

*The Talking Cure*

**TENDER IS  
THE NIGHT:  
FITZGERALD'S A PSYCHOLOGY  
FOR PSYCHIATRISTS**

**Jeffrey Berman Ph.D.**

# **Tender Is the Night:**

**Fitzgerald's A Psychology for Psychiatrists**

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# *Tender Is the Night: Fitzgerald's A Psychology for Psychiatrists*

## *Method of Dealing with Sickness Material*

- 1. Read books and decide the general type of case*
- 2. Prepare a clinical report covering the years 1916-1920*
- 3. Now examine the different classes of material selecting not too many things for copying*

*From the sort of letter under E*

*From the sort of letter under F*

*(in this case using no factual stuff)*

*From the other headings for atmosphere, accuracy and material being careful not to reveal basic ignorance of psychiatric and medical training yet not being glib. Only suggest from the most remote facts. **Not** like doctor's stories.*

*Must avoid Faulkner attitude and not end with a novelized Kraft-Ebing—better Ophelia and her flowers.*

F. Scott Fitzgerald, notes to *Tender Is the Night*.<sup>1</sup>

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S *Tender Is the Night* (1934) remains one of the most profoundly moving psychiatric case studies in American literature and, like Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," was born from the novelist's anguished experience with mental illness. Whereas Gilman was

dramatizing her own breakdown and treatment with the Weir Mitchell rest cure, however, Fitzgerald was writing about his wife's psychiatric history and the extent to which he felt himself doomed through marriage. Zelda's mental illness was not only the "catalytic agent" in Fitzgerald's approach to *Tender Is the Night*, as Matthew J. Bruccoli has observed about the numerous revisions of the manuscript, but her tragedy "provided the emotional focus of the novel."<sup>2</sup> The Fitzgerald story was a double tragedy involving Zelda's incurable schizophrenia and Scott's worsening health and premature death at the age of 44. Their celebrated marriage in 1920 had collapsed just one decade later when Zelda suffered her first psychotic breakdown and her husband's alcoholism was destroying his work. Their final years involved a dark solitary journey which starkly contrasted the hope and excitement of their early marital life. Like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the Fitzgeralds turned to literature in an effort to transmute suffering into enduring art; but unlike the author of "The Yellow Wallpaper," they could not achieve lasting therapeutic relief from their private horrors. Before exploring the vision of psychiatry in *Tender Is the Night*, we may review the major medical events Fitzgerald relied upon for the "sickness" material in his novel.

Their lives have been eloquently documented for us by their biographers. The three major books on Scott Fitzgerald are by Arthur Mizener, Andrew Turnbull, and most recently Matthew J. Bruccoli, and the life history of Zelda Fitzgerald by Nancy Milford.<sup>3</sup> The publication of Scott

Fitzgerald's voluminous correspondence—more than 3000 letters have been located, perhaps half the number he actually wrote—has given us a more complete documentation of his life than that of any other twentieth-century American writer.<sup>4</sup>

We have a great deal of information about the factual details surrounding Zelda's breakdowns and psychiatric institutionalizations, although we know little about the inner causes of her madness. From the time of her first breakdown in 1930 to her death in 1948 in a fire which killed her and eight other female patients in Highland Hospital in Asheville, North Carolina, Zelda was in and out of psychiatric institutions. In all there were more than half a dozen, including Prangins Clinic on Lake Geneva in Switzerland, where she was treated by Dr. Oscar Forel, son of the world-renowned Swiss psychiatrist Auguste Forel. There was also the Phipps Clinic of Johns Hopkins University Hospital in Baltimore, where she was treated by the eminent American psychiatrist Dr. Adolf Meyer and others.<sup>5</sup> In a 1930 letter to Zelda's parents, Fitzgerald summarizes the diagnosis offered by Dr. Forel and the consulting psychiatrist, Dr. Eugene Bleuler, the world's leading authority on schizophrenia (which he actually named). In Fitzgerald's words, Bleuler "recognized the case (in complete agreement with Forel) as a case of what is known as *skideophranie*, a sort of borderline insanity, that takes the form of a double personality. It presented to him *no feature that was unfamiliar* and no characteristic that puzzled him."<sup>6</sup> Medically, the diagnosis

would now make no sense in that schizophrenia is a psychosis, while "double personality," also called *Grande Hystérie*, is a neurosis. According to Fitzgerald, Bleuler was optimistic about the possibility of Zelda's recovery:

He said in answer to my questions that over a field of many thousands of such cases three out of four were discharged, perhaps one of those three to resume perfect functioning in the world, and the other two to be delicate and slightly eccentric through life—and the fourth to go right downhill into total insanity.<sup>7</sup>

It is difficult to know whether the original diagnosis of Zelda's illness was incorrect or whether Fitzgerald was overly optimistic with Zelda's parents. In a letter to Nancy Milford in 1966, Dr. Forel offered a different account of his early diagnosis of Zelda. "The more I saw Zelda, the more I thought at the time: she is neither a pure neurosis (meaning psychogenic) nor a real psychosis—I considered her a constitutional, emotionally unbalanced psychopath—she may improve, never completely recover."<sup>8</sup> During her worst crises, she was delusional and paranoid. Several times she attempted to kill herself, by self-strangulation, among other means, and on at least one occasion Fitzgerald rescued her from certain death when she tried to throw herself in front of an approaching train. She also suffered from asthma attacks, colitis, and severe eczema. Forel acknowledged that he had not been able to psychoanalyze her for fear of disturbing the precious little stability she had. In a 1932 letter to her husband, Zelda wrote that "Freud is the only living human outside the Baptist Church who continues to take man seriously."<sup>9</sup>

(Surely that was the only time Freud has been compared to that institution.) Nevertheless, there is no evidence to suggest that she received psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy. It was not until two decades later that psychoanalysts were able to modify Freudian ideas to the treatment of psychoses, as Dr. Frieda Fromm-Reichmann successfully demonstrated in her work with Joanne Greenberg and others.

It was during 1932 when Zelda was hospitalized in the Phipps Clinic at Johns Hopkins after suffering a second breakdown that she began writing her autobiographical novel *Save Me the Waltz*.<sup>10</sup> She completed the manuscript in six weeks. A curious and uneven novel with powerful descriptive passages, *Save Me the Waltz* dramatizes a young woman's frantic commitment to become a ballet dancer in an effort to preserve her delicate psychic balance. In retrospect, the sheer intensity of her quixotic commitment to ballet (she began to study when she was too old to achieve real success) was probably a symptom of her later collapse.<sup>11</sup> Although *Save Me the Waltz* does not employ the apparatus of the psychiatric case study of *Tender Is the Night*, it is clearly about Zelda's breakdown and her criticisms of her celebrity husband. She even intended to name the heroine's husband "Amory Blaine" after the autobiographical hero of her husband's novel *This Side of Paradise*. Fitzgerald was incensed when he read the manuscript, which he felt not only attacked him personally but also exploited material he was using for *Tender Is the Night*. After the publication of *Save Me the Waltz*, Fitzgerald was again



distressed by her plan to write a novel dealing with insanity—probably based on the Russian dancer Nijinsky's madness. According to Brucoli, "Since Fitzgerald was treating psychiatric material in his novel, he charged that she was again poaching and insisted that she could not write about this subject until his novel was published."<sup>12</sup>

In *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur*, Brucoli includes a revealing transcript of a bitter conversation in 1933 between the Fitzgeralds in the presence of Zelda's psychiatrist, Dr. Thomas Rennie. The angry discussion centered on Fitzgerald's demand that Zelda give up writing. He accuses her of being a "third-rate writer and a third-rate ballet dancer" who is "broaching at all times on my material just as if a good artist came into a room and found something drawn on the canvas by some mischievous little boy." He also refers to an agreement among her two psychiatrists at Johns Hopkins and himself over the inadvisability for her to write anything about her experience with insanity. His anger toward Zelda's fiction appears to have been motivated more by the jealous writer in him, fearful of his wife's literary success, than by the solicitous husband concerned for his wife's delicate mental health. Zelda's psychiatrist supported him:

*Dr. Rennie:* We know that if you are writing a personal, individual study on a psychiatric topic, you are doing something that we would advise you right along not to do and that is not to write anything personal on psychiatric material.

*Zelda:* Well, Dr. Rennie, didn't we discuss some time ago and didn't I say to you that I was miserable because I could not write short things? . . . And didn't we decide that it would perhaps be better to go on and write long things?

*Dr. Rennie:* But didn't I also say very emphatically and haven't I said all along that for you to dabble with psychiatric material is playing with fire and you ought not to do it, and didn't you promise me really once that you would put the psychiatric novel away for five years and would not Touch it in that period? (*Some Sort of Epic Grandeur*, p. 350).

The circumstances were different, but it is hard not to recall the similar psychiatric advice Dr. Mitchell had given to Charlotte Perkins Gilman nearly four decades earlier: . . . never Touch pen, brush or pencil as long as you live." Zelda had to endure some of the other restrictions against which Gilman protested vigorously, including a strict regimen of rest and isolation and a husband who was often insensitive to her situation. And yet it would be unfair to place all the blame on Fitzgerald. The Fitzgerald correspondence affirms their love and concern for each other, and no one can study their lives without feeling deep sympathy for them. Their bad treatment of each other was followed by sincere penitence, grief, and renewed determination to make their marriage work. In 1932 Fitzgerald withdrew his objections to the publication of *Save Me the Waltz*, and he even wrote supportive letters on her behalf to his publisher, Max Perkins. Moreover, he later admitted that artistic creation had a therapeutic effect on Zelda by helping her to deal with her illness. He conceded to a psychiatrist in 1933 that writing the novel had improved her health. "She grew better in the three months at Hopkins where

it was allowed and she grew apathetic in the two months at Craig House [a sanitarium in Beacon, New York] where she was continually dissuaded."<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, Zelda published no other novels.

Despite Fitzgerald's enormous difficulty in writing *Tender Is the Night*, he never seriously doubted the propriety of using Zelda's psychiatric experiences in his own novel. This was a writer's privilege, he felt, even if it intruded upon the private life of his family—as it certainly did. Indeed, he incorporated into his novel passages from letters that Zelda had actually written to him from the Swiss sanitarium in 1930.<sup>14</sup> In researching the material for *Tender Is the Night*, Fitzgerald rejected the idea of seeking psychiatric help for himself, although it had been suggested to him. According to Bruccoli, Zelda's psychiatrist, Dr. Meyer, "regarded the Fitzgeralds as a joint case and insisted that Zelda would not be cured unless Fitzgerald gave up drinking. The psychiatrist referred to him as 'a potential but unwilling patient.' But Fitzgerald refused to undergo psychiatric treatment; he thought that it would damage his writer's equipment."<sup>15</sup> Despite the popular fear that therapy destroys artistic creativity, as *Equus* and scores of other literary works claim, it is extremely unlikely that psychiatry would have harmed Fitzgerald's talents or anyone else's—unless of course the advice was to give up writing. Far from availing himself of psychiatric help, Fitzgerald drifted in the opposite direction. In a letter to Zelda written after 1932, he rhetorically asked: "Is there not an idea in your head sometimes that you must live close

to the borders of mental trouble in order to create at your best?"<sup>16</sup> He seems to have been describing himself as well.

The autobiographical elements of *Tender Is the Night* thus posed special difficulties for Fitzgerald. The objectivity needed to write the novel required emotional detachment, lest lucidity give way to self-pity; also, the clinical framework of the story demanded a degree of psychiatric authenticity. Apart from his experience with the psychiatrists who were treating Zelda and the clinical books he read on the subject, Fitzgerald had little help in creating the case study used in the novel. He knew the success of *Tender Is the Night* depended upon his ability to create a convincing psychiatrist and a credible therapeutic cure. Did the novelist succeed in finding a "method of dealing with sickness material?"

Fitzgerald believed so, and Zelda's psychiatrists agreed. To the editor of *Scribner's Magazine* he wrote, before pride gave way to embarrassment: "The psychiatrist at Hopkins says that not only is the medical stuff in [Part] II accurate but it seems the only good thing ever written on psychiatry and the —oh what the hell. Anyhow, that part's O.K."<sup>17</sup> Dr. Forel sent Fitzgerald a congratulatory letter from Switzerland in which he praised the novelist's ability to transpose reality into the world of fiction. Admitting that he was always on the defensive when he saw laymen approach subjects as complicated as psychiatry, Forel expressed relief that Fitzgerald had been

accurate in his observations of Prangins Clinic.<sup>18</sup> This judgment was confirmed in a review presumably written by a practicing psychiatrist in *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* in 1935. "For the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst the book is of special value as a probing story of some of the major dynamic interlockings in marriage. . . ." After praising Dick Diver's awareness of the "unconscious implications of the transference," the reviewer concludes by lauding *Tender Is the Night* as an "achievement which no student of the psychobiological sources of human behavior, and of its particular social correlates extant today, can afford not to read."<sup>19</sup>

In later years, however, critics have challenged Fitzgerald's understanding of psychiatry in *Tender Is the Night*. A brief discussion of the review appeared in 1961, written by a critic with a literary rather than psychiatric point of view. "It is not at all certain—or even likely—" that contemporary students of psychology "will come away from a reading of Fitzgerald's novel with the same degree of enthusiasm voiced by the first of their number in 1935."<sup>20</sup> The most authoritative judgment comes from Frederick J. Hoffman, who argues that the novel "is far more an account of illusions clumsily and pathetically supported than it is a psychiatric appraisal of modern ills." His conclusion emphasizes Fitzgerald's imperfect understanding of psychiatry:

There seems to have been something almost frantic about the writing of *Tender Is the Night*, as though he were taking note of his own excesses in

the course of describing those of his creatures. The novel is therefore a document of his own declining morale, his own suffering, above all his terrible fright over the spectacle of his descent. Psychiatry was a part of his experience at the time; it became a part of his explanation of the world of the 1920s as he came then to see it. In so doing, he used his knowledge of psychiatry freely, as a layman would who had somehow to know enough about its functioning to comprehend what was happening to him and to the world in which he had always lived.<sup>21</sup>

With the exception of Hoffman, no literary critic has discussed one of the most significant psychological questions in *Tender Is the Night*: Fitzgerald's use of the transference love relationship between Dr. Dick Diver and Nicole Warren. Nor does Hoffman devote more than one sentence to its importance. Of the few literary critics who use the term "transference," none defines the word in its precise psychoanalytic context.<sup>22</sup> Our discussion of *Tender Is the Night* must therefore raise the following questions. How knowledgeable is Fitzgerald of the theoretical and clinical intricacies of transference love? Why does his psychiatrist hero catastrophically disregard medical ethics to become romantically involved with his schizophrenic patient? And why—contrary to autobiography—does Fitzgerald allow Nicole to recover, completely and permanently, from her severe mental illness while the novelist betrays a rigidly deterministic attitude toward Dick Diver's downfall?

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Why is Dick, to begin with, a psychiatrist? He is not a psychiatrist in the earlier versions of the story. Initially, the hero was a young Hollywood technician with the unlikely name Francis Melarkey; in a later version he became a famous motion-picture director called Lewellen Kelly.<sup>23</sup> Autobiographical reasons doubtlessly influenced Fitzgerald's decision to change the profession of his hero, but cultural reasons also came into play. In the four decades separating *Tender Is the Night* from "The Yellow Wallpaper" psychiatry had achieved an enormous national and international popularity, and, like the other writers in our study, Fitzgerald fully exploits the mythic possibilities. As with so many others of his generation, Fitzgerald shared in the myth of the psychiatrist as a modern magician, a miracle worker dwelling in the psychic landscape of life. It would be natural for the novelist to tap the imaginative possibilities of a psychiatrist hero. In addition to Dick Diver's impeccable credentials—a graduate of Yale College, Johns Hopkins Medical School, and an Oxford Rhodes Scholar—he is invested with the omniscience and omnipotence of a Godlike healer.

What are Dick's motives for becoming a psychiatrist? Fitzgerald offers a few intriguing clues here. In the beginning of Part II, he develops Dick's apparent good health and invulnerability, but the language becomes increasingly discordant, suggesting the hidden weaknesses and tensions that may have shaped his decision to become a psychiatrist. "Dick got up to Zurich on less Achilles' heels than would be required to equip a centipede, but with

plenty—the illusions of eternal strength and health, and of the essential goodness of people; illusions of a nation, the lies of generations of frontier mothers who had to croon falsely, that there were no wolves outside the cabin door" (p. 117). The shrill tone and syntactical awkwardness foreshadow the instability of Dick's life: his illusion of health is exposed as a cruel delusion. His journey from the romantic French Riviera, in the beginning of the novel, to the obscure New York town, in the end, reflects the loss of strength and hope. But what exactly is the mystery of his fatal Achilles heel, and why does his idealism seem perilously close to cynicism? There is an instability about his identity that always threatens to force him out of character, both professionally and personally. Dick enigmatically hints at a counterphobic motive behind the decision to become a psychiatrist. "The weakness of this profession is its attraction for the man a little crippled and broken. Within the walls of the profession he compensates by tending toward the clinical, the 'practical'—he has won his battle without a struggle" (pp. 137-138).

Does this puzzling explanation imply that Dick Diver has become a psychiatrist to exorcise his own psychic wolves and demons? The evidence points in this direction. After observing that "a man is vulnerable only in his pride, but delicate as Humpty-Dumpty once that is meddled with," Fitzgerald adds: "Doctor Diver's profession of sorting the broken shells of another sort of egg had given him a dread of breakage" (p. 177). But is Dick's vulnerability



the cause or effect of his work as a psychiatrist? The answer is essential if we are to determine Fitzgerald's vision of psychiatry in *Tender Is the Night* and the extent to which he interprets Dick as a victim of his profession. Fitzgerald's comment to Edmund Wilson supports the view that Dick has been victimized by his work. "I thought that, since his choice of a profession had accidentally wrecked him, he might plausibly have walked out on the profession itself."<sup>24</sup> By contrast, we suspect that Dick has become a psychiatrist to hold in check the inner forces ultimately leading to his ruin.

There is no ambiguity, however, surrounding Dick's preference for the theoretical over the clinical side of psychiatry. As opposed to the capable but unimaginative resident pathologist Franz Gregorovius, Dick is the brilliant theoretician—though regrettably we never glimpse his theorizings. Fitzgerald regards the clinical side of psychiatry as barely one step above nursing, and even when Franz persuades Dick to open a clinic with him, Franz uses the enticing argument that the experience will be good for his writing. "Consider it, Dick. . . . When one writes on psychiatry, one should have actual clinical contacts. Jung writes, Bleuler writes, Freud writes, Forel writes, Adler writes—also they are in constant contact with mental disorder" (p. 176).

Indeed, the emphasis upon Dick's career as the author of celebrated psychiatric texts suggests that he is less a physician than a writer—a writer of psychological breakdowns, as was Fitzgerald himself. To carry the similarity

further, Fitzgerald uses the names of two of Zelda's psychiatrists (three, if we include Jung, whom Fitzgerald considered calling into the case), thus intimating the novelist's clinical attitude toward his wife's madness. The identification between Fitzgerald and his authorial writer is striking. It is also artistically dangerous in that the identification belies the incentive of increased narrative distance Fitzgerald hoped to achieve by making his protagonist into a physician instead of, like himself, a famous novelist. Indifferent to psychiatry, Dick invests all his energy and time into authorship. First there is *A Psychology for Psychiatrists*, with its ambitious if redundant title. Nicole observes that "the little book is selling everywhere—they want it published in six languages" (p. 159). Fitzgerald elaborates on Dick's writing career:

On his two long tables, in ordered confusion, lay the materials of his book. Volume I, concerned with Classification, had achieved some success in a small subsidized edition. He was negotiating for its reissue. Volume II was to be a great amplification of his first little book, *A Psychology for Psychiatrists*. Like so many men he had found that he had only one or two ideas—that his little collection of pamphlets now in its fiftieth German edition contained the germ of all he would ever think or know (p. 165).

Interestingly, Fitzgerald confuses the highly limited and specialized demand for psychiatric textbooks with the greater commercial appeal of novels. Few if any psychiatric studies have achieved the instant popularity of *A Psychology for Psychiatrists*, including most of Freud's books. Yet, it is biographically revealing that Fitzgerald projects his own fear of artistic

sterility onto his protagonist and then overcompensates by exaggerating the popularity of Dick's books. The fear that a writer may have "only one or two ideas" haunted Fitzgerald's life; Rosemary remarks that "Nobody wants to be thought of forever for just one picture" (p. 24). Apart from Dick there are two other artist figures in *Tender Is the Night*, the ruined musician Abe North and the mediocre novelist Albert McKisco.

Another confirmation of Dick's identity as an artist is that his vocabulary derives not from the profession of psychiatry but from the world of art—cinema, theatre, literature. "You and Rosemary aren't really alike," he tells Mrs. Speers, "The wisdom she got from you is all molded up into her persona, into the mask she faces the world with. She doesn't think; her real depths are Irish and romantic and illogical" (p. 164). Baby Warren's appreciation of his verbal energy reflects his gift for language, narration, pacing. "That's something you do so well, Dick. You can keep a party moving by just a little sentence or a saying here and there. I think that's a wonderful talent" (p. 216). Whenever Dick refers to a book, it invariably involves a novel instead of a psychiatric text or case study. He mentions Lewis Carroll, Jules Verne, Michael Arlen, and the author of *Undine*. And like the novelist, Dick has a gift for setting: Abe North tells Rosemary that Dick "invented" the French Riviera.

Dick's psychiatric expertise, by contrast, is less than convincing. One of

Fitzgerald's problems is die banality of Dick's medical advice to his patients. Whenever the psychiatrist speaks, he sounds more like a moralist than a therapist. "I won't lecture to you," Dick says to Nicole, and then proceeds to do just that. ". . . it's only by meeting the problems of every day, no matter how trifling and boring they seem, that you can make things drop back into place again" (p. 185). Despite his immodest aim to be a "good psychologist—maybe to be the greatest one that ever lived" (p. 132), he remains indifferent to the distinctions in terminology among psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis. Nor does Fitzgerald explain the dynamic basis of Dick's psychiatry except to note his avoidance of hypnosis. Yet, even here, the explanation is curious. Dick avoids hypnosis not because of its failure to bring repressed material to the surface but because of its perceived theatricality.

The question of psychiatric authenticity' also occurs in Dick's understanding of Nicole's mental illness. Fitzgerald's description of Nicole's illness evokes Dr. Forel's diagnosis of Zelda. "She's a schizoid—a permanent eccentric," Dick tells Baby Warren, "You can't change that" (p. 151). Forel had considered Zelda "a constitutional, emotionally unbalanced psychopath—she may improve, never completely recover." So too does Dick's characterization of Nicole as a "schizophrenic" or "split personality" recall Dr. Bleuler's diagnosis of Zelda. Fitzgerald cannot be faulted for the imprecision of Zelda's eminent psychiatrists; yet there is a deep pessimism toward Nicole's intellectual equipment that surprises us in light of her apparent recovery at

the end of the novel. "A 'schizophrene' is well named as a split personality— Nicole was alternately a person to whom nothing need be explained and one to whom nothing *could* be explained. It was necessary to treat her with active and affirmative insistence, keeping the road to reality always open, making the road to escape harder going" (p. 191). The definition of Zelda's mental illness in *Tender Is the Night* implies that self-discovery and psychological insight are of little value in effecting any therapeutic cure. Fitzgerald views the psychiatrist as one who actively intervenes to prevent the patient from lapsing into insanity rather than one who, as Freud argues, adopts a more passive but analytical role as interpreter of the patient's symptoms and resistance to recovery. Despite the case-study approach of the novel, the descriptions of the sanitariums evoke an image of the rest cure rather than the talking cure. Patients and psychiatrists do not talk to each other; Nicole never seems to do anything. Her recovery at the end remains a mystery to us.

Toward Freud, Fitzgerald reveals a contradictory attitude of vague admiration and suspicion. Franz's statement that Dr. Dohmler had given Nicole "a little Freud to read, not too much, and she was very interested" (p. 131) conveys Fitzgerald's limited tolerance for psychoanalytic theory. Dick's decision to attend the "Psychiatric Congress" in Berlin confirms the novel's strong hostility toward psychotherapy. Fitzgerald satirizes, in the following passage, the motives of psychiatrists, condemning what he perceives to be the theatricality, hollowness, greed, and ineffectuality of the profession:

He had no intention of attending so much as a single session of the congress—he could imagine it well enough, new pamphlets by Bleuler and the elder Forel that he could much better digest at home, the paper by the American who cured dementia praecox by pulling out his patient's teeth or cauterizing their tonsils, the half-derisive respect with which this idea would be greeted, for no more reason than that America was such a rich and powerful country (p. 194).

Dick's developing cynicism toward his own profession is primarily moral rather than intellectual; in the same paragraph he mocks the "dozens of commercial alienists with hang-dog faces, who would be present partly to increase their standing, and hence their reach for the big plums of the criminal practice, partly to master novel sophistries that they could weave into their stock in trade, to the infinite confusion of all values." Although Bleuler and Forel are spared from Fitzgerald's most withering criticism, the entire profession is condemned in the most categorical terms. It is as if the author of *A Psychology for Psychiatrists* has become disgusted with the entire field and is ready to denounce his own colleagues in a single jeremiad.

Oddly enough, Fitzgerald does not confront the one psychoanalytic concept that offers the greatest insight into Dick's catastrophic fall: transference love. The word "transference" appears three times in *Tender Is the Night*, each time in a clinical context. Referring to Nicole's growing emotional attachment to Dick, Franz exclaims: "It was the best thing that could have happened to her ... a transference of the most fortuitous kind" (p. 120). Dr. Dohmler later uses the word in a similar context, warning Dick

about the dangers of emotional involvement with his patient. But the tone of Dohmler's remarks suggests that, unlike Franz, he is more qualified in his endorsement of the term. ". . . this so-called 'transference'. . . must be terminated. Miss Nicole does well indeed, but she is in no condition to survive what she might interpret as a tragedy" (p. 139). The word also appears near the end of the novel when Nicole, falling in love with Tommy Barban, tries to detach herself from her husband. Feeling her old love for Dick reawakening, she "struggled with it, fighting him with her small, fine eyes, with the plush arrogance of a top dog, with her nascent transference to another man, with the accumulated resentment of years . . .(p. 301). Additionally, the word appears three times in Fitzgerald's notes to *Tender Is the Night*: the hero " 'transfers' to himself and she falls in love with him, a love he returns"; "Only her transference to him saves her"; and "His hold is broken, the transference is broken. He goes away. He has been used by the rich family and cast aside."

References to transference confirm that Fitzgerald is using the term not in its dynamic psychoanalytic context—the projection of essentially primitive experiences and emotions onto other people—but in the more general sense of an absorption or incorporation of one individual by another in a shifting love relationship. Despite the mechanistic connotations, Fitzgerald's use of transference does coincide with the psychoanalytic definition to the extent that Dick cannot maintain emotional detachment from entangling human alliances. Dick's integrity and wholeness are constantly threatened by the

"egos of certain people, early met and early loved," who undermine his independence:

His love for Nicole and Rosemary, his friendship with Abe North, with Tommy Barban in the broken universe of the war's ending—in such contacts the personalities had seemed to press up so close to him that he became the personality itself—there seemed some necessity of taking all or nothing; it was as if for the remainder of his life he was condemned to carry with him the egos of certain people, early met and early loved, and to be only as complete as they were complete themselves. There was some element of loneliness involved—so easy to be loved—so hard to love (p. 245).

The language intimates a desire to love so intensely as to both engulf and be engulfed. Although the passage implies that the people who are oppressing Dick are figures from the present—Nicole, Rosemary, Abe North—psychoanalytic theory would suggest that these relationships are repetitions of much earlier relationships dating back to Dick's past. The pattern recalls the pre-Oedipal stage of the mother-child relationship when the form of nurturing creates the archetypes of identifications, the basis of future interaction. Dick's insatiable quest for love paradoxically drains him, rendering him broken and incomplete. Emotional involvement proves disastrous because it threatens the distinction between self and other. The loved object always becomes menacing to Dick because, in absorbing others, he finds himself absorbed, depleted, violated. At the center of the male-female relationship in *Tender Is the Night* looms the specter of transference, with its ominous implications of the repetition-compulsion principle. Of all the



characters who endanger Dick, it is Nicole whom Fitzgerald accuses of sapping his hero's strength and creativity. "He could not watch her disintegrations without participating in them" (pp. 190-191). To understand further the meaning of Dick's fear of absorption in *Tender Is the Night* we must explore the psychoanalytic theory of transference.



Freud's most complete definition of transference is given in *An Autobiographical Study*, published nine years before Fitzgerald's novel. Since it is impossible to improve upon Freud's description, we may quote it in full:

In every analytic treatment there arises, without the physician's agency, an intense emotional relationship between the patient and the analyst which is not to be accounted for by the actual situation. It can be of a positive or of a negative character and can vary between the extremes of a passionate, completely sensual love and the unbridled expression of an embittered defiance and hatred. This *transference*—to give it its short name—soon replaces in the patient's mind the desire to be cured, and, so long as it is affectionate and moderate, becomes the agent of the physician's influence and neither more nor less than the mainspring of the joint work of analysis. Later on, when it has become passionate or has been converted into hostility, it becomes the principal tool of the resistance. It may then happen that it will paralyze the patient's powers of associating and endanger the success of the treatment. Yet it would be senseless to try to evade it; for an analysis without transference is an impossibility.<sup>25</sup>

Transference love arises when the patient becomes infatuated with the analyst. The love affair is fraught with dangers, Freud observes, and he

proceeds to elaborate upon them as if he were indeed writing *A Psychology for Psychiatrists*. "This situation has its distressing and comical aspects, as well as its serious ones. It is also determined by so many and such complicated factors, it is so unavoidable and so difficult to clear up, that a discussion of it to meet a vital need of analytic technique has long been overdue. But since we who laugh at other people's failings are not always free from them ourselves, we have not so far been precisely in a hurry to fulfill this task."<sup>26</sup>

How is transference love related to a patient's resistance toward therapeutic cure? Precisely because the motivation behind this love and resistance to a cure is suspect. The motivation includes the patient's need to reassure herself of her irresistibility in the eyes of the analyst, the effort to make the analyst fall in love with her to lessen his authority and power, and the unconscious attempt to exaggerate her readiness for sexual surrender, so that when the love affair ends disastrously, as it inevitably must, the patient's original repressions will be rationalized or vindicated.

How, then, should the analyst confront a patient's love? Each alternative, Freud says, has its difficulties. Rarely do circumstances allow the analyst to marry his patient, even if he desires to, and besides, this would result in the breakdown of the therapeutic relationship—as *Tender Is the Night* illustrates. If the analyst breaks off therapy to defuse the affair, as

Breuer did with Anna O., then this too would signal the collapse of the treatment. For the analyst to carry on an illicit affair with his patient would be unthinkable, both for reasons of morality and professional dignity. "If the patient's advances were returned it would be a great triumph for her, but a complete defeat for the treatment." What then must the analyst do?

He must, argues Freud, resist succumbing to whatever unconscious tendencies toward countertransference may be lurking within him. "He must recognize that the patient's falling in love is induced by the analytic situation and is not to be attributed to the charms of his own person; so that he has no grounds whatever for being proud of such a 'conquest', as it would be called outside analysis." Freud's papers on clinical technique, from which these passages come, are a model of lucidity, modesty, and probity—and in light of his warnings it is doubly ironic that so few fictional analysts have heeded his advice.

Once the analyst is in control of himself, he may direct the development of the patient's transference love:

He must take care not to steer away from the transference-love, or to repulse it or to make it distasteful to the patient; but he must just as resolutely withhold any response to it. He must keep firm hold of the transference-love, but treat it as something unreal, as a situation which has to be gone through in the treatment and traced back to its unconscious origins and which must assist in bringing all that is most deeply hidden in the patient's erotic life into her unconsciousness and therefore under her control. The more plainly the analyst lets it be seen that he is proof against

every temptation, the more readily will he be able to extract from the situation its analytic content. The patient, whose sexual repression is of course not yet removed but merely pushed back into the background, will then feel safe enough to allow all her preconditions for loving, all the phantasies springing from her sexual desires, all the detailed characteristics of her state of being in love, to come to light; and from these she will herself open the way to the infantile roots of her love (*Standard Edition*, Vol. XII, p. 166).

Yet ambiguities continue to surround transference love. How does it differ, for example, from genuine love? Freud's answer is surprising, for he acknowledges the overlapping between the two forms of love. Although resistance is an element in transference love, it does not *create* the love. Rather, the resistance exploits it. There may also be an element of reality behind transference love, although the artificiality of the analytic setting invariably colors the patient's feelings toward the therapist. Moreover, while observing that infantile determinants characterize transference love, Freud concedes that these elements also exist within genuine love. "It is true that the [transference] love consists of new editions of old traits and that it repeats infantile reactions. But this is the essential character of every state of being in love. There is no such state which does not reproduce infantile prototypes." What is different between the two forms of love, Freud points out, is that transference love is provoked by the analytic setting, intensified by clinical resistance to recovery, and less concerned with reality than genuine love. The patient certainly cannot be expected to see this distinction, but the analyst must; otherwise, the gravest consequences will occur.

One final observation must be noted. Freud insists that analytic treatment be conducted in a state of "abstinence," which is not limited to a narrow sexual context. Insofar as it was a frustration that made the patient ill, "It is possible to observe during the treatment that every improvement in his condition reduces the rate at which he recovers and diminishes the instinctual force impelling him towards recovery."<sup>27</sup> Favorable external changes in the patient's life may give the impression of effecting a therapeutic cure while in reality retarding psychological progress. "Cruel though it may sound, we must see to it that the patient's suffering, to a degree that is in some way or other effective, does not come to an end prematurely." The analysis should be carried out, Freud emphasizes, "*as far as is possible, under privation—in a state of abstinence* What example does he cite of external changes endangering the complete recovery of a half-cured patient? Apart from bodily infirmity, an unhappy marriage poses a particularly severe danger. For by gratifying unconscious guilt, the unhappy marriage becomes a form of self-punishment in which the patient's neurosis takes on new symptoms or substitute gratifications.



One of the ironies of *Tender Is the Night* is that, had Dr. Dick Diver fully understood the psychoanalytic dynamics of transference love, he would have

indeed been successful in writing the definitive *A Psychology for Psychiatrists*. And he would have immeasurably aided Nicole Warren's therapeutic recovery, succeeding where greater psychiatrists had failed. Instead, Dick never does solve the meaning of Nicole's illness. His own research into psychology never progresses beyond *Studies on Hysteria*, which offers intriguing parallels to *Tender Is the Night*. Both Dr. Breuer and Dr. Diver find themselves in the presence of hysterical women who project their incestuous fantasies upon father figures. To be sure, Breuer's hasty retreat from Anna O.'s advances is in contrast to Dick's ambivalent surrender to Nicole; yet, both women appear to be acting out imagined or real seduction fantasies. And in both case studies, treatment fails largely because of the psychiatrists' unawareness of the link between transference love and resistance. Dick's blindness to transference love deprives him of the most powerful instrument for Nicole's recovery. Worse, it ensnares him in a marital relationship built upon the similar psychological weaknesses of husband and wife.

Dick's sin is that he is too loving and loved for his own good. Nowhere is Fitzgerald more successful than in portraying the complexity of his hero's dark love, with its lust for power and possessiveness. There is something terrible about Dick's need for adulation, a narcissistic hunger that can never be fulfilled. "Save among a few of the tough-minded and perennially suspicious, he had the power of arousing a fascinated and uncritical love. The reaction came when he realized the waste and extravagance involved. He

sometimes looked back with awe at the carnivals of affection he had given, as a general might gaze upon a massacre he had ordered to satisfy an impersonal blood lust" (p. 27).

Dick's "impersonal blood lust" evokes the blood imagery surrounding Nicole and the "bathroom mystery" in which an unspeakable act is hinted at but never described. Waste, self-indulgence, and futility characterize Dick's carnivals of affection. His desire to "give a really *bad* party" identifies him as the archetypal Fitzgerald hero. The motives behind the party call into question his attitude toward life. "Maybe we'll have more fun this summer but this particular fun is over. I want it to die violently instead of fading out sentimentally—that's why I gave this party" (pp. 37-38). The comment betrays his similar feelings about marriage: the need to end love relationships with a bang, not a whimper; the assumption that relationships with violent endings are less "sentimental" than those which slowly fade or remain loyal and permanent; the hint, later magnified, of Dick's self-destructive tendencies. Fitzgerald returns to the dark side of Dick's character, though the murky syntax and strained psychological interpretation do little to illuminate the problem. "And Lucky Dick can't be one of these clever men; he must be less intact, even faintly destroyed. If life won't do it for him it's not a substitute to get a disease, or a broken heart, or an inferiority complex, though it'd be nice to build out some broken side till it was better than the original structure" (p. 116). Oddly enough, when Fitzgerald does attempt to analyze—or

psychoanalyze—Dick's problem, the narrative distance breaks down and the explanation only deepens the mystery. The novelist seems as bewildered and defenseless here as his character. Nor does Dick's next thought cast further light on his situation. "He mocked at his reasoning, calling it specious and 'American'—his criteria of uncerebral phrase-making was that it was American. He knew, though, that the price of his intactness was incompleteness." Cannot one be both intact and complete?

Whence arises Dick's overwhelming need to love and be loved? The novel offers a few clues. At the core of his unconscious feelings toward psychotherapy lies a rescue fantasy in which he desires to cure his patients through love, not self-awareness. Hence the impossibility of clinical detachment from his female patients, even those who are strangers to him. "Yet in the awful majesty of her pain he went out to her unreservedly, almost sexually. He wanted to gather her up in his arms, as he so often had Nicole, and cherish even her mistakes, so deeply were they part of her" (p. 185). The love from which his identifications spring contains both regressive and compulsive features, violating the necessary space between self and other and compelling Dick's romantic attachments to conspicuously younger women. Dick's natural protectiveness toward women evokes his paternal nature, yet he fails to accept responsibility for awakening sexual desires he cannot possibly fulfill. Paradoxically, there is an infantile quality to his "father complex"; his paternalistic power over women is one of the most dangerous



aspects of his countertransference. For example, he receives a letter from a woman recently released from his clinic which "accused him in no uncertain terms of having seduced her daughter, who had been at her mother's side during the crucial stage of the illness" (p. 187). Dick had "in an idle, almost indulgent way" kissed her, though he goes no further than this despite the girl's desire to deepen the affair.

Indeed, the pattern of Dick's romantic relationships invariably involves a much younger woman. *Tender Is the Night* opens in 1925, with Dick ten years older than his wife—a substantial difference (he is 34)—and 16 years older than Rosemary, with whom he later has an affair. Two additional incidents confirm the age inequality. When he is brought to the Italian courtroom at the end of Part II to face the charge of assaulting one of the carabinieri, the crowd confuses him with a native of Fieschi who has raped and slain a child. Himself out of control, Dick yells: "I want to make a speech. ... I want to explain to these people how I raped a five-year-old girl. Maybe I did —" (p. 235). In the penultimate paragraph of the novel, Fitzgerald hints at Dick's entanglement with a young woman who worked in a grocery store. According to Brucoli, Fitzgerald had specified in the serial version of the novel that the clerk was 18, but he deleted her age in the final form of the story.<sup>28</sup> Dick's history thus seems to be a depressing pattern of recurring affairs with women half his age and younger.

Consequently, Dick has taken a prolonged "leave of abstinence"—to use the "Freudian slip" that Franz makes on two separate occasions. Franz has become increasingly critical of his colleague's decision to marry Nicole, and when Dick announces his plan to take a leave from the clinic—ostensibly to allow his troubled marriage to heal—Franz responds: "You wish a real leave of abstinence?" Without commenting upon the meaning of the slip of tongue, Dick replies: "The word is 'absence' " (p. 194). Franz's remark proves prophetic in that Dick's leave from home sets into motion his renewed and altered relationship with Rosemary. Later, Franz makes the identical verbal slip. "Why not try another leave of abstinence?" to which Dick again mechanically replies: "Absence" (p. 256). Franz's error continues to be prophetic; this time Nicole proves unfaithful.

These Freudian slips, which Fitzgerald deliberately structures into the novel, emphasize Dick's inability to control the transference love relationship arising both in and outside of therapy. They also suggest the incestuous nature of his love for Nicole and the others. Several critics have pointed out the importance of incestuous love in *Tender Is the Night*. In an essay published in 1952, D. S. Savage draws a parallel between Devereux Warren's incestuous relationship with his daughter Nicole and Dick Diver's unconscious recapitulation of that earlier experience. "Since Nicole's condition is the consequence of physical seduction at the hands of her own father, it is impossible to evade the conclusion that Dick is unconsciously

implicated in the very incestuous regression which is at the root of her psychopathic (schizophrenic) condition."<sup>29</sup> Robert Stanton published a similar interpretation in 1958. Exploring the subject of "Daddy's Girl," the film in which Rosemary stars, Stanton defines the incest motifs in *Tender Is the Night*. "The term 'incest-motifs' may seem ill-chosen at first, since most of these passages allude, not to consanguineous lovers, but to a mature man's love for an immature girl."<sup>30</sup> The critic draws three conclusions at the end of his essay. "First, these motifs function literally as one result of Dick's relationship to Nicole; they are symptoms of his psychological disintegration. Second, they both exemplify and symbolize Dick's loss of allegiance to the moral code of his father. Finally, by including such details as *Daddy's Girl* as well as Dick's experience, they symbolize a social situation existing throughout Europe and America during the Twenties."<sup>31</sup>

Other critics have confirmed these conclusions.<sup>32</sup> Biographical evidence also supports Fitzgerald's interest in incestuous love. "There is no help for it," D. S. Savage remarks, "what emerges most patently from Fitzgerald's biography is his character as a mother's boy."<sup>33</sup> Fie also cites Arthur Mizener's observation in *The Far Side of Paradise*: "His mother's treatment was bad for a precocious and imaginative boy, and as Fitzgerald confessed to his daughter after she had grown up, 'I didn't know till 15 that there was anyone in the world except me...'"<sup>34</sup>

Incestuous love was obviously very much on Fitzgerald's mind not only in *Tender Is the Night* but in his story "Babylon Revisited," published in 1931, three years before the novel. Generally acknowledged as his finest short story, "Babylon Revisited" (whose title D. S. Savage suggests is an elided form of "Baby-land Revisited") is about a 35-year-old reformed alcoholic who seeks to regain custody of his 9-year-old daughter Honoria. The erotic dialogue between father and daughter is unmistakably incestuous; they are lovers in word if not deed. Charlie Wales, who has been indirectly responsible for the death of his wife, is a penitent sinner, yet the past returns to haunt him. Aware of the dangers of incestuous love, he is nevertheless devastated by the failure to regain Honoria at the end of the story. There is one passage that strikingly foreshadows the theme of "Daddy's Girl" in *Tender Is the Night*: "The present was the thing—work to do and someone to love. But not to love too much, for he knew the injury that a father can do to a daughter or a mother to a son by attaching them too closely: afterward, out in the world, the child would seek in the marriage partner the same blind tenderness and, failing probably to find it, turn against love and life."<sup>35</sup> It is not known whether Fitzgerald's ten-year-old daughter Scottie perceived this incestuous element in the story, but he did point out to her that she was the basis for the fictional daughter.<sup>36</sup>

There is a darker side to incestuous love. The notes to *Tender Is the Night* demonstrate that Fitzgerald had originally intended the story to deal

with the subject of matricide, with the title *The Boy That Killed His Mother*. He must have felt terribly ambivalent about the subject. He began working on the matricide theme in 1925, discarded it in 1929, returned to it again in 1930, and finally abandoned it. Although he omitted the overt matricide element from *Tender Is the Night*, he did not entirely succeed in disguising the misogyny that underlies the story. In perceiving Nicole and Rosemary as images of "Daddy's Girl," Dick views them and the "Amazonian" Baby Warren as part of a conspiracy to drain his creativity and emasculate him. Dick's submerged hostility toward women may be interpreted, according to the dynamics of ego psychology, as a turning around or denial of incestuous love. Matricide and misogyny come into existence when sexuality and aggression are fused together, usually as a defense against incestuous love. The result is an intolerable ambivalence toward women—which exactly defines Dick's attitude toward the women in his life.

Fitzgerald's critics have been reluctant to acknowledge the presence of misogyny in his fiction, although they do concede that women are dangerous to his male characters. Matthew J. Bruccoli voices a representative opinion here. "Fitzgerald created a procession of female destroyers of men, but his judgment was not misogynistic. His women—even at their most destructive—are warmly attractive."<sup>37</sup> Yet misogyny, of course, can exist alongside of heroine worship. If Dick is only partly aware of the incestuous implications of his acting out, he is blind to his fear and mistrust of women. There are simply

too many passages reflective of Dick's—and Fitzgerald's—anger toward women:

Baby Warren shifted her knees about—she was a compendium of all the discontented women who had loved Byron a hundred years before, yet in spite of the tragic affair with the guards' officer there was something wooden and onanistic about her (pp. 151-152).

Women are necessarily capable of almost anything in their struggle for survival and can scarcely be convicted of such man-made crimes as "cruelty" (p. 163).

It would be hundreds of years before any emergent Amazons would ever grasp the fact that a man is vulnerable only in his pride, but delicate as Humpty-Dumpty once that is meddled with—though some of them paid the fact a cautious lip-service (p. 177).

. . . the American Woman, aroused, stood over him; the clean-sweeping irrational temper that had broken the moral back of a race and made a nursery out of a continent, was too much for him (p. 232).

Fitzgerald can condemn Albert McKisco as a pretentious writer and Tommy Barban as a brutal soldier without condemning all men; but, by contrast, his attack on Baby Warren and to a lesser extent Mary North, Rosemary, and Nicole is generalized to include all women. The distinction is important. Even during the depths of Dick's self-degradation, Fitzgerald reminds us of the husband's anguish for his wife and the tragic consequences of a psychiatrist's love for his patient. Nicole, in contrast, can harden herself to Dick. Unlike him, she begins to "slight that love, so that it seemed to have been tinged with sentimental habit from the first. With the opportunistic

memory of women she scarcely recalled how she had felt when she and Dick had possessed each other . . ." (p. 300).

Compared to Dick, all the women in *Tender Is the Night* remain harder, less vulnerable, armorial. The name he secretly whispers to himself—"Lucky Dick, you big stiff" (p. 116)—gives way to Fitzgerald's fear of unmanly softness as his hero drifts toward a nosedive. Indeed, Dick's nose actually is broken by a policeman, suggesting symbolic castration. Dick's name also has a phallic connotation; as one critic has pointed out about Fitzgerald, "in a fit of adolescent bravado he has consequently christened his hero with a name whose slang meaning amply conveys the author's contempt for softness."<sup>38</sup> And Leslie Fiedler has noted the fluid and shifting sexual distinctions in *Tender Is the Night*, including the inversion of roles. "Indeed, the book is shot through with a thematic playing with the ambiguity' of sex: Dick Diver makes his first entrance in a pair of black lace panties, and homosexuals, male and female, haunt the climaxes of the novel."<sup>39</sup> Fitzgerald implies that between the time Dick met and married Nicole, and his acquaintance with Rosemary, his "spear had been blunted" (p. 201). The embodiment of phallic hardness in the novel is Rosemary's mother, whose last name—"Speers"—betrays the women's capture of an increasingly limp Dick.

Moreover, there is a curious coincidence behind the "Mary" element of three characters: Rosemary, who sees life from a rose-colored point of view;

Mary North, whose successful remarriage after the death of her first husband arouses Fitzgerald's uneasiness; and Maria Wallis, who shoots to death an Englishman. Along with Nicole and Baby Warren, these women serve as a variation on the theme of Mary Magdalene, though without achieving final redemption. Dick becomes what Fitzgerald calls in the notes to *Tender Is the Night* a "spoiled priest," pursuing and pursued by the "legendary *promiscuous* woman."<sup>40</sup>

Fitzgerald's attitude toward Nicole fluctuates between sympathy and criticism. Although obviously a portrait of Fitzgerald's wife, Nicole—unlike Zelda—has been sexually traumatized by her father's advances. In inventing this detail, the novelist had difficulty in deciding whether it was rape or seduction. In the notes to the novel he views the incest with her father as nothing less than a rape: "at fifteen she was raped by her own father under peculiar circumstances—work out." In the novel, however, Nicole consents to sexual intercourse. The change is obviously significant in that now she must assume partial responsibility for the act, along with the consequent blurring of innocence. What Fitzgerald thus imagined initially as a rape now becomes Nicole's acting out of an infantile seduction scene. Yet Fitzgerald could have gone one step further by completely eliminating the objective basis of Nicole's seduction. If she had only imagined seduction, the novelist would have had to deal with her wishes and fears, and the extent to which her imagination had distorted reality into mental illness. This was precisely what Freud had to



confront when he reluctantly gave up his seduction theory—the belief that his neurotic patients were actually seduced by their fathers—in favor of the idea that they only imagined incestuous acts.<sup>41</sup> Psychological reality need not correspond to objective reality, Freud taught us; fantasized seduction can seem as real as if it actually happened. We may question Fitzgerald's implication that the incest directly precipitated Nicole's schizophrenia. Indeed, she hardly appears schizophrenic at all. Unlike the female patients of other fictionalized psychiatric case histories—the heroines of "The Yellow Wallpaper," *The Bell Jar*, *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*—Nicole rarely seems mentally ill to us and never psychotic except for perhaps a few moments. We certainly do not receive an inside account of her madness. The few symptoms she manifests suggest hysteria and obsession compulsion, especially during the "bathroom mystery."

However obscure the bathroom mystery must remain, it appears to have something to do with Nicole's menstruation, seduction, and horror of blood-stained sheets. Her swaying back and forth beside the bathtub may also hint at masturbation. Nicole seems to be obsessed with "blood lust" (Fitzgerald's simile to describe Dick's power to arouse a fascinated and uncritical love): the blood on the sheets of the dead black man, the blood from Dick's broken nose, and the menstrual blood of Rosemary when she and Dick make love for the first time, all seem thematically to coalesce around the bathroom scene. The entire drama has a play-within-a-play quality,

reproducing the symbols and symptoms of Nicole's psychic conflict. Fitzgerald evokes a theme of the rites of passage through the expression "What time is it?" which becomes a major leitmotif in Part I. According to Freud, behind every neurotically inhibited activity lies an instinctual wish; Nicole's seduction fantasy evokes dread and desire. The hysteria during the bathroom scene may reflect the emotions accompanying her incestuous relationship with her father. Nicole's love for Dick has its source in her tangled feelings toward her father; but whereas she allows the father to seduce her, she reverses the situation with her psychiatrist. Despite Nicole's horror of sexuality, she proves to be the aggressor with Dick. It is she who is seducing him. Dick's command—"Control yourself"—becomes ironic in that he too conspires in the incestuous regression. The impossibility of purgation may be suggested in the "dirty bathtub water" scene in Part III, in which the children appear implicated in the evil.

Nicole's desertion of Dick for Tommy Barban raises the question of the motives behind her present affair: Do these motives differ from those behind her attraction toward Dick when she was his patient? That is, is there an element of resistance in her transference love? She enters into her affair with Barban quite calculatingly, unlike the indecision and guilt with which Dick begins his affair with Rosemary. Before Nicole can commit herself irrevocably to the affair, she does a great deal of rationalizing, as Fitzgerald makes clear:

Nicole did not want any vague spiritual romance—she wanted an "affair"; she wanted a change. She realized, thinking with Dick's thoughts, that from a superficial view it was a vulgar business to enter, without emotion, into an indulgence that menaced all of them. On the other hand, she blamed Dick for the immediate situation, and honestly thought that such an experiment might have a therapeutic value (p. 291).

Nicole's reasoning includes the desire both to hurt her husband and to release herself from his power. Because she allies herself with the morally hollow Barban (whose name suggests his barbarian qualities), we lose sympathy for her. Why then does she commit herself to a man she does not love? Barban offers her the possibility of rescue from an increasingly destructive husband. She senses that the new union will complete the therapeutic cure initiated by her preceding rescuer. The affair with Barban thus allows her to end the enforced dependency upon another man and to exact a fitting revenge for his marital infidelity.

Although Fitzgerald recognizes the complex motives underlying Nicole's relationship to Barban, there is little evidence to suggest the novelist's awareness of her similar motives for loving Dick. This is not to reduce Dick's generous character to Barban's, nor to debase her love for Dick, but to suggest that Nicole's psychological needs dictate the nature of her relationships with men. This returns us to the element of resistance behind her transference love for Dick. It is disingenuous for Fitzgerald to tell us that Nicole is thinking with Dick's thoughts in the passage above. Nicole's motives for pursuing

Barban do not seem very different from her initial pursuit of Dr. Dick Diver in the Swiss sanitarium: to effect a change in her life and to exert her sexual attractiveness over a man. To this extent, Nicole has not changed at all—she is thinking not Dick's thoughts but her own. In another sense, however, Nicole is Fitzgerald's own creation, quite apart from her indebtedness to Zelda's biography. Nicole's role as exploiter of men reaches back to Dick's deepest fears and ultimately Fitzgerald's as well.

The structure of Nicole's love relationships to the three men in her life—father, husband, lover—reveals an element of aggression directed toward the previous man, from whom the successful rival promises to free her. Dick offers to rescue her from the mental illness triggered off by her father's incestuous advances. Barban promises to liberate her from her husband's incurable alcoholism. Love thus represents to Nicole an escape from an unhappy situation engendered by the abandonment of an earlier man in her life. She is astonishingly successful as a survivor. What we rarely see in *Tender Is the Night* is the full-blown marital warfare that inevitably accompanies the subtle betrayal of love. The rage and painful recriminations found in the Fitzgerald correspondence are largely absent from the novel. That part of the story may have been too terrible for Fitzgerald to write.

As *Tender Is the Night* draws to a conclusion, we are left wondering about the reasons for Nicole's miraculous recovery and Dick's hopelessness.

The novel is unclear here, but Fitzgerald implies that the patient's health depends somehow on the psychiatrist's dissipation, as if he has mysteriously absorbed her suffering and absolved her from guilt. Yet the "spouse" seems to be guilty of inflicting a lethal injury to the doomed protagonist. Just as the narrator's husband is responsible for the heroine's isolation and madness in "The Yellow Wallpaper," so does the wife seem responsible for the hero's self-destruction in *Tender Is the Night*. Fitzgerald's notes to the novel make clear that the patient's cure results in the psychiatrist's terminal illness, as if madness is contagious. "The Divers, as a marriage are at the end of their resources. Medically Nicole is nearly cured but Dick has given out and is sinking toward alcoholism and discouragement. It seems as if the completion of his ruination will be the fact that cures her—almost mystically."

The explanation for this probably lies in Fitzgerald's biography—his deep guilt over Zelda's illness, the fear she would not recover, and the wish to sacrifice himself for her sake. "I left my capacity for hoping on the little roads that led to Zelda's sanitarium," he wrote in his notebooks.<sup>42</sup> The hopelessness of her situation contributed to the bleakness of his. Why then does Fitzgerald grant Nicole complete and permanent recovery, contrary both to biography and to the pessimistic statements about schizophrenia earlier in the novel? The conclusion seems inevitable: in curing Nicole and condemning Dick, Fitzgerald is punishing himself for complicity in Zelda's illness.<sup>43</sup> Fie may also have been trying to heal Zelda's illness through the magic of fiction. But the

element of wish fulfillment in *Tender Is the Night* may be viewed, psychoanalytically, as a denial of the novelist's unconscious aggression toward the woman perceived as responsible for the hero's collapse. Masochism and sadism, most therapists agree, are the sides of the same coin. There is one passage in the novel that ominously hints at Dick's death wish toward his wife. "Certain thoughts about Nicole, that she should die, sink into mental darkness, love another man, made him physically sick" (p. 217). This is one of the few clues that Dick's self-destructive behavior derives from guilt over his hostile feelings toward Nicole. But this idea is too terrifying for Fitzgerald, and, like his fictional psychiatrist, the novelist retreats from these murky depths. Yet, Dick is literally killing himself over his "ambivalence" toward Nicole—ironically, it was Zelda's psychiatrist, Dr. Bleuler, who first coined the word.<sup>44</sup>

It is not Freud whom Fitzgerald and his fallen hero invoke at the end of *Tender Is the Night* but Christ. Releasing Nicole from the strangulation hold he has momentarily wished to exert, Dick "raised his right hand and with a papal cross he blessed the beach from the high terrace." Fitzgerald thus casts off his doomed hero, though not without conceding him a vestige of dignity and grandeur. Nicole's future with Tommy Barban remains uncertain: She seems destined to reenact a pattern of falling in and out of love in a futile effort to remain "Daddy's Girl." But Fitzgerald's main focus rests on Dick, who gives up psychiatry, we are told, for general medicine. Nor is this surprising. After all,

Dick has never displayed an interest in parent-child relationships, the interpretation of dreams, symptomatology, ego defenses, or transference. The talking cure has never informed his therapy. Fitzgerald mentions the "big stack of papers on his desk that were known to be an important treatise on some medical subject, almost in process of completion." No longer practicing the art of psychiatry nor what had been for him the more valuable art of writing, the author of *A Psychology for Psychiatrists* succumbs in the end to his own shrinking vision, a victim of the love he never quite understands and the once heroic commitment to work that has now taken a permanent leave of abstinence.

### Notes

- [1](#) The Notes to *Tender Is the Night* quoted here and elsewhere may be found in "Appendix B" of Arthur Mizener's biography of Fitzgerald, *The Far Side of Paradise* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Sentry Edition, 1965), pp. 345-352.
- [2](#) Matthew J. Bruccoli, *The Composition of Tender Is the Night* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), p. 82.
- [3](#) In addition to Mizener's biography, see Andrew Turnbull, *Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Scribner's, 1962) and Matthew J. Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981). See also Nancy Milford, *Zelda* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970, Avon, 1971).
- [4](#) For collections of Fitzgerald's correspondence, see Andrew Turnbull, ed., *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Scribner's, 1963); John Kuehl and Jackson R. Bryer, eds., *Dear Scott/Dear Max* (New York: Scribner's, 1971); Matthew J. Bruccoli and Jennifer M. Atkinson, eds., *As Ever, Scott Fitz*—(New York: Lippincott, 1972); Matthew J. Bruccoli and Margaret M. Duggan, eds., *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Random

House, 1980).

[5](#) Nancy Milford notes in *Zelda* (pp. 199-200) that Prangins Clinic, which opened in 1930, quickly became established as the foremost European clinic for the treatment of mental illness. James Joyce's daughter was diagnosed as schizophrenic by Dr. Oscar Forel, the director of Prangins, and twice institutionalized there.

[6](#) Brucoli and Duggan, eds., *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, op. cit., p. 253-

[7](#) Ibid., p. 254. In the same letter Fitzgerald seems troubled by the vagueness of the expression "rest and 're-education' " that constituted Zelda's treatment at Prangins.

[8](#) Milford, op. cit., p. 220.

[9](#) Brucoli and Duggan, eds., *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, op. cit., p. 284.

[10](#) Zelda Fitzgerald, *Save Me the Waltz* (New York: Scribner's, 1932, Signet, 1968).

[11](#) Matthew J. Brucoli, "Afterword," *Zelda Fitzgerald, Save Me the Waltz*, op. cit., p. 205.

[12](#) Brucoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur*, op. cit., p. 347. The following quotations from the psychiatric transcript come from Brucoli's biography, pp. 349-350.

[13](#) Brucoli and Duggan, eds., *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, op. cit., p. 363. I have not corrected Fitzgerald's spelling in the quoted passage.

[14](#) To cite one example, in late summer/early fall of 1930 Zelda wrote Fitzgerald a long rambling letter from Prangins in which she accuses him of hurting her. "You gave me a flower and said it was 'plus petite et moins entendue'—We were friends—Then you took it away and I grew sicker, and there was nobody to teach me, so here I am, after five months of misery and agony and desperation" (Brucoli and Duggan, eds., *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, op. cit., p. 249). In one of the letters Nicole Warren writes from her Swiss sanitarium to Dr. Dick Diver, she says: "One man was nice—he has a French officer and he understood. He gave me a flower and said it was 'plus petite et moins entendue.' We were friends. Then he took it away. I grew sicker and there was no one to explain to me." See F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender Is the Night* (New York: Scribner's, 1934, 1962 rpt.), p. 122.



All subsequent references to the novel come from the 1962 edition.

- [15](#) Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur*, op. cit., p. 346. For a psychiatrist's report on Fitzgerald's alcoholism, see pp. 186-187.
- [16](#) Bruccoli and Duggan, eds., *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, op. cit., p. 301.
- [17](#) Turnbull, ed., *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, op. cit., p. 238.
- [18](#) Bruccoli and Duggan, eds., *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, op. cit., p. 372.
- [19](#) *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, Vol. 82 (July-December, 1935), pp. 115-H7.
- [20](#) Jackson R. Bryer, "A Psychiatrist Reviews *Tender Is the Night*," *Literature and Psychology*, Vol. 16, Nos. 3-4 (1966), pp. 198-199.
- [21](#) Frederick J. Hoffman, *Freudianism and the Literary Mind*, 2nd ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), p. 271.
- [22](#) After the original publication of this chapter in *Literature and Psychology*, I came across Mary E. Burton's interesting essay, "The Countertransference of Dr. Diver," *English Literary History*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (1971), pp. 459-471. Although Burton does not relate Fitzgerald's treatment of psychiatry in *Tender Is the Night* to Zelda's mental illness, she does briefly touch upon the significance of transference and countertransference in the novel. She does not explore, however, the dynamics of transference love in the story. For a psychiatrist's medical objections to certain aspects of *Tender Is the Night*, see the summary in Henry Dan Piper, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Critical Portrait* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965). Interestingly, in *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur* (p. 414) Bruccoli quotes a memo Fitzgerald drafted to his daughter in 1936 on "How Would I grade my Knowledge at 40." He gave himself a B+ in literature and attendant arts but only a C in his knowledge of psychiatry—a judgment that reflects Dr. Dick Diver's barely passing competency in his field.
- [23](#) For a study of the various stages and revisions through which Fitzgerald's story evolved, see Bruccoli, *The Composition of Tender Is the Night*, op. cit.

- [24](#) Turnbull, ed., *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, op. cit., p. 346.
- [25](#) Sigmund Freud, *An Autobiographical Study* (1925), *Standard Edition* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1959), Vol. XX, p. 42.
- [26](#) Sigmund Freud, "Observations on Transference-Love" (1915), *Standard Edition* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1958), Vol. XII, p. 159. The following quotations come from this essay.
- [27](#) Sigmund Freud, "Lines of Advance in Psycho-Analytic Therapy" (1919), *Standard Edition* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), Vol. XVII, p. 163.
- [28](#) Brucoli, *The Composition of Tender Is the Night*, op. cit., p. 206.
- [29](#) D. S. Savage, "The Significance of F. Scott Fitzgerald," in Arthur Mizener, ed., *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 152-153.
- [30](#) Robert Stanton, "'Daddy's Girl': Symbol and Theme in Tender Is the Night," *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Summer 1958), p. 136.
- [31](#) *Ibid.*, p. 142.
- [32](#) For an early mention of incestuous love in *Tender Is the Night*, see Maxwell Geismar, "A Cycle of Fiction," in Robert E. Spiller, et al., eds., *Literary History of the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1949). Geismar writes: "Fitzgerald's work, like Poe's, is colored by the imagery of incest. *Tender Is the Night*, psychologically perhaps the most interesting of all Fitzgerald's novels, deals directly with this theme, but, as the later Fitzgerald said about his friend Ring Lardner, 'he had agreed with himself to speak only a small portion of his mind' " (p. 1299). Of the many later critics writing on this theme, see Richard Lehan, "*Tender Is the Night*," in Marvin J. LaHood, ed., *Tender Is the Night: Essays in Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969): "When Nicole falls in love with Dick, he takes the place of her father. The fact that she falls out of love with him and that Dick commits symbolic incest with Rosemary, an act which leagues him with Devereux Warren, reveals Dick's failure to become a responsible 'father,' a position which, in this novel, Fitzgerald seems to equate with maturity" (p. 68).
- [33](#) Savage, op. cit., p. 153.

[34](#) Mizener, *The Far Side of Paradise*, op. cit., p. 3.

[35](#) F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Babylon Revisited," in Arthur Mizener, ed., *The Fitzgerald Reader* (New York: Scribner's, 1963), p. 316. Charlie Wales's insight here eloquently illuminates the pattern of incestuous fixation in *Tender Is the Night*.

[36](#) See Turnbull, ed., *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, op. cit., p. 64 and 78.

[37](#) Brucoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur*, op. cit., p. 79.

[38](#) For a discussion of Fitzgerald's fear of homosexuality, see *ibid.*, pp. 278-279; 289. See also Ernest Hemingway's notorious account of Fitzgerald's fear of a small penis in "A Matter of Measurements," *A Moveable Feast* (New York: Scribner's, 1964), pp. 189-193.

[39](#) Leslie Fiedler, "Some Notes on F. Scott Fitzgerald," in Mizener, ed., *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Critical Essays*, op. cit., p. 74.

[40](#) For examples of Fitzgerald's vituperative attack on women, see the following interviews published in Matthew J. Brucoli and Jackson R. Bryer, eds., *In Our Own Time: A Miscellany* (New York: Popular Library, 1971): "Our American Women are Leeches," pp. 255-258, and "All Women Over Thirty-Five Should Be Murdered," pp. 263-266. Although there is a great deal of posturing in these early interviews as well as deliberate outrageousness, they do reveal in overstated language the misogyny that subtly appears in *Tender Is the Night*. For example, compare the following statement to any of the descriptions of the parasitic Baby Warren in *Tender Is the Night*. "Our American women are leeches. They're an utterly useless fourth generation trading on the accomplishment of their pioneer great-grandmothers. They simply dominate the American man" (p. 256).

[41](#) See Sigmund Freud, *The Origins of Psycho-Analysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess* (New York: Basic Books, 1954), pp. 215-218; 221-225, for Freud's account of the reasons for his abandonment of the seduction theory and his discovery of the importance of psychical wishes in the creation of seduction fantasies. In these letters Freud articulates for the first time the Oedipus complex and offers his interpretation of *Hamlet*.

[42](#) Matthew J. Brucoli, ed., *The Notebooks of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. 204.

[43](#) It is interesting to see how Brucoli, the foremost Fitzgerald scholar, has reluctantly reached this position. In *The Composition of Tender Is the Night*, op. cit., he criticizes the "Psychoanalytic branch of criticism" for establishing a close relationship between the Fitzgeralds and the Divers. He also dismisses the element of wishful thinking behind Nicole's recovery. "On this interpretation, Mrs. Fitzgerald's impossible recovery is achieved through Nicole; Fitzgerald is seen to be punishing himself for his complicity in his wife's breakdown by means of Dick's ignoble end. But it is not really necessary to plunge into the author's subconscious mind, for in the case of Fitzgerald the obvious parallels are sufficiently remarkable" (p. 82). In *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur*, op. cit., however, he implicitly endorses the psychoanalytic position. "In achieving Zelda's impossible cure in fiction Fitzgerald may have been trying to absolve himself of whatever guilt he felt for his wife's madness—as well as to punish himself for his self-indulgence and self-betrayal" (p. 341).

[44](#) One of Fitzgerald's most justly celebrated statements in *The Crack-Up* (New York: New Directions, 1945) eloquently describes Bleuler's idea of ambivalence: ". . . the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function" (p. 69).

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