

“The Insoluble Problems of Personal Charm”: Intimacy and the “Dying Fall” of Dick Diver in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Tender Is the Night*

Rei Asaba

1. Introduction

One of the most longstanding criticisms F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Tender Is the Night* has endured since its first publication in 1934 is that the etiology of the protagonist Dick Diver’s “dying fall”¹ is obscure. As Kirk Curnutt summarizes, critics often attribute this obscurity to the inconsistencies in the characterization of Dick Diver, and argue that it mars the tragic representation of Dick’s relationship with his schizophrenic wife, Nicole Warren Diver (121). Fitzgerald himself, several years after the publication of *Tender*, looked back on the novel in a letter and observed: “I did not manage, I think in retrospect, to give Dick the cohesion I aimed at I wonder what the hell the first actor who played Hamlet thought of the part? I can hear him say, ‘The guy’s a nut, isn’t he?’ (we can always find great consolation in Shakespeare)” (*Letters* 567).

Reading *Tender Is the Night*, however, one notices that Dick senses the loss of his own self-integrity. In Book II, when Dick takes leave from his clinic, and travels alone after Nicole’s relapse, he reflects:

He had lost himself—he could not tell the hour when, or the day or the week, the month or the year. Once he had cut through things, solving the most complicated equations as the simplest problems of his simplest patients. Between the time he found Nicole flowering under a stone on the Zurichsee and the moment of his meeting with Rosemary the spear had been blunted. (201)

In this scene, Dick is baffled by the unaccountability of his own disintegration. It is, then, more appropriate to consider the lack of cohesion in Dick’s character as the manifestation of his loss of self-integrity than Fitzgerald’s failure in Dick Diver’s characterization.

This paper reconsiders Dick’s “dying fall” as the process of the dissolution of

his self-integrity, for which Dick himself is unaccountable, and, in so doing, demonstrates that it is the intimacy in Dick's relationships with others that triggers the dissolution. In his illustrious biography of Fitzgerald *The Far Side of Paradise*, Arthur Mizener notes Fitzgerald's "talent for intimacy":

He was, as a person, probably no less odd and alone than most people, but he had a talent for intimacy. . . . He created an air of interest in those he was with, when he chose to, which is rarely provided for anyone except by himself. He did so because, with his quick imagination, he always saw what others were feeling and sympathized with them
(xviii-xix)

Fitzgerald's "power of understanding and of sympathy [that breeds] the feeling of intimacy" (xx) is imparted to Dick Diver, as the Divers' party in Villa Diana in Book I shows. In *Tender Is the Night*, it is also made clear that this talent for intimacy takes root in his intense desire for intimacy: "Wanting above all to be brave and kind, he had wanted, even more than that, to be loved" (*Tender* 302). Thus, intimacy is a key to understanding Dick's interpersonal relationships.

The preceding studies on *Tender Is the Night* have analyzed the various interrelated issues that appear in the novel, such as psychoanalysis, gender, incest, capitalism, World War I, and Modernism, contributing considerably to explicating how Fitzgerald captures the problems of his time and society as a novelist. Nevertheless, it has yet to be fully examined how these findings relate to the protagonist's "dying fall," the central motif of the novel. This paper aims to elucidate the workings of Dick's "dying fall" in the light of Dick's intimacy in his interpersonal relationships. In so doing, I will focus on Dick's profession as a psychiatrist, his marital relationship with Nicole, and his adultery with Rosemary.

2. Personal Charm and the Profession of Psychiatry

I would like to start with the analysis of a motif that plays a key role in Dick's relationships: personal charm. In September, 1929, while fretting over the novel on which he had long been working and yet making little progress toward completion, Fitzgerald remarked in a letter to a fan named Betty Markell:

About five years ago, I became, unfortunately, interested in the insoluble problems of personal charm and have spent the intervening time on a novel that's going to interest nobody and probably alienate the remaining half dozen who are kind enough to be interested in my work. Unfortunately my sense of material is much superior to my mind or my talent (*Letters* 495)

This casual, and rather self-mocking, remark seems to indicate that Fitzgerald conceived this novel, which later became *Tender Is the Night*, as one that revolved around the theme of “personal charm.”

In fact, the theme survives in the finished version of *Tender Is the Night*. Most apparently, it is reflected in Dick's personal quality as a “charming” man: “he had no idea that he was charming, that the affection he gave and inspired was anything unusual among healthy people” (116). As this quotation indicates, the source of Dick's charm is his “talent for intimacy,” his ability to arouse a feeling of intimacy in those in his company. This ability entails, however, a certain element of precariousness in itself, for it is often exerted with an intensity that is disproportionate to the importance of the targets to Dick: “there was a pleasingness about him that simply had to be used—those who possessed that pleasingness had to keep their hands in, and go along attaching people that they had no use to make of” (87). This disproportion causes in Dick a confusion of values as he remarks self-mockingly: “Now, human respect—you don't call a man a coward or a liar lightly, but if you spend your life sparing people's feelings and feeding their vanity, you get so you can't distinguish what *should* be respected in them” (178).

With regard to the theme of personal charm in *Tender*, it is equally important that it dictates Dick's value judgments about people. Near the end of the novel, Dick interviews a young man named Francisco at the request of his father, Señor Pardo y Ciudad Real, a distinguished figure from Chile, who desperately wants to have his son's alcoholism and homosexuality (then considered a form of mental disease) cured. Dick contemplates Francisco's charm while having a pleasant conversation with him:

It was as close as Dick had ever come to comprehending such a character from any but the pathological angle—he gathered that this very charm made it possible for Francisco to perpetuate his outrages, and for Dick, charm always had an independent existence, whether it was the mad

gallantry of the wretch who had died in the clinic this morning, or the courageous grace which this lost young man brought to a drab old story. Dick tried to dissect it into pieces small enough to store away—realizing that the totality of a life may be different in quality from its segments (245)

Dick considers that the totality of someone's life or personality cannot be grasped from a one-sided perspective, and that a person's charm resides in the totality of their life and personality. For Dick it is "an independent existence," irrespective of social norms that prescribe what is "normal" and what is not. Dick thus desires to understand the totality of a person in whom he finds charm.

It is important to note that this disposition contradicts Dick's profession of psychiatrist. Meditating on personal charm, Dick calls to mind two mental patients: Francisco, and the anonymous woman artist who just died in Dick's clinic. When he finds charm in them, he also finds the inadequacy of viewing them solely from the pathological angle, as mere "mental patients." This realization is inevitably intertwined with Dick's disbelief in psychiatry. In another scene, while on his rounds at the clinic, Dick has a conversation with this woman artist.² As she tries desperately to uncover the meaning of her suffering as "a symbol of something" (185), Dick, as a doctor, attempts to persuade her that it is merely a "sickness," saying, "It's not wise to be mystical about it—we recognize it as a nervous phenomenon" (184). At the same time, however, Dick recognizes what he tells her from the professional standpoint as a "lie," for he perceives that the true cause of her suffering lies in her exploration of identity in "the frontiers of consciousness"³ as an artist:

The frontiers that artists must explore were not for her, ever. She was fine-spun, inbred—eventually she might find rest in some quiet mysticism. Exploration was for those with a measure of peasant blood, those with big thighs and thick ankles who could take punishment as they took bread and salt, on every inch of flesh and spirit.

—Not for you, he almost said. It's too tough a game for you.

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. (185)

Dick considers her attempt at artistic explorations of “the frontiers of consciousness” to be “mistakes,” that she is too brittle to break with the norms of society and establish her own identity (the history of which is not fully revealed to the reader, nor to Dick; yet it is implied that it concerns her deviant sexual/gender identity). However, he also perceives that the “mistaken” struggles constitute an inseparable part of the totality of her life.

The irony here is the fact that Dick’s susceptibility to the patient’s problem—his “power of understanding and of sympathy”—is simultaneously a mark of his excellence as a psychiatrist and of his incompatibility with the profession. It is only this ability that enables Dick to create an intimate space, a space that makes possible a dialogue between the woman patient and him at all—“During spells of overexcitement he was the only doctor who could ‘do anything with her’” (183)—and thus to gain a deeper insight into her problems than any other doctors in his clinic can have. At the same time, however, vis-à-vis the reality of her suffering and the dignity with which she endures it, Dick loses faith in his professional role as a psychiatrist, which strikes him as insincere and helpless, merely giving her unwanted lectures on the normative “reality.”

Richard Godden argues that “Dick’s skills as socialite and psychiatrist are synonymous, depending upon a capacity to reconstruct the mental interiors of others in the forms of the old bourgeoisie” (111). Indeed, the mental clinics in *Tender Is the Night* are depicted as the institutions for family members of the leisure class who have fallen mentally ill, and the psychiatrists’ role is to reintegrate them into the bourgeois social norms. On social occasions, too, Dick’s role is to create an intimate space by detecting the guests’ hidden inner selves and temporarily supplementing them with the illusion of harmony and esteem: “to be included in Dick Diver’s world for a while was a remarkable experience: people believed he made special reservations about them, recognizing the proud uniqueness of their destinies, buried under the compromises of how many years” (27). Dick’s belief in his own virtues—good manners, politeness and self-control—takes root in the value system of “the old bourgeoisie.”

Focusing on the essential bourgeoisness of Dick and psychiatry as a whole, however, Godden’s argument overlooks the disproportion in Dick’s skills as psychiatrist-socialite and the impact its realization has on him. Dick comes to suspect that his capacity only amounts to satisfying the vanities of charmless

bourgeois people, while being unable to relieve the sufferings of those who possess charm for him. Confronted with the "awful majesty of [the woman artist's] pain," his instinctive reaction is an intimate one: he feels an urge to embrace her "almost sexually." He desires to share her suffering, her life in totality, as he does with Nicole.

This explains the reason why Dick decides to marry Nicole. Dick doubts that professional engagement would save Nicole from her mental illness. Finding charm in Nicole, he wishes to commit himself to a personal relationship with her, transcending the boundaries between the doctor and the mental patient, and shoulder her life in totality. Having a walk with Nicole in the ground of Dohmler's clinic, Dick wishes that "she had no background, that she was just a girl lost with no address save the night from which she had come from" (135). What he wishes for is an intimate sphere where their "backgrounds," their social identities as a doctor and a mental patient, do not matter.

3. Nicole, or an Ultimate Intimacy

It would be misleading, however, to suppose that Dick decides to marry Nicole solely for the purpose of curing her. It is rather a result of his unhopedor emotional involvement with her: Dick falls in love with Nicole so intensely that "her problem [becomes] one they [have] together for good now" (157). Therefore, to fully examine the relationship between Dick and Nicole, it is necessary to take into consideration the romantic imagination of Fitzgerald, whose central theme is almost always the relationship between the male protagonist and the beautiful heroine, the object of his romantic desire. In *Tender Is the Night*, too, Nicole possesses the romantic qualities of Fitzgerald's archetypal heroines: "She smiled, a moving childish smile that was like all the lost youth in the world" (134); "there was excitement about her that seemed to reflect all the excitement of the world" (135).

George Toles discusses Fitzgerald's romantic imagination in *Tender Is the Night* in comparison to *The Great Gatsby* from the perspective of distance:

Apart from the transient force of Dick's manners, there is no emotional pressure in the text capable of lifting characters and events above the plane of desolate, unyielding fact. Fitzgerald, perhaps for the first time, is unable to locate an imaginative site where desire for things unseen is suffused with value. The radiance of language in *The Great Gatsby* was

sustained by the ardor of Gatsby's rich romantic hope and by the secret (and suspect) promise of a world of gleaming privilege, viewed from a distance. (426)

Toles points out that Gatsby's ardent romantic hope for Daisy is perpetuated by the "distance" between them, the fact that Daisy is ultimately unattainable by Gatsby. This distance inspires an ardent desire and enables one to suffuse it with romantic "value." On the other hand, in *Tender* no such space can be found, and the narrative is instead filled with the sense of panic and neurotic anxieties. Toles's argument identifies the thematic difference between the two novels.

Given that in *Gatsby*, Gatsby's untiring pursuit of the goal—the acquisition of Daisy's love, in other words, the elimination of the distance between them—gives him an unshakable selfhood and moves the plot forward, the stability of Gatsby's romantic self is structurally guaranteed by the pre-established distance. On the other hand, in *Tender*, there is a loss of distance—the marriage of Dick and Nicole—at the beginning of the story. Furthermore, their union is depicted as the ultimate loss of distance: "a wild submergence of soul" (217), in which the boundary between the self and the other disappears. It is an ultimate realization of Dick's romantic desire for intimacy. *Tender Is the Night* is, then, the story of the disintegration of this ultimate intimacy, in conjunction with which Dick's disintegration takes place.

In the novel, it is made clear that the incest between Nicole and her father, Devereux Warren, causes Nicole's schizophrenia, and critics have analyzed this motif of incest from various angles, conceiving it as the novel's central motif. Nicole's schizophrenia, however, can also be examined from a different angle—not from its etiology but from the form of its manifestation. In a telling essay that chiefly analyzes the rhetoric in *The Great Gatsby* in the light of excess, Robert Elbaz calls Nicole's schizophrenia "the ultimate excess" (65). In fact, the novel presents its relapse as the eruption of uncontrollable energy, constantly likening it to the overflow of water: "the brilliance, the versatility of madness is akin to the resourcefulness of water seeping through, over and around a dike" (191-92). While it is true that the incest is the trigger of Nicole's illness, it does not explain this excess of energy.

Rather, Fitzgerald associates it with the power of her wealth. In *Tender*, there is a famous passage that describes Nicole's shopping:

Nicole was the product of much ingenuity and toil. For her sake trains began their run at Chicago and traversed the round belly of the continent to California . . . and as the whole system swayed and thundered onward it lent a feverish bloom to such processes of hers as wholesale buying, like the flush of a fireman's face holding his post before a spreading blaze. She illustrated very simple principles, containing in herself her own doom, but illustrated them so accurately that there was grace in the procedure (55)

Nicole, who is "rich as Cræsus" (175-76), is the embodiment of ever-expanding American capitalism, and her beauty is inseparable from her status at the summit of the American consumer society. In this scene, Fitzgerald enumerates the goods Nicole randomly buys. Unlike either Rosemary, who spends the money she earned to buy a few items, or a high-class courtesan, who buys underwear and jewels as "professional equipment and insurance" (55), Nicole's "wholesale buying" lacks purpose or selection; it is consumption for the sake of consumption, ventilation of excessive energy.

Crucially, the realization of an ultimate intimacy between Dick and Nicole, too, is made possible by Nicole's excessiveness, as in their kiss, which prompts Dick to decide on marrying Nicole:

There were no more plans than if Dick had arbitrarily made some indissoluble mixture, with atoms joined and inseparable; you could throw it all out but never again could they fit back into atomic scale. As he held her and tasted her, and as she curved in further and further toward him, with her own lips, new to herself, drowned and engulfed in love, yet solaced and triumphant, he was thankful to have an existence at all, if only as a reflection in her wet eyes. (155)

Through the kiss, their communion is materialized as an atomic fusion in Dick's vision. This physical imagery is, however, tinged with ominousness rather than a romantic bliss. For Nicole's love is perceived in the image of flooding, much in the same way as the outbreak of her schizophrenia quoted above. It is as if the chaos of the schizophrenic world swallows Dick, like amorphous water flooding over him, and it effaces the autonomy of Dick's self, until he becomes only "a reflection in her wet eyes." It is symbolic that right after their kiss, the storm arrives, and the scenery around them disappears,

leaving behind only “tumult, chaos and darkness” (156). To Dick, Nicole’s love is unexchangeable because of the ultimate intimacy of their union that effaces the boundary between the self and the other, and yet ironically its very intensity is inextricably linked to the schizophrenic confusion.

Inevitably, to maintain the integrity of their married life, Dick has to suppress the relapse of Nicole’s schizophrenia, and anchor her to reality: “the struggle would come presently at home and he might have to sit a long time, restating the universe for her. . . . 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” (191). However, because of her father’s incest with her, which signifies the destruction of her trust in the stability of the familial system—the supposed foundation of one’s self—at the formative stage of her self, Nicole’s self is essentially unstable. Dick tries to lend stability to her self by forming a familial union with her, and re-establishing her trust in the family system, but as an inevitable result, it reinforces her dependence on Dick: “always when he turned away from her into himself he left her holding Nothing in her hands and staring at it, calling it many names, but knowing it was only the hope that he would come back soon” (180).

Nicole’s relapses occur when she detects, consciously or subconsciously, a possibility of Dick’s abandoning her, and more importantly, of his doing so for an incestuous relationship with somebody else, however delusional it may be. Her relapses are observed four times in *Tender Is the Night*: at the party at Villa Diana, at the end of Book I when the body of Jules Peterson is found in Rosemary’s hotel room, at the Agiri Fair, and during a long period following Topsy’s birth. In the first two instances, it is apparent that Nicole’s breakdown takes root in the detection of Dick’s infatuation with Rosemary. The case at the Agiri is triggered by a letter from a mental patient at Dick’s clinic, denouncing Dick for seducing her daughter. The last instance, the most serious breakdown of all, is induced by the birth of Dick’s and her own daughter. All the instances are clearly concerned with Nicole’s panic over the possibility of Dick’s abandonment of her for a younger woman *and* her fear of the reiteration of her father’s incestuous transgression. Nicole’s love for Dick is “a transference of the most fortuitous kind” (120), in which, according to Freudian theory, one represses the memory of the traumatic relationship and reiterates the same type of relationship with another person, most typically with the psychiatrist.⁴ Hence, Nicole sees in Dick the dual role of her father-lover, as Devereux Warren was to her. In her delusional schizophrenic vision, the distinction between

herself and those younger girls, as well as that between Devereux and Dick, becomes distorted, so that she is the abandoned one as well as the one who is raped by the father figure.

Naturally, during a relapse, Nicole's aggression is directed toward Dick and everything that he symbolizes—the reality he tries to redefine for her, and the family including their children: "Evil-eyed, Nicole stood apart, defying the children, resenting them as a part of a downright world she sought to make amorphous" (191). Vis-à-vis Nicole's aggression, Dick cannot help but being torn by the contradictory dual role of Nicole's doctor and partner, for to control her relapse and anchor her back to reality, Dick needs to relativize the situation with a professional detachment as a doctor; yet Dick, who has "become one and equal" (190) with Nicole, cannot distance himself from her, so that he experiences her breakdown as his own. When Nicole's relapse "carries him over the line" (188) into the confusion of the schizophrenic world, he, too, can no longer perceive the distinction between reality and unreality as self-evident.

4. Rosemary, or the Uncontrollability of Desire

One of the most baffling aspects of Dick Diver's "dying fall" is his infatuation with Rosemary Hoyt. Critics have confoundedly pointed out that Rosemary's presence is disproportionately featured in the novel, and have largely concluded that it is due to the novel being structurally flawed. For instance, Mizener argues that "the emphasis put on Rosemary Hoyt's point of view by Book I might easily mislead readers into believing she was the central character" (265), which might in turn confuse the reader when Rosemary disappears from the story and the central focus of the plot shifts to the relationship between Dick and Nicole at the beginning of Book II. Given, however, that excessiveness and disproportion is an essential characteristic of Dick's "fatal pleasingness" (302), his talent for intimacy, as I have discussed, the disproportionate presence of Rosemary is a key to further elucidating Dick's "dying fall" in the light of intimacy.

Having no idea about Nicole's mental illness and naïvely admiring the graceful manners of the Divers, Rosemary has a brief conversation with Tommy Barban at the Divers' party at Villa Diana:

" . . . When I'm in a rut I come to see the Divers, because then I know that in a few weeks I'll want to go to war."

Rosemary stiffened.

“You like the Divers,” she reminded him.

“Of course—especially her—but they make me want to go to war.” (30)

Tommy, who knows about Nicole’s mental illness, and is attracted to her, refers to war here because he associates the chaotic energy of Nicole’s schizophrenia with wars in which he participates as a mercenary, which gratifies his sense of masculinity, and gives him a feeling of aliveness.⁵ More important, however, is the fact that by a casual phrase—“especially her”—Tommy performatively breaks the unity of “the Divers together” (52) into two separate entities. It is no coincidence that Rosemary repeats the same phrase to Dick shortly after this conversation takes place: “I want to know all of you too—*especially you*. I told you I fell in love with you the first time I saw you” (38 emphasis added). The repetition of the phrase signifies that Tommy and Rosemary regard their respective triangle relationships as a conflict between the family as a social institution and their passionate love, the conflict commonly found in adultery novels. In fact, Rosemary thinks that the marital relationship between Dick and Nicole is “a rather cooled relation, and actually rather like the love of herself and her mother” (75), while Tommy sneeringly calls it “[l]’amour de famille” (309). By considering that the relationship between Dick and Nicole lacks romantic passion, they both attempt to draw romance toward themselves.

On the other hand, Dick sees the triangle relationship with Nicole and Rosemary differently. Near the end of Book I, Dick reflects back on his love for Nicole and Rosemary in utter confusion:

Back at two o’clock in the Roi George corridor the beauty of Nicole had been to the beauty of Rosemary as the beauty of Leonardo’s girl was to that of the girl of an illustrator. Dick moved on through the rain, demoniac and frightened, the passions of many men inside him and nothing simple that he could see. (105)

In this passage, Dick perceives a qualitative difference between the charms of the two women: one is an authentic work of art, the other is common and interchangeable. Dick’s panic in this passage is almost outrageously disproportioned, for despite his recognition of such a decisive qualitative difference, he is afflicted by an equally intense passion for both of them. His conflict is far from the one between familial attachment and romantic passion

as Rosemary presumes it.

As many critics have noted, Dick's infatuation for Rosemary *repeats* his infatuation for Nicole, in the way that Freud would call "compulsion to repeat."⁶ The textual evidence of this repetition is ample: the two women are both around the age of eighteen, considerably younger than Dick when they first meet him; they both take initiative in advancing the relationship, while Dick is reluctant at first; Dick tries to assume a paternal attitude to maintain detachment, and inevitably fails; Dick cherishes romantic illusions of innocence at the moments of contact. Fitzgerald even repeats almost the same description of Dick's physical sensation at the moment of kissing: "[Nicole] kissed him several times, her face getting big every time she came close" (155); "Presently [Rosemary] kissed him several times in the mouth, her face getting big as it came up to him" (105). The above instances demonstrate that Fitzgerald consciously incorporated the Freudian concept of the repetition compulsion into *Tender Is the Night*, that the text itself manifests that Dick's romantic desire is merely a compulsion to repeat. The question, then, is what impact this manifestation has on Dick.

The kissing of Dick and Rosemary inside a taxi is described as follows:

Her breasts crushed flat against him, her mouth was all new and warm, owned in common. They stopped thinking with an almost painful relief, stopped seeing; they only breathed and sought each other. They were both in the grey gentle world of a mild hangover of fatigue when the nerves relax in bunches like piano strings, and crackle suddenly like wicker chairs. Nerves so raw and tender must surely join other nerves, lips to lips, breast to breast. . . .

They were still in the happier stage of love. They were full of brave illusions about each other, tremendous illusions, so that the communion of self with self seemed to be on a plane where no other human relations mattered. . . .

But for Dick that portion of the road was short (74)

This passage captures the physical sensation of fusion through a kiss similar to the one I have discussed in the scene of Nicole's kiss. Unlike his communion with Nicole, however, the intimate feeling here is only transient and accompanied by images of weariness—"hangover" and "nervous laxity"—even in the middle of the illusion. This is because Dick knows deep inside that

Rosemary will never mean more to him than Nicole does. After the consummation of his affair with Rosemary, Dick looks back and concludes that “Nicole [is] his girl—too often he [is] sick at heart about her, yet she [is] his girl. Time with Rosemary [is] self-indulgence” (213), yet he *knew* it from the very beginning. The trouble with Dick is the fact that in spite of this recognition he cannot suppress his desire for intimacy with Rosemary.

Hence, Dick cannot place a romantic value on his desire for Rosemary. After he heard from Collis Clay the story of Rosemary’s flirtation with some unknown college boy from the past, which aroused in him an unhoped-for intense jealousy, Dick wanders around in a mad frenzy: “Dignified in his fine clothes, with their fine accessories, he was yet swayed and driven as an animal. Dignity could come only with an overthrowing of his past, of the effort of the last six years” (91). In that moment, Dick is poignantly aware that the only way to regain his dignity, to bring his desire in line with his value judgment, is to abandon Nicole for Rosemary, and become altogether oblivious of the years they spent together. Yet he is also aware of the impossibility of doing so because he values Nicole’s charm and his bond with her—the realization of an ultimate intimacy—more than anything else. When Dick succumbs to his own uncontrollable desire, in which he fails to find any value, it seems to him that his self-reliance degenerates into an animal-like indignity.

4. Flight from Nicole

Dick’s desire for Rosemary also causes a significant change in his relationship with Nicole. When Dick and Nicole have returned home from Paris to the French Riviera after Nicole’s relapse, Dick reflects:

Having gone through unprofessional agonies during her long relapse following Topsy’s birth, he had, perforce, hardened himself about her, making a cleavage between Nicole sick and Nicole well. This made it difficult now to distinguish his self-protective professional detachment and some new coldness in his heart. As an indifference cherished, or left to atrophy, becomes an emptiness, to this extent he had learned to become empty of Nicole, serving her against his will with negations and emotional neglect. (168)

This “new coldness” is certainly in conjunction with his growing desire for

Rosemary. As Dick himself realizes, his desire for Rosemary entails an element of "self-indulgence," a flight from the nerve-flaying reality of Nicole's schizophrenia. As his belief in self-control progressively disintegrates, his inclination for flight increases, until eventually the desire for Rosemary, devoid of any substance, is supplanted by a fragmented desire for "every pretty woman he [sees]" (201). Accordingly, his emotional commitment to Nicole becomes increasingly difficult against his will, and his professional detachment, primarily required for anchoring Nicole to reality and saving her, becomes indistinguishable from his flight from Nicole.

As discussed earlier, in her relapse, Nicole directs aggression toward Dick. At the Agiri Fair, she denounces Dick for flirting with a little dark girl, "a child, not more than fifteen" (190). Being aware that she detects his growing tendency to randomly fall for any pretty girl, and his faculty for self-control increasingly slackening, Dick cannot dismiss her denouncement easily, despite the supposedly self-evident fact that she is in a delusional state. He doubts his own sincerity when she says, "It's always a delusion when I see what you don't want me to see" (190).

Tender Is the Night abounds with symbolic implications of Dick's latent incestuousness, so much so that Fitzgerald seems to urge the reader to assume that Dick reiterates the incestuous transgression committed by Devereux Warren. Its most apparent example is the title of the movie in which Rosemary plays the leading part, *Daddy's Girl*, which implies that the relationship between Dick and Rosemary structurally reenacts the one between Devereux and Nicole. In reality, however, as Michael Nowlin notes, Rosemary is "*mommy's girl* [who is] not emotionally scarred like *daddy's girl*, Nicole" (70), the fact of which explains the stability of Rosemary's self. Rather, it is in Nicole's confused schizophrenic delusion that they become indistinguishable. It is then more appropriate to consider that the symbolism signifies Dick's submission to Nicole's vision. This interpretation explains the reason why, after the beating and imprisonment in Rome, Dick shouts at the crowd that gathers in front of the courtyard to look on a criminal who has raped and slain a five-year-old child, "I want to explain to these people how I raped a five-year-old girl. Maybe I did—" (235).

5. Conclusion

From the middle of Book III, as the novel's narrative perspective shifts to

Nicole in conjunction with her somewhat mysterious recovery from her mental illness, Dick falls into silence: at this point, the reader views Dick, who has ceased to express his inner thoughts to others, from the outside. This is because his self-integrity has become disrupted to the extent that if he utters something, it seems to deviate from what he feels to be real and sincere.

When Tommy says to Nicole, “Why didn’t they leave you in your natural state? . . . All this taming of women!” (293), Tommy explicitly alludes to Dick. He implies that Dick domesticated Nicole, confining her within the patriarchal family system and making her dependent on him. In a similar way, Nicole redefines her relationship with Dick as her affair with Tommy advances: “Either you think—or else others have to think for you and take power from you, pervert and discipline your natural tastes, civilize and sterilize you” (290). This view is clearly one-sided, made possible by obliterating the years of her life with Dick: “She began 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 in secret places around the corners of the world, during the month before they were married” (300).

On the other hand, Dick cannot recapitulate the totality of his relationship with Nicole, precisely because he refuses to let it fall into oblivion. For him, it meant neither merely a familial affection, nor a romantic infatuation, both of them and more than that. It meant “a wild submergence of soul,” an ultimate intimacy in which they merged into one entity. And yet, now that the union has disintegrated, he has no means to express it, so he chooses to disappear in silent renunciation.

Notes

¹ Shortly after the publication of *Tender Is the Night*, in a letter to H. L. Mencken, Fitzgerald uses the phrase “dying fall”: “That is what most of the critics fail to understand (outside of the fact that they fail to recognize and identify anything in her book): that the motif of the ‘dying fall’ was absolutely deliberate and did not come from any diminution of vitality but from a definite plan” (*Letters* 510).

² This anonymous woman artist is, like Nicole, clearly modeled on Fitzgerald’s own wife, Zelda Fitzgerald: she breaks down at the same age as Zelda when she had the first mental breakdown; she suffers from nervous eczema and hallucinations; she is an American painter whereas Zelda obsessively took to painting after she gave up her

dream of becoming a professional ballet dancer.

³ The word "frontiers" relates the artistic exploration of this woman artist to the theme of Americanness. In another scene, Dick in his youth is described as cherishing "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" (117). It is ironic that Dick, too, is fine-spun and eventually destroyed in his exploration of "the frontiers of consciousness" as a psychiatrist.

⁴ For Fitzgerald's use of the Freudian concept of "transference" in *Tender Is the Night*, see Berman. Mary Burton also analyzes Dick's relationship with Nicole in terms of "counter-transference," the state in which the psychiatrist falls in love with the patient and accepts his/her transference love.

⁵ Referring to Fitzgerald's notes on Nicole's schizophrenia in "General Plan," Bruce L. Grenberg points out that the crucial moments in the history of Nicole's illness correspond to the important dates in the United States' involvement in the World War I, and argues that Fitzgerald attaches to Nicole's schizophrenia the symbolism of war. Fitzgerald's sketch of the novel's "General Plan" is reprinted in Matthew J. Bruccoli, *The Composition of Tender Is the Night*, pp. 76-82.

⁶ For the detail of the Freudian concept of "compulsion to repeat," see "Beyond Pleasure Principle" (*The Freud Reader*, 594-626), especially pp. 602-05.

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