

Introduction

Days after the inauguration of Barack Obama, the Republican National Committee elected Michael Steele, an African American, to become its chairman. In the following weeks, Steele embraced what National Public Radio described as a “hipper—some may say a hip-hop—vernacular to breathe vigor into the demoralized GOP.” The *Washington Times* reported the chairman’s desire for “an ‘off the hook’ public relations blitz targeting young Latinos and African-Americans in ‘hip-hop settings.’” This was the Republicans’ answer to the widespread perception that they were out of touch, too white and too set against the future to understand those beyond their traditional core. To be sure, Steele’s search for a hipper vernacular didn’t register a significant change in the GOP, and this was not simply because his chairmanship was contested from the start, and ultimately short-lived. Republicans remained attached at their grass roots to the modern conservative movement crystallized by Barry Goldwater, committed to consolidating white supremacy, concentrating wealth, and privatizing the New Deal welfare state. Steele simply announced the party’s willingness to market new messages to new segments of the voting public as the situation demanded. The language might change, but the message would not: as Steele put it, Obama’s “big government” stimulus package was “just a wish list from a lot of people who have been on the sidelines for years . . . to get a little bling, bling.”¹

Steele’s gambit was of course pointedly counterintuitive: if one of the two parties had an obvious affinity with hip black culture, it was the Democratic Party. A tide of rappers had turned out during the 2008 race for Obama. Ludacris had led the charge: as his “Obama Song” put it, “You can’t stop what’s ’bout to happen, we ’bout to make history / The first black president is destined and it’s meant to be.” Breathless, *American Prospect* declared, “Whether or not he is aware of it, Barack Obama is the first hip-hop presidential candidate.” The moment seemed to abound in historical firsts. The *New Republic* described

Obama's presidency, one year later, as the first "cool presidency," and *Politico* described the president as "the nation's first hip president." "Watch him walk," *Politico* urged. "Listen to him talk. See the body language, the expressions, the clothes. He's got attitude, rhythm, a sense of humor, contemporary tastes."²

These announcements bespoke the fervent hope that Obama's election represented a definitive departure from the nation's long and ugly history of racism. The American public had elected a man with dark skin to its highest office. Who could refrain from wondering what opportunities this would create for entire classes of people? In his epochal "race speech," Obama had sought to "remind" Americans that "many of the disparities that exist in the African-American community today can be directly traced to inequalities passed on from an earlier generation that suffered under the brutal legacy of slavery and Jim Crow." The candidate seemed poised to redress these disparities, and it was tempting to see his hip in this light. "Where did this man's cool come from?" asked Michelle Cottle of the *New Republic*. A white writer, Cottle cited African American journalist Donna Britt on the distinction between "cool" and "brother cool," and reminded her readers that maintaining a calm and collected outward appearance had often been, for black men, a matter of life and death. But in Cottle's hands, the defense mechanism became a potent weapon: possessed of a brother cool, Obama wielded a "controlled fire" that gave him "the upper hand" in virtually all his political dealings.³

Hip Figures seeks to understand the origin not of Obama's cool but of fantasies such as Cottle's. Its central contention is that, over the last fifty or so years, a range of predominantly white fantasies about hip have animated the secret imagination of postwar liberalism and, more concretely, organized the Democratic Party's efforts to redress "the brutal legacy of slavery and Jim Crow." Seen in this context, Obama's presidency, like that of Bill Clinton before him, realized trends first manifest during the presidency of John F. Kennedy, whose very person seemed to capture the newfound importance of style to American liberalism. At the start of the sixties, mainstream political thought turned with frequency to what the sociologist David Riesman called "the process by which people become related to politics, and the consequent stylizing of political emotions." As Riesman saw it, "If politics is a ballet on a stage set by history," then "style tells us . . . in what manner [the dancers] play their parts and how the audience responds."⁴ An important insight, to which we must add: a given style tells us only what the dramatic conventions governing its performance allow

us to hear. I am interested in a particular stage, one not only set by history but furnished by novelists, and I mean to insist that it matters a great deal, to our sense of both literary and political history, that the fantasies of hip that have mattered most to liberalism first emerged in novels.

Norman Mailer thought Kennedy's style recognizably black, and on the eve of the 1960 presidential election, he dubbed the senator from Massachusetts "the Hipster as Presidential Candidate."⁵ We cannot understand the works of novelists like Robert Penn Warren, Ralph Ellison, Norman Mailer, William Styron, John Updike, E. L. Doctorow, and Joan Didion without understanding how they too invoked hip on behalf of the Democratic Party of their time. Principally, these novelists invoked hip, as Mailer did, to consolidate the voting constituencies of postwar liberalism. To be sure, the novelists to whom I turn worked within a larger "coalition culture"; their novels joined a range of expressive forms—jazz, rhythm and blues, and rock and roll prominent among them—that militated on behalf of new unions between black and white voters and, more broadly, the ends associated with the Civil Rights Movement and the larger project of integration. But *Hip Figures* argues that novelists played a far more significant role in that coalition culture than we might at first imagine. They were, in a very real sense, the most important political strategists of their time.

Though they were responsive in individual ways to the massive voter realignments then changing American electoral politics, these novelists were primarily male and primarily interested in other men. Electoral politics was for them—as in many ways it still is today—an insularly fraternal affair. We can be more specific and postulate that these self-consciously hip novels were written for white male professionals and managers in the Northeast who were then rising to prominence within the Democratic Party. Few of these white-collar workers were what the sociological literature of the moment would have considered authentically hip; most experienced hip as a distant echo. But they no doubt glimpsed, even if only vaguely, its ultimate importance to their class, whose political power would depend upon sponsoring the aims of the Civil Rights Movement. Styron had this class in mind when he complained, during the sixties, that liberalism in the North demanded little more than that you "smoke pot and dig the right kind of jazz" in order to demonstrate "that you really love Negroes."⁶ Seen this way, literary hip provided yet one more cost-free means of expressing goodwill toward African Americans, one more way of embracing, in Greg Tate's words, "everything but the burden."⁷ But the function

of literary hip is more complicated, precisely because the “hip figures” that I describe exist on the page, not on the street or in jazz clubs or dance halls.

Those pages transform exploitative relations between people, in Marx’s famous formulation, into “the fantastic form of a relation between things.”⁸ The literary hip with which I am concerned is a fetish, just as nineteenth-century blackface was. For Susan Willis, “blackface is a metaphor for the commodity. It is the sign of what people paid to see. It is the image consumed, and it is the site of the actor’s estrangement from self into role.” That site looks different, however, when the blackface in question, now removed from sight, appears in figurative language, as a metaphor for a metaphor for the commodity. Literary hip is a doubly deracinated sign, one that abstracts embodied, coercive relations and subjects them to particularly complex forms of profit-bearing exchange. Like the minstrel show from which it is descended, literary hip presides over a series of alienations that remove individuals from the conditions of their labor, from the social relations implicit in those conditions, and, finally, from themselves. Willis reminds us that “in mass culture many of the social contradictions of capitalism appear to us as if those very contradictions have been resolved. The mass cultural object articulates the contradiction and its imaginary solution.”⁹ The same is true of the literary objects that follow, each of which mobilizes hip to unite otherwise multicolored bodies possessed of different economic interests. But these novels indicate how members of the professional-managerial class might, *as readers of novels*, view themselves as simultaneously inside and cast out from the center of political power, as possessed of both white and black skin. In these works, which transport whites into the imagined bodies of African Americans, the burnt cork of blackface returns, dematerialized, as a figurative “second skin” meant to hold together the straining coalitions of a Democratic Party undergoing decisive change.

The Marxist critic William Haug describes commodities as promissory “second skins”—iridescent phantasms that drift “unencumbered like a multicolored spirit . . . into every household.” The second skins with which I am concerned drift into households inside of novels, as hip figures. These skins—figures of skins and skins produced through figures—bear the imprint, or brand, that would define postwar liberalism, and render it subject to exchange. When Mailer dubbed Kennedy hip, he reasoned that the candidate had just enough “patina of that other life, the second American life, the long electric night with the fires of neon leading down the highway to the murmur of jazz”

(*PP* 31). Mailer conjured this shimmering patina to brand Kennedy voters, no less than Kennedy himself. It's a marketing cliché that brands create consumers. A recent study announces in familiar fashion that while "emerging" consumers are "a demographic fact and a sociological reality—in many ways they are a metaphor," a metaphor made fact by branding.¹⁰ As with consumers, so with voters: metaphors call both into being. In the early seventies, Doctorow announced that "unlike the politicians we [novelists] take office first and then create our constituencies"; the novels discussed in *Hip Figures* go further, branding those constituencies on behalf of the Democrats.¹¹

Reading hip figures against the grain, as efforts to elide contradictions in the interests that motivate liberal coalitions, I describe novelists struggling—with mixed motives and results—to create that brand. Whether or not these novelists did so successfully is a question for which there is no simple answer—a question, moreover, that opens out on at least four decades of debate within the humanities over the significance of symbolic forms to more ostensibly "real" political formations. In practical terms, voting constituencies are less forgiving than reading ones: no national politician could have championed the inflammatory interracial sexual unions dramatized by Updike and Mailer, for example. But in the decades following the Second World War, during the heyday of the American novel's prestige, when it was unclear to the Democrats how they should understand the base of their power or the nature of their interests, it seemed plausible to these novelists that they might change the party in significant ways.

The postwar Democratic Party began to take shape after the Dixiecrat revolt of 1948, and after Harry Truman marginalized Henry Wallace and other pro-Soviet voices within Franklin Roosevelt's coalition. Embarrassed by their commitment to big government, complicit in Cold War red baiting, traditionally dependent on the institutionalized power of labor unions but increasingly responsive to well-educated elites, postwar Democrats began to distance themselves from the New Deal's hostility to concentrated economic power. Most significantly, the rising clout of professional and managerial elites within the Democratic Party came at the expense of old guard southerners still committed to white supremacy and segregation, and took place alongside the increasing electoral importance of African Americans, who had turned en masse to the Democrats during the New Deal. In 1932, when Roosevelt ran against Herbert Hoover, the Republicans won more than two-thirds of the black vote.

Four years later, with another presidential contest under way, *Time* announced, “In no national election since 1860 have politicians been so Negro minded.”¹² In a reversal that would change the face of twentieth-century American politics, Roosevelt won almost three-quarters of the African American vote. After this election, the steady movement of African Americans into the Democratic Party, and the party’s subsequent if uneven embrace of the civil rights struggle, fundamentally changed the nature of its liberalism, in obvious and less than obvious ways.

Between 1936 and 1964 (when women first began to vote Democratic more than Republican) blacks represented the single largest new voting bloc to enter the party.¹³ In electoral terms, black votes were crucial to the outcomes of numerous elections. In legislative terms, because of the unity that African Americans were able to exert within their rank and file, they steadily replaced southern racists as the minority interest group most capable of casting a decisive veto within the party—even if particular African Americans weren’t allowed significant positions of party leadership until well after the formation of the Congressional Black Caucus in 1969. But just as importantly, “blackness” took on a symbolic importance in the party beyond the practical influence that black politicians were able to wield.¹⁴ For in the eyes of many white liberals, African America represented more than actual individuals in need of state aid; in a very basic fashion, liberalism organized itself, to recall Michael Rogin writing about blackface, “around the surplus symbolic value of blacks, the power to make African Americans represent something besides themselves.”¹⁵ The “Negro,” Ralph Ellison noted, was “a key figure in a magic rite by which the white American seeks to resolve the dilemma arising between . . . his acceptance of the sacred democratic belief that all men are created equal and his treatment of every tenth man as though he were not.” In some versions of this rite, African Americans were cast as beatific ideals of public virtue, possessed of a deep moral warrant. In others, they were anarchic and rebellious, angry guardians of democracy because of their unwillingness to surrender or submit. Either way, black bodies demarcated what Ellison called “that area of the national life where political power is institutionalized and translated into democratic ritual and national style.”¹⁶

I focus on a reinlection of this process, in which novelists institutionalized and translated the style of hip subcultures into the political power of the Democratic Party. For these writers, subcultural style does not, as it does for cultural

critic Dick Hebdige, articulate a “refusal” of power or a “breakdown of consensus.”¹⁷ Rather, it struggles to reconcile differences between groups to produce a vision of naturalized, easy authority capable of consolidating a rapidly changing Democratic Party. As Henry Louis Gates Jr. puts it, for Ellison, “America, roughly speaking, means ‘black.’”¹⁸ The fact that blacks could be made to seem quintessentially American, in many ways more so than whites, explains why militating on their behalf might have provided the Democratic Party with a way to transcend what many took to be its atomizing pursuit of local interests. Committing to racial justice involved something more than committing to one group among many. It meant, rather, discovering the grounds for a deeper unity. In this respect, Johnson’s dedication to civil rights exemplified the centrifugal tendency of what historian David Reynolds calls “interest group liberalism” even as it promised to mitigate its effects.¹⁹

As Mailer saw it, Kennedy committed the Democrats to hip and to civil rights together, in the same moment, but it was already clear, before 1960, how hip might identify the greater vision of American pluralism with the Democratic Party itself. Since the end of the forties, novelists had been treating the hipster as the paradigmatic liberal subject, as a vigorous example of how even the most intense expressions of difference and disaffection might contain within them the grounds for producing ever-more-encompassing groups and collectivities. Kennedy concretized and lent institutional warrant to this literary program. “I see little of more importance to the future of our country and our civilization,” the president announced at a memorial service for Robert Frost, who had spoken at his inauguration, “than full recognition of the place of the artist.” Never before had novelists in particular been so fully recognized, so enthusiastically invited into the corridors of power. They streamed in and out of the White House, and engaged the president in conversation. Thus Gore Vidal would later declare, while speaking of those admitted to Camelot, that 1960 marked the moment at which “politics and literature officially joined forces.”²⁰

Jazz Fictions

As John Leland puts it, hip is not “a marginal fillip but a central current in American culture,” and today that current encompasses a wide range of phenomena. Remarkably elastic, contemporary hip polices the boundaries of countless cultural forms, fashions, and lifestyles—calibrating distinctions between the authentic and the ersatz and calculating degrees of proximity to the

fountainheads of significant change.²¹ The particular hip I take up, however, is a complex variant of the peculiarly American tradition of blackface minstrelsy. In Eric Lott's formulation, minstrelsy was a "theatrical practice, principally of the urban North, in which white men caricatured blacks for sport and profit." A "clumsy courtship" animated by complex motives, minstrelsy allowed white men to negotiate the "panic, anxiety, terror, and pleasure" attendant upon their identification with black men. To Lott, that courtship persists: "Every time you hear an expansive white man drop into his version of black English, you are in the presence of blackface's unconscious return"; the legacy of blackface "is so much a part of most American white men's equipment for living that they remain entirely unaware of their participation in it."²² The white and self-conscious version of hip at work in the chapters that follow constitutes a particular moment in the afterlife of minstrelsy, a moment precipitated by the emergence of bebop on the one hand and R & B on the other, when anxious white men sought and found in black subcultures a means of negotiating the conflicted ideological and organizational imperatives of postwar liberalism.

I take it as axiomatic that hip on the page is no more or less authentic than hip on the street—in all its forms, hip remains quixotic, an imitative fantasy for which there is, finally, no definitive locus or referent. To be sure, novelists like Jack Kerouac, John Holmes, and Chandler Brossard (among many others) treated bebop as the fountainhead of hip, and understood themselves as constituting the tertiary stage of a phenomenon that began in the early forties in Harlem jazz clubs. Reading these novelists, we confront literary figures that reproduce with a difference the white hipster's imitations of the nonchalant authority and sartorial styles associated with black bop musicians (the sneakers, wide-lapeled suits, berets, "smoked-window" glasses, and goatees).²³ Still, this is not a study of bebop, which, in the apt words of Cornel West, "expressed the heightened tensions, frustrated aspirations, and repressed emotions of an aggressive yet apprehensive Afro-America."²⁴ Rather, it is a study in the political afterlives of the white fantasy that coalesced around that edgy and cerebral music—as well as the more demotic idioms that followed, from boogie-woogie and the jump blues to R & B and rock and roll.

There were undeniable differences between the conspicuously elite avant-gardism of bebop and the more incipiently commercial tendencies of the dance-oriented rhythms that animated youth in the fifties and sixties. But the second skin of hip that I depict is nothing if not elastic, and accommodates a range of

tastes and styles that would, in any event, converge over time in the popular imagination. As Andrew Ross has it, “hip is the site of a chain reaction of taste, generating minute distinctions which negate and transcend each other at an intuitive rate of fission that is virtually impossible to record.”²⁵ But we must attend to moments of fusion as surely as those of fission. Despite its sometimes studied antipathy to any but the most discerning audience, bebop was quickly assimilated into mainstream culture. In 1952, the editors of *Down Beat* handed Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie awards before a national television audience; after Parker’s untimely death in 1955, as “Bird Lives” began to appear scrawled on walls throughout the recently named East Village, his legend grew apace, galvanizing not simply an increasingly visible underground but a generation of suburban whites hungry for something beyond the confines of a Cold War America that seemed to have sprung from the insipid imaginations of Walt Disney and Dwight D. Eisenhower. Whether they listened to Parker live, or to Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry on radios and jukeboxes, or watched Lenny Bruce and Lord Buckley in nightclubs, or Maynard G. Krebs on television, these whites participated in an encompassing coalition culture. When in John Updike’s *Rabbit, Run* (1960) the white Negro Harry “Rabbit” Angstrom—embraced as a namesake decades later by the “wigga” Eminem—flees his wife and child and drives south, he listens to a radio station that plays Sidney Bechet and Cannonball Adderley as well as Chuck Berry, the Impalas, and Dave Cortez. Updike’s goal is less to produce distinctions between these artists than to suggest how, taken together, they provide Rabbit a solution to the problem expressed by one of his lovers: “You’re too white.”²⁶

Popular music like the kind on display in *Rabbit, Run* was incipiently political—albeit in complex and contradictory fashion—long before the counterculture of the sixties declared it so. While the social democratic liberalism expressed by that counterculture had its origins in the Civil Rights Movement, for example, the impact on a generation of white liberals of jazz, broadly construed, had by that time already paved the way for the popular reception of that movement. Yale law professor Charles Black, a member of the legal team that won *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), liked to describe the moment he ceased being a white racist: it was while watching Louis Armstrong play at a Texas dance. The same might have been said by the countless teens that danced to swing, boogie-woogie, R & B, early rock, or any other of the forms that grew, as Armstrong’s did, from the cross-fertilizations that first created jazz. Indeed,

jazz was hailed widely as the nation's first truly integrated art. In 1963, LeRoi Jones, soon to become Amiri Baraka, detailed how jazz was born in the first decades of the twentieth century from the fusion of European musical techniques popular among the black middle classes with an expressive folk tradition of the blues, popular among the black working classes. The merging of these idioms produced music representative of all classes of black society and, at the same time, allowed for whites to engage it in what seemed to be a non-exploitative fashion. To Jones, jazz "made it possible for the first time for something of the legitimate feeling of Afro-American music to be imitated successfully." It "enabled separate and *valid* emotional expressions to be made that were based on traditions of Afro-American music that were clearly not part of it." In short, jazz was the nation's first and most significant vehicle for cultural integration. "It was a music," Jones argues, "capable of reflecting not only the Negro and a black America but a white America as well."²⁷

What was true of the music was true of the literature it inspired. Eager to counter the accurate perception that the United States trumpeted freedom abroad while denying it to black Americans at home, the State Department sent musicians like Dizzy Gillespie overseas to sell the promise of American democracy. But, in the words of *Down Beat* in 1959, "the question of how hip the State Department really is" remained "an open one."²⁸ Less committed to jazz per se than to its value as propaganda, the tours provide one example of James Baldwin's claim that white fantasies of black America facilitated "the sanctification of power."²⁹ I'm interested in the related fact that a striking number of postwar political novels mobilized hip not only to sanctify but to symbolize and thereby negotiate transformations in the Democratic Party's power.

In Edwin O'Connor's *The Last Hurrah* (1956), an old-school ward boss in Boston confronts the reality that the New Deal's national consolidation of the party and the subsequent importance of television in elections have, together, rendered machine politics obsolete. As if to drive home this point, O'Connor's novel describes a black bebop musician who wanders in and out of scenes whispering scat, an unwelcome agent of the forces then changing what it meant to be a Democrat. In Billy Lee Brammer's *The Gay Place* (1961), a Texas governor modeled on Lyndon Johnson surrounds himself with liberal "hipster-pols," hard-partying, jazz-loving hacks who clean up after the governor and struggle to reconcile the Democrats' racist conservative wing with the tastes and mores of its surging youth vote. In Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), a black

pickpocket exposes himself to the aging protagonist, who compares the man's penis to Lyndon Johnson's, before calling it "a symbol of superlegitimacy or sovereignty." That sovereignty belongs to the Democrats, but Sammler cannot understand the nature of its authority because, as a friend tells him, he is not hip. In Updike's *Rabbit Redux* (1971), Rabbit is similarly estranged from the Democrats, to whom he has been loyal all his life. A black man asks him, "What is lib-er-alism?" and he is unsure. But ultimately the answer comes in the form of Rabbit's apprenticeship to that man, who teaches Rabbit "to groove."³⁰

Generalizing about the differences between white and black fiction risks obscuring the degree to which, as Eric Sundquist reminds us, European American and African American literary traditions are part of one tradition.³¹ Certainly Ralph Ellison confounds any simple distinction between black and white literary traditions, and I use his essays and never-completed second novel, along with Norman Mailer's essays, as something like the code key for much of the analysis that follows. This said, it's worth noting that black novelists of the postwar period tend to insist upon the exploitative dynamics of liberal hip more than white novelists, who tend to mystify those dynamics. For John A. Williams and Ishmael Reed, for example, Democrats either betray the spirit of bebop or appropriate it for dubious ends. The protagonist of Williams's *The Man Who Cried I Am* (1967) "wanted to do with the novel what Charlie Parker was doing to music—tearing it up and remaking it; basing it on nasty, nasty blues and overlaying it with the deep overriding tragedy not of Dostoevsky, but an American who knew of consequences to come: Herman Melville, a super Confidence Man, a Benito Cereno saddened beyond death." Instead, a racist publishing industry keeps him dependent on the income he earns writing for a newspaper called the *Democrat*. In due course, the novelist finds himself writing civil rights speeches for John Kennedy, which only hastens his disillusionment with the party. He finds himself "bored with New Deals and Square Deals and New Frontiers and Great Societies." In Reed's *The Free-Lance Pallbearers* (1967), mainstream liberalism literally feeds on hip. "Why, they're real swingers," someone says of Harry Sam, a despot modeled after Lyndon Johnson. "Those kats" live in "a groovy nowhere." But Sam shrouds himself in hip to disguise the fact that he has been abducting and eating black children from the impoverished black neighborhoods that surround the capitol. When the novel's protagonist discovers Sam's secret, a white performance artist complicit with Sam tries to teach him "HOW TO BE A HIP KITTY AND A COOL COOL DADDY O."

The artist's name, Cipher X, captures liberalism's commitment to obscuring its atrocities with a mystifying cultural style; when Cipher discovers that the protagonist is steadfast in his desire to expose Sam, he says in disappointment, "I thought that you were hip."³² Reed lampoons with single-minded focus what most of the novelists whose work is examined in this volume struggle to efface; though their efforts to do so are riddled with illuminating tensions, these preponderantly white writers seek to consolidate and bind together the interests that Reed would disarticulate. Where Reed's *Pallbearers* exposes the sanctification of liberalism, these novels enact it.

None did so more influentially than Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men* (1946), which established the template for how postwar novelists would register—if only to elide—uncomfortable realities facing white professionals and managers. My first chapter reads the novel in light of the South's transition from tenant farming to large-scale agriculture, as an account of why affluent southern liberals, who were pledged to the Democratic Party but still implicated in the former production regime, would ultimately fail to form a workable coalition with working-class blacks. Governor Willie Stark winks at Jack Burden and suggests that all southern whites have dirty hands, implicated as they are in the coercive extortion of value from black labor. More particularly, Stark insinuates that Burden's hands are dirty whether he understands himself as a liberal professional or as a descendant of a slave-owning family, and Stark's wink would haunt a subsequent generation of novelists whose literary office depended on sugarcoating an otherwise stark reality: that the professional and managerial class (PMC) in the North would be required to control a black working class previously controlled by southern bourbons. Following Warren north after the Second World War, and reading his most famous novel as a rumination on his own professional development, I describe the New Critics' commitment to poetic autonomy as a commitment to obscuring the PMC's role in laundering black labor power. In sublimating constitutive economic relationships into mystified accounts of aesthetic power, the New Criticism eased the transition of reactionary Southern Agrarians into a nationally oriented PMC, even as it suggested to political novelists how they might do the same by means of hip figures.

Most white members of the PMC came to their sense of hip by way of bebop, a musical style that was itself the product of contested labor relations. In the early thirties, its innovators gathered after hours in small Harlem clubs to evade representatives from the local musicians' union, which had forbidden

public jam sessions on the theory that they constituted unremunerated performances.³³ Ralph Ellison faulted the music because it struck him, along these lines, as the product of upwardly mobile blacks who wished to put distance between themselves and not simply the rank and file of the musicians' union, but the vernacular musical traditions of the black working classes. Whether or not we agree with this ultimately uncharitable account of the music, we must acknowledge that many of the white professionals and managers who experienced bebop—difficult to perform and yet seemingly committed to the appearance of ease—took from it an aesthetic vision ultimately valuable for its capacity to sublimate demanding physical labor, and the social relations that organized that labor, into something more easily exchangeable.

Proceeding from this assumption, my second, third, and fourth chapters read Chandler Brossard's *Who Walk in Darkness* (1952), Ralph Ellison's *Three Days Before the Shooting . . .* (2010), Richard Condon's *The Manchurian Candidate* (1959), and John Updike's *Rabbit, Run* (1960) as efforts to demonstrate hip's importance to the sale of commodities and, ultimately, the Democratic Party itself. I read these novels, more specifically, in light of cultural and economic changes in the North that led to the election of John F. Kennedy; each participates in the shaping of Kennedy's interracial coalition by reproducing the procedures of an advertising industry increasingly important to the fortunes of the Democrats. For politicians and admen, as well as for these novelists, hip made a fetish of racial difference even as it provided a conglomerating image designed to pass over and go beyond difference; it transported whites from their own bodies and into the images of other bodies, in the process dematerializing race and turning it—and, by extension, the project of integration—into an after-effect of consumption. Then as now, selling hip to white consumers involved selling them the fantasy that consumption could turn them black—but only for as long as they wished to be.

Some saw this blackening as potentially permanent, and the cause of the decade's crisis of masculinity. "All Americans," Mailer wrote, "suffer an unconscious slavery to advertising."³⁴ He wanted white men, in particular, to embrace the interracial fraternity that he thought followed from this shared condition. But Mailer's hip, no less than Madison Avenue's, elided the labor relations toward which it seemed to gesture. In fact, much of sixties-era fiction would suggest, against all evidence to the contrary, that middle-class white men were like African Americans in their shared subservience, not simply to

commodities but to owners and capitalists. Typically, when professionals and managers, those men were paid to oversee, discipline, or otherwise manage labor on behalf of capital; nevertheless, middle-class white men persistently worried about their downward mobility and cast their affinity with the working classes in racial terms. Nowhere is this dynamic more evident than in the decade's countless dramas of middle-class self-liberation. Chapters 5 and 6 examine novels that urged white-collared white men to free themselves from themselves, as black slaves would free themselves from white owners. This exhortation often invoked familiar clichés about black male sexuality, pitched as it tended to be to emasculated white men in need of vicarious invigoration. It also sat uneasily with the Great Society liberalism in whose name it was often advanced. Novels like Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967), Updike's *Rabbit Redux* (1971), Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1967), Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), and Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel* (1971) seem to militate on behalf of an interracial alliance between white and black workers; but, ultimately, these novels reassure their readers that white professionals and managers have it in their power to become owners and capitalists, in ways that black workers do not.

Attending to the emergence of rock and roll in Chapter 6, I read *Vietnam* and *Daniel* in particular as efforts to integrate raced voices, as opposed to raced bodies. Rendering racial difference ever more fungible, these novels embrace in vocal registers the racial hybridity then central to rock and roll. But they also, as a consequence, refine the operations of a white-collar economy oriented toward the processing of deracinated information. And in their preoccupation with integrated voices, as opposed to integrated public spaces, they establish the terms with which subsequent novelists (and politicians) would later reject Great Society racial politics. My last chapter, on Joan Didion's *Democracy* (1984), examines Didion's backlash against the legacy of John F. Kennedy and the vocal integration with which she associates it. Looking back on a "New Liberalism" that she takes to be too closely affiliated with the Civil Rights Movement and the counterculture, she conflates purging the Democrats of African American taint with doing the same to her own literary voice. She performs this racial cleansing even as she defends the interests of what she calls "the American business class." In so doing, Didion anticipates the neoliberal project of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) (formed one year after the novel's publication) and the presidency of Bill Clinton.