Babylon Revisited Study Guide

Babylon Revisited by F. Scott Fitzgerald

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Introduction

When "Babylon Revisited" was first published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in February, 1931, F. Scott Fitzgerald had already written three of his major novels— *This Side of Paradise, The Beautiful and Damned,* and *The Great Gatsby*— and he was finally making a good living as an author. The story of a recovering alcoholic's return to Paris after the start of the Depression and his attempt to win back custody of his daughter, "Babylon Revisited" is a portrait of a man trying to get his life back in order after having made several bad mistakes in the years following his rise to riches during the heyday of the stock market in the 1920s. Fitzgerald came to regard "Babylon Revisited" as one of his most important stories. He gave it pride of place as the last story in his 1935 collection *Taps at Reveille;* he called it a "magnificent story" in a 1940 letter to his daughter; and to another correspondent he described it as one of the benchmarks in his evolution as a writer: "You see, I not only announced the birth of my young illusions in *This Side of Paradise,* but pretty much the death of them in some of my last *Post* stories like 'Babylon Revisited'."

Author Biography

F. Scott Fitzgerald was born in September, 1896, in St. Paul, Minnesota, the son of an entrepreneur and salesman and his wife, a distant cousin of Francis Scott Key, author of "The Star-Spangled Banner," for whom he was named. He displayed an interest in writing early on and in 1911, he moved to New Jersey to attend the Newman College Preparatory School. Two years later he entered Princeton University, and in 1917 he received a commission as a lieutenant in the U.S. Army. Hoping to eventually see combat in World War I, Fitzgerald was assigned to Camp Sheridan in Montgomery, Alabama, where he met Zelda Sayre, the daughter of an Alabama supreme court justice. He was smitten by Zelda's charm, but was forced to turn his attention fully toward earning a living as a writer. Fitzgerald sold his first short story in 1919, and in September of that year Scribner's accepted his first novel, *This Side of Paradise,* for publication. It immediately became a financial and critical success, and Fitzgerald was suddenly a literary figure of national prominence.

Having achieved success as a writer, Fitzgerald resumed his courtship of Zelda Sayre, and they married in 1920. Their only child, a daughter named Scottie, was born in 1921. That same year, the Fitzgeralds undertook the first of several extended trips to Europe. On one such trip in 1925, Fitzgerald met aspiring novelist Ernest Hemingway, whose career and work he championed until Hemingway's own fame and Fitzgerald's troubled personal life weakened their friendship. Fitzgerald's second novel, *The Beautiful and Damned,* was published to mixed critical reviews in 1922. Three years later, he published *The Great Gatsby,* his most popular and admired work, though it received several disappointing reviews upon publication, which discouraged him deeply. Although Fitzgerald had begun drinking heavily at Princeton, he became severely alcoholic in the mid 1920s, and his drinking, combined with his expensive tastes and Zelda's mental instability, began to seriously affect his health, finances, and productivity. After *Gatsby* in 1925, for example, he did not publish another novel until *Tender Is the Night* in 1934. The bulk of his income came from advances sent by his legendary editor at Scribner's, Maxwell Perkins, and from the sale of his short stories to high-paying magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Esquire.* Between 1919 and 1939 he sold 160 stories, primarily to pay his bills and thus buy him small windows of time to work on his novels.

Desperate for income to support his lifestyle and psychologically taxed by Zelda's treatment at mental sanitariums, Fitzgerald moved to Hollywood in 1937 to work as a screenwriter for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) studios. Although he saw only one of his screenplays produced as a finished film, he continued to work on film treatments, short stories, and his last major work, the unfinished novel *The Last Tycoon,* until he died of a heart attack in December of 1940. In a posthumous collection of confessional *Esquire* pieces, *The Crack-Up,* Fitzgerald succinctly offered his own harsh epitaph for his last years: "Then I was drunk for many years, and then I died."

Many autobiographical details shaped the content of "Babylon Revisited." Like Charlie Wale's daughter Honoria, Fitzgerald's only child, Scottie (who was also nicknamed

"Pie"), was about nine years old at the time of the story's composition, and, like Charlie, Fitzgerald was confronted with the problem of Scottie's custody after Zelda's mental instability began to accelerate in 1930. Also like Charlie, Fitzgerald was also a prosperous Irish-American expatriate, and, as the evocative description of 1930 Paris in the story suggests, Fitzgerald was also intimately familiar with such Parisian landmarks as the Hotel Ritz, Josephine Baker's nude revue, and the club scene and restaurants of Paris nightlife. Most centrally, however, Fitzgerald, like Charlie, also wrestled painfully with his alcoholism, and his skillful evocation of the self-delusions and strategies Charlie adopts to convince himself of his rehabilitation were drawn directly from Fitzgerald's lifelong struggle with heavy drinking. Charlie's pre-1929 Paris escapades, alluded to throughout "Babylon Revisited" — squandered money, bitter marital disputes, and alcohol-fueled decline— are sharply autobiographical. Fitzgerald biographer Matthew Bruccoli has also pointed out that the baleful Marion Peters, Charlie's sister-in-law, was "obviously" based on Fitzgerald's own sister-in-law, Zelda's older sister Rosalind Smith, who questioned Fitzgerald's ability to raise Scottie properly.

Plot Summary

"Babylon Revisited" is the story of a father's attempt to regain the custody of his daughter after recovering from the death of his wife and his own battle with alcoholism. After having built a fortune in stock investments during the great bull market of the 1920s, American businessman Charlie Wales had quit his job and moved to Paris with his wife, Helen, to enjoy his newfound wealth. Friction within their marriage, his own weakness for alcohol, and the couple's wild lifestyle, however, led to Helen's death and Charlie's admission to a sanitarium to recover from his alcohol dependence. During this time, the couple's young daughter was sent to live with Helen's sister and her husband in Paris. After Charlie was released from the sanitarium, he moved to Prague, Czechoslovakia, where he reestablished himself as a businessman. As the story begins, Charlie sits at his old haunt, the bar at the Ritz Hotel, asking the bartender, Alix, about the whereabouts of some of the people he knew when he was last in Paris a year and a half before. When Alix offers him a drink, Charlie declines, telling him "I'm going slow these days."

Out on the Paris streets, Charlie passes places that remind him of his three pre-crash years in Paris and reflects on how his formerly debauched lifestyle has spoiled Paris for him. His cab ride takes him past such Paris landmarks as the Place de la Concorde, the river Seine, and the Left Bank. Charlie arrives at his brother-in-law's apartment and is greeted by his daughter, Honoria. He tells her guardians, Lincoln and Marion Peters, about his newfound success in Prague. When the conversation shifts, Charlie comments nostalgically on the days before the crash, when Paris was overrun by prosperous Americans like himself: "It was nice while it lasted. . . . We were a sort of royalty, almost infallible, with a sort of magic around us." During dinner he feels a great protectiveness toward Honoria, but having decided to let the Peters's bring up the subject of his regaining custody, he leaves for a late-night tour of Paris.

The next day Charlie treats Honoria to lunch at a restaurant and offers to take her to a toy store and then the vaudeville. When Honoria tells Charlie she wants to come live with him, he puts her off in anticipation of his coming conversation with his in-laws about regaining custody of her. As they leave the restaurant, they run into two "ghosts out of the past," Duncan Schaeffer and Lorraine Quarrles. The two still-drunken old friends invite Charlie to join them for lunch, to dine with him later, and ask to accompany him and Honoria to the vaudeville. He evades all their invitations, and when Duncan asks for his address he stalls, telling Duncan he will call him later. Afterward, he views the encounter coolly: "They wanted to see him, because he was stronger than they were now, because they wanted to draw a certain sustenance from his strength."

The next day Charlie returns to the Peters's to formally request custody of Honoria. Marion does not take kindly to the suggestion. She is still bitter about the death of her sister, which she blames on Charlie, and does not believe that he will remain sober for long. He admits that it is possible that he "might go wrong at any time." Charlie's strategy of assuming "the chastened attitude of the reformed sinner" pays off, and Marion eventually sees that Charlie is in control of his life again and resignedly leaves

Charlie and Lincoln to make the final decision. As Charlie leaves, Lincoln assures him that Marion now has confidence that Charlie can provide a stable home for Honoria and will agree to his assuming custody of his daughter. That night Charlie is haunted by the memory of Helen, who appears to him in a white dress, sitting on a swing, assuring him that she is happy for him and wants Honoria to return to Prague with him. As he falls asleep, he imagines Helen swinging "faster and faster all the time," until he can no longer understand what she is saying.

Charlie's fourth day in Paris begins with a phone call to Lincoln Peters to finalize his plans for taking Honoria back to Prague with him. Peters assures him that Honoria can return with him but informs him that Marion wants to retain legal guardianship over Honoria for one more year. Charlie agrees, and they arrange to "settle the details on the spot" later that evening. Back at his hotel, Charlie finds a note from Lorraine Quarrles forwarded from the Ritz bar in which she reminisces about some of his alcohol-inspired stunts two years before and invites him to meet her "for old time's sake" at the Ritz Hotel later that day. Charlie recoils in horror at the memory of the "utter irresponsibility" of his pre-crash Paris life and breathes a sigh of relief that Alix at the Ritz has not given her his hotel address. At five, Charlie heads for the Peters's apartment, where he finds that Marion has "accepted the inevitable." Suddenly, a drunken Duncan and Lorraine appear at the door to invite Charlie to dinner. Badly shaken, Marion Peters storms out of the room, and Lincoln tells Charlie that their dinner is off and to call him the next day at his office.

Charlie heads for the Ritz bar hoping to confront Lorraine and Duncan about their drunken appearance at the Peters's. Not finding them, he orders a drink and is greeted by Paul, the head bartender who had presided over Charlie's pre-crash revelries at the Ritz. " I heard that you lost a lot in the crash," Paul inquires. "I did," Charlie answers, "but I lost everything I wanted in the boom." "Selling short?" Paul asks, and Charlie answers, "Something like that." He calls Lincoln Peters only to learn that Marion wants him to wait at least six months before they will consider the question of Honoria's custody again. Back in the Ritz bar, he declines the bartender's offer of another drink and resolves to send Honoria some presents the next day— lots of presents. "He would come back some day; they couldn't make him pay forever. . . . He was absolutely sure Helen wouldn't have wanted him to be so alone."

Characters

Alix

Alix is the Hotel Ritz bartender who, along with the head barman, Paul, links Charlie Wales to his wild Paris life in the days before the stock market crash of 1929. As the story begins, he is filling Charlie in on the grim fates of Charlie's former Paris compatriots - Mr. Campbell, George Hardt, "the Snow Bird," Duncan Schaeffer, and Claude Fessenden. One is ill, another has returned to the United States after losing everything in the crash, and a third has been banned from the Ritz for trying to pass a bad check.

Alix is the first and last of several characters in the story who test Charlie's resolve to remain an ex-alcoholic. He offers Charlie a drink in the story's opening scene and another in the story's conclusion. Charlie declines both.

Paul

Paul is the head bartender at the Ritz Hotel bar in Paris and one of the witnesses to Charlie's wild lifestyle before his wife's death. He, too, made a killing in the bull market of the 1920s and used the money to buy such luxuries as a country house and a "custom-built" car, which he drives to work but scrupulously parks a block from the Ritz so as to maintain his humble image as a barman. He appears only at the end of the story, when Charlie angrily returns to the Ritz to locate Lorraine Quarrles and Duncan Schaeffer, whose drunken arrival at the Peters's has sabotaged Charlie's plans to reclaim custody of his daughter, Honoria. Like his fellow barman Alix at the beginning of the story, Paul fills Charlie in on the post-crash fortunes of Charlie's former Paris social companions. "I heard that you lost a lot in the crash," he tells Charlie. "I did," Charlie answers, "but I lost everything I wanted in the boom." Paul misreads Charlie's reply as a reference to investment blunders. "Selling short," he suggests, referring to the stock market practice of gambling on the future decline of a stock's price. Charlie's answer, "Something like that," continues the financial metaphor, but hints that Charlie's boom-year losses were of a much more personal nature.

Lincoln Peters

Lincoln Peters is the husband of Marion Peters and Charlie's brother-in-law. A fair-minded man, he is devoted to his family and is willing to give Charlie the benefit of the doubt about his apparent reform. His home in Paris is "warm and comfortably American," and, as his first name suggests, Lincoln represents the kind of stolid, traditional American that Charlie had ceased to be during his "nightmare" years before the crash. Unlike Charlie, Lincoln had never saved enough money from his job at a Paris bank to invest in the bull market of the 1920s and reap the rewards of the boom's

easy money. Charlie describes the Peters's middle-class life succinctly: "They were not dull people. But they were very much in the grip of life and circumstance."

Throughout the story, Lincoln is the only adult who expresses a belief that Charlie has reformed himself. When Charlie explains that part of his program for recovery is to have a single drink every day, Lincoln quickly endorses the idea; when Charlie tells the Peters's that his deepest fear is that he will miss Honoria's childhood entirely, Lincoln sympathizes; and when Marion lashes out at Charlie for swearing, Lincoln takes Charlie's side. Finally, when Marion tells Charlie that she holds him partly responsible for Helen's death, Lincoln tells Charlie "I never thought you were responsible for that," he says.

Lincoln is the mediator between Marion and Charlie, translating Marion's emotional words and behavior into terms Charlie can understand: "I think she sees now," he tells Charlie, "that you - can provide for the child, and so we can't very well stand in your way or Honoria's way." But his first loyalty is to his family, even though he agrees that "there was no reason for delay" in letting Charlie take Honoria back to Prague. Lincoln understands his wife's resentment about Charlie's former freewheeling days: "I think Marion felt there was some kind of injustice in it - you not even working toward the end, and getting richer and richer." It is clear from Lincoln's words that Marion's sense of injustice may be his as well. After Duncan and Lorraine interrupt Charlie's visit to the Peters, it is Lincoln who must tell Charlie that Marion has changed her mind about giving him custody of Honoria. Charlie densely asks Lincoln whether Marion is "angry" with him; the sharpness of Lincoln's reply underscores the new relation between the two men: "'Sort of,' he said, almost roughly."

Marion Peters

Because she retains legal guardianship over Charlie's daughter, Marion Peters represents Charlie's nemesis, the most formidable external obstacle standing between him and his dream of a future with his daughter. The older sister of Charlie's dead wife, Marion is "a tall woman with worried eyes" who once had a "fresh" American attractiveness, but health problems, financial anxieties, and the unexpected death of her sister have left her embittered and frail. She regards Charlie with an "unalterable distrust" and "instinctive antipathy." Though she provides Charlie's daughter with a warm, American-style home - an island of domesticity amidst the pagan wickedness of Paris - for her Charlie represents the ugly undomesticated American, irresponsible, ostentatiously materialistic, and devoid of character. Fitzgerald underscores the contrast Charlie sees between Marion and Helen by describing Marion as dressed in a "dignified black dinner dress that just faintly suggested mourning" with a necklace of ominous "black stars," while Helen appears to Charlie in a dream as the image of purity in a white dress.

Marion's dislike for Charlie predates his alcoholic collapse and his contribution to Helen's death. She never believed Helen was really happy with him; and, Charlie believes, she needs a "tangible villain" to explain the dissatisfactions of her life. Perhaps

most importantly, she resented the fortune that came his was by chance when he played the stock market, and through his own efforts during his period of sobriety and hard work in Prague. Moreover, she has trouble believing that Charlie had overcome his alcoholism. His admission that he had been in the Ritz Hotel bar fuels her suspicions, and the appearance of the snide and inebriated Lorraine and Duncan in confirms her worst fears.

Lorraine Quarrles

Lorraine Quarrles is "a lovely, pale blond of thirty" with whom Charlie socialized in his alcoholic days before the stock market crash. Although she is married, she has left her husband behind in America and is escorted by Duncan Schaeffer (who she familiarly calls "Dunc") throughout the story. She seems to be attracted to Charlie, and though he feels nothing for her now, during his dissipated days Lorraine was "very attractive" to him. Now she is one of the "ghosts" from his past: "blurred, worn away."

Charlie has severed whatever emotional connection he had to Lorraine, and he dismisses her coolly as "one of a crowd that had helped them make months into days in the lavish times of three years ago." When he escapes Lorraine and Duncan's attempts to renew their friendship, he describes her as a kind of emotional vampire, conscious of Charlie's self-control and sobriety and wishing to pull him back into the alcoholic daze she has not escaped: "they wanted to see him, because he was stronger than they were now, because they wanted to draw a certain sustenance from his strength." Lorraine and Duncan follow Charlie and Honoria to the vaudeville and finally prevail upon him to share a drink with them. Lorraine admits to Charlie that since the crash she and her husband have been "poor as hell" and that her husband has given her "two hundred a month and told me I could do my worst on that." At the Peters', as Charlie tries to finalize his future with Honoria, Lorraine appears as a spectral, disembodied "voice" that "develops under the light into . . . Lorraine Quarrles." She has appeared to do her "worst," drunkenly disrupting the scene in which Marion Peters is agreeing to let Charlie have custody of his daughter. She teases Charlie for being so "solemn," and when he remains unresponsive to her, she angrily reminds him of a time he sought her out early one morning desperate for a drink.

Duncan Schaeffer

Duncan Schaeffer is a college friend of Charlie's who participated in Charlie's self-destructive life during his three-year Paris debauch before the stock market crash of 1929. Charlie asks the Ritz bartender about him in the story's opening scene. Later, at a Paris restaurant with his daughter, Charlie runs into Duncan, who is escorting another of Charlie's former party chums, Lorraine Quarrles. Duncan repeatedly tries to get Charlie to join them, but Charlie declines, eventually telling him that he and Honoria are headed for the vaudeville show at the Empire.

Charlie views Duncan's dogged sociability with deep suspicion: "They liked him because he was functioning, because he was serious; they wanted to see him, because he was stronger than they were

now, because they wanted to draw a certain sustenance from his strength." Charlie's disclosure that he and Honoria will be at the Empire threatens his resolution to reject his past, for Duncan and Lorraine follow Charlie and Honoria to the Empire, where Duncan offers Charlie a drink. Worn down by Duncan's persistence, Charlie relents.

Later, Duncan and Lorraine, drunkenly burst in on Charlie at the Peters's apartment, seriously damaging Charlie's attempt to reclaim his daughter.

Charlie Wales

Charlie Wales is the protagonist of "Babylon Revisited" and serves as the lens through which readers see the events of the story. A thirty-five-year old Irish-American businessman from Vermont, Charlie moved to Paris with his wife, Helen, and daughter, Honoria, to enjoy the windfall from stock investments he made during Wall Street's boom years in the late 1920s. Charlie and his family travel through Europe enjoying their wealth until his drinking, lack of work, quarrels with Helen, the corrupting influence of money, and the couple's new social circle begin to destroy his marriage. One night, after an argument, Charlie locks his wife out of their apartment during a storm. Later, he checks into a sanitarium to treat his alcoholism, learns that most of his money has been lost in the stock market crash, and, as a gesture to his wife, assigns legal custody of Honoria to Helen's sister, Marion. When Helen dies of heart trouble, Charlie moves to Prague to reestablish himself, and a year and a half later, prosperous and apparently sober, he returns to Paris to reclaim Honoria.

During the action of the story, Charlie is described as a devoted, loving father who desperately misses his child and is wracked by guilt and disgust at his earlier actions. He is a garrulous man with many acquaintances, enjoys money and the luxuries it provides, and has a generous streak that leads him to buy his daughter anything she wants and to help his brother-in-law find a better job. He also displays self-control that enables him to control his dormant dependence on alcohol and his natural desire to defend himself when his sister-in-law, Marion, reproaches him for his past mistakes. Once a strict father, he now wants to pamper his daughter. But his new tolerance disguises a moralistic streak that causes him to recoil in alarm at the "utter irresponsibility" of his pre-crash life. He affirms his belief in "character" as the "eternally valuable element" and reflects responsibly on his need to give Honoria love, "but not too much love, for he knew the injury that a father can do to a daughter."

If self-control, love, and generosity are Charlie's strengths, alcoholism and guilt are his weaknesses. Under the influence of alcohol, he allowed his marriage to fall apart, locked his wife out in the snow, consorted with Lorraine Quarrles behind his wife's back, and squandered his money in Paris clubs. Now apparently sober, he bears the weight of his previous life and returns repeatedly in his mind to memories of his wife, her death,

and his responsibility for it. Charlie's guilt is personified in Marion Peters, who verbalizes every doubt Charlie has about himself. These doubts may be justified: Charlie foolishly gives the Ritz barman the Peters's address to pass on to a "ghost" from his alcoholic past, his generosity suggests that he has the same preoccupation with the power of money he had before the crash, he returns more than once to the decadent Parisian scenes of his pre-crash "nightmare," he seems incapable of shutting Lorraine and Duncan out of his new life, and in his visits to the Peters he displays an ability to self-consciously manipulate his behavior and conversation to win the "points" he needs to get Honoria back. But Charlie's awareness of his weaknesses and his determination to obtain what he wants may help him prevail in the end. "He would come back some day," he tells himself at the story's conclusion, "they couldn't make him pay forever. . . . He was absolutely sure Helen wouldn't have wanted him to be so alone." Though he is temporarily beaten, the tenacity and conviction of Charlie's parting thoughts suggest that he is a survivor.

Helen Wales

Charlie's dead wife, Helen, though physically absent from the story, is the central "ghost out of the past" with whom Charlie struggles to fashion a new future for himself and Honoria. Like Fitzgerald's own relationship with his wife, Zelda, Charlie and Helen's marriage had been an emotionally stormy one. After Charlie makes a fortune in the stock market, he quits his job and moves with Helen and Honoria from Vermont to Paris. They travel throughout Europe "throwing money away." In Paris, they begin to "run around" with a wild, disreputable crowd and to fight with each other. On a February night an argument at a Paris nightclub ends with Helen kisses another man. Charlie storms out alone and angrily locks the door of their apartment behind him. Helen arrives home an hour later and, unable to get inside, wanders through a driving snowstorm to her sister's apartment. Although she avoids pneumonia and she and Charlie half-heartedly attempt a reconciliation, their marriage and her health have been dealt a fatal blow. While Charlie lies in a sanitarium recovering from his alcoholism, he assigns custody of Honoria to Helen's sister as a gesture to Helen, but she dies soon afterward.

As Charlie moves closer to reclaiming Honoria, Helen's ghost continues to haunt him, and on the night Charlie learns that Marion has agreed to let him have Honoria, Helen appears to Charlie in a dream and gives her approval to Honoria's move with him to Prague. After Helen's lone appearance in the story, Charlie's fate begins to change dramatically. The door he locked shutting Helen out in the snow many months before is replaced by the open "door of the world." But as he blissfully contemplates his future with Honoria, sad memories of Helen abruptly interrupt his happiness, and he begins to think gloomily that he must not love Honoria "too much." Later that day, after Lorraine and Duncan's disastrous appearance at the Peters's dashes Charlie's hopes for a life with Honoria, Charlie sits in the Ritz bar, assailed by memories of his trips with Helen and of their debauched lives, and by feelings of self-hatred for locking Helen out months before. For all the disastrous events of the day, however, the story closes with Charlie reassuring himself that Helen "wouldn't have wanted him to be so alone."

Honoria Wales

Honoria Wales is Charlie's nine-year-old daughter, whose custody battle is the central conflict of the story. Honoria adores her father, and she greets his arrival in Paris with shrieks of joy and open arms. She is described as a lovely girl, and though she appears to get along well with the Peters and their children, she is excited by the prospect of going to live with her father in Prague after not having seen him in over ten months. At lunch at Le Grand Vatel, Honoria agreeably eats her vegetables and is pleased that they are going to the vaudeville later on. However, Charlie's offer to buy her anything in the toy store dampens her spirits. Though she likes the doll he has given her, she says "I've got lots of things. And we're not rich anymore, are we?"

Honoria is a good student at school, and when pressed, she admits that she likes Uncle Lincoln more than Aunt Marion. Eager to live with her father, she notes that "I don't really need much taking care of any more. I do everything for myself," and she hypothesizes that the reason she does not live with her father is because "mamma's dead." Though Lorraine and Duncan are condescending towards Honoria, she remains polite to them. At the theater, Charlie notes that she is "already an individual with a code of her own" and he is "absorbed by the desire of putting a little of himself into her before she crystallized utterly." When asked about her mother, Honoria answers that she loved her very much, but now she loves her father "better than anybody." When Charlie suggests that someday she will fall in love, get married, and forget she "ever had a daddy," she replies, "Yes, that's true," a comment which demonstrates her understanding of what adult life is like. Nevertheless, her affection for her father never wanes.

Themes

Change and Transformation

In "Babylon Revisited," a father tries to regain custody of his daughter after the death of his wife, financial disaster in the stock market crash of 1929, and his own battle with alcoholism. A central theme of the story is Charlie's struggle to convince himself and others that he has abandoned the "dissipated" ways of his pre-crash life in Paris. Through telling details, Fitzgerald shows the reader that Charlie has largely reformed, while hinting that his problems may not be entirely behind him.

Throughout the story Charlie is presented with temptations to return to the "utter irresponsibility" of his previous life, which he must overcome to prove he truly understands that personal character is the "eternally valuable element." In the story's opening scene, Charlie appears to demonstrate his new self-discipline by refusing the bartender's offer of a drink. But he then undercuts the reader's confidence by giving him the Peters' address to pass on to Duncan Schaeffer, a one-time drinking partner. Moreover, the fact that Charlie has found himself in a bar as soon as he reaches Paris, and proceeds to ask the bartender the whereabouts of his old friends, introduces a doubt about Charlie's actual rehabilitation. Similarly, after Charlie's first visit to the warm domesticity of the Peters' home, he avoids returning to his hotel in favor of taking in Paris's decadent nightlife. At the restaurant with Honoria the next day, Charlie successfully avoids the social invitations of old friends from his drinking days, but tells them that he and Honoria are headed to the Empire theater, where Duncan and Lorraine reappear and convince him to have a drink.

Charlie consciously manipulates his conversations with his in-laws to achieve his goal of winning back his daughter. Rather than simply present himself as the reformed man he claims he is, Charlie sees his meetings with his in-laws as contests or performances in which his behavior must be manipulated to win "points." By showing Charlie in the bars and nightclubs he has claimed are no longer a part of his life, drinking with people he claims are part of his past, and viewing his conversations with the Peters's as contests, Fitzgerald introduces an element of doubt that enables the reader to share Marion Peters' suspicion that Charlie's transformation is, at best, incomplete.

Guilt and Innocence

Throughout "Babylon Revisited," Charlie Wales struggles with his sense of guilt over having caused his wife's death, losing custody of his daughter, and squandering the successes of his early years in alcohol and "dissipation." In order to win custody of Honoria, Charlie must convince his sister-in-law, who now has legal guardianship over Honoria, that he has accepted his guilt and turned over a new leaf. Though he admits to her that he has acted badly in the past, he now hopes that his sobriety is permanent, but admits that "it's within human possibilities I might go wrong any time." Marion

refuses to interpret his remarks as mature, honest expressions of self-knowledge, and uses them instead to confirm her deepest suspicions about Charlie.

Throughout the story, Charlie's ability to punish himself and make himself feel guilty is every bit as strong as Marion's. "I spoiled this city for myself," he laments while driving through Paris, "I didn't realize it, but the days came along one after another, and then two years were gone, and everything was gone, and I was gone." Recalling the clubs where he gave away thousand-franc notes as tips, he guiltily makes another donation, this time to a poor woman who accosts him in a *brasserie.* When Marion Peters confronts him directly with the question of his responsibility for Helen's death ("It's something you'll have to square with your own conscience"), her words touch the raw nerve of Charlie's guilt and "an electric current of agony" surges through him. For the remainder of the story, Charlie's sense of responsibility for Helen's death hounds him. Both in his hour of triumph, when Marion agrees to give him custody of Honoria, and later when Lorraine and Duncan's drunken appearance changes her mind, Charlie is haunted by Helen's image, which reminds him that he is one of the heartless "men who locked their wives out in the snow."

Although both Marion and Charlie himself seem to take Charlie's guilt for granted, Fitzgerald leaves the question of Charlie's true guilt open. How guilty was he? After a night of drinking and quarreling, Charlie and Helen create a scene at a Paris nightclub. Charlie tries to take Helen home, but she kisses another man in front of him and his friends, then makes a personal remark that embarrasses Charlie publicly. Angry and perhaps believing that Helen will spend the night with "young Webb," he returns home, locks the apartment door behind him, and goes to bed. Helen returns an hour later in a driving snowstorm, however, and, unable to get in or call a cab, she trudges through the snow in her slippers to her sister's apartment. Though she appears at Marion's "soaked to the skin and shivering," she escapes pneumonia only to die later of "heart trouble." When Charlie later reminds Mari-on that Helen died not from pneumonia caused by the snowstorm, but from heart trouble, she repeats the phrase *heart trouble* "as if [it] had another meaning for her." This "other meaning" suggests that Marion believes Helen died of a "broken heart." Yet Helen's willingness to kiss another man and embarrass her husband publicly suggests that on that "terrible night" it may have been Charlie rather than Helen who suffered the worst emotional damage.

Wealth and Poverty

The ambiguity that surrounds Charlie's sense of guilt in "Babylon Revisited" is compounded by Fitzgerald's introduction of the theme of money, wealth, and envy. Not only is Charlie riddled with guilt for his wife's death, his alcoholism, and the loss of custody of his daughter, he has also come to feel guilt for his financial success during the boom years before the stock market crash. In "Babylon Revisited" money is seen, in the words of one critic, as a "corrosive power," and though virtually everyone in the story is preoccupied with it, only Charlie has learned that when it comes to matters of the heart, money has no value.

The story opens with Charlie sitting in the bar of the Ritz Hotel, the symbol of opulence in the French capital. Although everyone he asks about is either ill or bankrupt - even his old friend Lorraine tells him, "We're poor as hell" - Charlie has recovered from his financial losses and is doing better in Prague than he was before the crash: "My income last year was bigger than it was when I had money." Although he fondly recalls the pre-crash years when rich Americans abroad "were a sort of royalty, almost infallible," he now feels more guilt than nostalgia for the days of "wildly squandered" cash. Passing a Paris restaurant, he reflects that "he had never eaten at a really cheap restaurant in Paris. Five-course dinner, four francs fifty, eighteen cents, wine included. For some odd reason he wished that he had." Later, when a woman accosts him in a *brasserie,* Charlie guiltily buys her a meal and slips her a twenty-franc note. The next day when Honoria asks him, "we're not rich anymore, are we?" he disingenuously replies, "We never were," but then offers to buy her "anything you want."

The heart of Charlie's guilt over money emerges when he tells the Peters that his problems did not begin "until I gave up business and came over here with nothing to do. . . . I worked hard for ten years, you know - until I got lucky in the market, like so many people. Terribly lucky. It didn't seem any use working any more, so I quit. It won't happen again." The easy money Charlie won in the boom years of the 1920s was unearned, he now believes, because he acquired it through the stock market rather than

through honest work. In his mind, his guilt over Helen's death is linked to his guilt for quitting his job and living off his stock market windfall. Although he has learned his lesson and rebuilt his wealth through hard work in Prague, the Peters do not share Charlie's sense of moral rebirth through good, old-fashioned labor. After telling them that his newfound success in Prague will allow him to give Honoria "certain advantages," including a French governess and a new apartment, Marion lashes out: "I suppose you can give her more luxuries than we can. When you were throwing away money we were living along watching every ten francs." In Marion's mind, Charlie's responsibility for Helen's death is inseparable from his financial success: he should feel guilt for both.

Even Lincoln Peters - who explicitly absolves Charlie of guilt for Helen's death - seems to resent Charlie's knack for prosperity: "While you and Helen were tearing around Europe throwing money away, we were just getting along. . . . there was some kind of injustice in it - you not even working toward the end, and getting richer and richer." And as Charlie himself admits, Lincoln "couldn't be expected to accept with equanimity the fact that his income was again twice as large as their own." When Marion changes her mind about letting Charlie take Honoria back to Prague, Charlie is left alone at the Ritz with only his money, and he reflexively resolves to "send Honoria some things; he would send her a lot of things." But Charlie's emotional losses have taught him that "this was just money" and "nothing was much good" except getting Honoria back. For the Peters, however, whose circumstances prevented them from enjoying the prosperity of the pre-crash boom years, the guilt Charlie should feel for his alcoholic life and Helen's death are inseparable from the guilt he should feel for his money.

Style

Setting and Symbolism

The setting of "Babylon Revisited" is Paris, France, circa 1930, a year after the U.S. stock market crash that ruined the fortunes of many Americans. In the story's title, Paris is compared to the ancient biblical city of Babylon (on the Euphrates River, near present-day Baghdad, Iraq), which was famous as a hotbed of sin and vice. Like the Babylonian Jews of the Bible who surrendered their Mosaic law to worship Babylon's pagan idols, in his former life Charlie had been corrupted by Paris's licentious ways and had lost touch with his traditional American values. For Charlie, Paris is a beautiful but dangerous place. The Place de la Concorde retains its "pink majesty," and the facade of the Paris opera house remains "magnificent," but the busy allure Paris had when the Americans of the twenties ruled its nightlife is now gone. Paris, like the famous Ritz Hotel where the story begins and ends, "had gone back into France," and Charlie no longer feels "as if he owned it." Seeing Paris with "clearer and more judicious eyes," Charlie is struck by its "provincial," even "bleak and sinister" quality. "Vice and waste" are catered to on an "utterly childish scale," and grim tourist traps snare travelers who are leery of the decadence of Paris's nude revues and prowling prostitutes.

Charlie's attitude toward Paris reflected Fitzgerald's own. In 1927 Fitzgerald wrote, "The best of America drifts to Paris. The American in Paris is the best American. . . . France has the only two things toward which we drift as we grow older - intelligence and good manners." By 1931, however, Fitzgerald saw something alarming in the waves of newly rich Americans who had descended on France before the crash: "With each new shipment of Americans spewed up by the boom the quality fell off, until toward the end there was something sinister about the crazy boatloads." For Fitzgerald, France became merely "a land" while "the best of America was the best of the world." America's "simple pa and ma and son and daughter," he wrote, was "infinitely superior in their qualities of kindness and curiosity to the corresponding class in Europe." Fitzgerald's biographer Matthew J. Bruccoli underscores Fitzgerald's alienation from Paris and France as a whole: he "remained a tourist," Bruccoli maintained, "never felt at home in France," and "found that France intensified his identification with his native land." Moreover, in Fitzgerald's fiction France is depicted, in Bruccoli's words, as "a place where Americans deteriorate or sometimes demonstrate their superiority over the natives." In "Babylon Revisited" Charlie does both: he is briefly part of an infallible "royalty," but he eventually descends into nightmarish "dissipation."

Point of View

Although Charlie does not narrate the story directly, it is through his vantage point that the actions of "Babylon Revisited" are described. The narrator separates himself from Charlie, however, by occasionally telling the reader things that Charlie cannot know or does not himself believe. The narrator, for example, tells readers that Marion Peters

"once possessed a fresh American loveliness" but then adds that "Charlie had never been sensitive to it and was always surprised when people spoke of how pretty she had been." Similarly, when Charlie tries to convince Marion that he deserves another chance as Honoria's father, the narrator again separates himself from Charlie by relating Marion's point of view: "part of her saw that Charlie's feet were planted on the earth now, and her own maternal feeling recognized the naturalness of his desire; but she had lived for a long time with a prejudice - a prejudice founded on a curious disbelief in her sister's happiness, and which, in the shock of that one terrible night, had turned to hatred for him. It had all happened at a point in her life where the discouragement of ill health and adverse circumstances made it necessary for her to believe in tangible villainy and a tangible villain."

Throughout "Babylon Revisited," the point of view the narrator adopts is almost always Charlie's. Charlie perceives Paris as a dangerous, decadent place, rather than one of the world's most beautiful cities, and the final judgment about whether Charlie has truly escaped his alcoholic past depends largely on whether readers believe what he tells them about himself. Occasionally, Charlie even seems to turn directly to the reader to plead his case through the narrator. Recalling the night Charlie locked Helen out in the snow, the narrator asks, "How could he know she would arrive an hour later alone, that there would be a snowstorm in which she wandered about in slippers, too confused to find a taxi?" In several passages in the story, the narrator's voice and Charlie's thoughts seem indistinguishable, and the story's narration becomes almost like an interior monologue: "He had never eaten at a really cheap restaurant in Paris. Five-course dinner, four francs fifty, eighteen cents, wine included. For some odd reason he wished that he had"; "He believed in character; he wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element. Everything else wore out"; or, "He would come back some day; they couldn't make him pay forever. But he wanted his child, and nothing was much good now, beside that fact. . . . He was absolutely sure Helen wouldn't have wanted him to be so alone." In passages like these, the third-person narrator and Charlie himself seem to become almost the same voice.

Structure

The structure of a work of fiction is the general organization of the scenes or events that make up the story. In its broadest outline, "Babylon Revisited" is divided into five sections. The first and last sections take place in the same location, the bar at the Hotel Ritz in Paris, and thus frame the story. In section 1, Charlie tells the Ritz bartender that he will be spending "four or five days" in Paris, and each section of the story narrates the events of each of these days. Only in the story's fifth and last section does Fitzgerald break this pattern, moving not to Charlie's fifth day in Paris, but to the evening of the fourth day, which began in the previous section.

Many critics have praised the structure of "Babylon Revisited." One critic has argued that the story's plot is more minimal than it appears: there is only one real scene - the intrusion of Lorraine and Duncan at the Peters' on the night Charlie hopes to regain custody of his daughter. The rest of the story merely develops or builds up to this

moment. Other critics have argued that Fitzgerald unconventionally structured the story with *two* climaxes: one in section 3 when Charlie learns that Marion will grant him custody of Honoria, and one in section 4, when Lorraine and Duncan's sudden appearance changes Marion's mind. Several critics have also noted that the structure of the story consists of alternating scenes, an exterior-interior movement that reflects the struggles occurring in Charlie's mind. Thus, according to one critic, Fitzgerald alternates between interior scenes (the Ritz bar, a restaurant with Honoria, the Peters' home) and exterior scenes (Paris at night) to create the backdrop of "Babylonian" corruption against which the story of a man's quest to regain his daughter is played out. This same back-and-forth structure can be seen in the alternation between Charlie's struggles in the real world to regain custody of Honoria and his internal, mental struggle to deal with his past, his sense of guilt, and his confidence in his own rehabilitation and honor.

Other Symbols

Two of the most important symbols in "Babylon Revisited" are the swing or pendulum and the door. The image of the swing first appears when Helen appears to Charlie in a dream on the night he seems to have finally regained custody of Honoria. Helen appears on a swing, "swinging faster and faster all the time" and speaking reassuring words until her motion prevents Charlie from making out what she says. Later, after Lorraine and Duncan's appearance at the Peters' has sabotaged Charlie's plans, he turns to see Lincoln Peters "swinging Honoria back and forth like a pendulum from side to side." As symbols, the swing and pendulum not only serve to link Helen and Honoria as the two loves in Charlie's life, they also point to the importance of time in the story. The motion of the swing and the pendulum reflects the quickening movements of the story itself, in which the events of the plot seem to unfold faster and faster. In the span of one day, for example, Charlie's fourth in Paris, he goes from feeling "happy," with "the door of the world" open before him, to unexpected defeat after which he is left alone in a hotel bar to contemplate his guilt and loneliness. As symbols of time, the swing and pendulum also represent the struggle in the story between Charlie's alcoholic past - with its "ghosts" and "nightmare" scenes - and the uncertain present in which he tries to secure a future of happiness, honor, and self-mastery.

Doors appear as symbols of both hope and menace in "Babylon Revisited." Early in the story, Fitzgerald uses doors to symbolize the devouring "mouths" of Paris's decadent nightclubs. After his first visit with the Peters in section 1, Charlie revisits the old haunts of his pre-crash Paris life: "He passed a lighted *door* from which issued music, and stopped with the sense of familiarity. . . . A few *doors* farther on he found another rendezvous and incautiously put his head inside. . . . The Poet's Cave had disappeared but the two great *mouths* of the Cafe of Heaven and the Cafe of Hell still yawned - even devoured, as he watched, the meager contents of a tourist bus." In these scenes the doors of Paris's clubs are virtually the doors of hell, beckoning tourists "with frightened eyes" to squander their money on "drink or drugs" and surrender themselves to the "dissipation" of Paris' temptations. Later, Lorraine, a "ghost " from Charlie's past, will remind him of another similar door, opened to feed his need for alcohol: "I remember

once when you hammered on my *door* at four A.M. I was enough of a good sport to give you a drink."

The principal door image in the story, however, is the door Charlie locked behind him a year and a half before the story starts, stranding his wife in the snow and perhaps contributing to her death from heart failure. As Charlie admits, it was the most uncharacteristic act of his life: "Locking out Helen didn't fit in with any other act of his life." The closing of that door signaled the death of his marriage and the death, he now hopes, of his self-indulgent alcoholic life in the days before the crash. Fitzgerald also uses door imagery to represent a metaphorical entrance way to Charlie's hopeful new future with Honoria. The very first door encountered in the story, in fact, opens to reveal "a lovely little girl of nine" - Honoria - who shrieks with joy as she leaps into Charlie's arms. The door as symbol of Charlie's possible future with Honoria is then repeated the morning after Charlie learns that Marion will consent to his regaining custody of his daughter: "He woke up feeling happy. The *door* of the world was open again."

But the next door to open admits Lorraine and Duncan Schaeffer into the Peters's home, shattering Marion's confidence in Charlie's new image: "The *door* opened upon another long ring, and then voices, and the three in the salon looked up expectantly. . . . the voices developed under the light into Duncan Schaeffer and Lorraine Quarrles." Although their appearance separates Charlie from Honoria once again, the last door image of the story returns to the door as a positive symbol, like the open "door of the world" that Charlie first glimpsed when he was reunited with Honoria for the first time in section 1: "Then he opened the *door* of the dining room and said in a strange voice, 'Good night, children.' Honoria rose and ran around the table to hug him."

Perhaps the most obvious symbol in the story, however, is Honoria. Charlie's reason for being in Paris is to regain his honor, which is manifest in his daughter, Honoria.

Lost Generation

Fitzgerald has often been associated with a school of American writers born near the beginning of the twentieth century and who reached maturity around World War I, and, in many cases, lived as expatriates in Europe during the 1920s. Besides Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, poet Hart Crane, and critic Malcolm Cowley are associated with this group of writers rebelling against the no-longer-viable rules of the past. According to Hemingway, the term *Lost Generation* derived from a remark Stein overheard an auto mechanic make to his younger colleagues as they bungled their attempts to fix Stein's car: "You are all a lost generation." After Hemingway used the remark as the motto for his famous novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), the term began to be used to describe his generation's loss of faith in traditional values following the carnage they witnessed in World War I. "Babylon Revisited" is also in some ways an analysis of the consequences of losing touch with these traditional (American) values. Marion and Lincoln Peters represent the sober, prudent, family-oriented values of an earlier America, and the "haunted" Charlie represents the by-product of ignoring these values by surrendering to the temptations of unearned wealth and self-indulgent,

immoral behavior. The notion that Charlie's (and Fitzgerald's) generation had perhaps fallen away from the solid values of its predecessors is echoed in the story in Charlie's assertion that "he believed in character; he wanted to jump back *a whole generation* and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element. Everything else wore out."

Historical Context

The Modern Era Arrives

In 1930, the year Fitzgerald wrote "Babylon Revisited," the world was in the midst of profound political, cultural, and economic changes. Political despotism seemed to be on the rise everywhere: the dictatorships of Josef Stalin in the Soviet Union and Benito Mussolini in Italy, both founded in the mid-1920s, were firmly entrenched by 1930; the collapse of Germany's Grand Coalition in March signaled the death of the fragile democratic Weimar Republic; and in September, 1930, Adolf Hitler's Nationalist Socialist Workers Party enjoyed its most dramatic election victory, moving Hitler closer to the complete dictatorial control of Germany he would assume in 1933. In America, Prohibition—which outlawed the manufacture, transportation, and sale of liquor— was entering its eleventh year, and a violent gangster class had emerged to feed the national demand for booze. In 1930, radio entered its golden age, the "talking picture" began to replace the silent film, and experimental television broadcasts made in the United States and the Soviet Union. In March, construction began in New York City on the Empire State Building; by the end of the year, the number of paid passengers on commercial airlines had increased 300 percent over 1929, and in December, Germany established a rocket program to develop military missiles.

Short-lived Prosperity

Overshadowing all these events, however, was the economic devastation that followed the New York Stock Exchange crash of October, 1929. An investment boom that had begun in late 1924 had by 1927 spiraled into a full-fledged bull market. It was a boom, however, fueled by unprecedented levels of purely speculative money and "margin" stock purchases, in which investors could take out loans to buy stocks for as little as ten percent down. In June, 1929, in what economist John Kenneth Galbraith has called a "mass escape from reality," the ceiling came off the U.S. stock market, and stock prices rose by leaps and bounds to unheard-of levels. "Never before or since," Galbraith wrote, "have so many become so wondrously, so effortlessly, and so quickly rich." Then in September, 1929, the wildly overvalued stocks, the widespread indebtedness caused by banks' loans to speculating investors, and the weaknesses in the U.S. economy set off an extended freefall in stock prices that cleaned out novice and veteran, low-income and well-to-do investors alike. As panicked investors rushed to sell their stocks before their value dropped to zero, the market surrendered, in Galbraith's words, "to blind, relentless fear." The worst carnage was suffered on October 29, 1929, but after a brief stabilization in June of 1930, Wall Street began a further slide that lasted until June, 1932. One thousand U.S. banks closed in 1930 alone, and by the end of the year three million Americans were out of work, and the savings of hundreds of thousands of people had disappeared. By 1933 the U.S. gross national product was fully a third smaller than in 1929, and only the onset of the massive military buildup for World War II managed to pull the world economy out of what came to be called the Great Depression.

From the beginning of his career, Fitzgerald identified himself closely with the American experience. He was fascinated and deeply moved by American history and wove it into the plots and themes of his major works. Although he himself had not experienced the overnight riches-to-rags experiences of other Americans in the fall of 1929, he immediately understood its significance and incorporated it into his writing. In his entry for the year 1930 in his personal ledger, for example, he wrote, "The Crash! Zelda + America." While Fitzgerald identified the "crash" of his own life — his wife Zelda's first nervous breakdown — with the unraveling of the U.S. economy, he was of two minds about the meaning of the great change in American's fortunes before and after the stock-market crash. On the one hand, he wrote that "it is the custom now to look back on ourselves of the boom days with a disapproval that approaches horror. But it had its virtues, that old boom: Life was a good deal larger and gayer for most people. . . . There were so many good things." On the other hand, in the mid-1930s he wrote that the 1920s were "the most expensive orgy in history" and that the youthful happiness he felt during that decade was as "unnatural as the Boom; and my recent experience parallels the wave of despair that swept the nation when the Boom was over."

Critical Overview

Throughout the 1930s, Fitzgerald suffered guilt by association for his early identification with the "flappers and philosophers" of the so-called Jazz Age. In the years of the Great Depression, Fitzgerald's identification with the comparatively carefree 1920s rendered him irrelevant in the opinion of readers who were now enduring rather hardscrabble lives. Moreover, with "The Crack-up," a series of essays published in *Esquire* magazine in the mid-1930s, readers who were accustomed to seeing Fitzgerald's cleverly phrased romantic entertainments in the "slick" magazines now discovered a writer who bluntly described himself as a "cracked plate," an alcoholic has-been whose best days were behind him. With his move to the glitzy, superficial world of Hollywood in the late 1930s, Fitzgerald's critical reputation reached its low tide, and it was not until the decade after his death that his work was seriously reevaluated. From the beginning of the Fitzgerald "revival" in the 1950s, "Babylon Revisited" was regarded among Fitzgerald's best short stories, and the first critics to analyze it at length focused on the problem of Charlie's character. Some argued that Charlie's failure to regain custody of Honoria was a direct result of his decision to leave the Peters' address with the Ritz bartender. Others maintained that throughout the story, Charlie demonstrated a convincing and even heroic self-mastery and that his ultimate loss of Honoria was therefore the fault of the external world and the unwillingness of Marion, Duncan, and Lorraine to believe that Charlie had truly left his irresponsible past behind.

In more recent criticism, the story's ambiguity has been interpreted as the story's central theme and strength. Recent critics have also begun to more fully explore the story's sophisticated structure. Fitzgerald, for example, successfully used the image of the pendulum and the swing, as well as repeated shifts between present-tense action and references to Charlie's past, to create a sense of back-and-forth movement that perfectly reflects Charlie's own constantly rising and falling hopes. The story's heightened sense of tension or ambiguity and its multiple potential meanings, combined with the sheer emotional pull of Fitzgerald's characters and plot, may account for the critics' continued fascination with "Babylon Revisited."

In spite of the disagreements over Charlie's character or the themes or structure of the story, virtually all critics have regarded "Babylon Revisited" among Fitzgerald's finest stories. While a few critics have noted traces of pop fiction melodrama in the story, as well as flaws in its structure and point of view, more have described it as nearly perfect, and one has even labeled it "among finest short stories of the twentieth century." Among the aspects of the story that have received the most praise are Fitzgerald's dramatization of the father-daughter relationship; his evocation of Paris as the story's setting and major metaphor ; and his deft use of such metaphors and images as the swing and pendulum and doors, locks, and bars (in both senses). Above all, Fitzgerald has been praised for balancing depth of theme with economy of plot, creating a richly evocative atmosphere and realistic dialogue, and sustaining a measured tone of restraint and ambiguity.

Many elements of "Babylon Revisited" were drawn from Fitzgerald's own life: his knowledge of Paris from his several trips there with his wife Zelda in the 1920s, his lifelong battle with alcoholism, his affection for his daughter, Scottie (the model for Honoria), his preoccupation with money and affluence, his interest in America and its history and identity, and Zelda's absence due to mental illness, which served as a template for the absence in the story of Charlie's wife, Helen. Among the themes explored in the story are freedom and imprisonment, sin, guilt and retribution, alcoholism and self-discipline, self-mastery, responsibility and personal character, greed, envy and money, love, the abandonment of traditional American values, and the irrevocability and burden of the past.

By the time Fitzgerald published "Babylon Revisited" in 1931 he had long since established himself as a regular contributor to America's most popular "slick" magazine, *The Saturday Evening Post.* By 1929 his per-story fee had climbed to $4,000, and 1931 proved to be his most profitable year ever as a writer. According to critic Morris Dickstein, however, "Babylon Revisited," perhaps because of the seriousness of its themes, was repeatedly rejected by the magazine editors who had previously craved Fitzgerald's more superficial, "flapper" stories. When "Babylon Revisited" was finally published in the *Post*'s February, 1931 issue, it received a large national readership though no formal reviews from critics. In late 1934 and early 1935, Fitzgerald gave his own critical estimation of the story by choosing it as the last story in his fourth short story collection, *Taps at Reveille.* Critics received the collection positively but urged Fitzgerald to write more serious stories worthy of his talents.

At the time of his death in 1940, few of Fitzgerald's books were popular. In the early 1950s, a Fitzgerald revival began, partly based on word-of-mouth enthusiasm for such works as *The Great Gatsby* that caused critics and scholars to pay his novels new attention. Later, his stories began to spark new critical interest. "Babylon Revisited" in particular began to emerge as Fitzgerald's most admired short story, a fact reflected in his publisher's decision in 1960 to reprint some of his stories under the title *Babylon Revisited and Other Stories.* By 1979, "Babylon Revisited" had been selected for inclusion in sixty-three short story anthologies - far more than any other Fitzgerald story - and had become the object of much scholarly analysis.

Although the attitude of most critics toward "Babylon Revisited" has been reverent, not all have viewed it as a flawless work. In 1962, Arthur Mizener, a Fitzgerald biographer, contrasted Fitzgerald's decision to use the third-person voice for the narrator to Joseph Conrad's more effective first-person style in his classic tale "Heart of Darkness." In 1971, John Higgins claimed that Fitzgerald had "slightly" injured his story by deciding to insert two climaxes rather than the one turning point found in most short stories. Two years later, David Toor noted that the story's third-person narration resulted in "flaws in the technique," mainly that the point of view shifts, allowing the narrator to know things that Charlie probably could not know. In 1981, Matthew Bruccoli noted that the story's autobiographical aspect showcased Fitzgerald's "considerable self-pity," and a year later Kenneth Eble, though praising the story's effectiveness, detected "shades of melodrama " that detract from its power.

Another group of critics has explored the changes that Fitzgerald made in the story's text between its first publication in 1931 and its appearance in the collection *Taps at Reveille* four years later. In the first version of the story, for example, when Charlie jokes to Alix that, luckily for him, the people in Prague "don't know about me," Fitzgerald has Charlie "smile faintly" at his own wit. In the 1935 version, Fitzgerald changes this to "Alix smiled," suggesting that perhaps the joke is really on Charlie. Similarly, in the 1931 version, after Lorraine and Duncan barge in at the Peters, Lorraine tries to get Charlie to join them for dinner and says, "Be yourself, Charlie. Come on." In 1935 Fitzgerald replaced this with a line that reinforces Lorraine's drunkenness: "Come and dine. Sure your cousins won' mine. See you so sel'om. Or solemn." Likewise, in the earlier version, Fitzgerald had Charlie explain Lorraine and Duncan's sudden appearance by saying they "wormed" the Peters's address "out of Paul at the bar." In the 1935 version Fitzgerald made Charlie's explanation more vague and uncertain: "They wormed your name out of somebody." Finally, in the 1931 version, after Lorraine and Duncan leave, Fitzgerald had inserted a line in which Lincoln is seen "somewhat uneasily occupying himself by swinging Honoria from side to side with her feet off the ground." In the 1935 version, Fitzgerald deleted this passage but failed to cut the word *still* in the subsequent line, "Lincoln was *still* swinging Honoria back and forth like a pendulum" - introducing a source of possible confusion for later readers.

Several aspects of "Babylon Revisited" have received special critical attention. The story's style has been widely praised as demonstrating a masterly, nuanced restraint and its structure has been consistently hailed as tightly balanced and unified. The gravity of its themes has also received special notice. In the span of a twenty-page story, Fitzgerald manages to touch on such themes as time and the inescapableness of the past, money and envy, the abandonment of traditional values, sin and guilt, honor and integrity, freedom and imprisonment, self-delusion, self-pity, parental and romantic love, and emotional bankruptcy and isolation.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4
- Critical Essay #5

Critical Essay #1

Bodine is a freelance writer, editor, and researcher who has taught at the Milwaukee College of Business. In the following essay, he discusses the characterization of Charlie, touching on several of the story's key themes.

The richness of "Babylon Revisited" as a work of fiction lies in Fitzgerald's ability to encompass so many themes while leaving the important questions about Charlie Wales' character unanswered. On the surface, the story is about a father's attempt to regain the custody of his daughter after a series of personal disasters. Critics have consistently praised the story for its authentic and affecting portrayal of the love between Charlie and Honoria, and in discussing a planned film version of the story, Fitzgerald himself later referred to "the tragedy of the father and the child" that lies at the heart of the story. Within this basic emotional core, however, Fitzgerald dramatizes a universe of emotional, social, historical, and psychological themes. Charlie's quest to win back Honoria, for example, is also his quest to prove to himself and those who know him that he is a new man. Only a year and half before, he was an unemployed, irresponsible, spendthrift alcoholic with poor taste in friends, a broken marriage, and a malicious streak that allowed him to lock his wife out of their apartment on a winter night. He now presents himself to his sister's family, his former friends, and the reader as a "radically" changed man, once again sober and employed - "a reformed sinner" with a new appreciation of personal character as "the eternally valuable element."

Much of the critical discussion of "Babylon Revisited" has centered on which Charlie is the "real" one. On the one hand, Charlie seems to repeatedly flirt dangerously with his past. He hangs around the Ritz bar, the gathering place for many of his former drinking partners; he leaves the Peters' address with the barman so a former drinking buddy can find him; he waxes nostalgic about the "sort of magic" he felt in his earlier inebriated days; and he returns to the nightclubs and nude revues he frequented in his previous life. On the other hand, he now holds down a well-paying job in Prague, displays a palpable love for his daughter, is clearly anguished by his wife's death and horrified at his past, breaks firmly with Lorraine Quarrles by failing to meet her at the Ritz Hotel, repeatedly displays self-control by refusing drinks, and maturely controls his anger when Marion accuses him of causing his wife's death. The ambivalence in Charlie's character is also mirrored in the ambivalence of the story's conclusion. Lorraine and Duncan's appearance has changed Marion's mind about surrendering Honoria to Charlie, and he is left alone back at the Ritz bar, replaying his guilty memory of his dissipated former life and the night he locked his wife out in the snow. His final conversation with Lincoln Peters closes the door on Charlie's plans to leave Paris with Honoria, but it also dangles the hope that "six months" from now, he'll get a second chance. The story closes with Charlie ambiguously giving in to self-pity - "He wasn't young anymore, with a lot of nice thoughts and dreams to have by himself" - but also reaffirming his own determination to win in the end: "He would come back some day; they couldn't make him pay forever."

Beyond Charlie's personal drama, "Babylon Revisited" also explores larger social and historical issues: the contrast between Europe's decadent culture and the domesticity of traditional Americans, America's transition from the prosperity of the 1920s to the straitened conditions of the Depression, and the moral value of work versus the "free money" of the speculating investors of the "boom" years. In a scene typical of the story's fusion of narrowly personal and broadly social themes, Fitzgerald compresses Charlie's own history into the history of his generation during the boom years of the twenties. Seated at the Ritz bar after his plans for regaining custody of Honoria have begun to vanish, Charlie converses with Paul the barman about the "great change" wrought by the stock market crash the year before. When Paul mentions that he heard Charlie had lost his money in the crash, Charlie replies, "I did, but I lost everything I wanted in the boom." Paul interprets this as a reference to "selling short," the only sure way to lose money during a boom in the stock market. Short-selling means gambling that the price of a stock bought at a low price will fall to that price, but risking that if the price *rises* - as it does in a booming market - you'll be forced to ante up more money to avoid losing your original investment. Charlie understands Paul's financial allusion but plays on the other meaning of "selling short": selling *oneself* short by surrendering one's principles. In this and other scenes, Fitzgerald combines Charlie's personal history with the history of his generation.

As a portrait of the city Paris in the years before World War II, "Babylon Revisited" also captures the glamorous, culturally rich flavor of that city while evoking the darker, morally threatening qualities that distinguish it from the United States in Charlie's eyes. For Charlie, America symbolizes an energy and vitality that Paris now lacks. In the Ritz bar in the story's opening scene, he notes that the "frenzy" and "clamor" the bar had when rich Americans ruled it before the crash has been replaced by an oppressive air of boredom, emptiness, and quiet. With America's fortunes reversed by the stock market crash, the Ritz bar is "not an American bar any more": "It had gone back into France." Although France is once again French, reminders of America follow Charlie throughout the story: the Peters' home is "warm and comfortably American," Marion Peters possesses the traces of a "fresh American loveliness," a fine fall day reminds Charlie of "football weather," and Lincoln Peters' first name conjures up an image of a simple and decent American far removed from Paris' luxury hotels and prowling prostitutes. This Americanless Paris unsettles Charlie: "It seems very funny to see so few Americans around," he tells Marion. When she replies that the absence of her countrymen "delights" her, Charlie nostalgically rushes to their defense, recalling the "sort of magic" he once felt as an American in Paris.

In "Babylon Revisited" Paris is both a heaven and a hell. In two brief early scenes, Fitzgerald presents a snapshot tour of many of Paris's most famous locations, from the Hotel Ritz in the Place Vendome and the Place de la Concorde to the river Seine, the Left Bank, and Montmartre. These glimpses of the "majesty" and "magnificence" of Paris are then contrasted with its seedy tourist traps, licentious nightclubs, loose women, and money-devouring restaurants and nightspots. Against these images of Paris as both splendid icon and threat, Fitzgerald employs images of a familiar America that reminds Charlie of the home he gave up when his ill-gotten stock market windfall separated him from his moral center. Exploring Paris's streets, Charlie catches a

glimpse of the effect of Paris's foreign decadence on the American values he claims to have regained: descending into a club appropriately named the Cafe of Hell, "an American couple" glances at him "with frightened eyes." The image of a moral or psychological hell suggested by the nightclub's name conveys the image of Paris as a dark underworld, which Fitzgerald strengthens elsewhere in the story. The "fire-red, gas-blue, ghost green" signs Charlie sees during his first night in Paris contribute to the city's spectral, otherworldly quality in the story, and Fitzgerald later reinforces this foreboding atmosphere with the images of "bleak sinister cheap hotels," "*cocottes* prowling singly or in pairs," and "women and girls carried screaming with drink or drugs out of public places." By evoking an image of Paris as a Dantean "nightmare," Fitzgerald suggests how far Charlie had fallen in his pre-crash days as well as the dangers that still threaten him. Fitzgerald's ability to broaden Charlie's personal drama into a reflection on the free-spirited times of the twenties, the stock market crash of 1929, the dawning of the Great Depression, the life of American expatriates in Paris, and the contrasts between the American and European ways of life demonstrate the depth of Fitzgerald's accomplishment in "Babylon Revisited."

Most critics of "Babylon Revisited" have agreed with Fitzgerald's own high estimation of the story as "magnificent." The story has been occasionally criticized for its melodramatic touches and imperfect structure, but the majority of critics have regarded it among the very best of the 160-odd stories Fitzgerald wrote during his career. In his 1964 analysis of the story, Thomas Staley focuses on Fitzgerald's exploration of the theme of time. The struggle between Charlie's irrevocable past and his uncertain present leaves him in the end "suspended in time," with only a "future of loneliness" before him. Staley shows that Fitzgerald was "particularly preoccupied" with the theme of time by tracing the story's temporally oriented language, from the title itself, which refers back to the biblical city of ancient Mesopotamia, to the images of movement through time that pervade the story. Charlie's battle with time is reflected in such lines as "he wanted to jump back a whole generation," "a crowd who had helped them make months into days"; "the present was the thing"; or "It's a great change." For Staley, the story's conclusion offers Charlie little real hope; he will remain "suspended" between the past, present, and future - without Honoria.

In his 1973 interpretation of the story, David Toor also argues that the story ends negatively, on a note of "almost total despair." For Toor, "Babylon Revisited" is the unambiguous story of Charlie's "self-destruction" as a result of his "warped" delusion that he has recovered from his past and is deserving of a second chance with Honoria. All Charlie's problems stem from his inability to love, Toor argues, and Charlie repeatedly refuses to confront his guilt for Helen's death, his continuing dependence on alcohol, and his misguided belief that giving money away and giving love are the same thing. For Toor, Charlie's point of view is completely unreliable, self-justifying, and manipulative, and he neither deserves nor will ever win custody of Honoria. In a 1982 discussion of structural metaphors in Fitzgerald's short fiction, William J. Brondell argues that, like all Fitzgerald's better stories, "Babylon Revisited" contains a "deep structure" that illuminates the thoughts and emotions of the characters. In "Babylon Revisited" this deep structure can be understood with the aid of the "structural metaphor" of the swing or pendulum first presented in Charlie's vision of Helen swinging

"faster and faster" on a swing. The swing metaphor, with its alternating, back-and-forth movement, pervades the story, which continually shifts between disappointment and exultation, past and present, action and reaction. Because Charlie has proved that he can control his reactions to the forces and events around him, Brondell argues, as a patient realist he will be rewarded with Honoria in the end when the "swing of the past [loses] its momentum."

In his 1982 article, Carlos Baker analyzes the theme of freedom and imprisonment in " Babylon Revisited" by discussing the opposing motifs of Babylon - "the center of luxury and wickedness" - and the "quiet and decent" home Charlie wants to raise Honoria in. Within this opposition, Baker maintains, Fitzgerald uses the imagery of keys, locks, and doors to dramatize Charlie's battle to escape the prison of his past and enter "the door of the world." Noting Fitzgerald's use of alternating interior and exterior scenes to create the threatening "Babylonian" element that lurks behind the action of the entire story, Baker sees Charlie's final fate at the story's end as both a "lock-out" and a "locking in." Baker also traces Fitzgerald's return to the material of "Babylon Revisited" in the late 1930s when he began work on a screenplay of the story under the name *Cosmopolitan.*

Source: Paul Bodine, "An Overview of 'Babylon Revisited'," in *Short Stories for Students,* Gale, 1998.

Critical Essay #2

In the following excerpt, Baker examines the themes of freedom and imprisonment in "Babylon Revisited," focusing on Charlie's characterization.

A kind of change came in my fate, My keepers grew compassionate, I know not what had made them so. They were inured to sights of woe. And so it was: - my broken chain With links unfastened did remain And it was liberty to stride Along my cell from side to side. - Byron, "The Prisoner of Chillon"

Fitzgerald once called "Babylon Revisited" a magnificent short story. The adjective still holds. It is probably his best. Written in December, 1930, it was first published February 21, 1931, in the *Saturday Evening Post,* whose editors must have recognized its superior qualities, well above the norm of the stories from his pen that this magazine had been publishing for the past ten years. Collected in *Taps at Reveille* in 1935, it stood proudly at the end of the volume, a memorable example of well-made short fiction.

The epigraph from Byron bears upon the story for many reasons, not least because "The Prisoner of Chillon" was the first poem that Fitzgerald ever heard, his father having read it aloud to him in his childhood, a circumstance that he recalled in a letter to his mother in June, 1930, when he paid a tourist visit to "Chillon's dungeons deep and old" while staying at Ouchy, Lausanne in order to be near Zelda, who was desperately ill in a nearby sanatorium. The story he wrote six months afterwards might have been called "Chillon Revisited," involving as it does the double theme of freedom and imprisonment, of locking out and locking in. For although Charlie Wales seems to himself to have redeemed his right to parenthood and to have regained his proper freedom, the links of his fetters are still visible when the story ends. And we, the keepers, inured as we are to sights of woe both inside and outside Fitzgerald's life and works, cannot help feeling compassion for this fictive prisoner, who tries so hard to measure up, only to be defeated by a past that he can never shed.

From the triple nadir of the Wall Street crash, months of recuperation from alcoholism in a sanatorium, and the death of his wife, Charlie Wales has now rehabilitated himself as a successful man of business in Prague, Czechoslovakia, and has returned to Paris in the hope of taking custody of his nine-year-old daughter Honoria, who has been living in the care of her aunt and uncle since her mother's death. He feels ready for the responsibility, since he has made another kind of comeback, having staved off drunkenness for a year and a half by the simple expedient of rationing himself to one whisky a day. All those sins of commission which led to the debacle are now, he is sure, behind him. He recognizes that while he was flinging away thousand-franc notes like handfuls of confetti, even the most wildly squandered sum was being given "as an offering to destiny that he might not remember the things most worth remembering, the things that now he would always remember": Honoria taken from him and Helen buried in Vermont.

Two motifs stand opposed in the story. One is that of Babylon, ancient center of luxury and wickedness in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. The other is that of the quiet and decent home-life that Wales wishes to establish for his child. He defines the Babylon motif as a "catering to vice and waste." It is what used to happen every afternoon in the Ritz bar when expatriated Americans like himself systematically hoisted glasses on the way to the ruin, moral or physical or both, that besets so many of them now. More spectacularly, it is places of decadent entertainment like the Casino where the naked Negro dancer Josephine Baker performs "her chocolate arabesques." It is squalidly visible along the streets of Montmartre, the Rue Pigalle and the Place Blanche, where nightclubs like "the two great mouths of the Cafe of Heaven and the Cafe of Hell" used to wait, as they still do, to devour busloads of tourists, innocent foreigners eager for a glimpse of Parisian fleshpots.

Fittingly enough, it is in the Ritz bar that the story opens - and closes. The place is nothing like it used to be. A stillness, "strange and portentous," inhabits the handsome room. No longer can it be thought of as an American bar: it has "gone back into France." All the former habitues are absent - Campbell ailing in Switzerland; Hardt back at work in the United States; and Fessenden, who tried to pass a bad check to the management, wrecked at last by shame and obesity. Only Duncan Schaeffer is still around Paris. Swallowing his loneliness, Charlie Wales hands the assistant bartender a note for Schaeffer including the address of his brother-in-law in the Rue Palatine. It is his first mistake. A key clicks in the prison door. Although he does not know it yet, Schaeffer will twice seek Charlie out, only to lock him into loneliness again.

At the outset Fitzgerald alternates interior and exterior scenes, with the obvious intent of providing the Babylonian background against which the principal dramatic scenes are to occur. While Charlie is on his way to the Peters's apartment in the Rue Palatine, he is most impressed by the nocturnal beauty rather than the wickedness of Paris. Bistros gleam like jewels along the boulevards, and the "fire-red, gas-blue, ghost-green signs" blur their way "smokily through the tranquil rain." By contrast, the living room at his brother-in-law's place is "warm and comfortably American," with a fire on the hearth and a pleasant domestic bustle in the kitchen. Although Honoria is well, and happy enough with her small cousins, she is plainly overjoyed to see her father again. At dinner he watches her closely, wondering whom she most resembles, himself or her mother. It will be fortunate, he thinks, "if she didn't combine the traits of both that had brought them to disaster."

Marion Peters has no doubt as to whose traits must be guarded against. Between Charlie and his sister-in-law an "instinctive antipathy" prevails. In her eyes he can do nothing right. When he says how strange it seems that so few Americans are in Paris, she answers that she's delighted: "Now at least you can go into a store without their assuming you're a millionaire." But Charlie replies that it was nice while it lasted. "We were a sort of royalty, almost infallible, with a sort of magic around us. In the bar this afternoon," - and here he stumbles, seeing his mistake - "there wasn't a man I knew." Marion looks at him keenly: "I should think you'd have had enough of bars."

In Marion's mind the reference to bars has no double significance; she means only those places where drinking is done. But to the eyes of the reader, aware of Charlie's prison-like predicament, the word might well carry an ulterior suggestiveness. For he has had enough of bars in both senses, longing instead for the freedom to live a responsible domestic life and "more and more absorbed," as he thinks next day, "by the desire of putting a little of himself into [Honoria] before she [has] crystallized utterly" into maturity.

The bars of his incipient prison move closer on the following afternoon when he takes Honoria to lunch and afterwards to a vaudeville matinee at the Empire. That morning he has awakened to a bright fall day that reminds him, as it so often reminded Fitzgerald, of football games. Charlie is naturally optimistic, sanguine by temperament, at least in the mornings. The gloom closes in when two ghosts from his past - Duncan Schaeffer and Lorraine Quarrles - intrude on the father-daughter colloquy, first at the restaurant and then at the theater. He puts them off as well as he can: they are the counterforce to all he now longs for. Going home in the taxi, Honoria says firmly that she wants to live with him. His heart leaps up. When he has delivered her to the apartment, he waits outside for her to show herself at the window. She appears, warm and glowing like an image of domesticity, and throws him a kiss in the dark street where he stands.

On his return that evening, Marion meets him with "hard eyes." She is wearing a black dinner dress that faintly suggests mourning, possibly for her dead sister. Although he understands that he will "have to take a beating," Charlie supposes that if he assumes "the chastened attitude of the reformed sinner," he may be able to carry the day and win the right to his daughter, despite Marion's legal guardianship. But she remains obdurate. Never in her life, she tells him, can she forget that early morning when Helen knocked at her door, "'soaked to the skin and shivering'," with the news that Charlie, in drunken and jealous anger, had locked her out in the snow, where she had been wandering in slippers, "too confused to find a taxi."

Once again the imagery of keys and locks and doors rises into view. Seeing that Marion has "built up all her fear of life into one wall and faced it toward him," Charlie can only swallow his protestations. When he points out in a dull voice that Helen, after all, "'died of heart trouble'," she picks up and echoes the phrase as if - unlike her earlier reference to "bars" - this one of "'heart trouble'" has "another meaning for her." But she has reached the end of her tether. "'Do what you like!'" she cries, springing from her chair. "'. . . You two decide it. I can't stand this. I'm sick. I'm going to bed'."

Next day when Charlie lunches with Lincoln Peters, he finds it difficult "to keep down his exultation." The two men agree to a final conference that evening to settle all details. But Charlie's past cannot be shed so easily. Back at his hotel he finds a *pneu* from Lorraine Quarrles, reminding him of their drunken exploit in stealing a butcher's tricycle and pedaling round the etoile until dawn. "For old time's sake," she urges him to meet her at the Ritz that afternoon at five.

Lorraine as temptress has lost her charm for Charlie. At five he leaves instead for the Rue Palatine for what will amount to the obligatory scene of the story. Honoria, who has

been told that she is to go with her father, can scarcely contain her delight. Even Marion seems at last to have "accepted the inevitable." Charlie nods to Peters's offer of a drink: "I'll take my daily whisky." The wall that Marion erected against him has fallen now. The apartment is warm - "a home, people together by a fire," the ideal of domesticity that Charlie would like to establish on his own for his child.

At this point comes the long peal at the doorbell and the sudden intrusion of Duncan Schaeffer and Lorraine, drunken, word-slurring, "hilarious . . . roaring with laughter." When Charlie introduces his old friends, Marion freezes, drawing back toward the hearth, her arm thrown defensively around her daughter's shoulders. After he has gotten rid of the intruders, Charlie notices that she has not moved from the fire. Both of her children are now standing in the maternal shelter of her arms. Peters is still playfully "swinging Honoria back and forth like a pendulum from side to side" - a gesture to which Fitzgerald plainly attaches symbolic significance and one that even echoes, though doubtless by chance, the very words of the prisoner of Chillon.

Once more, in a telling repetition of first effect, Marion rushes from the room. She is in bad shape, as Peters returns to say. Dinner is out of the question and Charlie must go.

Charlie got up. He took his coat and hat and started down the corridor. Then he opened the door of the dining-room and said in a strange voice, "Good night, children."

Honoria rose and ran around the table to hug him.

"Good night, sweetheart," he said vaguely, and then trying to make his voice more tender, trying to conciliate something, "Good night, dear children."

The story returns to its opening locale. In the grip of his anger, Charlie hopes to find Lorraine and Duncan at the Ritz bar. But they have done their sorry work and vanished from his life. He orders a whisky and chats idly with the bartender about times past. Once more the memory of those days sweeps over him like a nightmare - the incoherent babbling, the sexual advances, "the women and girls carried screaming with drink or drugs out of public places," or the men like himself "who locked their wives out in the snow" on the theory that "the snow of twenty-nine wasn't real snow. If you didn't want it to be snow, you just paid some money."

Another lock-out is imminent, which will also amount to a locking-in. When Charlie telephones, Lincoln Peters is compassionate but firm: "'Marion's sick. . . . I know this thing isn't altogether your fault, but I can't have her go to pieces about it. I'm afraid we'll have to let it slide for six months.'" Charlie returns to his table. Although he tells himself that "they couldn't make him pay forever," he knows he must serve a further sentence in the prison of his days. But he is "absolutely sure that Helen wouldn't have wanted him to be so alone."

Source: Carlos Baker, "When the Story Ends: 'Babylon Revisited'," in *The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald: New Approaches in Criticism,* edited by Jackson R. Bryer, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982, pp. 269-77.

Critical Essay #3

In the following excerpt, Brondell examines the structure of and the metaphors in "Babylon Revisited."

"Babylon Revisited" has deservedly received more critical attention and praise than any other Fitzgerald short story, with most commentators expressing admiration for its flawless blend of a tight, balanced structure and a significant theme. The only reservation about the story's structural excellence appears in a footnote to Higgins' study of the story [in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Study of the Stories,* 1971]: "The story's structure seems slightly flawed in that there are actually two dramatic climaxes, scene four and scene six." One sees a flaw only if one insists on a restricted development in the superstructure; such an emphasis traditionally demands that the climax be followed by a change in the hero's fortunes or in his psychological state. There is obviously a change in Charlie's fortunes and psychological state after Marion relents and yields to Charlie's request for custody of Honoria. But then of course the story continues; and just as his desires are to be fulfilled, the "ghosts" out of the past intervene and turn Charlie into a victim instead of a victor— his fortunes change and his spirit falls. But clearly, Charlie's loneliness at the end of the story is appropriate only if he has been deprived of Honoria, as happened in the climax in Scene six, Section IV.

Even though some disagree with Seymour Gross's interpretation [in *College English,* Nov. 1963] of the ultimate meaning of the story, his reading of "Babylon Revisited" remains the most judicious and detailed appraisal of the relationships between the structure and the theme— so detailed that the following examination of the deep structure and the structural metaphor will be but a fine-tuning of his argument and a moderation of his gloomy interpretation. Gross notices, analyzes, and expands on the structural "maneuvers" Fitzgerald uses to achieve the unity and coherence that raises this story above the others. Since "Babylon Revisited" is essentially a story of Charlie's character, Gross correctly sees Charlie as having attained the fundamental state of a man of character, a "quiet power over himself." But despite this self mastery, Charlie needs "his daughter back to give shape and direction to his renascence, to redeem his lost honor, and in a sense to recover something of his wife." Charlie's failure to accomplish this "crushes any lingering hopes" that he might have had, and leaves him with nothing to do "but turn for comfort to the dead for whom time has also stopped." Gross's attention is focused primarily on the superstructure and on the action moved along by the extensive parallels between the sections of that structure; as a result, he sees the story as a tightly woven yet simple description of a man cruelly and unjustly denied both his daughter and his honor. A brief analysis of the deep structure of Charlie's internal life and the special metaphor that informs the deep structure suggest that "Babylon Revisited" is indeed a story on two levels: the exterior level which describes Charlie's unsuccessful attempt to reclaim his daughter Honoria; and an interior level which describes Charlie's successful attempt to prove his reformation and thus reclaim his lost honor.

As in "The Freshest Boy," the structural metaphor in "Babylon Revisited" to be found immediately prior to the climax, informs both the superstructure and the deep structure. At the end of Section III, after Marion has agreed to relinquish her custody of Honoria, Charlie returns to his rooms in an "exultant" state of mind. But immediately, he discovers that he cannot sleep, because the "image of Helen haunted him." He begins to review their stormy relationship, and especially the particulars of the night when he, in a pique of jealous anger, locked her out in the snow. He then recalls the aftermath and all its horrors, the superficial "reconciliation," and the eventual death of his wife —"martyrdom," as Marion would have it. The memories are so strong and become so real that Charlie imagines that Helen talks to him. She reassures him that she also wants him to have custody of Honoria, and she praises him for his reformation. Then she says a "lot of other things — friendly things— but she was in a swing in a white dress, and swinging faster and faster all the time, so that at the end he could not hear clearly all that she said." This image of Helen in the swing emanates throughout the story's superstructure. Just as the dream of his dead wife in a white dress (suggestive of the innocent past of long ago) swings into his mind to restrain his "exultation," so the sins of the past, in the shape and form of Lorraine and Duncan, will appear in Section IV to dash his hopes for the custody of Honoria. Similarly, the action of the swing reflects the pacing of the action in the climactic section: its faster and faster movement implies the quick arrival and departure of Lorraine and Duncan, Marion's abrupt change of heart, and the sudden reversal of Charlie's fortunes.

The metaphor with its back and forth motion not only serves to describe and motivate the climax, but also marks the progress of the action which precedes and follows the climax. From the beginning to the end, the plot is characterized by a series of alternating currents from the past to the present. Higgins has suggested that there are three interwoven movements in the story: "A continual reciprocating movement between his old and new world" in a series of seven scenes; "an in-and-out movement among past, present and future"; and the movement of Charlie's "emotional alternations between optimism and pessimism, hope and disillusion." Clearly, every contact with the past seems to dampen Charlie's spirits or to cloud his expectations, or to defeat his hopes. Just as clearly, the swing functions as a metaphor of the intrusion of the past and reinforces the theme of man's inability to escape the consequences of his past behavior. Furthermore, because of its insistent continual motion, the metaphor seems to suggest that as long as Charlie's life continues, he will, like Sisyphus, almost reach the moment of joy; but something out of the past will turn him away. As Thomas Staley has remarked [in *Modern Fiction Studies* 10 (1964-65)], "Time and its ravages have left Charlie suspended in time with a nightmare for a past, an empty whiskey glass for a present, and a future full of loneliness." Or so it seems if only one level of action is examined. But as Gross has suggested, Charlie's attempt to reclaim his daughter implies an attempt to reclaim his lost honor; and the swing metaphor mirrors Charlie's efforts on this level.

According to the physics of swinging, there is a state of near-equivalence between the terminus of the forward motion and the terminus of the rearward motion. But if the swing must rely on its own momentum, the laws of gravity demand that the terminus of the succeeding motion be lower than the terminus of the preceding motion. There is a

similar "balance" in the heights and depths of Charlie's emotional responses to the actions that elicit these responses. In a sense, the physical laws that control the swing are transformed into the metaphysical and ethical laws that govern Charlie's feelings. Thus for every action in the plot, there is Charlie's less-than-equal reaction— and never any overreaction. Unlike the reactions of every other character in the story, Charlie's are always under control. He may not be able to control the events of his life, but he can and does control his reactions. As he states in Section III while justifying his daily drink, "It's a sort of stunt I set myself. It keeps the matter in proportion."

Throughout the difficult inquisition in Section III, Charlie consciously restrains his natural desires to match the venom of Marion's accusations. "Keep your temper," he tells himself after discovering that he "would take a beating." When Marion recalls the morning after he had locked his wife out in the snow, Charlie "wanted to launch out into a long expostulation," but he doesn't. Later, he becomes "increasingly alarmed" because he feared for Honoria if she remained in the "atmosphere" of Marion's hostility. But "he pulled his temper down out of his face and shut it up inside him. . . ." Near the end of Section III, Marion, eaten up by her prejudice against him and her inescapable memories of her sister's death, cries out, "How much you were responsible for Helen's death I don't know." Even in this desperate moment, as he feels a "current of agony" surge through him, he "hung on to himself" and restrained his emotions — he kept "the matter in proportion." Even Marion realizes the extent of his mastery over himself: "She saw him plainly and she knew he had somehow arrived at control over the situation." In essence, by restraining his reactions, Charlie makes Marion's actions seem all the more out of control. Thus, by being more controlled and reasonable, Charlie proves his reformation and achieves a victory over Marion. For every swing of Marion's argument, Charlie swings back with a controlled response.

In the climactic fourth section the swing begins to move faster and faster, and Charlie's interior world moves in the same rhythm. The first paragraph clearly suggests this motion: "He made plans, vistas, futures for Honoria and himself, but suddenly he grew sad. . . ." In the next breath, he says, "The present was the thing; work to do and someone to love"; and then, "But not to love too much." His mind is swinging back and forth in rapid succession: the hopes for the future are controlled by his thoughts of the past; the sadness of the past is restrained by the needs of the present; and over all, a sense of control, of moderation.

It is this moderation and control that characterizes Charlie's response to the devastating swing of the past that squashes his hopes for reunion with Honoria. The climax brings into clear focus the essential nature of his "character," and his mastery over his emotions. After Lorraine and Duncan materialize, Charlie's attempts to control the situation prove fruitless. At first he was "astounded," then "anxious and at a loss." Later he approaches them "as if to force them backward down the corridor," back into the past. But the momentum of their untimely visit can't be stopped; and in their swinging, they figuratively knock him out of the way: Marion changes her mind and therefore Charlie's future. His last lines in the section show the completeness of his self-control. They are peculiarly measured and restrained, not at all the farewell speech of a man who feels that he has lost everything he has ever wanted. His farewell to his daughter,

"Good night, sweetheart," echoes Horatio's farewell to Hamlet; but Charlie broadens his farewell in order to lessen the possible tragic overtones: "Trying to make his voice more tender, trying to conciliate something, 'Good night, dear children.'" Undeniably, the action of the climax proves that even a man of strong character cannot control the actions and feelings of others, nor the strange, almost accidental swing of fortune; but, Charlie's reactions prove that a man who has mastery over his emotions and can control himself has a sense of integrity and honor that cannot be made hostage to the quirks of fate and the meanness of others.

In the first three sections of the story, Charlie's tactics of control and his measured responses to the actions of others accomplished their purpose. As Marion realized in Section III, Charlie is in control of the situation, and is on the point of reclaiming his daughter and redeeming his honor. But as the events of the climax show, Charlie's tactics are not enough. But by this time, his self-control is no longer just a tactic; it is clearly a habitual ethical strategy based on a strong belief in the "eternally valuable element," character. By the end of the story, he realizes that "there was nothing he could do" about the remote and recent past, nor about the future: he is neither a pessimist nor an optimist, but a realist. From the beginning, he has known that he wanted Honoria, and in Section III, "He was sure now that Lincoln Peters wanted him to have his child." Looking back on his experience he also realizes that Marion has yielded before, and may very well yield again. Finally, as he sits in the Ritz bar considering his victories and defeats, he becomes "absolutely sure Helen wouldn't have wanted him to be so alone." All of his experiences during the last few days in Paris suggest to him that it is only a matter of time, perhaps Lincoln's "six months," before the swing of the past will have lost its momentum.

A large measure of the success of "Absolution," "The Freshest Boy," and "Babylon Revisited" depends on Fitzgerald's ability to portray accurately and convincingly the inner life of the characters who inhabit the stories. He has drawn, as it were, a believable picture of souls in motion. To control this motion, he has created a deep structure which traces the characters' most profound thoughts and emotions; and in these stories, he has provided a map, the structural metaphor, so that the reader may follow the motion of these souls. Using this map, the careful reader will be able to discover and feel that "special emotion" and "special experience" that is at the heart of the stories and at the center of Fitzgerald's art.

Source: William J. Brondell, "Structural Metaphors in Fitzgerald's Short Fiction," in *Kansas Quarterly,* Vol. 14, No. 2, Spring, 1982, pp. 107-11.

Critical Essay #4

In the following essay, Toor offers his view of Fitzgerald's handling of the theme of guilt and self-destructiveness, focusing on the character of Charlie.

Roy R. Male's perceptive article on "Babylon Revisited", [*Studies in Short Fiction* II (1965)] goes far in clearing up many of the unresolved problems that have recently been discussed in relation to the story. Male has pointed out, as James Harrison had shown in an earlier note [*Explicator* 16, (January, 1958)], that Charlie Wales is in a sense responsible for the appearance of Duncan and Lorraine at the Peters' house at precisely the wrong moment. Male has further called into serious question the general interpretation of the story, most specifically Seymour Gross' contention that Charlie has been renovated and that the punishment he suffers is brought upon him from external sources. Gross says: "That moral renovation may not be enough is the injustice that lies at the center of the story" [*College English* XXV (November, 1963)]. Both Male and Harrison point out that had Charlie not given the bartender the Peters' address at the opening of the story, Duncan and Lorraine would not have shown up there and given Marion Peters a real reason to refuse to return Honoria to Charlie.

Gross' further statement, "Nor is there anything here of that troubled ambivalence which characterizes our response to that fantastic ambiguity, Jay Gatsby," seems quite wrong, because it is precisely in the troubled ambivalence of Charlie Wales that the meaning of the story is found. But Charlie's ambivalence is not the result of the fact that, as Male argues, "his is a story of suspension between two worlds," although to a great extent the story is structured on the contrasts between the past, as represented by Lorraine and Duncan, and the present, in the persons of Marion and Lincoln, but in a deeper awareness of Charlie's own guilt and his inability to work it out. It is in a kind of personal psychological morality that the meaning of the story is found.

It is convenient for Charlie to blame the errors of his past for the pains of his present - and future. But Fitzgerald's world is not a world of external retribution - you are not made to pay for what you've done - not at least by a God, or in Hemingway's words, "what we have instead of God," a code, or even by a deterministic fate. The payment is self-punishment, and the ironically disastrous result of such punishment is the intensification of the feelings of guilt. There is no expiation, only the further degeneration of the mind - neurotic reinforcement of behavior that leads eventually to total insanity or a form of suicide.

Charlie Wales is not torn between the poles of two opposing worlds so much as he is torn by his own inner sense of guilt and his inability to expiate it. He is not morally renovated, only sicker and less able to cope with the guilt. In one part of him he wants his Honoria (honor) back, but in the deeper man, the guilt-ridden one, he knows he doesn't deserve her. He has exiled himself to a dream world free of past responsibilities - Prague - where he creates the fresh image of himself as a successful businessman. Of course the image cannot hold, and his distorted view of the real world leads him into delusion and jealousy: "He wondered if he couldn't do something to get Lincoln out of

his rut at the bank." What kind of rut is Lincoln really in? A warm home-life that Charlie envies, children who love him, a neurotic wife, yes, but a reasonable contentment.

There are many hints through the story which point to these conclusions, and one of the most significant may be viewed as flaws in the technique of the tale. Fitzgerald chose a third-person limited point of view to tell the story, and the lapses, few as they are, are telling. All of the lapses - the shifts from limited to omniscient - are concerned with the Peters. The three most important ones directly involve Marion:

She had built up all her fear of life into one wall and faced it toward him.

Marion shuddered suddenly; part of her saw that Charlie's feet were planted on the earth now, and her own maternal feeling recognized the naturalness of his desire; but she had lived for a long time with a prejudice - a prejudice founded on a curious disbelief in her sister's happiness, and which, in the shock of one terrible night, had turned to hatred for him. It had all happened at a point in her life where the discouragement of ill health and adverse circumstances made it necessary for her to believe in tangible villainy and a tangible villain.

Then, in the flatness that followed her outburst, she saw him plainly and she knew he had somehow arrived at control over the situation. Glancing at her husband, she found no help from him, and as abruptly as if it were a matter of no importance, she threw up the sponge.

In a way these passages are indeed flaws. Certainly a craftsman like Henry James, whose meanings so much depend on careful control of point of view, would not have allowed them to pass. But Fitzgerald, as much a conscious artist as he was, as in the excellent handling of such matters in *The Great Gatsby,* for instance, did let them pass because, I think, perhaps he might have been too involved in the problems of this tale, as he was not in *Gatsby.* There is the possibility that these few passages can be read as consistent with a limited third-person point of view and that these were indeed Charlie's reactions to the situation.

But what these flaws may represent is Charlie's attempt to somehow put himself in a position to account for the (subconscious) terrors that were plaguing him on this return to Babylon. All three of these cited passages are explanations of the sources of Marion's hostility and her resignation in the face of Charlie's apparent renovation. Charlie is convinced that Marion has seen that he is a changed man. But it becomes more and more clear as we examine the story that he himself was by no means convinced.

Aside from the early action of leaving the Peters' address for Duncan Schaeffer at the bar - and Charlie's subsequent denial of any knowledge of how Duncan could have found it out - we need examine in some detail what Charlie does and says through the story to understand just how completely he is caught between the psychologically necessary self-delusion that he is somehow blameless and changed, and the deeper recognition of his own guilt.

Charlie's pose, once again, is that of the reformed alcoholic, allowing himself one drink a day to prove to himself he doesn't need it. "I'm going slow these days," he tells Alix at the beginning. "I've stuck to it for over a year and a half now." The reassurance seems to ring true - it has been a long time. But in the way that he tells himself he can face and beat alcohol, he hasn't allowed himself to try to face and beat the deeper problems. He lives in Prague, adding to Alix, "They don't know about me down there." The dream world of escape, a foreign land where maybe Charlie too, doesn't know about himself. He is cooling it - going slow these days - even the taxi horns play the opening bars of *Le Plus que Lent.*

The Peters' home reminds Charlie of what he has lost. It "was warm and comfortably American." He responds inwardly to the intimacy and comfort of the children in the house, but his outward reaction, while holding his daughter close to him, is to boast to the Peters about how well he himself is doing. He has more money than he'd ever had before. But he cuts it off when he sees "a faint restiveness in Lincoln's eye." His defensive opening had been wrong, he sees, but still he persists. He boasts also about the past: "We were a sort of royalty, almost infallible, with a sort of magic around us.'" And twice in three lines he repeats, "'I take one drink every afternoon. . . ."

In one way Charlie is ready to admit to himself - and others - that he has a large burden of blame to carry, but too often this admission is qualified with either a denial, a shifting, or a sharing of the blame. As he looks at his daughter he silently hopes that she doesn't "combine the traits of both [Charlie and Helen] that had brought them to disaster." In his lyrical reminiscences of the past in Paris, especially about the money squandered, he tries to convince and justify himself: "But it hadn't been given for nothing." Hadn't it? The next passage is really quite confused, and although it sounds meaningful, in reality it is a pastiche of attempted self-justification and escape from responsibility:

It had been given, even the most wildly squandered sum, as an offering to destiny that he might not remember the things most worth remembering, the things that now he would always remember - his child taken from his control, his wife escaped to a grave in Vermont.

He thinks about Honoria being "taken from his control," not that "he had lost the right to her control." His wife has not "died," but has "escaped." The last part of the sentence essentially contradicts and yet reinforces the first part.

His encounters with Duncan and Lorraine demonstrate much the same kind of ineffectual self-justification: "As always, he felt Lorraine's passionate, provocative attraction, but his own rhythm was different now." After they leave the restaurant where he had been dining with Honoria, Charlie tries to separate himself from Duncan and Lorraine:

They liked him because he was functioning, because he was serious; they wanted to see him, because he was stronger than they were now, because they wanted to draw a certain sustenance from his strength.

How do we understand this in terms of his later desire to get "Lincoln out of his rut at the bank?" We can't because of Charlie's inability to admit consciously the distorted state of his mind. Once again, it is not a conflict between the past and present, between Charlie Wales and Charles J. Wales of Prague, but between Charlie and his guilt. Charles J. Wales does not really exist, except in Charlie's limited perception.

Back at the Peters' on the evening of that first encounter with these specters from the past, he proposes that he take Honoria back with him to Prague. He again boasts about his position and how well he is prepared to care for the girl, but he knows what he is in for - and in a way he is demanding to be punished, but he will put on an act for the Peters': "if he modulated his inevitable resentment to the chastened attitude of the reformed sinner, he might win his point in the end." But Charlie doesn't really know what his point is.

Marion, hurt and ill herself, pushes him to further self-justification: "You know I never did drink heavily until I gave up business and came over here with nothing to do. Then Helen and I began to run around with - ." He is cut short, but he can't help but bring Helen into it. When Marion blames him for being in a sanitarium while Helen was dying, "He had no answer." Marion pushed him further. "Charlie gripped the sides of the chair. This was more difficult than he expected; he wanted to launch out into a long expostulation and explanation, but he only said: "The night I locked her out - ."

When Marion asks him why he hadn't thought about what he had done before, and the damage he had caused to Honoria and himself, he again refuses to admit to the full blame:

"I suppose I did, from time to time, but Helen and I were getting along badly. When I consented to the guardianship, I was flat on my back in a sanitarium and the market had cleaned me out. I knew I'd acted badly, and I thought if it would bring any peace to Helen, I'd agree to anything. But now it's different. I'm functioning, I'm behaving damn well, so far as - ."

His guilt at the damage he'd done to Helen is further reflected in the fear of what his daughter might learn about him: "sooner or later it would come out, in a word here, a shake of the head there, and some of that distrust would be irrevocably implanted in Honoria."

Marion hits Charlie hardest when she verbalizes the real and deepest source of Charlie's guilt: "How much you were responsible for Helen's death, I don't know. It's something you'll have to square with your own conscience." And this is just what Charlie can't do. "An electric current of agony surged through him. . . ." But his only outward response, after Lincoln's attempt to defend him, is, "Helen died of heart trouble." There is no other answer Charlie can give, for to admit consciously, even for an instant that he might really have been to blame for Helen's death might permit him to face his guilt and thus enable him to start the cleansing process that might lead back towards balance.

In the reverie of Helen that follows the bitter scene ending with Marion's agreeing to return Honoria, we find evidence of his inability to admit to his blame. "The image of Helen haunted him. Helen whom he had loved so until they had senselessly begun to abuse each other's love, tear it into shreds." He excuses himself again for the events of the night he had locked her out. "When he arrived home alone he turned the key in the lock in wild anger. How could he know she would arrive an hour later alone, that there would be a snowstorm in which she wandered about in slippers, too confused to find a taxi?" The final scene of the vision of Helen that night is again part of his ambivalent attempt and refusal to find expiation. Helen seems to comfort him with tenderness and forgiveness, except that as she swings faster and faster the forgiveness is not complete: "at the end he could not hear clearly all that she said," leaving him to delude himself into half-believing the closing words of the story about Helen forgiving him.

The remaining two sections of the story, IV and V, reinforce what has gone before. Further self-delusions of himself as cured, even a garbled version of how best to raise a daughter:

The present was the thing - work to do, and someone to love. But not to love too much, for he knew the injury that a father can do to a daughter or a mother to a son by attaching them too closely: afterward, out in the world, the child would seek in the marriage partner the same blind tenderness and, failing probably to find it, turn against love and life.

This is just the kind of distortion that Charlie's mind would drive him to. Certainly there is a base in Freudian psychology for what he says, but only in his conscious rationalization of "not to love too much," can Charlie make sense out of his own inability to love fully and completely. He is too warped to see that the only love worth having or giving is one without reservations and limits.

Reference has been made in footnotes to some of the changes in the above passages between the 1931 and 1935 versions of the story. Two of the most significant changes between the two printed versions of the story occur in part IV. Both versions open with Charlie leaving the address of the Peters' with the bartender to give to Duncan Schaeffer. Lorraine's later message reaches Charlie by different means in the two stories. In the 1931 version:

Back at his hotel, Charlie took from his pocket a *pneumatique* that Lincoln had given him at luncheon. It had been redirected by Paul from the hotel bar.

In the final version:

Back at his hotel, Charlie found a *pneumatique* that had been redirected from the Ritz bar where Charlie had left his address for the purpose of finding a certain man.

It's likely that part of the confusion results from an oversight of Fitzgerald's in revising the manuscript. But the confusion here may also be the result of Fitzgerald's intention to emphasize that Charlie was responsible for the appearance of Duncan and Lorraine at the Peters'. The "certain man" in 1935 is still Duncan at the beginning of the story. And

further, that if Lincoln had given him the message, as in the earlier version, Lincoln also would have known that Charlie had given out the address, and Charlie's denial would have been seen immediately as a lie. It was important that Charlie be able to continue his self-delusion without any real fear that Lincoln would know that Charlie was responsible.

Another important change is in Lorraine's invitation to Charlie after she and Duncan have barged in at the Peters': "Come on out to dinner. Be yourself, Charlie. Come on," reads the 1931 version. The final draft: "Come and dine. Sure your cousins won' mine. See you so sel'om. Or solemn." In the *TAR* version Lorraine is quite drunk, obviously intended to make Marion even angrier than in the magazine version. But Fitzgerald has cut the line, "Be yourself, Charlie." It is too obvious to Lorraine in that early version that Charlie is still Charlie, but more important, it is too obvious to Charlie that he is still what he was.

The ghastly scene at the Peters' ends with Charlie getting what he was begging for subconsciously all along - Marion's rejection of his plea for Honoria. Before Charlie leaves he lies - consciously or not - to Lincoln: "I wish you'd explain to her [Marion] I never dreamed these people would come here. I'm just as sore as you are."

Charlie cannot make amends, cannot "conciliate something," as he puts it, and the story ends on a note of almost total despair. It is not by accident that his thoughts turn back to money and his imagination of the power of money. He reflects that "the snow of twenty-nine wasn't real snow. If you didn't want it to be snow, you just paid some money." Charlie hasn't been able to deal in love, but he has been able to handle money and the things money can produce. He still isn't convinced that the two are not equal,

nor can he admit to himself the possibility that the main source of his troubles was his inability to love and that his present guilt feelings stem directly from that source. So he will turn back to the new old ways and instead of dealing with people, deal with things. "There wasn't much he could do now except send Honoria some things; he would send her a lot of things tomorrow. He thought rather angrily that this was just money - he had given so many people money. . . ." And that's all he had given.

In the tormented inner world of Charlie Wales, the world where God could not exist and therefore not punish, and where the individual retains, if not a sense of sin, at least a sense of guilt, we find the real conflict. "Babylon Revisited" is not a story about the inability of the world to forgive and forget, or even about a man drawn back to the past and therefore unable to come to terms with the present. It is a story about self destruction, about the human mind's ability to delude itself into thinking that what it does is based on logic and reason. The story ends with only the promise of emptiness to come in Charlie's life; it ends with the lie that may lead Charlie to destruction: "He was absolutely sure Helen wouldn't have wanted him to be so alone."

Source: David Toor, "Guilt and Retribution in 'Babylon Revisited'," in *Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual 1973,* edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli and C. E. Frazer Clark, Jr., Microcard Editions Books, 1974, pp. 155-64.

Critical Essay #5

In the following essay, Staley presents his interpretation of the motif of time in the story, focusing on the way the past constantly impinges upon present events.

[Immanuel] Kant wrote that time is the most characteristic mode of our experience, and, as Hans Myerhoff has pointed out [in *Time and Literature,* 1955], "It is more general than space, because it applies to the inner world of impressions, emotions and ideas for which no spatial order can be given." Modern fiction is preoccupied with the concept of time; [Henri] Bergson's concept of *la duree realle* and [Marcel] Proust's *la memoire involontaire* have of course, exerted a large influence on fiction; in fact their indirect influence has been enormous. Modern writers since Bergson and Proust have become increasingly aware of the implications of time in the structure of their fiction. F. Scott Fitzgerald was particularly preoccupied with the forces of time. His personal life, together with his reading, gave him a profound sense of the importance of time with regard to self.

Fitzgerald felt the ravages of time especially in his own life, and a great deal of his fiction touches on this theme. He was less inward in his treatment of time than either Joyce or Thomas Wolfe, but there is in his fiction a sense of the unity of past and present; the past is irrevocable because it brings about the reality of the present. An understanding of how Fitzgerald's concept of time informs his fiction can be illustrated by an analysis of his famous short story "Babylon Revisited." The plot of this story moves directly through time and space, and its movement conveys its theme.

The theme of "Babylon Revisited" suggests that the past and the future meet in the present; moreover, Fitzgerald also dramatically expresses Bergson's idea that duration is the continuous progress of the past which forces into the future. In the story, Charlie Wales relives the disastrous events of his past in a few days, and he realizes in the brilliant final scene in the Ritz Bar that time is irreversible, that the empty glass in front of him is the emptiness of his whole life, past, present, and future. At the beginning of the story, Charlie intends to shuck away the memory of his past through the recovery of his lost child, but the actuality of the past has nullified this prospect from the first.

The very title of the story suggests the movement of time and space. The scene is set in the modern city along the Seine, but we are intended to recall the ancient city on the banks of the Euphrates. Charlie Wales returns to Paris in order to claim his daughter and thus give meaning and purpose to his life. But just as Charlie has changed in the three years since he left Paris, so, too, has the world he left. In the opening scene in the Ritz Bar he inquires about his former friends, but finds they have scattered, to Switzerland, to America. He notices a group of "strident queens" in the corner and is depressed because he realizes that ". . . they go on forever" and are not affected by time.

Throughout Part I of the story Charlie is continually trying to turn back the clock. During dinner at the Peters' he looks across at Honoria and feels that ". . . he wanted to jump

back a whole generation." As he walks through the Montmartre district after dinner, he recalls his dissipated life in Paris, and he realizes that his bar hopping was "an increase of paying for the privilege of slower and slower motion." As he wanders the streets of Paris, Charlie Wales' attitude toward time is that of something lost. Throughout Part I all the references to time are to the past; the hope for the future remains in the background.

There is a shift of emphasis in time as Part II opens. Charlie wants to forget the horrors of the past as he has lunch with Honoria. He deliberately chooses a restaurant that is "not reminiscent of champagne dinners and long luncheons that began at two and ended in a blurred vague twilight." Today is to be a special day; today is to be isolated into the present; but this is impossible, for out of that twilight world of the past "sudden ghosts" emerge. Two of the people who helped him to "make months into days" confront him in the restaurant, and the past impinges on the present, and also foreshadows its impingement on the future.

In this scene present, past and future fuse. Both past and future collide as Honoria, a symbol of the future, meets Lorraine and Duncan, symbols of the lurking past. This scene in which the past and future meet in the present also foreshadows the climax of the story in Part IV, when Lorraine and Duncan invade the Peters' home and in so doing both symbolically and literally destroy the future.

Part II opens at noon when the sun is high in the air and the day is full of expectation for Charlie, but it ends as Charlie stands outside in the dark street and looks up at Honoria as she blows him a kiss ". . . out into the night." This scene also recalls the impossibility of Gatsby's dream illustrated as he stands outside in the darkness waiting for Daisy following the automobile accident in *The Great Gatsby.*

In Part III Charlie is aware that he will have to submit to Marion's verbal beating in order to get Honoria back. "It would last an hour or two hours. . . ." But what is two hours in relation to a lifetime? The scene with Marion and Lincoln begins with Charlie's confidence quite high, but the desperateness of his situation shows through the conversation. He says to Marion: "'But if we wait much longer I'll lose Honoria's childhood and my chance for a home.'" Charlie leaves the Peters' home and crosses through the Paris streets. With the question of Honoria's coming with him still unresolved he recalls again his past and is haunted by the image of his dead wife as he crosses the Seine, the same Seine that he crossed many times three years before with his wife Helen. His spirits rise and the Seine seems fresh and new to him. The opposition of present and past is visually reinforced by the black dress that Marion wears in the present and by the white dress that Helen has on as she swings ". . . faster and faster all the time." But this is the Helen that emerges in a dream, out of relation with time. But even in the dream, time is present in the symbol of the pendulum swinging and swinging; Helen becomes the pendulum of time herself. Dreams momentarily take the burdens of time from Charlie; they offer him an escape from the present, distort the past, and belie the future.

Charlie wakes up to another "bright, crisp day" as Part IV of the story opens. Separating past and present for a moment, Charlie looks to the future, believing for an instant that the past doesn't determine the future: "He made plans, vistas, futures for Honoria and himself." But this glimpse into the future is quickly thwarted by a glance backward at past visions: "Suddenly he grew sad, remembering all the plans he and Helen had made." Seeing the future as not quite real and the past as a crushed dream, Charlie thinks of the present: "The present was the thing— work to do and someone to love."

Each time Charlie's future with Honoria seems temporarily possible the past quickly snuffs out the hope. After having lunch with Lincoln, he returns to his hotel room to find a note from Lorraine. In the note Lorraine recalls that "crazy spring" when she and Charlie stole a butcher's tricycle. This incident again brings Charlie back to that past which in retrospect was a nightmare. Out of his feeling of repugnance for the past, symbolized in Lorraine, he quickly turns to thoughts of the future, symbolized by Honoria.

At five o'clock Charlie arrives at the Peters' and his dreams of the future seem realized; he seems to have finally defeated the past. But the final tension of past and present in the story comes to a climax. Duncan and Lorraine suddenly interrupt the discussion of plans concerning Honoria. These "blurred, angry faces" from the past emerge to destroy the future forever. "Charlie came closer to them, as if to force them backward down the corridor." It was impossible for Charlie to blot out the past. After Lorraine and Duncan leave, Charlie returns to the salon to see Lincoln "swinging Honoria back and forth like a pendulum from side to side." Whether Charlie realizes it or not, this action is visual testimony that time has placed Honoria in the hands of the Peters. Charlie leaves the house knowing full well that he is not to get Honoria; the past has spoiled the present and determined the future.

The final irony of Charlie's life is brought out in the final section of the story, Part V, which is set again in the Ritz Bar where the story opened. Paul, the bartender, points out the irony unknowingly when he says, "'It's a great change. . .' ." Charlie's mind goes back to the past again, but now he sees himself in the eternal present, alone. He thinks back to a fixed period of time, the Wall Street crash, and then to the time just before that when the snow wasn't real snow. "If you didn't want it to be snow, you just paid some money." To escape from the past Charlie tried to make a life for himself and Honoria, but now he must be concerned with only the hollow thought of buying her something. As the story ends, he must escape time and reality and dream again of Helen, who he is sure "wouldn't have wanted him to be so alone." Time and its ravages have left Charlie suspended in time with a nightmare for a past, an empty whiskey glass for a present, and a future full of loneliness.

Source: Thomas F. Staley, "Time and Structure in Fitzgerald's 'Babylon Revisited'," in *Modern Fiction Studies,* Vol. X, No. 1, Winter, 1964-65, pp. 386-88.

Adaptations

"Babylon Revisited" was adapted as the film *The Last Time I Saw Paris* by director Richard Brooks, starring Elizabeth Taylor, Van Johnson, Walter Pidgeon, Donna Reed, Eva Gabor, and Roger Moore, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1954; available from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

"Babylon Revisited" was produced as an audio book, *Babylon Revisited and Other Stories*, read by Alexander Scourby, Listening Library, 1985; distributed by Newman Communications Corporation.

Topics for Further Study

Research the lives of the American expatriate literary community in Europe in the 1920s, focusing on such figures as Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Gertrude Stein. Explore the factors that compelled these American writers to live overseas.

On a map of Paris, trace Charlie's travels through Paris in "Babylon Revisited." Try to locate such Parisian landmarks as the Hotel Ritz, Montmartre, the Place de la Concorde, the Place Blanche, the Etoile, and the Left Bank as well as such thoroughfares as the rue Palatine, boulevard des Capucines, rue Pigalle, rue Saint-Honore, avenue de l'Opera, and rue Bonaparte.

Research the history of the boom years of the American stock market in the 1920s and the crash of October, 1929. Explore the causes and effects of the crash and explain why such a crash could or could not occur again.

Explore the concept of legal guardianship of children and the laws surrounding child custody. Explore the factors courts weigh when deciding to award or strip parents of legal custody of a child.

In "Babylon Revisited" Fitzgerald uses several French words and phrases to create a sense of place for the story's setting in Paris. Three of these words, *chasseur, bistro* and *brasserie,* have been assimilated into the English language. Find the definitions for these words in an English dictionary. Find ten other French words used by Fitzgerald in the story that are now part of the English language.

Compare and Contrast

1930s: On October 28, 1929, the stock market loses 12.8 percent of its value. The event, dubbed "Black Thursday" results in widespread panic, numerous bank failures, and precipitates the great depression, which lasts throughout the 1930s.

1997: On October 27, the stock market loses 7.2 percent of its value, with the biggest one-day point loss in history. Computers automatically shut down the market to prevent panic. Despite the shocking decline, caused by unstable Asian markets, the New York Stock Exchange rebounds significantly in the next day of trading.

1930s: Alcoholism is not a well-understood disease. Individuals deal with the condition to the best of their own ability. Alcoholics Anonymous, the first substantial effort to address the problem, is organized by Bill Wilson in New York City in 1935. The program is a self-help fellowship designed to empower alcoholics to control their drinking habits.

1990s: Alcoholics Anonymous has more than 30,000 local groups in 90 countries and has an estimated membership of more than one million. Spiritual values are emphasized as a means to recovery.

1930s: Josephine Baker is the toast of Paris. After leaving the United States for what she says is a more hospitable culture, she becomes one of the most popular entertainers in France. After starring in the *Folies Bergere*, she opens her own nightclub and continues to perform until her death in 1974.

1990s: In 1991, Lynn Whitfield stars in the film *The Josephine Baker Story,* which outlines the legend's rise from her impoverished beginnings in St. Louis near the turn of the century to her rise to fame and her involvement with many issues, including children's welfare and the U.S. civil rights movement.

What Do I Read Next?

Among the many Fitzgerald biographies, Matthew J. Bruccoli's *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur* (1981) remains the definitive treatment of the author's life. Bruccoli argues that it was Fitzgerald's conflicted attitudes, most notably his love/ hate relationship with the rich, as much as his heavy drinking and marriage troubles that prevented him from devoting more of his creative energies to his work.

The Great Gatsby (1925) has proved to be Fitzgerald's most popular novel, and some critics have claimed that it may well be the finest American novel ever written. In it, Fitzgerald lyrically recounts the story of bootlegger and idealist Jay Gatsby's dream of rekindling his relationship with Daisy Fay, his former flame, and the tragic consequences of an automobile accident for which Gatsby takes the blame.

In his posthumously published memoir *A Moveable Feast* (1964), novelist Ernest Hemingway describes his experiences among the American literary expatriates in Paris during the early 1920s, including Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound,

Ford Madox Ford, and Fitzgerald. The volume paints a vivid and impressionistic image of the expatriates' Paris of "Babylon Revisited" and includes an extended, if unflattering, portrait of Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda.

The Day of the Locust (1939) by Nathanial West explores the seamy world of the early Hollywood studios, where Fitzgerald wrote screenplays in the 1930s. West explores the vices of all the Californian subcultures of the era, in a book that has come to define misguided attempts to attain the American Dream.

The Wild Party (1928) by Joseph Moncure March is an epic poem about the downfall of a vaudeville dancer. The account epitomizes the Jazz Age.

Man Ray's Paris Portraits 1921-1939 is a collection of photographs by artist Man Ray, an American who moved to Paris in the early 1920s and helped found the Dadist and Surrealist art movements. His photographs capture the mood of the artists and writers in residence in Paris during the 1920s and 1930s.

Further Study

Gallo, Rose Adrienne. *F. Scott Fitzgerald,* Modern Literature Monographs, Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1978, pp. 101-5.

Gallo argues that Fitzgerald hints that Charlie has not completely rejected his past alcoholic life and praises Fitzgerald's "brilliant evocation of place."

Lehan, Richard. "The Romantic Self and the Uses of Place in the Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald," in *The Short Stories of F.*

Scott Fitzgerald: New Approaches in Criticism, edited by Jackson R. Bryer, University of Wisconsin Press, 1982, pp. 3-21.

Lehan emphasizes Fitzgerald's fusion of individual experience and the larger "spirit of the times" in the story. Charlie's dissipation is dramatized as being inseparable from the dissipation of his age, and the "note of loss" that surrounds Charlie's predicament at the story's conclusion reflects Fitzgerald's theme throughout his fiction that his protagonists' tragedies reflect the larger events of society around them.

Mangum, Bryant. "F. Scott Fitzgerald," in *Critical Survey of Short Fiction,* pp. 858-66.

Mangum argues that in "Babylon Revisited" Fitzgerald strikes a compromise between the reader's feeling that Marion unfairly persecuted Charlie and the reader's sense that Charlie should not escape the consequences of his pre-crash irresponsibility. Fitzgerald's compromise is to have Marion retain Honoria, but give Charlie the hope that at some point in the future he can make another attempt to regain custody of his daughter. Mangum sees the story as a workshop for *Tender Is the Night,* because it successfully dramatizes the father-daughter relationship and creates a "mythic level" in which everything conspires to drive Charlie into "exile" from the "fallen" city of Paris.

Prigozi, Ruth. "Fitzgerald's Short Stories and the Depression: An Artistic Crisis," in *The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald: New Approaches in Criticism,* edited by Jackson R. Bryer, University of Wisconsin Press, 1982, pp. 111-26.

Prigozi claims that "Babylon Revisited" showcases the "nuanced and elliptical" style of Fitzgerald's "masterpieces," in which he employs a sophisticated approach to scene and atmosphere to explore the themes of struggle, responsibility for others, professionalism, and "above all . . . that elusive trait, character."

Staley, Thomas F. "Time and Structure in Fitzgerald's 'Babylon Revisited.'" *Modern Fiction Studies,* Vol. 10, No. 1,Winter, 1964-65, pp. 386-88.

Analyzes the construction of the story.

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Approaches in Criticism, edited by Jackson R. Bryer, pp. 269-77. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982.

Bruccoli, Matthew J. *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur,* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981, pp. 308-09.

Eble, Kenneth E. "Touches of Disaster: Alcoholism and Mental Illness in Fitzgerald's Short Stories," in *The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald: New Approaches in Criticism,* edited by Jackson R. Bryer, University of Wisconsin Press, 1982, pp. 39- 52.

Galbraith, John Kenneth. *The Great Crash: 1929,* Houghton Mifflin, 1961.

Toor, David. "Guilt and Retribution in 'Babylon Revisited.'" In *Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual 1973,* edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli and C. E. Frazer Clark, Jr., pp. 155-64. Washington, D.C.: Microcard Editions Books, 1974.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, SSfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SSfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SSfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in SSfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by SSfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

SSfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Short Stories for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Short Stories for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from SSfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from SSfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Short Stories for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Short Stories for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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