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A whole lot of different simple people: The degeneration of Nicole Warren Diver in "Tender is the Night"

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A WHOLE LOT OF DIFFERENT SIMPLE PEOPLE:
THE DEGENERATION OF NICOLE WARREN DIVER IN TENDER IS THE NIGHT

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In Partial Fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

This essay examines the character of Nicole Warren Diver as Fitzgerald develops her in three stages: the innocent, romantic girl in the clinic; the protective, loving wife and mother at the Villa Diana; and the calculating, power-conscious woman on the beach.

The first two Nicoles are convincingly crafted by Fitzgerald, just as are the first and second books of the novel; the third Nicole is not. That the young wife can develop from the young girl is believable. That the third Nicole is all that is left at the end is harder to accept. Just as Dick Diver fades away into the small towns of New York, all that is best in Nicole fades away, too. In the end, Fitzgerald leaves his schizophrenic with the worst of her selves.

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In F. Scott Fitzgerald's Tender Is the Night, Dick Diver is married for ten years to Nicole Warren, a clinically treated schizophrenic who regains her sanity at the expense of his mental health and professional success. She is a supporting character, but she is the controlling force in Dick's life. Rosemary, the young actress from whose point of view most of the first book is written, sees Nicole before she sees Dick on her first day on Gausse's beach, and Nicole is again on the beach when Dick takes his final look at the place he made comfortable by removing the rough pebbles and seaweed and creating the amusement. But Nicole changes so much from the first morning to the last that she becomes a new character, and to these two Nicoles can be added a third, the young girl Dick corresponded with and subsequently married. Of the three Nicoles, two are sympathetic characters, the final Nicole is not. Nicole the character degenerates when Nicole the patient breaks away from her doctor/husband. She regains her sanity and develops into a normally functioning woman, but when she does, she loses her warmth and complexity as a character: she becomes cold, predictable and trivial.¹

anal.
Nicole on the beach with her children, translating recipes while she sits in the morning sun tanning her back to contrast with her pearls, Nicole who says little, intrigues and fascinates. Nicole in the clinic, waiting for Dick in the rain, wearing flowers and playing American songs, Nicole who says less than she wants to say about her family money and social position, charms and evokes sympathy. But Nicole who goes to Tommy Barban calculatedly dressed for an affair has left behind her mystery and her charm. When this final Nicole comes onto the beach with Tommy and

her sister baby, the dream quality that originally attracted Dick³ and the seeming serenity that intrigued Rosemary are gone. In their place is a cold, self-serving insensitivity that has been obscured by her illness and by Dick's protective shadow.

The narrative voice of the novel insists that the final personality is always present, that it is merely obscured or overshadowed by the behavior which Dick has taught her, and when one looks closely for the hints of what she is at the end of the novel, the narrator is correct. The seeds of selfishness and social power are there, but they are just that, seeds, and are not fully grown until the protective shield is removed and she moves into the sun with Tommy.

The first two Nicoles are carefully crafted by Fitzgerald, as are the first and second books of the novel, but the third Nicole is not. Just as Fitzgerald pushes Dick into collapse, he pushes Nicole away from Dick and away from all the good that he has given her. Dick's collapse comes too quickly and Nicole's final personality comes too quickly, too. According to Matthew Bruccoli in The Composition of Tender Is the Night, Fitzgerald admitted that "this part of the novel did not receive as much of his careful attention as the first two books."² Nicole in Book III certainly does not receive enough. Fitzgerald has planted the seeds for what she becomes but the final fruit ripens too quickly. The change in Nicole is so radical that even with the warning blight one is not prepared for the final decay.

When Rosemary first sees her, Nicole is on the beach copying something from a book, making a list. She is separate from the others in her group and seems to withdraw from them. Each time they laugh at what the man in the jockey cap says, she withdraws further into her list. She

is wearing pearls with her bathing suit; they glisten in the sun-- white to accent her healthy brown back. Her face is described as "hard and lovely and pitiful."³ Why pitiful? Since this description is from Rosemary's point of view, pitiful seems much too intuitive or telling at this early point in the novel, but nevertheless it leaves a question.

Is there something in this hard, lovely faced woman that evokes pity and if so, why? When she withdraws at "each salvo of amusement" (7), Rosemary thinks it is "perhaps from modesty of possession" (7), but again, Rosemary does not know yet that Nicole is married to Dick since she has met neither of them. However, in this opening description of Nicole there are three telling words: pitiful, possession, and pearls. Nicole will evoke pity in Book I and her actions will seem to come from her sense of threatened possession of Dick. The pearls hint at her wealth.

Rosemary next sees her in the water with her children. Nicole watches them as they play with Abe North. As they yell "with fear and delight" (10), Nicole watches "with a lovely peace, without a smile" (10). The third appearance of Nicole in Book I is still through Rosemary's eyes and still from a distance. Rosemary now knows that this woman is Mrs. Diver, but they have not met. She watches as Nicole gets into her chauffeured car with her "arms full of sofa cushions" (14). Nicole sits "in her car, her lovely face set, controlled, her eyes brave and watchful, looking straight ahead toward nothing" (14). Brave is still another word indicative of Nicole's having more problems to deal with than are so far apparent. A lovely, peaceful woman, but with a hard, pitiful, brave and watchful face--it is a curious, seemingly contradictory combination of descriptive words, a combination which suggests Nicole's complexity.

After Dick invites Rosemary to join his group under the umbrellas on the beach, she is able to enlarge on Nicole's character. At twenty-four, Nicole is, "described in terms of conventional prettiness" (16), quite attractive. But there is more:

. . . the effect was that [her face] had been made first on the heroic scale with strong structure and marking, as if the features and vividness of brow and coloring, everything we associate with temperament and character has been molded with a Rodinesque intention, and then chiseled away in the direction of prettiness to a point where a single slip would have irreparably diminished its force and quality (17).

One wonders what more there is to this person than prettiness and what is being hinted at with this reference to "Rodinesque temperament and *hand* character." Rodin's sculptures tend to strength, largeness, boldness-- quite in contrast to fragile prettiness.

At the party which Dick organizes as a farewell to the beach, Rosemary describes Nicole as "one of the most beautiful people she had ever known" (33). She thinks of Nicole's face as "the face of a saint, a viking Madonna" (33). Viking hints that this must be a fighter, a good fighter, a fierce protector of her home and children. But again there is the sense of quiet. In the candlelight, Nicole is "still as still" (33).

When Nicole and Rosemary go shopping, Rosemary looks at her carefully as they ride in a taxi. The narrator intrudes in Rosemary's evaluation, but from the two perspectives comes further evidence of Nicole's loveliness:

There were all the potentialities for romantic love in that lovely body and in the delicate mouth, sometimes tight, sometimes expectantly half open to the world. Nicole has been a beauty as a young girl and she would be a beauty later when her skin stretched tight over her high cheekbones--the

essential structure was there. She had been white-Saxon-blond but she was more beautiful now that her hair had darkened than when it had been like a cloud and more beautiful than she (67).

Rosemary and the narrator are not alone in their appreciation of Nicole's beauty. When Nicole meets the Norths, Dick, Rosemary and two French musicians for lunch, "seeing from their eyes how beautiful she was, she thanked them with a smile of radiant appreciation" (53). But in this scene and at this stage of her "recovery," her sense of this comes from without: she needs reassurance; her value comes from their eyes. Even when she is alone in her garden, there is a rough edge on the loveliness: "Her face was hard, almost stern, save for the soft gleam of piteous doubt that looked from her green eyes" (25). Again, pity and hardness, but without explanation.

Despite all the references to hard and quiet and pitiful, there are also descriptions of her lively sense of humor. Nicole and Tommy Barban amuse themselves with the names of Americans who are listed in The New York Herald as traveling in Europe. Nicole comments on Mrs. Evelyn Oyster and says, "Oh, yes--S. Flesh--doesn't he give you the creeps?" (18). At dinner Nicole laughs at Abe North's story about trying to saw a waiter in half with a musical saw. When Abe asks if she wouldn't like to know what is inside a waiter, "Old menus," she laughingly suggests. "Pieces of broken china and tips and pencil stubs" (32). When Nicole tells Rosemary about how Abe North behaved "long ago" before his heavy drinking began, she remembers how Abe would scare their maid: "She thought he was a ghost and sometimes Abe used to meet her in the hall and moo at her, and it cost us a whole tea service once--but we didn't care" (99).

Nicole's humor contains both a touch of the absurd and a sense of condescension. While she cannot remember McKisco's name, she does remember that it "sounds like a substitute for gasoline or butter" (20). After appearing shocked by the behavior of the McKiscos--by his rubbing his wife's face in the sand during an argument--Nicole laughs and says, "We're very well adjusted . . . I'm not going to have my nose rubbed in the sand. I'm a mean, hard woman . . ." (21). Then she hands Dick a pair of what appear to be "transparent black lace drawers" (21) which she has made and which he wears on the beach, shocking the McKiscos, insulting Campion and Dumphy. Much of what she finds amusing is at the expense of someone else. The saint of the dinner table has some very human imperfections--a bit of elitism, a bit of cruelty. At this point, Nicole seems a mystery, a curious--even contradictory--mixture of qualities.

The same confusion extends as well to her lavish expenditures. On the surface at least, Nicole appears quite generous. At the farewell dinner party, Nicole gives Rosemary's mother a yellow evening bag because Mrs. Spears has admired it. "I think things ought to belong to the people who like them" (35), she says. She even fills the bag with "all the yellow articles she could find, a pencil, a lipstick, a little notebook, 'because they all go together'" (35). Her generosity shows a second time when she and Rosemary go shopping: "Everything she liked that she couldn't possibly use herself, she bought as a present for a friend" (54).

Nicole in Book I seems to belie her upbringing. The horsetraders and robber barons in her background would not give without an expected return, but Nicole does not seem to give her gifts to curry favor. She is not Lady Bountiful bestowing her riches on underlings and unfortunates for the effect she can create and the loyalty she can insure. Nicole is not a

courtesan and she is not giving a charitable tithe that will be tax deductible. She spends her money because it is there to spend. It gives her pleasure and it gives pleasure to her family and friends. She may be buying other's affection and gratitude, but there is no indication that she does so consciously. Her uncalculated generosity won't last but in Book I it seems genuine.

Her shopping habits also suggests her complexity. In the one hand, what she buys is colorful and meant for comfort and entertainment:

She bought colored beads, folding beach cushions, artificial flowers, honey, a guest bed, bags, scarfs, love birds, miniatures for a doll's house and three yards of some new cloth the color of prawns. She bought a dozen bathing suits, a rubber alligator, a travelling chess set of gold and ivory, big linen handkerchiefs for Abe, two chamois leather jackets of kingfisher blue and burning bush from Hermes . . . (54-55).

On their second day of shopping, Nicole brings home more artificial flowers, strings of colored beads and "for her son she bought Greek and Roman soldiers, a whole army of them, costing over a thousand francs" (67). She buys apparently for beauty and fun, yet the desperate, indiscriminate quality of her purchasing suggests the depth of her need to feel appreciated.

Clearly she cares about what people think of her. She meets Abe at the train station because he asks her to be there, and she tries to entertain him with observations about the people passing them as they wait. But along with her support there is also a bit of selfish interest. While the narrator says that "Nicole had liked Abe better than any one except Dick," he also says that Abe "had been heavy, belly frightened, with love for her for years" (81). She knows, and it is pleasant to bask in the presence of someone who loves her. Then when he insultingly says, "I haven't had fun seeing you this time. I'm tired of both of you, but it doesn't show

because you're even more tired of me--you know what I mean" (81), she becomes firm with him and insists that there is no excuse for his boredom and his drinking. It is in this conversation that Nicole says: "I am a woman and my business is to hold things together" (82).

A few moments later it is Nicole who holds things together. After Maria Willis shoots a man in the train station, Dick wants to rush to the police station to help Maria. His show of concern is largely for Rosemary's benefit, and when Nicole stops him with a firm, "you wait" (84), and goes herself to call Maria's sister, Dick says to Rosemary: "When Nicole takes things into her hands, there is nothing more to be done" (84).

She does indeed seem in Book I to be the sort of person who can take things into her hands, and they seem to be not only lovely but very capable multitalented hands. She draws, she sews, she gardens, she organizes, and she does this with what appears to be quiet efficiency and love for her family and close friends.

However, because most of this first book is from Rosemary's naïve point of view, it is possible to have a very naïve concept of Nicole and her relationship with Dick after reading only Book I. Rosemary sees her as lovely and as a frightening force, as sophisticated and at ease in her safe, comfortable world at the Villa Diana. She does not see the cracks in Nicole's serene surface until Nicole breaks although these breaks appear long before the dramatic breakdown in the bathroom in Paris at the end of Book I.

On the day that Rosemary first joins the Divers and their friends on the beach, Nicole is immediately aware of Rosemary's interest in Dick: "Nicole, lifting her head, saw her choose him, heard the little sigh at

the fact that he was already possessed" (19-20). Later that morning Nicole says: "Well, I have felt that there were too many people on the beach this summer . . . Our beach that Dick made out of a pebble pile" (20). She follows this with some critical remarks about the British who were there the previous summer, and she mocks the remarks the British made to one another. At this point, Rosemary does think that "she would not like to have Nicole for an enemy" (20).

When the Norths, the Divers and Rosemary go to a World War I French battlefield, Nicole takes no part in the conversation. While Dick amuses the others, there is no mention of Nicole. Only when the group is on their way back to Paris is she part of the episode:

Nicole was abstracted, biting her lip restlessly and reading over the guidebooks to the battlefield that Dick has brought along--indeed, he had made a quick study of the whole affair, simplifying it always until it bore a faint resemblance to one of his own parties (59).

Nicole's thoughts are not given at this point but the implication is that she again thinks that there are too many people in the group, or at least one young woman too many. Nicole is tired and does not go out in the evening with the others. Rosemary sees her now as "a force--not necessarily well disposed or predictable like her mother--an uncalculable force. Rosemary was somewhat afraid of her" (60). But Rosemary does not see Nicole as flawed, only as strong and formidable. It is quite understandable that Nicole would be tired of watching Rosemary flirt with Dick.

When Rosemary arranges for a showing of her film, Daddy's Girl, and sits touching shoulders with Dick in the screening room, "Nicole stir[s] restlessly at the end of the row" (68). When Rosemary announces that she has arranged for Dick to have a screen test, Nicole is "faintly annoyed at



not having been asked for a sitting" (70). At lunch on the day that Abe supposedly leaves for America, Nicole is sharp with Rosemary who asks that she and Dick give Collis Clay a message: "You'd better leave the message with a waiter," Nicole's voice was stern and unmodulated, "we're leaving immediately"(86). After Rosemary leaves them, Dick sees that Nicole is upset: "He saw a flash of unhappiness on her mouth, so brief that only he would have noticed, and he could pretend not to have seen. What did Nicole think? Rosemary was one of a dozen people he had 'worked over' in the past years . . ." (87). If this is a pattern that Dick follows, then Nicole is again seemingly justified in being upset.

Later that evening, Nicole is sharp with Dick when he calls to ask if she would like to have dinner and go to a play, he suggests that "It's better than brooding--" (95). Nicole "sharply" asks, "Brooding about what?" (95). Dick means brooding about his jealousy of Rosemary (Collis Clay has just told him a story about Rosemary and a young man on a train). Though she does not confront him, Nicole probably realizes that he has been brooding about Rosemary.

The sharpest crack in the Nicole of Book I which exposes the final Nicole underneath is her reaction to Abe's involvement with the Negroes and the police. Rather than get involved, Nicole goes shopping. This can be seen two ways. Nicole may be protecting her emotional stability by avoiding the chaos that Abe has caused, but she is also running to the protection of her money, buying things to amuse herself rather than help Abe. It is one thing to wait with him at the train station when he will be going away and taking his problems with him and quite another to become actively involved.

What Violet McKisco sees in the bathroom at the Villa Diana is not explained in Book I, and the only real clue that it involves Nicole is Tommy Barban's remark to Violet which he makes in the car just before the duel challenge: "Mrs. McKisco, please don't talk further about Mrs. Diver" (43). It is not until Dick gives the bloody bed spread and blanket to Nicole (after Peterson's body is left in Rosemary's room) that the Villa Diana scene begins to make sense. Rosemary sees Nicole swaying beside the bathtub and hears her crying part nonsense, part truth and discovers that Nicole has some mental problems. To Rosemary, Nicole cries: "--it's you come to intrude on the only privacy I have in the world--with your spread with red blood on it" (112). To Dick, she cries: "I never expected you to love me--it was too late--only don't come in the bathroom, the only place I can go for privacy, dragging spreads with red blood on them and asking me to fix them" (112). The narrator says of Rosemary: ". . . now she knew what Violet McKisco had seen in the bathroom at Villa Diana" (112); however, she has only a sense of what might have happened; she does not have the full story.

At the end of Book I, Dick seems to be a philanderer, and she seems to be a complicated, but warm and fascinating, person who must manage a rather spoiled husband. She seems to have been protecting what could be a good relationship and a pleasant family life for too long, and the effort of protection has been too intense for too long. Nicole may have a somewhat aloof attitude toward the McKiscos, the British summer people and her servants. Her sense of humor may be a little dark and she may hide from unpleasantness, but at the end of Book I, she seems basically admirable.

When Rosemary laughs at the black lace swim trunks Nicole makes for

Dick, when she watches the duel with Champion, when she kisses Dick on the hotel landings, and even when she sees Nicole in the bathroom, she does not know enough about the Divers to understand what she is seeing and becoming involved in. Rosemary does not know enough and this keeps Nicole a mysterious character:

Her naïveté responded whole-heartedly to the expensive simplicity of the Divers, unaware of its complexity and its lack of innocence, unaware that it was all a selection of quality rather than quantity from the run of the world's bazaar; and that the simplicity of behavior also, the nursery-like peace and good will, the emphasis on the simpler virtues, was part of a desperate bargain with the gods and had been attained through struggles she could not have guessed at (21).

At the end of Book I, one can only speculate on what the struggles have been. Dick does certainly seem to "work over" people, and one can guess that Nicole is one of them. He says that he loves Nicole, and he does tell Rosemary: "Nicole mustn't know--she mustn't suspect even faintly. Nicole and I have got to go on together . . . Nicole mustn't suffer--she loves me and I love her--you understand that" (75). He says that he loves Nicole, but his thoughts in Book I are primarily with Rosemary.

Nicole in the first ten chapters of Book II is as fresh and young as new flowers after a rain. She is also as fragile and crushable as flowers. She needs protection, she needs love and this need coupled with her eagerness and her expectancy, makes her a more poignantly vulnerable character than the Nicole of Book I. This Nicole is a princess in a tower ready to escape and see the world, and Dick is to be her liberator.

When Book II begins, the secret of Nicole's identity is not immediately told. There are references to a pretty girl who has been ill, but

the revelation does not come until the signature of what the girl says is her third letter to "Mon Capitaine." The letters from Nicole Warren move from confused phrases to careful descriptions of her activities and make her seem clever and charming in spite of her illness.

Then comes her father's tearful explanation of the rape and this victim becomes even more deserving of protection and sympathy. As her father describes her, Nicole was a model child:

"As a child she was a darling thing--everybody was crazy about her, everybody that came in contact with her. She was smart as a whip and happy as the day is long. She liked to read or draw or dance or play the piano--anything. I used to hear my wife say she was the only one of our children who never cried at night" (126).

*proof
natural
charm
innocence ?*

Then after the rape, this lovely child freezes except to say, "Never mind, never mind, Daddy. It doesn't matter. Never mind" (129).

The young girl that falls in love with Dick is not only lovely, she is also bright and accomplished. Franz tells Dick: "She really has an excellent mind, so, [Doctor Dohmler] gave her a little Freud to read, not too much, and she was very interested. In fact, we've made rather a pet of her around here" (131). Her excellent mind has allowed her to learn French and German and some Italian and Spanish to complement her native English, and she takes music and drawing lessons as well.

When she plays her romantic American records, when she waits for Dick in the afternoon rain, she seems to deserve better treatment than what Doctor Dohmler, Franz and Dick professionally decide will be best for her. Her situation is most poignant when her hopes are washed away in the rain. After the doctors' meeting, Dick goes to Nicole who has been waiting for him. In an exchange which is hard for him because he has

fallen in love with her and must not show his feelings and hard for her because she wants to convince him that she is well and accomplished and desirable, Dick tells Nicole: "Go back to America and be a debutante and fall in love--and be happy" (143).

Nicole's world had fallen to pieces but it was only a flimsy and scarcely created world, beneath it her emotions and instincts fought on. Was it an hour ago she had waited by the entrance, wearing her hope like a corsage at her belt? . . . Dress stay crisp for him, button stay put, bloom narcissus--air stay still and sweet (143).

She almost tells Dick how rich she is in a last effort to have him, but this Nicole does not use her wealth. She accepts the "emptiness and pain" (143) and walks back to the clinic in the rain.

There is little known about Nicole before she enters the Dohmler clinic. Her father recalls that during the last summer before her breakdown "she was out all day playing golf and tennis with boys. And some of them pretty gone on her at that" (127). Dr. Dohmler summarizes this very young Nicole as "a perfectly normal, bright, happy child" (126) and her father agrees. Her sister Baby "had never liked Nicole's free and easy manner as a child" (157), but neither the father nor the sister are reliable sources of information. Mr. Warren is guilt-ridden and Baby Warren's life has been filled with failed relationships. The only other history comes from Nicole and the narrator. Nicole tells Rosemary that she once lived in a small hotel in Paris with Baby and their governess while her mother traveled, and the narrator says that when Nicole was quite young she organized the luggage for her "failing mother" (258) when they traveled. There is very little said about her, but the emphasis is on her being happy, talented, and well-organized, very dependent on her

*Sister features
maybe she
asked for
abuse?*

father after her mother's death, and aware that her family is rich, but not knowing just how rich.

The scene on the funicular when Nicole and Conte de Marmora scramble into the rear compartment from the confinement of the enclosed first class section is one of liveliest in the novel. Nicole's blonde hair is short and in curls; she is wearing powder blue and white--like the clouds the train is moving toward. As the narrator says, "She was the first morning in May and every taint of the clinic was departed" (148). What follows in the evening is the only hint in the young Nicole of what she will become: it is a hint of the power of possession.

Later that evening, Nicole leaves the group in the dining room and Dick finds her standing alone. She asks him: "If I hadn't been sick would you--I mean, would I have been the sort of girl you might have--oh, slush, you know what I mean" (154). Even though Dick remembers that Baby Warren has just talked of buying a young doctor in Chicago for Nicole, he cannot resist kissing her: "My God," he gasped, "You're fun to kiss" (155). Now Nicole knows that she can have what she wants:

Nicole had a better hold on him now and she held it; she turned coquette and walked away, leaving him as suspended as in the funicular of the afternoon. She felt: There, that'll show him, how conceited; how he could do with me; oh, wasn't it wonderful! I've got him, he's mine. Now in the sequence came flight, but it was all so sweet and new that she dawdled, wanting to draw all of it in (155).

✓ who her father?

Although she is "still afraid of Dick" (155), the sense of possession is alive. This time when she comes in from the rain, Dick is with her. However, she is still vulnerable and has not done anything except to be a good

child, a model patient, and a charming young woman determined to win her man. There is almost nothing about this Nicole to dislike; in quite a different way from the charming young wife/mother/friend of Book I, she is also a sympathetic character.

Nicole's monologue in Book II summarizes her feelings for Dick and her mental stability during the first six years of their marriage. At first she is innocent. She is not aware of the extent of her wealth. She is proud that his book is selling and happy that "there are three of us now" (159). She and her husband are traveling and "Life is fun with Dick" (160). But halfway through the monologue she talks of the birth of her daughter and how after that "everything got dark again" (161). It is also half way through that the Nicole of Book I, the Nicole who "takes things into her hands" (84) emerges more forcefully.

The emerging Nicole wants to learn: "I am tired of knowing nothing and being reminded of it all the time" (161). She insists on having a house instead of an apartment; she wants her life to stop being "topsy-turvy." When she has the Villa Diana, she seems content. But into this tranquility come Tommy and Rosemary who break the balance and propel Nicole toward her least attractive self. When Nicole says: "All in all, everything has never gone better" (162), the viking fighter is emerging. Now she is the blonde beauty, the prize who will go to the man who wins her. They are fighting for her and she is pleased. And she ends her monologue with a warning comment about her feelings toward Rosemary: "Yes, she's lovely, but there can be too many people" (162).

In the second half of Book II, Nicole is much the same person as in Book I. Although it is easier to like Dick by this point in the novel, it

is also possible to remain sympathetic with Nicole. After the Divers return to the Villa Diana from Paris, what Violet McKisco saw the night of the farewell party is finally explained. Nicole had laughed hysterically and told Violet that she could not use the bathroom because the key had been thrown into the well. The next day she was "repentant" (168) and tried to call the McKiscos to apologize, but they had already left their hotel. Her repentance helps to excuse her behavior. Even when she tries to wreck the car and endangers the lives of the entire family, it is obvious that she is still not well, and Dick's foolish behavior with the daughter of one of his patients has pushed her over the edge. He is repeating an old pattern with Rosemary, and his attentions to young women threaten Nicole's world: "She led a lonely life owning Dick who did not want to be owned" (180).

In Book III the Nicole with whom Fitzgerald critics have been most concerned appears. Bathed and "crossed" (291) with Chanel Sixteen, this one is ready to fight with all the weapons that her wealth and beauty afford her for the life that others of her class are living. This is the Nicole that Brian Way calls "self-centered and rather deficient in her feeling for other people,"⁴ Milton Stern calls "irresponsible,"⁵ and James E. Miller, Jr. calls a "spiritual cannibal."⁶ This Nicole leaves behind the freshness of youth, the serenity of the days as a mother on the beach, and becomes cold, scheming and trivial. Certain elements of Nicole, only hinted at earlier, now become dominant. Now she seems much like the other women of her class, Baby Warren, Caroline Sibley-Biers, and Mary North Minghetti.

Change develop quickly in Book III. The first and last symbolically

striking movement is brought about by the illness of Nicole's father. As soon as Kaethe Gregorovius tells her that her father is sick and in Lausanne, Nicole rushes to catch the next train. In part this signifies her ability to come to terms with her traumatic past, to break out of her role as victimized daughter. Running back to Daddy symbolizes the beginning of running back to the life she once lived in the Warren world. When she gets to Lausanne and learns from Dick that her father has already left, she says to Dick: "I don't see why you have to--come in contact with all this" (252). Of course Dick would naturally be involved, but Nicole is trying to push him aside.

Although the second Nicole can take control of a situation as she does at the train station during the Maria Wallis incident, the emerging third Nicole does so more frequently and defiantly. When the Divers visit Mary Minghetti, Nicole "reproves" (260) Dick for his drinking and his use of improper language. Then when Lanier thinks that he has been bathed in water that is dirty from the bath of a sick child, Nicole strongly defends her son: "I won't have the child brought in." Nicole threw on her clothes as though they were chain mail" (262). Then she silences both Mary and Dick before the bath question is dropped. Her "Stop it" to Mary and "Be Quiet!" to Dick end the discussion. When Dick accuses the cook of drinking their best wine, it is Nicole who calls the gendarmes. When the cook's nephew apologetically takes her away, Dick regrets that the ugly situation occurred but Nicole is "not sorry a bit" (267).

On the day of the cook incident, Nicole tests her thoughts of independence on Dick: "'We can't go on like this,' Nicole suggested. 'Or can we?--what do you think?'" (267). When his weak response is not reassuring, she

is alarmed. But when he suggests that they join the party on T. F. Golding's yacht and at the party she rediscovers Tommy Barban, Nicole's confidence bubbles up again. Not only does she find Tommy, she also finds Lady Caroline and is "impressed . . . with her sheer strength derived from an attitude" (272). With Tommy's attention to sustain her and people like Lady Caroline for models, she is ready to break away from Dick.

Nicole's attention to Tommy on the yacht angers Lady Caroline, who in retaliation angers Dick and creates an unpleasant scene. Nicole's reaction is annoyance with Dick "for having become fuddled, for having untipped the capped barbs of his irony" (273) but most of all "for having come off humiliated--she was a little more annoyed because she knew that her taking possession of Tommy Barban on their arrival has first irritated the English-woman" (272). When Nicole goes looking for Dick, she finds him standing alone at the bow. For a moment she seems concerned and even considers suicide with him because she thinks he is going to jump off the yacht, but Tommy's arrival breaks her mood. As the three talk, Dick asks Tommy if he is rich. Tommy tells Dick that he is not "as things go now" but "all goes well" (274). Nicole lies: "'Dick's getting rich,' Nicole said. In reaction her voice had begun to tremble" (274). Suddenly, money does openly measure worth for her, and Dick's not having money diminishes his worth.

The next day, after Tommy has driven Nicole and the sleeping Dick back to the Villa Diana, she is elated by being the object of tension between the two men. Earlier, she had been pleased by the prospect of having Tommy in love with her. Now however, she seems to enjoy the prospect of conflict between Dick and Tommy. "She did not want anything to happen, but only for the situation to remain in suspension as the two men tossed her from one mind to another" (276). She is deciding that if other women can have lovers, so can she. She has another moment of doubt about

the affair when she overhears the coarse sexual conversation of two workmen, but she does not doubt long. She sits callously sketching a "head of Tommy" (277) while Dick manages to talk "trivially with the blood still drained down from his cheeks" (277).

As Tommy leaves, Nicole gives him a jar of camphor rub for his cough. Dick asks her not to because the camphor is difficult to get and this jar is the only one they have. When she tosses it to Tommy, she is again making a symbolic gesture. It is clear to Dick that with it she has tossed herself to Tommy. After Tommy leaves, Nicole is once more frightened. Dick is quiet, not talking; he is just "staring at the ceiling" (279). Nicole's thoughts are only with herself: ". . . in a kitchen-maid's panic she ran downstairs, afraid of what the stricken man above would feed on while she must still continue her dry sucking at his lean chest" (279). *use* Then "in a week, Nicole forgets her flash about Tommy" (279). The narrator says that she forgets people easily. The young Nicole suffers the trauma of what she cannot forget. The second Nicole can put people out of her mind if she needs to maintain her equanimity. This one just forgets.

Rosemary comes back to Gousse's beach just when Nicole is changing into her final self, and Dick does show some of his old interest in her, but this time what Dick is doing does not seem so inexcusable as before, considering the life he has been leading with Nicole. Nicole makes him well aware that "everything he does annoys her now" (285). Defiant again, Nicole tells Dick that she likes Mary Minghetti. She tells Rosemary not to put "ideas in the heads of other people's children" (288), and she leaves them both together on the beach. When she gets home, she writes Tommy "a short provocative letter" (289). The decision to have an affair has

been made, but she has the convenience of Rosemary to blame it on if it should not be what she wants.

Nicole does not love Tommy. She uses him because he is available: "Nicole did not want any vague spiritual romance--she wanted an 'affair'; she wanted a change" (291). The only positive aspect of her choice of Tommy is that since he is a mercenary he can understand exchange of services without loyalty; she understands a bargain or money agreement. However, Nicole lies to him again. This time it is in "swearing to him that never before has she so entirely, so completely, so utterly . . ." (300). Then when Dick arrives home sooner than she has expected, she lies to him, too, telling him: "There isn't anything to know" (299). The lying is part of being a crook in the Warren tradition. Tommy tells Nicole that she has "white crook's eyes" (292). She likes the effect: "So I have white crook's eyes, have I? Very well then, better a sane crook than a mad puritan" (293).

"Moment by moment all that Dick had taught her fell away and she was ever nearer to what she had been in the beginning" (298). When Nicole and Dick have their final confrontation, the narrator says: ". . . she fought him with her money and her faith that her sister disliked and was behind her now . . ." (301). Money comes first in her weapons against him, ✓ but she also does not allow him any foibles, any weaknesses. Nicole stabs at every vulnerable spot in his collapsing social persona: "with her quick guile against his wine-ing and dine-ing slowness, her health and beauty against his physical deterioration, her unscrupulousness against his moralities" (301-302). She does not say that she loves Tommy, that leaving Dick is difficult, or even that she is at all sorry. She simply tells Dick that after all he does not care for her and that he can do his

work much better without her. Even in the end she tries to make Dick excuse her behavior, to agree with her rationalizing.

On the beach the day Dick leaves, Nicole "[shrinks] back in the shadow of her dressing-tent" (312) to avoid seeing him, and although she does not argue when Baby says: "That's what he was educated for" (312). Later she makes a slight movement toward him, but rises only to her knees and does not move again after Tommy tells her, "Let well enough alone" (314). The remark about Dick's being a good husband strikes Brian way as "half-hearted."⁷ Half is too generous an estimate.

After Nicole lets him go or pushes him away, her contact with Dick is on a business basis. As he obviously moves further and further away from the life that they had shared as the Divers, Nicole does nothing to help him. She does not send money which she could guess he needs from the downward progression of his addresses. Instead, she writes to ask if he needs it. Even at the end, she wants him to ask for money; she holds the power, and he will have to come to her. She is practicing what she concluded the day of the Maria Wallis affair: Don't reach out to people: "Let people come to you." (82).

That Nicole would like a new life without the taint of her illness is understandable. As William F. Hall argues, "she understands that her dependence on Dick has been in fact her disease: a false dependence on a false reality."⁸ He is right that she cannot continue her dependence on Dick, but what Nicole does is transfer her dependence to Tommy. She goes immediately to him. There is no time when she is on her own. She simply transfers from one to the other. She does not become independent--just hard and cold--and she goes to someone uncomplicated who will require

does she?

nothing from her but sex and money and the life-style her money will buy.⁹ Tommy requires none of the sensitivity that the broken Dick Diver needs and never seems to get from anyone.

Tommy, who is obviously looking for someone simple, for someone that he can manipulate easily and who will demand very little from him, is surprised on the day that their affairs begins to find that Nicole many not be as malleable or naïve as he thought. When she tells him that Rosemary has upset Dick and that he has gone away to "dream about her" (292), Tommy says, "you know, you're a little complicated after all" (292). Nicole is quick to disclaim any complexity: "No, I'm not really--I'm just a--I'm just a whole lot of different simple people" (292). Tommy is right but so is she. She is indeed complicated, and she is also at least three different people in the course of the novel.

In Book I she is Rosemary's viking Madonna, a lovely wife entertaining her friends by candlelight with her husband. She carries comfort like sofa cushions in her arms. She protects her children, organizes her home, supports her friends, plays with her money, only occasionally shows aggression or a bit of superiority. And she is frightened by the threat to her serene world that Rosemary represents. In Book II she is the romantic young girl in the rain. She is innocent and eager; she is loving and lovable, and she is idealistic enough to want to live in the style that Dick can afford. In Book III Nicole is the calculating, power-conscious, rich bitch, the perfumed crook that shrinks from her victim after she has cheated him.

That the madonna could develop from the eager, lively innocent is believable. She retains the beauty and some of the caring sensitivity of

her younger self. That the cold, bitchy Nicole is all that is left at the end is harder to accept. Fitzgerald takes away too much. He cures her and yet he destroys her. Dick fades away into the small towns of New York, and all that is best in Nicole fades away, too. In the end, Fitzgerald leaves his schizophrenic with the worst of her personalities.

Notes

¹Brian Way, F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Art of Social Fiction (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), p. 140. Nicole in her final personality becomes like the other women of her social group. She becomes cold, calculating, insensitive and undeserving of any special notice. She loses her difference. In searching for the right word (having discarded "common" and "ordinary"), I read a sentence in Brian Way's book which gave me "trivial": "But in the conditions of expatriate life, Fitzgerald could not avoid realization that triviality was an essential feature of the times." Triviality is certainly a feature of the final Nicole.

²Matthew J. Bruccoli, The Composition of "Tender Is the Night" (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), p. 128.

³F. Scott Fitzgerald, Tender Is the Night (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934, renewal copyright 1962), p. 6. Subsequent references to this text appear in parentheses in the body of the paper.

⁴Way, p. 126.

⁵Milton R. Stern, The Golden Moment: The Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), p. 324. Stern is concerned with the adaptation of women in the society of the early twentieth century and with Fitzgerald's use of the selfish destructive woman as a symbol of the time:

In short, Fitzgerald felt that whether he was

writing about men or women, in writing about the pampered, selfish, impulsive, destructiveness of his flaming generation, he was writing about the vain, impulsive destructiveness of the golden-girl "female" within him. That is, whether his materials demanded male or female characters, he felt that the post-war world he was writing about was really a woman's world. What happens, simply, is this: as the "good" female is out of place, is used, in the brutal sun-world of the hot cats who exercise their droit de seigneur, the "bad female" adapts to it. Adapting, the golden-girl finds irresponsible power in her liberation from the old "man's world." The "emergent Amazon" ends up in the female personification of her hot Tom, and exercising her power over him, she succeeds in the war for control of the new world of flaming youth.

⁶James E. Miller, Jr., "Tender Is the Night," in Tender Is the Night: Essays in Criticism, ed. Marvin J. LaHood (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), p. 93. Miller says: "There is a kind of spiritual cannibalism or vampirism going on in the novel . . . Nicole imbibes Dick's overflowing vitality" As she gains "stability," Dick is reduced to "emptiness."

⁷Way, p. 132. "At the end, when Nicole protests half-heartedly that Dick has been a good husband in the first years of their marriage, Baby retorts, 'That's what he was educated for.'"

⁸William F. Hall, "Dialogue and Theme," in Tender Is the Night: Essays in Criticism, ed. Marvin J. LaHood (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), p. 149.

⁹Bruce L. Grenberg, "Fitzgerald's 'Figured Curtain,'" in Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual 1978, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli and Richard Layman (Detroit: Gale Research, 1979), p. 125.

Amoral and self-indulgent, Tommy worships the power of money, which can bring him his dreams of good food, good clothes, and "good" women, and his only church is the stock market, where "everybody . . . is making millions" . . . Tommy is ultimately committed only to himself--to his own survival and self-indulgence.

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