes that “the frankly left-wing politics of Hollywood in the late thirties” must not be omitted from any account of Fitzgerald’s last days, for “sex and left-wing ideology was a great deal of what Hollywood in the thirties was all about” (*Intimate Lies* 5). The West Coast, the literal end of the American frontier, came to be regarded by the public and by legislators less as a primordially republican open space and more as a crowded, left-leaning metropolitan center. In Fitzgerald’s Western environment, the cowboys were long gone, the gold rushes over, and the capitalist tycoons increasingly maligned in an era of stark economic hardship.⁴ The novel addresses these re-evaluations of the West by toying with expected tropes of the Western formula, deploying them with a sharp critical purpose. By labeling *Tycoon* a “Western” and contrasting present day Hollywood with the West’s mythic frontier past, Fitzgerald analyzes cultural differences between two significant eras in the history of an American region. But an appreciation of the several genres colliding in the text is prerequisite for processing the political import of their collision.

Western as Genre

The manner in which the novel's subtitle invokes the Western genre impels the reader to approach the text under the influence of the generic sensibilities attending cowboy narratives. As John Frow reminds us, "Genre guides interpretation because it is a constraint on semiosis," and it also "defines a set of expectations which guide our engagement with texts" (*Genre* 101, 104). Nevertheless, one of the most puzzling aspects of *The Last Tycoon*'s subtitle is that little strictly related to the Western genre of film and literature takes place within the novel. If we seek in *Tycoon* the obvious tropes of frontier masculinity and violent justice that tend to shape classic Westerns, we will be sorely disappointed. Only one cowboy, the out-of-work character actor Johnny Swanson, appears in the surviving text, standing "on the corner in his semi-cowboy clothes staring gloomily past the moon" at the beginning of Episode 4 (21). As such, the Western qualities of Fitzgerald's final work can best be appreciated through analyses of understated or "semi-cowboy" elements. This entails, first, a brief examination of the gender trouble sketched in outline by taunting omissions that refer to the Western cowboy even as they perpetually defer his representation and, second, a longer consideration of how Fitzgerald appropriates the subtexts of politics and economy that have historically permeated Western narratives.

If a fascination with the hyper-masculine cowboy figure recurs in Fitzgerald's late work, it may be traced in part to his long-standing friendship with fellow Princetonian Sap Donahoe, whom Fitzgerald refers to in *The Crack-Up* as his moral conscience (*Crack-Up* 79). In the summer of 1915, the aspiring writer spent some time with Donahoe's family on their Montana ranch. A photo from the vacation shows a dust-flecked Fitzgerald improbably decked out in rancher clothes (Meyers 24). Fitzgerald's experience working alongside ranch-hands and joining

in their poker games appears in retrospect an absurd outlier in his biography, as far removed from the nervous revelry of his Jazz Age existence as his eventual exile in Hollywood. From this biographical perspective, the elision of cowboys from Fitzgerald's self-described "Western" novel can be regarded as a comment on masculinity in the modern era; that the idealized cowboy's rugged individualism is ephemeral and outmoded in the face of late capitalism is represented by his absence in thought and action. In this updated Western, what we find instead of frontiersmen engaged in manly, honest work are emasculated city dwellers skittering from paycheck to paycheck, cowering in the shadow of an encroaching war. *Tycoon* measures the male-dominated frontier fantasy of the Hollywood Western against the genuinely emasculated America of the Great Depression, which Kimmel describes as a country of men in search of new ways to express and validate their masculinity.

But one must bear in mind that the Depression-era Western revival had barely begun when Fitzgerald began working on *Tycoon*. And Irving Thalberg, the actual producer in whose image Monroe Stahr was modeled, made movies at a time when Westerns were in many respects unpopular, so he did little work within the genre.⁵ He died in 1936, three years before films like John Ford's *Stagecoach* revived studio and public interest in the big-budget Western. Richard Slotkin observes in *Gunfighter Nation*, his lengthy study on the Western genre's impact on American culture, that the state of the filmic Western during the mid-1930s was rather unenviable. Though the form had enjoyed wild popularity during the silent and early talkie eras, shifts in taste and public perception led to halt of studio interest in A-grade Westerns. The cowboy films of the thirties were typically B-movies, cheap distractions that took up space on a double feature, or musical Westerns, designed to take advantage of developments in cinematic technology. Noting that in the US the Great Depression coincided with a drought in prestige

Western films, Slotkin posits that the bitter realities of economic hardship led politicians as well as movie audiences to reevaluate the significance of the frontier and even to see in its closure a metaphor for the decline of expansionist capitalism. The Westerns of the Progressive Era had dealt with continental imperialism and resource acquisition in a celebration of American ingenuity and industry, reflecting a hope that the closed frontiers of Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis might be figuratively reopened in the sense of capitalist economic growth. This mood, however, did not accord with the dire straits of the Depression. Slotkin quotes from one of FDR's radio addresses to illustrate how the significance of the frontier had changed. In 1932, FDR lamented that "our last frontier has long since been reached," and he dissuaded the public from taking hope in imperialist conquest or "exploitation of natural resources" by encouraging a new interest in "distributing wealth and products equitably" (256-57). The coincidence of these political reassessments of the American frontier coupled with the resurgence of Western films near the end of the thirties suggests the genre's decade-long slump was accompanied by serious soul-searching on behalf of filmmakers and audiences to determine the present value of the frontier in fiction and on screen. Beset from without by the ideological challenges of communism and fascism, disempowered from within by the economic entropy of the Depression, American capitalism came to be seen in some intellectual circles as an analogue for the exhausted frontier: in decline, reaching its logical conclusion, indicative of an era's end. The Western films that followed this recognition in the subsequent revival possessed a keener political awareness than their predecessors.

Fitzgerald himself lived long enough to bear witness to the birth of the Western film (in 1902) and its eventual rebirth (in 1939). It is therefore suggestive that Fitzgerald began working on *Tycoon*, his own "Western," the very year the genre began to stage its intellectual comeback.

Frances Kroll, Fitzgerald's personal secretary, recalls in her memoir that Fitzgerald gave her his preview passes for *Destry Rides Again* (1939), a Jimmy Stewart film that helped spearhead the Western revival (*Against the Current* 74).⁶ Cowboys were in vogue once more in the Hollywood that Fitzgerald sought to capture in a novel. The resurgence of the genre seems to have provided the author with some degree of inspiration, in spite of the fact that his personal interest in cowboy movies was minimal. In a 1939 letter to an MGM story editor, Fitzgerald even alludes to characters from *Stagecoach* as he outlines his own script ideas (*Letters* 597). Moreover, the scandalous Hollywood subject matter, the provocative Western allusions, and the subversive political subtexts gave his novel a new way to appeal to the public, with whom Fitzgerald had largely fallen out of favor in the 1930s. Cash-strapped consumers had little desire to read about the Jazz Age exploits of flappers and philosophers, but they might deign to read about labor conflicts, displaced cowboys, and the Hollywood elite. Despite its temporary lull in box office popularity, the Western film and the American frontier it projected retained a certain sociopolitical cache. In a subsequent portion of this chapter section, I will address the genre's long-running engagement with the conflict between labor and capital, but there are some superficial matters that bear mentioning even if they are difficult to miss. The foremost of these is the visual corollary between the arid wastelands used as settings in countless Western films and the barren prairies of the Depression-era dustbowl. It is no coincidence that the publication of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) occurred in tandem with the Western revival, for the book's direct treatment of the subject matter is loosely reflected in the aesthetic impact of John Ford's desolate landscapes. Ford would later direct the film adaptation of Steinbeck's novel. In general, the desperation of frontier life as captured on screen shares discomfiting similarities with hand-to-mouth subsistence in the Depression.

Fitzgerald almost certainly recognized these surface connections as he endeavored to complete his novel about Hollywood in a time of political and economic crisis. And he was in fine company, for Nathanael West likewise made provocative connections between Western films and the Depression in *The Day of the Locust* (1939).⁷ The novel primarily concerns the sordid experiences of Tod Hackett, a Hollywood set designer who wishes to paint a Breughel-*esque* landscape of LA ablaze as its denizens go about their seedy business. Like *The Last Tycoon*, then, *Locust* portrays Hollywood as cultural apocalypse: the city at the end of Western civilization. Also like *Tycoon*, West's *Locust* embraces both the frontier history of California and the present state of the Western film genre as tools for expressing its vision of political apocalypse. Despair and disappointment abound in the California of *Locust*, which West portrays as the final frontier of American hedonism, a place pleasure-seekers retreat to after realizing that their vulgar lives in the East and the North are nothing like the movies. But, West writes, these transplants soon realize that the cultivated West is nothing like the movies; they feel "cheated and betrayed," having "slaved and saved for nothing" (178). This is a new manner of Manifest Destiny, a philosophy of boundless entitlement to pleasure as payment for participating in the grimy humiliations of American capitalism. It is instructive to consider that one of the mock films West places in the text is a Western which bears the loaded title of that imperialist imperative. Tod reflects in the novel that there is a real possibility of riot in response to such profound disillusion—not in California alone but across the "whole country" (118).

Fitzgerald and West's citation of the Western film draws on its historical engagement of domestic economic matters, for the Western movie genre has dealt with issues of labor and production ever since its inception. The Selig Company's 1904 Western feature *A Lynching at Cripple Creek* was a financial success primarily because it happened to be filmed near the site of

two violent labor disputes between miners and mine bosses; Selig linked the film to the violence as a publicity stunt (Smith 22-24). Moreover, the book that inspired the entire Western genre, Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, ruminates seriously upon frontier justice as doled out by powerful ranchers upon those who trespass against them. Wister's text takes the side of the ranchers, even though they lynch cattle thieves against the laws of the land. But even Wister himself came to acknowledge the inherently ambivalent politics of the genre he fathered. In his "Rededication and Preface" to the 1911 edition of *The Virginian*, he describes the book as an attack on the "many enemies" of American democracy, setting his sights on two threats from different ends of the economic spectrum: the politicized proletariat of the labor unions and the smug bourgeoisie of Wall Street (5). Patrick McGee argues that this novel, as the foundation of the entire Western genre, has defined the political divide of cowboy cinema, with some capitalist-friendly films siding with political authority or big business and other left-leaning movies sympathizing with outlaws and laborers. For McGee, the Hollywood cowboy thus comes to represent "the subject under capital, whether it identifies with or against that social force" (243). The figure is inherently embedded within the structures of capitalism, but in various works he may resist or comply with his situation.

We see in Fitzgerald's take on the American film industry both a labor-oriented appreciation of production and a consumerist's reification of the end product. *Tycoon* evinces a genuine respect for the blue collar crew that builds a movie from the ground up—the workers Fitzgerald's friend Bud Schulberg would later lionize as "Hollywood's exclusive proletariat... whose hands literally *make* pictures (*The Disenchanted* 5, emphasis in original). But Fitzgerald's novel occasionally indulges in the fantasy that a given film springs to life spontaneously by the glamorous interaction of actors, directors, and producers. The latter of

these two incompatible visions reflects the movie-going public's obsession with the celebrity component of cinema; an individual film often comes to be associated with its "tycoon" or great man, while the nameless multitudes who contributed significantly to its production are relegated to the credit reel, appreciated by few. When one considers the recurring theme of labor in *Tycoon*, one sees that its connections to the Western genre have less to do with the stereotypical trappings of the form and more with its economic significations. In his notes for *Tycoon*, Fitzgerald wrote that he wanted Stahr's studio to be marked by an "optimism only equalled [sic] by that of the River Rouge plant in its great days" (*Tycoon* 156). He alludes here to the Ford Motor Company plant in Dearborn, Michigan, which produced vehicles for the US in World War I but was in 1937 the site of a violent union-busting. Stahr, like Henry Ford, is distrustful of unions and Marxists; he rants against the Directors' Guild and then attempts to fistfight a Communist agitator named Brimmer (the name suggests political anxiety "brimming" over) in Episode 17 (127-29). But even Brimmer finds Stahr somewhat appealing, giving him mixed praise as a "paternalistic employer" in light of Stahr's admission that he sometimes views his workers as his own property (126). In Fitzgerald's surviving plans for the novel (made available in Brucoli's 1993 edition of *Tycoon*), we see that it is Stahr's partner Brady who would actually have been the union buster. An outlined episode describes him firing many studio employees and cutting the pay of others as a threat to Hollywood's various guilds and unions (181-82).

In his economic desires, Stahr is as divided an individual character as the Hollywood cowboy is in abstract. Born into poverty in New York, Stahr has since become a rich, powerful man; now, his blue collar roots struggle against his present wealth. Kroll, Fitzgerald's *Tycoon*-era confidant, remarks that by authorial design Stahr's central problem with leftist economics is that he falsely believes any hardworking American should be able to replicate his own Alger-

esque climb to success (140). He takes Marxist criticism of capitalist economics personally because it suggests that his meteoric rise was precipitated as much by blind chance as skilled determination. Though Stahr is by necessity a “subject under capital” and by birth child of poverty, pride in his particular talents prevents him from rejecting capitalism as a flawed economic system.

This particular ambivalence is no less problematic than Fitzgerald’s own relationship with American capitalism as evidenced by his life and works. Indeed, one of the most provocative aspects of his final novel’s connection to the Western genre is that it continues to illustrate, via a filmic metaphor, the dialectic between capitalism and socialism that had dogged Fitzgerald’s work since the composition of his first novel, *This Side of Paradise* (1920). In *Paradise*, Fitzgerald’s fictional stand-in Amory Blaine spends the last pages of the novel debating economics and politics with a wealthy capitalist named Ferrenby. The scene is best read as a prototype of *Tycoon*’s conflict between Stahr and the Marxist. Here, Blaine spars with the businessman over corporate influence on the media and the exploitation of workers. Paraphrasing Marx on surplus value, Blaine complains, “The root of all the business I saw around me consisted in overworking and underpaying a bunch of dubs who submitted to it” (294). He then advances his theory of a socialist government which would invite tycoons like Clarence Mackay and J.P. Morgan to actively participate in government while simultaneously capping the incomes of the wealthy. Per Blaine’s utopian vision, powerful men would jockey for honor and fame instead of hoarding wealth and impoverishing their laborers. But near the end of his diatribe he acknowledges his personal stake in social change: “A social revolution might land me on top. Of course I’m selfish” (302). Blaine identifies himself with the capitalist, whose companionship and cigars he has been enjoying all along. Fitzgerald was drawn to the

accoutrements of capitalism as much as he was repelled by them. His fictions are celebrations of moneyed leisure as much as they are criticisms of it. And though his early works give lip service to socialism, they more commonly praise the capitalistic industriousness of the self-interested egotist plying his trade with eventual success on the open market. Alternately rich and poor throughout his life, Fitzgerald occupied several different positions as a “subject under capital”—from student socialist sympathizer to largely apolitical nouveau riche to radicalized Hollywood left-winger who considered sending his daughter on an “economically organized tour” of Russia in 1939 (*Letters* 56)—so he plainly found it difficult to let his sympathies reside wholly with one party in the dialectic. *Tycoon*, then, is valuable as a testament to Fitzgerald’s socioeconomic sensibilities at the close of his life. It serves as endgame for the dialectical deadlock of alternating radicalism and conservatism that in some ways defined his work.

The Western genre to which the novel pays subtle homage provides a resilient framework for supporting such divided sympathies, since the works within its canon have historically evinced a similar political ambivalence, siding alternatively with the capitalist and communist sides of the dialectic—or, as Slotkin has defined the ideological conflict, flirting with both “progressive” industrial and “populist” agrarian sentiments (23). In *Tycoon*, the cutthroat capitalist Brady is a thematic descendant of Wister’s lawless cattle baron, a representation of the moneyed impunity facilitated by progressive capitalism. Fitzgerald’s novel stops short of sympathizing with Brady in the way that *The Virginian* sides with its lynch mob ranchers; instead, the narrator Cecilia shows equal concern for Stahr, the “good” capitalist, and Brimmer, the radical Communist. I find that the novel strives to achieve an ideological synthesis by circumnavigating the extremes of the dialectic. Slotkin points out that a Western narrative may fluctuate between progressive and populist sympathies without contradiction, and the same may

be said of Fitzgerald's "Western" as it searches for a compromise between bourgeois ingenuity and the demands of labor. Forecasting the end of Western capitalism—a cataclysm that was averted, despite the author's worst fears—the book begins to imagine a new hybridized political structure that marries socialist government with entrepreneurial innovation. The operative metaphor here is Stahr's film studio (sans the influence of Brady) as social collective: an order in which group administrative oversight reigns supreme but individual talent seldom escapes notice or reward. In the next section, I will turn my attention to the grand political upheaval Fitzgerald predicted would prefigure such a political reconciliation.

Western as Civilization

Late in the novel, as Stahr's romantic interest Kathleen reveals some details about her former lover, she mentions that he educated her in history and the arts so that she would be able to understand the works of historian Oswald Spengler. At the anecdote's conclusion, she abandons him before he begins her informal course on Spengler. The narrative ceases all discussion of Spengler at this point with the allusion dangling in midair, rife with unrealized potential, its meaning suspended and deferred like the book's strange subtitle. A link plainly exists between Spengler and the "Western" subtitle, since the historian authored his own text on the global West: the controversial two-volume analysis of civilizations in flux entitled *The Decline of the West* (originally published in 1918, translated and revised throughout the 1920s). Kathleen's brief mention of Spengler points to Fitzgerald's personal fascination with the theorist's cyclical model of civilization, and it offers us yet another reading of *Tycoon* as a Western.⁸ Spengler's *Decline* argues that all civilizations must die, and the death process begins when a productive culture crystallizes into a stagnant civilization. Spengler carefully

distinguishes between these two terms, using “culture” to signify a living, thriving body of people and “civilization” to connote the decadent “fulfillment [and] finale of a culture” (1.31). As a culture careens down its moribund spiral towards full-blown civilization, the symbols and ideas that had previously given it definition become so rigid that they can no longer accommodate the creation of new meaning. Skepticism erodes long-held values. Wars increase in frequency and cities grow overpopulated. Eventually, visionaries within the declining civilization begin to imagine and promulgate a new cultural paradigm, which will become the defining image of the emergent culture.

In the case of Western civilization, Spengler writes that the once-dominant, now-declining cultural metaphor is that of infinite space. In contradiction to the various economic, religious, geographic, and social ideas of infinity which govern Western civilization (such as the capitalist doctrine of infinite market expansion, the American pursuit of the Western frontier, or Christian faith in the unending afterlife), Spengler redefines the dying culture in terms of its finite limitations:

The future of the West is not a limitless tending upwards and onwards for all time towards our present ideals, but a single phenomenon of history, strictly limited and defined as to form and duration, which covers a few centuries and can be viewed and, in essentials, calculated from available precedents. (1.39)

One sees the death of this concept crop up in Fitzgerald’s writings from *The Great Gatsby* (1925) on, for it is in that phase of his career that the author likely began to fall under Spengler’s sway. *Gatsby* ends with a seemingly Spenglerian gesture, contrasting the limitless potential of unsettled New York’s “fresh, green breast” with the cluttered modern settlement the region would become. The dream of infinite space and new frontiers dies as culture civilizes itself, so when the narrator concludes what has been a “story of the West,” the novel’s historical turn assures us that Western civilization is in mind as much as the Midwestern region of the US (*Gatsby* 180, 176). After

Gatsby, Fitzgerald identified himself as a Spenglerian in interviews—one of which was tellingly titled “Fitzgerald, Spenglerian” (*Conversations* 86)—and much of his subsequent work shows the influence of Spengler. Kermit Moyer has singled out *Tycoon* in particular as a novel about “the decline of the West” (“Two Unfinished Novels” 242).

It is worth noting as well that the Western genre comes with its own tacitly Spenglerian associations. Western films routinely address the end of the frontier and the limits of westward expansion, thereby assessing the decline of infinite space as a viable cultural metaphor. Wheeler Winston Dixon refers to this tone as “elegiac” in its yearning for a “time now irrecoverably lost,” citing it as a stylistic link between the novels of Scott Fitzgerald and the films of John Ford (*Cinematic Vision* 83). The Western genre’s treatment of cultural change also situates it in dialogue with Spengler’s philosophy. It is possibly in light of this linkage that Fitzgerald chose to ally his novel with the Hollywood Western. The ending of *Gatsby* demonstrates the author’s tendency to pun on the myriad significance of the “west,” and in the filmic Western he struck upon a form receptive both to Spenglerian thought and his own brand of wordplay. Moreover, the transition of the novel’s title from *STARR: A Romance* to *The Love of the Last Tycoon: A Western* indicates that the project is less “romantic” (either in the medieval sense of chivalric heroism or in the Hawthornian sense of expanded possibilities) than “Western” in its treatment of frontiers, borders, anti-heroes, and end times. Because Fitzgerald had previously applied the subtitle *A Romance* to the largely unromantic *Tender is the Night* (1934), we know also that he was perfectly willing to plant his subtitles ironically when the project at hand called for it. In opting to mark *Tycoon* a “Western” instead of a “Romance,” he distanced his new manuscript from his recent semi-flop while still going in for a half-ironic title: a Western in which there are no cowboys. Yet, surface ironies aside, there were real connections between the Western

format's dire apocalyptic overtones and the present political context—connections that evaded neither Fitzgerald nor his literary peers.

For another example of a Hollywood novel in which Western civilization and Western films are provocatively conflated, we may turn once more to Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust*. Much as Fitzgerald plays with Western tropes to contribute to his portrayal of imminent political crisis, West uses a cowboy character in his own work to function as a troubling sign of the times. His animalistic Earle Shoop is an authentic cowboy, a genuine article from Arizona, but in Hollywood he merits only bit roles in B-grade "horse operas" (108). Semi-homeless, Shoop camps outdoors with his fellow cowboy transients; he is so poor that he must hunt for his food. Underemployed, uncultured, violent, and unchecked in his sexual impulses, Shoop plainly illustrates how the economic debasement of a person can result in his dehumanization. If this is the future of masculinity as enabled by the deprivations of the Depression, it is not a pretty sight. Shoop's plight bears some resemblance to that of the unemployed Western actor Johnny Swanson in *The Last Tycoon*, whose way of life as an actor in silent features has come under attack by changes in the means of cinematic production. Both cowboys are victims of what their creators depict as economic catastrophe. The presence of these down-and-out Westerners in their respective texts suggests a great deal about the role of the Western in the midcentury Hollywood novel, namely that the comparatively shabby Westerns of the Depression had fallen from grace much as the American economy had and, prior to their revival as prestige features, embodied the hackneyed dead end of a once-popular cinematic form. I think it is ultimately these economic and cultural aspects of the genre that both Fitzgerald and West have in mind when invoking Western film tropes in their novels of Depression-era Hollywood. Their readers, many of whom had witnessed the genre devolve from the novelty of the early silent Westerns to

the pulpy singing cowboy films of the 1930s, would have recognized that the form being alluded to had experienced its own manner of decline.

Other echoes of Spengler's *Decline* resound throughout the unfinished text of *Tycoon*, encouraging readers to see in Fitzgerald's depiction of the Depression-era West Coast shades of Western civilization writ large. Spengler's analysis of rural-to-urban migration prefigures Fitzgerald's critique of the Hollywood labor system in *Tycoon*. The writer's portrayal of Los Angeles as a consumptive colony comprised of "weary desperadoes... who lived back East in spirit while they carried on a losing battle against the climate" (*Tycoon* 80) calls to mind the historian's description of the paradigmatic urban center as a "giant city [that] sucks the country dry, insatiably and incessantly devouring fresh streams of men, till it wearies and dies in the midst of an almost uninhabited waste of country" (2.102). Through the Spenglerian lens, Los Angeles serves as the setting of Fitzgerald's *Tycoon* not only because it is inextricable from the modern film industry but also because it represents the end of American history and economy. Here, workers in the movie business have become utterly commodified, used up, and burned out—exploited embodiments of the labor anxieties attending the Great Depression.

The economic turbulence of the novel's historical setting, coupled with the encroaching war against the Nazis, lends its apocalyptic Spenglerian undertones some degree of credence. Westbrook shares in *Intimate Lies* Sheila Graham's recollection of Fitzgerald's vision: "Scott wanted to portray Monroe Stahr as the best and (as it looked in 1940) probably the last example of capitalism—the last tycoon, in fact, an individual who swims against the stream of the new collective" (434). Outside the novel, Fitzgerald's letters from the last two years of his life reveal that he did indeed believe the world was headed towards a political apocalypse resulting from the collision of three wholly incompatible sociopolitical forces: American-style capitalism, German

National Socialism, and Soviet communism. And though the author greatly admired Marx and agreed with the philosophical precepts of communism, he abhorred the idea held by some party members that they might “milk Marxism out of Hitler’s sterile teats” (*Letters* 77)—that Fascist victory in the war might eventually lead to real socialist revolution in the United States. *Tycoon* bears the stress of all these anxieties, condensing them into a historical narrative inflected by Spengler’s philosophy. Thus what the novel captures in its plot and characters is no less than the discourse on the end of Western civilization as the author presumes to know it. The titular assertion that Stahr is the “last tycoon” casts him as the final issue of a capitalist system hell-bent on making celebrities of its captains of industry, its barons, its moguls, its great men. Stahr’s death signals the definite decline of the Alger myth and the possible ascent of something drastically new.

As indicated by the notes collected in Brucoli’s 1993 edition of the text, the epilogue planned for the novel would have turned Stahr’s death into a homily of sorts for the purpose of addressing political and economic futures. Three children would scavenge the wreck of Stahr’s plane, each salvaging an item from the deceased Hollywood elite inside. Fitzgerald’s 1939 summary provided to Kenneth Littauer mentions that a young girl would seize the possessions of an actress, a boy would take items from a disreputable producer, and another boy would happen upon Stahr’s suitcase. In a later synopsis, Fitzgerald expands upon their personalities and names the children Frances, Dan, and Jim. Dan, he writes, would be a child corollary of the ruthless Brady, while Jim would inherit the balanced eagerness and scruples of Stahr. As in the biblical parable of the talents, Dan would squander his inheritance, though Jim would make good on his and at least have the sense to go to the police (lxiii-lxv).

Obviously no mere cautionary tale for children, the episode functions as a comment on the potential legacy of American capitalism following its presumed post-Depression dissolution. The working notes and anecdotal evidence suggest that Fitzgerald sought to pose a provocative question: What will future generations make of the moral inheritance left by men like Stahr, who embody the tireless work ethic and artisanal pride of idealized capitalism? True to the novel's larger project, this inquiry is Spenglerian in nature, for it seeks to understand the consequences of a dissolved cultural paradigm. *Tycoon* ponders, with a fatalistic post-dated nostalgia, the role of capitalism in the West after the economic crash, communism, and Hitler. Its argument follows what FDR's financial advisor James P. Warburg would soon posit in his WWII-era propagandistic treatise on diplomacy, *Foreign Policy Begins at Home* (1944): that "[r]unaway capitalism is the half-way house to fascist slavery" (viii). Yet Fitzgerald's novel also shares Warburg's ambivalent response to socialism, which the propagandist regarded as "an escape from, rather than a solution to, the basic problem of modern society," for it assigns the means of production to an abstract state apparatus and not to gifted entrepreneurs (like Stahr) who, according to national myth, once made America great.⁹

Though the novel proper functions in large part as an obituary for capitalism's "last tycoon," its projected epilogue performs the odd gesture of resituating capitalism at the center of the narrative, offering a parable not about what will replace the dying economic system but instead about how it will evolve into something drastically different—a subtle but important inflection that has its roots in Spengler's concern for the death and rebirth of culture. Spengler aside, however, Fitzgerald's heroic treatment of Stahr and attention to his legacy suggests a preference for capitalism, despite the author's socialist sympathies (decried as dilettantism by some of his contemporaries). As Moyer and other critics have noted, one does not typically find

in Fitzgerald's work radical desire for drastic socioeconomic change but instead nostalgia for the bygone era of the self-made man, the mythologized Ben Franklin type faintly echoed in Monroe Stahr. Thus in a novel that chastises American capitalism for producing monsters like Brady, one hears, in lieu of a call for revolution, a lament sent up for the disappearance of beneficent capitalists like Stahr, men who spur progress on and are producers in every sense of the word.

Evincing admiration for great capitalists who, in the manner of Gatsby, owe their greatest debt to a platonic conception of self-creation, Fitzgerald turns to the cyclical popularity of the Hollywood Western to express the desire that tycoons, like cowboys, might make a comeback. The "Western" subtitle that frames the novel as paratext hints at nostalgia for an idealized capitalist order and hope that its sociopolitical legacy might help Western civilization to endure in recognizable form following the upcoming turmoil of the inevitable war. The uniquely American form of the Western film had proven in Fitzgerald's time to be resilient, surviving a shift in public taste that left the Western unmarketable and therefore virtually unproduced for two decades. When the Hollywood Western flourished once more in the late 1930s, its representative films were considerably different from the silent cowboy features from earlier in the century, but the trappings of the genre remained intact. *Tycoon's* subtitle, linking as it does the Western film with Western civilization, counters the latter's decline with the former's resurgence, offering hope that the global West might rebound in the manner of its filmic corollary. In Fitzgerald's notes for the novel, we see that he planned to have the cowboy actor Johnny Swanson find work at the end of *Tycoon* after the character is mistakenly asked to be a pallbearer at Stahr's funeral (*Tycoon* lxiv). Like the book's projected epilogue, Swanson's re-employment draws attention to the producer's legacy and, by connection, the legacy of American capitalism. Here the explicit connection to the contemporary Western film revival colludes with

Fitzgerald's use of symbolic names (Swanson's last cowboy feature proves to have not been his "swansong") to suggest themes of rebirth and renewal even in the face of apparent death and decay. In the larger sense of the novel's political vision, these themes are directed towards the besieged American capitalism embodied by Monroe Stahr. The fallen Stahr looms large as the specter of capitalism, a beacon of liberty and endurance in an era of great social upheaval for the West. In pitting Stahr's benevolent mastery of capital against the threat of fascism, Fitzgerald sketches an economic thesis that Warburg would later flesh out in detail: that fascism is "the ultimate perversion of capitalism," because it "carries out to the nth power capitalism's most outstanding weaknesses as a social system, namely, its tendency to over-concentrate power, privilege, and prerogative in the hands of the few at the expense of the many" (*Foreign Policy* 19-20).

Fitzgerald was onto something in linking the resurgent Western genre to the future of capitalism after WWII, for the revival led by filmmakers like John Ford and Howard Hawks made possible a reinvigorated conservative take on the American West, even if Ford's own films were skeptical about the ethics of westward expansion in history. The subsequent Western boom advanced the careers of conservative icons Ronald Reagan and John Wayne, figures whose right wing stances on American exceptionalism and capitalist supremacy would stand in sharp contrast to the semi-socialist politics of Fitzgerald and his fellow Hollywood chronicler Nathaniel West. Their own left-leaning re-toolings of the Western genre refer to an obscure moment in the history of Western cinema—a shabby time between the popular silent Westerns and those of the revival—and therefore rightly seem at odds with the popular understanding of pre-revisionist Westerns. For a long time after, the cowboy politics of men like Reagan and Wayne would place limitations on what the West and the Western film could signify in political discourse, but these

Depression-era Hollywood novels speak from a time when dramatic shifts in economic stability and public taste permitted a radically different reading of the on-screen frontier. Fitzgerald regarded the survival of modern American capitalism as unlikely, but the Cold War conservatives who outlived him regarded its subsequent endurance as a mandate. The ten gallon hat aesthetic that thereafter permeated American politics suggested a new kind of manifest destiny, one that would entail a foreign policy evangelism of freedom and capitalism—which the following chapter will argue was partially prefigured by interwar American “colonies” abroad.

Notes

¹ This chapter is adapted from an essay that appeared previously in *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*. It appears here with the permission of Wiley Periodicals, Inc., publisher of *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*. See appendix for notice of permission.

² Dickens published installments of the unfinished novel serially throughout 1870. Nabokov worked on *The Original of Laura* in 1977. Knopf published an elaborate reproduction of the manuscript in 2009. Hemingway wrote *The Garden of Eden* from 1946 through 1958; a heavily edited version of the still-incomplete text was published by Scribner’s in 1986.

³ In “‘The Diamond’ and the Declining West,” Ronald Berman makes a compelling case for connections between the Western setting of “The Diamond as Big as The Ritz” and the apocalyptic political philosophy of Oswald Spengler. I devote a later section of this chapter to similar connections between *Tycoon*’s Western traits and Fitzgerald’s well-documented devotion to Spengler’s theories.

⁴ This was due in large part to the influence of men like Walter Wanger, the socially conscious movie producer who encouraged leftist intellectuals to use the film medium to “reach the people

whom the liberal needs to convert” (“Hollywood and the Intellectuals” 40). Wanger’s hand is apparent in the tentatively anti-capitalist politics of *Stagecoach*, which he produced.

⁵ Biographer Mark Vieira relates a story in which Thalberg commissioned a writer to script “an old-fashioned Western” for actor Wallace Beery, but she instead followed her own muse and wrote *The Champ*, which premiered in 1931 (*Boy Wonder* 142-43). The anecdote suggests that filmmakers of the era were less eager than before to embrace the pulpy connotations of the genre.

⁶ Jimmy Stewart was around this time having an affair with Norma Shearer, Thalberg’s widow. Stewart biographer Lawrence Quirk writes that Shearer fell for the actor after seeing him in cowboy attire at a 1938 costume party (*Behind the Scenes* 94). It’s unclear whether Fitzgerald, who was planning his own “Western” loosely based on Thalberg’s legacy, knew about this romance between the star of Universal’s new cowboy feature and the widow of Hollywood’s “boy wonder” producer.

⁷ Predating works by West and Fitzgerald, Horace McCoy’s 1935 *They Shoot Horses, Don’t They?* makes an implicit connection between the new Hollywood novel genre and Western/frontier tropes. Several characters in the novel have farm or ranch backgrounds, and the title itself alludes to the practice of putting crippled horses out of their misery. As the story opens, McCoy’s protagonist is on trial for shooting a failed actress at her request.

⁸ There is considerable critical disagreement about when Fitzgerald began to consume Spengler firsthand instead of receiving his theories secondhand via the intellectual ether of his cultural context. James H. Meredith observes that though Fitzgerald claimed to have read Spengler in 1924, the text was not readily available in English until 1926 (“Fitzgerald and War” 201). André Le Vot’s biography of Fitzgerald suggests that Spengler’s theories, as advocated in volume one

of *Decline*, became influential at Princeton a year or two after the author left the school; thus through interaction with alumni and current students, Fitzgerald may have encountered Spenglerian philosophy almost a decade before the publication of the first major English translation (37). And in “‘The Diamond’ and the Declining West,” Ronald Berman notes the apparent influence of Spengler on the Fitzgerald’s mid-1920s writing without fretting too much over how it got there. In a spate of 1927 interviews, Fitzgerald says he finished reading the work in full that year, but doubtless he would have already been exposed to the ideas (*In His Own Time* 271-77).

⁹ Like Fitzgerald, Warburg was interested in the “unresolved conflict between two contradictory elements” of Western civilization. He wrote in *Foreign Policy Begins at Home*, “[F]rom an ethical and religious point of view, Western civilization believes in justice and equality. On the other hand, in our practical life—that is, our economic system—we believe in ‘free enterprise,’ which is the doctrine of survival of the fittest” (22).

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION OF THE PARIS CAFÉ: EXPATRIATE AUTHORS, COCKTAIL CULTURE, AND TRANSNATIONAL NATIONALISM

“He disliked bars and *bodegas*. A clean, well-lighted café was a very different thing.”

-Ernest Hemingway, “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” (1926)

“The whole difference between the pre-war spirit and the post-war spirit is somehow summed up in the difference between the pre-war café and the post-war bar.”

-Sisley Huddleston, *Paris Salons, Cafes, Studios: Being Social, Artistic and Literary Memories* (1928)

In my four previous chapters, I argued that interwar American literature produced a complex regional imaginary onto which were projected deterministic genetic fantasies, anxieties about Oriental others, concern for the middle class’s drift to the political right, and reassessments of free-market capitalism. What I have sought to demonstrate, using F. Scott Fitzgerald’s life as a touchstone and his works as a cultural index, is that during the twenties and thirties when isolationist political philosophies dominated the US scene, the literary discourse on region expanded to address not only American place but also America’s place in the modernizing global community. I have employed Fitzgerald as a focusing lens for this project for a variety of reasons: he lived all around the country and endeavored to write both national and regional fictions; his parabolic career neatly followed the nation’s own Boom and Bust; his camaraderie with other modernist authors embedded him within a literary network that spanned the country; and his considerable time in Europe broadened his perspective on domestic matters.

Yet I have, with a few exceptions, elided mention of overlap between expatriate and regional fictions in Fitzgerald’s oeuvre as well as in the modernist canon. Here, I seek to remedy that elision by analyzing impositions of American place in Paris between the World Wars. In some ways, this approach detours drastically from what has come before. I have transferred the discussion of American place away from American soil, and the previous chapters’ emphasis on regions and regionalisms is herein reduced. But this final chapter is ultimately essential to the

volume, for it addresses the interwar commercialization and exportation of US cultural products that evoke American place. In doing so, it provides a glimpse at the meaning and mutation of American geography in a foreign context. Specifically, the space of the American bar and the concept of the American cocktail accrued nationalistic significance in France, and Paris's "American colony" proved to be an imagined geography as much as an imagined community. Fitzgerald and his expatriate peers chronicled the transnational interplay of these cultural-spatial tensions, and native Parisians "wrote back" to their American occupiers through multiform means of protest. An odd coalition of radical leftist and upper-class French opposed, with violence and with snobbery, the spread of a "cocktail culture" that altered Parisian drinking and spending habits. Some even sponsored Prohibition-inspired temperance movements that frowned upon consumption of hard liquor but expressed support for light French domestic beverages like wine, cider, and beer. Thus, the period's literature and history show that transatlantic geographies, communities, and drinks became interrelated categories fraught with socioeconomic significance.

These conflicts rarely merit mention in popular representations of the post-WWI Montparnasse arts scene, whose proponents typically depict as a vibrant community in which class barriers collapsed and artists from around the world talked shop over coffee and fines. When screenwriters stage the scene, as Woody Allen recently did in *Midnight in Paris* (2011), they tend to characterize Americans visiting the French cosmopolis as naïfs, awestruck by and drawing inspiration from the bustling, modern City of Light. The problem with this imagined geography of Paris is that it is a fantasy, albeit a popular and enduring one. Many of the expatriate writers who came to Paris from booming American metropolises did not find the city inordinately modern. Some dared to describe it—with respect to its staid noise ordinances, its

gypsy pickpockets, its spotty access to hot water, and its floundering economy—as provincial. Djuna Barnes called Paris’s theatres “very bad” and its music halls “usually worse” (*Collected Poems* 261). Moreover, the directionality of the cultural exchange taking place between Paris and the loose coterie that formed its American colony was hardly one-way; rather, these visiting Americans, traipsing through France as the US government alternately antagonized and aided its beleaguered ally, left a significant imprint on Paris much as the city made its impression them. Trying to explain what drew expatriates to Paris, Gertrude Stein described the city as “the natural background for the twentieth century” (*Paris* 24), but those hundred years have since become immortalized for better or worse as “the American century.” With these conflicting histories in mind, this chapter examines the transplanted American spaces that US expatriates like Fitzgerald brought to Paris and how cultural exports like the “American bar” teem with a transnational significance that hints at the nation’s future power in defining the parameters of globalization.

The phenomenon of looking back with nostalgia at the material and intellectual excesses of expatriate-occupied France is hardly unique to our time. By the 1930s, the Paris of the twenties had, following the American Bust, already ascended to mythic status. It was nearly instantaneously promoted to Golden Age by the lucky few who had lived there and the wistful others who wished they had. A spate of reminiscences of Paris’s American colony appeared during the Depression, inviting readers to salivate at the remembrance of a time when one US dollar could with relative ease cover the cost of a good French dinner with wine service. Fitzgerald reflected on the heyday of expatriate excess in his best known short story “Babylon Revisited” (1931), Hemingway lamented the end of the decade in his 1933 “A Paris Letter” article for *Esquire*, and both literary critic Malcolm Cowley and Dingo bartender Jimmie Charters published expatriate memoirs in 1934. Hemingway, who also contributed a

meandering introduction for Charters's book, was working on his own Paris memoirs a few years before he died in 1961; the unfinished text was published in 1964 as the alternately sentimental and sardonic *A Moveable Feast*.

Works such as these helped concretize in the twentieth century the “Americans abroad” literary genre that Henry James and Mark Twain had popularized in the nineteenth, but they also sometimes became complicit in the romanticizing of the American expatriate experience in France—a perspective that too often neglects the cultural colonization of Paris by American visitors as well as the US government's meddling in European politics during a period of nominal isolationism. The most enduring popular myth is that the American expatriate experience consisted primarily of Americans being transformed by their bohemian experiences abroad. Emblematic of the imagined Paris to which I allude, Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* reduces the relationship between the city and the expatriate to that of actor and acted upon—“the town best organized for a writer to write in that there is” (156). Literary critics and historians have problematized the one-way directionality of this exchange, noting especially the obvious economic exploitation of a dollar-franc conversion that afforded Americans unprecedented spending power abroad. Caren Kaplan has critiqued middle-class white “exile” in the 1920s as a calculated performance, remarking, “The modernist trope of exile utilizes the modes of displacement more characteristic of tourism but masks and submerges all references to commerce or popular culture by promoting artistic concerns” (*Questions of Travel* 45-46). More recently, Brooke L. Blower has provocatively interpreted Jazz Age American attempts to commercialize the French capital as efforts “to command Paris—the capital of revolution, birthplace of bourgeois society and republican values” and, through doing so, “to control the path of history” (*Becoming Americans* 10). What these scholars are presently evaluating is a

phenomenon similar to but distinct from the period's prevalent pro-US jingoism, which H.L. Mencken lampooned in 1922 as "the faith... that one of Our Boys, taken at random, could dispose in a fair fight of ten Englishmen, twenty Germans, thirty Frogs, forty wops, fifty Japs, or a hundred Bolsheviki" (*The American Scene* 7). In contrast to the deliberately pro-American, hardline conservative politics of organizations like the American Legion, Paris's American colony consisted of globetrotting American artists and entrepreneurs who imagined themselves intellectually superior to Coolidge-era isolationists. When the Legion held its 1927 convention in Paris, it did so explicitly intending to jingoistically flaunt American superiority on the French soil it had "saved" from Germany in World War I. But the occupying forces of expatriate literature and US cultural exports worked a subtler nationalistic magic by transposing American spaces into Paris.

It is within the context of this critical discourse that the transplanted American bar, a business enterprise that emerged immediately prior to World War I in France and flourished during the "années folles" of the 1920s, offers evidence of lopsided transnational exchange. The political, economic, and cultural rifts that separate the classic Parisian café from the competing American bar in Paris demonstrate, as they appear in literature and popular discourse, that the American expatriate experience provides an interesting and complex example of transnational nationalism, a phenomenon that occurs when a foreign community inhabits one country but persists in touting the values and beliefs of another. The imported space of the American bar on French soil permitted US nationals to practice a form of expatriate patriotism, a garish manner of conspicuous consumption that emphasized American economic superiority and worked to more or less repel the French working class. The bohemian and working-class café was in several instances literally remodeled into the bourgeois American bar, a place where the price of drinks

overreached the diminished income of French laborers, students, and artists passing by. More striking still, some American bars like the Jockey and some hotels that catered to Americans imposed, against French law, segregationist policies that installed traces of the US South in the heart of Paris.

Both in literature and at the bar, a conflict emerges between two imagined geographies: the romanticized freespace of Bohemia and the transported material environ of the American bourgeois. Bohemia, the gypsy homeland province that now exists as part of modern Czechoslovakia, was empirically as real a place as America, but in the Parisian context both were translated imaginatively in response to changing socioeconomic conditions during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As early as the 1830s (but more commonly after the popular reception of Henry Murger's stories and plays in the 1850s), aspiring French artists who sought to distance themselves from the bourgeois commercialization of art had been labeled bohemian due to perceived connections between their transient lifestyle and that of actual gypsies. This group, members of which either affected or practiced a sort of hedonistic asceticism, emerged largely in response to the rise of the bourgeois class and the commodification of artistic production. The grimy glamor of this emergent movement attracted, in the twentieth century, a deluge of expatriate artists who wished to benefit from the perceived vitality of its artistic environment. However, their arrival in the tumultuous economic conditions of interwar France sponsored a remarkably bourgeois market for "the good life," the deliberate commercialism of which ran counter to the idealistic precepts of "la vie de bohème." In his 1924 travel guide, Karl Baedeker informed his Anglophone readers that Paris was "a city of pleasure, always en fête" (xxxii), and, for middle- to upper-class Americans seeking a vacation from Prohibition, this description throbbed with hedonistic promise. The American bar, with its

overpriced cocktails and attractiveness to tourists, embodied the threat of a counter-Bohemia, though it is worth noting that members of the French working class were essentially displaced from both geographies.

Some American authors, most notably Fitzgerald and Hemingway, shared a keen awareness of the crass materialism that expatriates smuggled into Paris during the 1920s. Having fled the dry United States, they appreciated the ubiquity of alcohol on French soil, but their fictions, letters, and essays show that they intuited an exploitative intent in the spending patterns of their expatriate cohort. By frequenting American-style bars and voting with their dollars at establishments that pandered to their interests, expatriates and tourists exerted a powerful economic influence on Paris that altered the city's cultural identity. Remarkably, nineteenth-century fears of European decadence had by the Jazz Age reversed into the recognition that young American capitalism posed its own threat to old Europe. Many examples of modernist prose display genuine ambivalence about the imposition of American culture onto France, and the literary setting of the American bar in Paris proves to function as a rich node of transnational cultural exchange. In the commercial space of the American bar, the United States entered France as an imagined geography, a consumerist-capitalist bourgeois ideology evoked in name and celebrated in the conspicuous consumption of imported American goods and services.

By exploring the individualistic politics of the American cocktail and by subsequently evaluating the transnational significance of the Parisian-American bar in literature, we may tease out these nationalistic and capitalistic complexities. Such investigations gain new potency in light of Donald Pease's call for "a field of American studies... that is grounded in a comparativist model of imperial state exceptionalisms" ("Re-thinking 'American Studies'" 25), for the means through which the American expatriates of the Roaring Twenties imported consumerist values

into a frequently unreceptive French context provide us an opportunity to study a subtle cultural conflict between two colonizing nations. Nonviolent skirmishes between these Western imperial powers, occasions on which US citizens slyly “colonized” French territory, played out in American literature and at the American bar.

“Paris is [illegible]”: Expatriate Authors and the American Taint in Interwar France

Many American authors sought out Paris on the basis of recommendation. Their mentors pointed them towards the city as if it were a homework assignment, and they crossed the Atlantic for further instruction in the production of modern literature. Hemingway went in 1921 at the recommendation of Sherwood Anderson, who sent him packing with letters of introduction to Stein, Ezra Pound, and Sylvia Beach. When Fitzgerald made his second trip to France in 1924, he was following the advice of his intellectual conscience, Edmund Wilson, who had implored him to give Paris another chance after a disappointing first trip. In 1925, William Faulkner came seeking in James Joyce a mentor superior to Anderson; he ended up seeing the Irish novelist only from a distance, too shy to make his approach. If most expatriates came for the art and the modernity that Paris had cultivated, the ones who stayed did so for the wildly favorable exchange rate and the quality of life it purchased on the cheap.

Fitzgerald—who is often regarded by his biographers as the typical ethnocentric American abroad, so goofily out of place that he once bathed his daughter in a bidet (Le Vot 171)—was enthusiastic about how far the dollar stretched in postwar France. The healthy (though often squandered) income he drew in America from the sales of novels and stories translated to a modest fortune in Europe. In 1924, he wrote to Thomas Boyd, “We found a wonderful English nurse in Paris for \$26.00 a month (My God! We paid \$90.00 in New York)”

(*Correspondence* 141). Childcare was only one of the expenses made minimal through the miracle of the dollar-franc exchange; travel, meals, lodging, and above all drinks were incredibly cheaper in France than in America, where the price of alcohol was being driven up on the black market by insatiable post-Volstead demand. In 1922, Hemingway had conservatively estimated a twelve-for-one conversion (*Dateline* 115), but during the economic tumult of 1926 a dollar could net as much as fifty francs (Blower 70). Hemingway, who generally made a show of being above petty financial concerns, could not resist writing exuberantly to a friend about getting his money's worth out of Paris in 1921: "Living is very cheap. Hotel room is 12 francs and there are 12.61 to the paper one. A meal for two hits a male about 12-14 francs—about 50 cents apiece. Wine is 60 centimes. Good Pinard. I get rum for 14 francs a bottle. Vive La France" (*Selected Letters* 60). Like the French bohemians before them, American and English writers flocked to the Left Bank of Paris to ply their trade honestly and escape the material concerns of bourgeois living; but, also like the French bohemians, these authors found that the Parisian artistic counterculture was tethered to consumerism and capitalism. They were not able to live outside materialistic convention so much as they succeeded at outbidding it through a beneficial exchange rate. In addition, Americans imported their own capital-oriented cultural tropes and spree-style spending habits into the French context, leading a handful of writers to express guilt over taking advantage of war-ravaged Europe. Cowley writes in his 1951 revisions to *Exile's Return*, "The exiles of art were also trade missionaries: involuntarily they increased the foreign demand for fountain pens, silk stockings, grapefruit and portable typewriters. They drew after them an invading army of tourists, thus swelling the profits of steamship lines and travel agencies. Everything fitted into the business picture" (62-63). With these comments, Cowley

participates in a modern reversal of the classic nationalist fantasy that decadent Europeans endeavor to corrupt innocent, earnest Americans.

Since the Revolution, American letters have expressed an enduring fear of “the European taint”—the idea that ineffectual, effeminate, and feudally aristocratic Old World values threaten the exceptional, manly, and democratic project of the New World. Literary expressions of this fear peaked in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, surfacing in the writings of men like Benjamin Franklin, Royall Tyler, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry James. In the modernist era of literary production, however, the directionality of these fears reversed and many left-leaning American writers expressed their concern that US-style free-market capitalism might unduly influence Europe in the form of an American taint. Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) offers a full and early expression of this fear as it shows American protagonist Jake Barnes and his expatriate friends cut a swathe of debauchery from France to Spain, culminating in the sexual corruption and physical debasement of a young Spanish matador. Hemingway’s ironical tone in this novel, especially as applied to the expansion of cocktail culture in France, harkens back to one of his 1922 *Toronto Star* articles in which he sarcastically declares that the present “golden age of European culture” has arisen because “the French bartender has at last learned to mix a good martini and a palate-soothing bronx” (*Dateline* 124). Other writers expatriated in different ways in reaction to America’s Jazz Age and its possible influences on Europe. Believing that Americans lacked tradition and discipline, T.S. Eliot adopted British citizenship and converted to Anglicanism in 1927; Ezra Pound began railing against capitalism and the US on Italian radio in 1935; and Stein, despite the risks she faced due to her Jewish ethnic heritage, remained in France throughout World War II and privately supported the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy government.¹

Yet it is Fitzgerald's conflicted, dynamic perspective on interwar interactions between Americans and Europeans that provides the richest index of popular stances on the topic.

As revealed by his volatile comments in stories, novels, letters, and nonfiction essays, Fitzgerald's perspective on France—and in particular on the place of expatriates in Paris—changed drastically from the beginning of his professional career to his post-*Gatsby* slump. In May 1921, not long after his first trip abroad, Fitzgerald fired off an uncharacteristically nationalistic letter to Edmund Wilson. In it, he rants, “God damn the entire continent of Europe.... France made me sick. Its silly pose as the thing the world has to save. I think it's a shame that England and America didn't let Germany conquer Europe. It's the only thing that would have saved the fleet of tottering old wrecks.” Fitzgerald, who even early in his career had typically been antagonistic to American capitalism and nationalistic sentiment, here indulges fully in the rhetoric of both. He resorts to the pseudoscience of eugenics to convey the unrestrained disgust he held for France: “I believe at last in the white man's burden. We are as far above the modern Frenchman as he is above the Negro. Even in art.” Near the end of his screed, he invokes materialistic consumerism to denounce Paris's role the cosmopolitan capital of culture and to praise its possible successor, New York City: “You may have spoken in jest about New York as the capital of culture but in 25 years it will be just as London is now. Culture follows money and all the refinements of aestheticism can't stave off its change of seat.” His rage almost spent, he concludes the letter by leaving “2 francs” to Wilson to “find a French slave to make me a typed copy of your letter from Mencken” (*Letters* 326). Fitzgerald's language in this letter is, while patently offensive, characteristic of the post-WWI American attitude towards France. As evidenced by the landslide victory of the isolationist, pro-capital Warren G. Harding over the internationalist, progressive James M. Cox in the 1920 presidential election, a disturbing

number of Americans regretted the nation's participation in WWI and viewed France as an unwanted burden.

Fitzgerald's subsequent experiences of living abroad for extended periods led him to reevaluate his vitriol towards France. Two articles he placed in *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1924 help pinpoint the moment this change began. The first, "How to Live on \$36,000 a Year," was published in April of that year, and it finds Fitzgerald using wit to lampoon the American grocery store owners and thieving servants who have driven up his cost of living on Long Island and stymied his efforts to enjoy a newly rich lifestyle. "How to Live on Practically Nothing a Year," published later that year in September, is the sequel to the former article, this one written as an account of the Fitzgeralds' summer in France. Its introduction explains that they expatriated to escape from soaring American prices. What they discover abroad, however, is that France's weak national economy compels some French to fleece comparatively wealthy tourists just to survive. At the essay's conclusion, Fitzgerald sympathizes with the French instead of antagonizing them, and he sees his own American experiences reflected in those of a young girl on the Riviera who tells him, "The English and Americans drive the prices up until we can't buy and we don't know what to do. My sister had to go to Marseilles and find work, and she's only fourteen. Next winter I'll go too" (*Afternoon* 115). Like the Fitzgeralds, this child and her family are victims of Anglo-American profiteering, forced to pull up roots and "economize" via geographic displacement.

In the spring of 1925, Fitzgerald wrote Wilson from Paris a letter that wholly reversed the sentiments he had expressed in 1921. He no longer sided with isolationist, xenophobic Americans in their crude mockery of France and their preference for New York; now, he sided with the French against the bourgeois American tourists who were presently clogging Parisian

streets. Fitzgerald wrote, “This city is full of Americans.... they seem to be incapable of any conversation not composed of semi-malicious gossip about New York courtesy celebrities. I’ve gotten to like France.... I’m filled with disgust for Americans in general after two weeks’ sight of the ones in Paris” (*Letters* 342). He would soon lose his patience with his fellow countrymen at home. He wrote Hemingway in December 1927 that America “is a wowsy country but France is [illegible] and I hope to spend March and April, or April and May, there and elsewhere on the continent” (*Letters* 303). Editor Andrew Turnbull makes no guesses at what adjective Fitzgerald applied to France, but we can easily infer that it is the opposite of “wowsy,” or baby-talk for “lousy.” Despite his self-admitted difficulties in speaking the French language, Fitzgerald-the-expatriate had come to prefer life abroad. Like many Americans, he had initially resented the way poor Frenchmen (doormen, taxi drivers, etc.) tried to part touring Americans from their inflated wealth through price-fixing and grift; by the mid-1920s, however, he seemed to intuit that such ills occurred in tandem with and primarily because of American cultural imperialism. In France, he was especially fascinated by the prospect of a slower-paced country not prone to boosterism and abject materialism, two darker aspects of American capitalism in the 1920s.

Fitzgerald spoofed the French disdain for grubby commercialism in a short creative nonfiction essay entitled “Salesmanship in the Champs-Élysées” that he wrote for *The New Yorker* in 1930. The piece, narrated in tortured English from the perspective of a Parisian car salesman dealing with an American customer, is a half-admiring, half-mocking tribute to the stereotype of the irate French business proprietor. The plot is simple: an American enters the dealership looking to buy a car, and the unhelpful French salesman could care less about selling him one. The salesman is eager to philosophize and converse, but he is humorously unmotivated by the potential for profit, leading the customer to remark, “I don’t think you want to sell me a

car” (*In His Own Time* 235). Yet the conclusion reveals that the salesman, who wishes to “[make] a proper study of his sincerity and his character and the extent of his desire for the car,” operates on a timetable incompatible with the hasty commerce preferred by the American (236). This comedic short tells us a good deal about Fitzgerald’s emergent respect for the French and his growing impatience with expatriate and vacationing Americans, many of whom earnestly wished to Americanize—colonize—their French environment.

Prior to the mid-twenties, when his experiences abroad led him to reevaluate his sneering attitude towards the French, Fitzgerald had shared his sense of anti-Europeanism with the conservative popular magazine *The Saturday Evening Post*, a common venue for his short stories. Editorials in the *Post* of the 1920s regularly criticized the internationalist excesses of the Wilson administration and touted instead the pragmatic isolationism of “business government” (Lowden 5). In illustrations of European characters, the magazine’s cartoonists festooned their targets with monocles and furs to mock their foppish impracticality. The recurring implication, indebted to nationalist sentiments that sprang up after WWI, was that Americans should avoid European entanglements and decadent Continental culture. Fitzgerald’s global consciousness and cultural tolerance expanded as he began living abroad for extended periods in 1924, but he would not write maturely in fiction about Euro-American relations until 1930. As late as October 19, 1929 (a mere ten days before Black Monday), Fitzgerald was placing stories in the *Post* that pandered somewhat to Jazz Age American notions of exception. In that particular issue, his “The Swimmers” concluded with a star-spangled stream of patriotic prose:

The best of America was the best of the world...

France was a land, England was a people, but America, having about it still that quality of the idea, was harder to utter—it was the graves at Shiloh and the tired, drawn, nervous faces of its great men, and the country boys dying in the Argonne

for a phrase that was empty before their bodies withered. It was a willingness of the heart. (*Short Stories* 512)

Perhaps the most interesting part of this passage is its emphasis on American participation in the Allied offensive at the Battle of the Argonne Forest, which took place in late 1918. Though this battle ended a terrible number of American lives (estimated at 117,000), the Allied victory was a joint US-French effort on French soil, a fact downplayed in Fitzgerald's representation of France as "a land" (a mere backdrop or stage) where American heroism once displayed its merit.

Similar to how the Crash and the Depression gave rise to a new era of national soul-searching in America, the dawn of the 1930s inaugurated for Fitzgerald a new decade of self-reflection and self-castigation in fiction; the economically crippled country was pondering its new place on the world stage just as the emotionally bankrupt author was wondering how his bad behavior abroad contributed to the onset of his wife's schizophrenia. As André Le Vot and others have noted, Fitzgerald was keenly aware of how his meteoric ascent to celebrity and his subsequent ruin "mimed his epoch, preceded and followed it" (xii). Zelda had the first of her major breakdowns in Paris in April 1930, leading to two more on American soil in 1932 and 1934. Earlier in his career, Fitzgerald might have blamed Europe for contributing to his and Zelda's loss of innocence, a popular American notion that Hemingway had parodied in *The Sun Also Rises* through Bill Gorton's mockery of Jake's expatriate status: "You've lost touch with the soil.... Fake European standards have ruined you" (120). But by the publication of "One Trip Abroad" (1930) and *Tender is the Night* (1934), Fitzgerald had begun to worry like Hemingway about the American problems expatriates brought to Europe—and brought on themselves.

"One Trip Abroad," published in the *Post* on October 11, 1930 (roughly a year after the Crash) finds Fitzgerald placing the blame for American corruption less on decadent Europeans than on Americans behaving badly. The story concerns the globetrotting young Kellys, Nelson

and Nicole, who grow dissipated and morally lax as they tour Northern Africa and Europe. At frequent intervals in the narrative, the Kellys encounter another couple who always seem slightly more debauched than they; by the end, they realize that the couple is a supernatural reflection of themselves. As Matthew J. Bruccoli observes in his preface to the story, “One Trip Abroad” uses the German literary device of the doppelgänger (*Short Stories* 577), a hint that the story privileges neither American forms nor politics. The doppelgänger device allows Fitzgerald to express the problem of American isolationism abroad—the tendency to form expatriate cliques and colonies instead of becoming immersed in foreign culture. Though they have put an ocean between themselves and their home nation, the Kellys run into themselves (literally) over and over again, much as the expatriates found adaptations of American spaces awaiting them in Paris. The story explains the logic behind this phenomenon in order to critique it. When the Kellys befriend an older, more seasoned expatriate couple after “a cocktail in the bar of the Hotel Transatlantique,” these travel veterans assure them, “Every place is the same.... The only thing that matters is who’s there. New scenery is fine for half an hour, but after that you want your own kind to see.... The place itself never really matters” (579-80). What the Kellys themselves later discover in Paris is that Americans abroad have a knack for causing trouble and making their presence known but unwanted. They find expatriates partying incessantly, distracting one another from work, and disseminating American customs amongst the French. At one party they attend, their Austrian-French host declares, “Everyone who arrives must drink two cocktails in the American style,” even though, as Nelson notes, the “very fashionable” native Parisians nationalistically prefer French wines and beer (591). Nelson, a professional musician, fails to make any progress in his career, and the doppelgänger revelation at the tale’s conclusion strongly suggests that the most corrupting force Americans encounter abroad is other Americans.

The themes of self-recrimination, diminished patriotism, and sympathy for Europe prefigured by “One Trip Abroad” receive extended treatment in *Tender is the Night*, Fitzgerald’s novel about the dissipated Divers, Dick and Nicole. Set in the 1920s, the plot chronicles Dr. Diver’s inability to complete his treatise on psychiatry amidst the physical temptations and libational pleasures of interwar Europe. Yet the insurmountable hurdles he faces are in nearly every case American in origin: his interest in a visiting Hollywood starlet (Rosemary Hoyt) strains his relationship with his wife; his alcohol-drenched friendship with American musician Abe North—who once back in the States is “beaten to death in a speakeasy” (*Tender* 208)—impedes his writing; and his American sense of being excepted from international law results in a brutal beating administered by Italian carabinieri. Reflecting on his own European misadventures, Fitzgerald depicts Diver and North as slumming Americans who believe their money and national identity afford them the right to colonize Europe as a drunken playground. In one of the novel’s most troubling scenes, Dick and Abe are tangentially involved in the murder of a Scandinavian-African expatriate, Jules Peterson. When Peterson’s body turns up in Rosemary’s Paris hotel room, the two men participate in a cover-up to protect her lily-white reputation. We learn that, through a roundabout sequence of events, Abe is partially responsible for the man’s death; after being robbed in a Montparnasse bistro, North had called the gendarmes on the establishment’s proprietor and clientele, leading to mass confusion—which Jules, as a helpful witness, had tried to sort out, much to the displeasure of the criminal, who murdered him in retaliation. Fitzgerald’s narrator expresses the conundrum of nationalities and legalities in a darkly droll passage: “Abe had succeeded in the space of an hour in entangling himself with the personal lives, consciences, and emotions of one Afro-European and three Afro-Americans inhabiting the French Latin Quarter” (111). The predicament, caused by Americans behaving

badly, leaves the comparatively innocent Rosemary with a strong distaste for the expatriate scene. Exasperated, she asks, “Do all the Americans in Paris just shoot at each other all the time?” (116)

Fitzgerald is merciless in his treatment of the flawed, “spoiled” Dr. Diver and, in contrast, highly respectful of the French environs the character mucks up. In one episode, Diver and his debauched companions visit Beaumont-Hamel, site of the Battle of the Somme, causing the doctor to tear up with a sentimentality he seldom displays for American topics. Of the trenches, he remarks, “This kind of battle was invented by Lewis Carroll and Jules Verne and whoever wrote ‘Undine,’ and country deacons bowling and marraines in Marseilles and girls seduced in the back lanes of Württemberg and Westphalia. Why, this was a love battle—there was a century of middle-class love spent here. This was the last love battle” (62). Fitzgerald had previously reserved purple prose like this for “the best of America,” as he did in his appropriation of the Argonne for “The Swimmers.” Its deployment here as an elegy for prewar Europe suggests a new development in his style and ideology. This, when considered alongside his depiction of *Tender’s* American characters as not merely dissipated but dangerous (leaving madness, violence, and even murder in their travelling wake), suggests that Fitzgerald had, like many modernist authors, come to recognize the threat American materialism posed to European cultures in the dawning age of globalization.

Transnational Concoctions: Between the Café and the Bar

Symptoms of this cultural-economic transnational conflict were notably present in the history of and the literature surrounding the American bar, especially with regard to the importing of the American bar and the American cocktail into the twentieth-century French

context. Interestingly, the cocktail had by the mid-nineteenth century spawned its own genre of popular literature in the form of the mixing guide, and American celebrity bartenders were emerging as patriotic American types. Well-dressed, financially secure, frequently partners in the establishments where they held court, the country more prominent barmen were equal parts artisan and businessman, embodiments of the tense masculine balancing act Michael S. Kimmel has described as definitive in the American age of the “self-made man.”

Although celebrity bartenders had existed as far back as the early nineteenth century, “Professor” Jerry Thomas’s mixing guide, *The Bon-Vivant’s Companion; or, How to Mix Drinks* (1862), was the first text of its kind in America, and a distinctly nationalist-exceptionalist strain courses through it. In the text, Thomas and his publishers repeatedly tout the wealth and general superiority of the United States, where “drinks exist in greater variety... than in any other country in the world” (xlvi). Their stated goal is to situate young America within the old transnational history of fancy alcoholic drinks. The publishers write in their preface that “a list of all the social drinks... of America would really be one of the curiosities of jovial literature; and that if it was combined with a catalogue of the mixtures common to other nations... it would be a ‘blessing to mankind’” (xlviii). However, the implicit end of this combinatorial effort is the celebration of America, home of the cocktail, as the new drinking capital of the world. The gaudy American creations on parade in Thomas’s collection make the refined but simple alcoholic palates of the French and English seem downright bland by comparison. As one might expect of a book published during the Civil War and republished frequently during Reconstruction, American place plays an essential role in Thomas’s indexing of these recipes, which are more often than not labeled in relation to where they were invented or became popular. Allusions to diverse regional identities appear in such drinks as the “Louisiana Sugar

House Punch” (20), the “Philadelphia Fish-House Punch” (26), and the “Baltimore Egg Nogg” (97). Thomas collects these diverse beverages under one cover, compiling in recipe-book form a document of American exception. Claret and port drinks, tainted by connection to Europe, are marked as outsiders and given alienating Catholic names, like the “Bishop,” the “Arch-Bishop,” the “Cardinal,” and the “Pope” (74-76).

Cocktail historian David Wondrich reads Thomas’s book as a nationalist document that cites the cocktail as a symbol of American ingenuity and individuality. As a single-serving, made-to-order beverage, the cocktail signifies a different consumerist ideology than do traditional European drinks, like French wines and English punches, served to crowds. Wondrich writes of this difference, “Ideas of democracy and individualism extended to men’s behavior in the barroom, where they were less likely to all settle for the same thing or let someone else choose what they were to drink” (*Imbibe!* 68). Thus, in its origin, the cocktail was an indisputably American creation—though, as *The Bon-Vivant’s Companion* demonstrates in its numerous citations of place, the cocktail’s invention was spread across the nation’s regions, from the urbanizing North to the Deep South and the frontier towns in the West. Thomas himself picked up recipes from and plied his trade across a number of US states, including Connecticut, New York, California, Nevada, Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, South Carolina, and Louisiana.

Thomas’s book and the imitations that followed hinged on the notion of young America contributing significantly, even boastfully, to a well-established European tradition. The author himself told an interviewer in the 1880s that he planned to “revolutionize the bar” in England by opening an American-style saloon in a major city (qtd. in Wondrich 34). Yet despite the patriotic fervor of their proponents, the cocktail and the American bar in which it was served were ineluctably tethered to a number of transnational connections. The very title of Thomas’s

book cites the French term “bon-vivant,” invoking European definitions of the good life as one in which high-quality food and drink feature prominently. Most early editions of the volume include nearly as many markedly European recipes as American ones, and often requisite ingredients like sherry and brandy are products of typically European origin. Even recipes that call for American whiskey are indebted to a moment of transatlantic crisis in alcoholic beverage history, the Great French Wine Blight of the 1850s, which generated in America greater demand for domestic liquors. Coincidentally, the blight itself was caused by American grapevines imported to France. These carried with them a species of aphid that decimated French crops. For French vineyards to survive, they were forced to more fully integrate their plants with the roots of durable American breeds.

Much like those American vines, aphids, and roots, the cocktail culture popularized by Jerry Thomas spread to Europe in a curiously transnational fashion and profoundly affected French life as well as American letters. Between the turn of the century and the 1920s, entrepreneurs successfully managed to “revolutionize” the bar in Paris, accomplishing in France what Thomas had hoped to accomplish in England. “American” bars, so dubbed because they specialized in cocktails and catered primarily to an expatriate clientele, sprang up in the City of Light, often replacing Parisian working-class cafés. To leech from the comparatively abundant wealth of American and English visitors, foreign profiteers transformed a number of pre-existing French cafés into upscale, if often lurid, venues; such was the case for the café Le Dingo, which mutated into the Dingo American Bar and Restaurant after its new American owner Louis Wilson remodeled the building and added a wooden bar (Glassco 223). Even cafés that were unwilling to fully convert to American bar status sometimes added wooden bars and cocktail options to appease customers. Thus, the term “American bar” could apply categorically to the

establishment itself or it could refer simply to the presence of a bar setup in the larger café: either the state of being an American bar or the circumstance of having one and offering cocktails. The saloon-style serving bar—at which patrons could belly up, order mixed drinks, and sit to their content—was itself an American cultural product distinct from the traditional zinc countertops of Paris cafés. American bars in Paris needed to import or construct this feature to attract the expatriate customers whose plentiful francs they coveted.

Despite sharing virtually the same space, the transplanted American bar differed rather profoundly from the traditional French café. In Paris, from the mid-nineteenth century Second Republic to the 1940 end of the Third Republic, the Left Bank café thrived as a working-class, student, and bohemian institution, a semi-domestic commercial space that helped citizens negotiate a middle ground between their homes, their jobs, and their representation in government. Social historian W. Scott Haine has observed that, in the age of industrialization, the French café space “served not only as a living room for the working class but also as an annex to the workshop and factory” and that it “suited the needs of a proletariat negotiating the transition from life in small cities, towns, and villages to the experience of a large modern city” (*The World of the Paris Café* 59, ix). The crowded café helped rural workers come to terms with the crush of the city in a relatively safe environment, and it allowed all workers—urban natives and rural transplants alike—a public space for interacting with their economic peers. Moreover, in a time when factory owners and foremen strove to mechanize workers by instilling within them an indefatigable sense of efficiency, the working-class café afforded them the passive resistance of inebriation; in Haine’s words, the café “[prolonged] the traditions of the artisanal world, and it thus ran directly counter to the most powerful economic forces of the era: rationalization and mechanization” (86). Because in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century

France workers were permitted semi-frequent food and beverage breaks, wine purchased in the café space could mischievously interfere with the working day's schedule.

Besides enabling what Haine refers to as “indiscipline,” the café also facilitated more direct political activity and labor organization. The history-making first meeting between Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels took place in a French café, and the institution has long played a role in radical politics and anti-capital agitation. Since before the nineteenth century, many café owners had run unofficial employment bureaus out of their businesses, helping local workers find jobs through informal connections. In the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, the café remained a space for dealing informally with problems at work. According to Haine, laborers received permission from sympathetic café owners to use backrooms as bases for organizing strikes, walkouts, and other forms of resistance. The threat to Parisian capital was so great that in the 1840s undercover police monitored café activities, and in the 1850s conservative politicians endeavored to close cafés that catered to left-leaning clientele (Haine 24, 10-11).

These Left Bank working-class cafés were also frequented by Paris's bohemian element (its starving artists as well as its slumming fakers), who, like the laborers, tended to favor leftist politics and passive resistance to bourgeois ideology. The literal place of Bohemia, then the much-mythologized gypsy homeland province in Eastern Europe, had little to do with the Parisian appellation, which period critics invoked to map a crusty imagined geography over the perceived griminess of the “art for art's sake” crowd. Historian Jerrold Seigel has remarked that the rise of bohemian subculture occurred in response to two social forces: the spread of bourgeois values (in the age of industrialization) and the commercialization of artistic production (as patronage gave way to salable art). He writes that, for nineteenth-century French intellectuals and artists, “Bohemia was a living reproach to bourgeois life. It was the realm of liberty,

pleasure, and truth. Its existence showed that idealism and devotion could find no home in ordinary society; that the modern exaltation of work rested on domination by capital and the exploitation of real workers” (*Bohemian Paris* 62-63). As an imagined geography, he explains, “Bohemia was a realm of liberated fantasy. Life in the remote margins and dark corners of society allowed the mind a free play that the demands of a regular, orderly life constricted” (76). The semi-domestic space of the Left Bank café helped enable this “free play,” and it brought artists into contact with workers who shared their political beliefs—if not their aesthetics.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the American bar began to intrude into this café-centered economic, political, and artistic context, and its effects did not go unnoticed. By 1928, English expatriate socialite Sisley Huddleston observed in the “Epistle Dedicatory” to his *Paris Salons, Cafes, Studios* that the City of Light had turned into a “variegated cosmopolitan Paris... a curious kaleidoscope Paris that has changed its morals and its manners in this our Cocktail Epoch.” Jazz, American fashion, and cocktails had invaded the city, leading many native Parisians to view turn-of-the-century French formal dress and café culture with sarcastic disdain. “Nobody cares to see the flutter of frilly lace and the swirl of tempestuous linen,” lamented the socially conservative Huddleston. “The nude has replaced the agitation of petticoats, and negro jazz and tangoes from South American houses of ill-fame have triumphed over the waltz and polka” (18). Struggling to answer the question of why Parisian culture had changed so profoundly in three decades, Huddleston cast vague aspersions on the phenomenon of the American bar: “The whole difference between the pre-war spirit and the post-war spirit is somehow summed up in the difference between the pre-war café and the post-war bar” (230). The French, he noted, had tried to take ownership of the signature American drink—the cocktail—via language by “Frenchify[ing]” it as “coquetèle,” but “the meretricious

mixture” resisted these efforts and remained an alien invader of malicious intent (20-21). To the caste-minded Huddleston, the American bar and its attendant cocktails symbolized crude, raw democracy: a jumbled, shaken, and stirred social order, with love of money transcending concern for class and race. He particularly feared the positive reception African-American jazz musicians had received abroad. In short, he believed that a particularly corrosive form of the melting pot had been marketed overseas as the cocktail. For the old guard expatriate Huddleston and for many residents of Paris, the cocktail was a potent symbol of modern cultural chaos. The Dutch painter Kees Von Dongen quipped to Huddleston, “Cocktails! They are of all colours. They contain something of everything. No, I do not merely mean the cocktails that one drinks. They are symbolic of the rest. The modern society woman is a cocktail. She is a bright mixture. Society itself is a bright mixture. You can blend people of all tastes and classes” (20).

Cocktails and bars had effected an American invasion of France. Stephen Longstreet quotes Harry McElhone, owner of the hotspot Harry’s New York Bar, as saying of the era’s Parisian youth and visiting expatriates, “The younger people aren’t happy with the bistros that used to satisfy their fathers. They prefer the atmosphere of bars and pubs” (*We All Went to Paris* 316). Although these American bars sprang up from the husks of renovated French cafés, the French working class and bohemian artists were not welcomed by the new proprietors; they were priced out by the increased cost of mixed drinks in such establishments. Jimmie Charters, barman at the Dingo, describes American bars as places “where the management catered exclusively to foreigners and the few internationally-minded French. Prices were higher in such places, but that only served to keep out the riffraff” (*This Must Be the Place* 19-20). He remarks in his memoirs that he and his fellow bartenders regarded French laborers, who could be picked out when they committed the faux-pas of ordering wine as they would in a café, with disdain,

because they were typically unable to pay the exorbitant tabs. Most customers at American bars were non-French. Charters breaks down the national make-up of his clientele: “Of my clients in Montparnasse some 70 per cent were Americans, about 20 per cent English, and the rest a mixture of French, Italians, South Americans, and Swedes” (32). The French who could afford to attend were slumming bourgeois businessmen and successful artists.

At the heart of the American colony in Left Bank Paris, a strange transnational gentrification, coded in nationalistic and colonial terms, had occurred, usurping the French proletariat politics of the café with the American bourgeois economics of the bar. The Montparnasse area in particular underwent radical changes from the dawn of the twentieth century through the French equivalent to the Jazz Age. Blower writes that in 1900, it “remained surprisingly agrarian,” a zone where a mixed-class neighborhood dead-ended into wheat fields. When the Boulevard Raspail cut through Montparnasse in 1911, the area began to become more commercialized. Even then, however, “the Dôme was only an unassuming workmen’s corner bistro with no outside seating, the Rotonde only a modest *zinc*” (81). The market expansion caused by the post-WWI flood of American nationals changed this and resulted in the addition of new cafes and the gentrification of preexisting ones. Sometimes the effects of this gentrification were peculiar; in *A Moveable Feast*, Hemingway mentions that one unfortunate waiter was “forced to cut his mustache when they made the American bar at the Closerie” (143), presumably because his exorbitant whiskers were too European for the imported American setting. Blower reports that American money could even import Southern-style racial segregation into the French context; the Paris police archives document accounts of French-African colonial subjects and African-American visitors being ejected from the Jockey, while period newspapers noted similar happenings at various Montmartre clubs.

On August 11, 1923, the African-American newspaper the *Chicago Defender* reported on these abuses in an article provocatively entitled “Start War on American Color Line in France: Americans Take Hate to Paris.”² The article describes several “instances in which white tourists from the United States have expressed dissatisfaction at finding themselves placed at tables with dark subjects,” listing troubling incidents of de facto segregation or unreproved racism at the Café de la Paix, the Bal Tabarin, and various sightseeing agencies (1). For their part, French police and politicians vehemently opposed such practices, but some hotel owners persisted in informally segregating their establishments to appease American clients. Some tour organizers, too, risked the ire of Parisian officials by racially segregating their busloads of tourists. African-American expatriate celebrity Josephine Baker was herself nearly ejected from a French restaurant when a white American couple complained to the head waiter (Blower 51, 277). Fitzgerald sought to represent the transnational nature of these expatriate regional and racial conflicts in an early “Melarky” draft of *Tender is the Night*. In one scene set in a Paris café, the sight of a “huge American Negro, with his arms around a French tart” causes the protagonist’s “Tennessee instincts” take over; leaving the place in a huff, he assaults a different black musician on his way out (qtd. in Taylor 162). Likewise, Langston Hughes wrote about black Southern musicians abroad in France playing for an audience of white “American millionaires” in his poem “Jazz Band in a Parisian Cabaret” (*Collected Works* 106). These literary and journalistic discourses on the significance of region and race in an expatriate context suggest that American domestic racial anxieties were translated intact abroad.

In spite of obvious barriers of class and race, bar proprietors, bartenders, and the expatriates who paid for the cocktails generally indulged in the fantasy that they were bringing an important democratic element to a still-provincial, caste-oriented Paris. Using the rhetoric of

liberty versus prudery, Charters relates in *This Must Be the Place* the legend of how the American colony was born: a scantily-clad American flapper was asked, for decorum's sake, not to smoke outside the Rotonde, so she and her friends fled across the street to the more permissive Dôme, marking it and nearby bars safe spaces for expatriates (15-16); Jimmie, who though born in England seems to have acquired through his clientele a preference for American society and politics, further skewers the Rotonde by confiding to his readership that it later became a communist bastion. Charters celebrates the American colony in Paris as a zone of individualism and freedom, giving little thought to the French Bohemia it crowded out. He remembers it as a place where “artists, writers, nobles, American sailors, and doubtful women mingle[d] on equal terms without reserve” (24); later, with no concern for the French laborers effectively barred from participation, he exults, “People did not separate into class or intellectual groups” (28). And if any of his contemporary readers were to doubt that the inside of the typical American bar was a specially nationalized space, Jimmie assures them that “these smaller bars really took the place of the American living room. No one ever entertained at home, first because French housing laws do not permit *any* noise after ten o'clock, and secondly because it was so much more economical to meet your friends in a bar where each paid for his own drink” (20, emphasis in original). Charters, in his resistance to French noise ordinances and his praise for the fiscal accountability in buying one's own individually-made cocktail, here provides a succinct expression of how the American bar formed a bastion of nationalism, exception, and isolation in a foreign context.

In their fictions, Fitzgerald and Hemingway chronicle the rise and decline of the American bar in Paris, which, in spite of its bohemian affectations, thrived generally as long as expatriates could rely on a booming economy back home. Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*

offers an extensive catalogue of the era's prominent American bars (such as Harry's New York Bar, the Dingo Bar, the Crillon, and the bar at the Ritz) as well as cafés that had adapted to serve American-style mixed drinks to their clientele (including the Dôme, the Rotonde, and the Select), though the author holds many of these businesses at an unfriendly arm's length.³ As J. Gerald Kennedy has noted, they assume an enervating role in the novel's recurring theme of labor; "the seductive ambience of the Quarter" distracts protagonist Barnes from "the workaday world of the Right Bank" ("Hemingway, Hadley, and Paris" 206). As early as 1922, Hemingway had argued to his Canadian newspaper readership, "You can find anything you are looking for at the Rotonde—except serious artists. The trouble is that people who go on a tour of the Latin Quarter look in at the Rotonde and think they are seeing an assembly of the great artists of Paris. I want to correct that in a very public manner, for the artists of Paris who are turning out creditable work resent and loathe the Rotonde crowd" (*Dateline* 115). This was not entirely true, since many notable French writers and painters frequented the Rotonde and managed to remain productive, but it certainly speaks to how Hemingway viewed cocktail culture as a threat to his work ethic. In the same article, he noted of lazy "American Bohemians in Paris" that "the gang that congregates at the corner of the Boulevard Montparnasse and the Boulevard Raspail have no time to work at anything else; they put in a full day at the Rotonde" (*Dateline* 116). By 1926, he was convinced that bars and cafés were detracting from his personal creative output. He wrote Fitzgerald, "I haven't been drinking, haven't been in a bar, haven't been at the Dingo, Dome nor select. Haven't seen anybody. Not going to see anybody. Trying unusual experiment of a writer writing" (*Selected Letters* 217). He thus reacted strongly against the popular equivocation of expatriate bar and artistic cultures.

Fitzgerald, who aside from a handful of minor 1925 stories had little to write in fiction about Paris before the Wall Street Crash of 1929, thereafter began to emulate Hemingway by using the Parisian bar/café scene as a trope for creative impotence and unchecked excess. The plot of his 1930 *Post* story “The Bridal Party,” which is set almost exclusively in Parisian bars and bistros, primarily concerns rich Americans drinking heavily to dull the pain of their financial losses. Fitzgerald describes the cosmopolitan drinking habits of these men as incongruous with the dire economic conditions facing them:

for weeks they had drunk cocktails before meals like Americans, wines and brandies like Frenchmen, beer like Germans, whisky-and-soda like the English, and as they were no longer in the twenties, this preposterous *mélange*, that was like some gigantic cocktail in a nightmare, served only to make them temporarily less conscious of the mistakes of the night before. (*Short Stories* 565)

He chastises his characters indulging in the anodyne sweetness of that “gigantic cocktail” while Americans back home suffer.

Elsewhere, Fitzgerald writes about the disappearing transnational space of the Parisian-American bar, which had lost much of its expatriate customer base in the Crash. In a particularly insightful passage in “Babylon Revisited,” Fitzgerald remarks on the American bar’s reliance on the colonizing, globalizing power of the American dollar in a bull economy. The story’s protagonist Charlie Wales is “not really disappointed to find Paris was so empty. But the stillness in the Ritz bar was strange and portentous. It was not an American bar any more—he felt polite in it, and not as if he owned it. It had gone back into France” (*Short Stories* 616). Here, the language of revoked ownership and conceded territory mingle to represent the loss of capitalist buying power and withering of imperialist intent. With the American colony broken up by the Bust, the Left Bank has reverted back to its classic “provincialism” and the Right Bank’s nightlife scene attracts “a local, colloquial crowd” that leaves the few remaining American

tourists staring with “frightened eyes” (619-20). Fitzgerald’s rhetoric suggests that the transnational space of the American bar has caved in, gone native—a reclamation of French cultural territory that had been seized in a vulnerable time. Its reversion is, within the story’s thematic framework, not to be lamented, for such bars assume a villainous, dangerous aspect in remembered sequences, contributing to the death of Wales’s wife, his mental breakdown, and his initial separation from his daughter. The American bar retains these sinister qualities in *Tender is the Night*, as it contributes to the dissipation of antihero Dick Diver and the demise of his alcoholic friend Abe North. In several key scenes, Fitzgerald emphasizes the artificial American-ness of the Parisian-American bar of the Cocktail Epoch, but the most puissant and telling occurs when North impersonates General “Black Jack” Pershing to receive star treatment at the Hotel Ritz bar. Dick and friends warn the gullible concierge, “He brooks no delay. Every man, every gun is at his service” (*Tender* 83). In this scene, set in the Boom year of 1925 but written with the postdated insight of the Bust, Fitzgerald’s expatriate characters stage an invasion that expresses rather frankly the aggressiveness of American commercial and cultural intrusions in interwar France.

Fitzgerald and Hemingway both noted the irony inherent in expatriate American affectations of bohemian artistic and economic values. With an equally sharp tongue, Zelda likened, in the pages of *Save Me the Waltz* (1932), the fiscal side of the American expatriate experience to the “sword of Damocles, forged from the high hope of getting something for nothing and the demoralizing expectation of getting nothing for something” (*Collected Writings* 98). Authors who had gone abroad to the cosmopolitan capital of Paris for the purpose of fleeing a decade of Harding, Coolidge, and Prohibition found the era’s hallmark American capitalism, exceptionalism, and isolationism by their side at every step. They came sharing Stein’s

aspirations for laying the cosmopolitan foundations of twentieth-century art and literature, but they inadvertently lugged the imperialist burden of the American century along with them. As artists, they founded an American colony based unintentionally but nevertheless significantly on exclusion; as celebrities, they accidentally commercialized the Left Bank as a fashionable vacation spot for visiting intellectuals and pop culture-minded tourists alike; as drinkers, they revolutionized the Paris proletariat café and bistro scene by creating a new market for bourgeois American bars.

The French, themselves no strangers to colonization, were not entirely receptive to these intrusions. They were also growing tired of the US government's interference in French and European economic concerns. During WWI, the United States and Britain had agreed to maintain stable exchange rates with the French; after the war, these measures expired, leading to an excess of francs in circulation from the war effort and a subsequent decrease in value for the currency.⁴ From 1921 to 1922, as the French sought war reparations from Germany, the governments of both America and England refused to support France's claim. What happened as a result was an economic crisis during which the value of the franc plummeted, leading to suffering on the part of the French poor and a favorable exchange rate for the deluge of expatriates (Parry and Girard 133-34). Desperate to lay hands on any sort of reparations, France and Belgium sent troops to the Ruhr in Germany to extract natural resources from local mines and to intimidate the German government. In response to the occupation, American and British political leaders threatened to recall French loans and refuse to issue new ones; thus the franc dipped an additional forty-six percent in value in 1924 (Conklin et al. 157). The US-backed Dawes Plan, the brainchild of American banker Charles Dawes, guaranteed a portion of reparations to be paid in exchange for the politically humiliating withdrawal of the French-

Belgian coalition troops. Making an all-too literal investment in European politics, the United States would loan Germany funds to pay a small percentage of the reparations.

French citizens projected their frustrations with the US government onto American tourists, and, in the summer of 1926, Parisians threw trash and vegetables at a sightseeing bus full of Americans outside the Place de l'Opéra, which was not only a popular tourist area but also home to many of Paris's bourgeois American permanent residents. Massive national tax hikes (as high as twenty percent in some cases) and purposeful devaluation of the franc (to stabilize the tanking currency) further soured the atmosphere, leaving the French increasingly less sympathetic to foreigners keen on benefitting from their tumultuous economy. More riots occurred in 1927 following the Sacco and Vanzetti executions. French radicals, angry at the US government's handling of these accused anarchists, broke windows at the Select as well as other businesses that catered to American expatriates (Blower 11-12, 124).

Fitzgerald acknowledged his awareness of simmering anti-American animosity in August 1926 when he wrote a friend, "Unless the Americans are first driven out of France (as at present seems not unlikely)—I'll be home with the finished manuscript of my book about mid-December... Whether the spring will see us back on Long Island or returning to Europe depends on politics, finances and our personal desires" (*Letters* 207). Yet it was two forces of primarily US origin that ultimately crippled the American colony in Paris: its own snowballing popularity and the encroaching Depression. Jimmie the barman captured both of these in his memoirs, explaining that by 1925 "too much advertising had turned the spontaneity of 'la vie de bohème' into a huge commercial success" and that "the cafés continued to flourish mightily until the depression swept most of the Americans and English—the biggest spenders, of course—back to

their native lands” (14). Had Huddleston waited one more year to publish his 1928 critique of the “Cocktail Epoch,” he might have been able to pen its obituary.

Stars and Bars: Cultural Exports and Transnational Nationalism

Though it evaporated at the beginning of the Depression and the end of Prohibition, the American colony in Paris carried significant transnational resonance because it foreshadowed the invasive, globalizing power of American cultural exports in the twentieth century. The American bar itself was one of the US’s first internationally franchisable entities, something that might be regarded as a forerunner to the dominating global power of American fast food chains like McDonalds. The phenomenon of American bars and American authors becoming fashionable in a foreign metropolis notorious for defining fashion hints at the rise of the American century, the worldwide appeal that the US culture industry would soon exert—not to mention the martial might and ideological coerciveness of the nation-state’s surging military-industrial complex. The artist Marcel Duchamp intuited these connections as early as 1934, when, thinking back on the expatriate scene, he labeled Hollywood an “industrialized, popularized Montparnasse” (qtd. in Charters 156). In the final section of this chapter, I intend to use the American colony as chronicled by Fitzgerald and his peers to perform a comparative study of imperial strategies practiced in the era by the United States and France. My purpose, drawing from Pease’s call for such an approach, is to articulate the relation between the cultural arm of the early twentieth-century American “empire” (its cocktail bars, its literary stars, and its buoyant dollars) and the post-WWI civilizing mission of French colonizers in West Africa. These two imperialist-democratic ideologies, so superficially different, both sprang from a common capitalist drive for wealth and market expansion. Moreover, both modern nations now

face the threat of transnational nationalism from unassimilated immigrant communities—a political effect evident earlier in the shared space of Parisian-American bar.

In the late nineteenth-century European rush to occupy Africa, the French colonizing imperative operated under two presumptions: that it could civilize West Africans and that it could make this venture profitable. In this era, French statesman Jules Ferry remarked, “European consumption is saturated; we must create new bodies of consumers in other parts of the world, or else modern society will go bankrupt” (qtd. in Parry and Girard 87). His rhetoric of assimilation suggests the French intention that African “bodies” and minds would be made over in the image of the rational, thrifty Frenchman to ensure the never-ending market expansion required for economic growth in the classic capitalist model. This was primarily a capitalist-secular mode of empire-building, with little emphasis on religion and much on producing new consumers and new capital. In actuality, the West African colonies seldom yielded the desired economic results and cultural assimilation proved incredibly difficult, for behind the humanist rhetoric of compassion and civilization rested the glaring financial motive, obvious to all parties involved. Money concerns troubled relations between continental French and colonized West Africans, who, due to failures in production, were unable to “buy in” to civilization. After WWI, French politicians planned to use German reparations to pay for colonial improvements (like better healthcare facilities and new schools) in the region; lacking these, the imperialists fell back on exploitative forced labor strategies in an attempt to make the colonies profitable (Conklin et al. 168).

Notwithstanding its comparatively liberal ideology of assimilation, the French occupation of West Africa from the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century adhered to a traditional European model of colonization that required regular army presence and official government

sanction. Following roughly the same timeline, businessmen, artists, and celebrities from the United States were testing a new form of unsanctioned, civilian cultural colonization in Paris. It is tempting, perhaps, to regard this as an overstatement, an exaggeration of an innocent moment in transatlantic history, but historians are now beginning to see the American colony in Paris not as a bohemian freespace (as it was romanticized during the Depression and in later popular culture) but as a dominated zone prefiguring America's hegemonic role in later globalization. Blower writes, "After World War I, Americans reinvented their national life in Paris, transforming what had been a modest colony or outpost into a colony in the more grandiose sense of the term—a foray into foreign space that threatened to dominate and redirect local life" (24). The decade's ballooning population of permanent American residents in Paris attests to the veracity of her claim: in 1920, 8,000 Americans (many of them de-mobbed soldiers) claimed residence, but by 1923 that amount increased exponentially to 32,000—and it would later reach as high as 40,000 (Blower 6). If these numbers seem inconsequential when compared to Paris's estimated 1924 population of 3,500,000 (Baedeker xxvii), it bears noting that they do not at all account for the inestimable flood of tourists—temporary residents—pouring into Paris on a daily basis, pockets heavy with inflated francs. By 1927, the Paris American Chamber of Commerce had thousands of members, many of these representatives of businesses and services that sprang up to cater to Americans and French citizens who desired American goods: doctors, grocery stores, and, of course, cocktail bars (Blower 28, 7). The 1924 Baedeker travel guide to Paris devotes two full pages to British and American health care providers operating in the City of Light (43-44). Notable too is one fact to which I alluded earlier in the chapter—that French West African colonial subjects were not always welcome in these establishments, some of which

practiced informal racial segregation when they could do so without drawing the ire of the Paris police.

Americans of the 1920s colonized Paris as a playground but also as a commercial zone. The rapid proliferation of American citizens and businesses in the French cosmopolis demonstrates this clearly, but it should also be remembered that expatriate authors came to France to do business as well. The American intelligentsia's flight to Paris might be regarded in economic terms that borrow from and revise European modes of colonialism: they occupied a resource hub to produce intellectual capital and to expand their markets. Fitzgerald in particular was obsessed with reinventing himself in France as something more than a wunderkind college writer. He wanted *Gatsby*, his least expressly political novel to date, to stand on its own stylistic and structural merit, and from France he regularly wrote Max Perkins to check its disappointing sales numbers. Hemingway, too, used France as a base of operations for expanding the marketability of his talent. Desiring fiercely to be more than the small journal writer whose name was misspelled in *The Best Short Stories of 1923*, he struggled to break his contract with the avant-garde press Boni & Liveright so that he could sign with the conservative, powerful Scribner firm—a scheme engineered in part by Fitzgerald. As many critics have noted, Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* is littered with commercialist language that suggests finances occupied his mind during composition and revision. In one section, a drunken Jake summarizes his existential philosophy of “exchange of values”: “Enjoying living was learning to get your money's worth and knowing when you got it. You could get your money's worth. The world was a good place to buy in” (152). In another, he projects his fiscal-mindedness onto the entire country of France: “Everything is on such a clear financial basis in France.... If you want people to like you you have only to spend a little money” (237). Much later in life, Hemingway was

still imagining Paris in economic terms; he would comment in his *A Moveable Feast* manuscript that Paris “was always worth it and we received a return for whatever we brought to it” (236). Of course, Hemingway refers to more than mere financial investment in each of these passages, but fiscal rhetoric nevertheless frames his engagement with France.⁵

If American literature and mixed drinks seem strange weapons for deployment in a colonial conflict, it bears noting that American imperialism has seldom been as overt as its European counterpart. The expansionist history of Manifest Destiny is, though fraught with atrocities, patterned on a narrative logic distinctly different from that of colonial imperialism. Later, after the closing of the western frontier, US imperial strategies were not about land acquisition but market expansion. So, in the twentieth century, although the United States was certainly willing to flex its military might to spread the gospel of free-market capitalism, it more often disseminated its ideology through popular culture, fast food, and conspicuous consumption. Today, when fundamentalist provocateurs and terrorists rail against “American imperialism,” they typically have in mind the globalizing action of American corporate culture as much as they do injustices carried out abroad by the US government. Thus, working towards political ends, modern terrorists commonly target civilians and businesses, assuming complicity. The “*années folles*” Parisians who threw bricks through the windows of the Select and pelted American tour buses with garbage made similar assumptions, for with bars and cocktails, with novels and dollars, Americans had succeeded at annexing French territory, crowding out the proletarian café scene. On the part of the conquering army, the only shots fired were made of liquor, perhaps flowing freely into one of Jerry Thomas’s flaming Blue Blazers.

As early evidence of the American century that would follow, the American colony in Paris was a space that displayed both transnational and exceptionalist qualities. Taking the

definition of “transnational” literally, it was very much a place between nations, where boosted currency bought foreigners the right of perpetual occupation and where expatriates were defined less by the place they were than the place they had left. But, as phenomena like informal racial and economic segregation remind us, the shifting terrain of the American colony was also a place of exclusion and exception. Through the currency exchange and the artistic inspiration Paris provided, a transatlantic fraud transpired: Paris’s many American businesses helped keep American dollars in American hands, and its American salons supported an expatriate counter-culture industry devoted to producing new American art. In this manner, it operated like an evolving cultural form of imperialism, and there was an accidental “civilizing mission” at work to boot. As Cowley noted in 1951, expatriate culture made the French eager consumers of imported American products, and American loan-sponsored relief efforts paved the way for an urban rebuilding that facilitated modern advertising and American-style cinemas (Conklin et al. 172). Nor was Paris the only city where this “American bar” strategy of cultural colonization took place; during Prohibition, something like an exodus of American bars and American culture took place, with Volstead exiles dispensing cocktails from Havana, Cuba to Casablanca, Morocco (Sismondo 219, 278). Transnational transactions that privileged American culture—the sort chronicled by Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and others—spanned the globe.

Although the classical colonial imperialist model fails to accurately describe the spatial intrusion of the American colony in Paris (which created an exclusive American commercial subculture with its own economy and art), it may be possible to regard it instead as a form of transnational nationalism. Sociologists are presently using this term to define “a new type of nationalism that is transnational—that is, a nationalism that is expressed and developed beyond and outside the borders of a single state and its territory” (Kastoryano 160). Often, they apply

the term to the modern behavior of unassimilated immigrant groups who resist the sociopolitical ethos of an adopted country by forming insular sub-communities and by touting fundamental beliefs imported from a distinct country of origin. In first-world environments where assimilation is advocated either explicitly or implicitly, such behavior “arouses nationalist sentiments in both home and host countries, and beyond” and “creates new expressions of belonging and a political engagement that reflects the nationalization of communitarian sentiments guided by an ‘imagined geography’” (Kastoryano 160). Yet this “new type of nationalism that is transnational” is, as we have seen, hardly new. Modern research on the phenomenon focuses primarily on nonwhite others belonging to Muslim immigrant communities in the United States and the European Union, but US nationals practiced this very behavior in 1920s Paris, creating a Little America in the French metropole.

Sociologist Riva Kastoryano encourages us to interpret twenty-first century occurrences of transnational nationalism as informal political movements that cut across geographical boundaries by “employing discourses, symbols, images, and objects” (167). This approach is helpful for mapping the commercial-cultural geography of the early twentieth-century American colony in Paris, which was thinly networked across the city in a chaotic grid from the Opera district and Montmartre to Montparnasse and working class areas on the opposite side of the Seine. For, in a very real sense, the imagined American geography that expatriates cultivated in Paris was most present in its commercial spaces and objects: bars, stores, and books produced in France but evoking hints of American nationalism. The prohibitive pricing at American bars reeked of the pro-capital political environment of the 1920s US, and the exclusionary effect these prices had on French laborers mirrored the way Prohibition had complicated poor Americans’ access to liquor while leaving the rich and middle classes largely unaffected. Likewise, the

success many expatriate novelists experienced in writing American fiction while living on inflated francs paralleled the US government's foreign policy stance on Europe during the decade: isolationist and exclusionist in theory, while in practice willing to intervene for the sake of profit and unilateral benefit. This is not to say that authors like Fitzgerald and Hemingway were intentionally complicit in anti-European nationalistic behavior or that they lacked global awareness after their time abroad, for certainly many American authors left Paris with strong internationalist political beliefs that they would hold for the rest of their lives. But they nevertheless altered the cultural geography of Paris, so that today one can visit the city and indulge in Hemingway and expatriate tours, retracing their steps in and around American bars, many of which are still standing.

From the retrospective vantage of literary history, it is common practice to regard the American expatriate experience as normative, even natural, given how many canonical modern American works were produced as a direct result of the phenomenon. But it must not be forgotten that US nationals who doubled as permanent and semi-permanent residents of Paris formed an inassimilable immigrant community that generated then nearly as much transnational tension as similar groups composed of ethnic minorities do today in the US and EU. Transplanted spaces like the American saloon, which carried in its history and its drink recipes traces of American regional identity, worked to reproduce a US-privileging cultural geography abroad. The imaginary American spaces summoned into existence by expatriate fiction did much the same. When expatriate authors endeavored to represent their vision of interwar France by writing first and foremost about Parisian-American bars, they wove a discrete, self-reflexive information loop that scribbled American signifiers palimpsestically over an endlessly complex twentieth-century European experience. The most self-conscious of these authors eventually

acknowledged, first, their failure to represent non-Anglophone aspects of European culture and, second, the deleterious influence American commercialism exerted abroad—as Fitzgerald did in “Babylon Revisited” when he recollected Paris’s snow as a Hollywood special effect: “the snow of twenty-nine wasn’t real snow. If you didn’t want it to be snow, you just paid some money” (633). These authors’ fictions and their favorite bars serve to remind us of the ephemerality and portability of American place, representations of which circulated in the twentieth century, the American century, as imagined geographies and fungible commodities.

On the surface, Fitzgerald’s America looks like a small, homogenous place: the lily-white zone of the “great American novelist,” hemmed in by his regrettably short career and his fixation on settings occupied by upper-middle-class white characters. To read Fitzgerald without delving into his neglected stories, his transregional American life, and his self-conscious critique of expatriate behavior is to accept those limits. But digging into Fitzgerald’s “little lower layer” means recognizing that his America, in both its material and illusory aspects, frequently exceeds them. It is the rich collection of sites he imagined in fiction, the history behind and around these geographic fantasies, and the perforated borders where his imaginings spill over into works of other authors, contributing to multiple discourses on cultural geography. Simultaneously placeless and tied to numerous places, Fitzgerald and his works provide an invaluable index for exploring changing valuations of American regions in modernist literature and popular culture.

Notes

¹ See Barbara Will's *Unlikely Collaboration: Gertrude Stein, Bernard Fay, and the Vichy Dilemma* (Columbia UP, 2011) for details on unpublished letters in which Stein's Jewish identity and her support for Nazi-occupied France come into conflict.

² The *Chicago Defender* newspaper sometimes covered the African-American expatriate scene, and it later hired author Langston Hughes (who traveled to Paris in 1924, 1937, and again in the 1965) to write weekly columns from 1942 through 1962. In one such article, Hughes wrote about the odd phenomenon of facing racial prejudice in American establishments run by immigrants. These proprietors refused him service because they feared it would drive out their white clientele. He contrasts this domestic problem with his comparatively better experiences receiving service abroad, including in France (*Langston Hughes and the Chicago Defender* 58). The *Defender* itself boasted an interesting regional history, because founder Robert S. Abbott used the pages of the paper to publicly encourage American blacks to flee the South and migrate northward (13).

³ Some of these businesses receive only passing mention in the novel, while others feature more prominently. Harry's appears briefly as the "New York Bar" in which "Harvey had won two hundred francs... shaking poker dice" (*Sun* 49). Cohn's lover Frances mentions the Ritz as a spot for a lunch date.

⁴ The US had also made substantial loans to France during WWI and declined to forgive these debts after the war. Some internationalist thinkers regarded this as a shortsighted political move that contributed significantly to European instability. James P. Warburg described the loans as "our contribution toward winning the war" and "the price we paid in money for the lives which Britain and France sacrificed during the first years when we were unaware that our own vital interests were at stake" (*Foreign Policy* 87).

⁵ In “Babylon Revisited,” Fitzgerald employs similar rhetoric but in a more penitent tone.

Recollecting “thousand-franc notes given to an orchestra for playing a single number” and “hundred-franc notes tossed to a doorman for calling a cab,” Fitzgerald’s protagonist tells his sister-in-law that money made the expatriates “a sort of royalty, almost infallible” (619-20). Yet Wales believes that the money he wasted in the Paris of the twenties had corrupted him—that, though he “lost a lot in the crash,” he “lost everything [he] wanted in the boom” (633).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Argersinger, Peter H. *The Limits of Agrarian Radicalism: Western Populism & American Politics*. Lawrence: U of Kansas P, 1995. Print.
- Ash, Stephen V. *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1999. Print.
- Baedeker, Karl. *Baedeker's Paris and its Environs*. New York: Scribner, 1924. Print.
- Balfour-Paul, Jenny. *Indigo in the Arab World*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 1997. Print.
- Barnes, Djuna. *Collected Poems with Notes Towards the Memoirs*. Ed. Phillip Herring and Osias Stutman. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2005. Print.
- Berman, Ronald. "'The Diamond' and the Declining West." *Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and the Twenties*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2001. 40-51. Print.
- Blower, Brooke L. *Becoming Americans in Paris: Transatlantic Politics and Culture Between the World Wars*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.
- Buttitta, Tony. *After the Good Gay Times: Asheville—Summer of '35, A Season with F. Scott Fitzgerald*. New York: Viking, 1974. Print.
- Brucoli, Matthew J. *Classes on F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Columbia, SC: Thomas Cooper Library, 2001. Print.
- “Fitzgerald’s Eras: Social and Political Backgrounds of the 1920s and 1930s.” *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Centenary at the University of South Carolina*. 28 March 2003. Web. 17 April 2012.
- . *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Rev. 2nd Ed. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2002. Print.
- Cain, James M. *Cloud Nine*. New York: The Mysterious Press, 1984. Print.
- Charters, Jimmie. *This Must be the Place: Memoirs of Jimmie the Barman*. 1934 New York: Lee Furman, 1937. Print.
- Cline, Sally. *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2003. Print.
- Conklin, Alice L. et al. *France and Its Empire Since 1870*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.
- Cooper, John Milton. *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography*. New York: Random House, 2011. Print.

- Curnutt, Kirk. "The Great Gatsby and the 1920s." *The Cambridge History of the American Novel*. Ed. Leonard Cassuto et al. New York: Cambridge UP, 2011. 639-52. Print.
- Dixon, Wheeler Winston. *The Cinematic Vision of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986. Print.
- Donaldson, Scott. "F. Scott Fitzgerald Restored: Purging Editorial Intrusions from the Author's Unfinished Tale of a Hollywood Tycoon." *ChicagoTribune.com*. *Chicago Tribune*, 26 December 1993. Web. 29 May 2011.
- Duck, Leigh Anne. *The Nation's Region: Southern Modernism, Segregation, and US Nationalism*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2006. Print.
- Duff, J.L. "The Rubaiyat of Ohow Dryyam." *Old Fashioned American Humor*. 2009. Web. 30 March 2012. <<http://www.oldfashionedamericanhumor.com/the-rubaiyat-of-ohow-dryyam.html>>.
- Dumenil, Lynn. *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995. Print.
- Evans, Brad. *Before Cultures: The Ethnographic Imagination in American Literature, 1865-1920*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005. Print.
- Faulkner, William. *The Sound & the Fury: The Corrected Text*. Ed. Noel Polk. New York: Vintage, 1990. Print.
- . *Selected Letters of William Faulkner*. Ed. Joseph Blotner. New York: Vintage, 1978. Print.
- "Fiction Review: F. Scott Fitzgerald. The Love of the Last Tycoon: A Western." *PublishersWeekly.com*. *Publisher's Weekly*, 20 December 1993. Web. 29 May 2011.
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *Afternoon of an Author: A Selection of Uncollected Stories and Essays*. Ed. Arthur Mizener. New York: Scribner, 1957. Print.
- . *The Beautiful and Damned*. 1922. New York: Collier, 1986. Print.
- . "The Camel's Back." *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Centenary at the University of South Carolina*. 19 August 1996. Web. 23 April 2012.
- . *The Crack-Up*. 1945. Ed. Edmund Wilson. New York: New Directions, 1956. Print.
- . *The Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli and Margaret M. Duggan. New York: Random House, 1980. Print.
- . *The Cruise of the Rolling Junk*. Columbia, SC: Bruccoli Clark, 1976. Print.

- . *The Great Gatsby*. 1925. New York: Scribner, 2004. Print.
- . *In His Own Time: A Miscellany*. Ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli and Jackson R. Bryer. Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 1971. Print.
- . *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Ed. Andrew Turnbull. New York: Scribner, 1963. Print.
- . *The Love of the Last Tycoon: A Western*. Ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli. New York: Cambridge UP, 1993. Print.
- . "Minnesota's Capital in the Role of Main Street." *Literary Digest International Book Review* 1 (March 1923): 35-36. Print.
- . *My Lost City: Personal Essays, 1920-1940*. Ed. James L. West III. New York: Cambridge UP, 2005.
- . *The Pat Hobby Stories*. New York: Scribner, 1995. Print.
- . *The Price was High: The Last Uncollected Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979. Print.
- . *The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli. New York: Scribner, 1990. Print.
- . *Tender is the Night: A Romance*. 1934. Ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli. London: Everyman, 1996. Print.
- . *This Side of Paradise*. 1920. Ed. James L. W. West III. New York: Scribner, 1998. Print.
- Fitzgerald, Scott and Max Perkins. *Dear Scott/Dear Max: The Fitzgerald-Perkins Correspondence*. Ed. John Kuehl and Jackson R. Bryer. New York: Scribner, 1971. Print.
- Fitzgerald, Zelda. *The Collected Writings*. Ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli. New York: Scribner, 1991. Print.
- Flandrau, Grace. *Being Respectable*. New York: Harcourt, 1923. Print.
- Foster, George G. *New York by Gas-Light and Other Urban Sketches*. Ed. Stuart M. Blumin. Berkeley: U of California P, 1990. Print.
- Franklin, Benjamin. *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*. Ed. Albert Henry Smith. New York: Macmillan, 1907. Print.
- Frow, John. *Genre: The New Critical Idiom*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Frye, Mitch. "Westward Expansion, Economic Contraction: The 'Semi-Cowboy' Politics of

- Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon*." *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 9 (2011): 126-45. Print.
- Geisst, Charles R. *Wall Street: A History*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997. Print.
- Genette, Gerard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. Print.
- Giles, Paul. *The Global Remapping of American Literature*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2011. Print.
- Glassco, John. *Memoirs of Montparnasse*. New York: New York Review of Books, 2007. Print.
- Grantham, Dewey. *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1983. Print.
- Greeson, Jennifer Rae. *Our South: Geographic Fantasy and the Rise of National Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2010. Print.
- Gross, Barry. "Fitzgerald's Midwest: 'Something Gorgeous Somewhere'—Somewhere Else." *Midamerica: The Yearbook for the Society of the Study of Midwestern Literature* 6 (1979): 111-16. Print.
- Haine, W. Scott. *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability among the French Working Class, 1789-1914*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. Print.
- Hemingway, Ernest. *By-Line: Ernest Hemingway: Selected Articles and Dispatches of Four Decades*. Ed. William White. New York: Scribner, 1967. Print.
- . *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The Finca Vigía Edition*. New York: Scribner, 1987. Print.
- . *Dateline: Toronto: The Complete Toronto Star Dispatches, 1920-1924*. Ed. William White. New York: Scribner, 1985. Print.
- . *A Moveable Feast: The Restored Edition*. Ed. Seán Hemingway. New York: Scribner, 2009. Print.
- . *Selected Letters, 1917-1961*. Ed. Carlos Baker. New York: Scribner, 1981. Print.
- . "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." *Esquire* 6 (August 1936): 27, 194-201. Print.
- . *The Sun Also Rises*. 1926. New York: Scribner, 1956. Print.
- Hobson, Fred. *Mencken: A Life*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994. Print.
- . *Tell About the South: The Southern Rage to Explain*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP,

1983. Print.
- Huddleston, Sisley. *Paris Salons, Cafes, Studios: Being Social, Artistic and Literary Memories*. New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1928. Print.
- Hughes, Langston. *Collected Works: The Poems, 1921-1940*. Ed. Arnold Rampersad. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 2001. Print.
- . *Langston Hughes and the Chicago Defender: Essays on Race, Politics, and Culture, 1942-62*. Ed. Christopher C. De Santis. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1995. Print.
- Jonas, Manfred. *Isolationism in America, 1935-1941*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1966.
- Kaplan, Caren. *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*. Durham: Duke UP, 1996. Print.
- Kastoryano, Riva. "Transnational Nationalism: Redefining Nation and Territory." *Identities, Affiliations, and Allegiances*. Ed. Seyla Benhabib et al. New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print.
- Kazin, Michael. *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*. New York: Basic Books, 1995. Print.
- Kennedy, Gerald. "Fitzgerald's Expatriate Years and the European Stories." *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Ed. Ruth Prigozy. New York: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.
- . "Figuring the Damage: Fitzgerald's 'Babylon Revisited' and Hemingway's 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro.'" *French Connections: Hemingway and Fitzgerald Abroad*. Ed. J. Gerald Kennedy and Jackson R. Bryer. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. 317-43. Print.
- . *Imagining Paris: Exile, Writing, and American Identity*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1993. Print.
- . "Hemingway, Hadley, and Paris: The Persistence of Desire." *The Cambridge Companion to Ernest Hemingway*. Ed. Scott Donaldson. New York: Cambridge UP, 1996. Print.
- Kern, Alexander C. "Dreiser and Fitzgerald as Social Critics." *The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 5.2 (1972): 80-87. Print.
- Ketkar, Shridhar Venkatesh. *The History of Caste in India*. NP: Taylor & Carpenter, 1909. Print.
- Kimmel, Michael S. *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. Second Ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.
- Le Vot, André. *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Biography*. Trans. William Byron. Garden City: Doubleday, 1983. Print.

- Lewis, Sinclair. *Main Street & Babbitt*. New York: Library of America, 1992. Print.
- Longstreet, Stephen. *We All Went to Paris: Americans in the City of Light, 1776-1971*. New York: Macmillan, 1972. Print.
- Lowden, Frank O. "Business Government." *The Saturday Evening Post* 13 March 1920: 5, 165-66, 169. Print.
- Lowell, James Russell. "Edgar A. Poe." *The Works of the Late Edgar Allan Poe: Tales*. Ed. New York: Blakeman & Mason, 1859. vii-xii. Print.
- Lynd, Robert Staughton and Helen Merrell Lynd. *Middletown: A Study in American Culture*. 1929. New York: Harcourt, 1956. Print.
- . *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts*. New York: Harcourt, 1937. Print.
- McCoy, Horace. *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* 1935. New York: Avon Books, 1970. Print.
- McGee, Patrick. *From Shane to Kill Bill: Rethinking the Western*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006. Print.
- McKenzie, John L. *Dictionary of the Bible*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. Print.
- Mencken, H.L. *The American Scene: A Reader*. New York: Knopf, 1965. Print.
- Mellow, James R. *Invented Lives: F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984. Print.
- Meredith, James H. "Fitzgerald and War." *A Historical Guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Ed. Kirk Curnutt. New York: Oxford UP, 2004. 163-213. Print.
- Meyers, Jeffrey. *Scott Fitzgerald: A Biography*. New York: HarperCollins, 1994. Print.
- McDonagh, Eileen L. "Race, Class, and Gender in the Progressive Era: Restructuring State and Society." *Progressivism and the New Democracy*. Ed. Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1999. 145-191. Print.
- Moyer, Kermit W. "Fitzgerald's Two Unfinished Novels: The Count and *The Tycoon* in Spenglerian Perspective." *Contemporary Literature* 15.2 (1974): 238-56. Print.
- Mortimer, Gail L. "Significant Absences: Faulkner's Rhetoric of Loss." *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 14.3 (1981): 232-50. Print.
- Orvell, Miles. *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940*. Chapel Hill: U of NC Press, 1989. Print.

- Parry, D.L.L. and Pierre Girard. *France Since 1800*. New York: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.
- Parsons, Floyd W. "Everybody's Business." *The Saturday Evening Post* 3 April 1920: 37-38, 100. Print.
- Peffer, Nathaniel. *American's Place in the World*. New York: Viking, 1945. Print.
- Pease, Donald. "Re-thinking 'American Studies after US Exceptionalism.'" *American Literary History* 21.1 (Spring 2009): 19-27. Print.
- Quirk, Lawrence J. *Jimmy Stewart: Behind the Scenes of a Wonderful Life*. New York: Applause Books, 1997. Print.
- Rasmussen, Frederick N. "Are we Northern? Southern? Yes." *TheBaltimoreSun.com. The Baltimore Sun*. 28 March 2010. Web. 23 April 2012.
- Reports of the Department of Labor: 1920*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921. Print.
- Richardson, Heather Cox. *The Greatest Nation of the Earth: Republican Economic Policies During the Civil War*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997. Print.
- . *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America after the Civil War*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2007. Print.
- Ring, Frances Kroll. *Against the Current: As I Remember F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Berkeley: Donald S. Ellis, 1985. Print.
- Roosevelt, Theodore. *Social Justice and Popular Rule: Essays, Addresses, and Public Statements Relating to the Progressive Movement (1910-1916)*. New York: Scribner, 1925.
- Roulston, Robert. "Whistling 'Dixie' in Encino: *The Last Tycoon* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's Two Souths." *Modern Critical Views: F. Scott Fitzgerald*. New York: Chelsea House, 2006. 157-65. Print.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979. Print.
- Salpeter, Harry. "Fitzgerald, Spenglerian." *Conversations with F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli and Judith S. Baughman. Jackson: U of Mississippi P, 2004. 86-89. Print.
- Schenker, Daniel. "Fugitive Articulation: An Introduction to *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*." *Victorian Poetry* 19.1 (Spring 1981): 49-64. Print.
- Schulberg, Budd. *The Disenchanted*. New York: Random House, 1950. Print.

- Seigel, Jerrold. *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930*. 1986. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. Print.
- “Senate Majority Leader Fitzgerald’s statement on budget address.” *WKOW News*. 1 March 2011. Web. 20 April 2012.
- Shortridge, James R. *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture*. Lawrence: U of Kansas P, 1989. Print.
- Sismondo, Christine. *America Walks Into a Bar: A Spirited History of Taverns and Saloons, Speakeasies, and Grog Shops*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.
- Slotkin, Richard. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Atheneum, 1992. Print.
- Smith, Andrew Brodie. *Shooting Cowboys and Indians: Silent Western Films, American Culture, and the Birth of Hollywood*. Boulder: UP of Colorado, 2004. Print.
- Smith, Edward H. “Queen Silk.” *Saturday Evening Post* 26 June 1920: 10-11, 166, 169-70, 173-74. Print.
- Smith, Joseph Russell. *North America: Its People and the Resources, Development, and Prospects of the Continent as an Agricultural, Industrial, and Commercial Area*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925. Print.
- Spengler, Oswald. *The Decline of the West*. One Volume Revised Ed. Trans. Charles Francis Atkinson. New York: Knopf, 1926. Print.
- “Start War on American Color Line in France: Americans Take Hate to Paris.” *The Chicago Defender* 11 August 1923: 1. Print.
- Stein, Gertrude. *Paris, France: Personal Recollections*. 1940. London: Peter Owen, 1971. Print.
- Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. 1939. New York: Penguin, 2006. Print.
- Stoddard, Lothrop. *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy*. New York: Scribner, 1920. Print.
- Sufism, Music, and Society in Turkey and the Middle East*. Ed. Anders Hammarlund, Tord Olsson, and Elisabeth Ozdalga. Richmond, England: Curzon Press, 1997. Print.
- Tarkington, Booth. *The Magnificent Ambersons*. Ed. Nahma Sandrow. New York: Barnes & Noble, 2005. Print.
- Thomas, Jerry. *The Bon Vivant’s Companion; or, How to Mix Drinks*. 1862. Ed. Herbert


- Asbury. New York: Knopf, 1929. Print.
- Vieira, Mark A. *Irving Thalberg: Boy Wonder to Producer Prince*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2010. Print.
- Wanger, Walter. "Hollywood and the Intellectuals." *Saturday Review of Literature* 25.49 (5 December 1942): 6, 40.
- Warburg, James P. *Foreign Policy Begins at Home*. New York: Harcourt, 1944. Print.
- Walling, William English. *Progressivism—and After*. New York: Macmillan, 1914. Print.
- Welty, Eudora. *Stories, Essays, & Memoir*. New York: Library of America, 1998. Print.
- West, Nathaniel. *Miss Lonelyhearts & The Day of the Locust*. New York: New Directions, 2009. Print.
- Westbrook, Robert. *Intimate Lies: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sheilah Graham*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995. Print.
- Westbrook, Wayne W. "Skunked on the New York Cotton Exchange: What Really Happens to Jason Compton in *The Sound & the Fury*." *Southern Literary Journal* 41.2 (2009): 53-68. Print.
- Williams, William A. "The Legend of Isolationism in the 1920's." *Essays in American Diplomacy*. Ed. Armin Rappaport. New York: Macmillan, 1967. 215-28. Print.
- Wister, Owen. *The Virginian*. Ed. Robert Shulman. New York: Oxford UP, 1998. Print.
- Wondrich, David. *Imbibe!: From Absinthe Cocktail to Whiskey Smash, a Salute in Stories and Drinks to "Professor" Jerry Thomas, Pioneer of the American Bar*. New York: Penguin, 2007. Print.
- Woodress, James. *Booth Tarkington: Gentleman from Indiana*. New York: Lippincott, 1954. Print.
- Woodward, C. Vann. *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1951. Print.

APPENDIX: PUBLISHER'S PERMISSION TO REPRINT

Wiley Periodicals, Inc., publisher of *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, grants original authors the right to reprint their work in new publications. This permission is granted on the “Permissions” webpage Wiley manages for the journal. The relevant parts of the page (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/%28ISSN%291755-6333/homepage/Permissions.html>) are provided below:

The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review

© 2012 The F. Scott Fitzgerald Society and Wiley Periodicals, Inc.



Edited By: Bill Blazek, Michael Glenday, Ruth Prigozy, Susan Wanlass, and Kirk Curnutt (Managing Editor)
Online ISSN: 1755-6333

Permissions

***PLEASE NOTE: If the links highlighted here do not take you to those web sites, please copy and paste address in your browser.**

Permission to reproduce Wiley journal Content:

Effective immediately, requests to reproduce material from John Wiley & Sons journal content are being handled through the Rightslink® online service. Wiley no longer accepts requests or forms for Wiley journal content sent via email, fax or mail.

Simply follow the steps below to obtain permission via the Rightslink® system:

- Locate the article you wish to reproduce on Wiley Online Library (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>)
- Navigate to the abstract page.
- Click on the 'Request Permissions' link, under the 'ARTICLE TOOLS' menu
- Follow the online instructions and select your requirements from the drop down options and click on 'quick price' to get a quote
- Create a RightsLink® account to complete your transaction (and pay, where applicable)
- Read and accept our Terms & Conditions and Download your license
- For any technical queries please contact customercare@copyright.com
- For further information and to view a Rightslink® demo please visit www.wiley.com and select Rights & Permissions.

AUTHORS - If you wish to reuse your own article (or an amended version of it) in a new publication of which you are the author, editor or co-editor, prior permission is not required (with the usual acknowledgements). However, a formal grant of license can be downloaded free of charge from Rightslink if required.

Additional permission to reprint “Westward Expansion, Economic Contraction: The ‘Semi-Cowboy’ Politics of Fitzgerald’s *The Last Tycoon*” was granted via email by *FSFR* managing editor Kirk Curnutt on February 17, 2012.

VITA

Mitch Frye grew up in Aynor, South Carolina, a rural two-stoplight town on the travel route to Myrtle Beach. During his teenage years, he attended the SC Governor's School for Science and Mathematics, a state-run residential magnet school. Surrounded by future propulsion physicists and neurosurgeons, he discovered that he was really more of a humanities person. After graduating from SCGSSM, Mitch majored in English at the University of South Carolina and had the good fortune to work with F. Scott Fitzgerald scholars Matthew J. Bruccoli and Park Bucker. While pursuing a Master's degree at the same institution, he wrote his thesis on literary appropriations of eugenic discourse in the pulp horror fiction of H.P. Lovecraft. Portions of this thesis later appeared in *The Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*.

MA in hand, Mitch took a year off of graduate studies to teach as an English instructor for the Duke University Talent Identification Program and for Coastal Carolina University. During this time, he also wrote articles for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Critique*. In 2007, he enrolled as a PhD student in the English Department at Louisiana State University, where he studied modernist American literature, taught a variety of courses (including one on Batman), and worked as a copy-editor for J. Gerald Kennedy. At LSU, Mitch published essays in *Nabokov Studies* and *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, and he contributed chapters on American superhero comics to two scholarly collections.

Mitch currently lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana with his fiancée (Doris), a Siamese cat (Simone), and a Chihuahua (Oscar).