

An Analysis of the Themes of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*—From the Perspective of the Contrast between the Short Story and the Film

Yunyi Cang^{1,a}

¹College of Liberal Arts, Nanjing University of Information Science & Technology, Nanjing, China

^a1216794949@qq.com

Abstract: *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is a short story written by the American writer Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald in the 1920s. The short story tells the absurd life of Benjamin Button, who was born as an old man and grew up younger and younger. Adapted from the story, the film of the same name directed by David Fincher was released in 2008. In 2009, the film won three awards and many nominations at the 81st Academy Awards. Although there are certain differences in the plot between the story and the film, the common themes that both art forms want to present and the respective ones are worthy of in-depth exploration. Therefore, this paper attempts to analyze the themes of the masterpiece through the contrast of the two art forms.

Keywords: *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*; Themes; Contrast

1. Introduction

As different art forms, literature and film have been inextricably connected since Shakespeare's time. For one thing, literature comes from life and history, which provides rich materials and deep connotations for film. For another, many films are adapted from literary classics, and adaptation is another form of creation to some extent. Meanwhile, literature and film have many similarities in terms of artistic expression. Their main tasks are to tell stories, shape characters, and convey ideas. No matter the words in literary works or the images in films, they are designed to make readers or audiences feel emotions of human beings and experience the ups and downs of life.

Fitzgerald's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, the language art form, enables readers to construct a unique story world through imagination and give their own understandings of the characters' fates. In comparison, David Fincher's film, based on the short story, is not completely faithful to the original's content. The film, with meticulous organization and production, creates a specific atmosphere and enhances the emotional experience of the audience. Therefore, this chapter will mainly discuss the differences in plot between the short story and the film.

1.1. The outline of the story

Today, Fitzgerald is known for his novels, but in his lifetime, his fame stemmed from his prolific achievements as one of the American most gifted story writers. *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, a witty and fantastical satire about aging, is one of his most memorable stories. In other words, the strange and haunting story embodies the sharp social insight that has made Fitzgerald one of the great voices in the history of American literature.

As for the story, Benjamin Button was born as an old man about 70 years old. His father Roger Button was shocked and confused, but still had to accept this absurd fact. Roger Button wanted Benjamin to wear clothes suitable for babies and play with toys that children would like. Later, Benjamin learned to do "appropriate" things to please his father. At the age of five, Benjamin was sent to kindergarten, but was soon dropped out of the school. At the age of twelve, Benjamin put on his first pair of long trousers. When he was 18 years old, Benjamin looked like a 50-year-old man. Accompanied by his father, he attended and successfully passed the entrance examination of Yale College. On the third day after being admitted, he was expelled from the university, because the registrar did not believe that Benjamin was an 18-year-old freshman. In fact, this was just the beginning of Benjamin's being treated as an alien in his life.

Back at home, Benjamin started working alongside his father running hardware business, which became successful over the next few years. At the age of twenty, Benjamin began to “enter the society” and met his first love—Hildegard Moncrief, the daughter of General Moncrief—at a dancing party outside of Baltimore. Although at first neither Baltimore nor General Moncrief would acknowledge the couple, they got married and lived together for many years. However, Benjamin was getting younger and younger, while Hildegard was no longer young and beautiful day after day. Then, driven by passion, Benjamin went out to various social occasions and joined the army when the Spanish-American War broke out. More than a decade later, Benjamin’s son Roscoe grew up and took over his wholesale hardware business. When Benjamin looked like a 20-year-old young man, he attended Harvard University. At first, Benjamin was the most celebrated man in college because of his excellent performance in the football team. But as he became shorter and weaker, he fell out of favor and dropped out of the team.

After graduating from Harvard, Benjamin looked only fourteen or fifteen years old. Because of this embarrassing situation, Roscoe became very rude to Benjamin, warning Benjamin to call him “uncle” in front of others. Soon after, Benjamin received a letter inviting him to return to the army with a higher rank. As a result, both the sentry and the colonel in the camp thought him only a naughty boy. Two days later, he was brought home by his son Roscoe. In his later years, Benjamin could play with Roscoe’s son and go to kindergarten together, which seemed no strange. Finally, Benjamin died peacefully in his white crib, under the loving care of nurse Nana.

1.2. The synopsis of the film

Released in North America in 2008, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is a fantasy romantic drama film directed by David Fincher. The script written by Eric Roth and Robin Swicord is loosely based on the 1922 short story of the same name created by Fitzgerald. The film stars Brad Pitt as a man who ages in reverse and Cate Blanchett as the love interest throughout his life.

In August 2005, Daisy Fuller was on her deathbed in a New Orleans hospital as Hurricane Katrina ravaged the southern United States. She told her daughter Caroline about the blind clockmaker—Mr. Gateau—hired to make a clock for a train station in 1918. When the clock was unveiled, the public was surprised to see it running backwards. She revealed that Mr. Gateau made it as a memorial for those who had lost their sons in World War I, including his own son. Daisy then asked Caroline to read a diary for her, whose owner was a man named Benjamin Button.

In 1918, World War I came to an end. On the day of Europe’s victory, a baby boy was born in a family named Button in New Orleans. The boy seemed different, with the appearance and maladies of an elderly man. Unfortunately, his biological mother died soon after childbirth. His father, Thomas Button, abandoned the infant on the porch of a nursing home. The baby was found by the caretaker Queenie and the cook Mr. “Tizzy” Weathers, who worked at the nursing home. Queenie decided to raise the baby as her own, naming him Benjamin. As the years went by, Benjamin physically blended in with the elderly residents but had the mind and curiosities of a child. Aging in reverse, he gradually transitioned from a wheelchair to crutches and learned to walk. He befriended a visiting African Pygmy named Oti, who taught him to look beyond the physical, and a resident Mrs. Maple, who taught him to play the piano.

On Thanksgiving 1930, Benjamin came across seven-year-old Daisy, who came to visit her grandmother living in the nursing home. When Benjamin met the second woman who had completely changed his life, her loveliness and sincerity soon won over his heart. Benjamin’s equally pure, sincere heart also touched little Daisy, and they began to adore each other instantly. Ten years later, the flames of World War II burned the whole world even more fiercely. Benjamin Button, like many Americans, sailed from the United States to Britain to contribute to the war against fascism. During the period of turmoil, he met all kinds of people, witnessed the tragedy of real life, and experienced the greatest glory of human nature. In Murmansk in 1941, Benjamin became smitten with Elizabeth Abbott, wife of the British Trade Minister. Their affair eventually ended, leaving Benjamin heartbroken.

After the war, Benjamin returned to the United States. At this time, he had already got rid of the appearance of an old age, gradually growing into a middle-aged man. Perhaps decreed by fate, Benjamin reunited with his childhood sweetheart Daisy in New York. By this time Daisy had become a successful dancer with good looks. However, Benjamin departed upon seeing that Daisy was romantically involved with someone else. In 1954, Daisy’s dancing career abruptly ended when her leg was crushed in an automobile accident in Paris. When Benjamin visited her, Daisy was amazed by his appearance. Frustrated by her injuries, she told Benjamin to stay out of her life. In 1962, Daisy returned to New

Orleans and reunited with Benjamin. Now of comparable physical age, they naturally fell in love. Their daughter, Caroline, was born in the spring of 1968. Benjamin thought he could not be a proper father due to his reverse aging, so he sold his assets and left the proceeds to Daisy and Caroline, choosing to travel alone during the 1970s.

When Benjamin returned from India a few years later, he found Daisy married a widower. Daisy introduced him as a family friend to Caroline and her husband Robert. Benjamin was relieved but a little bit sad to see them getting along. In 1990, recently widowed Daisy was contacted by social workers who found Benjamin—he was physically a pre-teen at that time. When she arrived, they explained that he was living in a condemned building, taken to the hospital in poor physical condition, and that his diary had her name on it. As he got older, Benjamin displayed early signs of dementia, so Daisy eventually moved into the nursing home in 1997, caring for Benjamin for the rest of his life as he regressed into infancy.

In 2002, Mr. Gateau's clock was replaced with a modern digital clock working properly. In the spring of 2003, Benjamin died in Daisy's arms, physically an infant but chronologically over 84 years of age. Daisy died peacefully in 2005, having finally revealed that Benjamin was Caroline's father. In the end of the film, Hurricane Katrina flooded a storage room holding Mr. Gateau's clock, which continued to tick backwards.

2. The Themes Reflected in the Story

Fitzgerald makes up such a fantastic story about a strange man who goes against the law of nature and thus walks on a unique life track. From being an octogenarian at birth to being brain dead under the appearance of an infant, Benjamin is destined to be different from common people. The reversal of time makes him experience complex feelings. At the same time, his life is as ordinary as that of any others—entering schools, attending dances, getting married, running wholesale business, joining the army, etc.

The most attractive aspect of the work is the fusion of fantasy and reality. Throughout the story, Fitzgerald integrates the legendary life of Benjamin with deep observations and reflections on the entire American society in the Jazz Age. Behind the absurd story, Fitzgerald reveals to readers the spiritual crisis hidden under the surface of magnificence.

2.1. *Abnormal emotions*

After World War I, America entered the "Roaring Twenties"—the era of diversity and prosperity. Under the great halo of economic development, the relationship between people has become increasingly estranged. People in that age were outwardly with high spirits, but emotionally lonely. The critic Malcolm Cowley called this generation as "exile" [1]. Being one of the representatives of the "Lost Generation", Fitzgerald also indulged in the extravagance and sensual pleasures of that age, but suffered from spiritual decadence and desolation at heart.

The birth of Benjamin left his father feel incredulous for a long time afterwards. The Buttons had a prominent position in both social and financial circles in Baltimore. Therefore, this southern gentleman family, which was likely to get well connected with those notable families, had no place for a "monster" that would discredit the family fame. Roger Button deluded himself by treating Benjamin as a normal child, buying him toys which babies liked and making him drink milk three meals a day. He even dyed Benjamin's hair and eyebrows brown to cover up the worst part of them, trying every means to hide the truth about Benjamin's age. In doing so, Roger Button thought he could retain some of his own self-respect, and even the social status of the Buttons in Baltimore.

When Benjamin seemed no more than sixteen, his son Roscoe got married and settled down, very active in the social circle of Baltimore. Not wanting any scandal about his family, Roscoe refused to let Benjamin call him by his first name, because it looked absurd for a boy of fifteen to call him by first name. Instead, he asked Benjamin to call him "uncle" when others were around. In a word, had it not been for Benjamin's "reverse growth", the relationship between the father and the son would have been intimate.

The love between Benjamin and Hildegard could not last long. From the moment he laid eyes on Hildegard, Benjamin felt that "an almost chemical change seemed to dissolve and recombine the very elements of his body". When he fell madly in love with Hildegard, the impulse of love at first sight only came from her criminally beautiful appearance. Hildegard was also interested in Benjamin, partly driven

by the romance of marrying a middle-aged man. However, the love based on the attraction of outward appearance could not withstand the test of time. Benjamin grew younger and younger, while Hildegard's beauty gradually faded. There was only one thing that worried Benjamin: his wife was no longer attractive to him.

Superficially, the family life of the Buttons was harmonious, but in fact, there existed many conflicts. The love between Benjamin and Hildegard occurred under sensual impulses, bound to fade away with time passing. The "deterioration" of family relationship, the frivolity in love affairs, and even the separation between human bodies and their own souls stemmed from the lack of spiritual pursuit during the "Roaring Twenties". As a consequence, people relied on the enjoyment of material life to make up for the barren spiritual life.

2.2. *Illusion of glory*

The decade after World War I in American history was also called "the Jazz Age". When hedonism prevailed in the society, most Americans greedily enjoyed the rich fruits brought by the economic prosperity. As one of the witnesses to the growth and collapse of that age, Fitzgerald once said in *Echoes of the Jazz Age*: "It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire." [2] His rising fame in the American literature was also accompanied by a sensual, unrestrained struggle for extreme pleasures. However, he could sharply observe the world where he was involved, reflecting personal experiences and thoughts in his creations [3]. When he picked up his pen, he wrote about himself. Almost all his works were the expression of his own feelings [4]. In one word, Fitzgerald used his works to expose the emptiness of his soul behind the success.

In the story, as time went by, Benjamin has undergone a series of physical changes, feeling "that the blood flowed with new vigor through his veins" every day. He began to get tired of the monotonous life, "becoming more and more attracted by the gay side of life." Out of his growing curiosity and enthusiasm, he decided to join the army when the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898. His outstanding service in the war and his influence in business circles earned him the rank of captain as well as many medals. He was obsessed by the active and exciting military life, feeling very regretful for his retirement. Back home, Benjamin's desire for enjoying pleasures became stronger and stronger. "He took up golf and made a great success of it. He went in for dancing: in 1906 he was an expert at 'The Boston,' and in 1908 he was considered proficient at the 'Maxine,' while in 1909 his 'Castle Walk' was the envy of every young man in town."

After becoming one of the most successful writers in that era, Fitzgerald recalled his mental despair in *The Crack-Up* [5]: when money and love become rightfully deserved, when fame loses its mysterious color, when the future auxiliary to reality and the past full of desire merge in a beautiful moment—then life is indeed like a dream [3]. In the three autobiographical essays, Fitzgerald reconsidered why he needed to succeed and whether he really wanted those he had gained. He began to realize that the things, people and even all aspects of life that he once appreciated were losing their value for him. That's why he was experiencing mental breakdown and the cause can be described as a lack of self. Fitzgerald found himself so constrained by external norms that he tirelessly struggled to achieve but indeed had no direct benefit to him. In view of the above analysis, the only thing he had to maintain was to work hard towards what would directly profit himself.

On one hand, the increasing number of titles and honors made Benjamin's life once glamorous and enviable. On the other, he tried to escape reality as he abandoned himself to the euphoria brought by these praises. He seemed to enjoy himself and live a luxurious life, but actually he suffered from a poverty of spirit. On the whole, hero medals and several dance champions put him in the limelight of the public, but could not eliminate his disappointment and loneliness. From the cease of World War I, there were many great changes in the American society. This period was both turbulent and prosperous. The post-war generation, especially young people, lost their faith and challenged traditional values. Since a new, unified morality had not yet formed, glittering medals of honor and various titles became their "refuge" on the spiritual barren land.

2.3. *Disillusionment of dreams*

The historian James Truslow Adams was regarded to be the first person that coined the term "the American dream". He defined it in *The Epic of America* as "a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position." [6]

The American dream dazzled and captivated the generation in the Jazz Age, when opportunities to pursue their aims could be found everywhere. Everyone worshipped it as a faith and had the driving force to realize it. However, the vast majority of followers failed to gain something, and the American dream went up in flames when the Great Depression struck in October 1929.

In the last few years of Benjamin's life, his memories gradually blurred and he could hardly remember anything. "He did not remember clearly whether the milk was warm or cool at his last feeding or how the days passed..." Day after day, Benjamin fell asleep with the sunset, and there were no haunting dreams, nothing. "...all these had faded like unsubstantial dreams from his mind as though they had never been. He did not remember." As the last sweet aroma of the milk faded out from his mind, Benjamin's extraordinary life came to an end. Although Benjamin had many glorious moments in his youth and some sweet time with his lover, he forgot them all at the end of his life. In a sense, the American Dream was so illusory that people made every effort to pursue it but ended up with nothing.

No matter how incredible one's life may be, he will eventually face death. When Benjamin passed away unconsciously as an infant, it was in 1930 as the story suggested. The Great Depression swept across the United States, mercilessly putting an end to the hedonistic life of that era. Through the American dream in that period, we could see people's undisguised desire to make fortune. However, without the support of spiritual strength, the dreams people had spent their whole life chasing turned out to be an illusion. Fitzgerald acutely foresaw the failure of the era, so he wrote in the ending of *Echoes of the Jazz Age*: "...it all seems rosy and romantic to us who were young then, because we will never feel quite so intensely about our surroundings anymore." [2]

3. The Themes Presented in the Film

The film adapted from the short story does not have many complicated plots or conflicts between characters. The director David Fincher once said: "I don't know how much movies should entertain. To me I'm always interested in movies that scar." Accompanied by the faint gloom and sadness that pervades the film, the audience as observers not only see how a group of ordinary people live their lives, but also reflects on their own life experiences through these characters.

In the film, David Fincher uses weird and grotesque techniques to place the growth of a "freak" baby against the background where old people live, so the audience can think deeply about the essence of life in the retrograde time. What's more, the symbolism and metaphors throughout the film play a crucial role in interpreting the themes of aging, love and destiny. Interspersed with images such as clocks, hummingbirds, steamers, early mornings and so on, the work also appears more rich and profound in the meaning of life.

3.1. Aging

Aging is an inevitable life course for every individual. The manifestations of aging are thinning hair, wrinkled skin, falling teeth, stumbling steps and so on. For a person living through childhood, youth, middle age and old age, aging is perfectly in line with human life process. For Benjamin, aging is a lifelong state, which is also the basis for the plot of the film. Therefore, to fully understand the themes of the film, we should first analyze the atmosphere of aging created by the film.

At the beginning of the film, there is a shot of the elderly Daisy in the state of dying. The aged Daisy was bidding farewell to her daughter, hoping to finish her last journey in the voice of her daughter reading a diary. There is no doubt that the senility of Daisy is the normal aging of human beings. The rich memories she possesses are the proof of her extraordinary life, which also makes her unperturbed at the last moment of her life. Daisy poetically recalled the construction of the railway station in 1918 and the story of the famous clockmaker Mr. Gateau. The film is interspersed with Mr. Gateau's love for his son and the clock running backwards, which are the best finishing touches in the overall atmosphere, though they are small episodes outside of Benjamin's life. Naturally, the whole film unfolds slowly in the gloomy tone of aging. The memories of Mr. Gateau and his son make the film extend from Daisy's aging to another proposition: Beyond love, there are birth, senility, illness and death. One's life is not only related to herself / himself, but necessarily related to that of others in the world. Life is not static, nor is it unique. No matter what kind of life you are experiencing, you must face the complexity of life itself and the changes at anytime and anywhere.

Aging means more leniency and understanding. Though the film's tone is somber and the plot is not a joyful one, those old people in the film are all kind, friendly and optimistic. The director "put" Benjamin,

who was abandoned, in a nursing home. Apparently, this is not a normal environment for children to grow up, but it is the best place for Benjamin, a child with a retrograde biological clock. The nursing home is like a paradise, where Benjamin can comfortably get along with people. Accustomed to senility and death, people in the nursing home take aging as the norm and the end of life as their destination. No one here scoffs at or is frightened by Benjamin's bizarre appearance, and no one thinks aging is a depressing topic. Such a special environment ensures the healthy growth and freedom of Benjamin. Benjamin, who would be in the extreme loneliness, is no longer lonely, because he has the companionship of the elderly in the nursing home. The philosophy of life conveyed by the film is that "Fat people, skinny people, tall people, white people, they're just as alone as we are. But they're scared shitless." In this world, actually each individual is lonely, but not everyone can find the "key" to "unlock" the loneliness. Luckily, Benjamin has found such a "key" in the nursing home and got out of the dilemma.

Premature aging can offer insight into life. Growth is a logical consequence for an individual. Although Benjamin stands at the starting line of life like others, he begins his life with the appearance of an aged. In this unique way into human society, Benjamin is bound to pay more hardships than others. However, this unusual situation allows Benjamin to look closely at life and understand life from another perspective, that is, his sense of responsibility for himself, his wife, friends, family and society. As for Benjamin, due to the retrogradation of time, the imbalance and inconsistency of his physical and mental state—the thinning hair, the skeleton-like body, the terrible appearance and the fragile physique—led the doctor to assert that he was extremely old and that he might not live for several hours. Fortunately, Benjamin survived when he met a kind-hearted black woman. Thanks to her meticulous care, Benjamin can have a deeper understanding of love than normal persons. He understands that love is one of the foundations of life, and the "last" guarantee of the constantly changing world. He believes in the power of love and is willing to warm others with love. He helped his dead companions to send money home. He missed those old people who once lived in the nursing home. He was willing to help Daisy who injured in the accident through the difficulties. Therefore, Benjamin's life leaves many of these short but the most beautiful fragments.

Indeed, the retrograde life and retrograde time are false propositions that cannot appear in reality, but this movie gives the audience a chance to break out of the normal logical circle and understand the irrational aging of an extraordinary man. And "warmth" is the key to interpreting this film.

3.2. *Sincere love*

Throughout the film is the romantic love between Benjamin and Daisy. They had mutual affection since childhood. In the nursing home, they listened to grandma's fairy tales and then sneaked out to light candles and confide secrets. Little by little, their hearts were getting closer and closer. Later, Daisy became a graceful dancer and came to New York, where she indulged in sensual pleasures. At that time, Daisy was in a sweet relationship with another man. Instead of disturbing them, Benjamin left silently. In an accident, Daisy was injured and her dancing career abruptly ended. Benjamin came all the way to take care of her. Despite being rejected again, he still chose to leave quietly and waited for Daisy. In the middle age of their lives, they shared a good time of love and had their daughter Caroline. The dialogue in the film is moving:

- "Will you still love me when my skin grows old and saggy?" (Daisy)
- "Will you still love me when I have acne? When I wet the bed? When I'm afraid of what's under the stairs?" (Benjamin)

Reading this dialogue brings to mind the words of the poet William Butler Yeats: "How many loved your moments of glad grace, and loved your beauty with love false or true, But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you, And loved the sorrows of your changing face". The most romantic is "to stay together till death and end for far, for near, hand, oath, accord: Never alive will we keep that word" (Ezra Pound). When Daisy, with a full head of grey hair, and Benjamin, with florid complexion, walk together side by side, their hearts are filled with deep feelings: this true love can be eternal.

After the wonderful but brief period, Benjamin and Daisy's lives are like two trains that passed opposite, one in the direction of aging and the other in the direction of youth. This contradictory situation magnifies the crisis in the love between the couple, because worries and responsibilities make it impossible for them to continue living together. Faced with the irreversibility of time, the only thing Benjamin can do is seizing the precious opportunity to spend a short time with Daisy and leaving the best memories in his life. Benjamin comes to realize the true meaning of life because his growth experience is different from that of any others. He thinks that an individual's physiological conditions are closely connected with his/her social attributes. In the absence of normal physiological conditions,

the relationship between personal life and social life will deteriorate or even become completely disjointed. Having gone through many hardships of growth and life, Benjamin also gradually realizes that persistence and abandonment are equally meaningful.

3.3. *Destiny*

A person's destiny is made up of countless choices. In the film, Benjamin decided to leave the nursing home and see the outside world. He worked on the ferry and sailed across Russia. He fought in World War II on the front lines, and also indulged in the world of extravagance. Despite experiencing many kinds of difficulties, Benjamin can always accept the unknown fate calmly, pursue happiness with an optimistic view, and make choices at several critical junctures in life. Although there are only a few important crossroads in the journey of life, every choice has the possibility to change a person's destiny permanently. All the things in this world seem to be independent of each other, but their interaction can shape everyone's past, present and future.

The narration from Benjamin's perspective mentioned that a woman was preparing to go shopping but she forgot to put on her overcoat and went back to pick it up. Just then, her phone rang, so she chatted for a few minutes and then went out to take a taxi. The taxi driver, while drinking coffee, happened to pick up this female passenger and slammed on the brakes when a pedestrian appeared in front of the car. The pedestrian got up five minutes later than usual because he/she forgot to set the alarm clock. The woman didn't get the packed things she bought on time, because the salesgirl who was disappointed in love forgot it. At this time, the taxi was temporarily blocked by a delivery truck again. Meanwhile, Daisy waited a little while for her companion who was tying the shoelace—when Daisy and her companion were heading out, a car accident occurred. However, if any of these things had changed, the accident would probably not have happened. It seems that these people and things are unrelated to Daisy's car accident, but they are actually on the chains of this tragedy. The film skillfully connects time and space, presenting the internal logic and fully reflecting the complexity of destiny.

There are other examples of the film's performance of fate and the characters' attitudes towards fate, such as Captain Mike, who is drunk all day and boasts of being an artist. Captain Mike hated his father's domineering control over him but had to take over his father's business. He never forgot to be romantic when sailing on the sea, though. He created his own tattoo and insisted that he was an artist. He also led the crew to contribute to the war against fascism. In this sense, he is a brave man who earns people's respect. He once said such a wise word: "You can be as mad as a mad dog at the way things went. You could swear, curse the fates. But when it comes to the end, you have to let go". The captain also took hummingbirds as a symbol. A hummingbird's heartbeat reaches 1,200 times per minute and its wings flap 80 times per second. If it stops flapping its wings, it will die within 10 seconds. Later, Benjamin was surprised to see hummingbirds on the sea, and Daisy saw hummingbirds beating against the window when she was dying, both of which are metaphorical. Its implication is self-evident: To thrive in calamity or adversity and to perish in soft living. Where there is life, there is struggle.

4. Conclusion

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button is a great success in both literature and film history. The boldness of conception and excellent writing techniques represent not only Fitzgerald's literary talent, but also his keen insight into the Jazz Age. In that superficially brilliant era, the relationships between people are deformed. Fame, glory and the American dream fascinated by that generation proved to be illusory in the end. Several decades later, director David Fincher brought such a masterpiece to the screen, combining the traditional mainstream thinking with the eccentric style of art. The film gives the audience a new perspective to understand life and love. Though humans are born to die, growth is liberation in another sense. The retrograde time makes people see the more primitive nature of life.

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