



Tender Is The Night: A Psychoanalytic View

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Abstract: Psychoanalysis is a discipline stressing the study of psychic life which aims at curing diseases of the soul. This branch of psychology is helpful to understand philosophy, culture, and religion. It also came to be applied to criticize works of literature. Psychoanalytic criticism often aids in providing clues to baffling characters, situations, symbols and actions. The founder of this new discipline, Sigmund Freud's influence can explicitly be seen in Fitzgerald's literary work. *Tender is the Night* is F. Scott Fitzgerald's fourth novel. It was clearly one of the most exceptional fictions of the 1930s offering a conspicuous criterion of American fiction since the World War I. Though it was written after the World War I when the majority of the fiction belonged to war fiction, it depicts the events, which have its roots in psychology. The paper presents the novel's psychoanalytic insights in its experimental handling, characterized by the use of a complicated time structure and by the creation of vivid images of the post-war period as a means of reflecting inner worlds of mood and feeling.

Keywords: Psychology, Psychoanalysis, modernism, Jazz culture, religion, Oedipus Complex, dreams, disillusionment.

Tender is the Night is F. Scott Fitzgerald's fourth novel with the depiction of events, having its roots in psychology, was obviously one of the most exceptional fictions of the 1930s offering a conspicuous criterion of American fiction since the World War I. For Pelzer, a prominent critic, *Tender is the Night* is the story

“Of a man of promise destroyed by both his own goodness and seductions of expatriate life on the French Riviera in the gaudy spree following World War I”¹

Having considered an innovative, modernist framework and adopted a third person limited omniscient point of view, Fitzgerald shows the process of collapse until Diver, the central character, becomes empty of everything in his life. His marriage and his friendships are all destroyed to the extent that all his social and emotional cords are broken. With the aim of bringing out a new way of viewing *Tender is the Night*, this chapter explores the psychological motives in Dick Diver's extreme downfall, dealing with both professional career and personal life using the psychoanalytical perspective.

Psychoanalysis is a discipline devoted to the study of psychic life which aims at curing diseases of the soul. Psychoanalysis is not merely a branch of psychology. It is helpful to understand philosophy, culture, religion and first and foremost - literature. Sigmund Freud and Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald were approximately contemporary. Freud's influence can explicitly be seen in Fitzgerald's literary work. In many ways Fitzgerald expressed in his literary works the frustration of the young generation with the American dream along with some disillusionment. According to Sigmund Freud, the unconscious mind consists of the processes in the mind that occurs automatically and is not available to introspection, and include thought processes, memory, dreams, ambition and motivation. Psychoanalytic criticism presents an explanatory outlook of literature by applying some techniques of psychoanalysis to interpret thought processes, memory, dreams, ambition and

motivation. Sigmund Freud applied the theory in order to treat patients of hysteria and neurosis during the late nineteenth century. Throughout the ages, writers have strived to explore the complexities of the human mind through literature. Many dramas and plays have traced the development of psychological behaviour with clinical accuracy. Psychoanalysis assists psychologists in understanding human experiences. Psychoanalytic criticism often aids in providing clues to baffling characters, situations, symbols and actions. There are numerous literary marvels which have been ingeniously interpreted with the tools of psychoanalytic theory. Freud stressed the importance of infant sexual development in determining the adult personality and named one stage of this the Oedipus Complex, when the young child is attracted to the parent of the opposite sex and wants to displace the other parent, the aggressive impulses resulting from this being resolved by identification with the parent of the same sex. He also stressed the importance of the unconscious mind and its role in repressing or suppressing whatever is unpleasant to the individual as a form of defence. One of Freud's most important psychoanalytic techniques was the use of free association during treatment. Patients were encouraged to relax on a couch and to say whatever came into their minds. Another technique was the interpretation of dreams, since Freud saw in these a rich source of emotionally significant ideas. The present novel is analysed with respect to above mentioned concepts.

The critical receptions focus on technical, psychological and historical working-outs of the novel. Till date, many reviews, essays and papers have been written on Fitzgerald and his work and so many critics and scholars have tried their hands most specifically on *Tender is the Night* to reflect its wonder. Peter Quennell described *Tender is the Night* as a rather exasperating type of chic. Fussell talks of its hard boiled humour and regarding Fitzgerald's progressive style calls it as gigantic a landmark as *the Great Gatsby*. D. W. Harding says

“Many of the features that go to making *The Great Gatsby* as fine as it is are also present in this latest novel of Scott Fitzgerald’s. There is still his power of seeming to lose himself in incident and letting the theme emerge by itself, there is his sensitiveness (occasionally touching sentimentality) and his awareness of the brutalities in civilized people’s behavior, and there is simultaneously his keen appreciation, not entirely ironic, of the superficialities of the same people’s lives.”²

Kennedy pronounces his contempt for the playful kind of reading of Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* which would equate historical fact with fictional recreation. Stern calls *Tender is the Night* not a great American historical novel, but rather a great American novel about history, a chronicle of post-war loss of the kinds of identities associated with stable societies, social altruism, and personal responsibility. The story of Dick Diver is a microcosm of that history. Kazin emphasizes the theme of fathers. He writes

“The bad European fathers are unmistakably identified with the American Warrens and the good ones enrich their land and future with a legacy of magnificent knowledge and civilization”.³

Callahan suggests a possibility of an analogy between Dick’s significance as a man in his life story and on a wider scale as

“a paradigm of the larger content of the international theme of history”.⁴

Weller Embler in the essay “F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Future” writes that in *Tender Is the Night*, schizophrenia is the theme, and Fitzgerald deals with it brilliantly. There is a flaw in the character of Dick Diver which drives him on inevitably toward

spiritual collapse. Thus, Fitzgerald builds up on dreams and illusions in the life of Dick Diver to create an excellent work.

Published in 1934 and written over a nine-year period and in different versions, *Tender Is the Night* was possibly Fitzgerald's own favourite among his works, and a book he considered a confession of faith. The corrupting influence of wealth and the underground sin of incest are at the dark heart of this influential novel. Set on the French Riviera in the 1920s, it records the gradual but inescapable and steady deterioration of Dick Diver. He is a fascinating psychiatrist by profession and his marriage to a patient, the beautiful and wealthy Nicole Warren compels him to become a man of slowly being seized by psychological illness. The relentless need to defend his wife's sanity takes its toll on Dr Diver as he carries out his dual role of husband and counsellor, virtually forsaking his true vocation and becoming a victim himself. Being attentive to the fact that his sophisticated and comfortable lifestyle is due to his wife's income, he is uncomfortably conscious that his role remains as his wife's keeper rather than doctor as her family has, in one sense, purchased him.

With the course of the novel, Nicole gradually recovers from her mental illness and grows sturdy and independent. Reversely Diver submits to alcoholism, the enticement of a young actress and a growing disorder. The final third of the book traces in graceful, almost imperceptible cadences, Dick's tragic descent from his wife's affections and the splendours of his former life. By the conclusion of this slow fade, he seems to have disappeared altogether, his existence dwindling to little more than hearsay. Not as sophisticated as *The Great Gatsby* but this is perhaps the better book better described as a psychological novel rather than a war novel as in the case of *This Side of Paradise* or a novel of modernism as in the case of *The Great Gatsby*.

The first thing to be noted about the novel is the autobiographical character of the novel. The novel reveals the author's own mental status and lives of his and of those surrounded by him. In the creation of Dick and Nicole Diver, Fitzgerald used aspects of his own life: his friends, especially Gerald and Sara Murphy; Zelda's affair with a French naval officer; her breakdowns; his own youthful exultations and expectations; his own high promise; his own great social charm; his own weariness and disillusion following his spent early success and his own destructive alcoholism. Mary Jo Tate and Matthew Joseph Brucoli view

"Fitzgerald's depiction of Dick's decline illuminates his own sense of a loss of purpose after the success of *GG*, as later chronicled in his 1936 "Crack-Up" essay. The two men share an emotional bankruptcy marked by drinking, a dislike of people, an increasing bigotry, and difficulty in completing the books they are writing. The novel explores Fitzgerald's wasted genius with a mixture of pity and contempt as he judges himself and Dick."⁵

The fictional character of the 'spoiled priest', Diver the doctor was, with no doubt, an autobiographical picture of the spoiled priest, Fitzgerald himself as some contemporary reviews insisted on identifying Diver as Fitzgerald. Written at a time when his own wife Zelda had been committed to a Swiss sanatorium, suffering from schizophrenia and his drinking was madly out of limit.

For Alan Margolies, by subsiding chronological time and putting events side-by-side, the psychoanalytic narrative interrupts the plot of the psyche. He introduces an interesting a psychoanalytic reading of the novel:

"A Freudian cure depends on introducing difference to the cycle of repetition, thereby starting time--and thus the story--moving again. The analyst assigns a beginning and an end to the repetition, thus bracketing it within a temporal

framework that allows the patient to understand the sign/symptom and eliminate it. In a moment of narrative revelation, he explains the genesis of the symptom; and in so doing, he puts an end to it. He masters the universe of signs and forces them into a plot--or rather, forces them to become one element in a plot, one episode in a life story.”⁶

According to the narrator, the young American Dr. Diver is a vibrant, sophisticated traveling man at ‘a fine age’. Furthermore, the novel says of all the men who have recently taken their degrees in neuro-pathology in Zurich, Diver has been regarded as the most brilliant. He settles down at Dohmer’s clinic where he desires to be an efficient psychologist. Diver’s desire shows his ambitious plans in his professional career. Furthermore, Diver publishes his own book on psychiatry, *A Psychology for Psychiatrists*. His ambitions and even his plans illustrate the values of his profession, aimed at finding ways to cure mental illness, the duty and role of a psychiatrist in the modern world. As a brilliant psychiatrist, Diver consciously knows his position and the values associated with his career, but ironically, he is ultimately rejected by the people he loves. He proves to be a failure in his profession as psychiatrist and himself to be patient of the same as he cannot recognize his emotional desires and he is always in want of love. It is an unquestionable fact that Diver’s desire can be seen as doubtful and careless in choosing both professional career and his love. He expected extreme love from Nicole for whom he sacrificed his profession but he is denied and turns to Rosemary, a beautiful actress for the same. Diver becomes attached to two love-objects, Nicole Warren and Rosemary. Diver believes that he can play various roles in his romance with, as a father, a husband and a psychiatrist, as and a father and a lover in his affair with Rosemary. However, he loses control over his relationships with both of them, particularly with Nicole. Diver acknowledges that he chose to become a psychiatrist because a girl at St. Hilda’s in Oxford regularly attended the same lectures and made a big decision to a psychiatrist on the basis of the irrelevant desire. The fact requires attention that Diver’s professional aims and erotic aspiration are connected to uncertain and unsteady desires which contribute to making Diver’s character psychologically weak and inconsistent.

Diver’s mental disturbance is a good instance of mental collapse in the special circumstance of a psychiatrist in Western society. Diver’s frustration is expressed in various aspects in the novel and the theories of Freud can be used to a remarkable degree in analysing the novel. In accordance with Freud’s ideas on psychology, Diver feels dissatisfaction with his life while he shows a conflict between libidinal wishes and the part of his personality called his ego, which is the expression of his instinct of self-preservation and which also includes his ideals of his personality. Diver lives in a luxurious place with a beautiful and rich wife and two children. So, as would be expected, these conditions make Dick happy, but unbelievably and sarcastically, he also suffers from it and shows his feelings are in fact contradictory and complicated. Dick Diver’s contradiction comes from what might be simply called the frustrations of life in that he cannot find any enjoyment. In case of Dick particularly, his seeming success and fall seem to be very adjacent and it is not always easy for him to realize the gap between them. He seems to be successful in life and in particular in his professional career but he is collapsing unconsciously at emotional level. Paradoxically, Dick, a doctor cannot recognize his future downfall but it is done by Nicole, a patient. The doctor-patient’s role seems to be getting reversed. Dick very quickly is enclosed in disillusionment, when he transfers his emotion to a girl, Rosemary, who loves and idealizes Dick in every way. Rosemary is a symbol of the modern girl in modern American culture. Rosemary is instructed to consider herself an equal to a man. As a beautiful and famous actress, Rosemary also idealizes her

romance as a reflection of the fantasy world she creates in films. Rosemary wants Dick to be her lover in both films and life.

Dick faces invites troubles as he simultaneously continues in both his marriage and his affair. He once tells Rosemary that his relations with Nicole has become complicated. Just as Dick's second object of love is Rosemary, Nicole's second object of love is Dick, her father being her first object. Here is found Freud's concept of 'Oedipus Complex' whereby a child is attracted to parent of opposite sex. She has become a mental patient as the result of the effects of an incestuous relationship with her father. Before she falls in love with Dick she has belonged to her father, 'another man' to use Freud's words. Freud suggests that the husband is almost always so to speak only the substitute, never the right man; it is another man – in typical cases the father – who has first claim to a woman's love, the husband at most takes second place. This leads to the consequence that Dick cannot find his true identity and is trapped in Nicole's world because Nicole is in the condition from which she cannot recover again. In addition, Dick's sexual desire towards Rosemary Hoyt has grown, leading to Nicole's growing dissatisfaction with her marriage. It is an established fact that both Dick and Nicole are victims of psychic disorder. Moreover, that Rosemary idealizes Dick is a psychological aspect of the novel. Ironically, Rosemary, likewise, Dick and Nicole, has also a second love object in the form of Hillis. Thus, all the three principal characters of the novel have feel dissatisfied with their first object and are in want of second. This mental condition reveals their imbalanced psychological equilibrium which seems to be beyond their control to be maintained.

According to Freud's theory, a girl feels security with the man to whom she loses her virginity. The man creates an emotional bondage which has a lasting impression in the girl's life. Viewing in the similar way, when Dick is told about Rosemary's affair with Hillis,

“Dick felt a change taking place within him. Only the image of a third person, even a vanished one, entering into his relation with Rosemary was needed to throw him off his balance and send through him waves of pain, misery, desire, desperation.”⁷

Obviously, Dick is not Rosemary's first man so he feels insecurity in this relationship. Dick can never possess Rosemary through sexual intercourse and so his feelings are full of pain, misery, desire, desperation. Dick is attracted to her only by sexual obsessions rather than sharing what he expects in his life that is true love. Near the end of the novel, after returning from his father's funeral in America, Dick sees Rosemary in Rome. He realizes that Rome was the end of his dream of her. Rome is seen a romantic and idealist place for a romance, but paradoxically Rome sees the failure and fall of the promising psychiatrist as he wants to hide himself from reality. In addition to the break-up with Rosemary, Dick gets drunk, fights with a taxi driver and then is beaten by Rome police. Every character feels insecurity due to psychological reason.

At age 30, Dick says that he plans “to be a good psychologist - maybe to be the greatest one that ever lived”⁸. He possesses a sense of uniqueness and superiority. This sense is “good material for those who do much of the world's rarest work”⁹. Dick's ambitions go beyond psychology:

“He wanted to be good, he wanted to be kind, he wanted to be brave and wise, but it was all pretty difficult. He wanted to be loved, too, if he could fit it in”¹⁰.

But Dick Diver is a big failure in his profession of which he had big aspirations and idealized his life. It is on this idealisation of his profession that he marries Nicole. As

he starts his career, Dick depicts his ambitious plans to become a famous psychiatrist. He wants to make his American Dream come true so he idealizes and re-creates his world, his women and his life. Dick wants to fulfil his wish to become a successful psychiatrist, in particular. To live a life of dependence on his wife's money seems to be degrading and undermine his commitment to the work of a doctor. Dick's dream is to be both a good psychiatrist and a husband. He loves Nicole but he also uses Nicole's money to satisfy his wishes. Dick did not marry Nicole for her money but it does overpower him and demoralize his commitment to his work. He does not sell out, but he discovers that he has been bought out. After eight or nine years of marriage and Nicole's breakdown at the fair, he takes a leave of absence for his soul's sake. The problem is that Dick's wishes do not turn into reality and instead he sinks deeper and deeper into his own fantasies without attempting to fulfil his wishes. He knows that he cannot be independent in his own life. Dick's failure in both love and profession make him totally lose his identity. Fitzgerald says that Dick had lost himself – he could not tell the hour when, or the day or the week, the month or the year. There is no doubt about Dick's collapse and losses and his life eventually becomes so dark that he becomes incapable of finding his true personality. Throughout the novel his professional ambitions and his need to be loved are in conflict.

Besides Diver, Nicole and Rosemary, there is a group of people in the Swiss mental clinics. With rich persons' clinics, as called by Franz, Fitzgerald creates disturbing images of human derelicts. When Dick Diver recounts to Franz his meeting with the young patient Nicole Warren in the grounds of the clinic, he calls her 'a beautiful shell'. The inmates of the clinic which Dick and Franz run in partnership from 1926 to 1929 are associated very deliberately with moral corruption or recklessness. The whole mood of emotions in the novel moves from innocence, tenderness, victimization and helplessness in the early section to egotism and even viciousness in the later one and the mental cases mirror this shift. While in the first clinic they are represented as victims, similar to the victims of war, in the second clinic they are decadent and degenerate, the products of a grossly materialist society at the end of the 1920s.

The most interesting of his patients in the second clinic, as far as Dick is concerned, is the American woman painter whose body has become a living agonizing sore and her existence a sleepless torture. She terms herself 'a ghostly echo from a broken wall'.¹¹ Dick can offer her no help other than kindness, yet he feels an identification with her which is given significance at the end of the novel when he too seems to fade like a ghostly echo from a broken wall. Another of Dick's last patients, whom he goes to Lausanne to interview, is a young Chilean homosexual who is regarded by his father as corrupt. Another guest in the Lausanne hotel is the sick and dying Devereux Warren, Nicole's self-indulgent father, who, even though he is apparently near to death, is another travelling American, always on the move. Dick's final patient in the clinic is a young alcoholic, but by this time Dick's own drinking is evident to his patients. The novelist writes about the habit:

"He drank claret with each meal, took a night-cap, generally in the form of hot rum, and sometimes he tiddled with gin in the afternoons - gin was the most difficult to detect on the breath. He was averaging a half-pint of alcohol a day, too much for his system to burn up".¹²

Fitzgerald's notes for the novel describe it as "a novel of our time showing the break-up of a fine personality. Unlike *The Beautiful and Damned* the break-up will be

caused not by flabbiness but really tragic forces such as the inner conflicts of the idealist and the compromises forced upon him by circumstances.”¹³

Two other aspects of novel have also psychological dimension. They are the First World War and the Jazz music. The Great War of 1914-18 involved the major powers of Europe in four years of shocking battle leading to innumerable changes. It was the first American engagement in Europe in the role of a great power. In 1917 five American ships were sunk. During the war, three-quarter million American troops were in France playing a decisive role in the result. Most of the fighting took place on French and Belgian soil. To exactly narrate the war psychology, the novel is set in France. In the novel the presence of many of the Americans travelling in France is associated deliberately with the First World War. Dick himself was originally sent to Europe by his government, although he was too valuable to be posted to the actual front. In the novel, those who linger or have the money to travel in France appear to be lost souls, without a centre of moral identity. Fitzgerald was one of the many American novelists to respond to the implications of American involvement in a destructive conflict of world proportions whose new technology of gas warfare, tanks and aeroplanes seemed to sweep away many of the older social and moral certainties of life.

The novel makes the First World War of the historical catalyst in the background of the characters' lives which leaves them without values they can believe in. There is a persistent repetition of violence in the novel. Nicole's violence in *Tender is the Night* grows out of her repressed sexual aggression. Fitzgerald relates the war experiences with psychological disturbances.

Secondly the Jazz music is equally important in presenting psychological conditions of the characters. Rosemary in the novel is the symbol of Jazz culture and represents the psychology of the people associated with the popular culture. Fitzgerald creates a strong sense of the texture of life in the 1920s by making her, an outsider figure, first as a starlet and then a full-fledged star, one of the images of wish-fulfilment on the screen. The recurrent use of popular music in the novel contributes both a sense of the decade and also serves to heighten the emotional content of scenes. When Dick, obsessed by his passion for Rosemary in the Paris scenes of Book I, phones her just for the sake of hearing her voice, he still cannot eliminate from his mind Collis Clay's gossip about Rosemary engaging in some heavy love-making with a student the previous year. He hears in the background mild sound of music waivered around her. The popular song playing during the conversation is used to effect an ironic contrast between the feelings of Dick and Rosemary. At one end of the phone he desires her, but at the other she immediately resumes her childish letter to her mother about her latest love. 'Me for you and you for me' has no place in their lives.

Popular music pervades *Tender is the Night*, whether from music recorders radios or dance bands. Dick at one point sits down to the piano to play the tune running through his head, 'Tea for Two', but daren't in case he should upset Nicole by reminding her of Rosemary. The songs are used in the novel as something essentially American, a feature of American life and American entertainment which has been imported into France. Fitzgerald vividly presents the psychology of people of various types.

Ronald Berman in his 'American Dreams and Winter Dreams: Fitzgerald and Freudian Psychology in the 1920s' has made several textual investigations to prove that Freudian language and ideas had a great influence on Fitzgerald's early works and specifically on his fourth novel, *Tender is the Night*. Berman is of the view that

“Fitzgerald was from the beginning of his career interested in psychological phenomena and their explanation.”¹⁴

Likewise, James L. W. writes that Fitzgerald had a good layman’s knowledge of the current state of psychiatric treatment, both in Europe and in the United States. Thus, it can be supposed that Fitzgerald implicitly adopts Freudian theories at a very early stage of his writing career and *Tender is the Night* provides the best example of his utilizing Freudian theory in an apt and thorough way.

Conclusion

In short, set among a group of expatriate Americans enjoying all the privileges and luxuries of their wealth in Europe during the 1920s, *Tender is the Night* incorporates many of the features of the period. It also makes them an integral part of its narrative process of the novel. Though a novel of the 1920s, it is not primarily a war novel but of the psychoanalytic insights in its experimental handling, characterized by the use of a complicated time structure and by the creation of vivid images of the post-war period as a means of reflecting inner worlds of mood and feeling. In a letter written in 1932, Fitzgerald cited Jung, a founding figure of the modern study of the unconscious mind, as the contemporary who best understood the twentieth-century world 'into which willy-nilly one's children will grow up'. For Fitzgerald recognized the alienation of the individual from contemporary society. The novel represents his artistic attempt to find a contemporary style which could express the modern psychology. *Tender Is the Night* is regarded as a classic psychological novel and what is considered by many to be Fitzgerald's second-best work, after *The Great Gatsby*.

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