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**Boats Against the Current:**  
**A Philosophy of Time in F. Scott Fitzgerald's Works**

**Kazuhiro Matsuura**

**Boats Against the Current:  
A Philosophy of Time in F. Scott Fitzgerald's Works**

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## Introduction

In his works, F. Scott Fitzgerald often employs time as one of his significant motifs. Apart from the irrecoverability of Jay Gatsby's relationship with Daisy, one could imagine Dexter Green's lament that he has lost his youth in "Winter Dreams," Charlie Wales's psychological debt to his deceased wife in "Babylon Revisited," or the protagonist's longing to recover his successful past in *The Pat Hobby Stories*—all of which analyze the characters' attitudes to their own past, or, in broad terms, their involvement with the nature of time. This thesis aims to reveal that F. Scott Fitzgerald's commitment to time stems from his obsession with the dead, and that his works are the fruition of contemplation on the matter. That is to say, for Fitzgerald, writing fiction was an attempt to release himself from the obsession; thus, in his works he employed his time philosophy as his literary theme. First, to examine the theme, I shall analyze his stories and novels as comprehensively as possible on the matter of time, because the theme permeates all of his works. Second, picking up on his hints in the short stories and by analyzing his novels (mainly, *The Great Gatsby*), we will focus on how he tried to heal and release himself from his problem with the past by inventing his philosophy of time.

Fitzgerald's works seem to focus on examining the function of the past—in other words, Jay Gatsby's famous attempt to "repeat the



past” is reflected in most of his fiction. Besides, the past and the dead are closely connected. Thus in analyzing the past in his works, I will also argue about the dead and gone, which seem to haunt Fitzgerald’s psychology. I argue that, to overcome the obsession, the author treats time not in a conventional manner but in his own way. Among recent Fitzgerald studies, critics have focused on time in his works.<sup>1</sup> Several studies recognize “repeating the past” or his obsession about the past from the viewpoint of nostalgia.<sup>2</sup> For example, Niklas Salmose discusses that “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* is a novel about nostalgia; it explores themes such as the impossibilities of recapturing the past, the role of myths in our lives, the shattered dreams of our youth, and the unrealized ambitions of the founders of America” (67). Also, Marius Bewley states about *The Great Gatsby* that the protagonist’s very hope to repeat the past inevitably involves him in the obsession of it:

Fitzgerald dramatizes Gatsby’s symbolic role. The American dream, stretched between a golden past and a golden future, is always betrayed by a desolate present—a moment of fruit rinds and discarded favors and crushed flowers. Imprisoned in his present, Gatsby belongs even more to the past than to the future. His aspirations have been rehearsed, and his tragedy suffered, by all the generations of Americans who have gone before. His sense

of the future, of the possibilities of life, he has learned  
from the dead. (22)

In this way, Bewley argues that *Gatsby* is the symbol of failed dreams and that it comprises Fitzgerald's sense of future. However, it seems that Bewley's argument remains in the range of time in a general sense, and it does not consider the possibility that Fitzgerald deviated from (or went beyond) the commonplace concept of time in his fiction. Readings like Bewley's seem to have been the trend of Fitzgerald criticism (see note 1). However, I would like to pursue the other possibility that Fitzgerald's concept of time is not limited to a general sense, and that critics need to consider the particularity of time in Fitzgerald's fiction.<sup>3</sup>

In general, time is perceived through a clock, but philosophical thoughts had already claimed the other way of perceiving time in Fitzgerald's era. Fitzgerald's contemporary philosopher, Henri Bergson, for example, revealed that other than the objective, regular, and linear flow of time that a clock represents, there exists time that he calls "pure duration." According to Bergson, it is perceived through a person's consciousness, not through any outward materials: "Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states . . . In a word, pure duration might well be nothing but a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another, without precise

outlines, without any tendency to externalize themselves in relation to one another, without any affiliation with number: it would be pure heterogeneity” (100-104). As Bergson writes, “pure duration”—a state or way of perceiving time—relates to “our conscious states.” Other than the regular and objective flow of time, one could assume the flow of time in one’s own consciousness that one’s ego creates. Considering Bergson’s argument and the seemingly wide-spread knowledge about perception of time in that period (which Bergson represents), it is not implausible that Fitzgerald constituted or reflected his own way of perceiving time in his fiction.<sup>4</sup>

Fitzgerald writes about time and its particularity in connection with death and mourning. In the first place, Fitzgerald is known to have been motivated to be a writer by his late sisters, who had passed away before he was born.<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Schiff discusses that “Fitzgerald wrote about a constellation of various mourning patterns from his childhood: his parents’ alternate preoccupation with grief or his two elder sisters and displacement of their grief onto him, behavior that in turn encouraged his sense of maternal and paternal loss, but also his identification with their grief. Furthermore, these circumstances contributed to his literary insights into cultural mourning norms.

(13). If Schiff’s claim is pertinent, it could also be said that the fundamental basis of Fitzgerald’s consciousness as a writer is constituted of absence and an unknowable past, the past that stays forever as a potentiality that could have been. Although Fitzgerald

does not write directly about his deceased sisters, similar deaths and absences can be observed in his fiction. In “Winter Dreams,” for example, Dexter Green loses Judy Jones as his girlfriend, whose absence is at the core of the story; or, the psychology of Charlie Wales in “Babylon Revisited” is greatly affected by his dead and absent wife. These characters have an imagination of the dead or the lost while they understand they are shadows of the past. Unlike Bergson who writes that “the psychical state . . . that I call my present, must be both a perception of the immediate past and a determination of the immediate future” (89), Fitzgerald perceives his own past as something to mourn. Yet it is blank and absent; thus he lacks even an “immediate past,” and possesses only a fragile—though flexible—sense of the present state.

This attitude toward time seems to originate from the course of Fitzgerald’s own life, which is full of loss and mourning, including the deaths of his sisters, to which I referred earlier. Mitchell Breitwieser’s *National Melancholy: Mourning and Opportunity in Classic American Literature* and Schiff’s *Ashes to Ashes: Mourning and Social Difference in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Fiction* are representative works that analyze Fitzgerald’s life and his involvement with loss. Breitwieser in particular regards loss as something that one cannot realize, or as something that should be borne by another person who entrusted it to him.

If, as Sigmund Freud suggests, the work of mourning lies in incremental construction in the conscious memory of an adequate representation of the lost thing, a representation that delineates a presenter who survives, then the inheritor of mourning is doomed to an inability to mourn—a true inability, not a deep or insurmountable unwillingness.

This is what the Mitscherlichs [Alexander, a psychoanalyst] described—not because the requisite knowledge is too awful but because it is nonexistent. It is not an inability for want of trying, but in fact trying all the more intensely, in a series of attempted approximations of the lost object in the imagination, in a writer's life devoted to the pursuit of what Nick Carraway supposes he hears in Gatsby's longing . . . (253-54)

Thus, Breitwieser recognizes the continuity between the analysis of mourning by psychologists and Nick Carraway's mourning for Jay Gatsby. Also, based on Schiff's argument that the loss of his sisters had a great influence on Fitzgerald as a writer, Breitwieser concludes: "Though he is unaware, or unwilling to be aware, of the steps of transmutation between the experience of one and the profoundest identity of another, Fitzgerald is convinced that his career begins in mourning, but not his own. Revisiting in memory the sites of his own losses will not dissolve the spell of trauma because the spell was cast three months before his own power to lose began:

he is a string of pronouns with no noun to anchor them” (248).

Breitwieser further writes that an important thing is “rather than a lost thing, a thing never had, and therefore a sense of lacking without the ability to know what it is that is lacked” (253). In this thesis, I argue that the “sense of lacking” and the absence of the object to mourn constructs the core of Fitzgerald’s works, and that the resulting fragility and flexibility of characters’ sense of time are the characteristics of his fiction. In so doing, unlike Breitwieser and Schiff who adhere mainly to the analysis of Fitzgerald’s biography, I hope to show that his works are written based on that sense of time.

In chapter one I analyze Fitzgerald’s short stories, focusing on his treatment of time, especially of past time. The main works that I analyze in this chapter are “Babylon Revisited” and “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button,” although I mention related works occasionally. Each short story has a time-related theme such as the past, the future, or the dead. In “Babylon Revisited,” Fitzgerald describes the past through the protagonist’s late wife, and the future through his daughter. In “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button,” Fitzgerald contemplates time more directly, by presenting the child who is born as an old man and becomes young as he grows older. By reversing time in the protagonist’s body, Fitzgerald makes it clear that his central concern is time. In these stories, the dead play a significant role as the symbol of the past that cannot be recovered; in other words, the dead represent the separation of the living from the

present. This chapter begins by focusing on the dead in the short works, and by analyzing his characters it seeks to reveal how they shape Fitzgerald's characteristic concept of time. At the end of this chapter, I also compare these stories with Fitzgerald's biography, which shows considerable similarities.

After confirming that the themes of the dead and the past can be observed in Fitzgerald's stories, chapter two explores the sense of loss that often stems from past guilt or remorse. In this chapter I examine "Winter Dreams," "Babylon Revisited," and again "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button." In addition to these short works, I partly examine *The Great Gatsby*, which has the same themes as the short works. Because Fitzgerald often writes short stories as a preparation for longer works, by examining the shorter works first one can follow Fitzgerald's flow of creative consciousness. In studying the short works, we see the characters' obsession caused by their inability to escape their past crises, while some of the other characters lose their past and thus wander in a rootless state in the present. Finally, this chapter again compares Fitzgerald's struggle with similar crises in his life with that of his characters, illuminating his theory of time as a state of mind necessary to cope with his past, or his fruition as a fiction writer.

In chapter three I will present a reading of Fitzgerald's novels from the viewpoint acquired from reading his short stories. I regard *The Great Gatsby* as an attainment of Fitzgerald's contemplation of

time, and I will try to reread the novel's famous statements such as "reserve all judgments" or "repeat the past" from the viewpoint of time. Finally, I will reveal the author's philosophy of time that is constructed from Fitzgerald's own experience and resulting contemplation of time. As I already described earlier in this introduction, the concept of time is different from clock time, and it is characteristic in its lack of the past as a firm foundation. Fitzgerald's world of fiction is the product of such fragile notion of time.



## Chapter I

### Fitzgerald and the Dead

#### 1.

#### The Hesitant Mourning in “Babylon Revisited”

##### 1. The Protagonist and Dead

In this section, I insist that an important concern for the protagonist in “Babylon Revisited” is a trauma related to the dead and the past. Although the story, on its surface, focuses on the protagonist’s sense of guilt over his dead wife, critics so far have not paid much attention to the protagonist’s suffering; instead, they have often focused on the protagonist’s money problems.<sup>6</sup> Cecil D. Eby tries to explain the story based on the principles of stock investment—specifically, short selling—and insists that the protagonist values money more than himself and his family value and that causes his tragedy. Eby examines a conversation between the protagonist Charlie Wales and the bartender. In this conversation, the bartender says to Charlie, “I heard that you lost a lot in the crash” and Charlie responds, “I did, but I lost everything I wanted in the boom.” The bartender then asks, “Selling short?” and Charlie answers, “Something like that” (Fitzgerald 222). Eby also suggests that Charlie’s mistake is “to underestimate or undervalue your worth,” and he continues, “To sell yourself short is, of course, to underestimate or undervalue your worth, to fail to come up to your

potential. In this sense, Charles has truly ‘sold himself short’ by having fallen into dissolute habits through earning and spending vast sums of money during the boom years” (Eby 176). Furthermore, according to Eby, “this *double entendre* is one of Fitzgerald’s verbal masterstrokes, for it compresses and combines the two essential themes of his story—economic as well as spiritual loss—into a single poignant exchange” (177). This explanation seems reasonable because the protagonist struggles with his past monetary troubles from the beginning of the story onward; he fails in stock investments and loses all his assets. However, this idea is not in itself enough to help us understand the story, because the protagonist eventually solves his monetary woes and even doubles his assets. Hence, in the end, he is free from all money-related worries yet cannot achieve his biggest goal: to regain custody of his daughter.<sup>7</sup>

In the previous introduction, I insisted that F. Scott Fitzgerald’s feelings of guilt regarding his dead sisters is based on his life experience. In his autobiographical short story “Author’s House,” the protagonist as a meta-author mentions that his dead sisters made him a writer:

“Not a bad cellar—as cellars go,” the author says. “You can’t see it very well and I can’t either—it’s mostly forgotten.” “What do you mean?” “It’s everything I’ve forgotten—all the complicated dark mixture of my youth

and infancy that made me a fiction writer instead of a fireman or a soldier.” (133-34)

As I mentioned in the previous introduction, Mitchell Breitwieser and Jonathan Schiff demonstrate that, like Fitzgerald, the fictional author of “Author’s House” never knew his sisters because they died before he was born. Consequently, the author feels the need to mourn their sisters but, because he does not know them, he does not have a clear image of the object of his mourning. This lack of object keeps him in a deadlock with the past, which I argue led him to describe the dead in his work obsessively. In this section, I will discuss the dead and mourning as depicted in “Babylon Revisited.” Charlie Wales, the protagonist, suffers from his past and the memory of his dead wife, which shows a resemblance with Fitzgerald, who wants to mourn the sisters but cannot because of his lack of their concrete image.

## 2. The Dead and Obsession

For Fitzgerald, it seems that the dead have a dualistic quality. That is to say, they do not exist among the living, yet they do in a state of emptiness. As his dead sisters represent, the dead do not exist, but they plead to be mourned. Fitzgerald remained entrapped by the dead and allowed them to inhabit his works. Fitzgerald calls this phenomenon open “wounds” (630) in “Babylon Revisited,” and it seems that this is one of the direct causes of his writing about the

dead lingering about characters. This chapter delves into how this issue consumed the author and attempts to reveal how it runs like a single thread throughout the short story “Babylon Revisited.” First, we shall discuss the work in detail with the help of biographical information on Fitzgerald, and then explore Fitzgerald’s obsession with the dead. This can reveal the world he created in his works and highlight the primal issue that gripped him as an author: his ceaseless obsession with the dead. This is simultaneously an issue of “mourning,” a way of treating the dead who do not exist now but plead to be mourned by the living.

In so doing, we assume that for Fitzgerald, “mourning” is an obsession parallel to that of the dead themselves. This is because some boundary is needed to distance oneself from those who have existed beyond the living and treat them as dead. Mourning works by creating borders between the living and dead. According to Freud, he stated in *Totem and Taboo*, that “mourning” exists as a ceremony for severing connections with the dead: “In other words, the savages never hide being afraid of the emergence or reappearance of dead spirits. They conduct various rituals to keep dead spirits away or drive them away (*Totem and Taboo and Other Works* 233).” That could be said to be the essential meaning of “mourning.” Although, for Fitzgerald and the protagonist of “Babylon Revisited,” mourning was not about driving away the dead, but the direct opposite. However, Freud’s idea of mourning as a ceremony to separate the dead from the

living provides important suggestions for considering the correlation between life and death in Fitzgerald's works because he shows that mourning is an important element in human psychology. Therefore, to embrace Freud is an effective way to understand the "relationship between the dead, living and mourning."

Incidentally, previous studies such as by Breitwieser and Schiff have investigated how the dead motivated Fitzgerald to be a writer and write his works. This fact suggests that it is almost impossible to exclude the issue of the dead for examining his literary themes. However, the previous studies I have introduced have been based mainly on biographical information on Fitzgerald, and have not been accompanied by a close examination of his works. It appears that past studies have not sufficiently discussed the author's obsession with mourning the dead.<sup>8</sup> Discussing how much trauma haunting Fitzgerald was expressed throughout his life's work, or how it drove him to write, may be inevitable when researching Fitzgerald, while such questions may simultaneously make it possible to delve more deeply into the author's trauma over the dead. Even in this context, "Babylon Revisited," which is the target of this section, may be considered as a work of particular interest. This is because the short story may first be understood by examining it against the readings that are acquired only through the author's biographical information.

### 3. Duality

First, this section focuses on the “duality” arising between Fitzgerald’s work and the author himself such as doubling his roles, works, characters, and ambivalent awareness about the dead.<sup>9</sup> Doing so allows a multifaceted examination of the author and the characters in his stories, which may result from how the different versions of “him” intersect. This simultaneously allows the living to contact with the reality depicted in Fitzgerald’s work. Thus, the purpose of this section is to show how Fitzgerald ended up creating his work.

As a representation of this duality, the protagonist Charlie Wales emphasizes the importance of inner “character”: “He [Charles Wales] believed in character; he wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character. Everything wore out” (619). As Ruth Prigozy argues, Fitzgerald was also at the time an adherent of the concept of “character.”

Fitzgerald felt that the 1920s had exacted a national penalty and that those who were able to face the grim reality of their present lives, to retain their capacity to work and to perform their required tasks professionally would ultimately survive, not only economically but psychically. Therefore, many stories from this period deal with struggle, with responsibility for others, with professionalism, and above all with that elusive trait,

character, which Charlie Wales believed in so utterly.

(116)

Indeed, in Charlie's words, who spent the wealth he made from the unprecedented economic boom and skyrocketing stock prices on destructive debauchery and then lost everything due to the subsequent stock market crash, the importance of inner character transcending practical value appears paradoxically resonant. Additionally, the short essay "Salesmanship in the Champs-Elysees," written at the same time, depicts a man who does not sell cars to rich Americans as lacking "character" (117), although, paradoxically, he is eager to buy a car. These depictions seem to include criticism of overvaluing money.

He [a rich American] turned and went out suddenly, and I stood looking after the impolite. However, thinking to profit himself he is in the end deceived, because Mr. Legoupy, the seller next door, will no more sell him without making a proper study of his sincerity and his character and the extent of his desire for the car than I. The impolite will end himself by being able to get no car at all. (117)

In "Babylon Revisited," the same seesawing created a problematic "duality" for Charlie, and that bothered him. In the story, Charlie thinks that he might have to settle his past accumulated acts with money: "He thought rather angrily that this

was just money—he had given so many people money. . . . He would come back some day; they couldn't make him pay forever" (633).

Furthermore, as Matthew J Bruccoli shows, Charlie cannot deny that the technical terms for "love and loyalty" (306) of family and stock overlap. Charlie talks to a barman in the final scene of the story, in which he juxtaposes the family he lost with "short-selling," essentially a trading method aiming to reduce a stock's price.<sup>10</sup> Of course, he is talking about his past mistake that eventually led his wife to die out in the cold, and it may be interpreted to some degree that "short-selling" his family was something that happened sometime before. However, as Charlie's conversation with the barman unfolds, he does not appear to reject this metaphor regarding present circumstances completely. It may be read here that, for Charlie, the value of family could be argued based on financial value. From this perspective, he cannot let go of values centered around money or material possession after all because they are tied with his family, nor can he accept a view of such things unwillingly. This corresponds to David Cowart's argument that "Charlie is still unable to understand the limits of money" (18). Also, Bryan Sutton states that "in both works [*The Great Gatsby* and "Babylon Revisited"] the idea of accumulating money the 'wrong' way is part of the reason the protagonist is unable to achieve his dreams" (165), and he adds, "Both stories also contain similar images reinforcing the idea that the past is dead and cannot be revived" (166). According to Sutton, "Babylon



Revisited” is a story about money problems and past actions, which corresponds to my point that, for Charlie, the value of money and family are inseparable.

This “character” of Charlie’s, thinking that money—which could work as a method of recovering his child—is everything, may show that he is unable to stop clinging to the past values that cost him his family. Despite catching sight of the limitations of overvaluing money, he still appears to place a premium upon the idea. The duality that Charlie raises, of not leaning in one direction or the other, is something that Fitzgerald himself verifiably held.<sup>11</sup> According to John Irwin, Fitzgerald, like Charlie, also says that he had an ambiguous attitude toward his daughter. In the absence of his wife, Fitzgerald was required to act, as well as function, as the mother (at the time, his wife Zelda was already mentally unstable). Partially citing “Babylon Revisited,” Irwin characterizes Fitzgerald’s “duality” at the time as follows:

[Citing a passage from “Babylon Revisited”] This passage reflects Fitzgerald’s own realization that, with Zelda’s breakdown, he was increasingly going to have to stand between Zelda and their daughter, Scottie, between the erratic behavior of the mother and its possible effect on their daughter, that he would have to take on a buffering role very like that which his father had assumed in that his expanded, more intensive role in Scottie’s life might

attach his daughter too closely to him, that he might be tempted to spoil his daughter to make up for the absence or absent-mindedness of her mother, and that he must, therefore, guard against this by being more exacting about her upbringing. (208)

On the flipside, in simultaneously carrying out the roles of father and mother, it also seems that Fitzgerald strongly resisted getting any closer to his daughter, considering Charlie in “Babylon Revisited” who acts as a father. Like Fitzgerald, according to Schiff, Charlie also has the same concern about his daughter: “Despite his concern about relationship between parents and child of the opposite sex, Charlie’s attitude toward his daughter reveals his wish, fueled by both guilt and nostalgia, to deny his wife’s absence in envisioning Honoria as his dead wife—one of many signs in the story indicative of the pastness of the present, the difficulty of working through the process of mourning (52).” In this way, the author felt a strong duality within himself—father and mother—in his one character. This is how there is an overlap in the consciousness of personal concerns between Fitzgerald’s works and his actual life. If we were to choose which of Fitzgerald’s struggles were the most important in the intersection of the real world and his works, then this discussion should focus upon a mixture of the conflicts and values present both within and outside Fitzgerald’s works. Furthermore, it is also

important that any deviations from this be verifiable from constructs other than “father/child” or “material/non-material.”<sup>12</sup>

Thus, Charlie grappled with the “duality,” and additionally, Charlie could not separate himself from the past. To examine this, it may be sufficient to indicate that Charlie still suffers from his past behavior such as alcohol addiction and failing investment. We see this from the fact that he is determined to recover the daughter from whom he became estranged due to a past act. Thus, he has rebuilt his life and returned to Paris where he previously lost everything. However, Charlie is essentially being hampered by something else as well: the presence of the dead. The dead remain symbols of his past problems. Furthermore, Charlie’s ambivalence, as has already been shown as dualities, becomes even more evident in his dealings with the dead. We shall discuss the details later in this thesis, but the feelings and depictions of duality regarding the dead draw our attention.

Incidentally, in “Babylon Revisited,” the subject of the dead arises regarding Fitzgerald’s works and the author himself. This is because the protagonist is burdened by the unresolved issues lying between himself and his dead wife.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, Charlie is aware of being a sinner burdened by his past crimes (see, for example, 625). In other words, it seems safe to assume that the issues he must address exist between him and the dead. Similarly, Schiff has shown that Charlie lives enclosed by the dead and the past: “Charlie Wales in

‘Babylon Revisited’ compares the living with the dead. In that story, Charlie feels guilt over the death of his wife (52).” He has no choice but to be conscious of the existence of the dead. It is impossible to avoid the subject of the past and of the dead in telling this story.

#### 4. Charlie and the Author

To examine Fitzgerald’s biographical facts might make it clear that Fitzgerald and “Babylon Revisited” are in sync with each other. What catches our attention here is the constant presence of death near Fitzgerald. Before publishing this short story, Fitzgerald lost his father Edward, which probably motivated Fitzgerald to write a story related to death and mourning. However, if one further expands the scope of time and takes a bird’s-eye view, it appears that the dead were an issue throughout his life; Fitzgerald’s interest in the nature of time—often represented by death and the irrecoverability of the dead—seems to spread across his career and work. “Author’s House,” one autobiographical work written by Fitzgerald later in his life, includes a scene in which the narrator gives the reason why he became a writer. This further includes the narrator saying that it is the past loss of his older sisters that led him to choose writing:

Well, three months before I was born my mother lost her other two children and I think that came first of all though I don’t know how it worked exactly. I think I started then to be a writer. (134)

According to Fitzgerald, it is this loss that made him a writer. Takahiro Sakane in discussing this trilogy in “Do Authors Dream of the Dead?” argues that reading Fitzgerald’s ‘Author’ trilogy,” Fitzgerald was constantly aware of those who had died—two older sisters whom he really had lost, and all of those around him who died in the war, which ended without his participation:

Fitzgerald, who had lost those closest to him early on, though, did not experience the war first hand; perhaps the dead were something that had always been lost to him. If Hemingway frequently depicted death in a realistic manner, then Fitzgerald repressed it as much as possible, even while longing for the dead, and refused to include physical images of mortality. (Sakane, “Do Authors Dream of the Dead?” 55)

In other words, for Fitzgerald, the dead were absent, albeit remaining within the realm of awareness, located on the opposite shore from physical existence.

As the short novel “I Didn’t Get Over” indicates that, although he did not belong to the war, he felt some responsibility for the death tolls. He may have felt guilty that so many young people belonging to his generation were killed while he remained at home. Fitzgerald wrote “I Didn’t Get Over” in 1936, during the time that he wrote the autobiographical trilogy that includes “Author’s House.” In this “I Didn’t Get Over,” a man blames himself for a huge mistake during the

war that resulted in a friend's death. After the war, he is reluctant to confess his responsibility for the death to another friend but, finally, he hesitantly starts to confess the name of a man who triggered the friend's death.

When they had gone I lingered.

"So Abe wasn't killed in France."

"No—you'll notice all that tablet says is 'died in service.'"

"What did he die of?"

Hibbing hesitated.

"He was shot by a guard trying to escape from Leavenworth. They'd given him ten years."

"God! And what a great guy he was in college."

"I suppose he was to his friends. But he was a good deal of a snob wasn't he?"

"Maybe to some people."

"He didn't seem to even recognize a lot of his classmates when he met them in the army."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. I told you something that wasn't true tonight. That captain's name is not Brown."

Again I asked him what he meant.

"The captain's name was Hibbing," he said. "I was that captain, and when I rode up to join my company he acted as if he'd never seen me before. It kind of threw me off—

because I used to love this place. Well—good night.” (175-76)

Although having never been to a battlefield, Fitzgerald wrote a short story on death and guilt in war. If he did not feel guilty and responsible for the dead of his generation, he would not have written the short story “I Didn’t Get Over.” One possible answer is that he did feel guilt or moral culpability, like Charlie who felt guilty for his dead wife.

Thus, death haunted Fitzgerald for a long time (from his dead sisters to the dead in WWI), and he sometimes even felt guilty for them (especially for the dead in WWI). He took being dead to be a first-person existence without becoming a third person. Alternatively, rather, it was a form that he had to accept—to feel the presence of the dead, although they do not exist in the present. It could be said that he was both afraid of the dead and also sought out the best way of treating them; that is to say, the best way to mourn them. The duality of Charlie, silhouetted by the light cast by the absence of the dead, overlaps with the issues facing the author. Thus, the issues presented by this short story in actuality overlap with the author’s life and therefore resonate with our discussion here.<sup>14</sup>

Fitzgerald’s fiction enfolds a contradiction in that he was turning his gaze toward the dead—blanks that cannot be seen in the present. Breitwieser traces the issue of “mourning” in Fitzgerald’s work in detail using psychological methods. According to his

argument, to Fitzgerald, the dead existed as a symbol of “mourning lost” (247-48). In simple terms, Fitzgerald took over from his mother in mourning for the two sisters who died young, but since the subject was absent, eventually it was virtually impossible to achieve any goals (253). For Fitzgerald, the “inability to mourn” was a state of being unable to satisfy the void created by death, in which case, any looking toward the dead is seemingly suspended in non-existence. In other words, the dead hover close to a state in which they still cannot grasp their absence. This is an ambivalent state in which life and death cannot be determined, caused by not being able to drive the wedge of mourning between the dead and the living. This appears to be similar to a state of being missing.

This depicting “the dead in a missing state” is a technique that can be seen in other works by Fitzgerald. As Kazuhiro Matsuura argues in a paper dealing with Fitzgerald’s short story “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button,” the technique of having “the dead in a missing state” is also found in the “author” trilogy (26). In “Afternoon of an Author,” the author himself plays a character from a novel he wrote in the real world. From a reader, the author receives a letter asking, “are you [the character appearing in the author’s novel] my long-lost brother?” The author states that he is the younger brother of the reader, now in a Baltimore prison, and he is going to be hanged soon (137-38). Then, the reader suggests, “if you get out, please come to my house,” to which the author replies, “your younger brother’s



sentence was suspended and he went to China" (139). His "suspended sentence" means that he will remain absent forever (since the writer himself is playing the brother of the reader, which is a complete fiction), but he will be present as a living being within the consciousness of the reader. This eternally absent "younger brother" will remain, to the reader, in an unclear state of life or death. His death will never be confirmed, and so his existence will be suspended between the two extremes. He will have an alive but dead existence for the reader. This may also be said to be Fitzgerald's method of "displacing without confirming the dead." Here, the importance of Breitwieser's prior observations is again recognized. This is because they confirm that Fitzgerald's duality is the author's fundamental critical issue. Thus, this issue arises most prominently in the problem with the dead and the past.

## 5. Mourning Someone

If the absence of the dead cannot be established by mourning, then they are, so to speak, missing in a state of suspension. They are the dead who do not seem to be so. This image of suspension is not reserved solely for the dead in this work. The punishment for the crime that Charlie committed in the past is also similarly suspended. His greatest crime is letting his wife, Helen, die in the cold night by locking her out of the house. Charlie's sister-in-law, Marion, holds him deeply responsible for her sister's death.

“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.” An electric current of agony surged through him; for a moment he was almost on his feet, an unuttered sound echoing in his throat. He hung on to himself for a moment, another moment.

“Hold on there,” said Lincoln unfortunately. “I never thought you were responsible for that.” “Helen died of heart trouble,” Charlie said dully. “Yes, heart trouble.” Marion spoke as if the phrase had another meaning for her. (627)

Charlie visits Paris for the first time in a while and tries to negotiate for custody of his daughter Honoria, who is in Marion’s custody. Marion gained custody of his daughter from Charlie while he was incapacitated by the loss of his fortune from the stock market crash and alcohol poisoning. Upon meeting her, Charlie finds Marion completely dressed in black: “Marion sat behind the coffee service in a dignified black dinner dress that just faintly suggested mourning” (624). This suggests that she is still mourning her dead sister even though several years have passed since her sister’s death—this is a state of endless mourning. For her, this will silently expose Charlie’s ongoing guilt. The atmosphere of the warm family home around the fireplace changes with Charlie’s arrival, from Charlie’s joyous reunion with his daughter into a court judging Charlie for the crimes

he committed in the past. Marion does not intend to spare Charlie punishment. She refuses to hand over Honoria and indefinitely prolongs his sentence. So, in a manner of speaking, Charlie's past crimes are suspended.<sup>15</sup> For Marion, Charlie's sentence will only end when he is found to atone for his burdensome sins completely.

Furthermore, the problem lying between Charlie and his wife has a structure similar to the dilemma of "mourning" for the dead. Charlie is depicted as a person with contradictions, that is, as someone living in an unattached "suspended state" as a result of the debts he owes to the dead. As Charlie mentions at the end of the story, it is not certain whether they will continue to ask for payment ("pay") to compensate for his past sins (633). However, it seems unlikely that Charlie will state any future scope or deadline. This may be said to be a debt that will never be allowed to be fully repaid—even if it can be repaid—or a debt that has nowhere to go and thus is suspended. This is because the creditor of the payment is already dead and no longer exists.

Thus, Fitzgerald's hang-up with death glimpsed through the autobiographical "author" trilogy mentioned above is very similar to Charlie's issues with death. The hang-ups of these two people suggest ambiguous feelings of affirmation and denial regarding death. For Charlie, the existence of his deceased wife is what connects him and his daughter, Honoria, and for him, this "tangible" and "visible" (628) daughter proves that he once loved one woman. She exists as the sole evidence that he can touch with his hands and prove with his eyes.

Honorio's existence is vital to Charlie, who very much rejects material things and values "character." To this daughter, he talks about his wife and attempts to share his memories of her. Looking at their conversations, we see that Charlie is trying to play the role of father for his daughter and that he is trying to validate his existence.

What did she say? What had he expected? Going home in a taxi afterward, he pulled her over until her head rested against his chest. "Darling, do you ever think about your mother?" "Yes, sometimes," she answered vaguely. "I don't want to forget her. Have you got a picture of her?" "Yes, I think so. Anyhow, Aunt Marion has. Why don't you want me to forget her?" "She loved you very much." "I loved her too." (623)

Through the role of "father," Charlie can exist through his daughter. In this case, the role of father allows Charlie to reach across his estrangement. However, it also presents him with a great dilemma—the more he plays the role of "father" here, the more effectively he has ceded parental authority to Marion. It is the equivalent of Charlie pulling the trigger for the live bullet that will separate him and his daughter.

For Charlie, all dressed up in this duality, the dead are troubled when deceived. He is severely questioned by Marion for his share of responsibility in his wife's death, while not being allowed to even talk about the deceased: "Please leave Helen out of it. I can't bear to hear

you talk about her like that” (625). In other words, the dead embodying the past itself to Charlie are indispensable to sustaining his filiation with his daughter, while at the same time ironically exposing his past sins—that he had been a troublesome presence directly connected to how he decisively lost his daughter. In other words, her very existence is a duality: she would pose problems if she did not exist, while simultaneously posing problems if she were to appear right before his very eyes.

## 6. A Moral Issue with the Dead

This stance by Charlie, to quote John A. Higgins, draws in the more fundamental duality between the presence of the dead symbolizing the past, and his bond with his daughter symbolizing the future:

Charlie’s old friends Duncan and Lorraine represent the past, from whose excesses he has succeeded in reforming but from which he cannot escape. Similarly, Marion and her husband represent Charlie’s grim present, and

Honorita, his daughter, represents his hopeful future. (122)

As the symbols of the past, these are depicted by Fitzgerald as “ghosts out of the past” (622). Duncan and Lorraine appear as characters who are well-acquainted with Charlie’s past actions. Lorraine especially was a playmate from Charlie’s voluptuary days in Paris, and she is depicted as a person who represents his past

negative aspects. As “the dead” who wander this world, these characters are called “ghosts out of the past.” This means, that is to say, they are the dead. They intrude when Charlie tries to mend wounds from his past, and they make the “past” appear before his eyes like an unpredictable inevitability.

They represent an intrusion from a wound that cannot be closed—the guilt at past behavior—and they also represent a serious problem for Charlie that is surreptitiously introduced into the story as a major element. There are episodes depicted in the story that directly hint at this. Charlie opens a door to release the future from a closed-off space. When he opens the door to Marion’s house to release his daughter, he simultaneously causes an unwanted intrusion of the past. The “problem of life,” of living with a mind toward the future, is inverted into a “problem of death.” The ghosts tormenting Charlie let him know that the essential ticket for running toward the future that he just obtained is invalid. They arrive twice, without warning, in between Charlie and his daughter. When Charlie is spending time alone with his daughter for the first time in a while, the ghosts appear suddenly and relentlessly follow the parent and child (623). The second time, Charlie and Marion have a fragmented reconciliation, and he catches a glimpse of the possibility of setting sail for a new life with his daughter. Just at that moment, at the same time, the “ghosts out of the past” push their way in.

A long peal at the door-bell; the *bonne à tout faire* passed through and went down the corridor. The door opened upon another long ring, and then voices, and the three in the salon looked up expectantly; Lincoln moved to bring the corridor within his range of vision, and Marion rose. Then the maid came back along the corridor, closely followed by the voices, which developed under the light into Duncan Schaeffer and Lorraine Quarries. They were gay, they were hilarious, they were roaring with laughter. For a moment, Charlie was astounded; unable to understand how they ferreted out the Peters' address. (631)

They force their way into Marion's house, which they have no reason to know about, and destroy the dinner that was supposed to have marked the beginning of Charlie's new life. This intrusion changes Marion's mood suddenly, and all hope is lost for Charlie living with his daughter.

The past has intruded, and Charlie is unable to stop it. Just as he attained the key to his future, the past found its way in, and everything was set back to square one. Both arrive before his eyes simultaneously. Opening a door to release one thing lets another in. Marion is convinced that her sister was dealt a fatal blow when Charlie sent her out into the snow. She does not listen at all to Charlie's insistence that it was a mistake. She feels Charlie deliberately locked her out in the cold. This is the direct cause of

Marion's disdain for Charlie: "I'll never in my life be able to forget the morning when Helen knocked at my door, soaked to the skin and shivering, and said you'd locked her out" (623). What stands out here is that Charlie locking the door and leaving his wife Helen out in the cold snow left a strong impression in Marion's mind. It should be remembered here that the door, the locking, and shutting out are depicted here as decisive things in Charlie's life.

Furthermore, the "ghost out of the past," Lorraine, came to him because long ago, Charlie went to her house at an unthinkable time of day, and she let him in and took care of him. She sought repayment for this "favor": "Her voice became suddenly unpleasant. 'All right, we'll go. But 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'" (631). This past favor, or debt, is what called her to be a ghost from the past. On that note, this story began by talking about people who were not allowed back into a Paris bar due to their debts, and people who were driven out of town: "He's in Paris, but he doesn't come here anymore. Paul doesn't allow it. He ran up a bill of thirty thousand francs, charging all his drinks and his lunches, and usually his dinner, for more than a year. And when Paul finally told him he had to pay, he gave him a bad check (617)." Then there is Charlie's debt (his case is one of "moral debt"), and he is inevitably thrown out of town. After all, it can be said that Charlie's fundamental problem was closely



connected from the beginning to being excluded from a certain place by the debt of his past sins.

In this way, leaving and being shut out are correlated in this story. About this problem, Carlos Baker also states: “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” (269). However, we must add to this the fact that Charlie was able to open the door and go out. If so, why does Charlie not avert the ghosts and rush for the exit right away? There should have been an exit for evading them right in front of his eyes. He should have been able to escape. This is because there were a passage and a door for escaping right before him. However, that exit itself lures Charlie into the middle of fear and longing. Rather, by opening that door, it was the presence of the dead and of the past that crept in through those cracks just like running water.

## 7. Conclusion

Charlie harbors contradictory feelings towards the past and the dead. These dead thwart Charlie in his quest to move forward into the future. For Charlie, the dead are a dynamic presence that cannot be pinned down only within their mutuality. By extension, this could be the same attitude that Fitzgerald had towards the dead, his deceased sisters in particular. They both desire and fear the dead,

and they also try to get close to and then pull away from them. What the dead evokes is this duality. Both Charlie and Fitzgerald attempted to deal with the deep-set issue of the impossibility of mourning while maintaining this duality, without being able to resolve the irresolvable *aporia* and letting the dead remain dead. Nevertheless, this signifies the endless aching for the dead within them and their inability to part with the past and dead.

The use of “aching” and “an incurable pain” call to mind Charlie’s metaphor of an injury to talk about past issues: “Family quarrels are bitter things. They don’t go according to any rules. They’re not like aches or wounds; they’re more like splits in the skin that won’t heal because there’s not enough material” (630). The wounds inflicted by the wrongs Charlie committed against his family can never fully heal. The laceration does not close, like a door that always stays open to the “living dead” to bring up past wrongs. The only way for Fitzgerald and Charlie to heal their wounds is to express their pain, which is also the only technique they can use to “mourn.”

The protagonist Charlie is a prisoner of his past and keeps reliving it through his memories of his dead wife. His future, as represented by his daughter, is at stake because of his past behavior. He has to repair the wounds of the past to ensure his desired future; however, his attempt to do so is in vain. This pattern reminds us of the author’s life and his short stories. Charlie’s past losses doom him to wander there. In the next section, I will discuss guilt about the

past and the repetition of past behavior in “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.”

## 2.

## “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” and Patricide

## 1. Past Problems

In the previous section, I discussed the protagonist’s past in “Babylon Revisited.” The protagonist Charlie Wales cannot help being obsessed with his past because he cannot pay back his past moral debt, represented by his dead wife and his daughter in custody. This debt keeps him stuck in the past and unable to progress into the future, symbolized by his daughter with whom he cannot live together. At the end of the story, he cannot escape from the ghosts of the past, represented by his two former acquaintances, and the consequent damage they inflict upon his future.

In this section, I continue to discuss the theme of the past repeated via memories of the dead, as depicted in “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.” In this story, the protagonist Benjamin cannot be dead and repeats the past because of his past sin.

## 2. Father

In “Author’s House” (1936), which is included in the “author” trilogy of introspective short works, F. Scott Fitzgerald is interviewed as an anonymous author and talks about his motives for choosing his occupation. In the short story, the cellar is packed with things that the author has forgotten. Moreover, those things, buried underground

but still wriggling about, are what has made him an author. Furthermore, he confides “[his] belief that [he] would never die like other people, and that [he] wasn’t the son of [his] parents but a son of a king, a king who ruled the whole world” (135). Immediately afterward, while the interviewer perceives a mound of dirt within sight in the corner of the cellar, the author begins to talk about why he became a writer: “Well, three months before I was born my mother lost her other two children and I think that came first of all though I don’t know how it worked exactly. I think I started then to be a writer” (134). Just as Mitchell Breitwieser indicates that what makes the author take up the pen is “something” that has already been lost and whose true character cannot be accurately grasped: “Rather than a lost thing, a thing never had, and therefore a sense of lacking without the ability to know what it is that is lacked” (253). The writer, however, only states that what is buried might be his older sisters who died young. The interview attempts to get further information, but the author abruptly changes the subject and stubbornly refuses to make any further mention:

“What’s that?” You demand. “That?” The author tries to change the subject, moving around so as to obscure your view of the too-recent mound of dirt in the corner that has made you think of certain things in police reports. But you insist. “That is where it is buried,” he says. “What’s buried?” “That’s where I buried my love after—” he

hesitates. “After you killed her?” “After I *killed* it.” “I do not understand what you mean.”

The author does not look at the pile of earth. “That is where I buried my first childish love of myself, my belief that I would never die like other people, and that I was not the son of my parents but a son of a king, a king who ruled the whole world.” (134-35)

Regarding this, Takahiro Sakane argues that this “burial” reminds the author of an “anonymous” corpse. When the author is thinking about why he became a writer, “it” is also “her” corpse, evoking the image of an undiscovered anonymous corpse that might even be his own (58). The “it” is something that he himself “killed” and buried, and then had to make “anonymous,” because this “burial,” which implies a murder or crime because the author says, “after I killed it” and “police reports,” seems to represent the existence of something that he wants to avoid by forcibly changing the topic. What is most important to us here is the author’s “denial or absence of a father” during the conversation—that he believes that his real parents are not “my parents” but “a king.” This also refers to the absence of real parents—that the “burial” is a single connecting line, unhesitatingly penetrating the story in this episode.

Thus, the author makes no further mention of this “something” that was so impersonally buried. Alternatively, perhaps it is being repressed deep in the bowels of oblivion instead, never to rise to the

surface. Burying and digging in the conversation in the cellar. This problem is very much in sync with the problem of the father and son in “Afternoon of an Author” in the “author” trilogy—an author comes up with a composition while riding the bus—the story of a father thinking about a son who died young and is now buried:

On the college football field, men were working with rollers, and a title occurred to him: “Turf-keeper” or else “The Grass Grows,” something about a man working on turf for years and bringing up his son to go to college and play football there. Then the son dying in youth and the man’s going to work in the cemetery and putting turf over his son instead of under his feet. It would be the kind of piece that is often placed in anthologies, but not his sort of thing—it was sheer swollen antithesis, as formalized as a popular magazine story and easier to write. Many people, however, would consider it excellent because it was melancholy, had digging in it and was simple to understand. (144-45)

Sakane seems to hit the mark in that Fitzgerald finds the inspiration for this story from the repeated image of digging and burying (60). Here, what we should focus upon is the fact that the subjects of “burying” and “digging” depicted in “Author’s House” are joined in the father-and-son plot. Also, considering “putting turf over his son instead of under his feet” should be necessary. Here, turf is

written as being planted in a reverse position. This might be interpreted as an inversion of the side that is buried or a father buried by his son.

Then, what is the author burying deep in his consciousness could be the father whose existence he has denied in the past, the father for whom he had held back or, in other words, repressed any guilty feelings. This paternal absence may have been such an essential factor in making him an author. Or, patricide may be a *basso continuo* running through “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” as one of Fitzgerald’s recurring literary themes, which he often writes in his fiction in a suppressed shape.<sup>16</sup> His literary works allow us a glimpse into such suppressed topics. Fitzgerald mentioned his father in the essay “The Death of My Father” from 1931 (when his father died). This work was hidden with Fitzgerald’s death and was neither completed nor saw the light of day. The incomplete essay was later discovered apparently by accident, but it appears to have a unique position in Fitzgerald’s *oeuvre*. That is, it is believed that Fitzgerald was unable to complete this piece, probably because he had to repress the topic. I am not arguing that Fitzgerald should have been pushed to address his private feelings for his father as an author. Rather, there may have been an organic integration of his rejection and symbolic burial of his father and his creation of literary works. This is very well illustrated by Fitzgerald’s early short story



“The Curious Case of Benjamin Button,” “Author’s House,” and “Afternoon of an Author.”<sup>17</sup>

### 3. Mixed Feelings about the Father

It seems clear that what we saw in the previous chapter agrees with autobiographical facts.<sup>18</sup> As Sadaoka Nagaoka has demonstrated, the influence of Fitzgerald’s mother greatly surpassed that of his father, aided by economic circumstances. Consequently, Fitzgerald was strongly exposed to the emotional influence of his mother and simultaneously gradually came to look down at the father for whom he once felt an affinity.

Fitzgerald’s sentiments toward his father were subtle. Fitzgerald expresses “the politeness inherited from my father” in one of the Basil stories from several years later depicting his youth and that it was Scott’s father who planted in him a “deep-rooted interest in poetry”... On his father Edward’s death in 1931, Fitzgerald wrote, “I loved my father—always deep in my subconscious I have referred judgments back to him, what he would have thought, or done.” However, as Fitzgerald indicated by writing “deep in my subconscious,” Fitzgerald needed time and self-development for his evaluation of his father to be in line with reality (24-25).

Here, “deep in my subconscious” is what should be an important matter to understand Fitzgerald and his psychology regarding his father. Although Nagaoka does not indicate the source of the

quotation, it is likely from “The Death of My Father”: “I loved my father—always deep in my subconscious I have referred judgments back to him, to what he would have thought or done” (118).

Furthermore, as Henry Dan Piper has shown, Fitzgerald recognized that his father was a “failure” at a young age: “For, in spite of his son’s affection for him, he was always, in Fitzgerald’s eyes, a ‘failure’” (182). This is the figure of the father whom Fitzgerald rejected by subconsciously painting over his existence. This overlaps the past with something buried in the dirt of the cellar. Thus, with Fitzgerald, the rejection of the father and burial are complex and, furthermore, strongly intertwined. The past murder or criminal burial is retold in a context parallel to Fitzgerald talking about his father. The author’s recollection of whatever was buried in the cellar in his youth seems to imply a symbolic criminal act of patricide.

This patricide flowing through the underground waterways of Fitzgerald’s consciousness is written in his fiction in the form of a reversal of the father-child power relationship. Differently stated, he may be using symbolic patricide to overturn the irreversible and universal father-child relationship, and thereby rejecting his father without ever realizing it. Considering the father in “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button,” the presence of another parent is beyond anyone’s control. No mother appears in “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.” More accurately, she is briefly mentioned in the story, but never actually makes an appearance. Only Benjamin’s

grandfather is depicted, while, similarly, his grandmother makes no appearance of any kind. Moreover, that is not all. Even the mothers of other characters, such as Benjamin's wife Hildegarde, are not mentioned. Hildegarde becomes a "mother" after giving birth, and then after her son Roscoe has grown up (around which time Roscoe and Benjamin are described as "often mistaken for each other," and therefore it is assumed that Hildegarde and Benjamin are now like mother and son in age); she abruptly leaves to live in Europe and henceforth disappears from the story. Or, in this story, mothers are deliberately concealed. This seems to have something to do with the fact that fathers, who are the subject of repression, are actively depicted in the story. If the depiction of fathers is the reverse of reality, it makes sense that Fitzgerald's mother, who is assumed from his biography to have had a large influence upon him, makes minimal impression in the story (or is not depicted). Thus, the theme of "patricide" finds actuation beyond the realms of the author's consciousness.

"Author's House" includes two other "play different people" episodes—an event at a football game and the story of the author becoming the character in a novel. In the cellar, the author talks about two motivations to become a writer. The first is the "sisters who died before he was born." The other is a childhood experience. When the author was still a child, a regular member of the football team was sidelined by an injury, and the author took his place during

the game. However, when the original team member returned, the author was returned to the bench. A few years later, the author understood the reason why he was returned to the bench—during a play he was standing in the position of the opposing side:

I had been playing listlessly. We had the other team licked by a couple of touchdowns, and it suddenly occurred to me that I might as well let the opposing end—who hadn't so far made a single tackle—catch a forward pass, but at the last moment I came to life and realized that I couldn't let him catch the pass, but that at least I wouldn't intercept it, so I just knocked it down. That was the point where I was taken out of the game. (135)

It is also important that the element of “being able to become different people” (unconsciously switching to the viewpoint/position of the opposing team) be mentioned, but, furthermore, it may be important that this be depicted as subject to the punishment of being “deprived of the opportunity to participate.”

The author also pretends to be a character he created in the novel and trades letters with a female reader. From a reader, the author receives a letter asking, “are you [the character appearing in the author's novel] my long-lost brother?” The author states that he is the younger brother of the reader, now in Baltimore, and he is going to be hanged soon (137-38). Then, the reader suggests, “If you get out, please come to my house,” to which the author replies, “Your younger

brother's sentence was suspended and he went to China" (139). His "reprieve" may continue to occupy the reader's consciousness as a living being even though he is forever absent. Thinking that the "brother" was in a situation where he could not escape from death, and that even if he did escape he would not return to his sister, the younger brother might be assumed on paper to be in an ambiguous state, a pendulum suspended between life and death, in a living but dead existence. Though a fictional character, the author came to be a "different person," "digging up" the existence of the younger brother who had been out of touch for a long time and then "burying" him again.

Previously, studies have focused on "rejection or absence of fathers" contained in the works of Fitzgerald. For example, James Gindin has indicated that "absent fathers" and "presenting (surrogate) fathers" are themes running throughout Fitzgerald's works.<sup>19</sup> Despite recognizing the importance of such themes in Fitzgerald's work, Gindin, however, indicates merely that characters who are bankrupt in their lifestyles or finances (like Gatsby and Patch, who spend money like water) lacked moral or religious models in the form of a father and, thus, became immoral persons (76). Thus, previous studies have only set their sights on the effects of absent or rejected fathers, and it is doubtful that how the author repeatedly wrote on this subject has been adequately discussed.

Regarding the father-and-son relationships in “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button,” Benjamin’s life opens with the misfortune of having his father abusively shouting, “You lie! You’re an imposter!” (162) immediately after he is born, denying that he is his child. Furthermore, immediately after that, his father visits a tailor to purchase Benjamin a suit and further behaves oddly.

Mr. Button turned miserably away. Then, he stopped, brightened, and pointed his fingers toward a dressed dummy in the window display. “There!” he exclaimed. “I’ll take that suit, out there on the dummy.” The clerk stared. “Why,” he protested, “that’s not a child’s suit. At least it *is*, but it’s for fancy dress. You could wear it yourself!” (164)

Benjamin’s father hardly notices when the clerk mentions, “You can get children’s clothing at another store, you know,” and he purchases the suit in the display (despite the clerk’s bewilderment). The suit that the “dummy” is wearing is an extremely showy “fancy dress” outfit (intended for use as a costume). The clerk also relates that this suit was meant for someone like Benjamin’s father. Benjamin refuses to wear this strange outfit, but his father forces him to do so while making violent remarks (164). As such, Benjamin’s real father rejects him as his son from the outset, and Benjamin is made to wear a costume. Therefore, we perceive that he is being

forced to be “one whose true self is a different kind of person” as soon as he is born.

Of course, this is not the only scene in which he is treated in such a manner. Benjamin showcases remarkable success on a college football team. However, as he ages, he physically transforms into a young child, meaning he is no longer given opportunities to play. Nevertheless, he is allowed to sit on the bench every game: “The coaches said that he had lost weight, and it seemed to the more observant among them that he was not quite as tall as before. He made no touchdowns—indeed, he was retained on the team chiefly in the hope that his enormous reputation would bring terror and disorganization to the Yale team” (176). Although he is not picked to play, Benjamin is not kicked off the team, for a somewhat unusual reason—rather than his abilities on the field; it is hoped that just by sitting on the bench, his presence will intimidate the other team. In other words, even in this setting, one could say that the team sought his presence as “one whose true self is a different kind of person.”

The issue here is what will happen in the story because of his “being treated as an ‘other,’” or, being forced to act as a “different kind of person.” The key to this issue lies in a subsequent episode involving mistaken father-and-son identities. Benjamin goes to the registrar’s office at Yale College to make arrangements after being admitted. Seeing Benjamin’s face, the registrar mistakenly believes that Benjamin’s father has arrived: “I’m very glad to meet you, Mr.

Button. I'm expecting your son here any minute" (168). The result of this conversation is that Benjamin has his admission revoked because his father has not gone with him. Additionally, visiting a tailor's shop to have a military uniform made, Benjamin is unable to get the attention of the clerk because his appearance is way too young. The clerk says that he cannot sell clothing to Benjamin, but it would not be a problem if the clothing were for his father: "Well," admitted the clerk, hesitantly, "if you're not, I guess your daddy is, all right" (178). These two episodes can be seen as demonstrating the considerable influence of Benjamin's father. In both cases, it seems that Benjamin's plans are put at risk because he is powerless without his father at his side.

However, it not true that these episodes tell of a child who cannot do anything if his father is not accompanying him. After Benjamin is chased out of the college, he is rumored by the public to be "Roger Button's father" (that is, Benjamin's grandfather) (172). That is, at the point at which he is chased out of college, those around him recognize Benjamin as Roger Button's father. What this means is that Benjamin was not refused admission to college because his father did not accompany him, but that Benjamin, who has now become the father, was rejected by the college because his "son" (Roger Button) was not there.

Conversely, the later episode at the tailor's shop is the symmetrical inverse of what occurred at the college. "Your daddy"



mentioned by the clerk when he was making the uniform was in reference to Roscoe (Benjamin's son). It is plausible that the tailor knew Roscoe, who was "prominent in Baltimore life" before alluding to Benjamin's "daddy," since Benjamin had intentionally introduced himself with his family name and address: "Roscoe was married and now prominent in Baltimore life" (177). In this episode, because the actual son Roscoe is not at his father Benjamin's side, the tailor refuses to make the clothes. Then, Roscoe's presence is recognized in the tailor shop, and Benjamin can get a uniform made. This episode is constructed as the exact inverse of what happened at the college. Here, Benjamin is saved by the presence of his son.<sup>20</sup> In this way, these two episodes seem to depict a reversal of the father-and-son power dynamic.

Furthermore, this changeover between Benjamin and Roscoe is then repeated more than before. Roscoe finds Benjamin to be an eyesore, and his son rejects Benjamin's "existence as a father": "another thing," continued Roscoe, "when visitors are in the house I want you to call me 'Uncle'—not 'Roscoe' but 'Uncle,' do you understand? It looks absurd for a boy of fifteen to call me by my first name. Perhaps you'd better call me 'Uncle' *all* the time, so you'll get used to it." (177). Conversely, Roscoe behaves as a father toward Benjamin. Since Benjamin cannot even enter prep school without Roscoe being there, he relies on his son as a chaperone. Their family business has already been taken over by Roscoe, and the son is

functioning as the father of the household. Here as well, the father is depicted as a character who cannot do anything without his son, and “the son usurping the position of the father” is repeated.

Thus, assuming that Benjamin’s existence is an affront to the obligations of the father-child relationship, this may explain the strange reactions—rage and bewilderment—seen among many of the characters to Benjamin’s birth. This is because this changeover hints at an Oedipal, mythical “patricide.” The scene in which the doctor who assisted in Benjamin’s birth hurls complaints at his father is especially suggestive: “Outrageous!” He snapped the last word out in almost one syllable, then he turned away muttering, “Do you imagine a case like this will help my professional reputation? One more would ruin me—ruin anybody” (160). Why did Benjamin, just as he was born, provoke such strong anger in the doctor? Perhaps the reason was that Benjamin looked exactly like his grandfather. This resemblance is stated: “A few people who were unfailingly polite racked their brains for compliments to give to the parents—and finally hit upon the ingenious device of declaring that the baby resembled his grandfather” (166). Furthermore, it is later rumored by townspeople that “maybe he was Benjamin’s father’s father,” that is, Benjamin’s grandfather: “It was said that Benjamin was really the father of Roger Button” (172). Moreover, in the 40 years that this doctor had been acquainted with the Button household, he had also helped to deliver Benjamin’s father: “I brought you into the world, young man,

and I've been physician to your family for forty years, but I'm through with you! I don't want to see you or any of your relatives ever again! Good-by!" (160-61). This episode is proof that the doctor very likely knew Benjamin's grandfather. In fact, before deciding on his son's name, Benjamin's father temporarily calls him "Methuselah," known as the grandfather of Noah (165). That being the case, this episode might also indicate the high likelihood that Benjamin is being described as his "father's father" (if for the sake of argument, this is true, we could say that Benjamin's father's utterance of "you're an imposter!" was also his father's rejection). Thus, the next point we would like to focus on is why Benjamin, in "reversing the father-and-son relationship," frequently provokes anger in those around him.

Aside from the uproar that Benjamin started at the hospital, it seems that his "becoming the father" arouses anger in those around him. The episode of Benjamin's marriage straightforwardly exposes this. The father of Benjamin's fiancée (General Moncrief) deems the marriage to be "criminal" and vehemently opposes it: "However, everyone agreed with General Moncrief that it was 'criminal' for a lovely girl who could have married any beau in Baltimore to throw herself into the arms of a man who was assuredly fifty" (172). At this point, Benjamin's fiancée, Hildegarde, is around 20 years old. In contrast, Benjamin is (in appearance) around 50. Those around the couple are opposed to this great age difference. However, a different aspect is presented if one knows the reason why Hildegarde decides to

marry Benjamin. Hildegarde says that her ideal man is “in his 50s,” a man who can look after her well: “I’ve always said,” went on Hildegarde, “that I’d rather marry a man of fifty and be taken care of than marry a man of thirty and take care of *him*” (171). Even more than her ideal marriage partner, does this not seem like an ideal father figure? Thus, meeting these conditions and thus winning her over, Benjamin replaces Hildegarde’s father. For Moncrief, this means having his position stolen from him. This criminal act of rejecting fathers depicted in the story shakes the very meaning of fatherhood to its core and, thus, is nothing less than a synonym for patricide.

The person who developed the most suggestive argument for our study was Freud. Freud used psychoanalysis to simultaneously explain the desire and frustration triggered by “patricide” lurking within people, while also finding throughout the works of Dostoevsky the writer’s repressed urge to kill his father, as seen in “Dostoevsky and Parricide.” In the same way, we should be able to use Freud’s proposed framework to uncover the theme of patricide concealed within Fitzgerald and his writing. Thus, we will proceed with discussing Freud as a key concept in the second half of this thesis, but this does not mean an unconditional reliance upon his writings. This also does not mean, of course, that we will be discussing the theories presented by Freud. There is but one meaning behind our use of Freud as a guide for discussion. Freud himself led the way in

thinking about our issues and thus has provided many viewpoints to “Benjamin Button.”

If Freud’s understanding of the Oedipus complex corresponds to this story, Benjamin’s actions may signify a crime.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Benjamin’s birth is already shrouded in despair. The doctor who attended his birth told everyone that Benjamin’s existence was destructive: “Do you imagine a case like this will help my professional reputation? One more would ruin me—ruin anybody” (160). Furthermore, Hildegard argues the discord and strife that arises between Benjamin and the world: “if everyone else looked at things as you do—what would the world be like?” (175). The previously mentioned college registrar, who mistakes Benjamin for his father, sees Benjamin as a lunatic: “Get out of the college and get out of town. You are a dangerous lunatic” (169). Benjamin thus shares some interesting commonalities with the myth of Oedipus. Oedipus was cast away by his real father, who feared erasure by his son and was raised “as if he were their own” by the couple who found him. When Oedipus grew up, he beat an old man to death on the road after an argument, not realizing that it was his real father. He then married the queen of Thebes, not realizing she was his real mother and became king. In other words, the underlying theme here is of “the son becoming the father.” Additionally, Oedipus is a “criminal” in this myth, as demonstrated by the fact that he is eventually driven from his home for the crime of patricide, and ends the tale living forever as

a vagrant. Going forward, this is consistent with Benjamin being treated as a criminal. Therefore, if “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” thus far has been a story of patricide, then, as Freud demonstrates, it would be appropriate if it was recognized as being one of a crime. It may not be true that Fitzgerald consciously depicted Freud’s arguments or patricide. Rather, Fitzgerald unconsciously depicted the story of a crime that may conceal significant themes about him as a writer.

#### 4. Replacing the Father

Benjamin inspired intense revulsion in those around him as soon as he was born. The cause for this might have been that his very existence, being born as someone to replace his father, was itself a so-called crime. The fact that he inspired this response, despite just having been born and not having done anything, suggests the inherently or fundamentally criminal nature of this birth. This is supported by Benjamin being depicted as a criminal throughout his life: Benjamin is rumored by the public to be John Wilkes Booth who assassinated Lincoln. Furthermore, in keeping with the context of Booth, Benjamin is said to “have been in prison” for a long while: “It was said that Benjamin was really the father of Roger Button, that he was his brother who had been in prison for forty years, that he was John Wilkes Booth in disguise” (172).

Furthermore, Benjamin's allegedly criminal status is stated by his father-in-law, who, as mentioned, lost his own position and was indirectly denied his existence as a father (172), and the first gift that Benjamin's father gives him is a model of "Noah's ark" and a set of animals and dolls (166). The story of Noah tells of God's anger, through flooding the entire surface of the earth, at human depravity. This tale is also closely tied to crime and punishment. Therefore, Benjamin's actions are his crimes, which also resonate with his patricide. If this is the case, the story of Benjamin's crimes demands punishment.

To understand the punishment that Benjamin should receive, it would be necessary to focus on a Jewish character juxtaposed with Benjamin in the story. Benjamin has his admission to Yale College revoked and is ordered to vacate the college and the town. Crushed, he feebly walks to the railway station and is chased around by some college students who seem to attack him. The name they give him at this point is "Wandering Jew": "He must be the Wandering Jew!" (169). According to George Anderson, the Wandering Jew is a legend about a Jewish cobbler who is responsible for the "crime" of having the misfortune of brushing off Christ's plea for a cup of water (62). According to Anderson, Christ begged the Jewish cobbler for "one cup of water and a place to rest" when he was tired along the way to the hill of Golgotha. However, the cobbler turned down his request. Then, Christ said something to the effect of "I shall die soon, but you will

not be able to die.” The cobbler understood the gravity of this right away, but it was already too late, and his body was no longer able to die. Thus, he had no choice but to leave his family and home behind, and he is thought to still be wandering the earth today (62). Because of this crime, he must wander this earth we live on for eternity, until the second coming of Christ.

In explaining this anecdote about the cobbler and Christ, there are many things that one could learn from Freud. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud mentions that Christ descended to earth “as the Father”: “Behold, the Messiah truly come, and the Messiah is truly killed in front of you. Given this, there is some piece of historical truth to the resurrection of Christ. The reason is that Christ is the original father that returned to the flock of his people. He had a divine transformation, and was uplifted to his Father’s place as the son (153).” Ultimately, with the execution of Christ, the Jew was given his sentence. That was the crime of “patricide”: “The ordinary Jew was charged with the ‘crime’ of killing God! He had to pay for that crime with his punishment” (204). The Jewish cobbler was thus charged with a “crime” due to Jesus’s death and was compelled to wander as his “punishment.” In short, following this, the reason that the cobbler lost his native land and continued to wander was this crime of “patricide” (for which all Jews were accused).



Freud also discusses this further in *Moses and Monotheism*. According to Freud, the “crime” of putting Jesus the son of God to death was that he had become God the Father:

The main substance of this new religion was surely the reconciliation with God the Father, and the atonement for the crime committed against God, but in a different aspect of the way these feelings work, the Son who had accepted the atonement of that crime into his own body became God himself along with the Father; strictly speaking, it is manifested in the reality of him becoming the Father. Starting from the religion of the Father, Christianity became the religion of the Son. (227)<sup>22</sup>

Here, according to the story of the Wandering Jew, the key concepts of crime, punishment, and the inversion of father and son are presented in one unified form.

Conversely, the punishment that Benjamin Button deserves is immortality and a life of wandering, like the Wandering Jew. As punishment, Benjamin was unable to die. To put it more accurately, he is resurrected numerous times. He is called a “ghost” or an “apparition” right after he is born: “It’s perfectly outrageous! The hospital will never have the ghost of a reputation after—” (161), “a picture of himself walking through the crowded streets of the city with this appalling apparition stalking by his side” (163). In this scene, “ghost” is interpreted in the sense of being “faint” or “slight.”<sup>23</sup>

However, what is important here is the fact that these words are used to refer to Benjamin. In reality, Fitzgerald also often uses the word “ghost” in other works when depicting a symbol of the past. In “Babylon Revisited,” he describes repeating the past (and its errors) as “ghosts out of the past” (622). Thus, Fitzgerald uses the word “ghost” to express the repetition of the past in the present. Simply stated, calling the just-born Benjamin a “ghost” or an “apparition” is thought to depict his existence as having been resurrected from somewhere: just as if a buried person had risen from out of the earth. The Wandering Jew also continues to wander without dying, returning to a youthful state when he reaches a certain age. Perhaps we could say that both Benjamin and the cobbler “repeat their lives many times over.”

## 5. Conclusion

This is also thought to mean that Benjamin and the Cobbler are wandering around in the same temporal axis. As Benjamin grows younger and is forced to call his son Roscoe “uncle,” Benjamin is told to “turn”: “you better turn right around and start back the other way” (177). Following this, Benjamin becomes an infant and disappears from this world. We could also say that the protagonist’s name “Button” hints at a circular, unending construction that forces one to return to the starting place constantly. Thus, Benjamin is destined to wander: he is thrown out of the hospital as soon as he is born; he is

forced to leave college, and he does not even have a place in his home. The Wandering Jew also loses the home and family he had become used to and wanders without finding a place to settle permanently. Therefore, these two stories are in parallel.<sup>24</sup> Then Benjamin, who is charged with the crime of “patricide,” must walk about aimlessly like the Jewish cobbler, bearing responsibility for the crime of patricide, forever wandering.

Through reading “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button,” this section indicates that Fitzgerald dealt with the problem of time in these short stories by dwelling on the dead as a symbol of the past. Because of the dead or their past, the protagonists have to repeat the past. Therefore, it is necessary for the reader to focus on the past to understand Fitzgerald’s literary theme, his theory of time, as the next chapter will discuss.

## Chapter II

### Fitzgerald and Wandering in the Past

#### 1.

#### Hoping for a Future in “Winter Dreams”

##### 1. “Winter Dreams” and *The Great Gatsby*

This chapter focuses on the theme of repeating the past in Fitzgerald’s short works. The previous chapter revealed the author’s preoccupation with the dead as demonstrated in his works. The past, represented by the dead and debt, compels the characters to repeat their actions. This theme is best expressed in the phrase “repeat the past” in *The Great Gatsby* as the protagonist haunted by the past is stuck between two points, the present and the past, without a future—on which this chapter focuses. This section studies the shared theme of “repeating the past” in “Winter Dreams” and *The Great Gatsby*, in which the protagonist of each is obsessed with a woman from his past. These stories have an original structure that inverts the “past” and the “future.” *The Great Gatsby* may hold the key to understanding the theory of time Fitzgerald proposed because one of the most important themes of the novel is “repeating the past.”

Gatsby’s pursuit of re-establishing his relationship with Daisy characterizes him as a man who attempts to repeat his own past. As Gatsby claims in conversation with Nick (which will be mentioned later in this thesis), for him the past is repeatable. To understand

Gatsby's desire to repeat the past, the short story "Winter Dreams" proves to be of great importance since it has an unmistakable connection with *The Great Gatsby*—both stories are about the pursuit of the past that can never be reclaimed. This connection may be the "Gatsby-cluster" as indicated by Matthew J. Bruccoli (121). These stories share a number of such aspects, although there is one important common point in these stories that may easily be missed. This is related to the fact, described in detail later, that the protagonist Dexter is extremely skilled in finding lost golf balls. He is a genius at finding lost things. In this respect, it can be said that *The Great Gatsby*, which is a story of a man trying to regain a woman he lost in the past, forms a pair with "Winter Dreams" or shares some continuity in that they both are about the protagonists' attempts at recovering lost things, even though the value of their objects appears to vary a great deal.

As discussed by Bruccoli, "Winter Dreams" and *The Great Gatsby* are recognized as closely connected works. In addition to Bruccoli, many studies have indicated a connection or the similarities between the two works. To enumerate names, Peter Wolfe demonstrates that Dexter Green and Jay Gatsby have many similarities:

Dexter Green, for instance, amasses money and status to impress his *princesse lointaine*, Judy Jones, in 'Winter Dreams' (1922), just as Gatsby believes that winning a

fortune, however dishonestly, will also win him Daisy's love. The Midwesterners Gatsby and Green surpass the New York blueblood Hunter in their purity motives; however, wrongheaded their methods, they want to marry and serve the women they love. Their goal is one of sharing. (245).

On the other hand, Bryant Mangun refers to the connection between the two stories more directly: "As he[Fitzgerald] became more sophisticated, especially during and after the composition of *The Great Gatsby*, the 'borrowing' became more subtle, as in the case of a story like 'Winter Dreams,' which he referred to as 'A sort of 1st draft of the Gatsby idea'" (63-64). Moreover, Richard Lehan says that "Winter Dreams" is a "satellite"(12) to *The Great Gatsby* and indicates representational commonalities between the two works: "In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald would move this landscape to the city, turn the wheat fields into a Valley of Ashes, turn out the lights at Gatsby's self-created world's fair, smash the imagination with the machinations of the city rich, and show how the religious intensity that Gatsby brought to his sense of self ends in the world totally secularized, materialistic, and brutalized" (12). On the other hand, "Dexter Green of 'Winter Dream' brings same intensity of purpose to winning Judy Jones, his summer love. . . . What he creates in place of his past is an image of self which he thinks is worthy of Judy and her wealth. *The Great Gatsby* was a summer novel, moving from the first

weeks of June, 1922, to the first weeks of September. Dexter's was a summer love. In both instances death follows the summer—and it is the death of self, the product of winter dreams” (13). In addition, Akiko Ishikawa and others argue how the two works are connected in terms of such representational commonalities. As described in this thesis, the arguments put forward in these critiques are largely based on the premise that *The Great Gatsby* and “Winter Dreams” have a strong correlation and that little attention has been paid to the structural details of “Winter Dreams.” Ishikawa argues that the two works have strong continuity between them (81), but doubts remain about her argument that the continuity is based only on the framework of “romance.” In addition, Berman attempts a Freudian psychoanalysis in discussing “Winter Dreams,” referencing the idea that “Winter Dreams” arguably projects the woman that Fitzgerald himself lost—G. King—onto the character of Judy Jones (“American Dreams and ‘Winter Dreams’” 52). Gerald Pike focuses upon the multiple stories contained within “Winter Dreams,” and Thomas Daniels discusses the differences between the American and English versions of the story. However, these critiques do not touch upon the critical connection of “Winter Dreams” with *The Great Gatsby*. John A. Higgins indicates that “Winter Dreams” might be a work that aptly depicts or mocks the American plutocratic society or the American dream of prosperity that was sought at that time. Higgins says, “Of all Fitzgerald's pre-*Gatsby* stories ‘Winter Dreams’ is the most

frequently-cited forerunner of the novel. Whereas ‘The Diamond as Big as the Ritz’ delved into the corruption of wealth, ‘Winter Dreams’ explores the other major theme of the novel—the romantic dream and the disillusion inherent in it. *The Great Gatsby* fuses the two and shows that they are both aspects of the fallacious American Dream” (60-61). By using it as a reference for observing contemporary social conditions, as pointed out by the critics, the connection between “Winter Dreams” and *The Great Gatsby* seems to be clear.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to these readings, which regard “Winter Dreams” as a similar yet smaller work that prepares *The Great Gatsby*, the story is often read through for its use of sport. Neil D. Isaacs, in discussing the title of “Winter Dreams,” focuses on the fact that what is ostensibly a story about “winter” has many pages devoted to golf, which is a summer sport. According to Isaacs, at the time, golf had grown immensely popular and sports represented a kind of social structure. He thus concludes that this trend had a big influence upon “Winter Dreams”: “Fitzgerald, in his Jazz Age depiction of a sports minded America, presaged the mass-age youth cult that is inextricably wound up with athleticism in contemporary culture. ‘Winter Dreams’ retains its appeal for audiences largely because Fitzgerald’s perceptions—whether prominent, subdued, or totally submerged—of the significance of sports in our society’s attitudes touch out conditioned responses. In the jargon, we related to the ways people and types and classes are characterized in their sports, to the



ways beauty is glimpsed in association with sports, and to the ways dreams are set in the arenas of sports” (207). Golf plays a major role in this work, but Isaacs describes it only as the influence of societal trends and unfortunately does not discuss the actual plot. This chapter focuses on the “drivers” appearing in the story in the form of golf clubs and vehicle drivers in the two works and their endless “swapping,” thus showing how they represent a series of stories about encountering, recapturing, and losing a single woman sharing the characteristics of a bad driver.<sup>26</sup> This may add an element to the understanding of the relationship with *The Great Gatsby* and “Winter Dreams.”

## 2. “Winter Dreams” as the First Draft of *The Great Gatsby*

Andrew Turnbull demonstrates that F. Scott Fitzgerald’s short story “Winter Dreams” is the first draft of *The Great Gatsby*.<sup>27</sup> Mid-September found the Fitzgeralds at the Plaza. When they were not house-hunting in the suburbs, Scott was writing a story, “Winter Dreams,” which he later called “a sort of first draft of the Gatsby idea,” or soberly transacting business in connection with his play (133). Past criticism has frequently cited such statements by Turnbull and letters by Fitzgerald, solidifying the assertion that “Winter Dreams” is part of the “cluster” encompassing *The Great Gatsby*. Matthew J. Bruccoli indicates that “Winter Dreams” and several other short stories simultaneously form a “cluster” with *The Great*

*Gatsby* and other works, which Fitzgerald used to introduce or test themes:

Fitzgerald did not have two mutually exclusive careers as a magazinist and as a novelist. It was one career, into which all of his work was integrated. Since Fitzgerald perforce wrote stories while he was working on novels, certain “cluster stories” introduce or test themes, settings, and situations that are fully developed in the novel. He routinely “stripped” passages from a story for reuse in a novel. These stories collected here are clearly in the *Gatsby*-cluster (a post-*Gatsby* work). (*The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald* xvii)

Furthermore, these “similarities” are mainly found in the plots of the two works. “Winter Dreams” opens with a scene in which a youth named Dexter Green living in a poor Minnesota town encounters a wealthy young lady, Judy Jones, at a golf course. For Dexter, Judy is just another girl, but she has an air of mystery that leaves a vivid impression upon him. Later on, the young Dexter finds great success as a businessman. One day, he runs into Judy on the golf course again. On noticing her, he starts pursuing her. However, the story ends with a scene in which we are stunned to find out that the now-married Judy has lost her formal luster. The plot of “Winter Dreams” is extremely similar to that of *The Great Gatsby*, in which young military officer James Gatz gives up his association with the

upper-class Daisy because of poverty, subsequently becomes enormously wealthy through success in business, and then wins her back for himself.

As described above, both works are similar in characters and settings and similarly involve love affairs between men and women. Of course, it is difficult to conclude a strong continuity between the works on this basis alone. This is because, like *The Great Gatsby* and “Winter Dreams,” many of Fitzgerald’s short works are centered around stories of unrequited love and social success. As several stories within Fitzgerald’s oeuvre have a high affinity to both works, it may be overreaching to assert that they are closely related only on the basis of the aforementioned characteristics. In order to identify the continuity between the two works in detail, the golf stories referenced in both “Winter Dreams” and *The Great Gatsby* and the role of vehicles and swapping, both of which have already been indicated in the past criticism of *The Great Gatsby* in “Winter Dreams,” would provide an appropriate means to examine the relationship between the two stories from a thematic viewpoint. The character of Jordan Baker in *The Great Gatsby* is a golf player, and golf plays a key role in “Winter Dreams” as well.<sup>28</sup> In addition, vehicles, which play an important role in *The Great Gatsby*, similarly play a critical role in “Winter Dreams.” Furthermore, according to Yasuhiro Takeuchi, the drivers and vehicles, which constitute the framework of this thesis, are significant in *The Great Gatsby*. In this

discussion, through a very “precise reading,” Takeuchi reveals that vehicles play an important role in *The Great Gatsby*. Takeuchi indicates that, as a story about vehicles, *The Great Gatsby* is simultaneously one about swapping (42-43). For example, the switching of cars by the characters at the very end of the story highlights how they have swapped their positions. The phenomenon revealed by Takeuchi may also be found in “Winter Dreams,” and the aim of this thesis is to re-evaluate the works in terms of this phenomenon and thereby present a connection between the two.

### 3. Golf Club Drivers and Swaps

At the beginning of “Winter Dreams,” a young Dexter encounters Judy Jones at the golf course where he works as a caddy. Here, Judy is visiting the golf course, which is managed by her father, and is releasing her first shot. Judy’s nurse says, “I don’t know what we’re supposed to do now” and “we don’t know how without we get a caddy” (366). Judy has never actually played golf before (since Dexter says he has seen Judy before at the golf course, and she seems to have come on several previous occasions) and does not know what to do first.<sup>29</sup> She calls out to a caddy [Dexter] who presents himself before her. Thus, “Then she [Judy] dropped her bag and set off at a haughty mince toward the first tee” (367). Judy is just about to make her first shot with a golf club. She has never been out on an actual course and has never taken her clubs out of the golf bag. She has never gripped a

golf club either. This means that Judy is about to start playing (possibly for the first time in her life) and attempts a tee shot. At this point, one can conclude that the golf club she is using is a driver.<sup>30</sup>

Judy and the golf driver appear in similar situations in different scenes of the story, which illustrates that a long time has passed from Dexter and Judy's first meeting on the golf course. The next time they meet, Dexter has had success in the cleaning business he bought after graduating from college and has risen to a similar social position as Judy. As a player, he now goes to the golf club where he once worked part time as a caddy and encounters the now-adult Judy. At this second encounter, Judy drives a golf ball using a driver, roughly striking it. While Dexter and his golf partner are searching for another lost ball, the golf ball flies out of nowhere and strikes his partner. They find that the golf ball was shot by Judy. Since she shot the ball a long distance "over the hill" (369) toward Dexter and his partner, the shot is called a "slice" ("drive"). Judy's striking of the golf ball "over the hill" means that what she did was "slice" (369) the ball. In other words, from the perspective of the person making the shot, the ball flew to the right. The occurrence must be due to Judy's using a driver to make the shot; thus, the club used by Judy may be supposed to have been a driver. This is because a driver is generally used when making a long-distance shot. It is hard to consider any other club as having been used in this scene, as it would not have made the golf ball fly "over the hill." Furthermore,

a slice is the result of a very low tee shot, or in other words, a first shot. This shows that Judy used a driver in this scene. Another way of saying that Judy sliced the golf ball is that she hit a “fade.” A “fade” is when a golf ball gradually goes to the right after it has been shot, while in a “slice” the ball makes a large curve to the right. In this scene, Judy’s shot makes a large fade, which results in a slice. As a result of this, it may be said that, in the scene in which Judy reappears, the “fade,” mentioned in the latter half of this thesis, is introduced early on in the first half of the story and at the same time as the driver. From the manner in which Judy made the shot, it seems as though it was her “first shot” (though it may have been the second shot with remaining distance from the first shot), but the fact is that Judy used a golf club in the scene that is used when making a long-distance shot. In other words, here she appears to be using a driver.

Similarly, the driver appears in different scenes without being specifically mentioned. In the round after Judy hits a golf ball at Dexter and his partner, they get stuck waiting for Judy to make her next shot after she goes ahead. “‘That Judy Jones!’ remarked Mr. Hedrick on the next tee, as they waited—some moments—for her play on ahead” (369). In this scene, Dexter and his partner, who were overtaken by Judy, wait for Judy to move to make her second shot near the tee for the next round. In other words, after Dexter and his partner yield to her, they watch as Judy first makes a tee shot with a

driver. It is also worth noting that Dexter's golf partner in this scene mentions, "Better thank the Lord she does not drive a swifter ball" (370), in reference to Judy's shot. This is because, as this remark makes clear, Judy uses a "driver" in front of Dexter and his partner at the next hole (after overtaking Dexter), making a tee shot, and further "driving" the golf ball. What cannot be overlooked is that, similar to this scene, Judy was introduced at the beginning of the story with a driver from her set of golf clubs and, furthermore, was repeatedly depicted with a driver when she reappeared later.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Judy could be understood as a "driver" that repeatedly appears within the work and drives Dexter and the whole "Winter Dreams."

#### 4. Drivers (of Vehicles) and Swaps

The drivers depicted in "Winter Dreams" are not just golf clubs. They also take the form of vehicle drivers in the story. There are three scenes in this story in which drivers appear together with images of vehicles. All of these bring about a swap and, at the same time, depict what ultimately drives Dexter. In the first scene, a motorboat driver appears, and there is a swap between riding a raft and a surfboard. Judy asks Dexter to take over driving the motorboat, while she rides a surfboard. The second scene depicts a swap between fiancés and drivers. Dexter, who is engaged to Irene, and Judy, who has come back to her home town after breaking up with a man living in Miami, are having a conversation. While Dexter drives a car in this

scene, they switch places on the way back. In the third scene, Judy marries a man in Detroit, and Dexter finds out that their marriage has already lost its luster. All of these scenes involve the presence of drivers as well as vehicles. Of course, since there are vehicles appearing in each of these scenes, it may just be a matter of course that drivers should appear along with them. However, Fitzgerald would not thoughtlessly introduce vehicles and drivers at the same time within the story without reason. That is, it is possible that drivers appear in vehicles for the purpose of driving some event. Furthermore, even in scenes that feature golf club drivers, the phenomenon of swaps, similar to that with vehicles, is depicted. Thus, the work itself is largely driven by actual swaps in the positions and relationships of people.

This phenomenon first appears in the scene in which Dexter and Judy meet on the lake. The day Dexter encounters Judy on the course, he is sprawled out on a raft on the golf club's lake. Judy then appears driving a motorboat. The motorboat she is driving hits the raft, causing it to tilt. Dexter slides down the raft toward Judy, which is when they recognize each other. Judy then has Dexter, who has been on the raft, drive the boat. She says she would prefer riding a surfboard instead: "Well, do you know how to drive a motor-boat? Because if you do I wish you'd drive this one so I can ride on the surf-board behind" (371). Within this series of actions, a swap occurs



(Judy moves to the surfboard, which is a “floating board” similar to Dexter’s “raft,” and Dexter becomes the motorboat driver).

Furthermore, the swap that occurs because Judy ran into the raft with the motorboat is also one that Judy experiences herself. Now, why did Judy appear on a motorboat on the lake in the middle of the night in the first place? A man she was familiar with suddenly showed up at her house uninvited and approached her for marriage: “I live in a house over there on the island, and in that house there is a man waiting for me. When he drove up at the door I drove out of the dock because he says I’m his ideal” (371). Thus, a man entered through the door of the house, and she ran out as though she had been pushed out. Then, by driving the motorboat, Dexter now occupies the position held by that man. Dexter thus starts a friendship with Judy, though he is actually doing this with the intent of marrying Judy later. Judy recognizes that Dexter is a substitute for the man who came to propose to her. She remarks, “I don’t know what’s the matter with me. Last night I thought I was in love with a man and tonight I think I’m love with you” (374). Before long, Dexter also proposes to Judy (374). This is also a swap. It shows that Fitzgerald is using scenes with drivers in order to depict two swaps at the same time.

A similar swap can be found in the scene in which Dexter meets Judy again at a dance club, after he has become engaged to Irene Sheare and Judy has returned to her home town. Here, Judy drives

Dexter's car. Dexter is intending to break off his company with Judy because of his engagement to Irene. However, Judy senses his plans and urges him, saying, "I'd like to marry you" (380). The result is that Dexter is unable to flatly refuse Judy; he calls off his engagement with Irene and simultaneously begins to re-establish his contact with Judy with the intent of marrying her. This exchange, which occurs in the car on the way home from the dance club, results in a "swap," namely, the "swapping" of Dexter's fiancées.

At the same time, there is also a swapping of drivers in this scene. Judy implicitly hints to Dexter that her car is parked in front of the dance hall: "Have you a car here? If you haven't, I have" (379). That is, Judy came to the dance club in her own car, and she then lures Dexter out of the dance club and rides home in the car that he drives (378). This scene has a two-fold "swap" (the substitution of Dexter's fiancées and the substitution of drivers). Furthermore, around the same time as Dexter and Irene became "engaged" (376), Judy also got "engaged" in Florida: "Dexter and Irene became engaged. It was to be announced in June, and they were to be married three months later. . . . Judy Jones had been in Florida, and afterwards in Hot Springs, and somewhere she had been engaged, and somewhere she had broken it off" (377). "She had been back only the day—her absence had been almost contemporaneous with his engagement" (379). This means that Dexter broke off his engagement with Irene to get engaged to Judy, and Judy broke off her engagement

around the same time. Judy says, as she coaxes Dexter, “I’d like to marry you if you’ll have me, Dexter. I suppose you think I’m not worth having, but I’ll be so beautiful for you Dexter” (380). The fact that Dexter decides to break off his engagement with Irene in response to Judy’s offer certainly suggests that Dexter has become engaged to Judy. That is, on the way home from the dance club, there was a two-fold swap involving fiancées and drivers.

The third is the scene in the final chapter where Dexter is talking with a man called Devlin at work. As soon as he hears from Devlin that “Judy has settled down now that she’s married,” Dexter is driven by an impulse all of a sudden; in other words, he is suddenly motivated: “He was possessed with a wild notion of rushing out into the streets and taking a train to Detroit. He rose to his feet spasmodically” (382). Thus, possessed by a “wild notion,” Dexter mistakes his own words for those of Devlin: “Did you say she was—twenty-seven? No, I said she was twenty-seven” (382). It is important to focus on the fact that a swap is occurring in this scene in which Dexter is being driven. Furthermore, the town where Judy lives, to which Dexter is driven, is Detroit, which happens to be a town that was, at that time, already known around the world for producing cars.<sup>32</sup> The fact that Judy lives in Detroit leads to associations with the images of driving and drivers. Furthermore, the motivating force that strongly drives Dexter is a result of longing to swap places with Judy’s husband and wanting to make Judy his own even though she

had married Lud Simms. Perhaps as a result of this drive, Dexter will try to get back the woman he had once “lost” (383). We may assume at this point in the story that Dexter is already in a state of being “driven” and possibly intends to rush over to Judy and “swap” places with her husband even though she is married.

## 5. Lost Balls

Another strong argument that shows a firm connection between the two works is that Dexter is considered exceptionally good as a caddy at finding golf balls that have flown off somewhere (“faded”) and got lost. This part of his character may be considered as the basis of Dexter’s attempt to find and win back Judy, who supposedly has “faded” (383) (like a golf ball).<sup>33</sup> This also serves as evidence that *The Great Gatsby* should be described as a continuation of “Winter Dreams.” The reason is that *The Great Gatsby* is also a story of someone searching for and winning back a woman (Daisy) he had lost in the past. If one considers the story of *The Great Gatsby* to be a continuation of “Winter Dreams,” it would be natural to assume that Dexter would probably seek out the supposedly faded Judy (as though searching for a golf ball that had flown off somewhere).

This particular skill of Dexter’s can be seen from his youth while he was working as a caddy. Dexter was seen as being superior at his job compared to other caddies because he would not allow any golf balls to become “lost balls.” For example, Mortimer Jones,

Dexter's employer from his caddy days, appraised him as follows:

"[Dexter was] the best caddy in the club, and wouldn't he decide not to quit if Mr. Jones made it worth his while, because every other—caddy I saw. . . . Never lost a ball! Willing! Intelligent! Quiet! Honest! Grateful!" (365). Dexter could find balls that would end up as "lost balls" for other caddies. This was his natural ability. This was also something he was actually able to put to use in managing his laundry business. Although Dexter's cleaning business was small, he was able to keep it going because, as his customers saw, he was skillful in making sure that none of the laundry would "shrink," unlike other places in the same line of work:

It was a small laundry when he went into it, but Dexter made a specialty of learning how the English washed fine woolen golf-stockings without shrinking them, and within a year he was catering to the trade that wore knickerbockers. Men were insisting that their Shetland hose and sweaters go to his laundry, just as they had insisted on a caddy who could find golf balls. (368)

Here the word "shrinking" is used, referring to not letting laundry shrink in size. Moreover, "fade" (similar to "shrink") also means to "physically diminish."<sup>34</sup> That is, in this work, what allows Dexter to both work as an excellent caddy and run a successful laundry business is his ability to keep things from "shrinking" (or "fading"). Thus, perhaps he is also trying to prevent Judy from "fading" like

this. This is because, in addition to not letting lost balls get away, he does not let knits “shrink.” When Dexter first realizes in this scene about Judy’s fading and that he has lost her, Dexter cannot imagine giving up on her. Right after Devlin tells him that Judy has “faded,” Dexter feels as though he has lost something:<sup>35</sup>

The dream was gone. Something had been taken from him. In a sort of panic he pushed the palms of his hands into his eyes and tried to bring up a picture of the water lapping on Sherry Island and the moonlit veranda, and gingham on the golf-links and the dry sun and the gold colour of her neck’s soft down. And her mouth damp to his kisses and her eyes plaintive with melancholy and her freshness like new fine linen in the morning. Why, these things were no longer in the world! They had existed and they existed no longer. (383)

Thus, of course, Dexter goes in search of Judy, just as he would search for golf balls that flew off and went missing (“faded”). Actually, Dexter discovers Judy twice in the search process. Dexter originally haunts the dance club searching for Judy. However, one day, when he resigns himself to the thought that he and Judy do not match, he encounters Judy at the dance club again. That is, Dexter meets Judy at the club twice. “Club” is also used in this work to mean “golf club.” Furthermore, according to *OED*, “ball” can also mean “a gathering for dancing.”<sup>36</sup> That is, just as Dexter went to search for

golf balls that his fellow golfers let fly away, he heads for the ball (meaning dance club), resulting in his meeting Judy twice. Thus, this simultaneously predicts that Dexter will later go again in search of a faded ball, while indicating that he might find the woman he is searching for.

“Winter Dreams” comes to a close with a scene that predicts that Dexter will find his lost lover Judy and that he will then “try to make a swap.” This bears connections to Gatsby when he is trying to win back Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*. In this way, the idea that the ending of “Winter Dreams” recalls has a very strong connection to the story of *The Great Gatsby*. At the same time, this clarifies that *The Great Gatsby* is a continuation of “Winter Dreams.”

## 6. Swaps: The Past Repeated

The reason for the use of the same phenomenon in this work—“swaps”—by Fitzgerald when depicting both vehicle “drivers” and “(golf club) drivers” lies in the time periods of the two works. “Winter Dreams” was published in 1922 and *The Great Gatsby* in 1925. However, if we look at the times depicted in these works, “Winter Dreams” is set in 1924 and *The Great Gatsby* in 1922. When the war (World War I) starts, Dexter immediately volunteers to go to the front:

He went East in February with the intention of selling out his laundries and settling in New York—but the war came

to America in March and changed his plans. He returned to the West, handed over the management of the business to his partner, and went into the first officers' training-camp in late April. He was one of those young thousands who greeted the war with a certain amount of relief, welcoming the liberation from webs of tangled emotion.

(381)

Dexter participated in the camp in "late April." America made a proclamation of war with Germany and rushed into the world war on April 6th, 1917. Thus, we can assume that Dexter participated in the camp in 1917. Furthermore, the final scene of the story takes place seven years after Dexter headed to the front:

There is only one more incident to be related here, and it happens seven years farther on. It took place in New York, where he had done well- so well that there were no barriers too high for him. He was thirty-two years old, and, except one flying trip immediately after the war, he had not been West in seven years. (381)

This proves that seven years after Dexter headed to the front in 1917, that is, 1924 would be the time of the final scene of "Winter Dreams." Furthermore, *The Great Gatsby* has the following remarks at the beginning of the book and is set in 1922 in the eastern United States: "Father agreed to finance me for a year, and after various delays I came East, permanently, I thought, in the spring of twenty-



two" (3). In other words, the time periods of the two works (both within and without) are in reverse order. As mentioned previously, "Winter Dreams" and the subsequent *The Great Gatsby* must be understood in terms of inverting their contexts.

The important thing here is that in "Winter Dreams," what motivates the drivers are swaps. As mentioned above, in the settings where there are "drivers," "swaps" are also depicted simultaneously. Thus, "Winter Dreams" "motivates" *The Great Gatsby* (which means that as a preceding work, it both amounts to the starting point of *The Great Gatsby* and suggests the reason for Gatsby's search for Daisy). This being the case, it would be appropriate for "swaps" to occur between the two stories as well. In reality, the two works have a relationship such that it is possible to turn the tide (with respect to time). In other words, Fitzgerald attempts to overrule the irreversibility of time through these two works.<sup>37</sup>

In the same way that Dexter was motivated by the memory of Judy in "Winter Dreams," Gatsby pines for the past and pursues Daisy, the lover he lost. However, if we look back over both "Winter Dreams" and *The Great Gatsby*, they are works in which the past and the present are swappable; they cannot be associated with fixed times of past and future (or beginning and end). Namely, what Fitzgerald depicted was not a singular and fixed time in past and future, but a time that allowed for swapping or reversing.

The time, that swaps the events occurring in “past and future,” is a direct answer to the question posed in *The Great Gatsby*. This is clarified by Gatsby’s reply to Nick’s question of “I wouldn’t ask too much of her”:

“I wouldn’t ask too much of her,” I ventured. “You can’t repeat the past.”

“Can’t repeat the past?” he cried incredulously. “Why of course you can!”

He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand. “I’m going to fix everything just the way it was

before,” he said, nodding determinedly. “She’ll see.” (110)

To put “repeat the past” in other words, the past is repeated in the future. Only by reversing “past and present” can Gatsby’s wish come true.

## 7. Conclusion

If *The Great Gatsby* is a continuation of “Winter Dreams,” it means that these two works could be seen as part of a series. Through their connection, a repeated past is created: that is, a repeat of the past in the future or a time in which it is possible for past and future to be swapped. Dexter and Gatsby sought this kind of time in order to make someone they lost in the past their own again; namely, they sought to “repeat the past.” The time that Fitzgerald depicted was a

kind of time for retrieving something important that had been lost in the past. As the first draft of *The Great Gatsby*, “Winter Dreams” indicates that the notion of “repeating the past” is critical to unveiling Fitzgerald’s theory of time. Thus, in the next section, I will focus on the short story “Babylon Revisited” again and illustrate how “repeating the past” is related to being lost and wandering in the past.

## 2.

## Wandering Forever in Unpayable Debts in

## “Babylon Revisited” and “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button”

## 1. Wandering

The previous section discussed the repetition of time as represented by the character of Judy Jones in “Winter Dreams.” This short story is key to understanding Gatsby’s famous words, “repeat the past.” This section will continue the discussion on how repeating the past means wandering and being lost in the past by studying two short stories, “Babylon Revisited” and “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.” The protagonists of each are forced to repeat their past—Charlie, through his memories and guilt, and Benjamin, quite literally as he ages in reverse. As a result, they wander or are lost in the past forever.

In “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button,” the protagonist Benjamin is abruptly called “Wandering Jew.” Although this seems to have no connection to the story, it seems that the old myth of “Wandering Jew” is key to understanding this short story. This thesis examines the thematic similarities between the mythical story of the Wandering Jew and the works of F. Scott Fitzgerald: more specifically, his short stories “Babylon Revisited” and “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.” Permeating all three tales are themes of wandering, inability to escape the repercussions of the past, and debt,

particularly to the dead, that can never be repaid. I argue that the protagonists of “Babylon Revisited” and “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” have serious and unredeemable moral debts. I argue that, in both stories, Fitzgerald deliberately draws on the myth to explore issues of moral redemption, guilt, suffering, and the impossibility to revisit the past to retrieve and heal previous transgressions, and that these themes are exemplified in the circular narrative structures of the stories.

Although some studies on “Babylon Revisited” have focused especially on monetary problems, in the story, the protagonist Charlie Wales clears up the money problem and even becomes richer than before. Thus, it is probable that the central concern of the story is not only the monetary problems.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, he still struggles with a conundrum, and he has to solve a problem with his past wife. Amid these problems, there is a serious problem, and before he could solve that, his wife was dead and he has a heavy cross to bear, which leads to his losing his daughter’s custody. This episode shows that his main concern is not so much about money as about a moral problem. To examine the moral problem in “Babylon Revisited” and “Benjamin Button,” it would be appropriate to consult studies that focus on “wandering” in Fitzgerald’s fiction. Many of Fitzgerald’s stories contain characters who lose their places and wander as a result of their inescapable circumstances, such as Charlie, the protagonist of “Babylon Revisited”; Dexter Green, the protagonist of “Winter

Dreams,” who is concerned with his fading memory of the beautiful Judy Jones; and Benjamin, the protagonist of “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button,” who destined to wander in exile.<sup>39</sup> In this section, I argue that the key to understanding the motifs common to “Babylon Revisited” and “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” lies in the myth of the Wandering Jew. Fitzgerald references this myth directly in “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button”: at the train station, some boys amidst a throng of onlookers who gawk at Benjamin say of him, “[H]e must be the Wandering Jew” (169).

## 2. The Myth of the Wandering Jew and “Babylon Revisited”

An overview of the myth will assist in showing how the themes of exile, guilt, and the failure to find redemption underpin “Babylon Revisited” and “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.” As George K. Anderson explains in his *The Legend of the Wandering Jew*, the story is a Christian allegory of the Jewish diaspora, where a Jewish shoemaker, Ahasuerus, also referred to as Cartaphilus, Ahasverus, Ahasuer, and Malchus in different versions, denies Jesus respite as Jesus travels toward Golgotha where he will be crucified. Jesus asks the shoemaker for a glass of water; however, Ahasuerus denies Jesus’ request and, as a result, Jesus declares that Ahasuerus will not die until the Second Coming, “I sure will rest, but thou shalt Walk, and have no journey stayed” (62). Ahasuerus realizes that he has made a catastrophic mistake; however, it is too late for him to atone for it. In

anguish, Ahasuerus leaves his wife, son, and homeland to wander the earth ceaselessly, suffering the guilt and pain of exile as the consequence of his momentary lack of compassion. Importantly, Ahasuerus cannot ever pay his debt and redeem himself because Jesus has died. Here, there seems to be two morals of the story: the first is that non-believers can never be redeemed from sin, and, more importantly, the second is that actions of the past can never be undone. To examine how the myth of the Wandering Jew underpins both “Babylon Revisited” and “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button,” which, I argue, are morality tales, I first examine how the themes and motifs of the myth are invoked in “Babylon Revisited.” I will then show how the circular narrative structure of both stories exemplifies the recurring theme of “exile as destiny” implicit in the myth.

In “Babylon Revisited,” asking for a drink and the inability to repay a debt for past transgressions, the latter also being implicit in the myth of the Wandering Jew, are recurring motifs. To begin with, Fitzgerald uses the title to invoke the myth of the Wandering Jew as a story of an unredeemable Antichrist, because, as George Anderson indicates, Babylon is the home of Ahasuerus to which he can never return (38). Fitzgerald’s “Babylon Revisited” concerns the protagonist Charlie who becomes an alcoholic and loses his wealth during the Great Depression. He also loses his wife Helen, and her sister Marion blames him for her death. This chain of events results in Charlie’s losing custody of his daughter Honoria to Marion. Even though

Charlie subsequently recovers his fortune, Marion cannot fully trust him and refuses to return Honoria, so Charlie's past actions are unredeemed, and, like Ahasuerus, he loses his family. There are three instances in "Babylon Revisited" that involve someone giving or refusing to give someone else a drink. In an encounter with Charlie, Lorraine, an old friend from his debauched days, recalls, "But 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" (221). Lorraine was also an alcoholic, but, unlike Charlie, has not reformed. She had previously asked Charlie for a drink when they accidentally met in Paris, the city where Charlie had lost his fortune. As the narrator records, "Between the acts they came upon Duncan and Lorraine in the lobby where the band was playing. 'Have a drink?' 'All right, but not up at the bar. We'll take a table'" (212). In the final instance, Claude Fessenden, a customer at a bar in Paris, asks for a drink; however, the bartender refuses (206). The idea of asking for or refusing to give a drink is not unusual in itself. However, in a short story whose title invokes the myth, the motif is obvious. Although, unlike the myth, the symbolism of water as a curative is replaced by alcohol, and also the refusal to drink is ironically the source of Charlie's partial redemption.



### 3. Monetary and Moral Debt

The protagonists of both the myth and “Babylon Revisited” struggle with guilt and the denial of redemption.<sup>40</sup> Charlie misunderstands his problems as being monetary in nature and thinks he can repay his moral debts through money or valuable gifts. Charlie recovers from his financial problems in Prague and becomes quite wealthy. As he says, to Marion and her husband Lincoln, he is doing “extremely well. . . There is a lot of business there that isn’t moving at all, but we’re doing even better than ever. In fact, damn well. . . My income last year was bigger than it was when I had money” (207). At this point, in his quest to regain his daughter Honoria, he suddenly realizes that money is not quite the problem he thinks it is. Fitzgerald writes, “[Charlie] stopped, realizing that he was blundering. . . [Marion and Lincoln] couldn’t be expected to accept with equanimity the fact that his income was again twice as large as their own” (216). However, for Marion and Lincoln, the problem is whether Charlie can be relied upon as a morally responsible person. Marion has lost a sister, Helen, partly because of his actions in the past. This means his debt is unpayable; he cannot adequately compensate others for his past deeds. His daughter, whom he cannot regain custody of, functions in the story as a type of collateral that is withheld from him.

Although Charlie is mistaken in thinking that he can repay his debt, he realizes that his past deeds have caused him to owe a debt he

cannot repay. The word “owe,” used in the opening and close of the story, is symbolically important. Various scenes in the story also emphasize owing, as opposed to owning, as a crucial factor for Charlie. For example, the narrator begins the story with the observation that “It was not an American bar any more” (205). This implies that, culturally speaking, Charlie and other rich Americans at one time owned the bar. At the end of the story, Charlie, who cares deeply about settling all his debts, asks a waiter for his bill, “What do I owe you?” (223). Owing and paying back what is owed—or returning what has been received—are key themes in “Babylon Revisited.”

Charlie’s inability to retrieve his daughter Honoria (his moral collateral) further emphasizes the unpayable nature of his debt. Charlie’s sister-in-law, Marion, legally holds the right to decide his daughter’s fate. Fitzgerald describes Charlie’s attempts at reconciliation with Marion in monetary terms, “He thought rather angrily that this was just money. . . they [Helen, Marion, and Lincoln] couldn’t make him pay forever” (223). Indirectly, if he hopes to regain custody of his daughter, he must continue to repay his debt to his wife. Marion blames Charlie for his poor treatment of his wife, her sister, in the past, saying, “My duty is entirely to Helen” (214). In addition, Charlie calls Honoria a “pie,” a term that can reference wealth as in “a piece of the pie.” When he goes to Marion’s house to visit Honoria, as in the following passage, the narrator observes, “From behind the maid who opened the door darted a lovely little girl

of nine who shrieked ‘Daddy!’ and flew up, struggling like a fish into his arms. She pulled his head around by one ear and set her cheek against his. ‘My old pie,’ he said” (207). Figuratively speaking, one can view Honoria as part of a financial transaction similar to a loan. This motif resonates on multiple levels because Marion’s husband, Lincoln, works at a bank (218). These analogies connecting Charlie’s life situation with the world of finances reinforce the reading that Charlie mistakenly believes he can financially redeem an unpayable moral debt.

Marion’s lack of “confidence” in Charlie further supports the notion that his problem is not monetary, but moral in nature. Charlie grieves because he, like Marion, believes that his past deeds caused his wife’s death. This is a key issue for Charlie because his wife’s death means that Marion’s confidence in him can never be restored. As a result, Charlie never regains custody of his daughter, which provides the final evidence that his debt is indeed unredeemable. Marion describes her misgivings about Charlie in terms of a “question of confidence” (220) and “distrust” (215). Lincoln concurs: “I think the main point for [Marion] is whether she has confidence in you or not” (215). Still, Charlie insists, “I think she can have entire confidence in me” (215), again failing to acknowledge the true nature of his debt which is moral rather than financial.

Also, Claude, an old friend of Charlie’s, parallels Charlie in that he also owes a moral debt, but Claude’s debt is financial as well as

moral. At the beginning of the story, Charlie learns that the bar staff have permanently barred Claude from the premises. Over the course of a year, Claude had run up a large bill on credit, and, when the head barman demanded that he pay, his “bad check” did not clear and the manager finally lost confidence in him (206). Similarly, Marion’s loss of confidence in Charlie means she will not return his daughter to be left in his care. Charlie’s moral debt can never be repaid. This problem is not resolved at the end of the story and is likely to be never resolved.

As in Ahasuerus’ case with Jesus, Charlie has no way to repay his moral debt to his wife, Helen, as she is dead. Furthermore, although Ahasuerus was not directly responsible for the death of Jesus, nor was Charlie for Helen’s “heart troubles,” both are in some way morally responsible for their past deeds. In both cases, they cannot redeem their past mistakes and must suffer this misfortune.

#### 4. Failure of Redemption and Circular Narrative

Both the myth and “Babylon Revisited” have circular narratives that prevent complete redemption of the protagonists from their past deeds. Charlie’s problems, which stem from his past behavior, constantly resurface in new situations, such as his interactions with his old friends. For instance, the “sudden ghosts of the past,” Duncan and Lorraine, have a kind of moral claim on Charlie as his friends, as does his sister-in-law and his deceased wife (211). When Marion and

Lincoln finally invite Charlie to dinner at their house, it seems likely that Marion will at last agree to grant Charlie custody of his daughter. However, Duncan and Lorraine suddenly arrive without notice, and Marion, angered by these uninvited drunken guests from Charlie's past, refuses to proceed with custody negotiations.

Significantly, it is at this point in the story that Lorraine cites Charlie's past deeds and requires that he repay Duncan and her for their earlier kindness to him by offering them a drink. She says, "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" (221). Lorraine formulates her past attention to Charlie as a type of loan, adding to Charlie's moral debt, and requires recompense; however, Charlie cannot repay her. More importantly, he calls these intruders "the ghosts of [the] past," alluding to the dead, including his late wife. Just at the point when Charlie seems poised to succeed in regaining his daughter's custody, he loses his opportunity because his past actions and an unredeemable moral debt comes back to haunt him. Once again, like Ahasuerus, he cannot redeem actions committed in the past.

Another similarity between Charlie and the Wandering Jew is that they face similar punishments. As Christopher Morrison explains, the Wandering Jew cannot die (400), and his age continues to reset itself, "On reaching old age he miraculously regenerates to a younger age" (400). Once he becomes approximately a hundred years old, his body changes back to that of a thirty-year-old. This process is

automatic and goes on *ad infinitum*; he cannot escape the cycle and cannot die. In “Babylon Revisited,” Charlie cannot help repeating the same actions, the consequences of which he is trying to overcome. In fact, “Babylon Revisited” has an overall circular structure: the story opens and ends in the same bar, with Charlie having the same conversation with the bartender, and the plot is unresolved.

Moreover, as the title implies, “Babylon Revisited,” this story demonstrates Charlie’s compulsion to repeat the same actions. For example, he visits and will revisit his daughter, and he pays and will continue to repay his unforgiving sister-in-law and her husband, “He would come back some day; they couldn’t make him pay forever” (223).

Although he repeatedly attempts to repay his sister-in-law, he fails to gain custody of his daughter. At the end of the story, he appears to fail yet again, and as the narrator claims, he will try again: “He would come back some day” (223). In the opening of the story, Charlie talks with a bartender about their acquaintances who had returned to their home countries, and, in the ending, the narrator states that Charlie will return to Paris one day. The same is true of the Wandering Jew, who will continuously return to his homeland and grapple with his sin for the rest of his life.

In “Babylon Revisited,” the idea of return has a dual symbolic meaning: as repayment of a moral debt and as a return to origins. As noted, the story begins with Charlie’s return to Paris. In his

conversation with the bartender, Alix, Charlie describes his family as an investment that has failed to yield a return. When Alix comments, “I heard that you lost a lot in the crash,” Charlie replies, “I lost everything I wanted in the boom” (222). In the ending, as mentioned earlier, the story echoes this theme of return, as the narrator speaks of Charlie’s future plans to return to Paris to pursue his dream of regaining Honoria’s custody.

Other significant motifs connect “Babylon Revisited” to the myth. The protagonists of both stories lose their families. As noted, Charlie’s wife dies, and his sister-in-law and her husband take custody of his daughter. The Wandering Jew is separated from his family during his eternal wandering. Both protagonists are also surprised at the drastic changes that occur in their surroundings during their absence. When Ahasuerus arrives at the village in which he grew up, he notices how dramatically it has been transformed. This idea is captured in the Anderson edition of the myth as follows, “Forth with he went into foreign lands, one after another, until the present time. When, after many centuries, he came back to his land, he found it all laid to waste and Jerusalem destroyed, so that he could no longer recognize it” (46). Furthermore, “He has a wife and child (or children), whom he must abandon because of the curse” (48). When Charlie arrives at the bar in Paris, he finds that many of his friends have already left the city, and, as noted above, he observes that the atmosphere is completely different: “It was not an American

bar any more—he felt polite in it, and not as if he owned it. It had gone back into France” (205).

## 5. Benjamin as the Wandering Jew

As to the relation between the myth and “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button,” the two stories share similar plot points, motifs, and circular structures, and they also share the moral problems. Fitzgerald makes the connection between these stories particularly clear in the episode in “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” where the protagonist is rejected by Yale University. He walks to the train station, followed by a curious throng of onlookers and some boys cry out, “He must be the Wandering Jew!” (169). Here, Fitzgerald makes explicit the links between the two protagonists. Furthermore, elsewhere in the story, Fitzgerald links Benjamin to images of crime; for instance, it is rumored that he “had been in prison for forty years” and “was John Wilkes Booth” (172). Booth was famous for being a Shakespearean actor who assassinated President Abraham Lincoln. Benjamin’s time in prison and his having the identity of an assassin are the consequences of his alleged crime. Interestingly, by associating Benjamin with the works of Shakespeare in the context, the character is identified with scenes of violence and murder. Furthermore, many of his neighbors and colleagues metaphorically refer to Benjamin’s marriage as “criminal” (172). Like the Wandering



Jew, Benjamin's unusual aging process and his past deeds, whether actual or imagined, also affect his experience of the world.

The similarities between these stories become especially clear by focusing on the theme of immortality and the circular story structure therein. Benjamin is born with the body of a seventy-five-year-old man and his body becomes progressively younger throughout his life. In the end, it seems that he does not die, but instead simply disappears. The most important point to understand about the ending of "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" is that it indicates a kind of rebirth. At the end of the story, Benjamin disappears and, as Fitzgerald writes, "Then it was all dark, and his white crib and the dim faces that moved above him, and the warm sweet aroma of the milk, faded out altogether from his mind" (181). In this scene, the specific details warrant attention. When he is born, nurses take him from the crib; he is then "[w]rapped in a voluminous white blanket, and partially crammed into one of the cribs" (162). Then, as Benjamin puts in the voice of an old man, "I asked for something to eat and they brought me a bottle of milk!" (163). The scenes described at the beginning and ending of the story are virtually identical. In the ending, the story comes full circle because Benjamin, who was placed in a white crib by a nurse shortly after his birth, also disappears from a white crib (162, 181).

Like the Wandering Jew whose fate is not to die and to wander forever, Benjamin in "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" do not

die, at least symbolically. Despite having appeared as central supporting characters, Benjamin's parents, grandfather, and father-in-law all disappear silently; Fitzgerald does not describe their exits from the story. These characters must have died because he is born an old man and by the end of his life, he has become an infant again. However, the lack of explicit mention of their deaths implies a world without death, particularly because his death is not described but rather implied when a nurse uses the word "ghost" (161) when referring to Benjamin shortly after his birth; furthermore, his father calls him an "apparition" (163). This suggests that Benjamin had been reborn: to be seen as a ghost is to be recognized as a dead person. According to his wife, nobody, not even Benjamin, should interfere with the cycle of birth and rebirth. She wonders why he insists on aging backward, "I should think you'd have enough pride to stop it. . . . If you've made up your mind to be different from everybody else, I don't suppose I can stop you, but I really don't think it's very considerate" (175). Thus, Benjamin is similar to Ahasuerus, whose body becomes young again when he reaches old age, and this cycle goes on *ad infinitum* because he cannot control it.

In both stories, the protagonists, Benjamin and Ahasuerus, are condemned to wander the earth. The Wandering Jew must roam the earth until the Second Coming. Benjamin wanders endlessly as others often reject him, including the hospital where he was born (162). Although he is a newborn and may require standard hospital care, the

nurse insists strongly that Benjamin must leave right away, saying, “We’re going to ask you to take him home with you as soon as possible—sometime to-day” (162), and “You’ll have to take him home immediately!” (163). Later in the story, the school registrar insists that Benjamin leave Yale University and the town, “Well, I’ll give you eighteen minutes to get out of town” (169). In addition, Benjamin must frequently leave his home because of arguments with his wife and son. Homeless, Benjamin attempts to rejoin the United States armed forces, but is refused.

Benjamin’s physical problems also are entwined with moral issues, as is the case with the Wandering Jew. His mere existence causes embarrassment and anger in others, which indicates there is a moral deficiency in him. Everyone at the hospital appears to be annoyed at his birth. Doctor Keene is a representative example. The doctor helps Benjamin’s mother give birth; he knows the Buttons well because he has a strong connection with them as their “family physician” (160). Despite this, he says to Benjamin’s father, “I brought you into the world, young man, and I’ve been physician to your family for forty years, but I am through with you! I don’t want to see you or any of your relatives ever again! Good-by!” (161). The doctor is angry and his response indicates that Benjamin poses potential problems, moral in nature, from the moment of his birth. Benjamin, as a newborn, presumably could not have done anything to trigger this anger. As his response to the birth, the doctor even

exclaims to Benjamin's father, "Outrageous!" (160), and seemed to be "in a perfect passion of irritation" (160). The nurses behave in a similar way; one "[gives] a little scream" when she meets Benjamin's father, who reminds her of Benjamin (161). Another nurse is greatly surprised when Benjamin's father asks to look at his child; she drops a basin (161). The nurse "[regains] control of herself, and [throws] Mr. Button a look of hearty contempt" (161). These instances reveal that, from the moment of his birth, the mere existence and presence of Benjamin reveals a moral deficiency, perhaps from his past, that he cannot overcome.

## 6. Conclusion

Fitzgerald reimagined myth in "Babylon Revisited" and "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," and the similarity seems to typify many of his stories and also their connection with other Jewish allegories and myths. From this point of view, "Babylon Revisited" appears as the story about the protagonist's failure to secure moral redemption, rather than about his financial problems. The themes in the story and "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button"—specifically, of wandering and dealing with unpayable debts and unsolvable problems—echo those of the myth and occur throughout Fitzgerald's short stories. In the two short stories, the protagonists are unwillingly lost psychologically because of their past. In their perception, they have no future unless they fix their past, or they

have to repeat the past forever, as the myth symbolizes, wandering between the past and the present, feeling guilty. Because of their guilt, the protagonists of these stories cannot see their ends. In the next section, using hints that we found out from these short stories in chapter I and II, I focus on *The Great Gatsby*.

## Chapter III

### Fitzgerald and His Theory of Time

#### 1.

#### The Stories Connected by the Dead

##### 1. From Short Stories to *The Great Gatsby*

This chapter attempts to integrate the discussions in earlier chapters that focused on short stories concerned about the obsession regarding the dead and the past. Following the discussion so far, this chapter also attempts to transition from trauma to chronemics in Fitzgerald's works. This refers to the study of his short stories, which has preceded this study. In *The Great Gatsby*, one of the numerous medium and full length works that F. Scott Fitzgerald produced, Fitzgerald's own methods of treating time are portrayed vividly. This is because the basic problem faced by Fitzgerald is powerfully revealed in this work; as a previous chapter's discussion of biographical studies such as Mitchell Breitwieser's *National Melancholy: Mourning and Opportunity in Classic American Literature* and Jonathan Schiff's *Ashes to Ashes: Mourning and Social Difference in F. Scott Fitzgerald's Fiction* demonstrated, Fitzgerald was obsessed with the death of his sisters, and, because of these deaths, he became a writer. As already mentioned in previous chapters, Fitzgerald's short stories are configured such that they encircle his medium and full-length works. In other words, his short

stories are written in a way that they include the themes of his medium and full-length works. Consequently, his short, medium, and full-length stories are interrelated and even share certain themes. As I mentioned before, Richard Lehan elaborates on these shared themes within Fitzgerald's short stories and novels:

The stories that are satellites to *The Great Gatsby* are "Absolution," "Winter Dreams," "The Sensible Thing," "The Last of the Bells," and "The Rich Boy." "Absolution" (1924) is directly related to the novel because it was originally written as a description of Gatsby's childhood before Fitzgerald decides to make that part of Gatsby's background less detailed. The connections with the novels are obvious. (12)

Matther J. Bruccoli also demonstrates that the short stories and novels created a "cluster":

Since Fitzgerald perforce wrote stories while he was working on novels, certain "cluster stories" introduce or test themes, settings, and situations that are fully developed in the novel. He routinely "stripped" passages from a story for reuse in a novel. These stories collected here are clearly in the Gatsby-cluster (a post-Gatsby work). (The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald xii)

This means that the short stories can function as a way of understanding his other works, and therefore, I began this thesis by

considering his short stories. Specifically, I began by uncovering the author's concept of time, which lurks in his short stories, and then I considered looking for possible ways to see how I could analyze *The Great Gatsby*.

## 2. Short Stories and *The Great Gatsby*

The themes of the short stories are also reiterated in *The Great Gatsby*. In Chapter one, which considered "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," Freud's *Totem and Taboo* was an appropriate reference to understand this story. This story deals with patricide and the original sin, and portrays a protagonist unable to atone for a past crime, thereby being compelled to wander forever. The key to interpreting this work is the fact that a past sin, or in other words, a sin involving time, is also a sin one cannot atone for. Like Charlie Wales in "Babylon Revisited," the past sin is described as "unatonable" because the object, person, or thing is already lost. As a result, like Charlie, Gatsby, and Dexter Green, the protagonist finally restores the past condition. However, the protagonist fails to restore a piece of the past because that is lost and irreparable. Although it is an unatonable crime, I would like to offer a short supplementary explanation. This is a repetition of content already presented in this thesis, but I hope this is permissible because this point has an important place in the discussion of *The Great Gatsby*. Freud



revealed in *Totem and Taboo* that humans latently feel a consciousness of guilt when someone dies:

When a wife has lost her husband or a daughter her mother, it not infrequently happens that the survivor is overwhelmed by tormenting doubts (to which we give the name of 'obsessive self-reproaches') as to whether she may not herself have been responsible for the death of this cherished being through some act of carelessness or neglect. . . It is not that the mourner was really responsible for the death or was really guilty of neglect, as the self-reproaches declare to be the case. None the less there was something in her—a wish that was unconscious to herself—which would not have been dissatisfied by the occurrence of death and which might have brought it about if it had had the power. And after death has occurred, it is against this unconscious wish that the reproaches are a reaction. (60)

According to Freud, the most significant point is that the actual death of a person triggers the emergence of the previously concealed desire for that person's death in one's mind to the surface as a consciousness of a crime:

Both of the two sets of feelings (the affectionate and the hostile), which, as we have good reason to believe, exist towards the dead person, seek to take effect at the time of

the bereavement, as mourning and as satisfaction. There is bound to be a conflict between these two contrary feelings (. . .) It is no longer true that they are rejoicing to be rid of the dead man; on the contrary, they are mourning for him; but, strange to say, he has turned into a wicked demon ready to gloat over their misfortunes and eager to kill them (. . .) they are relieved of pressure from within, but have only exchanged it for oppression from without. (63)

“The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” narrates the story of how the protagonist, Benjamin, murders his father but having become structurally unable to atone for this past crime, he continues to wander forever bearing the burden of his crime. In this way, even “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” occupies an extremely important position with regard to the problem of time.

Chapter I also dealt with “Babylon Revisited,” which has a theme closely analogous to that of “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.” That is to say, it is a work with past sin as its central subject. From the beginning to the end, it tells the story of a crime committed in the past. This crime, borne in the past, is one that the protagonist cannot atone for. I omit the details here, but the deceased person as a symbol of the past is tinged with a double meaning for the protagonist. At the same time that he uses the deceased person to come to terms with the past, the person symbolizes a crime he committed in the past. Consequently, he cannot structurally atone for

his past crime. This means that since the crime belongs to the past, he must continue to bear its burden in the present. The most symbolic scene is probably where Charlie allows old friends to enter his relatives' house. As they first intruded from the entranceway, this reminds the others of Charlie's past sin, and he loses all hope for the future (the sin revolves around the daughter he formerly entrusted to his sister-in-law). In a manner of speaking, he suffers a double loss—an unrecoverable past, and the loss of the future accompanying it. Viewed this way, "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" and "Babylon Revisited" tell the same story. In both, the protagonists are placed in a temporally antinomic situation. I have stated this before—it is a past crime and hence impossible to atone for. It is also the reason he cannot accept the fact that a person is deceased.

### 3. Lost in the Past

The structure of this story resembles that of other short stories, in that they deal with a theme regarding the past. This is also true of "Winter Dreams," a short story discussed in Chapter II. Regarding this story, this chapter focused on a theme that harks back to something that was lost in the past. If something was merely lost, the story would be simple. However, that is not the core of the problem. It is not clear what was lost in the past. Moreover, it portrays a situation where the loss is irrecoverable. The end of the story

demonstrates that the protagonist, Dexter Green, loses something.

However, he does not recognize that correctly:

The dream was gone. Something had been taken from him. In a sort of panic, he pushed the palms of his hands into his eyes and tried to bring up a picture of the water lapping on Sherry Island and the moonlit veranda, and gingham on the golf-links and the dry sun and the gold colour of her neck's soft down. And her mouth damp to his kisses and her eyes plaintive with melancholy and her freshness like new fine linen in the morning. Why these things were no longer in the world! They had existed, and they existed no longer. (383)

It can also be argued that, similar to "Babylon Revisited," the protagonist is trapped between double losses and is stuck in a dilemma. That is to say, he faces an extremely distressing quandary: he is unaware of what he lost in the past, and the self that grasps the key to this is essentially out of his reach. As a result, the protagonist is caught between the past and future. This is also a temporally antinomic relationship. This theme is discussed in this chapter, but it is similar to that of *The Great Gatsby*. The close interaction between "Winter Dreams" and *The Great Gatsby* has been discussed in many critiques, which I have referred to, but one probable aspect of this mutuality is the structural similarity between them.

Although Chapter II has already considered *The Great Gatsby*, this chapter focuses more narrowly on the authorial theme that is presented in the book. The discussion in Chapter II becomes the bridgehead to a discussion of its true nature. Briefly, the central claim of this chapter is to demonstrate that what Gatsby desired was not Daisy as an actual being; instead, she is someone who symbolizes the past, and Gatsby believes that recovering this symbol will reorder his disordered past. Gatsby was not aware of what he had lost, and this is the reason he was so obsessively determined to recapture Daisy. Further, I also wish to argue that Fitzgerald's obsession with the past and the way he symbolizes this in his works characterizes Fitzgerald as a fiction writer.<sup>41</sup>

## 2.

## People who Maneuver in the Past:

The Concept of Time in *The Great Gatsby* as an Authorial Problem of

F. Scott Fitzgerald

## 1. “Reserve All Judgments”: A Form of Cognitive Suspension

The story begins with the words of Nick, the narrator:

In my younger and more vulnerable years, my father gave me some advice that I’ve been turning over in my mind ever since. “Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone,” he told me, “just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’d had. (*The Great Gatsby* 1)

A lesson taught to Nick by his father is referred to here with the concept of “reserve all judgments” (1), which appears as the opening paragraph of the story. However, not many critiques have asked what types of actions this “reserving” principle triggered in the story, and some critics argue that the principle does not work.<sup>42</sup> In this thesis, I wish to demonstrate that this principle is an important rule that flows through *The Great Gatsby*, and by using this as guidance for reading this work, the concept of time (Fitzgerald’s authorial theme) is clarified.

“Reserve all judgments” is, in a manner of speaking, a cognitive pause.<sup>43</sup> This is because it involves deferring the expression of

judgment to determine some event or phenomenon. It means that instead of immediately jumping to a conclusion, the arrival at a conclusion is delayed indefinitely. Nick applied this principle while he was a university student and when he did, a variety of people were drawn toward him through a deep interest, and talked to him about various matters. As this was somehow troublesome, Nick reserved judgments as though this were a sacred principle followed by his family. When he did this, something happened:

In consequence, I'm inclined to reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not a few veteran bores. The abnormal mind is quick to detect and attach itself to this quality when it appears in a normal person, and so it came about that in college I was unjustly accused of being a politician because I was privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men. Most of the confidences were unsought— frequently I have feigned sleep, preoccupation, or a hostile levity when I realized by some unmistakable sign that an intimate revelation was quivering on the horizon. (1-2)

As Nick explains here, deferring “judgments” (or in other words, reaching conclusions) is the aim expressed by the word “reserve.” However, while a judgment is being reserved, information continues to arrive in succession. It is necessary, at the same time, that a person does not reach a conclusion of some kind and he continues to

accept this information. If he does not accept this information, or does not respond to other people, he will probably be in a state similar to having reached a pre-conceived conclusion. This differs from totally rejecting all information from the outside. It involves remaining open until the end, but still not accepting everything. It is a cognitive pause; this pause is not a complete stop and is a temporary or makeshift pause, or in other words, a hypothetical pause before completing an operation. This differs from a complete stop (in other words, death or permanent anchoring). It is a state that while dynamic, is also static—a state in which one progresses while approaching the dead. When contrary states co-exist or states that are contradictory are in well-balanced coexistence, this can be referred to as “cognitively reserving all judgments.”

To “reserve all judgments,” as Nick suggests, is a cognitive suspension in mid-air, a method of creating limitless hope, or in his words, “Reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope” (2). While the flow of cognition itself does not stop, achieving a conclusion is postponed. This means that even during a cognitive pause, one does not stop thinking. Or perhaps, these states are not so demarcated. While exposed to a variety of possibilities or alternatives, the person continues to defer a conclusion. Enduring this harsh and arduous situation is a characteristic of cognitive suspension in mid-air. This is said to create “infinite hope,” and this “reserve” principle is imagined



as contrary states or states that are contradictory to well-balanced coexistence.

Hope that is created without interruption—the motive power driving the vast creativity that *The Great Gatsby* effuses—is what comprises the “infinite hope.” In other words, Gatsby has a technique of continually creating limitless hope and advancing by transforming it into propulsive force. This implies that the character of Gatsby, from beginning to end, practiced the principle of “reserve all judgments” (2), which Nick considered an article of faith. Nick is antithetical to Gatsby in every way, and he evaluated Gatsby with the following words, as one who “represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn” (2). However, this narrator who eventually attached the adjective “great” to a person such as Gatsby, thought and acted on his behalf to the very end. This indicates that for Nick, Gatsby was a person worthy of a high evaluation or represented something irreplaceable. It must be said that on the surface, Gatsby failed to achieve his purpose. Superficially, his purpose was to obtain Daisy as his own, but this ended in failure; this gives rise to questions about Gatsby’s greatness and its extent. I wish to present a provisional answer to these questions. His greatness arises probably because he could apply the principle of “reserve all judgments.”

## 2. The “Reserve” Principle and Infinite Hope

As stated above, to “reserve all judgments” is a principle followed to generate “infinite hope.” If judgments or conclusions continue to hang suspended in mid-air, even if only for a short while, future possibilities will not disappear. As long as they hang in mid-air, these possibilities continue infinitely. In this way, hope is strongly linked to time, because it jumps to the future while being grounded in the present. With “now” as the springboard, it is expected to continue tomorrow, and into the future. Further, the expectation that something impossible today should be achievable tomorrow, or next month, or even next year is called “hope.” Briefly stated, when we refer to the word, we are gazing into the future. Moreover, something that occurred in the past can be handled as a phenomenon that is still occurring, so that it is suspended indefinitely in mid-air at present. It is not processed as a phenomenon of a kind that was fixed and decided in the past and is now completely unchangeable. At present, it is deferred. Even if it is a phenomenon that occurred in the past in terms of time, it is processed as a phenomenon that is now surely continuing to develop before our eyes. It is possible to assume that in this way, despite being a thing of the past, it can be transformed. Continuing to embrace hope, if expressed in other words, is a state in which, while remaining in the present, consciousness is postponed and projected into the future. It conveys an image of something in the present,

which is repeatedly postponed as it is incorporated into both the past and the future. A person, even while presently suffering, directs his gaze and consciousness into the future rather than the present to escape his present state. It is a method of suspending a situation in mid-air by being hypothetically grounded in a future time that will presumably arrive eventually. This is a temporary or makeshift approach to consciousness. Gatsby followed this principle in his actions when he scrambled up the social ladder from rock-bottom, and suggested that “to-morrow we will run faster” (180), which Nick states at the end as the origin of the principle of “reserving”:

“Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that’s no matter—to-morrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . And one fine morning (...)” (180).

In that case, the problem is how Gatsby carried out this process of reserving. The principle that uses “reserve” is one that locates consciousness in the future. As I mentioned earlier, to reserve indicates a situation where opposites are maintained in a well-balanced state. Gatsby is described as a seismograph by Nick: “some heightened sensitively to the promises of life as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away” (2). If earthquakes represent a disturbance in balance, it could be that Gatsby values the state of stability and can detect the state of unbalance. Regarding the matter of time, what is

stable is not the unknowable future but the past that is already gone. Here, one could say that his hope to “repeat [the] past” (110) indicates a desire for stability. In that case, his goal is to gain stability by recovering the past, including the once-familiar relationship with Daisy, and live in a comfortable state of repetition.

If so, Nick’s description of Gatsby provides a supplemental point of view on this matter:

He talked a lot about the past, and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered since then, but if he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was. . . (110)

What Gatsby wanted to possess was not anything material; it was “some idea of himself perhaps” (110). This passage demonstrates why Gatsby was so obsessed with the past, what the past was to him, and what he wanted to achieve through a repetition of the past. First, for him, a clear past did not exist. In other words, his final objective in repeating the past is not to physically recapture Daisy. Recovering possession of Daisy was not his final aim, but a method of reconstructing his own past. Further, his past was extremely disordered and chaotic. By achieving a “return to a certain starting place” (110), he could strive to bring order to a disordered situation, thereby recovering an idea he had lost in the past. To be more

precise, he had not grasped what he had personally lost nor was he certain of when he had lost it. In fact, he was aiming at an action that would confirm just what he had lost in the past. As mentioned earlier, the thing that he lost did not exist: not physical or material things but abstract ideas. In this way, he had fallen into a tautology, not knowing what he was searching for because he did not know precisely what he had lost in the past. This feeling of being in a cycle of the past and future is also found in the stories, “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” and “The Wandering Jew.” On the other hand, paradoxically, as a result of this tautology, his hope could also be sustained. In this circular argument, his judgments are suspended in mid-air. Thus, Gatsby, in order to free himself from this dilemma he was caught in, was attempting to reconfirm just what he had originally possessed, and what he had lost through repetition of his trust with Daisy, a bond that had created his disorder and loss. Gatsby intended to understand the causes and processes that had vanished, which would reveal a method of recovering what he had lost.

### 3. Fitzgerald’s Chronemics and the Principle of Reserve

The reserve principle that Nick mentions at the beginning of the book, which Gatsby had adopted, and his plan to create “infinite hope” (2) in the future, are linked to his chronemics—Gatsby’s notion of time—directly. This principle requires cognitive suspension, which

is performed by temporal awareness based on the chronemics. It is this principle that drives Gatsby and makes him hope to become rich and to recapture Daisy. However, the plan is very fragile because the motivation for hope in the future is derived from something lost in the past, something that does not exist in a material shape on earth. He does not understand what it is that he lost in the past, which means that the future and past, which are linked by a single thread, are delicately balanced.<sup>44</sup> This is a state in which the past and future are “tacks” welded through a temporary awareness at both ends, such that he sees the future through the lens of the past. Through the process of reserving, the past is established with the future as its guarantee, and the future is established with the past as its guarantee. This two-way interdependent relationship supports Gatsby. As long as this interdependence worked smoothly, Gatsby’s “reserve” plan would have continued to function. Simultaneous to its functioning, he wishes to realize what he lost in the past and discover the path to the future.

However, Gatsby puts on hold that which he had lost in the past. In this way, he was able to continue to foster hope for the future to the maximum extent. Under normal circumstances, what supports a leap into the future and guarantees the foundation of such a leap is the past. The determining logic here is that affairs have gone smoothly until now and existed till the present moment, and therefore, everything will continue smoothly in the future, thereby

supporting the possibility of a leap into the future. Even if affairs are not progressing smoothly now, because one somehow survived in the past, they are premised on the past, no matter how it was (because if a person failed and could not survive in the past, that person as he now does not exist). However, Gatsby does not have a past that can be his guarantee because he sees his past through the idea of Daisy—this is not the past that existed but what Gatsby idealized.

This evokes the protagonist of “Author’s House,” who denies his parents, changes his name, and rewrites his life:

Your eyes fall on another corner, and you give a start of alarm.

“What’s that?” you demand.

“That?” The author tries to change the subject, moving around so as to obscure your view of the too-recent mound of dirt in the corner that has made you think of certain things in police reports.

But you insist.

“That is where I buried,” he says.

“What buried?”

“That’s where I buried my love after—” he hesitates.

“After you *killed* her?”

“After I killed *it*.”

“I don’t understand what you mean.”

The author does not look at the pile of earth.

“This is where I buried my first childish love of myself,  
my belief that I would never die like other people, and that  
I wasn’t the son of my parents but a son of a king, a king  
who ruled the whole world.” (134-35)

Like him, for Gatsby, the ongoing present is the only foundation. His past was disordered, disguised, and sometimes idealized, and thus it could not become a foundation from which he could envision the future. His foundation was akin to a makeshift “tack weld.”

Regarding his next steps, he had no choice but to single-mindedly pursue hope and remain in a state of suspension, while surviving from one day to the next. This move typically follows a leap that forces a person into a balancing act in the future—a precarious state in which the floor might collapse beneath his feet at any time, he was continuously forced to take death-defying leaps into the future. He could not afford to pause. The instant he completely stopped would signify the end of his plan to gain hope. As a consequence, he was compelled to compromise the past. If he did not, he would not find an opening to his future. Gatsby exercised exquisite control by maintaining an extremely dangerous balance between the past and future and by delicately balancing time. He was supported in this endeavor by surviving from day to day: a state in which, because there is a past, there is also a future, and because there is also a future, the past ought to have gone smoothly. As I mentioned before,



it was a situation in which the instant he stopped trying to possess both the past and the future, both would collapse.

#### 4. Daisy and Reserving all Judgments

Based on this context, I would like to consider Gatsby's desire not to wish for Daisy as a material being but the idealized past.<sup>45</sup> It is likely that if she were personally his aim, he would not have had to take the trouble of making her deny that in the past she had loved her present husband, Tom. Gatsby was extraordinarily obsessed with attempting to make Daisy deny the past in her own words—"I never loved Tom" (132). The significance of this is that what Gatsby was eager to recover was not a material past, but an idealized version. In this scenario, Daisy is a being who symbolizes the past to be recovered. This refers to a being who personifies the past itself.

As analyses of biographical research on Fitzgerald, such as Breitwieser and Schiff have demonstrated, the problems he dealt with as an author, his so-called authorial themes, included mourning for his two older sisters who died before he was born and his inability to resolve his consciousness of the crimes triggered by this loss.

According to Schiff's *Ashes to Ashes*, in which he analyzes biographical information about Fitzgerald mainly by applying the psychological approach of Freud and others, Fitzgerald was raised by his parents as a "replacement child" or as a "living linking object" for the two elder sisters who passed away before Fitzgerald's birth (22).

In other words, he was brought up as a changeling for his two dead sisters (21), or as a replacement for the dead, a being who would atone for the sense of guilt that his parents embraced: according to Freud, a feeling of guilt exists about the dead, an unavoidable feeling of guilt felt by a person about the fact that someone else has died while the person continues to live:

I will posit here that Fitzgerald's parents' unresolved grief severely complicated their relationship with him. In doting upon him, they unsuccessfully masked an inner desire to withdraw from him, to grieve for the sisters. Fitzgerald, in turn, wavered throughout his life between a desire to serve as familial rescuer and a resistance to that role (22).

He also adds:

I suggest that Fitzgerald wrote about a constellation of various mourning patterns from his childhood: his parents' alternate preoccupation with grief or his two elder sisters and displacement of their grief onto him, behavior that in turn encouraged his sense of maternal and paternal loss, but also his identification with their grief. Furthermore, these circumstances contributed to his literary insights into cultural mourning norms. (13)

Moreover, he passed his childhood years as a being who connected the two girls with his parents. He was a “living linking subject,” or in

other words, he was raised as a being connected to the people who caused them to die:

The dolls resemble linking objects, items that encourage the externalization of grief. She [Fitzgerald's mother] kept them out of sight, wrapping them in tissue paper. In a scrapbook she kept of her son's accomplishments, she had demonstrated her unresolved mourning, her desire for reunion with her daughters: "Louise and Mary's little brother made his first attempt walk, and it seems as if they were nearer." Here, in a rare reference to her daughters, Fitzgerald is not mentioned by name. But he has temporarily rescued his mother from her grief. (33)

Thus, it seems that he was, since his childhood, linked with a past that was already lost, and with the dead.

While studying "Author's House," which is one part of a trilogy, Breitwieser also recognizes Fitzgerald's authorial starting point. Here, the loss is understood as one a person cannot realize or a loss which should be borne by another person who entrusted it to him:

Rather than a lost thing, a thing never had, and therefore a sense of lacking without the ability to know what it is that is lacked (. . .) If, as Freud suggests, the work of mourning lies in the incremental construction in conscious memory of an adequate representation of the lost thing, a representing that delineates a re-representer who survives,

then the inheritor of mourning is doomed to an inability to mourn—a true inability, not a deep or insurmountable unwillingness. . . (253-54)

In Breitwieser's notion, by linking his novels to Fitzgerald's life, the image of the past is one that he synonymizes with the dead. Although the loss is thought to be a part of the past, specifically, death does not symbolize the inability to clarify the content and nature of this loss. In the scene where Daisy appears in *The Great Gatsby* for the first time, she is portrayed in a way that insinuates something of this kind:

“Do they miss me?” she cried ecstatically.

“The whole town is desolate. All the cars have the left rear wheel painted black as a mourning wreath, and there's a persistent wail all night along the north shore.”

(9)

Here, Nick describes the scene through the cars that go along the streets of Chicago by likening it to funeral cars. In this passage, Fitzgerald portrays Daisy as a deceased person. One more clue to this exists, in a scene that directly links the past and the dead. Coincidentally, Jordan Baker mistakenly thought that Tom who had tried to investigate Gatsby's past exhaustively had used the word “medium”:

“I've made a small investigation of this fellow,” he continued.

“I could have gone deeper if I’d known—”

“Do you mean you’ve been to a medium?” inquired Jordan humorously.

“What?” Confused, he stared at us as we laughed.

“About Gatsby.”

“About Gatsby! No, I haven’t.

I said I’d been making a small investigation of his past.”

(122)

By “medium,” here, Jordan is referring to a spiritualistic medium. It is curious to propose the use of a medium to investigate Gatsby, especially considering the investigation was in relation to his past. This scene is treated as if Jordan had simply misheard Tom, but considering the course of the discussion up till now, it is possible to draw a connection between the past and the dead in this conversation. All the same, matters related to the past are linked to the dead. If we assume that the past consists of the dead, then Daisy, who symbolizes the past, is a deceased person. The dead people in his past were the reason why Fitzgerald was divested of his past and continued to harbor feelings of guilt. It was the dead who constantly continued to encircle him throughout his career.

As a writer, Fitzgerald was surrounded by the dead and was conscious of this fact. According to a letter Fitzgerald wrote to a friend in 1936, which is included in *Correspondence*, the collected

letters of Fitzgerald, he seems to have sensed that he was surrounded by the dead at that time:

Mother's death made me so sad in connection with so many deaths of people dear to me in the last two years, beginning with Ring's cashing in; after that Emily Vanderbilt shot herself on a lonely Montana ranch last summer which gave me the blues (451).

His mother died in September of the year this is excerpted from, so it is not odd for him to sense the close presence of the dead. Also, this seems to be the case because, in the *Author's House*, which is part of a biographical trilogy, he already felt the presence of the dead, due to his sisters who died before he was born. This feeling was experienced by him for the first time when he lost a close relation in 1936, and he felt the presence of the dead right beside him from the instant that he launched his career as an author:

"Well, three months before I was born my mother lost her other two children and I think that came first of all though I don't know how it worked exactly. I think I started then to be a writer." (134)

Like Sakane's argument previously quoted, André Le Vot indicates that according to his study of the short story, *The Crack-up*, Fitzgerald was surrounded by the dead and by ghosts at that time:

Depression, breakdown, crack-up: a single moral reality.

Word and concept are so compelling that Fitzgerald had to

coin a word for a macabre title given to one of the countless lists of the vanquished scattered through his papers: 'Necrology and Breakdownology.' These lists resound like an obsessive appeal to the dead, the suicides, the mentally ill who haunted his memory. On one page, for example, he drew a circle and around it wrote the names of the vanished, like so many ghosts invited to a funeral feast, Boyd, Lardner, Emily Vanderbilt, Mary Rumsey, Julian (the hero of 'A New Leaf') and others; presiding at this symbolic table is Zelda, the arch figure of the dispossessed. (293)

*The Great Gatsby* is set in 1922, which was a period different from that of this short story. It has been assumed that at that time, he was not surrounded by the dead. However, as already stated, since birth, he was fated to be involved with the dead. This event impelled him to become an author and to write works of literature. One could not know when he self-consciously grasped this motivation, but if the premise about his motivation is true, his consciousness as an author of the dead came to the surface about the time *The Crack-up* was written, and it seems that he was portraying his interrelationship with the dead as a major authorial theme far earlier.

Although Fitzgerald did not personally know the deceased people who inspired his creative works, he returned to the theme of death throughout his works. Similar to his creator, Gatsby is unaware

of what he lost in the past, which seems to be the reason why he first wanted to recreate his past by repossessing Daisy, who symbolized his past. He had left that which he had lost suspended in mid-air. By leaving the deaths in his past unresolved and not confronting what those losses meant to him, Fitzgerald continued to be hounded by their presence in his writing and imagination.

The methods of suspending the dead in mid-air or treating the dead as living beings can probably be used not to admit that a person has died. The method involves denying the death to continue to keep a dead person alive, suspending their death in mid-air. This was done in "The Long Way Out," a short story Fitzgerald wrote later in his life. This story ended with a passage about a jail; when a person was thrown into this jail in a castle in France, the person never emerged alive. The theme of this story was the fact that people lived in the jail until they died. The protagonist, who felt a fear that could not be expressed in words in this story, heard another story; the story of a woman, Mrs. King, committed to a long-term facility because of mental illness. Her mental state improved and so she was finally permitted to leave; she was allowed to take a long-awaited trip with her husband, and this encouraged her recovery. When that day finally arrived, eagerly looking forward to leaving, she waited to greet her husband at the entrance to the facility, but what reached the facility was a report that her husband had been killed in a traffic accident on his way to meet her. At first, the doctors avoided telling her the



truth, fearing that it would shock her. Eventually, they finally told her the truth, but thinking that they were joking, she did not take them seriously and suspended the truth: Mrs. King stopped and spoke to Dr. Pirie:

My husband's been delayed, she said. Of course I'm disappointed but they tell me he's coming tomorrow and after waiting so long one more day doesn't seem to matter. Don't you agree with me, Doctor? (253).

Day after day, she stood at the entrance to the facility, looking forward to meeting her husband. She carried a large bag and was formally dressed, and this would continue forever:

“There is no prognosis,” said Dr. Pirie. “I was simply explaining why she was allowed to go to the hall this morning.” “But there's tomorrow morning and the next morning.” (...) “There's always a chance,” said Dr. Pirie, “that someday he will be there” (253).

At the end of the story, the narrator juxtaposes the position in which the woman was placed in the prison mentioned in the introduction of the story. This is the denial of a dead person's death. It is “reserving” the dead, but a person who does this also places her own being in a “reserved” state, or a state identical to being placed in jail to wait for one's own death.

There is another short story written on the same theme of leaving a dead person suspended in mid-air. In another one of

Fitzgerald's later short stories, "Crazy Sunday," a young Hollywood script-writer named Joel wants to impress a major producer named Miles. He tries to get on the good side of Miles' wife, Stella, and he finally makes a good impression on her and is even noticed by Miles. However, in the final scene of the story, Miles dies in an air crash. Notified of his death, Stella suspends the dead person in mid-air—Joel runs upstairs and searches through a strange medicine cabinet for spirits of ammonia. When he comes down, Stella cried: "He isn't dead—I know he isn't. This is part of his scheme. He's torturing me. I know he's alive. I can feel he's alive" (246). Through this technique, she manages to keep Joel as close to her as possible. In brief, by constantly acting as if Miles, who is jealous of Joel, might suddenly return home, she prevents Joel from learning of the death of Miles. For this reason, Stella appeals desperately to Joel to remain by her side forever. Joel also notices this and initially, he thinks that Stella wants him simply because he is charming and talented, although this is not the case. Instead, he was used by Stella to hang a dead person in mid-air, to create Miles as someone who might return to Stella at any time. The story ends with a scene in which Joel, although aware of this fact, predicts that he would compulsively return to Stella. Ultimately, the dead person continued to hang in mid-air—"What a hell of a hole he leaves in this damn wilderness—already!" And then with a certain bitterness. "Oh, yes, I'll be back—I'll be back!" (248). As seen here, Fitzgerald portrayed the dead suspended in mid-air many

times. Yet in every case, suspending them in mid-air was accompanied by severe distress. In both “The Long Way Out” and “Crazy Sunday,” deferring the dead, left the surviving people suspended in mid-air. In a manner of speaking, this is a paralysis of the senses, not a radical solution that will free them from suffering. Thus, they are all ways to epistemologically postpone death, while at the same time, not hold any hope of materially resurrecting or restoring the life of the dead. Fitzgerald was thus constantly aware of the dead, which was the heaviest burden of the original sin that was imposed by his two older sisters. He inherited an awareness of mourning for and of sinning against these two girls from his parents.

In *The Great Gatsby*, this sense of guilt and awareness of mourning is also reflected. As Gatsby had to rectify a disordered past, he had to draw out the words that would directly rectify the past from Daisy’s mouth, as she symbolized the past. If Gatsby were to speak this sentence on her behalf, everything would end up being lost. That is why, as Charlie’s case shows, the living cannot interfere in the past and accept its incursion. The present cannot substitute for the past. To bring an end to the state of loss from the past, which had been the cause of Gatsby’s disorder, Daisy herself must rectify the past. It would be meaningless if inversely, the past was recovered by unreasonable revisions by Gatsby, or in other words by overwriting or fabricating it. Due to this structure, the past cannot be rectified. Gatsby had to reserve Daisy’s answer and judgment, and she tried to

mothball that repeatedly. However, finally, Gatsby broke the suspension, and he answered instead of Daisy as a proxy, which is not reserving. At that moment, his reserve principle collapsed immediately, and the flow for infinite hope dismissed. The door of his future closed in front of his eyes silently.

The stage where Gatsby aimed to recover their foundation was a room in a hotel in New York. Until then, the relationship between Gatsby and Daisy had appeared to be well-balanced: As he [Tom] left the room again, she [Daisy] got up and went over to Gatsby and pulled his face down, kissing him on the mouth. "You know I love you," she murmured (116). Gatsby had tried to talk to her in Tom's house, but Daisy said that she wanted to go to town and they set out for New York. As they were leaving, Tom tried to get Daisy to ride in Gatsby's car, but Daisy refused and chose to ride with Gatsby:

"Come on, Daisy," said Tom, pressing her with his hand toward Gatsby's car. "I'll take you in this circus wagon." He opened the door, but she moved out from the circle of his arm. "You take Nick and Jordan. We'll follow you in the coupe" (121).

Prior to this, in the house, it appeared that their trust relationship was balanced. Yet, something serious happened after they arrived in the hotel room, and the whole group including Daisy were disgusted with Tom who had made a series of nonsensical excuses. Nick describes the scene: "Angry as I was, as we all were, I was tempted to laugh whenever he opened his mouth. The transition from libertine to

prig was so complete” (130). Daisy appeared to be getting along well with Gatsby, but then, the problem is why Daisy’s heart suddenly swung back to Tom’s side:

The voice begged again to go. “*Please*, Tom! I can’t stand this any more.” Her frightened eyes told that whatever intentions, whatever courage she had had, were definitely gone (135).

When rereading the novel, it seemed that this flow was transformed by Tom’s revelation that he had investigated Gatsby’s activities, followed by his description of what he had discovered. However, this was not the ultimate cause. I raise this question because Daisy’s frame of mind appears to have changed prior to Tom’s revelations.

This change occurs in the scene where Gatsby forces her to say “I never loved him” (132). The flow between Daisy and Gatsby, which had been extremely harmonious until then, seems to have abruptly changed at that point. In fact, Daisy hesitated to say the words which Gatsby told her to say:

She hesitated. Her eyes fell on Jordan and me with a sort of appeal, as though she realized at last what she was doing—and as though she had never, all along, intended doing anything at all. But it was done now. It was too late” (132).

Just as with time in “Babylon Revisited,” he had invited the past in with his own hand by saying the words about the past himself instead

of allowing Daisy to say them. Unable to watch Daisy hesitating to speak, Gatsby had uttered the words. This was the turning point of the story, and at this point, his chronemics and the “reserve” principle collapses unexpectedly.<sup>46</sup> It was not his place to say the words of the dead on their behalf. As the dead are already lost through their passing on, it is forbidden to interpret their words to suit one’s purpose and also forbidden for the living to reproduce them. When he invited in the past in order to grasp the future, Charlie Wales who destroyed the bond between the past, and the future, which had been maintained in a balance that was superb albeit delicate, eventually lost both. The same is repeated here. As Daisy described, finally, Gatsby destroyed the balance by wanting too much:

“Oh, you want too much!” She cried to Gatsby. “I love you now—isn’t that enough? I can’t help what’s past.” She began to sob helplessly. “I did love him once—but I love you too.” Gatsby’s eyes opened and closed.

“You loved me *too*?” he repeated. (132)

As a result, the balance that his chronemics requires, collapses at once, which leads him to lose what he has desired: to repeat the past.

Thus, the plan to create hope indefinitely through suspension or the principle of reserve came to an end. If this is considered conversely, bringing the previously concealed knowledge to the surface ended his plan for hope. Daisy killed Gatsby’s hopes with her words:

“I love you now—isn’t that enough? I can’t help what’s past.” She began to sob helplessly. “I did love him once—but I loved you too.” Gatsby’s eyes opened and closed. “You loved me too?” He repeated. (132)

Daisy told him that after Gatsby had stopped contacting her, unable to bear it, she had chosen to marry Tom, but even then, she continued to think of Gatsby. This meant that she had loved two men at the same time. This two-sidedness burst out because Gatsby had opened the door to the past. This aspect is also extremely similar to the ending of Charlie in “Babylon Revisited.” Moreover, Tom struck a blow following this revelation:

“Even that’s a lie,” said Tom savagely. “She didn’t know you were alive. Why—there’s things between Daisy and me that you’ll never know, things that neither of us can ever forget.” (132)

Hearing that there was a past, he would never know, and Daisy did not even know he was alive, changed the nature of this hope for Gatsby. That is why Tom’s words have a huge impact on Gatsby—“The words seemed to bite physically into Gatsby” (132). There is more: the link between the past and the dead. This refers to the past and the dead who are in the context of the past that a person can never know, no matter how hard one tries. As a result, the two-sidedness of the past puts the brakes on Gatsby’s actions. The balance between the past and future that he had sustained by

reserving hope was destroyed, and his past continued to remain lost. Through this, at the same time, he also lost the future. The link supported by the hope he had created through “reserving,” finally collapsed. Gatsby, to whom the past was shut off, having already lost his way to the future, had also lost his source of hope for the future. He lacked the reserve energy to go on, and his future was lost.

As a result of his postponement, the dead who had moved far from him suddenly came closer, in the form that is represented by George Wilson, the husband of Myrtle, Tom’s lover. Tom calls Wilson as he was unaware of whether he was alive or dead—“Wilson? He thinks she goes to see her sister in New York. He’s so dumb he doesn’t know he’s alive” (26).<sup>47</sup> He appeared suddenly from the Valley of Ashes that surely symbolizes death.<sup>48</sup> Gatsby is overtaken from the rear by Wilson as a dead person who was forgotten in such a past:

A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about (. . .) like that ashen, fantastic figure gliding toward him through the amorphous trees. (161)

The past, which is a deceased person approaching him from the rear, finally overtook him. In this way, the cruise of Gatsby’s hope was brought to an end.



## 5. Conclusion

The reason for Nick affixing the word “Great” to Gatsby’s name, despite the fact that Gatsby died without achieving his aim, is found at the ending of the novel by the way his end is portrayed:

There was a faint, barely perceptible movement of the water as the fresh flow from one end urged its way toward the drain at the other. With little ripples that were hardly the shadows of waves, the laden mattress moved irregularly down the pool. A small gust of wind that scarcely corrugated the surface was enough to disturb its accidental course with its accidental burden. The touch of a cluster of leaves revolved it slowly, tracing, like the leg of transit, a thin red circle in the water. (162)

The location selected as the place where he met his end was the surface of a mat that simply continued to float. He chose to continue to float in the flow until the very end. Continuing to wait for the telephone call from Daisy and floating on the paddleboard in the pool outside the swimming season is a scene that symbolizes the presence of his simultaneous material “reserve” and cognitive “reserve.” This is so because he continues to postpone events that occurred in the past while allowing his body to float and to embrace the hope that Daisy would surely soon telephone him. Even after death, he continues to remain in the state of “reserve.” Gatsby holds fast to his plan to create infinite hope to the tragic end. By doing so, he retained his

hold over the past, the loss of which was about to be confirmed, and maintained the slightest remaining possibility of a future. In brief, until the tragic end, he maintained the balance between past and future. This is the reason why, in the end, the words that Nick dedicated to Gatsby are as follows:

We shook hands, and I started away. Just before I reached the hedge, I remembered something and turned around.

“They’re a rotten crowd,” I shouted across the lawn.

“You’re worth the whole damn bunch put together.”

I’ve always been glad I said that. It was the only compliment I ever gave him because I disapproved of him from beginning to end. (154)

One may wonder why Nick chooses this declaration as the final words for Gatsby, and at the same time, as his only eulogy. However, it is significant that Nick puts Gatsby in the position beyond any other person; in other words, Nick here removes Gatsby away from comparisons in the range of humanity. That is to say, the statement’s intention does not lie in attributing any value to Gatsby as an autonomous human being; rather, it partially emphasizes that Gatsby skillfully maintained a balance, which would not likely be maintained when many people are compared to one person. The balance is the aspect on which Gatsby placed the greatest importance, and therefore, this declaration came to possess value as the last words addressed to Gatsby. Further, trying to maintain this balance to the

very end led to his demise. This is precisely the reason why Nick attached the word “Great” to Gatsby’s name. Gatsby tried to stick to his principle of balance and reserve until the end. This was the embodiment of the hope supported by his “reserve,” or in other words, his last moment with a future based on suspending the past in mid-air as his own theory of time.

## Conclusion

In an essay, “My Lost City,” Fitzgerald describes the American boom after WWI:

New York had all the iridescence of the beginning of the world. The returning troops marched up Fifth Avenue and girls were instinctively drawn east and north toward them—we were at last admittedly the most powerful nation and there was gala in the air. (109)

Here, he writes as though he oversees the world, which shows that he did not acquire the sense that he belongs to it. After the war, much of the world entered a time of boom and brightness, but Fitzgerald did not share in the cheerful atmosphere. Rather, he seems to have reached the point of resignation, which is probably the quality of an older man. Fitzgerald continues:

And lastly from that period I remember riding in a taxi one afternoon between very tall buildings under a mauve and rosy sky; I began to bawl because I had everything I wanted and I knew I would never be so happy again. (111)

Fitzgerald and his world were struck by the end of something, which seems to be the final and disappointing destination of his former life. Actually, in the process of reaching that point, he had lost his older sisters before he was born. This tragedy was the reason for his obsession with the dead, of which the trauma made him a writer.<sup>49</sup> His melancholy might also have come from the war—the large number

of war dead may have added to the depressed tone of the passage. However, it could be something more than primitive loss. The sense of loss and resulting emptiness and melancholy can be seen in his fiction. At Gatsby's gorgeous Champaign party, although its atmosphere and guests are bright, they are vain, from Nick's perspective. Nick notices that when he visits Gatsby's party again, "We were at a particularly tipsy table. That was my fault—Gatsby had been called to the phone, and I'd enjoyed these same people only two weeks before. But what had amused me then turned septic on the air now (106)." With his second visit, both the seemingly enjoying people and the bright party are gone; more clearly, Nick feels that they have become obsolete or are lost. After the party, Nick writes about the sense of losing something:

Through all he said, even through his appalling sentimentality, I was reminded of something—an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words, that I had heard somewhere a long time ago. For a moment a phrase tried to take shape in my mouth and my lips parted like a dumb man's, as though there was more struggling upon them than a wisp of startled air. But they made no sound, and what I had almost remembered was uncommunicable forever. (111)

Like Dexter Green in "Winter Dreams," Nick and Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby* feel the need to recover things and memories in order to place

their existence on a firm basis, although what they are chasing does not exist because the party itself is a make-believe shadow, a shadow that Gatsby invented as his past that could have been, which is merely an idea that only exists in his mind.

Similar to what it does to the characters in his fiction, the past—something that is to be the basis of the present and thus comprises one's identity—also haunted Fitzgerald. He did not comprehend (in fact, he could not comprehend) what he had lost because, as represented by his dead sisters, he did not know concretely what he had lost, only feeling the sense of having lost something. Therefore, he continuously had to contemplate what he had lost, and attempt to understand his loss despite the pain or the emptiness, or the resulting melancholy. Probably for him, writing fiction could be a relief because he could temporarily forget his past and instead look at his future. It is not unlike Charlie Wales in "Babylon Revisited," who also suffers from his painful past but can keep pursuing a certain goal, i.e., to recover his daughter. However, simultaneously, Fitzgerald knew that he himself could not recover or regain what he had lost because of the preceding loss of their concrete image, an image that Fitzgerald attempts to recover through his fiction. This (probably painful) cycle of realizations is repeated endlessly and drives him to write novels.

Fitzgerald described something he lost in the past as "splits in the skin" in "Babylon Revisited." In the story, Charlie refers to the

damage and discords caused by the troubles with his family—he [Charlie] and Marion were alone for a minute in the room, and on an impulse he spoke out boldly: “Family quarrels are bitter things. They don’t go according to any rules. They’re not like aches or wounds; they’re more like splits in the skin that won’t heal because there’s not enough material. I wish you and I could be on better terms” (630).

To understand Charlie's traumatic wound it is probably best to compare it with a physical wound. Unlike physical ones, which generally heal and close soon because of organic regeneration, once the skin splits open, it can never be healed completely. The split is the past happening, invisible and physically painless, and it repeatedly opens and closes. Despite this seemingly painful process, he continued to write, hoping to eventually find enough materials—things physical enough to write in a fiction, which is played by physical characters—trying to close and heal the psychological cut made by the past. Until the end of his life, Fitzgerald forced himself to cut open this wound repeatedly in pursuit of this theme of time through his writing, which is the origin of his creativity.

If Fitzgerald needed to write because of his psychological wounds, it could be said that the trauma was his motivation to produce his works. In addition, Fitzgerald could not know the concrete symptom, nor its cause, which, in other words, means that Fitzgerald in a sense acquired the unknowable amount of possibility for his creativity, although Fitzgerald himself probably believed that

after filling the blank he could look toward the future. He believed that he had to write stories to grasp his image of the past because only symbolically repeating the past could enable him to open the gate to the future. Without the past, in his understanding, he could not find the way to the future. Even if this belief led him to a miserable state as he wrote in "My Lost City," he could not give it up because of the belief itself—which led him into infinite contemplation of the matter. Finally, he seems to have attained the state of acceptance, in which the endlessness of his contemplation and continuous looking back into the past are combined in his essay "Echoes of the Jazz Age":

In the spring of '27, something bright and alien flashed across the sky. A young Minnesotan who seemed to have had nothing to do with his generation did a heroic thing, and for a moment people set down their glasses in country clubs and speak-easies and thought of their old best dreams. Maybe there was a way out by flying, maybe our restless blood could find frontiers in the illimitable air. But by that time we were all pretty well committed; and the Jazz Age continued; we would all have one more. (136)

F. Scott Fitzgerald also pursued the echoes of the past—until the last, he believed that in his fiction he could make the make-believe mirage of his memory and the past real, thus providing it with authenticity.



## Notes

1. Many critics have argued that time is an essential theme in *The Great Gatsby*, and agree that Gatsby's purpose is to recover his past. David Parker indicates that "*The Great Gatsby* is a novel deeply concerned with time. It contains repeated allusions to hours, days and seasons suggestive of change" (40), basically, as shown by the words "hours, days, and seasons," regarding conventional time. Also, Lawrence Jay Dessner discusses that "the novel itself is a treatment of the concept of time, for it is time's incessant flow that forever separates dream from deed, aspiration from achievement" (177). Similarly, R. W. Stallman argues that "like Icarus, Gatsby soars against the tyranny of space-and-time by which we are imprisoned, only to be tragically destroyed by his own invention." (62). In Ernest H. Lockridge's words, Gatsby is "to buy back the past, to recover the time" (7), and in Thomas A. Hanzo's view, Gatsby "thought he could remake the past" (67). Susan Resneck Parr calls Gatsby's experience "the American experience: the moments of hope and promise and wonder can be found only in the past, that—except in the imagination—the past is irrecoverable" (76-77). Richard Lehan also pays attention to young characters in Fitzgerald's stories regarding the American dream, and argues that Fitzgerald's "fascination with America as a land of promise began with his belief that youth is the age of promise—of expectancy and eternal vision" (114), and "Gatsby is a soldier in the war against

time, and his end is testimony to Fitzgerald's belief that the prolonged dream, the vision without youth, is destined to end tragically" (122).

2. Regarding time, the future or dream is also significant in Fitzgerald's fiction, which is often discussed in critical studies. For example, critics often read his fiction in relation to the American Dream. Nicole Guetin argues: "Gatsby's and Tom's distorted aspirations may, at times, be found in the American psyche in the sense that these beliefs seem implicitly inscribed in the concept of the American Dream" (24). Lawrence Buell's critiques discover the same theme in Fitzgerald's short stories. Buell argues: "This story ['The Diamond as Big as Ritz'] is also his most succinct critique of the American dream" (30); Quentin E. Martin states: "In placing 'Magnetism' and 'Crazy Sunday' entirely in Hollywood, Fitzgerald was writing not only about a profession and popular entertainment but about an entire way of life that could not possibly be overstated—one that both defined and created in its life and work the myths and illusions of American middle-class society, which in Fitzgerald's vision of America equals the American Dream itself" (143). Besides, such dream often betrays Fitzgerald's protagonists. D. G. Kehl indicates that *The Great Gatsby* describes the transition from American Dream to nightmare of American society: "In a broad perspective, Fitzgerald's is a genre of deflation, of social satire inclining as

much toward the Juvenalian as toward the Horatian variety. The main target is American preoccupation with the American dream turned nightmare, values sacrificed for mammon. Fitzgerald's social satire runs the gamut of issues" (206), which is stated in M. Thomas Inge's words, "a parable of the youthful American who awakens to find the American dream a cruel and rapacious hoax" (234). William A. Fahey well summarizes Fitzgerald's involvement with the national dream: "Gatsby's dream might be described as the American Dream of success. It is the dream of rising from rags to riches, of amassing a great fortune that will assure a life of luxuriant ease, power, and beauty in an ideal world untroubled by care and devoted to the enjoyment of everlasting pleasure with nothing to intervene between wish and fulfillment." (70)

3. Milton R. Stern indicates that Fitzgerald described *The Great Gatsby* based on his notion pursuing for the American dream:

He[Fitzgerald] never forget what he had grown up knowing in his bones: the American dream and American wealth are inseparably related. The rich will take as a matter of course what the poor can't win. Scott was always nagged by a repressed knowledge of what would have happened if he hadn't hit the jackpot, and he exorcised that alternative—but real—losing self by naming him Jay Gatsby. So, as Daisy waits for Gatsby to come home from

the war, increasingly she resents her seclusion and finally cuts it short. (163)

Moreover, according to Stern, Fitzgerald chased two directions of his imaginary stream and reflects that in his novels:

In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald made out of his life with Zelda and his dream a moral history of the gnawing and murderous disappointment attendant upon discovering that the gorgeousness of America exists not in her [Zelda] glittering actualities, past or present, East or West, but in the fantastic sense of possibilities that drives the imagination of the archetype American, the eternal pioneer in search of the golden moment dreamed in the past and to be recaptured in the imagined future. (165)

I agree that Fitzgerald consciously paid attention to both the past and future generally; however, this thesis insists that it is not for chasing the concept of the American dream but more primitive and fundamental obsession drove him.

4. Neila Seshachari insists that “Jay Gatsby is a mythic figure” (101).

Seshachari continues that *The Great Gatsby*'s theme is not material, such as money and wealth, but love and myth—“For Gatsby's quest is not youth and wealth which are the symptomatic goals of the American Dream; Gatsby's personal quest centers wholly on his acquisition of the object of his love—woman—which is really the quest of the mythic idea” (94). I agree with the view

that Gatsby's aim is far from the materialistic idea. Actually, the time of myth is beyond general time; however, if so, we have to find out why Fitzgerald obsessively and repeatedly describes it in the story, transcending our universal notion and cognizance.

5. Fitzgerald's biographer, Davis S. Brown, writes: "In June 1896, the Fitzgeralds cruelly lost their two young daughters, Mary and Louise, to an epidemic. Heartbroken, Edward [Scott's father] wrote to his mother, 'I wonder sometimes if I will ever have any interest in life again. Perhaps so but certainly the keen zest of enjoyment is gone forever.' Three months later, on 24 September, his son, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, was born." (22) Fitzgerald also felt the effect of the loss. According to Edward Gillian, Fitzgerald felt sympathy for Mark Twain because Twain also lost his relatives. This episode indicates that Fitzgerald realized the impact of the loss—"Fitzgerald would have encountered some close parallels between Twain's youth and his own. Here was Twain the cruelly sensitive boy who wouldn't reach eight before a brother and sister died of childhood diseases, matching Fitzgerald's own terrible sense that the early deaths of two sisters had marked the psychic origins of his literary career. Fearful resonances exist, too, in the parents' tense marriages, in the maternal dominance of each family, in the mutual scrapes with poverty." (261)
6. Related to the money, the possibilities and limitations of capitalism are recurrent themes in Fitzgerald's works. According

to Matthew J. Bruccoli, “At the beginning of his career Fitzgerald was exuberant about the money and exposure generated by his stories” (15). Also, as Ronald Berman argues the affair of money “Gatsby, who relies on money and tries to forget his origins, and Tom Buchanan, who mistakes each and every one of the class values from ‘tradition’ to ‘courage’ summarized by Mencken” (*The Great Gatsby and Fitzgerald’s World of Ideas* 9). Furthermore, Kuehl also discusses that money in *The Great Gatsby* reflects the different levels of class in American society.

Money serves thus as the medium of the magic. It is the secret of Daisy's voice. Gatsby says, stunningly, that “her voice is full of money” (120) and this is not a mystical effusion. It has, if anything, a kind of sociological exactness. Her voice has the modulations of good breeding, of confidence, of schooling, of the assurance of being always loved and provided for and free to enjoy what life offers. Money, in the imaginary world these characters seek, is all that is needed to buy happiness, beauty, time itself. (*F. Scott Fitzgerald* 47)

One can see Fitzgerald’s money problems in his others works, such as “Babylon Revisited.” In this short story, Charlie Wells, the protagonist, loses his money and family. Finally, he recovers his prior economic situation; however, he cannot recover his family. Additionally, Fitzgerald’s short story series titled *The Pat*

*Hobby Stories* features the protagonist, who also struggles with money problems.

7. Previous studies also focus on the theme of return in “Babylon Revisited.” For example, Roy Male indicates that “Babylon Revisited” is a story of the return of a hero after a long absence, or of an exile, from home (271). However, this statement, although interesting, insufficiently explains Charlie’s situation. Charlie is indeed in exile; still, he cannot “return” but must continue to wander because he cannot atone for his sins.
8. There have been studies aimed at the dead appearing in Fitzgerald's works. However, in those cases they were used only as biographical material. There appears to have been no discussion on the themes of the dead and mourning in “Babylon Revisited” that associates Fitzgerald’s biographical information with his body of work in an organic manner.
9. Jennifer Banach discusses the “duality” in Fitzgerald’s works. According to Banach, his works describe American Dream and the dream has duality: “This dualistic vision of the American Dream—one encompassing the material and the spiritual, money and love—haunts Fitzgerald’s novels” (30). However, the American Dream Fitzgerald described was different from general notion of that: “Whereas previous incarnations of the American Dream tended to be forward-looking as they promised a bright future in exchange for present virtue and hard work,

Fitzgerald's version is blatantly nostalgic as his characters long to recapture the beauty of vanished moments and the faith of earlier generations" (31). Especially, Jay Gatsby represents the notion: "Certainly, one of his greatest creations is Jay Gatsby, a romantic figure who stands amid a tumult of excess and immorality. An upstart bootlegger with shady connections, Gatsby nevertheless emerges as the novel's tragic hero, idealistic and astonishingly uncorrupted as he gazes at the green light at the end of the Buchanans' dock and seek to recapture an irretrievable past" (31). Fitzgerald and characters in his stories swung between the duality; however, Banach's point does not see the concept of the writer's philosophy and basis of the swing values.

10. Marie Agnes Gay indicates that the conversation about stock trading leaks this story's theme: "economic and emotional loss":

The short dialogue between Charlie and Paul [about stock trading] provides a perfect example of Fitzgerald's unimpaired writing ability; the exchange is a model of implied meaning and understatement, conflating the essential themes of the story economic and emotional loss. It thus ironically exemplifies the sparse and careful technique Fitzgerald uses throughout the story at the very



same moment he implicitly evokes his own wasteful literary ways. (111)

11. Charlie constantly vacillates because of the duality within him. He paradoxically shuns anything “constant” no matter what happens: “Charlie watched a group of strident queens installing themselves in a corner. ‘Nothing affects them,’ he thought. ‘Stocks rise and fall, people loaf or work, but they go on forever.’ The place oppressed him” (617).

12. The “duality” in Fitzgerald’s work has already been indicated in past research. For example, Shu Tasaka focuses on the “oxymoronic expression” (44) (such as “half”) frequently appearing in Fitzgerald’s work, concentrating on the dichotomies and duality in his literary style. However, as indicated by the title of his paper—“The Style of Fitzgerald: The World of Perpetual Expression”—and surmised from the fact that his discussion converges upon “stylistic differences” between the works of Hemingway and Fitzgerald, Shu Tasaka is more interested in elucidating the style in Fitzgerald’s work than the literary themes. Therefore, the reason why Fitzgerald’s work always contains duality does not fit within the scope of Tasaka’s discussion. However, it is interesting that Tasaka’s findings and the duality found in the interaction between the author and the dead/past indicated in this thesis both seem to point in the same direction.

13. Kazuhiro Matsuura discusses that Charlie's suffering in the story is attributed to the "moral liability" of being burdened by his wife in the past. According to Matsuura, he appears superficially to be burdened by financial concerns. However, Charlie's financial situation rapidly improves after he leaves Paris, and his money problems are eventually cleared up. This might be evidence that his suffering is not related to his finances. The fundamental problem that he is facing is one of his ethics in dealing with his wife. This is, of course, something that he can never repay. This "suspended state" of "being unable to repay (due to the absence of creditors)" is the biggest problem facing the narrator ("Something Looking at You After Death" 28).
14. In this thesis, we shall limit the "circumstances" around which the author depicts his story of "patricide." This is because, even if the acts by which the living mourn the dead are understood to be, as Sigmund Freud once revealed in *Totem and Taboo*, actions or concepts that are universally valid to us rather than individual problems of the author, they seem to pose no problems for this discussion. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud discussed "taboos regarding the dead" with reference to modern cultural anthropology. According to Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, "savages" must draw a line with the dead at a stage where they have some link with the dead. That is, contact with the dead is

“taboo.” Thus, it is here that “mourning” exists as a ceremony for severing connections to the dead: “In other words, the savages never hide being afraid of the emergence or reappearance of dead spirits. They conduct various rituals to keep dead spirits away or drive them away” (233). Freud further developed this idea and applied this way of dealing with the dead to us.

Distancing themselves from the dead by putting water between them has not made living persons feel safer in fleeing the pursuit of the dead. Therefore, people have wanted to bury the dead on islands, or carry them to the far shores of rivers. This is where we get expressions like this world and the next. (*Totem and Taboo and Other Works* 235)

Freud thus explained the reciprocal relationship between the dead and the living. And he indicated that “mourning” works to establish a boundary between the living and the dead.

15. According to Scott Donaldson, Fitzgerald also had many difficulties in his communication with his sister-in-law (this is just as Charlie struggled with Marion), and “Babylon Revisited” allowed him to express his problems in his work: “In his fiction and elsewhere, Fitzgerald vented his dislike of Zelda’s sister. The most condemning portrait occurs in ‘Babylon Revisited,’ Fitzgerald’s 1931 story of how Marion Peters (modeled on

Rosalind[Zelda's sister]) prevented Charlie Wales from regaining custody of his daughter" (*Fool for Love* 90). In addition, according to Jeffrey Meyers, Fitzgerald got the idea for "Babylon Revisited" from sending his daughter Scottie to live with his uncle and aunt due to his wife Zelda's psychiatric disorder (similar to Honoria in the story). Charlie's uncle similarly works at a bank like Fitzgerald's uncle (*Scott Fitzgerald: A Biography* 240). This seems to be effective in supporting this thesis's attempt to comprehend the parallels between Fitzgerald as an author and the characters described in his work.

16. The common ground between the Oedipus myth and *Tender is the Night* and "Winter Dreams" has been discussed by Susan Cokal and James M. Mellard, but it appears that the direct influence of the Oedipus myth was not indicated in "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button." Cokal study *Tender is the Night* via Freudian theory in her paper. Mellard says that "In working out its oedipal implications in surprisingly complex ways, 'Winter Dreams,' in an adult repetition of a childhood phenomenon, shows how for at least one subject the Oedipus resolution eventuates" (54). Also, A. B. Paulson discussed that phenomenon in *The Great Gatsby*. According to Paulson, Myrtle Wilson and Daisy are as pre-Oedipal and Oedipal mothers (80-82). In the condition of pre-Oedipal, a small son can have strong hostility for his mother. Paulson indicates that Myrtle is

described as a pre-Oedipal mother and Daisy as an Oedipal mother.

17. Although not touched upon in this thesis, the author trilogy contains one additional story. This is “An Author’s Mother.” Sharing the key themes of the other two works—burying/digging/father-and-son relationships—and discussing them as intertwined with the Oedipus myth and Freud, this remaining work is also recognized for its great importance. However, in this thesis, we are only looking at the complexity between Fitzgerald and his father, so we shall leave discussion of “An Author’s Mother” for another time.
18. In this thesis, I shall limit the “circumstances” around which the author depicts his story of “patricide.” This is because it seems the discussion is not hindered if one recognizes the process of patricide more as a universally valid concept such as Freud’s Oedipus complex than as an individual problem.
19. Gindin indicates that this “rejection or absence of fathers” applies to Gatsby’s denial of his father’s existence (at the beginning of *The Great Gatsby*, Gatsby tells Nick that his father is already dead, but his father appears at Gatsby’s funeral), Dick Diver as a “surrogate father” in *Tender is the Night* (he tries to replace his wife’s father), and the “absent fathers” in *This Side of Paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned* (in these two works, fathers are always absent or died while their sons were young).

20. Incidentally, Benjamin's son Roscoe is also the one who rescues him from trouble he gets into during the war. Although Benjamin heads for an army campsite with his draft papers in hand, he is refused enlistment because he looks too young. Roscoe then goes to meet Benjamin all the way in South Carolina (179).
21. Freud writes in detail about the Oedipus Complex in "The Material and Sources of Dreams" from his *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Oedipus, born to Laius and Jocasta, the king and queen of Thebes, is abandoned shortly after his birth because an oracle states that he will kill his father in the future. However, he is fortunate enough to be saved and grows up as a prince in the royal court of another country. Later, Oedipus receives a prophecy that states that if he stays where he is, he will kill his father and marry his mother. If he wants to avoid this, he must abandon his home city. Having no other choice, Oedipus leaves the place that he believes to be his place of origin. Along the way, he gets into an argument with a man and kills him. However, the old man is Oedipus's real father, Laius. Unaware, Oedipus solves problems facing the city of Thebes, is welcomed as their king, and has a child with his own mother. Before long, Thebes is struck with a plague, and an oracle states that if the murderer of Laius is banished from the kingdom, the plague will be over. After his crimes are revealed, Oedipus is struck with fear by the enormity

of that crime. He stabs himself in the eyes, and leaves Thebes (313).

22. Freud indicated that the killing of Jesus is atonement for the killing of the father (Moses) by the Jews: “The Son of the only God gave his life as a sinless person, thus taking responsibility for the crimes of all people. The Son was the one who must die. This is because surely the Father was being killed” (147).
23. According to the *OED*, “ghost” (10-b) can also mean “A shadowy outline or semblance, an unsubstantial image (of something); hence, a slight trace or vestige, esp.”
24. The story of Benjamin thus resonates with the Oedipus myth, with Benjamin weighed down with the fundamental “sin” of “patricide.” Because of the sin, as a result, Benjamin is therefore forever marked, living a life of “eternal repetition.” He must traverse the same path back and forth until he is ultimately exhausted. Thus, we comprehend the tragic nature of Benjamin, which reverberates with the tragedy of Oedipus.
25. Henry Dan Piper also indicates the transition between “Winter Dreams” and *The Great Gatsby*:

*The Great Gatsby*, which was slowly taking shape in Fitzgerald’s imagination during this time, bears a certain family resemblance to both these short stories [“Winter Dreams” and “The Sensible Thing”]. Gatsby is the foolhardy idealist who cannot take the common-sense view,

who refuses to accept an equivocal love. It is almost as though Fitzgerald first had to explore the limits of the common-sense view in these two stories ["Winter Dreams" and "The Sensible Thing"] before he could celebrate the romantic view he himself shared with Jay Gatsby. (102)

Actually, from "Winter Dreams" to *The Great Gatsby* we can see the transition of Fitzgerald's view and imagination. However, as this thesis argues, the theme of these stories does not change and is taken over.

26. The "single woman" is, of course, Judy Jones in "Winter Dreams" and Daisy Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*. The two women are passionately sought by the male protagonists (Dexter and Gatsby) and have several common denominators in addition to both being "treated roughly" by their respective spouses: the constantly gallivanting Lud Simms and the openly unfaithful Tom Buchanan. These are the characteristics of a "bad driver." As described later, Judy is not accustomed to handling a golf club driver and repeatedly makes "bad driver shots" at golf courses. Daisy also gives Gatsby a ride, and while driving (and hence, being a "driver"), runs over Myrtle when she suddenly appears. Hence, the two women appearing in these works share the characteristic of being "bad drivers."
27. Turnbull's "first draft" assertion is believed to be based upon the fact that Fitzgerald himself referred to "Winter Dreams" in



June 1925 as “a sort of 1st draft of the Gatsby idea from Metropolitan 1923” (112) in correspondence with Maxwell E. Perkins. Also, John Kuehl discusses the similarities such as birthplace and background between the two stories (65).

Moreover, according to Jill B. Gidmark, Fitzgerald described the short story as “a short version of *The Great Gatsby*” (8).

28. Jordan Baker appears as a famous female golf player in *The Great Gatsby*. For example, “That was for the golf tournament. She had lost in the finals the week before” (43).
29. The “Winter Dreams” page numbers cited below are from *The Collected Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*.
30. “Driver” here refers to a type of golf club, and the shots made with this club are usually of longer distance than those made by other clubs, and thus it is used for making the first shot on actual golf courses. According to *OED*, a driver is a club used for tee shots—“a golf club with a flat face and wooden head, used for driving from the tee.”
31. This story begins with a “drive” and ends with a “drive.” As described later, Dexter is being “driven” at the end of the story. Moreover, in the first scene of the story, Dexter is “driven” by Judy to impulsively quit his part-time job at the golf club. Here, when Dexter says he is abruptly quitting his part-time job, it shocks those around him. His determination does not even change when the owner of the golf course begs him to stay “with tears in

his eyes.” Judy goes to the golf course, while Dexter leaves it.

This scene also depicts a “driver” and simultaneously a “swap.”

32. Devlin, a friend of Judy’s husband Lud Simms, comments on Judy as being “faded”: “Most of the women like her. . . Lots of women fade just like *that*,” Devlin snapped his fingers. “You must have seen it happen. Perhaps I’ve forgotten how pretty she was at her wedding. I’ve seen her so much since then, you see” (383).
33. According to the *OED*, “fade” can also mean “to get small and contract,” similar to “shrink”: “To grow small or weak; to decline, decay, fail, or faint; to shrink.”
34. James A. Ward described the car company and Detroit at the time—“The Packard and Joy[car company] were certain that they had a great car to offer the public, but their limited production capacity and out-of-the-way location hindered them. The auto industry was rapidly concentrating in Detroit, where numerous independent machine shops and easy access to wood allowed operating economics. In the early fall of 1902, the Packard brothers and Joy worked out financial arrangements to enable the new company to increase its production and relocate” (12). His description indicates that by 1920s Detroit had become a center of car manufacturing in the States.
35. Dexter Green suddenly notices that by losing Judy Jones, he has finally lost something important from the past. Richard Lehan indicates the “something” as “youth”—“As in ‘Winter Dreams,’

Fitzgerald gets his feelings of lost youth and beauty into *The Great Gatsby*. He also gets into the novel his sense of social inadequacy and his emotion of hurt when the dream is betrayed by lack of money” (95).

36. According to the *OED*, “ball” can also mean “dance or dancing”: “A social gathering for dancing, esp. of people belonging to a common establishment, society, profession, etc., sometimes having an organized programme and special entertainment. Often in *to give a ball, go to a ball*, etc” and “In extended use: a very enjoyable time; a period of uninhibited amusement; esp. in *to have a ball. Slang.*”
37. The theme of “past and present running in reverse” is a feature that can be seen in other works by Fitzgerald. For example, there is “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” (1922). In this story, the protagonist Button’s life unfolds with the “end” and “beginning” in reverse.
38. For details on the critics about the theme of “Babylon Revisited”, see Note No.4 or the early discussion of Chapter I.
39. Roy Male argues that “Babylon Revisited” is a story of the return of a hero after a long absence or exile from home (271). This is an important insight, because as I will show, the idea of exile and a failure to return home are themes implicit in both “Babylon Revisited” and “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.” Male does not link the idea of exile to the biblical myth of exile, one who

must wander the earth alone because of his sins, but as Matthew J. Bruccoli argues, Fitzgerald's short stories comprise a "cluster" which "introduce[s] or test[s] themes" (*The Collected Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald* xvii) developed in larger works such as *The Great Gatsby*. The question remains as to why the protagonists in these particular two stories struggle with their pasts and are destined to wander.

40. To understand these stories involve unresolvable moral problems and dilemmas. As I mentioned in previous chapter, criticism to date on "Babylon Revisited" has focused on Charlie's financial problems and the consequences of his past. For example, Bryan Sutton argues that "Babylon Revisited" is a story about Charlie's struggles with money and the past. Cecil D. Eby focuses on money and Charlie's spiritual problems (176), and Joan Turner suggests that the theme of "Babylon Revisited" is that "the past cannot be escaped" (282). In this thesis, I argue that money is less of a problem for Charlie than other scholars have suggested because he can solve the problem clearly. Rather, viewing Charlie's actions through the lens of unsolvable moral dilemmas can help to clarify his central problem.
41. Thomas K. Stavola indicates that *Gatsby's* past inspires his imagination and idealism.

Gatsby's romantic search for identity is characterized by the belief that the world of his imagination is better by

far than the drab one ruled over by his parents and their Catholic religion. This flight from childhood past and subsequent commitment to the power of romantic idealism is the source of Gatsby's heightened sensitivity to the promises of life. It is also the cause of his admirable defeat. Gatsby failed to recognize that the past he tries to escape from, especially the traditional values of Catholicism, represented in *The Great Gatsby* by Nick and the advice of his father, could have saved him from himself and a society inhabited by Buchanans which offers no commensurate objects for true heroic desires. (142)

I agree with that Gatsby is moved by his past. However, like Charlie Wales, Gatsby also tries to recover his past and pursues his future. Thus, Stavola's point seems not enough to discover Gatsby's and Fitzgerald's deepest theme or motivation.

42. Although it is core notion of this novel, limited number of critics pay attention to this. For example, Scott Donaldson argues that in reality, Nick did not completely practice his policy of reserving all judgments—"He listens to confessions since he is "a little afraid of missing something" ("The Trouble with Nick: Reading Gatsby Closely" 5) otherwise: a vicarious sense of having drunk his cup to the lees. But he does not suspend judgment. Nick judges, and condemns, practically everyone he meets in the course of the novel" ("The Trouble with Nick: Reading Gatsby

Closely" 158). Donaldson also demonstrates that "on the day of Gatsby's death, Nick has an idea that Gatsby didn't believe Daisy would telephone" and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream" (126). Nothing that Gatsby says or does warrants either of these conclusions. Nick is unable to conceive of the depth of Gatsby's dream" (160). Giles Gunn similarly expresses doubt that Nick could follow the principle of "reserve all judgments" by linking and discussing this reserve with "tolerance" to indicate Nick's lack of tolerance: "Nick's tolerance is not without its limits; for he is concerned to live as he has been raised" (238). What these comments express in common is probably that ultimately Nick's actions are filled with contradictions. However, as I discussed in this thesis, to "reserve all judgments" is in itself an action that connotes and induces contradictions. Indicating that Nick's actions are filled with contradictions probably reinforces the accuracy of the points presented in this thesis. Further, more important are the significance and the effects which to "reserve all judgments" bring to the story. This is understood because as discussed in this thesis, Gatsby's actions were supported by this plan and scheme, and similar tendencies can be seen in Fitzgerald's other works, so it is proper to focus on the impacts of his plan in the story.

43. There is a study that focuses on a material pause and stop, which

are the polar opposite of a cognitive pause. This study focuses on a material pause, or in other words, the pause of the passenger vehicle. According to Yasuhiro Takeuchi, the pause of the passenger vehicle which appears in this story is important. He first argues that Gatsby aimed to move an object that surely should not have moved. "So here he resolutely tries to reword Gatsby's dream. His dream is to 'move the immovable'" (39). To put it briefly, this means that in order to be able to move that which should not move, a passenger vehicle plays a vital role. "Moving the immovable transforms reality into unreality, and inversely, permits the existence of Gatsby's elaborate unreal ideal world, and the passenger vehicle created its environment" (40). Moving that which essentially should not move creates an unreal world. However, conversely, something which usually moves pauses occasionally. Nothing moves around without ever stopping. The instant a moving thing stops moving, it returns to its original world of immobility. "The movement of a passenger vehicle stopping. This is a case such as that where a transient relationship which has been supported by movement behind reality is instantly brought back to the sphere of the immovable" (41). This is to say that material movement and the pauses governing it appear in *The Great Gatsby* as a rule permeating the entire story.

44. This thesis is not the only one which insists that Gatsby is trying to balance between two things. Roger Lewis demonstrates that

Gatsby keeps himself between money and love—“(A)lthough a bootlegger, Gatsby is abstemious and careful—a man aware of his own doubleness. Both dreamer and vulgarian at the same time, he, is, like Dexter Green, a money maker and a romantic; unlike Dexter Green, he seems to a balance between the two. He appears able to keep the halves in control” (44).

45. I am not the only person who wonder why Gatsby wait for five years and not take Daisy simply. Roger Lewis indicates:

Why does he wait so long to arrange a meeting and then use Jordan Baker and Nick Carraway to bring it about? A man with Gatsby's resources would surely have a hundred easier ways to do what he does in the course of this story. The answer is that the love becomes more important than the object of it... No wonder, then, that after the five-years hiatus, when Gatsby's love has had the chance to feed upon itself and nourish itself, the possibility of physical intimacy has not grown, but the love has grown beyond the merely “personal.” (49-50)

46. Some papers refers to why Jay Gatsby has failed at his attempt to maintain his wealth, love interest, and his life. For example, Dianne E. Bechtel discusses that Gatsby's failure is caused by his lack of awareness of social structure and wealth.

Fitzgerald directly experienced the exclusion and humiliation of class distinction. He [Fitzgerald] depicts his



scrappy, if delusional, proletarian Jay Gatsby experiencing same pain and impotence of cultural exclusion. Like Fitzgerald, Gatsby performs a Herculean rise above his working-class birth to marry a girl with money, and in the process violates the dictated class structure. (121)

Gatsby is close to overcome the gap and achieve his intent.

However, finally he fails; however, Daisy may not mind the gap.

Thus, the cause of failure is different from the class and economical one.

47. Roger Lewis indicates that Wilson is described as a dead man —

“Wilson’s dull, self-defensive grief is the embodiment of the sterility of the valley of ashes; lacking a dream, his life itself is kind of death... The man who kills Gatsby is already dead when he commits the murder; Nick Carraway describes him as “ashen,” and his suicide is simply a belated acknowledgement of his condition” (53).

48. James E. Miller argues that in “Fitzgerald's Gatsby: The World as

Ash Heap”: “Though confined geographically to the area near the Wilson garage, the valley of ashes spreads like a contagious fungus psychically through all the novel, leaving in its wake a trail of images of death (248).

49. Richard Anderson argues that after Fitzgerald’s death, the

writer's influence is continuing in American literature and culture. For details on his influence, see "Gatsby's Long Shadow: Influence and Endurance," pp. 15-19.

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