



Babylon Revisited

F. Scott Fitzgerald

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F. Scott Fitzgerald's stories defined the 1920s 'Jazz Age' generation, with their glittering dreams and tarnished hopes. In these three tales of a fragile recovery, a cut-glass bowl and a life lost, Fitzgerald portrays, in exquisite prose and with deep human sympathy, the idealism of youth and the ravages of success.

This book includes *Babylon Revisited*, *The Cut-Glass Bowl* and *The Lost Decade*.

Babylon Revisited Details

Date : Published February 15th 2011 by Penguin Classics (first published 1931)

ISBN : 9780141195964

Author : F. Scott Fitzgerald

Format : Paperback 96 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Classics, Fiction, Literature, American, Academic, School

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From Reader Review Babylon Revisited for online ebook

Mario says

Is it weird that I enjoyed reading this short story more than I enjoyed reading *The Great Gatsby*?

Nick Davies says

This little freebie (three short stories by F Scott Fitzgerald, the last of which was so short as to barely deserve comment) was entertaining and interesting. Though at times the prose was drowning in style, at the heart of the two longer stories - the titular tale and 'The Cut Glass Bowl' - was some very well-observed aspects, a sharp wit, and (esp. in the latter) a creepy darkness that reminded me slightly of Roald Dahl's short stories. I'm not sure I'll rush to read something novel-length by this author, but this was a decent wee read.

Charlotte Jones says

I picked this book up in a charity shop for 10p and went into it not knowing anything about it but I am glad I have finally read something else by F. Scott Fitzgerald, after reading *The Great Gatsby* at the beginning of the year.

This book is a tiny 76 pages and contains 3 short stories: *Babylon Revisited*, *The Cut-Glass Bowl* and *The Lost Decade*.

Although I am glad that I read this collection, it isn't something that I love or hate; this book contains stories that just didn't seem to have any impact on me at all and I find them completely forgettable unfortunately. The writing was really enjoyable but due to the lack of plot and character development in each of the stories, I found the collection quite bland and lack-lustre for me personally.

Alan says

though that says 'Short Stories', it should be 'Short Story' as this has one story in it. Given me by a mate who got it free from some newspaper.

It has three stories in actually! And all three are pretty brilliant, a star lost for the last one 'The Lost Decade' due to underdevelopment(I felt). The title one was great, a former drunk, and widower in Paris tries to get his daughter back from the custody of his sister in law and husband. It has marvellous dialogue sequences with the daughter which showed great insight and reminded me of Salinger's later stories about children (eg the *Bananafish* one). The second one too was a gem 'The Cut Glass Bowl' although maybe a mite contrived (the bowl given the heroine by a spurned lover turns up in crucial ways at turning points of her life).

I'm going to get more of this series, I had to go into hospital for a minor (but embarrassing) procedure and these books fit my dressing gown pocket snugly.

John says

Three great short stories. My favorite was the second one about the giant glass cut bowl and the impact it had on the family. The first set in Paris tells the story of a father trying to get his daughter back. How he recalls why she is a ward of his dead wife's sister and the mistakes he made. I am curious now to read more short stories from this author.

Sam Quixote says

"Babylon Revisited" contains three short stories by F Scott Fitzgerald - "The Cut-Glass Bowl", "The Lost Decade" and the title story. If you've got "Flappers and Philosophers", his book of collected short stories, then you'll have already read this book.

"Babylon Revisited" is probably the best of the bunch, a story of an alcoholic father trying to regain custody of his young daughter, trying to prove to his sister in law and her husband that he is sober and is up to the task. As the story goes on we find out what happened to the mother and if you know anything about Fitzgerald's life you'll notice parallels between the story and his own life where he tried (and failed) to get his children back and overcome his alcoholism.

Alcohol abuse is the overarching theme in these stories with a punch bowl playing a part in pivotal moments of a troubled family's life in "The Cut-Glass Bowl" while "The Lost Decade" subtly but terrifyingly showing how addiction robs a person of their life.

The book itself is very dinky, a small paperback that's a decent introduction to one of the 20th century's finest writers but new readers to Fitzgerald would do well to seek out his most famous and greatest accomplishment, "The Great Gatsby". Kudos to Penguin though for putting out some of his lesser known stories in an attractively produced affordable paperback.

Maria Ella says

"I am the exception that proves no rules, the limits of your control, the condiment in the dish of life."

The book is pretty straight-forward and simple, arching the idea of Alcohol abuse as the central theme of the three following short stories: Babylon Revisited, Cut-glass Bowl, and The Lost Decade. The first short story is *inspired* by the author's true story of gaining custody of her daughter over the latter's aunt. After reading the collections did I know that Fitzgerald suffered this kind of episode at one point of his life.

In addition, this also seen the bitter reality of the year where the Great Depression started. It may lack development, or the transition from the Golden Years, but the stories, no matter how concise, depicted the

frustrations of its people suffering from this hardship, emanating the sentiments of how fast *The American Boom* went by.

Try these short reads - you will know why F. Scott Fitzgerald is considered a classic, and a required read to American students.

Mohsin Maqbool says

Eiffel Tower on a moonlit night.

IN November I unexpectedly came upon F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Babylon Revisited" at one of Karachi's flea markets. Through the book I came to know that the writer had a short life. He was born on 24 September 1896 in Saint Paul, Minnesota and he died on 21 December 1940 in Hollywood, California. But during that period he had already made his mark on the literary world.

"Babylon Revisited" comprises three stories: Babylon Revisited, The Cut-Glass Bowl and The Lost Decade. The first two stories are in excess of 30 pages while the last is only six pages long. I was totally enthralled by the first two stories.

"Babylon Revisited" appears on the front page of The Saturday Evening Post (February 21, 1931).

The protagonist of Babylon Revisited called Charles J. Wales visits Paris to regain custody of his daughter Honoria from her maternal aunt Helen. However the latter is a hard nut to crack and gives him a really tough time towards his goal.

One day Charles takes his daughter out for fine dining to a posh restaurant. Here is a part of what takes place there.

"When there had been her mother and a French nurse he had been inclined to be strict; now he extended himself, reached out for a new tolerance; he must be both parents to her and not shut any of her out of communication.

'I want to get to know you,' he said gravely. 'First let me introduce myself. My name is Charles J. Wales, of Prague.'

'Oh daddy!' her voice cracked with laughter.

'And who are you please,' he persisted, and she accepted a role immediately: 'Honorias Wales, Rue Palatine, Paris.'

'Married or single?'

'No, not married. Single.'

He indicated the doll. 'But I see you have a child, madame.'

Unwilling to disinherit it, she took it to her heart and thought quickly: 'Yes, I've been married, but I am not married now. My husband is dead.'

He went on quickly, 'And the child's name?'

'Simone. That's after my best friend at school.'"

What better than a rainy night for romancing in Paris!

You, the reader, also get to see a bit of Paris by night through Mr Fitzgerald's pen. And if you have not seen

Paris when the lights go on, you have not seen anything at all.

“He left soon after dinner but not to go home. He was curious to see Paris by night with clearer and more judicious eyes than those of other days. He bought a serapontin for the Casino and watched Josephine Baker go through her chocolate arabesques.

After an hour he left and strolled towards Montmartre, up the Rue Pigalle into the Place Blanche. The rain had stopped and there were a few people in evening clothes disembarking from taxis in front of cabarets, and cocottes prowling, singly or in pairs, and many Negroes. He passed a lighted door from which issued music, and stopped with the sense of familiarity; it was Bricktop’s where he had parted with so many hours and so much money.

A few doors further on he found another ancient rendezvous and incautiously put his head inside.

Immediately an orchestra burst into sound, a pair of professional dancers leaped to their feet and a maitre d’hotel swooped towards him, crying, ‘Crowd just arriving, sir!’ But he withdrew quickly.”

F. Scott Fitzgerald at work on his desk.

Since it is a short story, I won’t divulge any more details. You have got to read the story to fully enjoy it. Fitzgerald’s short story was later adapted into a film called “The Last Time I Saw Paris” (1954), starring Elizabeth Taylor and Van Johnson. I had seen it in the mid-1990s without even knowing that it was based on Fitzgerald’s story. However, I watched it again recently and was disappointed to realise that its director, Richard Brooks, had loosely adapted it from the book. Besides, the film ends on a happy note. Don’t think about the book and you are bound to enjoy it.

Elizabeth Taylor and Van Johnson closely huddled on a bench near the Notre Dame.

Here is the link for film buffs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMYnt...>

If it was up to me I would have probably made The Cut-Glass Bowl into the lead story and titled the book after it, the reason being that I enjoyed it even more than Babylon Revisited. The story is quite horrific and it reminded me of Edgar Allan Poe. However, please don’t think that it is a horror tale as it is not.

The protagonist of this story is a beautiful married woman called Evelyn.

An amazing antique cut-glass bowl.

Mr. Fitzgerald’s opening paragraph is simply beautiful. As soon as I read it, I got hooked on to the story.

“There was a rough stone age and a smooth stone age and a bronze age, and many years afterward a cut-glass age. In the cut-glass age, when young ladies had persuaded young men with long curly moustaches to marry them, they sat down several months afterward and wrote thank you notes for all sorts of cut-glass presents – punch-bowls, finger-bowls, dinner-glasses, wine-glasses, ice-cream dishes, bonbon dishes, decanters, and cases – for though cut-glass was nothing new in the nineties, it was then especially busy reflecting the dazzling light of fashion from the Back Bay to the freshness of the Middle West.” I should remind you that Mr. Fitzgerald is talking about the 1890s, the decade he was born.

The entire story revolves around the cut-glass bowl. Need I tell more?

Since The Lost Decade is such a short story, therefore I won’t tell you anything about it except providing an extract to raise your curiosity.

“He had seen this visitor go into the editor’s office – a pale tall man of forty with blond statuesque hair and a

manner that was neither shy nor timid nor otherworldly like a monk, but something of all three. The name on his card, Louis Trimble, evoked some vague memory, but having nothing to start on, Orrison did not puzzle over it – until a buzzer sounded on his desk, and previous experience warned him that Mr Trimble was to be his first course at lunch.”

A rain-drenched Paris.

Neha says

So I really don't like Fitzgerald's other work (or him as a person to be honest), but this moved me. Exquisitely well written and just vulnerable - I could see this shining honesty come through. I felt so much; I feel so much. This story is going to stick with me for a while.

Still, it lost a star for being slightly pretentious.

Femke says

It appears as though some authors should have left it at that one book that made them famous.

Lizzie says

Really this is practically five stars. I loved it. It's my favorite (American) story that I've read so far this summer.

I don't know what it's missing -- really, it's such an immensely straightforward story, that it doesn't actually have a whole lot happening below its surface. I guess that's it. I like the feeling of the unknown, just a little bit, when I read something. The feeling of, how did they *get* there?

Apparently, the story is truer to life than I realized when I finished it. Fitzgerald was in fact in a situation like this after his most alcoholic years, cleaning up and trying to get his sister-in-law to give him his daughter back.

I really like thinking about the work an author does to turn a true circumstance into solid fiction, which requires so many more things than nonfiction. To make art out of life, much more structure is needed to deliver its message, and timing of the things that happen must be more controlled. It won't work unless you are an extremely skilled storyteller. It seems somehow more structurally impressive to do so in a short piece than in a novel. The plot and people here are so smooth and genuine at the same time.

Though it's written with a light touch, the emotions in this story are brutal. The irony of Charlie's powerlessness defines everything: he's earned back everything he could, but his respect may be gone forever. And he feels that he may deserve this, but who could live like that? Back in Paris, he faces the scene of his disgusting hedonist meltdown, and can barely stand to look. It's a part of him that won't ever leave him, even if he lets it die. If he asks for true forgiveness, what does he do for the rest of his life if the answer's no?

The crux of this story is the waiting and swinging of this yes-or-no answer on the custody question that essentially decides the whole remaining worth of his life. Thinking of it happening, he feels "The door of the world was open again." I almost fell over with that sentence. His daughter is young but getting older, and in six months, she would not be the same. The time in which they can have each other is being lost. They never truly will, if not now. Six months is so short to wait, but so much can be ruined.

I happened to read this on a day that left me a rather bitter disappointment: one that said to wait. Not no, not yes. Three months. Maybe six. I was glad that Charlie was there, and sorry too.

Rachel Aranda says

This was my first read by F. Scott Fitzgerald but I didn't know much about his work at this time since I was 11 years old when I first read it. Honestly I forgot all about this short story and only remembered it once I found a copy of this story among my school papers. After rereading this story I realized how I forgot this book after all this time. This was a nice introduction to his work but there wasn't anything too spectacular about it. I did like how the main character (Charlie) admits to having one alcoholic drink a day as that shows how the character has grown from his party days and time in a sanatorium. There were times that Marian (Charlie's sister-in-law) annoyed me tremendously as she was incredibly hostile toward Charlie for spending time in a sanatorium or having had a drinking problem in the past. I'm still not sure how responsible Helen's death was Charlie's fault since she died of heart trouble. How her husband Lincoln, who is such a kind and good man, married her is a mystery to me.

Loredana (Bookinista08) says

M-a emo?ionat foarte tare povestirea asta... despre un tat? care a cedat cu un an ?i jum?tate în urm?, din cauza dependen?ei de alcool, custodia asupra fetei?ei sale în vârst? de nou? ani. Fetei?a s-a dus s? locuiasc? la m?tu?a ?i unchiul ei, în timp ce mama ei s-a pr?p?dit, iar tat?l ei, adic? personajul nostru principal, Charlie, s-a pus pe picioare, l?sând în urm? un trecut tumultuos plin de alcool, femei ?i dezm?? general. Numai c? acum eforturile lui Charlie de a-?i lua fetei?a înapoi sunt mult îngreunate de atitudinea ostil? a m?tu?ii fetei?ei, Marion Peters, sora so?iei sale moarte. Aproape m-a bufnit plânsul citind ultimele pagini. Poate c? Fitzgerald nu ?i-a dorit s? fie atât de „patetic” în scrierea sa, dar mie mi-a atins o coard? sensibil?. „Întoarcerea la Babilon”. A? fi vrut s? fie mai lung?, totu?i. ?i nu ?tiam, fiindc? via?a scriitorului F. Scott Fitzgerald nu m-a interesat niciodat?, dar se pare c? povestirea asta e inspirat? din propria lui experien??. Poate de aceea a ?i reu?it s? surprind? atât de bine emo?iile lui Charlie. O scriitur? minimalist?, dar puternic?.

Somya says

How can you not love Fitzgerald? The sheer irony, meticulously sewn characters, and the fantastic magical writing leaves me wanting more every time. Babylon Revisited has to be one of my favourite short stories of all time. The Cut Glass a close second.

"He thought rather angrily that this was just money--he had given so many people money. . . ."

Dane Cobain says

This mini collection had three of F. Scott Fitzgerald's short stories in it – the title story, as well as The Cut-Glass Bowl and The Lost Decade. I've read The Great Gatsby and I enjoyed it, but reading these made me realise I want to work my way through the rest of his books, too. If anything, I think his short stories might be better than his long-form fiction. Good stuff.
