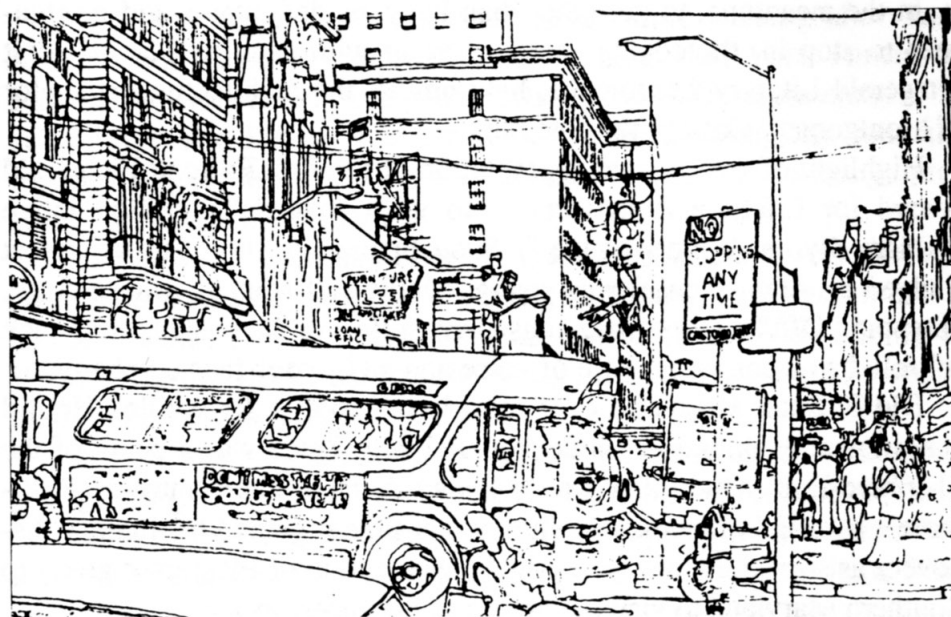


## Three Vignettes



pencil-on-paper, Greg Otto

### F. Scott Sleeps Here

F. Scott Fitzgerald and Rockville, Maryland. The association calls up the concluding words of *The Great Gatsby*, carved in stone at Fitzgerald's Rockville gravesite:

*So we beat on, boats against the current, borne ceaselessly  
back into the past.*

Given the rush of traffic through Rockville's center, within a hundred feet of F. Scott's mortal remains, more appropriate lines from *Gatsby* would be the ones about a bad driver only being safe until meeting another bad driver.

Rockville needs events like the recent centennial of F. Scott Fitzgerald's birth. Its naming as an All-American City in the '70s showed what jokes such awards are. Montgomery County developers—800-pound gorillas all and tasteless ones at that—have wrought their cruellest mischief on its county seat's downtown. Only a precious handful of public and commercial buildings are left from the old days. They were razed for a white elephant called Rockville Mall, a sprawling beast without any obvious means of entry which now has been, in the argot of the demolition industry, "dropped" for a new "Towne Centre." Perhaps it will include an aquarium.

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In the meantime, to get other than lawyers, defendants and mortgagees to stop in, the county seat comes up with such as The F. Scott Fitzgerald Literary Conference, held amidst the architectural splendor of Montgomery College the past fall.

Highlight of the day was presentation of the first F. Scott Fitzgerald Award for Lifetime Achievement, to white-maned Tidewater native William Styron. Winner of the F. Scott Fitzgerald Short Story Contest (judged by Alan Cheuse) was young localite Jeff Miner, whose entry, "Stepping Off," a tale of jazz musicians suffering the onslaught of rock 'n' roll, had a gorgeous sense of voice and an in-your-face epiphany.

Did F. Scott Fitzgerald ever set a living foot in Rockville? He did stay in nearby Baltimore while troubled wife Zelda was a client of the Shepherd-Pratt. One thing we do know: A 1932 diary entry of Baltimore's own H.L. Mencken—who by that time regarded his literary discovery as something of a pest—includes mention of Fitzgerald going to Southern Maryland to visit the graves of his ancestors.

One can imagine Scott standing in the serene St. Mary's Cemetery, thinking, "Hmm... This would be a good place for people to leave flowers and bottles of cognac."

—Neal J. Conway

"F. Scott Sleeps Here" by Neal J. Conway was first published in the Winter, 1997 issue of *The Potomac Review*. Neal Conway is the author of *Tales From Old Bethesda* and lives in Washington, DC. See [nealjconway.com](http://nealjconway.com). **Subject:** F. Scott Fitzgerald is buried at St Mary's Cemetery in Rockville, MD.