

Research Article

Exploring Setting as a Driver of Drama in Fitzgerald's "Babylon Revisited"

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Abstract

This study provides an in-depth examination of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Babylon Revisited," focusing on the influential role of setting in shaping the narrative's dramatic elements. Through a nuanced analysis, the research investigates how the depiction of 1920s Paris serves as a catalyst for character motivations and actions, thereby driving the plot forward. Utilizing a combination of textual analysis and literary theory, the study seeks to elucidate the intricate interplay between setting, structure, and dialogue in Fitzgerald's narrative, aiming to uncover the underlying thematic and stylistic elements at play. The primary objective of this research is to explore the profound impact of setting on character development and narrative progression in "Babylon Revisited." By examining the portrayal of Paris as a milieu of extravagance and hedonism, the study aims to explicate how the city functions as both a backdrop and a character in its own right, influencing the behaviors and decisions of the protagonist, Charlie Wales, and other key figures within the narrative. Methodologically, this study employs a combination of qualitative textual analysis and theoretical inquiry to interrogate the relationship between setting and drama in Fitzgerald's work. Drawing upon established literary frameworks and critical perspectives, the research situates "Babylon Revisited" within its broader cultural and historical context, allowing for a nuanced examination of the novel's thematic concerns and stylistic innovations. By engaging with interdisciplinary approaches to literary analysis, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which setting functions as a driver of drama in Fitzgerald's narrative. In conclusion, this research contributes to our understanding of "Babylon Revisited" by offering a rigorous analysis of the role of setting in shaping the novel's dramatic elements. Through a meticulous examination of the text and its contextual underpinnings, the study demonstrates how Fitzgerald's adept manipulation of setting, structure, and dialogue enriches the narrative, elevating it to a timeless work of literature. Ultimately, the research underscores the enduring relevance of Fitzgerald's exploration of human behavior and emotion within the framework of a vividly rendered setting, solidifying his status as a preeminent writer of the 20th century.

Keywords

Setting as Catalyst, Character Motivations, Narrative Progression, Symbolic Significance, Thematic Implications, Interdisciplinary Analysis

1. Introduction

Setting in literature encompasses the temporal and geographical context within which narrative proceeds, estab-

lishing the milieu and atmosphere for the story, including cultural, historical, and geographical elements, as well as the

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time of day [23]. Scholars offer varied perspectives on setting, with some viewing it as providing cultural background and enabling comparative studies between cultures [3, 18], while authors emphasize the centrality of place in their writing [22]. Milford A. Jeremiah, for example, argues for the essential role of place in understanding an author's work, asserting its contribution to intended meaning for readers [17, 21]. Place functions as a crucial literary device, enhancing reader engagement by providing relatability and insight into the story's context. Bruce Fleming underscores the significance of setting in its impact on the reader, suggesting that analyzing its use in literary works deepens comprehension of storytelling and character development [12].

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, for instance, unrolls across four distinct settings: East Egg, West Egg, the valley of ashes, and New York City. Each locale operates as a reflection of social stratification and moral decay, with the valley of ashes as a stark symbol of the consequences of an unbridled pursuit of wealth. Fitzgerald vividly describes the desolate landscape.

This is a valley of ashes—a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air [10].

The scene symbolizes the moral and social decay of the era, reflecting the emptiness and corruption beneath the surface of the Jazz Age society. Additionally, the imagery of the ash-grey men toiling in obscurity gives emphasis to the theme of class disparity and the exploitation of the working class by the wealthy elite.

While *The Great Gatsby* exemplifies Fitzgerald's adeptness at utilizing setting to mirror the moral and social decay of the Jazz Age, "Babylon Revisited" presents a more sophisticated exploration of this literary device. In this short story, published in the collection *The Crack-Up*, edited by Edmund Wilson in 1965, the influence of setting on character behavior and narrative events assumes a significant role. Here Fitzgerald employs setting as a powerful narrative device, complexly weaving together a tapestry of symbolic locales that mirror his own life experiences. Through a comparative analysis of these fictional settings and Fitzgerald's personal history, this study aims to illuminate the profound impact of place on character behavior and plot progression. By examining the vital events that evolve within each distinct locale, readers gain insights into the complexities of human nature and the interplay between desire and morality.

Set against the backdrop of 1920s Paris, "Babylon Revisited" grows as a poignant drama, with the city itself emerging as a central character. At the heart of the story is Charlie Wales, whose struggle with past indulgences and desire for redemption is linked to the allure and haunting nature of Paris. Fitzgerald's manipulation of setting elevates the narrative to a theatrical experience, inviting readers to immerse themselves

in the emotional landscapes of the protagonists. By exploring Fitzgerald's literary craftsmanship, readers gain a deeper understanding of the transformative power of place and its role in shaping human identities and relationships.

2. The Title

Titles are the initial gateway through which readers embark upon the journey of a narrative, akin to the first impressions individuals form through appearance, attire, and demeanor. Indeed, titles wield profound influence, as they evoke anticipation, establish expectations, and determine readers' inclination towards engaging with a story. This is evident in Fitzgerald's exploration of titles for his iconic novel, where he considered options like *Among Ash Heaps and Millionaires* and *Trimalchio*, before ultimately selecting *The Great Gatsby*, highlighting the thorough consideration given to this crucial aspect of literary presentation [4, 21, 27]. Just as individuals assess others based on their initial impressions, readers evaluate narratives through the lens of their titles. Thus, as scholars and enthusiasts of literature, it behooves us to appreciate the profound impact wielded by titles in guiding our literary encounters and interpretations.

The critique on "Babylon Revisited" is thoroughgoing, examining the story's allusions and implications from various angles, thereby contributing to a deeper comprehension of its underlying themes and character dynamics. Ruth Prigozi, for instance, argues that Fitzgerald's work in "Babylon Revisited" exemplifies his "nuanced and elliptical" style, emphasizing scene and atmosphere to delve into themes such as struggle, responsibility, professionalism, and character [24]. Rose Adrienne Gallo praises Fitzgerald's ability to subtly suggest Charlie's lingering ties to his past alcoholic life and acknowledges the author's adept portrayal of place [13]. Richard Lehan highlights Fitzgerald's skill in merging individual experience with the broader spirit of the times, illustrating how Charlie's personal struggles reflect societal dissipation [19]. However, few critics fully explored the title's implications regarding the dialogue between time and place.

The significance of setting and its impact on events is eloquently captured in the title of Fitzgerald's short story as it is strikingly theatrical. The title captures a strikingly theatrical essence, integrating place, time, and event into the immediacy of "here" and "now," rather than encapsulating them in the distant realms of "there" and "then" typically found in fiction. "Babylon," evoking imagery steeped in historical and biblical connotations, acts as a symbol of a distant, mythical past, laden with significance that extends far beyond its temporal boundaries. This symbolic resonance casts shadows upon Paris, the contemporary Babylon, presenting it as a modern-day incarnation of the ancient city's moral decay. The juxtaposition of these two cities, one derived from antiquity, and the other a contemporary metropolis, sets the stage for an exploration of the chemistry between place and action, past and present, and tradition and modernity, revealing the com-

plexities inherent in the evolution of urban landscapes and societal norms over time.

As for "Revisited," it suggests a deliberate re-visitation of past actions and making the events in the present, invite comparisons and contrasts between Charlie's former life in Paris and his return to the city in the aftermath of his personal turmoil. Charlie's past is characterized by excess and indulgence, a lifestyle emblematic of the Jazz Age's hedonistic spirit. Yet his return to Paris now is marked by a profound sense of longing and introspection as he wrestles with the consequences of his past actions and seeks revitalization in the face of adversity.

The narrative progresses as Charlie roams the streets of Paris, encountering reminders of his past. Each site operates as a poignant reminder of his former life, from the opulent settings of his extravagant *soirées* to the dimly lit alleyways where he once sought solace in the depths of despair. Paris itself becomes a character in the story, its vibrant streets and iconic landmarks acting as a location to Charlie's personal journey of self-discovery and redemption. Charlie is obliged to address the outcomes of his deeds and reconcile with the ghosts of his past. His return becomes a symbolic journey of salvation, as he strives to make amends for his past mistakes and forge a new path forward. The juxtaposition of past and present, embodied in the contrasting images of Babylon and Paris, displays the narrative's thematic complexities and invites readers to reflect on the timeless nature of human frailty and the enduring quest for improvement.

Furthermore, the impact of place on action is akin to the staging of a dramatic production. Paris, with its hurried streets and monumental structures, functions as the backdrop against which Charlie's personal drama unfolds. Each location becomes a stage upon which Charlie challenges his bygone days and copes with his present circumstances. Like a director carefully orchestrating a scene, Fitzgerald uses the setting to enhance the dramatic tension and the thematic complexities of the narrative. As Charlie embarks on his pursuit of atonement amidst the streets of Paris, he becomes both actor and director, shaping his own narrative within the grand theater of life.

In this light, Fitzgerald's choice of the title "Babylon Revisited" serves as a masterstroke, highlighting the intricate interplay between place and conduct. As Charlie navigates Paris, wrestling with his past and seeking redemption, the title reminds readers of the enduring echoes of history and the quest for personal transformation. "Babylon Revisited" transcends its narrative function, becoming a profound meditation on the human struggle to reconcile with the past and forge a hopeful future amidst urban life's complexities.

3. The Stage Is Set: Paris as a Catalyst for Drama

The opening scene is set at the Ritz bar, a frequent haunt of Fitzgerald. The Ritz was a popular gathering place for writers

and artists of the time, with the "Bar Hemingway" named after another prominent Lost Generation writer, Ernest Hemingway. In his biography of Fitzgerald, Matthew J. Bruccoli affirmed, "The Ritz was their Paris headquarters.... Scott and Zelda stayed at the Ritz often, and it was a meeting place for their friends" [4]. Blum also confirmed this, noting that the Ritz "was the epicenter of expat life in Paris" and that "F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald often stayed at the Ritz and had made the bar their own" [2]. This historical context illuminates the social and cultural milieu in which Fitzgerald and his contemporaries operated, providing insight into the interconnectedness of their personal lives and artistic endeavors. Moreover, the Ritz bar has become a symbolic space where the ethos of the Lost Generation, characterized by disillusionment and artistic experimentation, converged, fostering intellectual exchange and creative inspiration. Recognizing the Ritz as a hub of expatriate life in Paris underscores its role in shaping Fitzgerald's experiences and informing his literary portrayal of the Jazz Age era.

The centrality of the bar in Fitzgerald's life is reflected in the story. Thus, it is only natural that the bar should be the place where Charlie seeks solace and tries to connect with his past and old friends, but they are no longer there. The bar compresses the essence of Paris's impact on the protagonist, Charlie. Through vivid language and imagery, the narrator portrays the patrons' indifference towards their surroundings, which amplifies Charlie's sense of isolation:

He was not really disappointed to find Paris was so empty. But the stillness in the Ritz bar was strange and portentous. 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.... Passing through the corridor, he heard only a single, bored voice in the once clamorous women's room. When he turned into the bar he travelled the twenty feet of green carpet with his eyes fixed straight ahead by old habit; and then, with his foot firmly on the rail, he turned and surveyed the room, encountering only a single pair of eyes that fluttered up from a newspaper in the corner. [9]

The quoted passage offers a nostalgic glimpse into the protagonist Charlie's experience upon returning to Paris. Initially, his lack of disappointment at finding the city empty suggests a resignation to its altered state, indicating that he may have harbored some expectation of solitude or desolation. However, the description of the stillness in the Ritz bar as "strange and portentous" conveys a sense of unease and foreboding, hinting at deeper implications beyond mere emptiness.

The statement about the bar no longer being an American bar signifies a notable change in atmosphere, indicating that Charlie no longer feels the same sense of ownership or familiarity. This change symbolizes his detachment from his previous life of wealth and extravagance, as well as his separation from the American expatriate community that previously frequented the place. It also clarifies Charlie's realization that Paris has undergone a transformation and no longer represents an extension of America. This transformation ex-

acerbates Charlie's feeling of being out of place, as he contends with finding belonging in a city that once held great draw for him. As Charlie moves through the bar, the deserted corridors and the once-clamorous women's room, now reduced to a single bored voice, further emphasize the stark contrast between the past and the present. Charlie's solitary survey of the room, culminating in the encounter with "only a single pair of eyes" that momentarily meet his own, points to his profound sense of isolation amidst the remnants of his former life.

Largely, this quote captures Charlie's distressing realization of his changed circumstances and his struggle to reconcile his past with his present. It sets the tone for the narrative's exploration of themes such as loss, while also foreshadowing the challenges that lie ahead for the protagonist in his quest for atonement and reconciliation. What adds to his perception of disillusionment and despair is the fact the bartender tells him about Claude Fessenden's bankruptcy. Watching a cluster of "strident queens installing themselves in a corner," Charlie reacts sorrowfully: "Nothing affects them.... Stocks rise and fall, people loaf or work, but they go on forever" [9]. This indifference weighs heavily on Charlie, causing him to feel somewhat oppressed. He feels that the "queens" are an unchanging force in contrast to the fluctuations of human activity around them. However, the negative adjective "strident" also brings the protagonist back to his former life of chaos and disruption. This, in turn, contributes to Charlie's feeling of oppression and suggests that the place he is in is not conducive to human comfort or well-being.

Despite being in the familiar surroundings of Paris, a city he once cherished, he now feels like an outsider, unable to find comfort in his once-favorite haunts. Paradoxically, this detachment symbolizes growth and transformation, suggesting that he has undergone a significant evolution. His estrangement, though unsettling, acts as a vital catalyst for his personal development and journey towards self-discovery.

Fitzgerald adeptly portrays the dynamic interplay between individuals and their environments in this scene. The setting transcends its role as mere backdrop; it assumes a character of its own, exerting a profound influence on Charlie's emotions and actions. Paris emerges as a formidable entity, driving the drama of the narrative and shaping Charlie's journey to absolution. As he becomes increasingly affected to the point where he feels "The place oppressed him" [9], the quotation suggests that the setting plays a pivotal role as an antagonist in the story. Charlie's sense of oppression is compounded by the realization that while the physical environment and the people within it have remained unchanged, he himself has undergone a significant transformation. This contrast illustrates the profound impact of the setting on Charlie's evolving identity.

4. The Streets as a Stage: Navigating Chaos and Past Pain

Amidst his nostalgia for Paris, Charlie grapples with the ghosts of his past, confronting memories of excess and tragedy. The city and its streets become a battleground for his internal struggle, tempting him with the allure of his former lifestyle and the opportunity for redemption and self-reflection.

Crisscrossing the streets, Charlie is enveloped in a whirlwind of movement and sensory stimuli. Fitzgerald vividly paints the scene: "fire-red, gas-blue, and ghost-green signs shone smokily through the tranquil rain," while "the bistros gleamed" [9]. However, amongst this tableau, Charlie remains detached, unable to shake off the weight of his past, or perhaps he finds himself at a distance because he is a different person. The streets pulse with life, yet Charlie finds himself unable to calm down. His inability to connect with the full-of-go energy around him reflects his inner tumult and sense of displacement, thwarting his efforts to attain a profound sense of inner peace and tranquility.

Upon taking a taxi and crossing the Seine, Charlie is struck by "the sudden provincial quality of the left bank" [9]. This moment condenses Charlie's feeling of disconnection from the world around him. The streets of Paris, once a beacon of fascination and glamour, now stand as a stark reminder of his past missteps and the life he can never retrieve. Fitzgerald captures Charlie's sense of regret and disillusionment as he reflects: "I spoiled this city for myself. I didn't realize it, but the days came along one after another, and then two years were gone, and everything was gone, and I was gone" [9]. Even though the quote is derived from a story, its language and structure evoke theatrical elements and carry significant dramatic weight. Firstly, the quote exhibits characteristics commonly found in theatrical soliloquies or monologues. It presents a moment of introspection and confession, where the character, Charlie, directly addresses the audience or reveals his inner thoughts to himself. This creates a sense of intimacy and immediacy, drawing the reader or listener into Charlie's emotional journey. Secondly, the repetition of the word "gone" throughout the quote serves as a powerful rhetorical device. This repetition not only emphasizes the sense of loss and finality but also adds rhythm and momentum to the speech, akin to the cadence found in dramatic performances. It heightens the emotional impact of Charlie's realization and the gravity of his confession. Moreover, the imagery evoked by the phrase "everything was gone, and I was gone" conjures a vivid visual image of desolation and isolation, reminiscent of the stage setting in tragic or dramatic plays. This imagery contributes to the overall theatricality of the quote, engaging the reader or listener's senses and emotions.

Fitzgerald's portrayal of Paris as a city of excess and indulgence resonates with his own experiences in the city, where he struggled with alcoholism and socialized with fellow writers and artists who also indulged in excess. In his

correspondence with Ernest Hemingway, Fitzgerald candidly discussed his struggles with alcoholism, writing, "I have been drinking steadily since Christmas... there is no denying the world is full of liquor and the emptier it gets the more you have to drink to keep up the high tension of stupidity" [11]. The quote exposes Paris's potent influence on Charlie's state of mind, depicting the city almost as an antagonist pushing him towards excess. It portrays how Paris's atmosphere overwhelms him, compelling him to indulge in continuous drinking since Christmas. As the city empties out, Charlie feels increasingly pressured to drink more, reflecting Paris's powerful sway over his behavior and emotions. This highlights Paris as a formidable force shaping Charlie's journey of self-discovery and redemption.

The influence of the city on his emotional landscape is so enduring that Charlie "was still trembling when he reached the street." [9]. Strangely enough, the situation drastically changes: "but a walk down the Rue Bonaparte to the quais set him up, and as he crossed the Seine, fresh and new by the quai lamps, he felt exultant" [9]. Charlie's journey down Rue Bonaparte to the quais reveals a shift in his perception of Paris, contrasting his initial feelings at the Ritz bar. Leaving the tense atmosphere of Marion and Lincoln's home, the vibrant city streets allow him to recalibrate emotionally. The change in scenery, from confinement to the bustling quais, symbolizes freedom reminiscent of his youth, a departure from his previous lifestyle. As Charlie immerses himself in the lively street life, he rediscovers a sense of community and connection, a contrast to his past isolation. His journey signifies an evolution in his perception, embracing newfound liberation and vitality within the city.

Fitzgerald's use of setting in this scene transcends mere physical description; instead, the streets become a symbolic *opus* upon which Charlie's emotional havoc is projected. The juxtaposition of the energy of the city and Charlie's inner desolation creates a palpable sense of tension, driving the drama forward.

5. The Intimate Stage: Domestic Spaces and Interpersonal Conflict

While the grand stages of Paris's streets and famous monuments provide the contextual backdrop, Fitzgerald explores deeper into the intimate settings of domestic spaces, where interpersonal conflicts and character growth take center stage. Marion and Lincoln's home becomes a crucible of tension, where the simmering resentments and unresolved issues between Charlie and his estranged family come to a boiling point. Fitzgerald orchestrates the dialogue and interactions within a confined space in a manner reminiscent of a theatrical play, imbuing each utterance and gesture with heightened significance. Fitzgerald's narrative style, reminiscent of a theatrical play, saturates every dialogue and interaction within a confined space with profound significance.

This theatrical quality evokes Michel de Certeau's concept of "spatial practices," offering insights into the dynamics at play. Interestingly, De Certeau's framework explores fundamental dualities: space versus place, map versus tour, and strategy versus tactic. De Certeau contends that space is not merely a passive backdrop for everyday activities; rather, it is actively shaped by these activities, ultimately becoming their outcome [5]. Indeed, Charlie's actions within this domestic setting exemplify his quest to assert control over his narrative and reaffirm his paternal role.

Erving Goffman's theory of dramaturgical analysis provides a compelling framework for examining the several scenes in Marion and Lincoln's home, though Marion's uncooperative stance exposes a potential shortcoming of this perspective. Goffman likens social interactions to theatrical performances where individuals assume roles and engage in calculated behavior based on norms and expectations [14]. In this domestic setting, the characters can indeed be viewed as actors driven by enmity for each other. In the first meeting we are told, "From the first there had been an instinctive antipathy between them" [9]. This antipathy was fueled by their family conflict. Charlie was attempting to reassert his role as a reliable father with high income "bigger than it was when [he] had money" [9] through carefully scripted overtures. On the other hand, Marion's hostility stems from her position as a competing "playwright" crafting her own narrative in sharp contrast to Charlie's intended drama. According to her scripted version, Charlie should be cast as the villain—the man who destroyed the lives of her sister, niece, and those around them. This conflict of dramaturgical visions, with each party seeking to cast the other in a particular role aligned with their storyline, represents a breakdown of Goffman's conceptualization of performers collaborating towards a shared narrative. Marion's antagonistic position derails Charlie's intended strategy, preventing the establishment of a cohesive "performance team" and shared dramatic production, as Goffman conceptualizes [14]. Her pointed remarks become impediments to Charlie's redemptive theater rather than contributions to an overarching drama. In this light, the domestic space remains a stage, but one on which the performers have elected to temporarily pause their conflicting dramaturgical visions.

Lacking an amenable co-actor, except his own daughter from home "he drew confidence" [9], Charlie knows he must adapt his performance, downplaying his fatherly role and deferring the intended dramatic resolution until he can better prepare for the challenges posed by an uncooperative scene partner drafting her own compellingly oppositional script. Her dislike was evident in the coldness with which she spoke, but Charlie only smiled: "he had larger plans. Her very aggressiveness gave him an advantage, and he knew enough to wait" [9]. This displays his maturity, strength of will, and strategic foresight, evident in his patience and ability to leverage the situation to his advantage. The narrator further underscores Charlie's admirable qualities, noting Charlie's firm belief in

the importance of character: “He believed in character; he wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element [9]. Charlie's aspiration to return to a bygone era where character was held in high regard reflects his desire for authenticity and integrity. This emphasis on character uncovers Charlie's moral fiber and his commitment to upholding timeless values, showcasing his strength of character and unwavering determination to pursue his goals.

Thus, he engages in a rational and respectful conversation with Marion and Lincoln, demonstrating his maturity and willingness to listen to their concerns. In the next meeting, he acknowledges his past mistakes and takes responsibility for them, showing his capacity for self-reflection and growth. Charlie's future insight is also evident in his clear vision for Honoria's future. He understands the importance of stability and family and is willing to make the necessary sacrifices to provide that for his daughter. This foresight is contrasted with Marion's short-sightedness, as she is more focused on her own resentment towards Charlie than on Honoria's well-being.

Charlie's inner stability and maturity win over Lincoln's sympathy and understanding, leading to the promise that Honoria will return to him. This resolution points out the importance of personal growth and development, and the possibility of salvation even after past mistakes. Following his partial victory, Charlie embarks on a theatrical tour of Montmartre, a Parisian neighborhood renowned for its artistic bohemianism and libertine lifestyles. This excursion is a heart-rending *aide-mémoire* of Charlie's tumultuous past and the allure of indulgence he once embraced. Strolling amidst the lively streets adorned with cafes and clubs, Fitzgerald's vivid depiction of Montmartre's bustling yet tumultuous ambience intricately reflects Charlie's interior disorder. Amidst this feeling, Charlie experiences a renewed sense of determination to adhere to his newfound path of personal growth and restitution, his every step echoing with the dramatic tension of his inner conflict.

The stark contrast between his former hedonistic tendencies and his current aspirations for stability and family becomes increasingly apparent in the face of Montmartre's seductive charm. This critical moment brings to light Charlie's unwavering commitment to forging a new future and reclaiming his daughter's well-being, distancing himself from the turbulent past he seeks to overcome. Moreover, Fitzgerald's exploration of Parisian life through Charlie's eyes provides a deeper understanding of the symbolic significance of Montmartre within the narrative, its streets transformed into a stage where Charlie confronts his inner demons.

The elevated vantage point of Montmartre has grown a metaphorical perch from which Charlie can survey the sprawling expanse of Paris below. From this elevated position, he gains both a physical and a metaphorical perspective, allowing him to reflect on his past with newfound clarity. The sweeping panoramic view offered by Montmartre symbolizes the breadth of Charlie's introspection, enabling him to discern

the intricate nuances of his tumultuous journey. Just as someone traversing a valley may feel the weight of their despair, Charlie, perched atop Montmartre, experiences a sense of liberation comparable to soaring above his troubles. In this way, the topography of Montmartre becomes intrinsically intertwined with Charlie's narrative, serving as a poignant reminder of the transformative power of perspective.

Interestingly, Charlie's past life mirrors Fitzgerald's own experiences in Montmartre, as depicted through Charlie's reflections, further enriching the narrative's exploration of this historic locale. Fitzgerald proudly recounts his immersion in a social circle dominated by writers and artists known for their unconventional lifestyles [4, 20].

Unlike Fitzgerald, Charlie now finds himself daunted by the recreated atmosphere, keenly aware of the futility of his past experiences and the destructive nature of “dissipation.” Confronted with the remnants of his past excesses as he strolls through the streets of Montmartre, Charlie finds himself faced with the cabarets and cocottes, symbols of the childish pleasures he now perceives with emptiness and regret. In this affecting moment, Fitzgerald highlights the transformative power of place, because Montmartre adopts the role of an antagonist, reminding Charlie of his past mistakes and imparting valuable lessons about the importance of accountability and personal growth: “So much for the effort and ingenuity of Montmartre. All the catering to vice and waste was on an utterly childish scale, and he suddenly realized the meaning of the word ‘dissipate’—to dissipate into thin air; to make nothing out of something [9]. Montmartre here represents a lifestyle that is all about dissipation, recklessness, and instant gratification, which eventually leads to the destruction of all that is good and worthwhile. The protagonist's realization of the emptiness of this lifestyle states that the place has functioned as an antagonist and a type of tutor, one that can impart valuable lessons to those who are willing to learn. The message conveyed is that places have the power to shape our behavior, and that it is essential to be aware of the impact they have on us. Yet, Charlie's new character is immune to this destructive power.

The conclusion of Charlie's first day in Paris is marked by the narrator's observation that “the depression of yesterday was gone” [9], signifying Charlie's newfound strength to overcome his past and embrace a path towards healing. Fitzgerald's deft manipulation of place, from the intimate confines of domestic spaces to the symbolic significance of Montmartre, stresses the profound impact of physical environments on human behavior and the potential for salvation through self-awareness and personal accountability.

6. Dialogue as the Choreography of Narrative Conflict

Dialogue constitutes the verbal exchanges between characters that drive narratives and reveal insights into personali-

ties, motivations, and interpersonal dynamics [28]. Dialogue transcends pure fiction, extending into drama and performance as “a written or spoken conversational exchange” [16, 1]. While drama depends heavily on dialogue and fiction relies more on narration, great writers across genres often borrow stylistic elements from one another. Dialogue plays a versatile role as a literary device, capable of revealing conflict, presenting diverse viewpoints, providing exposition and background, conveying distinct character traits, expressing subtext and inner feelings, establishing deeper meaning for the reader, defining unique character voices, allowing confrontation between characters, and creating a sense of authenticity.

“Babylon Revisited” exemplifies how a work of fiction can harness the power of dialogue to instill the narrative with a distinctly dramatic quality. In fact, Fitzgerald’s use of dialogue is a hallmark of his fiction, elevating his works to a realm that transcends mere narration and goes deep into the theatrical essence of human interaction. This characteristic is particularly pronounced in his unfinished, cinematic novel, *The Last Tycoon*, where Fitzgerald embraces the qualities of the “dramatic novel” in a more progressive and ambitious manner than in his earlier works, such as *The Great Gatsby*.

Likewise, in “Babylon Revisited,” Fitzgerald employs dialogue as a dominant device to introduce the major conflict, propel the plot forward, and transform the storytelling into a theatrical experience for the reader. Throughout the five sections of the novella, dialogue assumes various functions, intertwining with the significance of place to create a compelling, dramatic structure comparable to a theatrical presentation.

In Part I, Fitzgerald utilizes dialogue to establish the initial conflict and set the stage for the unfolding drama. The opening conversation between Charlie and the bartender, Alix, at the Ritz bar immediately situates the reader within the pivotal setting of the story, a place that symbolizes a turbulent past for the protagonist. Through their exchange, the reader learns of Charlie’s past indulgences and his desire to reconnect with his daughter, foreshadowing the central conflict that will drive the narrative.

Advancing to Part II, dialogue assumes a heightened revelatory function, elucidating the intricacies of Charlie’s interpersonal relationships and explicating the obstacles he encounters in rekindling his bond with his daughter, Honoria. The playful banter between Charlie and Honoria showcases their endearing bond and also runs as a respite from the underlying tension, much like a comic relief scene in a play. In fact, the dialogue between Charlie and Honoria accomplishes myriad purposes, acting as a multifaceted tool that unveils the intricate layers of their relationship while also laying bare the formidable hurdles Charlie confronts in his endeavor to rekindle a meaningful connection with his daughter. As they engage in conversation, Honoria’s innocent questions and Charlie’s responses provide insights into their dynamic relationship and Charlie’s efforts to bridge the gap caused by his

absence during her upbringing. The exchange begins with Honoria looking to her father for direction, reflecting her reliance on him despite their physical distance. Charlie’s immediate response, promising her anything she wants, demonstrates his desire to make up for lost time and provide for her in the present moment. The conversation also touches on sensitive topics such as Honoria’s deceased mother and her absent father, highlighting the complexities of their family history. Honoria’s innocent question about living with her father stresses her longing for closeness and stability, whilst Charlie’s gentle reassurance reflects his understanding of the delicate balance between protecting her and allowing her to grow independently.

Anticipating the potential divergence of the meeting towards unfavorable outcomes, Charlie orchestrates a theatrical scene in a strategic attempt to mitigate the risk of losing custody of his daughter. Like a skilled playwright who both crafts the script and takes on a leading role in the spur of the moment, Charles initiates the scene with a delicate balance of vulnerability and determination, seeking to mend the fractured bonds of fatherhood as he grapples with his own past mistakes.

“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: “Honoria 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’m 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.” [9]

Charlie’s decision to adopt the persona of a stranger and engage in role-play with his daughter Honoria represents a fundamental moment in the narrative, boosting its dramatic context. Similar to a skilled playwright, Charlie stage-manages a performance within the larger story, utilizing theater to connect with Honoria and gain insight into her world. By assuming the role of a stranger and digging into her life, he breaks down barriers and creates a safe environment for Honoria to express herself authentically, unveiling her experiences, emotions, and desires.¹

1. This use of theater echoes the strategy employed by Hamlet in Shakespeare’s play, where Hamlet instructs actors to stage a scene reflecting his suspicions of his uncle’s treachery. Hamlet’s guidance to the actors to “suit the action to the word, the word to the action,” reflects Charlie’s approach, allowing him to bridge the gap between himself and Honoria, establishing a meaningful presence in her life. Similarly, in Hamlet, theater operates as a vehicle for uncovering truth and exploring complex emotions, particularly evident in the “play within a play” scene [26] where Hamlet confronts King Claudius’s guilt. This theatrical device here advances the plot and gives emphasis to the potency of theater in confronting and dissecting challenging truths. In both “Babylon Revisited” and Hamlet, the theater mode is a metaphor for the complexities of human relationships and the search for truth and meaning in a chaotic world. Through the medium of theater, characters like

This theatrical scene of Charlie assuming the role of a stranger-lover to his own daughter is a mirroring microcosm of the overarching themes of father-daughter intimacy and incestuous undertones that permeated the cinematic landscape during the era in which Fitzgerald's tale was penned ("Babylon Revisited" is a short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald, written in 1930 and first published on February 21, 1931 in the *Saturday Evening Post* and free inside *The Telegraph*) [6]. The "Babylon Revisited" story foreshadows the incest themes that would later appear in Fitzgerald's novel *Tender is the Night*. As literary scholar Ruth Prigozy notes, "the theme of incest is a logical outgrowth of a twenty-year preoccupation with father-daughter intimacy in the dramas that dominated early film history" [25]. In *Tender is the Night*, Dick Diver faces unsettling symbolic situations that intensify his repressed feelings around incest, such as the Italian crowd censuring his perceived seduction of a young girl and his wife accusing him of violating a patient's daughter [1, 15].

Despite the fact that "Babylon Revisited" does not explicitly depict incest between Charlie and his daughter, their interaction where he plays the "stranger-lover" could symbolically represent repressed, unconscious incestuous desires in the psychoanalytic view. Freudian theory holds the incest taboo is fundamental to psychosexual development, with transgressions profoundly impacting the psyche. So while not overtly incestuous, the symbolic implications of Charlie's behavior towards his daughter gesture towards repressed unconscious desires around the incest taboo, reflecting profound human truths that Fitzgerald's works mirror, like early 20th century drama.

Part III represents a key juncture where dialogue comes out again as the primary vehicle for the dramatic confrontation between Charlie and his sister-in-law, Marion. Their intense exchange, fraught with accusatory tones and unresolved grievances, transforms Marion's residence into a theatrical stage where the central conflict unfurls. Fitzgerald's utilization of dialogue in this scene epitomizes a battle between playwrights, as it witnesses Charlie and Marion engaging in a struggle to impose their fastidiously crafted scripts upon the other characters and reshape reality. Both Charlie and Marion have methodically composed their scripts, reserving the leading roles for themselves. However, their disparity lies in their approach to potential outcomes. Charlie portrays a flexible character, possessing patience, adaptability, and a willingness to adapt his role as necessity dictates whereas Marion's script remains rigid, refusing to entertain compromises. This discrepancy elucidates her eventual capitulation and frustration when confronted with Charlie's unwavering resolve.

In Part IV, the rapid-fire dialogue and the introduction of new characters, that is, Lorraine and Duncan, further heighten

the dramatic tension. The exchange of words, punctuated by the pneumatique (a literary device resembling a telegram), accelerates the pace of events, mirroring the escalating conflict and foreshadowing the impending climax.

And in Part V, the discourse assumes a reflective and introspective quality as Charlie seeks consolation within the familiar environs of the Ritz bar. His interaction with the bartender, Paul, is similar to a narrative denouement, like the final act of a theatrical performance. Here, the audience witnesses a somber resolution to the central conflict, mirroring the moment when the various plot threads are tied together in a play. Moreover, this scene accentuates the enduring influence of locale on Charlie's emotional state and decision-making, reminiscent of the stage setting's role in shaping the mood and tone of a theatrical production.

Fitzgerald's use of dialogue transforms the narrative into a theatrical experience, with each section analogous to an act in a play. The interplay between dialogue and place becomes a central element, shaping the characters' interactions, driving the plot onward, and in due course creating a compelling drama.

7. Unscripted Minds: Exploring Stream of Consciousness as Literary Theatre Devise

In literary criticism, the stream of consciousness is recognized as a narrative technique aimed at capturing the unfiltered flow of thoughts and emotions experienced by a character [7]. The character within the narrative can be viewed as an actor embodying the thoughts and emotions laid out by the writer, akin to an actor interpreting a script.

In "Babylon Revisited," Charlie transforms the stream of consciousness into a theatrical medium, acting as both the creator and stage manager of his own memories. As he walks down the Rue Bonaparte, Charlie's inner mayhem gradually shifts towards a sense of exultation, reflecting his manipulation of the emotional atmosphere akin to a production coordinator setting the tone for a scene. Upon reaching his room, he revisits scenes of his past arguments with Helen, reshaping these memories to emphasize moments of reconciliation rather than tragedy. The climax of Charlie's internal performance is his interaction with Helen in a half-asleep state. Here, he constructs a dialogue that validates his current actions and choices, providing closure to unresolved emotions. Through this interaction, Charlie transforms the tragic elements of his past into a more hopeful and cathartic narrative, guiding the trajectory of his stream of consciousness towards a desired destination of peace and acceptance. Charlie's ability to control his thoughts and shape his memories into a less tragic interpretation exemplifies the theatrical nature of the stream of consciousness technique, where the character acts as both performer and director in the unfolding drama of their inner world.

Charlie and Hamlet are able to pass through the convolutions of their own emotions and relationships, while also shedding light on larger themes such as identity, regeneration, and the nature of reality. Thus, theater emerges as a powerful and multidimensional apparatus for expression, revelation, and self-discovery in both literary works.

At the end of the story, Charlie's assertion of his agency and desire to reclaim his role as a father functions as the denouement of his internal journey. Throughout the narrative, he struggles with past regrets, seeking redemption and recovery. By affirming his determination to reunite with his child, Charlie assumes the dual role of creator and protagonist, scripting his own resolution.

Much like a playwright crafting the climactic scene of a drama, Charlie orchestrates this finale, imbuing it with a sense of hope and renewed purpose. His declaration serves as the culminating act, where he breaks free from the shackles of his tragic past and rewrites the narrative arc towards a more optimistic future.

In this moment, Charlie's stream of consciousness transcends mere introspection and becomes an active force shaping his reality. He steps beyond the confines of an observer, assuming the mantle of an auteur, directing the course of his own life's story. The narrative trajectory bends to his will, transforming from a tale of loss and despair into one of redemption and paternal reclamation. His declaration that "they couldn't make him pay forever" [9] reflects his defiance against the forces that have held him back, signaling a shift in power dynamics. Relying on the theatrical metaphor, it reflects his rejection to play a role in any other's script save his own. By reclaiming his agency, Charlie undergoes a profound metamorphosis, transitioning from a passive player in the universal play of fate to an active actor in his own narrative, a role brimming with potential for positive outcomes and accomplishments. This transformative shift represents a fundamental moment when he assumes control of his narrative trajectory, infusing it with a renewed sense of hope and purpose.

Charlie's acknowledgment of his own age and solitude adds depth to his character and underscores the complexity of his internal struggle. Through this introspection, he confronts the reality of his circumstances while simultaneously affirming his resilience and determination to overcome them. This self-awareness is reminiscent of a playwright's expert characterization, where depth and nuance are essential to create compelling and relatable protagonists. Charlie's assertion that "nothing was much good now, beside that fact" encapsulates his newfound clarity and sense of purpose. In this moment, he prioritizes his relationship with his child above all else, recognizing it as the driving force behind his actions.

8. The Denouement: Acceptance and Lingering Emptiness

As the story reaches its climax, Fitzgerald skillfully shifts the narrative focus away from a sense of cyclical submission and return to zero achievement. Instead, he portrays Charlie as a character brimming with determination to pursue his goals patiently and methodically, despite the influence of his surroundings.

Rather than portraying the Ritz bar as a symbol of defeat and stagnation, Fitzgerald depicts it as a stage for Charlie's resilience and determination. In this pivotal setting, Charlie confronts the ghosts of his past and grapples with the lingering emptiness that accompanies his outward transformation.

Through Charlie's unwavering commitment to reclaiming his life, Fitzgerald highlights the enduring tension between his aspirations and the allure of his former lifestyle. Despite the challenges posed by his environment, Charlie demonstrates a steadfast resolve to achieve his goals, refusing to be defined by his past mistakes.

By reframing the narrative in this way, Fitzgerald emphasizes the power of determination and resilience in the face of adversity. Rather than succumbing to the limitations of place, Charlie emerges as a symbol of strength and perseverance, inspiring readers to believe in the possibility of redemption and self-actualization.

9. Conclusion

Fitzgerald's "Babylon Revisited" testifies to the author's prowess in crafting a narrative that transcends mere storytelling and scrutinizes the profound exploration of the transformative power of place on human behavior and emotional landscapes. Through his deft manipulation of setting, structure, and dramatic elements, Fitzgerald invites readers to embark on a captivating journey that blurs the lines between reality and theatricality.

Fitzgerald's establishment of Paris as a formidable character in its own right saturates the narrative with a palpable sense of tension and conflict. The city's charm of excess and indulgence simultaneously seduces and haunts the protagonist, Charlie Wales, creating a clash that fuels the drama's progression. From the bustling streets that serve as a metaphorical stage for Charlie's existential struggles to the intimate confines of domestic spaces that amplify interpersonal conflicts, Fitzgerald's utilization of setting becomes a goading vigor behind the progressing drama. The incorporation of theatrical elements, such as dialogues, and scenes, further heightens the narrative's dramatic impact, inviting readers to dig into the depths of Charlie's introspection and emotional turmoil. The Ritz bar, a recurring and key setting, emerges as a symbolic representation of Charlie's internal conflicts, simultaneously offering solace and amplifying his feelings of entrapment.

Fitzgerald's adherence to the principles of dramatic unity, analogous to those found in classical Greek drama, lends his story a theatrical resonance. This adherence is evident in the narrative's focus on a singular central action, its confinement within a limited timeframe, and its unfolding within a singular physical setting. Through expressive conversations and subtle character nuances, Fitzgerald forges a deep connection between readers and the protagonist, stirring empathy for Charlie's struggles and a yearning for his redemption. The effectiveness of this metaphor lies in Fitzgerald's utilization of these classic principles: a play should orbit around a central action, occur within a confined timeframe, and transpire

within a singular physical space [8, 24].

Ultimately, "Babylon Revisited" stands as a timeless work of literature that reverberates with profound insights into the human condition. Fitzgerald's expert manipulation of dramatic elements elevates the story to a captivating theatrical experience, inviting readers to immerse themselves in the complexities of human nature and the eternal struggle between desire and morality. This masterpiece is a touching prompt of literature's transformative power and its ability to illuminate the depths of the human experience.

Author Contributions

Jamal Assadi is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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