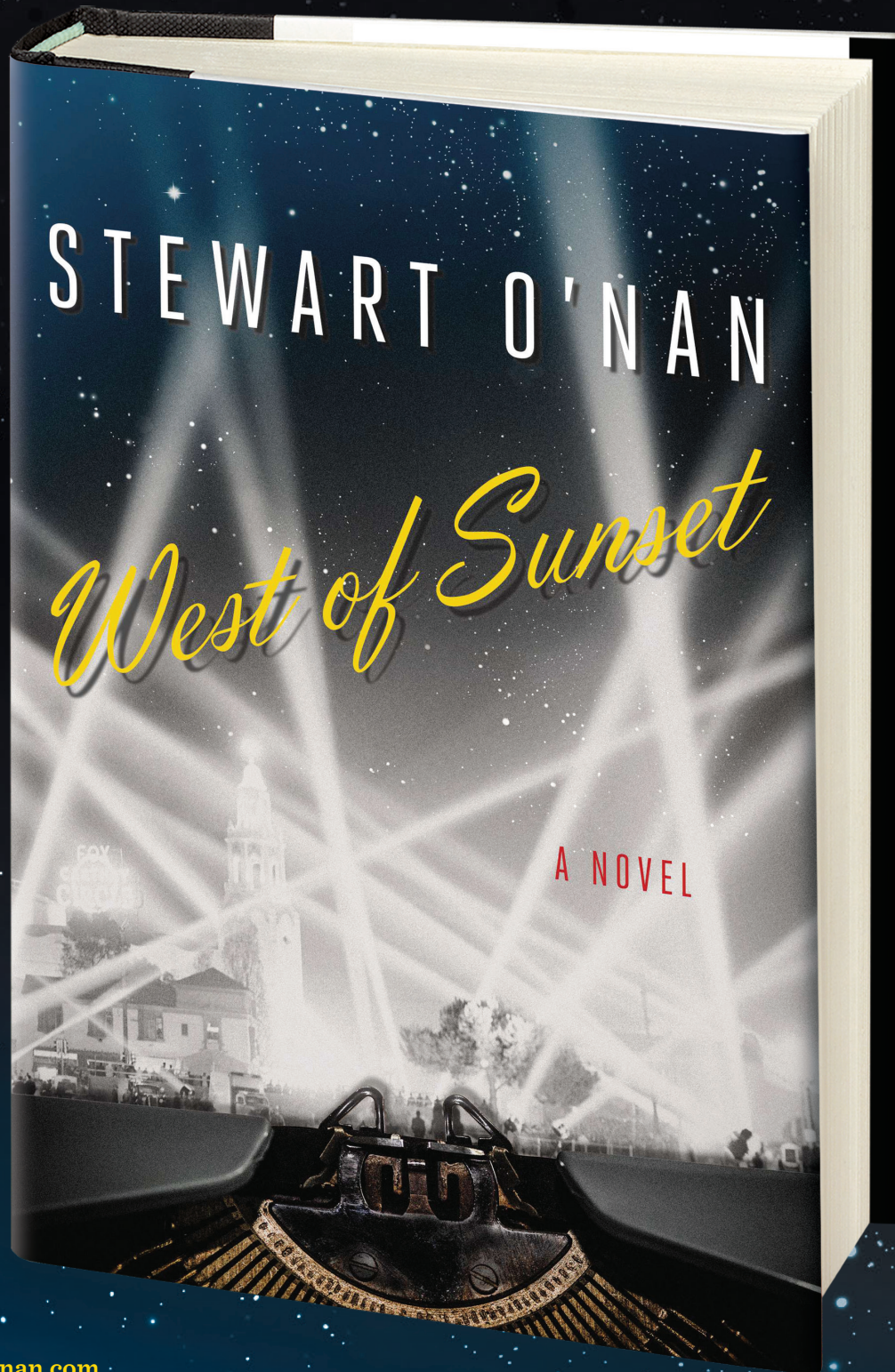


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An Introduction to *West of Sunset* by Stewart O’Nan

As a young man, F. Scott Fitzgerald believed that there were no second acts in American lives. By the age of forty, he was trying with all his might to prove that he was wrong.

When we meet him at the start of Stewart O’Nan’s scintillating new biographical novel *West of Sunset*, Fitzgerald is no longer the irresistible, golden icon of the Jazz Age, nor is his wife Zelda the daring, glamorous, baby-faced rebel of her youth. Zelda, now nearing thirty-seven, has been committed to a mental hospital—still lucid and winning at times but liable to sink into delusion or erupt into unreasoning violence at any moment. As for Scott, the soaring triumphs of *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender Is the Night* are behind him. A man preoccupied with truth, he ironically spirals ever deeper into falsehood. His greatest wishes now are to pay for Zelda’s care, to see his precociously talented daughter Scottie through college, and to somehow recapture some of his own tattered literary glory.

That glory, if he is to find it anywhere, lies neither on the verdant lawns of Princeton nor among the fabled pleasure palaces of Long Island. It lies instead in Hollywood, where Scott travels in hopes of building a new life as a screenwriter. Awaiting him there is an extraordinary host of old friends, including a muscular, pre-*Casablanca* Humphrey Bogart and a savagely witty post-Algonquin Dorothy Parker. Scott’s foremost literary rival, Ernest Hemingway, is not far off. But also waiting for Fitzgerald are some formidable problems. Fickle studio executives throw him on and off projects in revolving-door fashion. The frenetic party culture of 1930s L.A. threatens to erode whatever discipline he can muster. But the worst of his problems he has brought with him: an all too well-known weakness for cocktails and pills, as well as all the haunting memories of a glamorous but guilty past.

Some men, when drowning, clutch at straws. Others reach for a star. That star, for Scott, is Sheilah Graham, an English-born gossip columnist who might have passed for Zelda’s twin. Infatuated, Scott pursues her, thinking little of where the attraction might lead. What begins as an amorous dalliance gradually transforms into something much deeper and more elemental, and Graham begins to look like the one person who can save Scott both from the world and from himself. Yet Sheilah is harboring corrosive secrets of her own.

A marvel of research and a minor miracle of imagination, *West of Sunset* brilliantly calls to life both the seduction and the soullessness of late 1930s Hollywood while it also brings the reader inside the mind of F. Scott Fitzgerald. With deft precision, Stewart O’Nan evokes a great, flawed man in all of his complexity: his wit, his courage, and his besetting weaknesses. In its beautifully elegiac descriptions and its crisp, crackling dialogue, *West of Sunset* recalls a shimmering moment in time—and makes it timeless.

About Stewart O’Nan

Stewart O’Nan grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A graduate of Boston University, he began his professional life as a test engineer for Grumman Aerospace before leaving the corporate world to earn an MFA at Cornell. In 1996, *Granta* named him one of America’s Best Young Novelists. His novels, including *The Odds*; *Emily, Alone*; and *Last Night at the Lobster*, have won wide critical acclaim. Mr. O’Nan lives in Pittsburgh with his family.

Stewart O’Nan’s “library” while writing the book

Works by or about Fitzgerald, including, but not limited to:

- F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Last Tycoon*, *The Crack-Up*, *The Pat Hobby Stories*, *St. Paul Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, as well as the individual Fitzgerald stories: *Winter Dreams*, *Crazy Sunday*, and *Babylon Revisited*, *The Rich Girl*, his Basil and Josephine Stories and his personal ledger, plus all of his correspondence and papers
- F. Scott Fitzgerald’s screenplay *Three Comrades*, edited by Mathew J. Bruccoli
- Zelda Fitzgerald’s novel *Save Me the Waltz*
- F. Scott Fitzgerald and Zelda Fitzgerald’s *Bits of Paradise*
- *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald* edited by Cathy W. Barks
- *Letters to His Daughter* edited by Andrew Turnbull
- *Scott Fitzgerald* by Andrew Turnbull
- *Hemingway vs. Fitzgerald* by Scott Donaldson
- *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Biography* by Andre Le Vot
- *Dear Scott/Dear Max: The Fitzgerald-Perkins Correspondence* edited by John Kuehl and Jackson Bryer
- *The Far Side of Paradise: A Biography* by Arthur Mizener
- *After the Good Gay Times: Asheville-Summer of ’35* by Anthony Buttitta
- *Zelda: A Biography* by Nancy Milford
- *Exiles from Paradise: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald* by Sara Mayfield
- *Invented Lives: F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald* by James R. Mellow
- *Sometimes Madness Is Wisdom: Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald: A Marriage* by Kendall Taylor
- Frances Kroll Ring’s memoir *Against the Current: As I Remember F. Scott Fitzgerald*
- *That Summer in Paris: Memories of Tangled Friendships with Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and some others* by Morley Callaghan
- All of Sheilah Graham’s memoirs of Hollywood, especially *Beloved Infidel: The Education of a Woman* and *College of One: The Story of How F. Scott Fitzgerald Educated the Woman He Loved*
- *Crazy Sundays* by Aaron Latham
- *Some Time in the Sun: The Hollywood Years of F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Nathaniel West, Aldous Huxley and James Agee* by Tom Dardis
- *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald* by Mathew J. Bruccoli
- *The Perfect Hour: The Romance of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ginevra King*

Other books written about or during Fitzgerald's Hollywood Years, including but not limited to:

- ***Hope of Heaven*** by John O'Hara
- ***The Disenchanted*** and ***What Makes Sammy Run?*** by Budd Schulberg
- ***Babylon Revisited: The Screenplay***, edited by Budd Schulberg
- ***Day of the Locust*** by Nathanael West
- ***They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*** by Horace McCoy
- All of Raymond Chandler's works
- John Fante's LA Novels from the 1930s
- Dorothy Parker's stories and biographies, including ***What Fresh Hell Is This?*** by Marion Meade
- ***Lonelyhearts: The Screwball World of Nathanael West and Eileen McKenney*** by Marion Meade
- ***In a Lonely Place*** by Dorothy B. Hughes
- ***A Moveable Feast*** by Ernest Hemingway
- ***The Slide Area*** by Gavin Lambert
- ***After Many Summers Dies the Swan*** by Aldous Huxley
- ***The Diaries of Christopher Isherwood*** (Volume 1)
- ***Raymond Chandler's Los Angeles*** by Alain Silver
- ***Sprinkled with Ruby Dust*** by H.N. Swanson
- ***Bring on the Empty Horses*** by David Niven

Miscellaneous Materials included:

- Old road maps; gossip columns from the 1930s; menus & recipes from restaurants of the era; postcards from Hollywood, Malibu and Santa Monica, dating from the 1930s; the Malibu Phone book from the 1930s; MGM Newsreels from the 1930s; *A Guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald's St. Paul* and *The WPA Guide to California*

Movie Guide

- ***In a Lonely Place***, directed by Nicholas Ray and starring Humphrey Bogart and Gloria Grahame
- ***Three Comrades***, written by Fitzgerald, directed by Frank Borzage
- ***A Star Is Born*** (1937), written by Dorothy Parker
- ***Sunset Boulevard***, directed by Billy Wilder
- ***The Big Sleep***, written by William Faulkner, starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall
- ***Farewell, My Lovely***, based on the novel by Raymond Chandler
- ***Romeo and Juliet*** (1936) directed by George Cukor, starring Norma Shearer, Leslie Howard, and John Barrymore
- ***That's Entertainment***, written and directed by Jack Haley
- ***Double Indemnity***, directed by Billy Wilder, written by Billy Wilder and Raymond Chandler
- ***Beloved Infidel***, directed by Henry King, written by Sy Bartlett and Sheilah Graham
- ***The Postman Always Rings Twice***, directed by Tay Garnett and starring Lana Turner
- ***The Petrified Forest***, directed by Archie Mayo, starring Humphrey Bogart and Bette Davis
- ***Casablanca***, directed by Henry Curtiz, starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman
- ***Key Largo***, directed by John Huston, starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall
- ***The Thin Man***, the whole series
- ***Fast and Loose***, the whole series
- ***Hollywood, The Dream Factory***, documentary
- ***Last Call (Fitzgerald)***, directed by Henry Bromell and starring Jeremy Irons

Some of the notable people who appear in

West of Sunset

Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald: Wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Frances Scott “Scottie” Fitzgerald: Only child of Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Maxwell Perkins: Was F. Scott Fitzgerald’s and Ernest Hemingway’s editor.

Harold Ober: Was a literary agent who represented F. Scott Fitzgerald and other acclaimed authors such as Agatha Christie, William Faulkner, Pearl Buck, and J. D. Salinger.

John O’Hara: Was an Irish American bestselling author of *Appointment in Samarra* and *Butterfield 8*. His second wife Belle O’Hara makes an appearance in *West of Sunset*.

Sidney Joseph “S. J.” Perelman: Was an American humorist, author, and screenwriter. In cinema he is noted for co-writing scripts for the Marx Brothers films *Monkey Business* and *Horse Feathers* and for the Academy-Award-winning screenplay *Around the World in Eighty Days*.

Dorothy Parker: Was an American poet, critic, and satirist known for her wit and wisecracks in 20th-century urban foibles. She was married to actor and screenwriter Alan Campbell, a reputed bisexual. They were a popular screenwriting team in Hollywood until Campbell’s death in 1963.

Ring Lardner: Was an America sports columnist and short story writer, most known for his satirical takes on sports, marriage, and theater.

Ogden Nash: Was an America poet known for his comedic verse.

Robert Benchley: Was an American humorist who wrote essays and columns for *The New Yorker* and *Vanity Fair*, among others. He was a charter member of the Algonquin Round Table, a celebrated group of New York City writers, critics, actors, and wits who gathered at the Algonquin Hotel during the 1920s.

Marlene Dietrich: Was a German-American actress and singer, who had a decades-long affair with Ernest Hemmingway.

Aldous Huxley: Was an English writer and philosopher best known for his novel *Brave New World*, which was set in a dystopian London.

Sheilah Graham: An English-born nationally syndicated gossip columnist during Hollywood’s Golden Age. She had a romantic relationship with F. Scott Fitzgerald for three and a half years.

Joan Crawford: Was a noted Oscar-winning American film and television actress.

Irving Thalberg: Was an American film producer during the early years of motion pictures. Nicknamed “The Wonder Boy” for his youth and uncanny ability to choose the right scripts, Thalberg produced *Grand Hotel*, *China Seas*, *Camille*, *Mutiny on the Bounty* and *The Good Earth*. He was the inspiration for Monroe Stahr, the protagonist in Fitzgerald’s unfinished and posthumously published *The Love of the Last Tycoon*.

Hunt Stromberg: Was a film producer during Hollywood’s Golden Age. He produced, wrote, and directed some of Hollywood’s most profitable and enduring films, including *The Thin Man* series, *The Women*, and *The Great Ziegfeld*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture of 1936.

David O. Selznick: Was an American film producer and studio executive, best known for producing *Gone with the Wind*.

Joseph Mankiewicz: Was an American film director, screenwriter, and producer. He won the Academy Award twice for both Best Director and Best Screenplay for *A Letter to Three Wives* and *All About Eve*.

David Niven: Was an English actor and novelist best known for his role as Phileas Fogg in *Around the World in 80 Days* and “The Phantom” in *The Pink Panther*. He was awarded the Academy Award for Best Actor in 1958 for his performance in *Separate Tables*.

Budd Schulberg: The son of B. P. Schulberg, Budd Schulberg was an American screenwriter, television producer, novelist, and sports writer, most known for the novel *What Makes Sammy Run?* and the 1954 Academy Award-winning screenplay for *On the Waterfront*. In 1939, he collaborated on the movie *Winter Carnival* with F. Scott Fitzgerald, who was fired because of an alcoholic binge during a visit with Schulberg to Dartmouth.

Shirley Temple: Was an American film and television actress, most famous as a child star in the 1930s. She is best known for the movie *Bright Eyes*.

D.W. Griffith: Was an American film director, most known for his controversial films *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*.

Some of the notable places featured in *West of Sunset*

Café Trocadero: Also known as the Troc, Café Trocadero was an black tie French-inspired nightclub on the Sunset Strip where many Hollywood stars dined and danced.

“He called the Trocadero and changed their reservation. Instead of a quiet table in back, he asked for one with a view.”

The Cocoanut Grove: Was a Hollywood nightclub located in the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. It was the site of the 2nd and 12th Academy Awards and the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy. It was frequented by many stars of Hollywood’s Golden Age, including Norma Shearer and Irving Thalberg, Charlie Chaplin, Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant, Jimmy Stewart, and Marlene Dietrich.

“Walking into the Cocoanut Grove with the orchestra trilling a swoony ballad was like traveling back in time . . . Long ago they’d stayed at the Ambassador and danced there every night. This had been during Prohibition, and after a few weeks they’d been asked to leave. It had been Zelda’s idea to take all the furniture in their room and make a big pile in the middle, crowning it with the unpaid bill.”

The Brown Derby: Was the name of a chain of restaurants in Los Angeles. The first and most famous of these was shaped like a derby hat, becoming an iconic image synonymous with the Golden Age of Hollywood.

“Saturday was payday, and after driving over to the studio to turn in his pages, he and Sheilah were having dinner at the Vine Street Derby when the maitre’d came to their booth with a phone.”

Musso & Frank’s: This iconic Los Angeles restaurant is still open today and has been called “the genesis of Hollywood.” It’s appeared and featured in the movies *Ed Wood* and *Ocean’s Eleven* and the novel *The Day of the Locust*.

Schwab’s Drugstore: Was a drug store on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood and was a famous hangout for movie stars during the 1930s and 40s.

“He ordered in sandwiches from Schwab’s, washing down the salty pastrami with cold beer.”

Ciro’s: Was a nightclub located on the Sunset Strip in Hollywood. It opened in 1940 and was frequented by many celebrities.

Chateau Marmont: Opening in 1929, Chateau Marmont is a hotel located on the Sunset Strip in Hollywood and is a city landmark.

The Beverly Wilshire: Is a historic hotel located on Wilshire Boulevard located on the east side of Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills.

The Miramar: *"The studio was putting him up in Santa Monica, the last stop on the car line, at the Miramar, a grand seaside mansion that had outlived its silver magnate builder. The new management had chopped the place into apartments, and the hallways were dank and empty, the only hint of life the clashing of the elevator grate."*

MGM Studios, Irving Thalberg Building: *"His own office had no name and a view across Culver Boulevard of a billboard in a vacant lot touting a coming subdivision artfully christened Edendale."*

The Garden of Allah: *"The place was a Moorish variation on an L.A. staple, the square block of courtyard apartments . . . True to its name, the landscaping aspired to an oasis, with nodding date palms, spindly eucalyptus and rampant bougainvillea attracting hummingbirds and butterflies and hiding the Garden from the outside world."*

The Clover Club: *"Widely known to be mob-owned, the Clover Club was only a couple of blocks down Sunset, a prisonlike edifice built into the hillside. Save a strip of windows on the third floor, the front was blank to keep the police from raiding the place too easily."*

Sheilah Graham's apartment: *"Her place was up in the hills above Sunset, a salmon-tinted villa overlooking the bowl of the city, golden with the day's end."*

The Beverly Hills Hotel: *"He arranged for Scottie to stay at the Beverly Hills Hotel with old Broadway friends . . . Outside the entrance of the Beverly Hills, a great old Stutz landaulet sat like an emblem of bygone glamour."*

Ocean Park, Venice: *"After coffee they strolled the boardwalk beneath strings of naked bulbs, taking in the same flashing taffy parlors and midway games and dark rides that amused Sheilah in Ocean Park and Venice."*

Bullock's Wilshire: *"He drove over to Bullock's Wilshire and splurged on two new shirts, wishing, as he pawed through the racks, that Sheilah were there to help him."*

The Victor Hugo: *"Among the casting rumors and studio press releases was a tidbit about Dick Powell and June Allyson getting cozy in a booth at the Victor Hugo."*

UCLA Coliseum: *"UCLA was a bricklayer's idea of a campus, the halls stark boxes. Even the football stadium was new, a concrete copy of the Coliseum left over from the Olympics, far too large. Every Saturday he and Sheilah joined the student body in the bleachers to watch Kenny Washington run the single wing."*

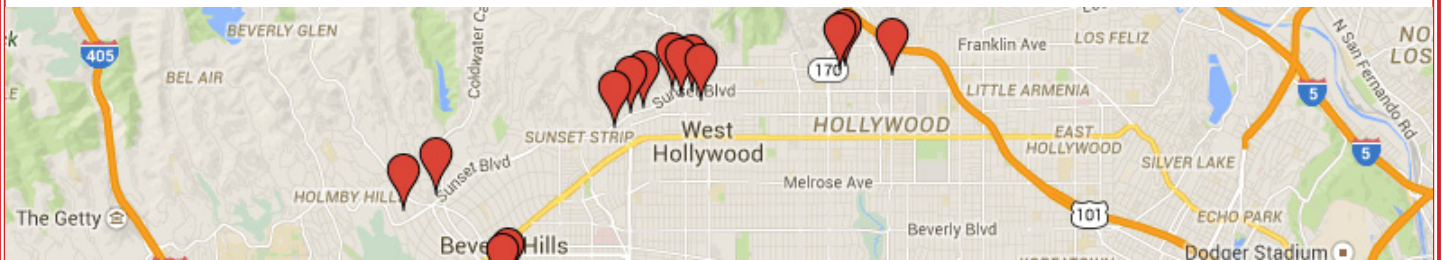
Malibu Movie Colony: *“At night the isolation was complete. Most of his neighbors’ places were closed for the season. Besides the light at the gatehouse, the Colony was dark.”*

Hunt Stromberg’s mansion: *“The directions Stromberg gave him took them up Beverly Glen through Holmby Hills into the older part of Bel Air where the roads meandered and mansions bulked darkly behind wrought-iron fences. . . . She found it first, a rambling Spanish Revival with Moorish arches and neatly spaced poplars.”*

Grauman’s Egyptian Theatre: *“The premiere was at Grauman’s Egyptian Theatre, a grand, pillared temple among the luncheonettes and pawnshops of Hollywood Boulevard.”*

Belly Acres: *“It was out in the valley, beyond the matchstick tract developments and the great dam and basin built to sustain them, a guesthouse on an estate surrounded by ranchlands.”*

Click here for a map of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Los Angeles



A Conversation with Stewart O’Nan

What drew you to tell the story of the last years of F. Scott Fitzgerald?

I’d read biographers’ versions of Fitzgerald’s time in Hollywood, but they all seemed skimpy for such a rich era; simplistic, bloodless overviews. Sheilah Graham’s memoirs vary wildly, as do the views of Fitzgerald in other contemporary accounts (Lillian Hellman’s is utterly fictitious, for instance). So, having his and Zelda’s and Scottie’s letters, knowing at least a piece of his emotional world, I decided to try to inhabit it.

Why write a novel instead of a strictly factual biography?

I didn’t have enough facts to write a biography of just that moment, and I was more interested in using the novelist’s tool of point of view to delve into his character. How does it feel to be you? For me, the novel answers this question better and more deeply than any other genre.

What is the most unbelievable thing in your novel that actually happened?

Fitzgerald pulling all-nighters with the pill-popping David O. Selznick, working on the script of *Gone with the Wind*. Also, that script’s original writer, Sidney Howard, being run over and killed by his own tractor. Conversely, what detail of your invention in *West of Sunset* do you look upon with the most satisfaction? Not invention but re-creation: the private moments between him and Zelda.

Ernest Hemingway accused Fitzgerald of betraying his gift. Do you agree?

No. Of course we wish we had more novels from him, but many of the stories are fine, and without his collapse, we wouldn’t have his brilliant confessional essays, “The Crack-Up” or “My Lost City.” And Hemingway’s got a lot of nerve saying that. *Tender Is the Night* is a far better novel than either *To Have and Have Not* or *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

We tend to associate Fitzgerald with the glamor of *Gatsby* and the high life of Lost Generation of Paris. But in *West of Sunset*, that’s not your Fitzgerald. Who is he?

The high life is mostly over for him at this point. Since ’29, Zelda’s been in and out of asylums, and now Scottie’s away at boarding school. So he’s lonely and broke and his life isn’t stable, which makes it harder to write (which is hard enough to begin with). He’s a man who doubts his powers, a romantic who’s lost his optimism.

The book’s dialogue, especially the passages that include Dorothy Parker, generate marvelous pop and sizzle. How did you develop your ear for Algonquin-style repartee?

Dottie and her husband Alan are so deliciously catty. It was great to work with characters who’ll say anything for effect. I went back to the movies of the ’30s and ’40s like The Thin Man series, also a series of husband-and-wife detectives starring the young Rosalind Russell. So clever and sharp.

We tend to think of alcoholics as weak people. However, *West of Sunset* makes us acutely aware of his inner strength and determination. How did you go about developing this paradox?

Being a functioning junkie of any kind is a hustle. It takes an incredible amount of energy and guile to support and hide a habit. Writing’s the same way. It takes a ton of determination to get to the desk and stay there, especially when things aren’t going well, and things have been going wrong for Fitzgerald for a long time when he arrives in Hollywood.

With its romantic overtones and elegiac undertones, *West of Sunset* reads a bit like a Fitzgerald novel. As you were writing it, did you find yourself hearing Fitzgerald's voice? Were you working more with or against whatever inspiration Fitzgerald's work gave you?

Fitzgerald's view of the world, his emotional sensibility, was more important for me than his voice. Trying to mimic his style is a trap. The idea was to get close to him so the reader can understand how he's feeling. Taking on his style would be distracting when what I'm trying for is clarity and depth.

You observe that what a writer most wants from this world is "the makings of another truer to his heart" (pg. 53). Does that statement describe your own personal longing?

I think it's true of all writers (and readers). We build these deeply felt imaginary worlds we want to live in—at least for a time.

Was there a particular character in *West of Sunset* that was most challenging to bring to life? If so, how did you finally crack the puzzle?

All of them. I had tons of material for my historical characters, but bringing any character to life on the page is hard. But—and this is typical—the more time I spent with them, the more alive they seemed, and after a while they were as solid and complicated as real people to me, maybe more so. That's the trick of fiction—spending so much time with them that you feel you know them better than you know anyone in real life.

People argue over the true meaning of a Fitzgerald line that you use as an epigraph: "There are no second acts in American lives." What do those words mean to you, and do you think they ring true?

He wrote them about Monroe Stahr, the hero of *The Last Tycoon*, whose wife is dead and who feels he's lost his taste for life, but then falls in love with a beautiful and mysterious young Englishwoman—just as Scott falls for Sheilah Graham. So with the events of the book he's testing that line. Is it true, or is Stahr's new love a second chance? Because Fitzgerald cares for Stahr, so do we, so we hope the line's not true. Who doesn't need a second chance?

Both on screen and in fiction, Los Angeles can come across as a uniquely terrifying city. Why might this be so?

The scale of it, I think. The mountains and the sea and the desert all make humans seem puny and vulnerable. In '37, the population hasn't boomed yet, and the freeways haven't taken over, but it's still a strange place—the glamour of Hollywood against the motor courts filled with Dust Bowl refugees from Oklahoma.

You write that, in Hollywood, no one is who he or she claims to be (pg. 122). Is it especially challenging to write fiction about characters who are perpetually making fictions of themselves?

A character in a false position, as Chekhov puts it, is a good character to write about. Eventually the truth will out, so there's all this built-in potential. Plus, the self-dramatizing are never dull. Annoying, maybe, but never dull.

Scott tries and fails to make it as a screenwriter. Would you ever write for the screen? Why or why not?

I haven't, but I've written a number of screenplays, mostly adaptations of novels I love, like Denis Johnson's *Angels*, and Flannery O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away*. It's another way of inhabiting the books, of getting close to the characters, working with the scenes and dialogue.

What are you working on now?

A novel set in Jerusalem in 1946.

Discussion Questions

1. Stewart O’Nan chooses to begin *West of Sunset*, not with Scott’s arrival in Hollywood, but with a meeting between Scott and Zelda. What does his story gain from this subtle and interesting choice?
2. O’Nan uses a variety of details to evoke the madness and absurdity of Hollywood culture. What images did you find most effective in this regard, and why?
3. What is the significance of the novel’s title, and how does that title bear upon the ensuing action?
4. Based on what you have read in *West of Sunset*, do you consider F. Scott Fitzgerald a brave man, a coward, or a bit of both? Explain your reaction.
5. Some have seen *West of Sunset* as, above all, a love story. If this is correct, who or what is the true object of Scott’s love: Zelda? Sheilah? Himself? Someone or something else? Discuss your answer.
6. O’Nan writes of Fitzgerald, “He was a poor boy from a rich neighborhood, a scholarship kid at boarding school, a Midwesterner in the East, an easterner out West” (pg. 208). Do you accept the idea that a Princeton man who is friends with Hemingway, Bogart, and Dorothy Parker can still claim to be an outsider? Why or why not?
7. Fitzgerald wonders whether he has mistaken oblivion for joy (pg. 166). How is it possible to confuse the two?
8. In *West of Sunset*, Fitzgerald, a superb novelist and sparkling writer of short stories, tries to make it as a screenwriter, an artistic milieu in which he seems desperately out of water. Why, apart from money, does he attempt this seemingly doomed transformation? Why might a writer who is so successful in one idiom fail so miserably in another?
9. The real Fitzgerald once wrote, “The two basic stories of all times are ‘Cinderella’ and ‘Jack the Giant Killer’—the charm of women and the courage of men.” Was he correct? Does O’Nan’s novel undermine or confirm Fitzgerald’s statement?
10. In *West of Sunset*, Hemingway accuses Fitzgerald of betraying his *gift*. Is it his gift that Scott most significantly betrays, or someone or something else? What?
11. What do you think is Stewart O’Nan’s most penetrating insight into the life of a professional writer?
12. Compare Zelda and Sheilah. What does each woman represent in Fitzgerald’s life? Why does he seem to need them both?
13. Imagine that you are Scottie Fitzgerald. What would you most want from your parents that they are not giving you? Would there be anything you could do to try to get it?
14. Fitzgerald, a Midwesterner by birth, seems caught between the American East and the American West. What does each offer that the other denies him, and in which of the two places does he more naturally belong? Why?