

Chapter 1

Fitzgerald's Life

F. Scott Fitzgerald's life has garnered almost as much interest as his most famous novel. At the beginning of his career in the 1920s, he went through extraordinary highs at a time when fame combined with mass media to create celebrity culture. He was talked about in newspapers and magazines as the spokesman of his generation. It was also at this time that the image—both still and moving—became ubiquitous. His good looks and those of his glamorous wife, Zelda, made them an early incarnation of the celebrity couple. The highs could not last, however, and the desperate predicaments that both of them would find themselves in through the course of the 1930s read like a tragedy. He would die in 1940 in Hollywood, aged only forty-four, but his life began in the Midwest city of St. Paul, Minnesota.

CHILDHOOD AND PRINCETON (1896–1917)

In the popular imagination, F. Scott Fitzgerald is associated with the glamour of New York and the French Riviera in the 1920s, but his roots were firmly planted in the turn of the century Midwest. He was born on September 24, 1896, in St. Paul, Minnesota, to Edward and Mollie Fitzgerald. The couple represented two alternative traditions of American identity. His maternal line was immigrant Irish; his grandfather had arrived as a child in the United States in the 1840s. Through industry and identifying valuable opportunities, Philip McQuillan amassed a considerable fortune running a wholesale grocery business that would be the income source Fitzgerald's family relied upon through much of his childhood. This financial reliance was the result of Edward owning and then losing a furniture business in 1898 that led to a family move to Buffalo, New York, for employment. This work with Procter & Gamble ended in 1908 and a return to the Midwest and financial dependency followed.

Edward's background contrasted with his wife's in a number of significant ways. He was born in Maryland into a well-established Southern family whose influence had faded. At the end of the Civil War, Edward had headed north and west, eventually settling in industrial St. Paul, home of railroad magnate James J. Hill. The pull between the self-made and reinvented idea of American identity and the allure of inherited wealth and social influence his parents represented reveals itself as a tension both in Fitzgerald's life and in his writing.

Throughout his great success in the 1920s, Fitzgerald showed little appreciation for the role his parents had played in the formation of his talent. Remarks about them during this time are either disparaging or pitying. However, Edward was central in passing on a love of literature, particularly in the form of English Romanticism. Fitzgerald's lifelong love of Byron and John Keats specifically can be traced to the influence of his father. He applied a less flattering acknowledgement to his mother, claiming that weaknesses in his character were a direct result of her overindulgence of him in childhood. Her behavior was not entirely surprising when we reflect on the fact that the Fitzgeralds buried three of Scott's siblings in infancy.

Fitzgerald's interest in writing revealed itself early on and a number of his short stories were published in school magazines, first, at the St. Paul Academy,

which Fitzgerald attended between 1908 and 1911, and subsequently at the Newman School, where he was a student until 1913. The second institution was vital in Fitzgerald's emotional and creative development as it was here that he met Monsignor Sigourney Fay, who encouraged his artistic leanings. The friendship between the two also led to Fitzgerald flirting with the idea of the priesthood. Fitzgerald would use him as a model for the character Monsignor Darcy in his first novel, *This Side of Paradise* (1920).

Although Fitzgerald was already showing signs of writerly talent by adding playwriting to his short story accomplishments, he did not particularly shine academically. However, university was an expected path for a man of his class to follow and he set his heart on the Ivy League and Princeton. His maternal grandmother's timely death meant that the tuition fees could be met and the threat of the University of Minnesota to save money was removed (Brucoli 2002, p. 37).

Fitzgerald's time at Princeton was no more academically successful than his school days. However, he made a number of important friends during his time as an undergraduate, including the poet John Peal Bishop, the writer and critic Edmund Wilson, and John Biggs, future judge and—on Fitzgerald's death—executor of his estate. Fitzgerald carried on writing and performing with the university's Triangle Club, as well as contributing to the university magazines *Tiger* and *Nassau Literary Magazine* that both Wilson and Bishop were heavily involved in. These creative outlets were the focus of his attention rather than his studies.

The outcome of his haphazard approach to academia was that in 1916, he returned to Princeton to repeat his junior year. By the beginning of the following year, he was making little progress and had little chance of graduating. In April 1917, the United States entered the war, relieving Fitzgerald of having to admit his academic failure or make decisions about his immediate future. By October, he was a commissioned second lieutenant in the infantry stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The following March he was at Fort Sheridan near Montgomery, Alabama, and had been promoted to first lieutenant. Fitzgerald would not take part in the action of the First World War, which he recognized as the defining experience of his generation, but he was about to experience a life-changing moment of a different kind. For it was here in Montgomery that he would meet eighteen-year-old Zelda Sayre, his future wife.

MEETING ZELDA AND EARLY SUCCESS (1918–1924)

Before his arrival at Fort Sheridan, Fitzgerald had already begun work on the novel that would eventually become *This Side of Paradise* and an early draft was completed by February 1918. It was submitted to Charles Scribner's Sons publishing house in New York for consideration under the title *The Romantic Egoist*, but it was rejected in both August and October of that year.

In July, Fitzgerald met Zelda Sayre at a country club dance in Montgomery. She was beautiful, vivacious, and popular; Fitzgerald was besotted. The path to marriage, however, was not without interruption as Zelda was unable to fully commit to Fitzgerald until she was certain that he could provide for her properly. A handsome soldier and would-be writer may have had romantic appeal but Zelda, like all women of her class at this time (as well as Fitzgerald's female characters), needed to be practical too. With no means of generating an income for themselves because of the limited opportunities open to them, women needed to take the decision to marry with both the head and the heart. Her lack of faith at this point in the relationship cast a shadow over their marriage that Fitzgerald could never quite escape.

In 1919, having never seen action overseas, Fitzgerald was dismissed from the army. Intent on marrying Zelda, he headed to New York and a role in advertising. He continued to write and submitted a number of short stories to magazines for publication but was unsuccessful. In June, Zelda—unconvinced that Fitzgerald would make a success of his chosen career and conscious that he had no independent wealth—broke their engagement. Fitzgerald was heartbroken but it triggered a series of events that would set him on the path to fame and fortune. He quit his job in advertising, packed his belongings, and once again returned to St. Paul where in the attic of his parents' home he redrafted his novel in a flurry of activity over the summer months.

In September, Fitzgerald's career as a commercial writer began when *The Smart Set* magazine accepted "Babes in the Woods" for publication. More good news would follow that month when Scribner's editor Maxwell Perkins accepted the newly renamed *This Side of Paradise* for publication. The title came from a poem titled "Tiare Tahiti" (1915) by English poet Rupert Brooke, who had perished during the war. The relationship between Perkins and Fitzgerald would be a mainstay of the author's life. Perkins was not only an extraordinary editor; he was also a loyal and remarkable friend who supported Fitzgerald through some of the darkest periods of his life.

Two months later, another professional contact would enter his life and remain a source of emotional, creative, and financial support. Harold Ober was a literary agent who was working for the Paul Revere Reynolds Agency, which specialized in placing short stories in magazines.¹ Throughout his lifetime, commercial short stories would be the most reliable income stream for Fitzgerald. Almost as soon as the author signed with the agency, Ober sold his story “Head and Shoulders” to *The Saturday Evening Post*, which was one of the most widely read periodicals in the country. It was the beginning of a productive relationship between author and publication that was closely guarded by Ober himself. Over the following months into 1920, a series of Fitzgerald stories was sold to a number of magazines.

On a personal level, things were also on the up. The engagement between Zelda and Fitzgerald resumed in January 1920, as the author’s career began to take shape. Within a few months Fitzgerald found himself a published author when *This Side of Paradise* was published on March 26. The first print run of 3,000 copies priced at \$1.75 sold out in an astonishing three days and it went on to sell close to 50,000 copies. Just over a week after publication, on April 3, Fitzgerald and Zelda married in a low-key ceremony in the rectory of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, New York. Fitzgerald found himself newly married, newly rich, and newly famous. The couple embraced their new life and the freedom that money brought. Parties and excessive drinking were routine. Toward the middle of the year, they rented a house in Westport, Connecticut, where Fitzgerald hoped he would be more productive; it was here that he started his next novel *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922) that drew heavily on the early days of the Fitzgeralds’ marriage.

Over the next few years, the couple moved regularly with periods spent in St. Paul, New York, and finally Great Neck on Long Island. Despite their somewhat chaotic lives, Fitzgerald published a number of his most significant short stories during this time, such as “May Day” (1920) and “Bernice Bobs Her Hair” (1920), as well as “The Diamond as Big as The Ritz” and “Winter Dreams,” both published in 1922. A collection of stories appeared in 1920 titled *Flappers and Philosophers* followed by *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922). A third collection of stories would appear more than a decade later, titled *Taps at Reveille* (1935). However, *The Beautiful and Damned*’s publication in 1922 did not have the same impact either commercially or critically as its predecessor. In the midst of the writing and the partying, the couple’s only child—a girl—was born on October

¹ Harold Ober established his own agency in 1929 and Fitzgerald went with him.

26, 1921, and named for her father: Frances Scott Fitzgerald. She went by Scottie throughout her life. During this period Fitzgerald returned to his previous love of the theatre by writing a play, *The Vegetable* (1923); however, it failed to impress during a pre-Broadway run in Atlantic City and, although published, it has garnered little attention from scholars.

This period of early success is also marked by the beginning of a problem that would haunt Fitzgerald throughout the remainder of his life and contribute considerably to his death, namely his alcoholism. His heavy drinking probably became a physical and psychological addiction by his mid-twenties at the latest. It interfered with Fitzgerald's work patterns as did Zelda's need for amusement. An intelligent and curious woman, her need for interests outside of her marriage saw her eventually turning toward artistic pursuits of her own. Alongside writing herself she would—at different times in her life—also explore ballet and painting.

By 1924, Fitzgerald was desperate to break the cycle of having to write short stories to sell them in order to fund a lifestyle that was indulgent and financially reckless. In an attempt to save money, the couple decided to take advantage of the dollar-franc exchange rate and spend time in Europe. The goal was that Fitzgerald could work uninterrupted on his next novel. Therefore, in the middle of April 1924, the Fitzgeralds were ready to set sail to France and new adventures.

THE GREAT GATSBY AND EUROPEAN TRAVELS (1924–1931)

After their transatlantic crossing, the Fitzgeralds spent just over a week in Paris where they found a suitable nanny for Scottie before heading down to the Riviera. By June they were settled in the Villa Marie in St Raphaël. Fitzgerald began in earnest the writing of his next novel, which he hoped would be a considerable departure from his commercial fiction and would be sustained by a developed artistic vision. Writing to Max Perkins shortly before their departure to Europe, Fitzgerald reflected on the time that he had wasted in the previous two years. He also articulated his hopes for his new book. It was not to be concerned with “trashy imaginings as in my stories but the sustained imagination of a sincere and yet radiant world. So I tread slowly and carefully + at times in considerable distress. The book will be a consciously artistic achievement [sic] + must depend on that as the 1st books did not” (Fitzgerald 1994, p. 67).

Through the summer months Fitzgerald worked on his novel and Zelda was largely left to her own devices, often spending time at the beach sunbathing and swimming in the beautiful Mediterranean Sea. During July, she became involved with a French aviator by the name of Edouard Jozan. The exact nature of the relationship between the two is unknown, with Jozan claiming after the deaths of both Fitzgeralds that it was an innocent flirtation. However—whatever the truth—it introduced a wedge between husband and wife which, some biographers have argued, was never fully repaired. Curiously, it was also a traumatic event that both of them drew upon and reimagined—not only in their fiction—but as an ever-evolving story that the couple shared with friends.

During this period, the Fitzgeralds met Sara and Gerald Murphy, a glamorous and well-connected couple who were noted for their exquisite entertaining as well as their artistic group of friends that included Pablo Picasso, Cole Porter, and Jean Cocteau. They would remain friends and frequent correspondents of Fitzgerald for the rest of his life, despite his drunken antics sometimes putting pressure on his relationships with the Murphys and others.

Fitzgerald spent the remainder of 1924 and the early months of 1925 revising the galley proofs of his novel, which after a series of name changes was now called *The Great Gatsby*. Much of this work was undertaken in Italy, where the Fitzgeralds spent a number of months in both Rome and Capri. During the process he was in regular contact with his editor, Max Perkins, at Scribner's. In a letter dated October 10, 1924, Fitzgerald wrote to him about an upcoming writer that he had heard of but (up to that point) had not met but believed he would be a good fit for Perkins's editorship. "This is to tell you about a young man named Ernest Hemmingway [sic], who lives in Paris, (an American) writes for the Transatlantic Review + has a brilliant future . . . I'd look him up right away. He's the real thing" (Fitzgerald 1994, p. 82).

On April 10, 1925, *The Great Gatsby* was published. Now widely hailed as one of the greatest novels of the twentieth century, at the time of its publication its significance was missed by the book-buying public and it had a critical reception that was mixed at best. The initial print run was 20,870 copies priced at \$2.00. In August, an additional 3,000 copies were printed, some of which "were still in Scribner's warehouse when Fitzgerald died" (Brucoli 2002, p. 217). Fellow writers such as Willa Cather and Edith Wharton wrote to Fitzgerald to express their admiration for the novel. Indeed, poet T. S. Eliot had read it three times when he declared it "the first step American fiction has taken since Henry James" in a letter to the author dated December 31, 1925 (Eliot 2009, p. 813).

However, the novel failed to have the impact that Fitzgerald had hoped it would have and the disappointment was not easily—if ever—shaken.

A few weeks after publication, the Fitzgeralds were once again on the move, this time to Paris, where they rented an apartment at 14 rue de Tilsitt. Sometime toward the end of April, Fitzgerald finally met Ernest Hemingway, the writer whom he had praised to Max Perkins some months before. The only detailed record of this first encounter is in Hemingway's posthumously published memoir *A Moveable Feast* (1964). The accuracy of much of the book is deeply questionable with the depiction of Fitzgerald unflattering and cruel. The pair shared a close friendship for a while and Fitzgerald was crucial in Hemingway moving publishers to Scribner's. He was also instrumental in offering editorial advice to the younger man in relation to his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). However, the relationship became increasingly strained and antagonistic as the years passed. Max Perkins, editor to both men, acted as an intermediary, communicating to both men about the other.

Over the next few years, the Fitzgeralds lived at different locations in Paris and the South of France as well as periodic returns to the United States. Both Fitzgeralds were drinking heavily but for Scott the tightening grip of alcoholism was interfering with his productivity. He was in increasing amounts of debt with both Scribner's and Harold Ober despite still being paid considerable sums of money for his short stories. For example, in 1926 according to Fitzgerald's own ledger his income was \$25,686.05 (Brucoli 2002, p. 532). Key events during this period were the beginning of a new novel shortly after the publication of *Gatsby* that would not see completion until 1934; publication of the important short story "The Rich Boy" (1926); a Broadway production of *The Great Gatsby* also in 1926; and a stint in Hollywood as a screenwriter in the opening months of 1927. The return to the United States during 1927 and 1928 also marked the beginning of Zelda's serious study of dance that would continue for a number of years with some success.

As the 1920s gave way to the 1930s a tidal wave of disaster struck both Fitzgeralds. The Wall Street crash of October 1929 drew to a close the carefree spirit of the Jazz Age with financial, psychological, and emotional ramifications for many. The unprecedented downturn meant a shrinking of the lucrative magazine market and the amount of money publications were prepared to pay for short stories, which directly affected Fitzgerald's livelihood. Compounding his growing financial worries and alcoholism, Zelda's mental health began to rapidly deteriorate leading to a complete breakdown that required hospitalization in April 1930. She would be in and out of expensive sanitoriums in Switzerland

until September 1931 when the couple returned to the United States. In between, Fitzgerald had briefly returned to the United States in January of that year to bury his father. Zelda would go through the same upset when her own father, Judge Anthony Sayre, died in November 1931, marking a hellish eighteen months for the pair. The couple seemed to reflect on a personal level the distress and the chaos of the United States as the 1920s came to an abrupt halt and the Great Depression engulfed everything in its wake.

TENDER IS THE NIGHT AND “THE CRACK-UP” (1931–1937)

Fitzgerald had turned his attention to a new novel in the summer of 1925, mere weeks after the publication of *Gatsby*. More than five years later, the work remained unfinished. There were multiple drafts with multiple titles, a variety of plots that were amended and discarded, changes in focus and narrative voice during this period. Fitzgerald’s inability to finish the novel was multifaceted. Financial anxiety weighed heavily upon him, which often led to him putting aside his novel to work on short stories that could pay the bills. Zelda’s treatments and Scottie’s education required a steady flow of income. Fitzgerald’s alcoholism was also creating havoc in his personal and creative life as well as damaging his health and general well-being. He was also unable to get a handle on his material. This, in part, was because of constant interruptions, but there were possibly other factors too such as subject matter that was not best suited to his style and a dread of failure after the disappointment of the reception of *The Great Gatsby*.

However, early in 1932, he turned his attention once again to the novel and began to draft what would eventually become *Tender Is the Night* (1934). As a writer who drew heavily on his own life for inspiration in his fiction, Fitzgerald reflected upon recent events and funneled aspects of them into the novel. His growing familiarity with psychiatry because of Zelda’s illness was a rich source of material and his protagonist, Dick Diver, is a psychiatrist who ends up marrying one of his patients. The novel is—in many respects—a reflection on the importance of work and vocation. It also reflects on the distractions that destroy the dedication required to succeed. Once again, it is possible to see Fitzgerald’s themes reflecting concerns in his own life.

In February 1932, Zelda’s mental health declined once again. It was serious enough to warrant admittance to Johns Hopkins Hospital’s Phipps Psychiatric

Clinic in Baltimore. By the following month she had written a novel of her own titled, *Save Me the Waltz* (1932) and sent it to Max Perkins without any consultation with or mention of the work to Fitzgerald, who was mortified. Zelda had completed a full-length piece of fiction in six weeks compared to his six years of labor for no return. Even more unnerving was that the material crossed over significantly with his own novel with which he was starting to make progress. A bitter marital rift ensued with accusations of sabotage and demands to cease writing on Scott's part and claims of jealousy and stealing of her own experiences for his benefit on Zelda's. The relationship was becoming increasingly strained because of Zelda's ill health, Scott's alcoholism, and the relentless pressures the pair were under in their daily lives. Despite Fitzgerald's reservations, the novel was published by Scribner's on October 7, 1932.

By this time, Zelda had been discharged from the hospital and the couple were living at "La Paix." The house was on the estate of the Turnbull family and situated on the outskirts of Baltimore, Maryland. The Turnbull family's young son, Andrew, would be an early biographer of Fitzgerald's, publishing *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Biography* in 1962. He also edited the first collection of the author's letters in 1963. During this time, Fitzgerald carried on working on his novel while Zelda turned her attention to writing a play called *Scandalabra*. It was produced by the Junior Vagabonds, a Baltimore-based theater group and had a one-week run in June 1933.

The final months of that year saw the beginning of Fitzgerald periodically checking himself into the hospital for a number of complaints. There were, of course, complications from alcohol but he also suffered from tuberculosis, the lung condition that had killed his beloved Keats.

By October, Fitzgerald was finally able to send Perkins the manuscript of his fourth novel, *Tender Is the Night*; the title came from Keats's poem "Ode to a Nightingale" (1819). The novel was serialized between January and April of 1934 in *Scribner's Magazine* and the book was finally published on April 12 of that year. It was an astonishing nine years since Fitzgerald had published a novel. Unfortunately, reviews were once again mixed. One of the perceived problems was that the novel's focus on a wealthy and leisurely class whiling away the days on the French Riviera seemed out of kilter with an America that remained in the throes of the Great Depression. To put this in context, *Tender Is the Night* was published less than three years before John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and only five before *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). Both books detail the depths of the despair brought about by the economic collapse on great swaths of the American population. Other concerns were structural;

Fitzgerald had used an extended flashback in the middle section of the book, but some critics felt a chronological approach would have worked better. For others, there was also a sense of disjointedness because of the novel's lengthy composition and a feeling that Diver's demise was not fully explained. It is also worth noting that the anticipation after close to a decade of waiting almost guaranteed disappointment. Fitzgerald had his own reflections on the novel's perceived weaknesses when he wrote to Maxwell Perkins on March 11, 1935, almost a year after its publication:

A short story can be written on a bottle, but for a novel you need the mental speed that enables you to keep the whole pattern in your head and ruthlessly sacrifice the sideshows as Ernest did in *A Farewell to Arms*. If a mind is slowed up ever so little it lives in the individual part of a book rather than in a book as a whole; memory is dulled. I would give anything if I hadn't had to write Part III of *Tender Is the Night* entirely on stimulant. If I had one more crack at it cold sober I believe it might have made a great difference. (Fitzgerald 1994, pp. 277–278)

Just before the release of *Tender Is the Night*, Zelda's mental health declined once more, and she was readmitted to the Phipps Clinic. She would be moved to a number of institutions over the next few years while her husband's circumstances became increasingly dire in terms of finances, productivity, and addiction. Between 1934 and 1936, he was moving between Baltimore and North Carolina, often in an attempt to be near where Zelda was hospitalized. In 1935, crippled by debt and worry and unable to work as quickly and effectively as in years past, Fitzgerald turned to his own inner turmoil as the source of a series of essays for *Esquire* magazine. After his death, they were published as a collection under the title of one of them: "The Crack-Up" (1945). The essays are powerful pieces of confessional writing in which the author reflects on the causes of his current plight and distress. However, Fitzgerald does play down the significance of alcohol as a root cause of his difficulties.

The series of essays were published in *Esquire* in 1936. It was a particularly painful year that saw his author friends berate him for exposing his emotional distress in a magazine. In addition, sometime friend and sometime nemesis, Ernest Hemingway openly mocked him by name in a story that was published in the same edition of *Esquire* that one of his own essays had appeared in. His mother died. He turned forty. On the day after his birthday that year, an interview was published in the *New York Post* that Fitzgerald had undertaken with journalist, Michael Mok. He was presented as a washed up, self-pitying drunk. Mortified and humiliated—according to a letter received by his long-suffering literary agent, Harold Ober, on October 5—Fitzgerald attempted suicide by

overdose. Whether it was a genuine attempt or not, it clearly illustrated that the man was at the end of his tether.

HOLLYWOOD AND *THE LAST TYCOON* (1937–1940)

In the middle of 1937, Fitzgerald was given the opportunity to go to Hollywood to work as a screenwriter. He had done so twice before and—although not particularly enamored with either the work or the place—he grabbed the opportunity. Film studio MGM was prepared to pay him \$1,000 a week on an initial six-month contract. Fitzgerald needed to address his debts and the movies offered a solution. By the time he headed west, he owed more than \$22,000 (equivalent today to approximately \$350,000–\$400,000). An astonishing \$12,511.69 was owed to Harold Ober alone (Brucoli 2002, p. 419).

Although he spent the remainder of his life working in Hollywood and was assigned to a number of films during that period including *Gone with the Wind* (1939), Fitzgerald received only one screen credit for *Three Comrades* (1938) based on a novel by Erich Maria Remarque, best known for *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929). However, the pay was good and despite intermittently falling off the wagon, Fitzgerald did maintain some level of sobriety allowing for a period of relative stability after the chaotic years of the early to mid-1930s.

Shortly after his arrival in Hollywood, Fitzgerald met English gossip columnist Sheilah Graham. They were romantically involved until the end of his life. Originating from London's East End, Graham had not been privy to an extensive education and Fitzgerald took it upon himself to be her teacher. He compiled reading lists for her, and she enthusiastically engaged with his mentorship, recounting the experience in her own book *College of One* (1967) written after Fitzgerald's death. The program of study revealed his own extensive reading. He also wrote regularly to Scottie, now at college, encouraging her to study and berating her when he felt she was not taking her work seriously. He valued education highly and wanted his own child to avoid the pitfalls that had tripped up her parents. Too often, Fitzgerald was—and still is—dismissed as a writer with a natural talent for lyricism but one that was not only undisciplined but unschooled in the literary traditions of which he was an inheritor. On close examination these seem unfair.

Fitzgerald may have formed a new relationship with Sheilah, but this did not mean that his commitment to Zelda disappeared. They remained in regular correspondence and he did not renege on his financial responsibilities toward her. They also spent some time together in North Carolina, Southern California, and Cuba. This final trip in April 1939, which was the last time the couple would see each other, involved Fitzgerald going on an alcoholic bender that required hospitalization on his return to the United States. The relationship as it once had been was over, but his commitment to her remained.

After a year and a half at MGM, Fitzgerald's contract was not renewed and he worked as a freelancer for a number of different studios including Paramount, Universal, and Twentieth Century Fox. His problems with alcohol recurred frequently much to the chagrin of Sheilah Graham. One particularly notorious episode occurred in February 1939 when he traveled to Dartmouth College to work on *Winter Carnival* (1939) with screenwriter Budd Schulberg. Fitzgerald was fired for drunkenness after being intoxicated nonstop for three days. Schulberg—who would go on to win an Oscar for best screenplay for *On the Waterfront* (1954)—recorded the events in his bittersweet novel *The Disenchanted* (1950).

This period of steady income had gone a long way to improve Fitzgerald's debts. In fact, he cleared money owed to Harold Ober completely. Unfortunately, the relationship would be terminated in July 1939 by Fitzgerald after almost twenty years when Ober—reluctant to return to the merry-go-round of debts and repayments—refused an advance requested by the author. Fitzgerald was deeply wounded and in an impulsive act, terminated their business arrangement and took to acting as his own agent, with little effect. However, Ober remained a surrogate father to Scottie, who had spent long periods of time living with his family. His role in her life is, perhaps, best illustrated by the fact that when she married—her father already dead—it was Harold Ober who gave her away.

Despite his work in the film studios, Fitzgerald never lost the sense that he was first and foremost a fiction writer. During this period, he began writing a sequence of stories about a Hollywood hack, Pat Hobby, who has fallen on hard times. There were seventeen stories in total and they were first published in *Esquire* magazine between January 1940 and May 1941. In the summer of 1939, he also turned his attention to a new novel set in the Hollywood studio system; it would be posthumously published as *The Last Tycoon* in 1941. He even hired a secretary to help him with this new project, Frances Kroll, who would recount the experience in her 1985 memoir, *Against the Current: How I*

Remember F. Scott Fitzgerald. Her death in 2015 at the age of ninety-nine severed Fitzgerald's last link with the living.

On December 21, 1940, at Sheilah Graham's apartment at 1443 Hayworth Avenue in Hollywood, F. Scott Fitzgerald died of a heart attack. He was forty-four. Two days after Christmas he was buried across the country in Maryland at the Rockville Union Cemetery. The Roman Catholic Church had refused permission for his remains to be buried in their cemetery nearby where his parents had been laid to rest. Zelda would join him in 1948 after being killed in a fire at the Highland Hospital where she was being treated for her ongoing mental health problems. In 1975, after the persistence of their only daughter was rewarded, the couple were reinterred in the Fitzgerald family plot at St. Mary's Church, Rockville, Maryland. Their headstone is inscribed with the closing line of Fitzgerald's most famous work, *The Great Gatsby*: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

FURTHER READING

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