

JAZZ FRACTURES : F. SCOTT FITZGERALD AND EPOCHAL REPRESENTATION. pdf

1: Butter-and-Egg Men: Response to Breitwieser

F. Scott Fitzgerald and Epochal Representation Mitchell Breitwieser An earlier version of this essay was presented at "History in the Making: The Future of American Literary Studies," a conference held at the University of Wisconsin at Madison in late March

Mitchell Breitwieser An earlier version of this essay was presented at "History in the Making: Preparing for the talk, I confessed, had stirred up memories, among them my first reading of *The Great Gatsby*, which powerfully evoked what F. Scott Fitzgerald called the promise of life. In the difference between my reading and theirs I see that, though Fitzgerald still interests me deeply, he has changed, or rather, the center of his gravity has for me moved not only to the discoveries of his later fiction but also to certain facets I had not noticed in *The Great Gatsby*, where he begins to think critically about history, about race, class, region, nationality, and about how the intersections of such powers provoke, shape, and frustrate desire. This, I would say, is where Fitzgerald parts company from Thomas Wolfe and Ernest Hemingway and keeps company with William Faulkner and Zora Neale Hurston, his [End Page] historical sense laying the foundation for what would be called American studies and prefiguring some of the disciplinary transformations within literary study that were the topic of "History in the Making. I differentiated the two terms by contrasting the melancholia that typifies endings in *The Great Gatsby* and the essay with some new ways of thinking about social and personal coherence that Fitzgerald was exploring at the time of his death in First, then, the "Jazz Age. If so, the irony is two-sided: Expressing the whole, the members of a transcendent avant-garde lead lesser persons to discover their latent character as symbols of the nation. Its traditional icons, its metaphors, its heroes, its rituals, and its narratives provide an alphabet for a collective consciousness or national subjectivity; through the National Symbolic the historical nation aspires to achieve the inevitability of the status of natural law, a birthright" The symbolicity of the symbol--its character as vessel containing abstract reality or as portal opening onto wonder--supplies the symbolic thing with its vitality. Failing that access, the thing is a mere thing, a dispirited outcome that in *The Great Gatsby* is figured as "foul dust" or ashes--devitalized remainder 6. These symbols of nonsymbolicity are extremely interesting to me, because they are the valleys where Fitzgerald, or his narrator at least, confines social life that fails to express the ideal revulsion marking that place where insight will later appear. Insofar as a person is a living seismograph of the ideal, a pure register of abstract national content, he is truly vital, alive, luminous; insofar as he is particular--a person with projects, worries, tics, pleasures, and sorrows, all of them inflected by ethnicity, region, [End Page] religion, class, gender, parental neurochemistry, and so on--he is a failure, merely particular, an outpost in which the rhythms of the capital have long since been forgotten. Determination by real circumstance and the complexity that this yields are markers of inadequacy. This is why *Gatsby* is great: But what if the one thing that the symbol incarnates--the essence that makes the epoch an epoch--is not itself at one with itself, but rather fractured, internally complex? As my title suggests, this brings us back to jazz, the primal X of the decade. A little later, There was the boom of a bass drum, and the voice of the orchestra leader rang out suddenly above the echolalia of the garden. *Gatsby* we are going to play for you Mr. If you read the papers you know there was a big sensation. It started out with a wierd, spinning sound that seemed to come mostly from the cornets, very regular and measured and inevitable with a bell now and then that seemed to ring somewhere a good distance away. That was the first movement and we all laughed and looked at each other rather nervously as the second movement began. At first there was a sort of monotony about it--a little disappointing at first as if it were just a repetition of the spinning sound but pretty soon you were aware that something was trying to establish itself, to get a foothold, something soft and persistent and profound and next you yourself were trying to help it, struggling, praying for it--until suddenly it was there, it was established rather scornfully without you and it stayed there seemed to lurk around as with a complete self-sufficiency as if it had been there all the time. I was curiously moved and the third part of the thing was full of an even stronger emotion. There would be a series

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of interruptive notes that seemed too fall together accidentally and colored everything that came after them until before you knew it they became the theme and new discords were opposed to it outside. Whenever I think of that summer I can hear it yet. The last was weak I thought though [] most of the people seemed to like it best of all. It made me restless and looking casually around my eye was caught by the straight, graceful easy figure of well-proportioned well-made figure of Gatsby who stood alone on the his steps looking from one group to another with a strange eagerness in his eyes. It was as though he felt the necessity of supplying, physically at least, a perfect measure of entertainment to his guests. He seemed absolutely alone--I never seen anyone who seemed so alone. A Facsimile Startling, fascinating, ultimately dismaying, and even frightening in its manifest but inexplicable logic, the "Jazz History" seems not to express its audience, but rather to stand in sardonic or satiric relation to them, making them drop their hilarity and mutuality, and to look to one another for a reassurance that none can supply to the others. But the dismay and consequent revulsion Nick feels do not overwhelm an obvious interest: The performance does not venture into the unexpected in order to return to the domestic consolation of familiar motifs or melodies: He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about. Material, without being real: Even when the East excited me most. West Egg especially still figures in my more fantastic dreams. I see it as a night scene by El Greco: In the foreground four solemn men in dress suits are walking along the sidewalk with a stretcher on which lies a drunken woman in a white evening dress. Her hand, which dangles over the side, sparkles cold with jewels. Gravely the men turn in at a house--the wrong house. Nick and Fitzgerald are baffled by and irresistibly interested in what seems to them to be the enormous perversity of the act of intentionally disconnecting things from their expressivity and turning them into stranded, carefully fashioned monstrosities--terminating expression, dissevering the conduit that makes things really real, assiduously producing a residue of unique creations that only a rather total failure of attention could assign to a category such as ashes or junk. Though the excised passage does not associate such intentional distortion with African-American cultural practice, a letter thanking Carl Van Vechten for a copy of his novel Nigger Heaven makes the connection clearly: Our civilization imposed on such virgin soil takes on a new and more vivid and more poignant horror as if it had been dug out of its context and set down against an accidental and unrelated background" Fitzgerald, Letters

In this record, Armstrong manages to transfigure completely a theme whose vulgarity might well have overwhelmed him; and yet his chorus is only a paraphrase. The theme is not forgotten for a moment; it can always be found there, just as it was originally conceived by its little-known composer, Venable. Taking off melodically from the principal note of the first phrase, the soloist begins with a triple call that disguises, behind its apparent symmetry, subtle differences in rhythm and expressive intensity. This entry by itself is a masterpiece; it is impossible to imagine anything more sober and balanced. During the next eight bars, the paraphrase spreads out, becoming freer and livelier. Armstrong continues to cling to the essential notes of the theme, but he leaves more of its contour to the imagination. At times he gives it an inner animation by means of intelligent syncopated repetitions, as in the case of the first note of the bridge. From measures 20 to 30, the melody bends in a chromatic descent that converges toward the theme while at the same time giving a felicitous interpretation of the underlying harmonic progression. This brings us to the culminating point of the work. Striding over the traditional pause of measures , Armstrong connects the bridge to the final section by using a short, admirably inventive phrase. Its rhythmic construction of dotted eighths and sixteenths forms a contrast with the more static context in which it is placed, and in both conception and execution it is a miracle of swing. During this brief moment, Louis seems to have foreseen what modern conceptions of rhythm would be like. In phrasing, accentuation, and the way the short note is increasingly curtailed until finally it is merely suggested [End Page] measure 25 , how far removed all this is from New Orleans rhythm! These bands have a style all their own, and at times it seems as though pandemonium had broken loose. Most of the time there is no distinguishable melody. To someone as intensely and deeply committed to a sacramental and holistic

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conception of art and society as Fitzgerald was at this time in his life, such created tension could only appear as a fracture, a break in the body of the work and in the body politic, an alienation shared even by so recent and influential a critic as Ted Gioia: An aesthetics of jazz would almost be a type of non-aesthetics. Aesthetics, in principle if not in practice, focuses our attention on those attributes of a work of art which reveal the craftsmanship and careful planning of the artist. Thus the terminology of aesthetic philosophy--words such as form, symmetry, balance--emphasizes the methodical element in artistic creation. But the improviser is anything but methodical; hence these terms have only the most tangential applicability to the area of jazz. The very nature of jazz demands spontaneity; were the jazz artist to approach his music in a methodical and calculated manner, he would cease to be an improviser and become a composer. For this reason the virtues we search for in other art forms--premeditated design, balance between form and content, an overall symmetry--are largely absent in jazz. In his act of impulsive creation, the improvising musician must shape each phase separately while retaining only a vague notion [End Page] of the overall pattern he is forging. Like the great chess players who, we are told, must be able to plan their attack some dozens of moves ahead, the jazz musician must constantly struggle with his opaque medium if he hopes to create a coherent musical statement. His is an art markedly unsuited for the patient and reflective. It is associated with a state of nervous stimulation, not unlike that of big cities behind the lines of a war" But notice that Fitzgerald does not say this is what jazz is, but rather this is what jazz has meant and what it has been associated with. He is not really departing from the insight of the excised passage, but rather changing the subject from jazz to the image of jazz in the middle-class white popular imagination. His feeling for the distinction accords with the subsequent judgment of cultural and social historians: Leopold Stokowski succinctly articulated this understanding of jazz: The Negro musicians of America are playing a great part in this change" qtd. An alternative form so radically disparate from popular performative norms as to be aesthetically unrecognizable to unexperienced listeners, jazz seems not to be form at all, only outburst. When I talk about "real jazz" I mean to appeal only to a formal authenticity: The [End Page] distinction between real jazz and the image of jazz became more tangled, however, when popularizers began to compose, perform, and record music that reflected the popular image of jazz. His jazzmen had their way from time to time, but in essence only as a sideline" Marshall Stearns expands this point: The number of prosperous dance bands at the popular level multiplied, while the jazz content remained slight. At the same time, dancing the Charleston, the Black Bottom, and the Lindy was highly popular and the bands tried to oblige by playing a little hot jazz. None of these large dance bands, however, could swing as a whole. The formula consisted of importing one or two "hot" soloists, or "get-off" men, letting them take a chorus once in a while surrounded by acres of uninspired fellow musicians. Bix Beiderbecke was doing this for Paul Whiteman in Beiderbecke was very well paid and his colleagues all looked up to him--the "hot" soloists were always the elite--but the frustration of being allowed to play so little, when he was hired because he could play so much, led to all kinds of personal problems and, indirectly, to the after-hours "jam session," where a musician could play his heart out. Whiteman, who became the "King of Jazz," saw his role as that of dignifying and legitimating jazz. It has been retained much as an ornament. Whiteman himself, who disliked the association with jazz and dance music, titled his Aeolian Hall concert an "Experiment in Modern Music. Where we might see a nonjazz orchestra equipped with a couple of jazz "stunts," whinnying trumpets, and some boosted drumming, Whiteman claimed that his music was jazz emerged from its cocoon, its inner necessity fulfilled. Thanks to extensive advance publicity, the Aeolian Hall concert was packed--invitations had been sent to Stokowski, Fritz Kreisler, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Van Vechten, and many other prominent white New Yorkers--and the response was tumultuous Jablonski ; Stearns The concert was performed on 12 February , a couple of months before the Fitzgeralds sailed for France; their celebrity at the time was such that they may have been included on the guest list, though I have been unable to discover whether they were invited or attended. In any case, the coverage in the New York papers after the concert was so extensive that Fitzgerald could not have failed at least to hear about the occasion. I am satisfied that the Aeolian Hall concert was the prototype for "The Jazz History of the World," a lineage first suggested,

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as far as I can tell, by Darrell Mansell. Though it is as hard to say for sure what Fitzgerald listened to as it is to prove he was at the Aeolian Hall concert, I am quite sure he would have heard the real thing as well as the smooth simulacrum: If the serial paraphrasing that Nick hears seems to him to be a prolonged deformity or brutalization, to the performer improvisation means a kind of circumstance-based freedom, taking an element from the dominant culture, twisting it, turning it around and inside-out, seeing if it will serve ends other than the usual and familiar ones. Like experiment in general, it seeks to discover avenues of possibility through the midst of inevitability, and to do so without special worry about the survival of coherence.

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2: Staff View: National melancholy :

By historicizing and analyzing the work of such writers as Willa Cather, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and William Faulkner, the author shows how their novels reveal, conceal, refigure.

Essay one due in class. Introduction to unit two in class. Murder mystery clues distributed. The time is January 25th, , in sunny Tucson, Arizona. At a 56th birthday party, a man is found by his caterer, dead in his own swimming pool. The deceased is a senatorial candidate, and a popular Tucson lawyer who has been under much press scrutiny due to his thoughts regarding U. Therefore, there are many who wish him not to be elected, and likewise, many who wish him to be elected. The party begins at 8: The man is floating in the shallow end; face down, wearing only black dress socks, polka-dot print boxer shorts, and a rather loud birthday hatâ€”which is slung around his neck. The first fifteen minutes: At the time the body is found, the caterer screams loudly and runs into the area where the party is taking place. The caterer directs the interested parties to the body. The partygoers stand stupefied, and the caterer and serving staff look stunned at their half-eaten party food. Many party guests leave before the police arrive. When the police from Tucson and Homicide arrive, the area of the house is blocked off, and no one is allowed to leave. The hired valet provides to police a list of attending guests, many of which the valet either does not know, or cannot remember. Some of the clues you are about to receive were gleaned during the conversations that took place while the suspects were quarantined. However, other pieces of information you might have culled from a newspaper article you read about the crime; still other clues you might have become aware of during further interviews with Tucson police or other suspects. J9 With your six clues, construct a fanciful narrative that connects the six pieces of information together. You will have to use your imagination and fill in the blanks. Make sure you use all of your clues. Murder Mystery information exchange. Come prepared to move around the classroom. J10 Now you have twelve murder mystery clues. Discuss sections seven and eight of ROTD. Choose one text from the paper text options to be your primary text. J13 Write a journal that discusses the themes and imagery in your primary text. Provide analysis, not summary. What comment does the author seem to be making about the service industry? Group students according to chosen lens text. Group workshopping primary texts. Reconvene and discuss findings. Choose two more texts from the paper text options. J14 Like J11, write a journal that discusses the themes and imagery in your secondary texts. Organize your journal via topic, not via splitting up your piece via literary work. Again, answer these questions: Discuss the possibilities amongst the five paper text options. What similarities are there between the five texts? How can we use our findings to our advantage? J15 Draft one of essay two. Use your primary text as a lens and read your secondary texts through your primary. Think of your secondary texts as further example of the phenomena represented in your primary text. J15 Draft one of essay two due. Group students for conferences. J16 Draft two of essay two in light of whole class workshopping. Bring three copies of your paper on Wednesday. J16 Draft two of essay two due. Bring three copies of your paper. One response per paper, thus if you have two papers, you write two one page responses.

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3: Project MUSE - Jazz Fractures: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Epochal Representation

Jazz Fractures: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Epochal Representation Mitchell Breitwieser An earlier version of this essay was presented at "History in the Making: The Future of American Literary Studies," a con-

The Great Gatsby F. It evokes not only the ambiance of the jazz-age search for the American dream of wealth and happiness, but also the larger questions of fading traditional values in the face of increasing materialism and cynicism. Nick, seeking freedom from his constricted Midwestern existence, takes a job in New York City and rents a bungalow in West Egg, Long Island, next door to the lavish mansion of the mysterious Jay Gatsby. Tom later persuades Nick to accompany him to a place he calls the Valley of Ashes and introduces him to his blowsy mistress, Myrtle Wilson. Tom, Myrtle, and Nick end up at an apartment in New York, where a wild party ensues, and in a violent outburst, Tom strikes Myrtle and breaks her nose. Later in the month, Gatsby sends Nick an invitation to come to a sumptuous party at his estate, where Nick meets his neighbor for the first time. This is the first of many parties Nick attends at the Gatsby mansion in the company of many of the rich and famous. When Gatsby later takes Nick to New York for lunch, he regales him with tales of his war medals and his Oxford education. The other guest at lunch is the notorious gangster Meyer Wolfsheim, who reportedly fixed the World Series in He does so even though he now knows that Daisy and Gatsby were in love prior to her marriage to Tom. The two ill-fated lovers meet, and Gatsby takes Daisy to his mansion and invites her to his next party. Daisy agrees, but when she disapproves of some of his guests, Gatsby stops entertaining altogether. He eventually tells Nick of his truly humble Midwest origins, noting that his name is really Gatz, that he did not graduate from Oxford, and that he has made his fortune in bootlegging and other nefarious ventures. On the way, they stop at the garage of George Wilson, husband of Myrtle, who tries to get money from Tom and announces that he and Myrtle are leaving town. At a hotel in New York, Tom accuses Gatsby of trying to steal his wife, and a fierce argument ensues. Tom blames the death on Gatsby though the real driver at the time was Daisy, whom Gatsby seeks to protect. Disillusioned with the Buchanans and their ilk, Nick decides to return to the Midwest. The Valley of Ashes and the sign with the blank eyes of Dr. Eckleburg indicate a moral wasteland and an absent Godâ€”as well as the emptiness of the new commercial culture. Many critics, most notably Ernest Hemingway, were put off by the fact that Fitzgerald had been known as a writer of stories for popular magazines like *The Saturday Evening Post*. For the five ensuing decades, *Gatsby* has continued to attract critical attention and reappraisal. While many have continued to explore biographical influences or comparisons with other authors, or to use New Critical analyses, others have increasingly employed such techniques as deconstruction, feminist criticism, and discourse analysis to uncover hidden meanings in the text.

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4: American Literary History

Mitchell Breitwieser; Jazz Fractures: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Epochal Representation, American Literary History, Volume 12, Issue 3, 1 October, Pages We use cookies to enhance your experience on our website.

The Contextual Commentary will discuss some of these key themes individually. Clicking on the links will take you to the corresponding area of the text. He has bled his family dry until he is ashamed to ask them for another nickel, and if he had not learned Philip was coming to New York he feared he would have killed himself. He represents the callousness of the rich, who see themselves as superior and above the troubles of the poor, remaining detached and disdainful in his attitude towards Gordon. The American Dream of the self-made man is one who brings himself prosperity through hard work and effort, not by borrowing money from his former classmate. Fitzgerald focuses on the quality of the clothes of each man to illustrate their contrasting conditions. Throughout his writing clothes are an indicator of wealth and success, demonstrating the materialistic focus of his characters and the dominating superficial opinions of the era he was capturing. All the signs of someone who has previously known wealth but has failed to live up to expectation and therefore lost it. Fitzgerald echoes this exquisite fragility in his own descriptions: She knows exactly how to act: Her keen self-awareness balanced with knowledge of how she is expected to behave at such social occasions allows her to subvert the social power usually given to men; in these situations she has the power. This is emphasised through her actions at the dance, as Edith smoothly moves between suitors as they approach her. Her heart is wrenched when she realizes the state he is in at the dance: Afterwards her actions become distant and cold whilst she waits for the first possible opportunity to leave him. Jewel Hudson, on the other hand, was a new kind of character for Fitzgerald. She is not rich or beautiful like Edith, her actions lack the delicacy and social awareness Edith has and yet she is still distinguishable as a femme fatale – exploiting her power over Gordon to extort money from him. From the first mention of Jewel, when Gordon is explaining why he is so distressed in Chapter I, it is clear she is a strong and determined, if not slightly ruthless, woman. Once again he is ensnared by her manipulation. Lost loves, lost hopes: This preoccupation with the past often hinders his characters in their present pursuits and their ability to look to the future; they romanticise their past and the life they used to lead. Most often this occurs in connection to a former love they have lost; they regret their inability to hold on to them and are consistently haunted by this weakness. The character hopes that by winning back their love they will be able to recapture a happier, more innocent past and somehow erase the intervening years when they were without them. Jay Gatsby is still in love with Daisy Buchanan, and will do anything to get her back. For Gordon, Edith is a reminder of his former glory at Yale, the time before he went war, before he met Jewel Hudson and the consequential destitute state he now finds himself in. Through Edith he hoped to return to the past and his former self, but ultimately he is too weak to win her and too weak to escape the grasp of Jewel. The Gordon she is faced with is not the same vision she remembers, he was not at all light, gay or careless but desperate, miserable and tired. Here Fitzgerald is emphasising the futility of striving to recover something that is already lost; they have both been searching for the perfect love they never had, trying to recapture the memory of something that no longer exists. Whereas if they capture their lost love they have to come to terms with the reality and regret the lose of their dream. The Short Story in English. Oxford University Press, , p. A Study of the Stories. Gale Group, , p. The Collected Stories, [Online]. University of Alabama Press, , p. X [6] Higgins, John A. Modern Language Quarterly, 30, 1, , pp. Journal of American Culture, 18, 3, , pp. The Promises of Life. Literature Film Quarterly, 23, 1, , pp. Penguin Group, , p.

5: The Great Gatsby | Criticism | www.enganchecubano.com

F. Scott Fitzgerald is often seen as portraying hopelessness in America's s and the inability to act meaningfully. An

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alternative reading parallels the ability of jazz music to empower African Americans, especially in the later work that regards lost social integrity as opportunity for reconstruction.

6: Jazz Fractures: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Epochal Representation : American Literary History - oi

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7: Table of Contents: National melancholy :

"Jazz Fractures: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Epochal Representation" Mitchell Breitwieser An earlier version of this essay was presented at "History in the Making: The Future of American Literary Studies," a conference held at the University of Wisconsin at Madison in late March

8: Table of contents for National melancholy

The fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald serves as a compelling and incisive chronicle of the Jazz Age and Depression Era. This collection explores the degree to which Fitzgerald was in tune with, and keenly observant of, the social, historical and cultural contexts of the s and s. Original essays.

9: UC Berkeley Department of English

Essays and criticism on F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby - The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald "Jazz Fractures: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Epochal Representation." ways in which.

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