

## Jordan Baker, Gender Dissent, and Homosexual Passing in *The Great Gatsby*

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Jordan Baker instinctively avoided clever shrewd men . . . because she felt safer on a plane where any divergence from a code would be thought impossible. She was incurably dishonest. She wasn't able to endure being at a disadvantage, and given this unwillingness I suppose she had begun dealing in subterfuges when she was very young in order to keep that cool insolent smile turned to the world and yet satisfy the demands of her hard jaunty body.

--F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (63)

Nearly every early twentieth-century American social bias is represented in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925). We see such bias in narrator Nick Carraway's ruminations on class and on women, in the rumors of criminality surrounding the newly rich Jay Gatsby, and, most explicitly, in the racism, classism, anti-Semitism, and anti-immigrant sentiment espoused by Tom Buchanan, whose wealth, race, and gender position him as the voice of the dominant ideology. Tom's reading of "The Rise of the Colored Empire" by "that man Goddard" (17) is, of course, a reference to Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy*, a popular work of scientific racism published just five years before *Gatsby*.<sup>1</sup> Largely following Walter Benn Michaels' reading of *The Great Gatsby* in the historical context of early-twentieth-century nativism, recent critics have interpreted Fitzgerald's allusion to racialist discourse as a linking of class with race, perceiving the narrative of social mobility as representing a kind of "passing [which] is figuratively rendered in terms of racial blackness" (Lewis 174). Such readings, I think, have it all wrong. It's difficult to imagine a character less interested in flying under the radar; Jay Gatsby wears a pink suit and colorful silk shirts, he drives a ridiculously tricked out car with a three-noted horn, and he plays host to wild, raucous parties likened to those of Trimalchio in *The Satyricon* (113).

There was another discourse of identity emerging in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, that of sexuality and of same-sex desire, which is, in some ways, remarkable in its absence from the text. During this period, discourses on sexuality, like those of race, were being constructed, as the work of Sigmund Freud—which represented homosexuality in terms of psychological dysfunction—came to replace the medical discourse of “sexual inversion” in the work of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis, in which homosexuality was presented as congenital (like Tom’s scientific racism, of which he tells Nick: “It’s all scientific stuff; it’s been proved” (17)).

Anyone familiar with the biography is well aware that, throughout his life, Fitzgerald was terrified of being identified as homosexual and uneasy about his sexuality and sexual performance, and he expressed a vehement hatred of, in his word, “fairies.” Homosexuality is treated explicitly in Fitzgerald’s next novel, *Tender is the Night* (1934), and the author’s notes for the novel show that he was, at least by that time, familiar with works on sexology: “Must avoid Faulkner attitude and not end with a novelized Kraft-Ebing [sic]—better Ophelia and her flowers” (qtd in Bruccoli 334). So, in some ways, it seems strange that homosexuality is not addressed in *The Great Gatsby*. Strange, that is, unless we recognize sexual transgression as the open secret of the novel.

What I’d like to suggest is that Fitzgerald’s odd references to racialist discourse in *The Great Gatsby* reflect the author’s recognition of the connections between the two incipient ways of conceptualizing social identity and that his representation of such intersections in the novel in 1925 affirms recent insights in contemporary studies of race and sexuality. Lisa Duggan highlights the relatedness of racial and gender discourse in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in *Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity*: “The increasingly rigid racial binary of the 1890s encountered a shifting gender binary and interacted to produce a new sexual binary implicitly marked by race and class” (26); and in *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*, Siobhan B. Somerville examines a “range of literary, scientific, and cinematic texts that foreground the problems of delineating and interpreting racial and sexual identity [to demonstrate that these] simultaneous efforts to shore up and bifurcate categories of race and sexuality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were deeply intertwined” (3). Perhaps most relevant to *The Great Gatsby*, particularly with regard to discussions of Gatsby’s parties and New York City, Chad Heap’s *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940*, examines the sexual and racial transgression evident in this phenomenon.

This positioning and use of *The Great Gatsby* may seem surprising, in no small part because the novel is one of the most highly canonical works

of American literature, assigned in high schools across the country. For those who haven't read it since high school, a brief refresher of the plot may be in order: Nick begins his narrative with a dinner in East Egg at the home of his cousin Daisy Buchanan and her husband Tom, with whom Nick graduated from Yale. A Midwesterner working on Wall Street, Nick has taken a home in the less prestigious summer destination, West Egg, where his neighbor, Jay Gatsby, hosts extravagant parties. At the Buchanan home, Nick meets Daisy's girlhood friend from Louisville, golf champion Jordan Baker, with whom he carries on an amiable involvement throughout most of the novel. Following one of Gatsby's parties, Jordan reveals to Nick that Daisy and Gatsby were engaged before the war, and together she and Nick mediate a renewal of that courtship. Through Nick, we learn some of Gatsby's background; it is a narrative that highlights Gatsby's important relationships with men, including yachtsman Dan Cody; gangster Meyer Wolfsheim; Gatsby's West Egg "boarder," Klipspringer (quotation marks in original); and Henry C. Gatz, Gatsby's father, who comes from the Midwest after Gatsby's death. Both Gatsby and Daisy's and Nick and Jordan's relationships end in tragedy when, following a confrontation with Tom, Tom's mistress Myrtle is killed by the driver (Nick believes Daisy) of Gatsby's car and, believing that Gatsby was the driver, Myrtle's husband murders Gatsby.

Critics have regarded Jordan Baker as one of the characters least deserving of scholarly attention; for those who have analyzed the novel's handful of explicit references of African Americans and racist theories of the day, she is treated as utterly irrelevant to the novel's overt discussion of race. I would like to suggest that this overt discussion of race is being read onto the novel's implicit argument about sexuality, and that the figure of Jordan Baker embodies these intersections and illuminates this code. Recognizing the intentionality behind Jordan's invisibility and indistinguishability from other women and understanding it as a self-conscious pose—a form of passing—reveals some of what I would like to argue are the novel's heretofore undiscovered core concerns: intersections between racial and gender transgression, queer politics and practices of the closet, and the ways patriarchal capitalism constructs gender and sexuality. The character of Jordan Baker then, whose affectation of "whiteness" Fitzgerald underscores throughout the novel, embodies the conflation of simultaneously developing discourses on race, sex, and gender. Ironically, the fact that her queerness is most often overlooked proves that her strategies for "passing" in the novel are successful.

Many critics have understood Nick's use of conventionally masculine language to describe Jordan's body ("hard," "muscular," that of "a young cadet") and his admiration of her conventionally masculine attributes (she is athletic, confident, and "self-sufficient") only in terms of his homosexuality, yet clearly there is evidence to suggest that Jordan has no erotic interest in

men.<sup>2</sup> Readers overlook a critical moment in Nick's developing relationship with Jordan, assuming his attraction to her is, in a sense, a physical one, reflective only of his own sexuality. Yet Fitzgerald's representation of Jordan draws from the common discourse of sexual inversion—including that of the "mannish woman," the "invert," and the "third sex"—of nineteenth-century sexologists such as Kraft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis, as well as the developing narrative of the "threatening lesbian." The character of the lesbian figure in popular representations of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century illuminates Fitzgerald's representation of Jordan:

The mannish woman sought various male prerogatives. Through "masculine" clothing she increased her public mobility; through professional or artistic aspirations she sought economic independence; through her romantic escapades she placed herself in courtship or domesticity in the masculine position. She was a presumptively white and prosperous woman who set out to claim an elite masculine life plan for herself. (Duggan 28-29)

Jordan fits Duggan's description of the "presumptively white and prosperous" lesbian, and it is to this presumption and privilege of whiteness that Fitzgerald points in his use of race as a code for *queer*. Contrary to most movie representations of the character, Jordan Baker is blonde, and in explaining the theories of scientific racism, Tom immediately identifies Jordan, along with Nick and himself, as being "Nordic"—though he hesitates when it comes to Daisy (18). Jordan's golf career allows her the public mobility and economic independence to travel to all of the same leisure destinations frequented by Tom and Daisy, and, as Nick points out, she takes the lead in her relationships with men. Fitzgerald's use of the expression "sporting life" to describe the magazines in which Nick has seen her photograph creates a double entendre linking her professional athleticism with a kind of recreational sexuality (23). Importantly, unlike the established representation of the "mannish woman," Jordan does not wear masculine clothing. She is always in extremely feminine attire, in clothing apparently identical to Daisy's.

Jordan's "whiteness" renders her invisible not only to Tom but to many readers. Mary McKay notes the lack of definition of female characters, including Jordan, in the novel: "Throughout the novel, Nick emphasizes this lack of definition among the women characters. He sees them as creatures blurred by the pointless round of parties and vacuous relationships. Myrtle's sister, Catherine, has 'a blurred air to her face' [*Gatsby* 34]; and all the women at *Gatsby's* parties look alike" (317). Another reading of such women's lack of definition is possible; it is not that narrator Nick perceives the women in this way so much as that he recognizes that they are intention-

ally making themselves indistinguishable—in other words, passing. This act of recognition is possible because among Jordan's associates, only Nick is, himself, invested in sexual passing.

Over the last thirty years, readers have come, to greater or lesser extent, to accept Nick's homosexuality. An examination of what this means for his relationship with Jordan Baker is long overdue. In his 1979 essay "Another Reading of *The Great Gatsby*," Keith Fraser writes of his puzzlement that so few readers comment on narrator Nick Carraway's ambivalent sexuality, citing both textual and extra-textual evidence to discuss what he cautiously terms Nick's sexual "ambiguity" and "ambivalence." In 1992, Edward Wasiolek built on Fraser's reading, highlighting much *more* evidence to support a reading of what he goes so far as to deem Nick's "homosexuality," identifying the many passages throughout the novel he claims we read over instead of reading through, presumably because our assumptions about heterosexuality make them invisible to us. Nearly twenty years later, readers may accept that homoerotic desire informs Nick's strong feelings for Gatsby and colors his soliloquies on New York bachelor life, but critics' and popular readers' insistence on the centrality of a heterosexual love triangle—Southern belle/flapper Daisy Buchanan caught between two lovers; Tom, husband and father of her child; and first love Gatsby—renders Nick's sexuality irrelevant. If this is a book about how much Gatsby loves Daisy, as (for instance) the Francis Ford Coppola screenplay wants us to believe, what does it matter that the narrator is homosexual? Furthermore, the reader who wants to dismiss Nick's sexuality as inconsequential can always point to the fact that he is, we assume, in a heterosexual relationship. His girlfriend, though, is hard to read.

Jordan's apparent lack of definition is reflected in literary criticism of the novel, which dismisses her as a flat and static character, Fitzgerald's representative of a vacuous and superficial New Woman, a kind of stock character of the flapper. The explanatory note of the authorized text points only to the character's association with popular cars of the day and with the golf champion Edith Cummings. Her name, and her relationship with Daisy, also evokes Zelda's female friend Jordan Prince, who incited Fitzgerald's jealousy when she invited Zelda to accompany her to a dance while he was ostensibly courting her. I would like to offer another possible association: the African-American jazz singer Josephine Baker. Jordan Baker's name itself identifies her as *queer*—referring not only to the automobiles that are, of course, so closely associated with (male) wealth and power in the novel, but also with Josephine Baker, a racially and sexually transgressive figure. "Oh, -- you're *Jordan Baker*," Nick says when he recognizes her as a well-known golfer (23). In 1925, the year *Gatsby* was published, Josephine Baker—who, like many women blues singers of the day, was known to be bisexual—expatriated to Paris, which offered greater racial and sexual

emancipation than the United States (Smith 198). Fitzgerald explicitly uses Josephine Baker as a representative cultural icon in his later work: she appears in the stories “Melarky” and “Babylon Revisited,” the latter of which includes a reference to Baker and her female lover; in *Gatsby*, the reference to a “Follies understudy” might be another allusion to Baker.

Recognizing the intentionality behind Jordan’s invisibility and indistinguishability from other women and understanding it as a form of passing reveals some of what I would like to argue are the novel’s heretofore undiscovered core concerns: intersections between racial and gender transgression, queer politics and practices of the closet, and the ways patriarchal capitalism constructs gender and sexuality. The character of Jordan Baker then—whose affectation of “whiteness” Fitzgerald underscores throughout the novel—embodies the conflation of simultaneously developing discourses on race, sex, and gender.

Rereading *The Great Gatsby* in this way, the novel becomes a fascinating cultural document, one that has been preserved, it should be noted, precisely because it was written in such a cautiously guarded fashion. US federal laws such as the 1873 Comstock Act banning material and literature deemed to be obscene, lewd, or lascivious, and similar laws in England, would have made it impossible to publish work that openly dealt with homosexual themes. Radclyffe Hall’s lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness*, published three years after *Gatsby* and based on autobiographical sources, does not explicitly depict homosexual acts but was nonetheless the subject of an obscenity trial in the United Kingdom at the end of which the judge ordered all copies to be destroyed, a decision which was upheld on appeal.

*The Great Gatsby*, then, is exceptional in that the kind of reserved, circumspect lives of men like Nick and women like Jordan have rarely been recorded in letters and diaries. Rather, unprofessed homosexuals of Fitzgerald’s generation, particularly writers and artists who had achieved or held ambitions to fame, guarded their privacy. Willa Cather and Carl Van Vechten, to name two writers whom Fitzgerald knew and admired at the time and who are now known to have been lesbian and bisexual, respectively, would restrict or forbid even the posthumous publication of certain of their papers. From the beginning, Fitzgerald’s success as a writer was buoyed in no small part by readers’ conflation of his life and writing. His first two novels, *This Side of Paradise* (1920) and *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922), famously drew heavily on autobiographical detail, as, indeed, would his fourth novel, *Tender is the Night* (1934), and the novel at which he was working at his death in 1941, *The Last Tycoon*. Given this continued tendency to write from his own experience and to encourage readers’ association of his life and work, it is no wonder that Fitzgerald would write about sexuality in a secretive way.



### I. Jordan's Indistinguishability

Superficially, Jordan seems unremarkable, often indistinguishable from other women, particularly from Daisy. On first seeing Daisy and Jordan in the novel, Nick remarks: "The only completely stationary object in the room was an enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. They were both in white and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house" (12). The sentence structure itself obscures the women's presence, relegating them to the position of accessory objects; it is the couch that attracts Nick's attention. Later, Fitzgerald presents an almost identical scene in which the women's physical presence seems again to be merely atmospheric, their bodies part of the décor. Arriving for lunch at the Buchanans', Nick finds "Daisy and Jordan [lying] upon an enormous couch, like silver idols, weighing down their own white dresses against the singing breeze of the fans. 'We can't move,' they said together" (122). Throughout the novel, Daisy and Jordan are often dressed identically in white. Later in the scene, when mother Daisy refers to Pammy as the picture of perfection, "You dream, you. You absolute little dream," the two year old reveals the image's artificiality: "'Yes,' admitted the child calmly. 'Aunt Jordan's got a white dress too'" (123). This is the child's only spoken line, in the only scene in which she appears, and it highlights the fact that the garments connoting innocence are, in fact, a self-consciously adopted *uniform* of an idealized feminine purity and innocence.

Jordan's physical characteristics and expression, like her white apparel, seem to be static. In a novel that is so tightly constructed, Fitzgerald's verbatim repetition of Jordan's physical description—her "grey [. . .] eyes" (15) and "autumn-leaf yellow hair" (22)—serve rhetorically to emphasize the fixed, unchanging nature of Jordan's superficial (Nordic) appearance. Upon meeting Jordan, Nick says, "It occurred to me that I had seen her, or a picture of her, somewhere before" (15), indicating that her appearance in reality and her appearance in photographs are interchangeable; later, recognizing her as a public figure, a professional golfer, Nick says, "I knew now why her face was familiar—its pleasing contemptuous expression had looked out at me from many rotogravure pictures of the sporting life" (23), implying that her appearance in each of the photographs, as well as in reality, is exactly the same. Strangely, Jordan at rest—she is often pictured in apparently languid, relaxed poses, as in the scenes quoted above—appears to Nick identical to her image in what would have been rigidly posed photographs, revealing that her casual air is studied.

Fitzgerald's constant repetition of the word "jaunty" in reference to Jordan can only be read as emblematic: "[T]here was a jauntness about her movements" (55); "her brown hand waved a jaunty salute" (57); "[she]

leaned back jauntily just within the circle of my arm” (84); “her chin raised a little, jauntily” (185), and of course, Nick’s insight that Jordan adopted this pose so that she may secretly “satisfy the demands of her hard jaunty body” (63). Not only does nearly *every* description of Jordan include some derivation of the word, but the word is used nowhere else in the novel *but* in relation to her. Clearly, the repetition of “jaunty,” like the verbatim repetition of her physical description, serves as a code in the novel, intimating that her “jauntiness,” her unstudied manner, like her “whiteness,” is itself a kind of pretense. I believe that the peculiarity of this repetitious usage of the word “jaunty”—along with the use of the word “gay,” which appears throughout the novel in instances where it could be interpreted as meaning “homosexual”—suggest a coded usage similar to Gertrude Stein’s repetition of “gay” in the 1922 short story “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene.” It was during this era that “gay” began to be used to refer to transgressive sexuality including, though not limited to, homosexuality, and in “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene,” Stein’s repetition of the word “gay” comes to signify something about the intimate nature of the women’s relationship. Throughout *The Great Gatsby*, the word appears in contexts in which the double entendre is possible.

Like her appearance, Jordan’s language seems innocuous, indistinct. The women’s voices at dinner on the night of Nick’s first visit to the Buchanans’ are as atmospheric and ephemeral as their billowing white dresses: “Sometimes [Daisy] and Miss Baker talked at once, unobtrusively and with a bantering inconsequence” (17). Yet examined closely, Jordan’s dialogue in conversation with men is more than merely inconsequential; she in fact slyly refuses even to interact with men. Left alone with Tom, she resorts to reading an article from the *Saturday Evening Post* aloud (22-23); in Gatsby’s library, she merely repeats the male party guest’s statements back to him (50-51).<sup>3</sup>

Jordan Baker is remarkably unremarkable; her normality suggests a normalizing, a kind of affected pose. The sheer banality of Fitzgerald’s portrayal of Jordan’s behavior, speech, expression, physical appearance, and wardrobe—which has, perhaps, led so many to dismiss her—itself suggests something *queer* about her. We should begin to suspect, as Nick does, that Jordan looks like her pictures precisely because she is always *posing*, and, as he soon realizes, her superficiality is a carefully constructed mask designed to conceal a secret life in a panoptical society.

## II. Nick “Discovers” Jordan’s Secret

Perhaps it is clues such as these that Nick is picking up on when he notes Jordan’s “familiarity” and comments that he knew “the bored haughty face she turned toward the world concealed something” even before “one day [he] found out what it was” (62). When Jordan makes him complicit



in an obvious falsification about leaving the top down in a borrowed car, Nick remembers an accusation of cheating made against her during her first golf tournament.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, Nick does not care whether Jordan took responsibility for the car's getting rained on or whether she was devious in gaining entrance into the golf world: "It made no difference to me," he says. "Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply--I was casually sorry, and then I forgot" (59). Read superficially, this statement has often been misinterpreted as a rather misogynistic dismissal of women. I would suggest a more complex understanding of his acceptance of female "dishonesty."<sup>5</sup> The statement comes almost immediately after the strange scene revealing to knowing and careful readers Nick's homosexuality: the elevator operator reprimands Chester McKee, the photographer Nick has just met, for handling the lever (presumably in a botched attempt to grope Nick); following an ellipsis in the text, Nick wakes up unclothed in McKee's bed.<sup>6</sup> As a homosexual man, then, Nick understands the necessity of deceit in a society that defines one's desire and agency as illicit and where there are eyes—and cameras—everywhere. In this, he identifies with women, particularly Jordan Baker.

Jordan is, literally and metaphorically, a woman successfully playing a man's game: her professional golfing career makes her self-sufficient, allowing her to live and travel independently, and it is a livelihood reliant, of course, on her skill using the golf club. Because he is homosexual and not wealthy, Nick has no vested interest in the maintenance and reproduction of patriarchal capitalism. He jokingly refers to himself as being "too poor" to get married (24), and therefore he would not care if she *had* moved the ball (though he does not believe she did), cheating her way into (male) privilege defined as autonomy, wealth, and freedom. After all, he says, the ball was resting on a "bad lie" to begin with (62). What is important, however, is that the association of the two incidents prompts Nick to interrogate his initial assumption that Jordan is merely handsome and vapid. Considering her potential for dishonesty allows Nick to entertain the possibility that she is not as she appears to be, leading him to recognize that, like him, she is concealing something. In this, as in her financial independence, he perceives her as a comrade.

Recognizing the connection between Jordan's defensive lie about the car and the caddy's charge against her early in her career (both instances in which Jordan claims male privilege by wielding symbols of male power), Nick recalls an earlier conversation about being "careful" while driving:

"Well, other people are," she said lightly.

"What's that got to do with it?"

"They'll keep out of my way," she insisted. (63)

In other words, for Jordan, it is precisely because the majority conforms so dogmatically to the law that transgressors like herself may proceed largely

without incident or accident. Connecting the two incidents in which Jordan is (or is accused of being) dishonest leads him to recall this conversation about being “careful” while driving and adhering to or transgressing the law. She tells him, “I hate careless people. That’s why I like you,” acknowledging that she knows he too is queer, and, also like her, not careless, but scrupulously discreet.<sup>7</sup> “[S]he had deliberately shifted our relations, and for a moment I thought I loved her,” he says in reply. It is crucial to understand that this conversation about driving forges a bond between them. He recognizes Jordan’s “dishonesty” and consequently “discovers” her secret and *immediately* decides to break from the “old friend” with whom he has been similarly “vaguely engaged” (24) out West (which he has left, he says, to avoid being “rumored into marriage”).

In effect, Jordan “deliberately shifted [their] relations” by very nearly articulating her understanding and confirming his suspicion, that she, too, is queer. Nick’s subsequent meditation on what it is like to live a secret life illuminates his identification with Jordan and his acceptance of so-called “dishonesty”:

Jordan Baker instinctively avoided clever shrewd men . . . because she felt safer on a plane where any divergence from a code would be thought impossible. She was incurably dishonest. She wasn’t able to endure being at a disadvantage, and given this unwillingness I suppose she had begun dealing in subterfuges when she was very young in order to keep that cool insolent smile turned to the world and yet satisfy the demands of her hard jaunty body. (63)

Prior to this moment, Nick says, he sensed that Jordan was “concealing something,” but it is only after he makes these “connections” (a pervasive word in the novel) between Jordan’s lying about the car, the accusation a caddy made about her early in her career, and their conversation about being “careful,” that he realizes that Jordan is concealing a secret not unlike his own; she is queer *like* him. In the passage above, he subtly discloses what he discovers her secret to be: it involves her relationships with men, transgression, passing, deception, power, superficial amiability, erotic desire, and transgressive sexuality.

### III. Jordan as Lesbian

Evidence suggests that Jordan is not interested in men sexually or as potential marriage partners. When Daisy and Gatsby kiss, the following exchange occurs:

“You forget there’s a lady present,” said Jordan.  
Daisy looked around doubtfully.  
“You kiss Nick too.” (123)

To which Jordan responds, “What a low, vulgar girl!” While Jordan speaks

of having thought, as a young teenager, that Daisy's relationship with Gatsby "seemed romantic" and of having had "beaux" of her own (80), Nick claims she, "unlike Daisy, was too wise ever to carry well-forgotten dreams from age to age" (143).

Nick's response to Jordan's relationships with other men is informative, as well. At the first of Gatsby's parties that Nick attends, Jordan's "escort [is] a persistent undergraduate given to violent innuendo and obviously under the impression that sooner or later Jordan was going to yield him up her person to a greater or lesser degree" (49); in other words, he is a man, like Tom, for whom "divergence from a code would be thought impossible." At the close of the novel, Jordan tells Nick "without comment that she was engaged to another man," but Nick says he "doubted that though there were several she could have married at the nod of her head" (185-86). Nick knows, or wants to believe, that Jordan will not marry, because marriage would mean capitulation; although Nick himself seems bullied into shaking Tom's hand at the end of the novel, he hopes Jordan will not be forced into such conformity.

Aside from her relationship with Nick, all of Jordan's relationships and interactions are with women, and it is in women—Daisy, the girls at Gatsby's parties—that she takes an active interest; Jordan is, at least, a woman-oriented and woman-identified woman. Tom disapproves of Daisy's and Jordan's intimate friendship. As a professional athlete, Jordan is a transgressive figure, the phallic golf club liberating her from a patriarchal capitalist economy that is the subject of Nick's scrutiny as a bonds man. It is a system, for Nick, in which women and poor men are treated as "trade," and in which women's bodies are controlled by fathers and husbands. When Tom bemoans patriarchy's lack of control over Jordan's body ("They oughtn't to let her run around the country this way" (23)), Daisy asks coldly, "Who oughtn't to?" reminding him that Jordan's family "consists of one aunt about a thousand years old"; this aunt, Mrs. Sigourney Howard, is a same-sex mentor evocative of the kind of benefactor Virginia Woolf would suggest necessary for the woman artist in *A Room of One's Own* (1929).<sup>8</sup>

Driving into the city with Tom and Nick, Jordan purposefully unsettles Tom with a mention of exotic sensuality: "I love New York on summer afternoons when everyone's away. There's something very sensuous about it—overripe, as if all sorts of funny fruits were going to fall into your hands" (132), sharing Nick's own affection for the city as a site of transgression of rigid social codes, a place where, in Nick's words, "Anything can happen now that we've slid over this bridge [. . .] anything at all. . . . [ . . . ] Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder" (73). In the city, the impossible is made possible, as the city is a site of not only racial and class transgression, but also of gender and sexual transgression. While Tom seems, for perhaps the first time in the novel, unsure of himself in the city,

Jordan and Nick seem far more at home.<sup>9</sup>

Chapter 1 has Nick having dinner with Tom, Daisy, and Jordan at the Buchanans' home in West Egg, while in Chapter 2, he has drinks in the city with Tom, Myrtle, Myrtle's sister Catherine, and neighbors Mr. and Mrs. Chester McKee, suggesting parallels between the two scenes. Jordan is apparently staying with Tom and Daisy for an extended period; the fact that this is a sore point for Tom delights Daisy (23). Similarly, Catherine seems at home in her sister Myrtle's residence, just as Jordan seems to be in the Buchanans'. In this sense, she functions in this scene of domestic life as Jordan's double. Fitzgerald's association of Jordan with whiteness is paralleled by his description of Catherine, whose "complexion [is] powdered milky white" (emphasis added), reinforcing the notion that Jordan's whiteness functions as a *mask* of purity. Like Jordan's, Catherine's relationships are with women, a fact about which she is quite open; when he asks Catherine if she lives in the apartment, Nick says, "she laughed immoderately, repeated my question aloud and told me she lived with a girl friend at a hotel" (34). Later in their conversation, she tells him about a trip to Monte Carlo: "Just last year. I went over there with another girl. [. . .] We went by way of Marseilles. We had over twelve hundred dollars when we started but we got gypped out of it all in two days in the private rooms" (36). Like Jordan, Catherine is a single, apparently financially independent woman, who travels freely; Catherine's gambling in Monte Carlo—"playing" with money—perhaps mirrors Jordan's golf career.

Jordan's and Catherine's apparent contentedness with their single status is, of course, itself an implicit criticism of the institution of marriage, but both are also outspoken critics of the institution of marriage, believing their married "sisters" should leave their respective husbands for something better. Catherine's character—and both Catherine and Jordan's "advocacy" of other women—also evokes then-popular representations of lesbians:

Women who challenged the sanctity of the male sphere were subject to particular scorn by psychiatrists, who stigmatized them as biological misfits and inverts. [. . .] [F]requently a link between sexual inversion and women's activism was proposed. [. . .] Other doctors were less restrained in proposing a literally organic relationship between the women's movement and lesbianism. [. . .] By this account [by Dr. William Lee Howard in 1900] the woman who "invaded men's sphere" was likely to want the vote, have excessive, malelike body hair, smoke cigars, be able to whistle, and take female lovers. (Chauncey 122)

Like Jordan, Catherine immediately, if not quite accurately, identifies Nick

as an ally, speaking to him conspiratorially; “She really ought to get away from him [. . .]. They’ve been living over that garage for eleven years. And Tom’s the first sweetie she ever had” (39). Both women disapprove of their “sisters’” bad marriages: in a query that echoes Jordan’s disdain for Tom and his infidelities, Catherine asks “Why did you [marry George Wilson], Myrtle? Nobody forced you to” (39). The comment prefigures Jordan’s description of Daisy’s wedding in which someone indeed does force Daisy to marry.

#### IV. The Origins of Jordan’s Gender Dissent

Jordan’s advocacy of Daisy, her gender dissent, transgression, and “passing,” are related to her relationships with women and are in response to women’s disadvantage in a patriarchal capitalist society, particularly in marriage. The origins of Jordan’s gender dissent and of her use of golf as a site of transgression and liberation are rooted in Daisy’s marriage to Tom. A strange anecdote in Chapter 7 illuminates these origins, as well as Jordan’s subsequent transgression and passing. In the New York hotel room rented for the afternoon on which Nick, Jordan, Daisy, and Gatsby are preparing to effect their plan for Daisy to leave Tom, they hear “portentous chords of Mendelssohn’s Wedding March from the ballroom below” (134), “portentous,” undoubtedly, in that the party is reminded of the social power of the institution of marriage. As occurs many times throughout the novel, Jordan, Daisy, and Nick are having a laugh at Tom’s expense:

“Imagine marrying anybody in this heat!”  
cried Jordan dismally.

“Still—I was married in the middle of June,” Daisy remembered. “Louisville in June! Somebody fainted. Who was it fainted, Tom?”

“Biloxi,” he answered shortly.

“A man named Biloxi. ‘Blocks’ Biloxi, and he made boxes—that’s a fact—and he was from Biloxi, Tennessee.” (134)

Here the explanatory note offers: “Biloxi is in the state of Mississippi; there is no Biloxi in Tennessee,” but states, “It is impossible to determine whether this geographical confusion was the characters’ or the author’s” (213). My reading of this scene relies on a different interpretation: the confusion is neither on Daisy’s part, nor on the author’s part. Daisy grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, and Fitzgerald himself had recently been stationed throughout the South, including in Mississippi; Zelda Fitzgerald, who read *The Great Gatsby* in manuscript, grew up in Kentucky and Alabama and would presumably have corrected a mere error. Rather, Daisy and Jordan have played a joke on the Midwestern Tom, and Nick immediately recognizes this and plays along. The geographical error and exaggerated mispronunciation (in

the South, “Biloxi” doesn’t rhyme with “blocks” and “box”), like Daisy’s tone, makes clear to Nick that this is a scene Daisy and Jordan have played with Tom many times before:

“They carried him into my house,” appended Jordan, “because we lived just two doors from the church. And he stayed three weeks, until Daddy told him he had to get out. The day after he left, Daddy died.” After a moment, she added as if she might have sounded irreverent, “There wasn’t any connection.”

“I used to know a Bill Biloxi from Memphis,” I remarked.

“That was his cousin. I knew his whole family history before he left. He gave me an aluminum putter that I use today.”

The music had died down as the ceremony began and now a long cheer floated in at the window, followed by intermittent cries of “Yea-ee-ee!” and finally by a burst of jazz as the dancing began.

“We’re getting old,” said Daisy. “If we were young, we’d rise and dance.”

“Remember Biloxi,” Jordan warned her. “Where’d you know him, Tom?”

“Biloxi?” He concentrated with an effort. “I didn’t know him. He was a friend of Daisy’s.”

“He was not,” she denied. “I’d never seen him before. He came down in the private car.”

“Well, he said he knew you. He said he was raised in Louisville. Asa Bird brought him around at the last minute and asked if we had room for him.

Jordan smiled.

“He was probably bumming his way home. He told me he was president of your class at Yale.”

Tom and I looked at each other blankly.

“Biloxi?”

“First place we didn’t have any president—” (134-35)

Moments later, accusing Gatsby of fabricating his history as “an Oxford man,” Tom says, “You must have gone there about the time Biloxi went to New Haven” (135), drawing a parallel between Gatsby and “Biloxi,” both



queer figures, uninvited guests, outsiders to the world of (male) privilege. Part of the scene's humor arises from Jordan's suggestion that Tom would have "known" (double entendre intended, of course) the effeminate (and therefore, according to assumptions of the day, probably homosexual) man who fainted at the wedding and that such a man could have not only attended Yale but achieved a position of power at that elite institution, ostensibly Tom's world. Yet in truth, it is Nick to whom "Biloxi" sounds "familiar"—and he associates this Biloxi with another major city, Memphis—here parodying the paranoid popular notion that homosexual people could simply recognize one another. Indeed, Jordan's is a winking response—the man she met wasn't the man Nick knew, but the two were related.

Jordan smiles approvingly at the idea that "Biloxi" was probably just a southern boy "bumming a ride home," taking advantage of the privileged, oblivious Tom, who rented a private train car for his wedding party to travel from Chicago, because she identifies with the freeloader, as she did when he stayed in her home (fainting at the wedding, suggesting he shares her "inversion" of gender; he is an outsider, clearly freeloading when he overstays his welcome, if not at the wedding itself). Jordan's smile at the name "Asa Bird"—the first name being Hebrew in origin—implies a further recognition and approval of his outsider status. That the man who provided "Biloxi" entrée into Tom's world might have been Jewish links him to Jay Gatsby, né James *Gatz*, whose possibly Jewish name has been the subject of critical conjecture, further emphasizing the uncertainty of "race" in the novel—and "race," particularly as it is linked to gender and sexuality. "Bill Biloxi's" having given Jordan the putter she continues to use demonstrates that the putter represents her "playing a man's game": i.e., acting independently. In his lengthy conversations with Jordan, we might imagine that Biloxi, who has gained access to Tom's world of wealth and privilege by passing, passes on strategies of how to transgress (in fact the knowledge of the possibility of transgression) along with the putter.

It is no mistake that it is in the days following Daisy's marriage to Tom that Jordan comes to identify with this queer figure and begins to engage in gender dissent and transgression. Just the day before she meets "Biloxi," Jordan has had a shocking realization about women's place in patriarchal capitalism. Earlier in the novel Jordan has told Nick about what Daisy refers to as their "white girlhood" (24). There is an aura of fairy tale in both women's evocation of an idealized southern white womanhood, particularly in Jordan's reminiscing about the young Daisy:

The largest of the banners and the largest of the lawns belonged to Daisy Fay's house. She was just eighteen, two years older than me, and by far the most popular of all the young girls in Louisville. She dressed in white and had a little white roadster

and all day long the telephone rang in her house and excited young officers from Camp Taylor demanded the privilege of monopolizing her that night, “anyways for an hour!” [. . .][O]f all the older girls, I admired her most. (79-80)

Daisy’s life, being courted by military men and wealthy men from cities like Chicago and New Orleans, “seemed romantic” and glamorous to the sixteen-year-old Jordan, so she is understandably traumatized by Daisy’s behavior the night before her wedding, which reveals to Jordan the truth about marriage in a patriarchal capitalist society. When she finds Daisy drunk in her room just before the bridal dinner, Jordan says, she was especially concerned, because *Daisy doesn’t drink*:

“What’s the matter, Daisy?”

I was scared, I can tell you; I’d never seen a girl like that before.

“Here, dearis.” She groped around in a waste-basket she had with her on the bed and pulled out the string of pearls [a wedding present from Tom “valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars”]. “Take ’em downstairs and give ’em back to whoever they belong to. Tell ’em all Daisy’s change’ her mine. Say ‘Daisy’s change’ her mine!”

She began to cry—she cried and cried. I rushed out and found her mother’s maid and we locked the door and got her into a cold bath. [. . .]

[S]he didn’t say another word. We gave her spirits of ammonia and put ice on her forehead and hooked her back into her dress and half an hour later when we walked out of the room the pearls were around her neck and the incident was over. Next day at five o’clock she married Tom Buchanan without so much as a shiver [. . .]. (81)

Witnessing Daisy’s being treated as property for exchange (the string of pearls Tom gives her parallels the dog collar he buys Myrtle) is a formative experience in the young Jordan’s developing attitudes toward gender and women’s position in society, and in hindsight she may feel guilty for the role she played in forcing Daisy to marry Tom, who is not only physically abusive but a philanderer. Although she is quick to assure Nick “there was no connection” between Bill Biloxi and her father’s death, it is significant that she began her professional golf career at just about the time she would have been expected to get married (and immediately after Daisy’s wedding).

Armed with the golf club “Biloxi” passes on to her—a symbol of illicit

power—Jordan’s work as a golfer becomes the source of her liberation from what she perceives to be Daisy’s tragic fate—being married off to a brutish son of wealth and privilege. Biloxi, we might argue, shows the young Jordan another way: Daisy did not have to marry Tom; marriage is not the only alternative; dissent and transgression are, in fact, possible. They are made possible, his presence as an uninvited guest at the wedding and subsequent holiday in her home illustrates, by the practice of “passing.”

### V. Jordan’s Use of Codes

The sport of golf, which requires poise, composure, and control, seems particularly well suited to Jordan’s purposes as a transgressive figure who adopts poses to pass beneath the watchful eye of social power. When Nick first meets Jordan, he is struck by her composure: “She was extended full length at her end of the divan, completely motionless and with her chin raised a little as if she were balancing something on it which was quite likely to fall. If she saw me out of the corner of her eyes she gave no hint of it—indeed I was almost surprised into murmuring an apology for having disturbed her by coming in” (13). Later that evening, Jordan refers to her (affectation of) rest and ease (the “balancing” pose we have seen), her refusal to let others know what she is thinking, as well as her refusal of alcohol—all practices of self-control—as part of her “training”:

“No thanks,” said Miss Baker to the four cocktails just in from the pantry, “I’m absolutely in training.”

Her host [Tom] looked at her incredulously.

“You are!” He took down his drink as if it were a drop in the bottom of a glass. “How you ever get anything done is beyond me.” (15)

Which is precisely the point: what Jordan “gets done”—her transgression of gender and sexual codes—*must* be done beyond Tom’s notice. The game she is playing, claiming the right to self-sufficiency, independence, and sexual freedom reserved for men, requires her to be particularly “careful,” especially around Tom, both as the embodiment of abstract social power and, quite literally, the force whom Jordan needs to evade: Daisy’s husband. Jordan’s dissent is against marriage in patriarchy in the abstract, as well as Daisy’s marriage to Tom, in particular. Fortunately, Tom is neither “clever” nor “shrewd.”

We come, then, to see that Jordan’s invisibility, or “whiteness”—her indistinguishability from other women in expression and apparel, her extended silences and apparent non-sequitors—is intentional, part of a carefully constructed guise. The Foucauldian panoptical social discipline suggested by a world in which there are eyes, cameras, and tabloid report-

ers everywhere makes it necessary to pose and to perform, to engage in subterfuge. The ubiquitous eyes of the novel, of which much has been made, are intrinsically related to the novel's theme of gossip, scandal, and tabloid journalism; the Hollywood people that populate the novel are well practiced in the art of subterfuge to avoid scandal. Jordan, then, as a public figure, is in a unique position to teach Nick how to evade panoptic social discipline.

Nick only recognizes Jordan's queer position after making the connection between her "deceptiveness," her golf career, and her driving. Jordan herself, however, immediately recognizes Nick as queer (perhaps because Daisy has told her). As we have seen above, twice in the novel prior to this moment of realization, Nick has commented on Jordan's seeming "familiar" to him. Throughout the novel, queer characters seem "familiar" to one another, a suggestion, undoubtedly, of an ability to recognize unspoken communication, gestures, and codes. In his history of gay culture during this period, George Chauncey comments that such "codes . . . intelligible only to other men familiar with the subculture . . . were so effective that medical researchers at the turn of the century repeatedly expressed their astonishment at gay men's ability to identify each other, attributing it to something akin to a sixth sense: 'Sexual perverts readily recognize each other, although they may never have met before,' one doctor wrote with some alarm in 1892, 'and there exists a mysterious bond of psychological sympathy between them'" (188).

In hindsight, the reader may recognize Jordan's several early attempts to invite Nick's confidence and acknowledge their common bond; during their first meeting, she tells him she knows Gatsby and says he must know him as well (15). Also in this first meeting, she adopts a conspiratorial tone when speaking of Tom's infidelity, identifying Nick as an ally of women, rather than of Tom, despite the men's common membership in a Yale "senior society." At the first of Gatsby's parties, when Nick accepts a date to go flying with Gatsby the following day, Jordan teases, "Having a gay time now?" (52) The common misreading (or dismissal) of Jordan's "Bill Biloxi" anecdote demonstrates how Jordan's pose conceals her deceptiveness and, more importantly, reveals what it is she is concealing—and communicating, in a coded manner with characters such as Daisy and Nick.

When Tom picks up on Jordan's suggestion of going to the movies as a way to cool off, she dismisses him, saying it's too hot; rather, Tom should go alone while she and Nick "ride around and meet [him] after." She says, "We'll meet you on some corner. I'll be the man smoking two cigarettes" (132). Jordan apparently understands the practice of using codes and arranging clandestine meetings in the city; interestingly, she assigns herself a role of gender transgression and excessive sexuality (she is a *man* smoking *two* cigarettes).

While Tom drinks heavily throughout the novel, queer characters

are always “careful,” marked by their tee-totaling and impeccable manners. Jordan articulates for Nick’s benefit the strategy of being “careful”: “It’s a great advantage not to drink among hard drinking people. You can hold your tongue and, moreover, you can time any little irregularity of your own so that everybody else is so blind that they don’t see or don’t care” (82). She also highlights another strategy of evasion at one of Gatsby’s parties: “I like large parties. They’re so intimate. At small parties there isn’t any privacy” (54). As we’ve seen above, Jordan doesn’t drink (she’s “in training” to wield that golf club), while Tom is “blind” through much of the novel. Nick himself knows the need for care quite well; the night he goes to the city with Tom is only the second time in his life he’s been drunk (33), and this kind of intoxication is dangerous for Nick, leading him as it does to make an overt homosexual connection and leave a very small party with Chester McKee. Reading the scene in Myrtle’s apartment through the lens of Jordan’s comments about being circumspect in one’s speech and actions, we understand more clearly the way in which Nick and McKee make a connection and then “time [their] little irregularity”: an infuriated Tom punches the screaming Myrtle in the nose, and the drunken party guests rush to care for her; wordlessly, Nick brushes a drop of shaving cream from the dozing McKee’s face, and then the two leave the apartment within seconds of one another. Daisy’s unusual drunkenness on the night before her wedding to Tom, then, suggests her eventual capitulation to patriarchal authority; until then, she has been able to evade getting married through a flamboyantly busy social calendar and a series of vague understandings (she is, at one point, “presumably engaged to a man from New Orleans” (62))—such as those Nick has with Jordan and previously had with his tennis-playing friend in the Midwest.

Because Jordan is always in the spotlight, she is constantly posing, and successfully so, as is evidenced in critical dismissal of her. We have been, in Wasiolek’s terms, reading over what we should be reading through. Throughout the novel, Jordan tutors Nick in the art of passing, showing him how to be “careful,” to “time any little irregularit[ies]” so as to avoid notice. In doing so, she is also teaching us how to read the novel. *The Great Gatsby* is a novel *about* the homosexual closet (to use contemporary language) that is itself *in* the closet. Characters throughout the novel engage in precisely the kinds of unspoken communication and subterfuge Jordan Baker describes and illuminates for Nick. Given the era in which it was written, the novel is itself written in a kind of code. Readers’ ongoing failure to notice is, in part, a product of their being enchanted by the superficiality of the novel, its subterfuge.

## VI. Conclusions

Perhaps it is because his strong negative attitudes toward homosexuality and homosexuals are so well known that Fitzgerald’s involvement in the

emerging gay and lesbian subculture of the 1920s has remained unremarked. There is much to suggest, for example, that Fitzgerald was familiar with lesbian socialite Natalie Clifford Barney by reputation as early as 1911 and certainly by 1925. Christian Hemmick, an acquaintance of Fitzgerald's through Catholic priest Sigourney Fay, married Natalie Barney's widowed mother, Alice Pike Barney, in 1911; the Fitzgeralds visited Capri, where Barney's lesbian circle summered, in 1925. Biographers of both Fitzgeralds recognize Zelda's exploration of her own lesbian desire (dismissed by many as a symptom of her mental illness and a response to her suspicion that Fitzgerald was himself homosexual). Biographer Sally Cline discusses at length Zelda's involvement in Barney's social circle in Paris in the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>10</sup>

Charles Lewis notes that despite "remarkably extensive" similarities between *Gatsby* and Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929), a novel in which lesbian desire figures prominently, "critics have generally not linked what is now one of America's more widely studied novels about racial passing with our most familiar canonical emblem of American self-invention and social mobility, despite their historical proximity, thematic overlap, and formal similarity" (174). Lewis's inventory of the parallels between the two is overwhelming, from the broadest summaries of plot ("In each novel, the main character is a passer closely observed by another admiring but ambivalent character whose relationship with the passer is fraught with tension and ambiguity, whose own position in society similarly entails an element of passing, and whose perspective infuses the narrative with a highly charged mix of desire and dread" (174)) to the most specific of details ("key scenes in which the women [Irene and Daisy] tear up letters from the main characters [Clare and Gatsby respectively] into 'white pieces' that end up dissolving in water" (182)). Lewis argues, persuasively, that the "resemblances between the two novels are extensive enough to warrant a consideration of sources and influences and what these relations imply" (183), raising intriguing questions about possible common sources, including "the African-American tradition of the 'tragic mulatto' narrative," and "the trope of racial passing" (183). Examining *The Great Gatsby* in the context of African-American literature and literary traditions is, I think, particularly illuminating, but it's important, too, to recognize some of the less obvious parallels between the two, which might explain Larsen's interest in Fitzgerald.

In the early 1920s, the Fitzgeralds socialized regularly with Carl Van Vechten and Tallulah Bankhead (an Alabama girlhood friend of Zelda's), both white people of queer sexuality associated with the Harlem Renaissance, and what Fitzgerald may have been responding to, in his use of African-American literary traditions, was the inextricability of racial and sexual transgression in the Harlem Renaissance, which, in the words of Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "was surely as gay as it was black, not that it was



exclusively either of these” (qtd. in Somerville 129). While the character of Jay Gatsby might illuminate the process of “passing,” he is certainly not trying—with his flashy clothes, his ostentatious car, his carnivalesque parties—to assimilate, unnoticed, into Tom’s world. It is, as we have seen, characters such as Nick and Jordan, who are scrupulously discreet in their transgression of social codes who represent a kind of queer passing. It is this kind of intersection of racial and sexual identity—and particularly the representation of lesbian desire—on which Larsen draws in the figures of Clare and Irene, reunited childhood friends. As Lewis notes: “Clare’s passing anticipates the critical reception of Larsen’s novel, which has been described as a narrative that is itself passing as a fiction of racial passing—and whose true identity can be interpreted more accurately in terms of modernist psychology, homosexual desire, or class conflict” (174-75). In other words, like *Gatsby*, *Passing* is a novel centrally concerned with lesbian figures and which both represents and engages acts of passing.

In the nearly twenty years since Wasiolek urged us to recognize the “sexual drama” of Nick and Gatsby, Americans have become increasingly familiar with gay male identities and culture and therefore more able and willing to recognize and accept Nick’s sexuality. That said, surprisingly little has been done to explore what the fact of Nick’s sexuality might reveal about that of other characters. This continued failure reveals how deeply invested our society remains in the idea of heterosexual romance; we are in the realm, in fact, where Nick says Jordan feels the least threat of exposure of her secret life, where “divergence from a code would be thought impossible.” If Nick’s overt homosexual rendezvous with Chester McKee is the key to understanding that *The Great Gatsby* is a novel about homosexuality, then Jordan’s dialogue and actions show us that it is a novel about a particular way of living as a homosexual in society, a way of life with which Fitzgerald was familiar, if not practicing himself.

### Notes

1. Given the repeated references to “breeding” throughout the novel, Fitzgerald’s identification of the author as “Goddard” might be a conflation of Lothrop Stoddard and popular American psychologist and eugenicist Henry H. Goddard.
2. Nick’s unnamed “old friend” out West is similarly “mannish”: Nick imagines her with a faint mustache appearing when she plays tennis; both she and Jordan are athletes, another cultural code of the time identifying them as “mannish.” These physical descriptions of the women associated with Nick have been interpreted as indicative only of *his* sexuality.
3. Jordan’s interactions with “queer” men—Nick, Gatsby and “Bill Biloxi”—are different: she speaks more honestly, although in a coded way, to Nick; she has apparently had more authentic conversations with “Bill Biloxi” and

Gatsby, but in both cases, she reiterates only the men's portions of the conversations. Significantly, her conversation with Gatsby takes place privately in his mansion, her conversation with "Biloxi" privately in her home.

4. Although the caddy immediately recanted his charge and Jordan has gone on to great success, Nick says, the "incident and the name had remained together in [his] mind" (63), as it does in most readers' and critics'. The threat of scandal is a recurring theme in the novel, and its power is evident in the critical response to the novel: on the basis of accusations (which Nick presents as baseless and mean-spirited), many remember Jordan as being a cheat, Gatsby a bootlegger; Francis Ford Coppola's 1974 screenplay goes so far as to depict Jordan's cheating, albeit in a friendly game on the lawn, rather than at a major tournament.

5. He comments as well on what he sees as Daisy's "basic insincerity" when she confides that she is miserable in her marriage and feels the "best thing a girl can be in this world [is] a beautiful little fool" (22, 21).

6. For thorough examinations of Nick's homosexuality, see Fraser and Wasiolek.

7. In Mann's *Behind the Silver Screen*, rather than using such post-Stonewall language as "openly gay" or "in the closet" to describe practices of in an earlier era, Mann uses the terms "overt" and "circumspect," words, he writes, "taught to [him] by the survivors themselves" (xv). One interview subject "explained 'circumspect' this way: 'Although people might have known someone was gay, if he was circumspect it meant he was *careful*. He might even live with another man, but he brought a woman to functions. He behaved properly. He didn't put the makes on someone on the set'" (emphasis in original). Chauncey, in *Gay New York*, notes similar usage of the word "careful."

8. It is significant that both Jordan Baker and Daisy Fay Buchanan are nominally linked to the author's own mentor, Catholic priest Sigourney Fay.

9. Heap's *Slumming* explores the racial and sexual transgression of the cultural phenomenon of "slumming" in New York and Chicago during this period. In his recognition of the relatedness of racial and sexual identities and spaces, Fitzgerald perhaps intuits what Heap identifies as an historical progression from the "Negro vogue" of the 1920s to the "pansy and lesbian craze" of the 1930s.

10. While beyond the scope of this essay, the ways in which an awareness of the Fitzgeralds' connection to Barney and her circle, heretofore unremarked by literary critics, may offer fresh insights into F. Scott Fitzgerald's life and work, particularly in the context of early gay and lesbian literature.

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