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Open wounds, shrunk...but wounds still: Mental Illness in the Life and Literature of F. Scott Fitzgerald

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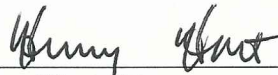
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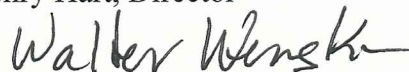
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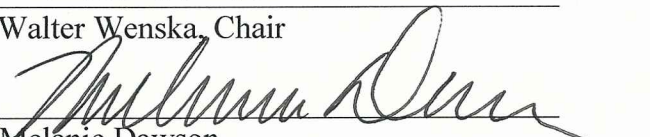
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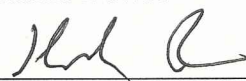
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Open wounds, shrunk...but wounds still:
Mental Illness in the Life and Literature of F. Scott Fitzgerald
by Catherine Bailey

“One writes of scars healed, a loose parallel to the pathology of the skin, but there is no such thing in the life of an individual. There are open wounds, shrunk sometimes to a size of a pin-prick but wounds still. The marks of suffering are comparable to the loss of a finger, or the sight of an eye. We may not miss them, either, for one minute in year, but if we should there is nothing to be done about it.”

- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender Is the Night* (168-169)

Fitzgerald’s marriage to Zelda Sayre, in 1920, united two exceptionally talented and creative individuals, both suffering from mental illnesses. Zelda’s psychotic breakdown in 1930 had a traumatic effect on Fitzgerald, but it also caused him to refocus and finish his novel *Tender Is the Night* (1934). Her breakdown also inspired him to examine his own breakdowns and write his essay “The Crack-Up” (1936).

This essay about his mental breakdown follows in the confessional literary tradition. Along with Fitzgerald’s note-books, letters, and other essays, “The Crack-Up” functions as a primary source from which to gain insight into Fitzgerald’s alcoholism and mood disorder. *Tender Is the Night* is also confessional and functions as a masked memoir. In the novel, Dick Diver resembles Fitzgerald with his own drinking problem and fluctuating moods. Moreover, Nicole Diver’s mental illness resembles Zelda’s (although Nicole’s schizophrenia is misdiagnosed).

Ultimately, F. Scott Fitzgerald’s personal life profoundly influenced his literature. He suffered psychological wounds, and he wrote in order to make sense of those wounds and to try to heal them. Yet, his writing goes beyond catharsis in the way it documents the human condition.

In a letter to Fitzgerald, a friend defined emotional bankruptcy as “drawing upon resources which one does not possess” (“Letters to...Fitzgerald” 291). His friend believed that the drainage of one’s resources resulted in a state of melancholy or depression. Fitzgerald’s own adoption of the concept of emotional bankruptcy reflected the modern culture of stock markets and monetary vernacular in which he lived. His fixation on the concept grew from his personal obsession with money. However, the concept of emotional bankruptcy had its roots in the Victorian era when rest cures were common among those whose aim was “returning the nerve force to its proper level” (Lawlor 128). Victorians defined melancholy as “a symptom of a disease of vitality, an impoverishing of the circulation and a slackening of nutrition” (Lawlor 132). An individual was perceived to have a limited amount of energy, and specialists believed that without energy, the individual would grow depressed. Fitzgerald and his contemporaries reconceptualized the 19th-century notion of one’s “nerve force” (Lawlor 107) into monetary terms.

In the novel *Tender Is the Night*, emotional bankruptcy is at the crux of the decline of Dick Diver, who, according to Matthew Bruccoli, “suffers a lesion of the spirit in consequence of giving too much of himself to his wife, friends, and patients” (Bruccoli 72). The novel contains no evidence to suggest that his role as therapist to other patients contributes to his decline. He does, though, give much of himself to friends and party guests throughout the novel: “His eyes were of a bright, hard blue...and there was never any doubt at whom he was looking or talking—and this is a flattering attention, for who looks at us?—glances fall upon us, curious or disinterested, nothing more” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 19). Dick gives to those around him the gift of intentional flattery; he operates

through emotional gift-giving. As Michael Nowlin argues, “[Dick] prefers giving people back a flattering idea of themselves, and in exchange receiving their love and devotion” (Nowlin 59). Yet, that gift-giving does not directly cause his decline. His sociability may, however, correlate to his increasing intake of alcohol, which propels his steady decline into an intensive crack-up. However, the most influential factor influencing Diver’s emotional bankruptcy is his relationship with Nicole. Furthermore, it is “the dual nature of his relation to Nicole, as husband and physician” (Adams 380) that leads to his own disintegration. Although Freud warns that a transference-love relationship between patient and therapist is potentially harmful to the patient, in *Tender Is the Night* it is Dr. Diver who experiences the consequences.

In his analysis of *Tender Is the Night*, Jeffrey Berman includes Freud’s definition of transference:

In every analytic treatment there arises, without the physician’s agency, an intense emotional relationship between the patient and the analysis 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 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 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 paralyse 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.

(Berman 73)

Furthermore, according to Freud, the “love relationship” that results is “illicit and...not intended to last for ever” (Freud 18). While “the full flood of Freudianization did not hit America until the late 1930s,” (Douglas 123), Fitzgerald certainly applies Freudian theories to his novel. Although his application of Freud’s transference theory is simplistic, Dick and Nicole’s relationship follows the theory fairly closely. It is “without the physician’s agency” that their relationship begins; in fact, it is largely Nicole’s manipulation, and later her family’s use of wealth as power, that causes the marriage.

First, it is Franz—whose name itself is a linguistic nod to Freud—who categorizes the relationship as transference: “‘It was the best thing that could have happened to her,’ said Franz dramatically, ‘a transference of the most fortuitous kind.’” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 120). For Franz, the transference that takes place between a young Nicole—diagnosed with schizophrenia¹—and Dr. Dick Diver is the best available solution to a mental sickness that seems incurable; Franz, in effect, recruits Diver to pursue a relationship with Nicole. His motivation to do so begins with her letters, which function as primary sources containing insight into her state of mind. He explains to Dick that “‘reading her letters helped us here—they were a measure of her condition’” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 130). Nicole’s letters provide the doctors—Franz, Dohlmer, and then Dick—with much of her interiority, and a way to track the progress, or lack thereof, of her mental illness.

¹ "Diagnosis: Divided Personality. Acute and down-hill phases of the illness. The fear of men is a symptom of the illness and is not at all conditional." (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 128)

On the spectrum of normalcy to madness, the letters fluctuate. “The letters were divided into two classes, of which the first class...was of marked pathological turn, and of which the second class...was entirely normal, and displayed a richly maturing nature” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 121). The first wave of letters reflects the depth of her mental state, which Nicole describes in one letter as being “a highly nervous state” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 122). Nicole explains that nobody around her is explaining the incestuous violation she has experienced and what that means for her mental health. She writes, “the blind must be led” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 122), and suggests that nobody is taking the initiative to lead her. In this way, she compares her mental and emotional state to blindness, a handicap, crippling. Nicole’s letters to Dick continue to venture into darker themes: “I write to you because there is no one else to whom I can turn.... I am completely broken and humiliated...pretending that what is the matter with my head is curable...nobody saw fit to tell me the truth about anything.... I am lonesome all the time...in a half daze” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 123). In this letter she shows how lacking she is in emotional support and demonstrates early signs of dependence on Dick. In another, she self-diagnoses herself: “Dear Captaine: I think one thing today and another tomorrow. That is really all that’s the matter with me, except a crazy defiance and a lack of proportion” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 124). In another, she considers herself “too unstable” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 124) to continue writing. These letters process her mental state through introspection, a sort of talk therapy with Dr. Diver. A sudden change comes as a result of the quasi-talk therapy: the second wave of letters. Nicole increasingly recognizes rebirth in herself and in the world around her: “I am slowly coming back to life.... Today the flowers and the clouds...” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 124). Diver explains to Franz that Nicole “seems hopeful

and normally hungry for life—even rather romantic” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 131). The bonds of transference begin to form for Nicole in her written correspondence with Dick, who—as scholarly psychiatrist²—is drawn to the letters in their written form.

Berman summarizes Freud’s definition of transference-love as: “when the patient becomes infatuated with the analyst” (Berman 73). Dick’s own infatuation with Nicole, as patient, comes with hesitation; it is, then, Nicole who takes control, who has the agency, in their first encounters. She is aware of her beauty during their first encounter, and, when the third party leaves, “Nicole took advantage of this to stand up and the impression of her youth and beauty grew on Dick until it welled up inside him in a compact paroxysm of emotion. She smiled, a moving childish smile that was like all the lost youth in the world” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 134). When Nicole takes advantage of a situation in which she is finally alone with Dick, her beauty and youth capture his attention. “Her very blonde hair dazzled Dick...her face lighting up like an angel’s” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 135). She shows intention in their second encounter, as well: “She smiled at him, making sure that the smile gathered up everything inside her and directed it toward him, making him a profound promise of herself” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 136). Additionally, Nicole kisses with intention. She kisses Dick with a strong force: “Now there was this scarcely saved waif of disaster bringing him the essence of a continent” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 136). Although Nicole is, in some ways, a waif, a neglected, abandoned child—who is furthermore a victim of incestuous rape—she brings the force of a continent to her intimate relations with Dick. She is inwardly weak, outwardly strong. In response, Dick advises her to participate in youthful activities, some she has likely missed out on. “‘You’re all well,’ he said. ‘Try to forget the past; don’t overdo

² Dick’s literature: “‘A Psychology for Psychiatrists.’” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 137)

things for a year or so. Go back to America and be a debutante and fall in love—and be happy.” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 142-143). In order to overcompensate for their age difference—about 10 years—he not only reminds her that she is young, but also advises her to *be* young.

Dick hesitates in his relations with Nicole because of his hyper-awareness of the transference relationship that is developing, and probably because of his awareness of the general dangers of transference-love. As they are walking, Dick “tried honestly to divorce her from any obsession that he had stitched her together—glad to see her build up happiness and confidence from him; the difficulty was that, eventually, Nicole brought everything to his feet, gifts of sacrificial ambrosia, of worshipping myrtle” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 137). Nicole appears to be strong, to be healthy, and Dick does not want her to attribute that strength to him; he is avoiding a dependence that is, however, already forming. Nicole is beginning to see him as savior, a rescuer from her father and from the prison of her past, and she is honoring him as such. Nicole, instead of resisting transference, is transferring gifts to him. In his detailed study of gift-exchange, Lewis Hyde explains how “a gift is consumed when it moves from one hand to another with no assurance of anything in return” (Hyde 9). Nicole’s gifts of ambrosia and myrtle are described as being given in worship and in sacrifice. Her gifts also bear the promise of growth. Hyde asserts that there is an “association...between gift exchange and increased worth, fertility, liveliness. Where true, organic increase is at issue, gift exchange preserves that increase; the gift grows because living things grow” (Hyde 11). Nicole’s gift-giving not only represents how she views Dick as a savior. By giving him living objects, she demonstrates the hope that she is placing in a fruitful, romantic relationship.

Freud argues that transference is inevitable; Dick and Nicole provide evidence to support Freud's claim. "Dick walked beside her, feeling her unhappiness, and wanting to drink the rain that touched her cheek" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 143). As they walk, Dick becomes increasingly absorbed in Nicole's mood, feels her emotions, and desires her physically. When they exchange a kiss, the absorption solidifies, because "gifts...have the power to join people together" (Hyde 70). Their intimacy is described as: "atoms joined and inseparable... 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" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 155). As joined atoms, they are absorbed into each other; they become one unit, which is Fitzgerald's interpretation of Freud's concept of transference. Berman explains 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" (Berman 72). In the case of Nicole Warren and Dick Diver, it is Dick who is absorbed or incorporated into Nicole. For him, it is "a wild submergence of soul, a dipping of all colors into an obscuring dye" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 217). And, although he is a psychiatrist and she is a patient, Nicole gets the upper hand, and is aware of this power dynamic: "Nicole had a better hold on him now and she held it." (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 155). Nicole feels accomplished. Freud argues that "if the patient's advances were returned it would be a great triumph for her, but a complete defeat for the treatment" (Freud 24). While Nicole does triumph in

making Dick belong to her, transference will, instead, prove to be more damaging to Dr. Diver.

Physical intimacy in *Tender Is the Night* causes absorption, and it is sexual intercourse—or erotic gift-giving—that finalizes the process. To claim Dick as hers, Nicole goes to his room in the night: “Her beauty climbed the rolling slope, it came into the room, rustling ghostlike through the curtains” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 156). Although Fitzgerald does not explicitly depict sexual intercourse between Dick and Nicole, it is implied by Nicole’s comment the following morning: “I’m not ashamed about last night” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 156). Dick reflects, “when he left her outside the sad door on the Zurichsee and she turned and looked at him he knew her problem was one they had together for good now” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 157). Because they have had sex, and have given their bodies to one another, they have physically become one unit, and, as Dick understands, they have emotionally become one: he is now incorporated into her “problem,” or her mental illness. Transference, as Fitzgerald understands it and portrays it, is therefore complete.

Motivated by his personal obsession with money, Fitzgerald interprets the psychological concept of transference as a series of transactions between Dr. Dick Diver and Nicole Warren. Hyde explains how “the gift moves in a circle” (Hyde 16); the gift cycle established in *Tender Is the Night* is between Nicole, Dick, and the Warrens. The Warrens give Dick money so that he can provide for Nicole—as therapist and husband—and can build a life for them on the Riviera. Dick is given a life of luxury and wealth, is “constantly inundated by a trickling of goods and money” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 170).

Additionally, he uses the Warrens money to establish his own clinic with Franz³. The literal business transaction contributes to the resulting loneliness and emptiness present in their marriage: “She led a lonely life owning Dick who did not want to be owned” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 180). Dick gives Nicole love, both in his role as therapist and as husband. While in pure gift-exchange, “a circulation is set up and can be counted on” (Hyde 114), in this case, the gift-giving stops at Nicole. Her gift-giving began with the ambrosia and myrtle, and, while she gives the gift of sexual love, there is no evidence that that gift-giving continues. Therefore, the gift cycle does not operate equitably. And while the Warrens continue to have enough money to draw upon, Dick goes emotionally bankrupt.

As a result of the inequitable gift-exchange, Dick and Nicole’s respective mental health statuses operate with an inverse relationship; in that way, their relationship functions as a single transaction. Although Freud argues that transference-love harms the patient, Hyde recognizes the risk a therapist runs when entering into a gift-giving relationship. He explains that “there are times when it would be inappropriate for a psychotherapeutic relationship to be a gift relationship...all healers risk contamination from their patients” (Hyde 71). Nicole, described as “the sweet poison” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 302), contaminates Dick. In a review of the novel, writers for the “Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease” wrote of this contamination and inverse relationship:

As, through Diver’s care and constant attendance, [Nicole] gains gradually to a firmer hold on reality, Diver himself slowly begins to slip: it would appear in the time scale of the novel that in proportion as Nicole’s improvement becomes more definite and complete, Diver, superficially at

³ Franz says: “...we owe this clinic to Nicole’s money.” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 240)

first, but later more deeply and pragmatically, is aware of the accruing effects of his own integration.

(“Journal of Nervous...” 391)

Fitzgerald depicts the Divers’ relationship as a business transaction, defined as “an occurrence in which goods, services, or money are passed from one person, account, etc., to another” (“Transaction”). In this case, Dick provides Nicole with his service as psychiatrist; he is her care-taker. Moreover, he passes his vitality to her, the image being that of an hourglass: Nicole and Dick are one, yet the sand of the hourglass passes from the section above to the section below. The hourglass’ sand represents vitality, energy; the emptiness of the above section represents bankruptcy.

Fitzgerald applies additional economic concepts to Dick and Nicole’s relationship. Dick recognizes that the principle of diminishing marginal productivity is applicable to Nicole’s mental illness. He tells her, “you’re stronger every day.... Your illness follows the law of diminishing returns” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 267). However, this observation reflects a lack of economic knowledge on the part of Dick Diver, and, by extension, F. Scott Fitzgerald. Dick is correct in his identification of the law of diminishing returns; however, Nicole is not necessarily growing stronger. “The law of diminishing returns states that in a production process, adding more workers might initially increase output and eventually creates the optimal output per worker. After that optimal point, however, the efficiency of each worker decreases because other factors—such as the production technique or the available resources—remain the same” (“Diminishing returns”). In the Dick-Nicole case, the *input* is Dick’s therapy, both in the form of marital love and in the form of actual, clinical therapy. The *output* is Nicole’s

recovery. At a certain point—the optimal point—Dick’s therapy yields less results. “The dualism in his views of her—that of the husband, that of the psychiatrist—was increasingly paralyzing his faculties” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 188). His input becomes increasingly inefficient. Thus, her recovery plateaus. Dick reassures Nicole’s sister, Baby Warren, that Nicole is not insane and will not go mad, but that she is, in fact, “a schizoid—a permanent eccentric. You can’t change that.” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 151). Dick’s partner, Franz, reiterates a similar sentiment, suggesting that Nicole “will possibly remain something of a patient all her life” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 239). Dick’s observation, therefore, is contradictory, for he claims that Nicole is stronger every day. Nicole only appears to be gaining strength, because Dick—as husband-psychiatrist—is losing his.

Nicole is reluctant to perceive their relationship as a transaction. As an adolescent, she saw Dick as a hero and was unaware of the effect her mental illness could have on him over a long period of time. Fitzgerald writes, “she had thought of him really as an inexhaustible energy, incapable of fatigue” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 300-301). Their romantic absorption into one another results in Dick feeling the heavy blow of each of Nicole’s relapses. “Dick and Nicole had become one and equal, not opposite and complementary.... He could not watch her disintegrations without participating in them” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 190-191). Dick’s disintegration, then, is a direct result of their transference-love relationship and their absorption into one unit. Her episodes of hysteria affect Dick intensely, particularly the Ferris Wheel episode and the car wreck. Fitzgerald describes the Ferris Wheel episode as such: “She was alone in what was momentarily the top boat of the wheel, and as it descended he saw that she was laughing hilariously; he slunk back in the crowd, a crowd which, at the wheel’s next revolution, spotted the

intensity of Nicole's hysteria" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 189). Her hysterical laugh punctuates each episode. It occurs again after the car wreck that she causes: "She was laughing hilariously, unashamed, unafraid, unconcerned. No one coming on the scene would have imagined that she had caused it; she laughed as after some mild escape of childhood" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 192). Afterwards, Dick informs her, "'this last thing knocked me sideways'" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 194).

The inverse transaction of mental health is complete in the almost-suicidal scene on the boat, a setting which is fitting for Dick's attitude toward his and Nicole's marriage, a sinking ship from which he must jump. "'You ruined me, did you?' he inquired blandly. 'Then we're both ruined. So—'" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 273-274). In his melancholy he wants to jump from the boat, and he wants to do it with Nicole because of the transference that has made them "Dicole" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 103), a linguistic representation of their absorption. Nicole almost complies: "Cold with terror she put her other wrist into his grip. All right, she would go with him—again she felt the beauty of the night vividly, in one moment of complete response and abnegation" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 273-274). Nicole feels the peaceful essence of the evening as she decides to jump with him; it is a moment of self-denial in which she is simply following the request of her husband-psychiatrist. They do not jump, but the experience of such deep loss of agency causes Nicole to understand fully the absorption between them. Her reflections demonstrate her initial desire to separate from Dick: "If she need not, in her spirit, be forever one with Dick as he had appeared last night, she must be something in addition, not just an image on his mind, condemned to endless parades around the circumference of a medal" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 277). Nicole speculates that if there is no longer a

necessity for her to be the wife and patient of Dick Diver in his currently depressive state, then she desires to be independent. As a planet revolving around Dick as sun, she desires to break free from that small prison she is in. “Nicole will remain in love with Dr. Diver only so long as she needs him. The fact that she is in love with him is predicated on sickness; when she ultimately comes to feel that she can stand by herself, her love for him collapses” (Chamberlain 374). For Nicole, experiencing Dick’s suicidal mood inspires her to find freedom and encourages her to have an affair. For Nicole, recognizing her current life as a prison is an opportunity to seek freedom from it (in her case, with another man). Nicole’s romantic goals are to be loved, lose agency, find freedom, and attain power in another relationship, only to lose agency again.

Nicole’s mental illness causes Dick’s mental health to worsen; furthermore, alcohol—perhaps a gift to himself—propels him into decline. Dick’s crack-up, a phrase Fitzgerald uses to describe his own deterioration years after the novel’s publication, is wrapped up in his alcoholism, but also in his melancholic tendencies, both of which appear before his official crack-up. In preparation for the first party hosted by the Divers in the novel, Nicole recognizes a manic-depressive inclination in Dick:

He went back into his house and Nicole saw that one of his most characteristic moods was upon him, the excitement that swept everyone up into it and was inevitably followed by his own form of melancholy, which he never displayed but at which she guessed. This excitement about things reached an intensity out of proportion to their importance.

(Fitzgerald, *Tender* 27)

He is exhibiting symptoms of mania: increased sociability and intense excitement, if not euphoria, in anticipation of the party. However, what follows is always a depressive mood, one he masks from Nicole.

Alcohol contributes to Dick's bankruptcy, draining his energy further. Alcohol has a presence throughout the novel, although it's mostly slight, subtle, and even inconsequential. The first suggestion that Dick Diver drinks is on the beach, when Rosemary is observing the cast of characters on the Riviera: "The man with the jockey cap was now going from umbrella to umbrella carrying a bottle and little glasses in his hands" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 11). The presence of alcohol seems normal, an accessory to the social life on the Riviera, and is therefore not yet alarming. Fitzgerald writes that, "Dick drank, not too much, but he drank" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 61), and provides an example of his alcohol intake: "an ounce of gin with twice as much water" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 166), which is not an alarming amount. Dick develops a drinking habit that is motivated by both outward perceptions and inward emotions. While in conversation Dick is described as "whipping up his imagination with champagne" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 260) in order to properly tell a story. Similarly, when reconnecting with Rosemary, his motivation for drinking is to ignore the guilt he is feeling prior to having sex with her: "Rosemary took a cocktail and a little wine, and Dick took enough so that his feeling of dissatisfaction left him" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 213). Dick's drunkenness culminates in Italy, where he exhibits "self-destructive tendencies" (Berman 77), as well as outward belligerency. "The passionate impatience of the week leaped up in Dick and clothed itself like a flash of violence, the honorable, the traditional resource of his land; he stepped forward and slapped the man's face" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 224). It is suggested

that his sexual frustration, in combination with the effects of alcohol, cause him to react impulsively.

Fitzgerald uses a vocabulary of cracking and breakage to describe what happens to Dick Diver's body and what happens to his character. Physically, Dick cracks in Italy a result of his drunken behavior and violent actions. After hitting the Italian policeman—the carabinieri—Dick is then beaten. “He felt his nose break like a shingle and his eyes jerk as if they had snapped back on a rubber band into his head.... Momentarily he lost consciousness... a bloody haze... he was alone” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 226). After being beaten, Dick is physically broken and sits in an isolated and “raw state” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 233). Dick experiences physical wounds, while in Italy, but also experiences cracks to his character. He explains to Rosemary that he has “gone into a process of deterioration.... The change came a long way back—but at first it didn't show. The manner remains intact for some time after the morale cracks” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 285). The cracks in his character affect how he interacts with the world around him: “Dick's bitterness had surprised Rosemary, who had thought of him as all-forgiving, all-comprehending” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 287). The truth: ““He's not received anywhere any more”” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 287). His internal cracks have been unmasked and externalized. He is rude and offensive. He responds to Mary North: ““But you've gotten so damned dull, Mary. I listened as long as I could.”” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 264). Dick has gone from enchanting host to insulting drunk. “Again he had offended some one—couldn't he hold his tongue a little longer?” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 271). His words are depicted as being as violent as his actions: “He crashed into words with a harsh ineptness” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 272). The shift in his social interactions—from

complimentary to offensive—is attributed to his inability to hold his liquor. Tommy Barban says to Nicole, “There are those who can drink and those who can’t. Obviously Dick can’t. You ought to tell him not to” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 274). The deterioration of Dick’s personality is evident to those around him, including Rosemary who tells him, “Liked you—I loved you. Everybody loved you” (*Tender* 314). Rosemary recognizes Dick’s change in spirit. Similarly, Nicole observes, “you used to want to create things—now you seem to want to smash them up” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 267). Nicole worries about how the crack-up will affect her in their marriage.

Dick Diver’s depression is certainly correlated with his alcoholism. His depression results in a loss of self, as Fitzgerald explains:

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.

(Fitzgerald, *Tender* 201)

Although Dick is unsure of when he lost his sense of self, he is conscious of it happening. He considers himself to be “the Black Death... I don’t seem to bring people happiness any more” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 219). He no longer gives gifts as flattering party host. He has also lost his former passion and ambition. Franz tells Dick that his “heart isn’t in the project any more” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 256). Likewise, Dick recognizes the change that has happened in his attitude towards psychiatry: “Not without desperation he had long

felt the ethics of his profession dissolving into a lifeless mass” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 256).

Like his marriage and personality, his profession is empty, without meaning, deteriorated.

However, it is likely that his loss of interest in psychiatry is inevitable. Berman argues that Dick “invests all his energy and time into authorship” (Berman 68) and has a “preference for the theoretical over the clinical side of psychiatry” (Berman 68). While this preference demonstrates a lack of psychiatric understanding on Fitzgerald’s part—psychiatric books did not, and do not, have much commercial appeal—it also casts Dick as an unconvincing character. Berman claims that “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” (Berman 68). Yet, to claim that Dick’s psychiatric inclinations are only a sign of Fitzgerald inserting himself—his aims and his fear of failure—into his character, is to limit potential analysis of Dick as a character. Fitzgerald wrote in a letter that “since [Dick’s] choice of a profession had accidentally wrecked him, he might plausibly have walked out on the profession itself” (Fitzgerald, “Letters to Friends” 278). Fitzgerald considers Dick’s profession alone to have wrecked him, to have caused such damage. But, there is no evidence to support that “Dick is a victim of his profession” (Berman 68). It is not his vocation that has victimized him. His relationship with Nicole—the transference-love turned into a marriage—is a much more influential factor. The improper use of his profession leads to the wreckage. Entering into a transference-love relationship—although Freud considers it to be inevitable—was the riskiest move Dick could have made; becoming a psychiatrist, generally, is not the reason for his downfall.

The final scenes in Fitzgerald's novel illustrate the inverse relationship between Nicole's mental health and Dick's. Dick speaks of his deterioration as if it were a sinking ship. He tells Nicole, "I can't do anything for you any more. I'm trying to save myself," to which she responds, "From my contamination?" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 301). Nicole rejects Dick's claim that her sickness has contaminated him and depleted his strength. Nicole exclaims, "You're a coward! You've made a failure of your life, and you want to blame it on me." (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 301). Nicole rejects the notion of a transaction taking place between them in their marriage. There exists an unspoken moment following their discourse in which their connection is broken:

And suddenly, in the space of two minutes she achieved her victory and justified herself to herself without lie or subterfuge, cut the cord forever. Then she walked, weak in the legs, and sobbing coolly, toward the household that was hers at last. Dick waited until she was out of sight. Then he leaned his head forward on the parapet. The case was finished. Doctor Diver was at liberty.

(Fitzgerald, *Tender* 302)

However, only Nicole experiences the benefits of the divide because she has latched onto Tommy Barban, a new rescuer. Nowlin explains that "Nicole, whose gaze once transformed Dick Diver into the supreme object of desire, 'continue[s] her dry suckling at his lean chest' until she recognizes that he has nothing to give and then 'cut[s] the cord forever' that binds her to him" (Nowlin 73). She chooses Tommy, who is "less civilized" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 19), barbaric even, but "a ruler...a hero" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 196), who falls quickly into his role of "Nicole's protector" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 310). Nicole

follows a distinct pattern in her intimate relationships in which she sees her future partner as a savior from her current partner. She was loved by her father, but lost agency in his incestuous violation of her. She then manipulated, charmed, seduced, and then drained Dick Diver, before pursuing an affair with Tommy Barban.

Nicole deliberately enters into an affair with Tommy and partly blames Dick for causing her to be unfaithful. Fitzgerald explains Nicole's thought-process, when he writes:

Nicole did not want any vague 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.

(Fitzgerald, *Tender* 291)

Although there is some internal conflict, she certainly “enters into her affair with Barban quite calculatingly, unlike the indecision and guilt with which Dick begins his affair with Rosemary” (Berman 83). Dick does eventually have an affair with Rosemary but is extremely hesitant from the start. Soon after meeting Rosemary, and falling for her, he tells her, “I'm afraid I'm in love with you...and that's not the best thing that could happen” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 74). He suspects the potential danger of an affair. When Rosemary and Dick do finally become intimate, he immediately thinks of Nicole: “Nicole was his girl.... Time with Rosemary was self-indulgence” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 213); “Certain thoughts about Nicole, that she should die, sink into mental darkness, love

another man, made him physically sick” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 217). However, Nicole finds her potential affair with Barban to be reasonable. She speculates that “other women have lovers—why not me?” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 276), and is soon “content and happy with the logic of, Why shouldn’t I?” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 277). Furthermore, she blames Dick—for his assumed infidelity and his alcoholism—and is, therefore, able to justify her actions. For Nicole, “the most unhappy aspect of their relations was Dick’s growing indifference, at present personified by too much drink. Nicole did not know whether she was to be crushed or spared” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 280). Not only has she lost the undivided attention of her husband, she has also cast him as dangerous and potentially violent towards her. Therefore it is necessary, in Nicole’s mind, to transfer her love from one man to the next. Berman claims that “[Nicole] 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” (Berman 84). Because she suspects Dick is unfaithful, she transfers her love to Barban in revenge. Her transfer of love to Barban is also necessary for her safety, because of Dick’s drinking. In recognizing Dick as emotionally bankrupt, she transfers love to Barban in “an experiment” that “might have therapeutic value” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 291). In this way, Nicole plays the part of therapist. Her new relationship with Barban is perceived as being therapeutic, not unlike her marriage with Dick.

Nicole’s behavior is cyclical in nature. This is partly due to the permanent nature of her mental illness caused by the original incestuous violation between her and Devereux Warren, her father. Because it was a sexual violation it has left a wound.

Nicole attempts to use other men as internal bandages to heal that sexual wound.

However, the wound remains. She does not truly recover from her schizophrenia. And she never truly stands on her own. Berman details Nicole's love relationship pattern:

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 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.

(Berman 84-85)

However, each new relationship, in some way, repeats the previous relationship. Because of the ten-year age gap between Dick and Nicole, their intimate experiences parallel the relations between Nicole and her father. Nicole sings to Dick in a private, intimate moment, just as she would sing to her father. Devereux Warren describes to the doctors at the clinic how “[Nicole] used to sing to me” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 129); Nicole, in her first encounters with Dick, “sang to him” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 136). Similarly, her relationship with Tommy quickly begins to resemble her marriage with Dick, what Nicole would deem, “another little prison” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 307). For Nicole, the trauma she experienced with her father, and her marriage to Dick Diver have been imprisoning and incapacitating. After Nicole has had the affair with Tommy, it is Tommy—not Nicole—who informs Dick of the potential for divorce: “Tommy faced

Dick, saying: ‘I think Nicole wants a divorce—I suppose you’ll make no obstacles?’” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 310). Nicole is unable to confront Dick herself to ask for legal divorce; she has no agency. Additionally, when Dick comes to the beach for the last time and is about to leave, Nicole desires to see him. However, Tommy does not allow her to see him or say any parting words. “‘I’m going to him,’ Nicole got to her knees. ‘No, you’re not,’ said Tommy, pulling her down firmly. ‘Let well enough alone.’” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 314). Verbally and physically, Tommy restricts Nicole from doing what she wants.

Thus, Nicole’s alleged recovery at the close of the novel is not too convincing. Dick’s decline, his crack-up, is much more vivid, and is captured most illustratively in the water trick scene. When it is suggested that he attempt to aquaplane, he agrees to try in order to impress Rosemary: “It was only the closeness of Rosemary’s exciting youth that prompted the impending effort...[to] make a spectacle of himself” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 282-283). While attempting to aquaplane, he cannot do the same tricks he was once able to do: he is “fumbling through stunts he had once done with ease” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 282). By the end of the novel, Dick has lost his youth and his physique. Perhaps, he is also impotent: he “slowly began to rise...he was having difficulties...he tried to rise. He could not rise...lifting an inch, two inches” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 283-284). Although this scene details Dick’s attempts to do aqua tricks, there is a sexual suggestion in the language, that is confirmed by the sexual suggestion of Dick’s name and his nickname “Lucky Dick, you big stiff” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 116). In addition to losing his youthful athleticism, it is possible Dick has lost his sexual abilities too.

More crucially, Dick's crack-up—which is bound up in his alcoholism—results in both vocational and mental declines. His partnership with Franz breaks; not only is his heart not in it anymore, but his unprofessional alcoholism results in uneasiness from both patients and Franz. The father of one patient informs Dick, “My son is here for alcoholism, and he told us he smelt liquor on your breath.... We hand Von Cohn to you to be cured, and within a month he twice smells liquor on your breath. What kind of cure is that there?... My son comes to a sanitarium and a doctor reeks of it!” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 253). Dick is beginning to fail at his vocation because of his drinking. Franz's wife, Kaethe, recognizes how Dick's habits are negatively affecting the success of the clinic. She asks Franz, “Do you think that sort of thing does the Clinic any good? The liquor I smelt on him tonight, and several other times since he's been back... Dick is no longer a serious man” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 241). Dick, too recognizes how inappropriate his drinking is in relation to his vocation, and does attempt to limit his alcohol intake. “He was averaging a half-pint of alcohol a day.... Dismissing a tendency to justify himself, he sat down at his desk and wrote out, like a prescription, a régime that would cut his liquor in half. Doctors...could never smell of liquor.... Dick blamed himself only for indiscretion” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 254). Dick assumes the role of doctor to himself, writing a quasi-prescription. However, he only considers his alcoholism to be inappropriate at the workplace. Ultimately, he is not very convinced of the need to stop drinking and his drinking escalates. Franz recognizes his unusual pattern of drinking and informs him: “Dick, I know well that you are a temperate, well-balanced man, even though we do not entirely agree on the subject of alcohol” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 255). Ultimately, Franz breaks their professional relationship. “Dick had not intended to come

to a decision so quickly, nor was he prepared for Franz's so ready acquiescence in the break" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 256). The language Fitzgerald uses, once again, is language of breakage. As an intellectual, Dick continues on in fragments. There is no resolution for Dick Diver; he is left wandering in upper New York, as a nomadic doctor. The big stacks of papers on his desk are "almost in process of completion" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 315), but never fully accomplished.

In *Tender Is the Night*, form matches content; there is a lack of resolution, a feeling of incompleteness. In his review of the novel, Malcolm Cowley observed that "[the novel] doesn't give the feeling of being complete in itself" (Cowley, *Tender...* 387). Its structure is not as compact or complete as some of Fitzgerald's other novels, such as *The Great Gatsby*. However, the incompleteness of Dick Diver's story, and the disenchantment that results, is compelling. Brucoli argues that the novel's "tone is one of infinite regret conveyed through a seemingly dispassionate factual account of Dick's failures in America. All the information about him has a second-hand, picked-up quality, which reinforces the impression of Dick's migration from failure to failure" (Brucoli 159). To feel unsatisfied about Dick's incomplete, fragmented story (content) is to feel unsatisfied about the novel's seemingly incomplete ending (form). Fitzgerald himself "believed that 'the purpose of a work of fiction is to appeal to the lingering after-effects in the reader's mind'" (Dyer 137). Geoff Dyer further explains that "Hemingway...later told Max Perkins...that 'in retrospect [Fitzgerald's] *Tender Is the Night* gets better and better.'" (Dyer 137). Likewise, John Updike observed that, "So often in Fitzgerald...we have only the afterglow of a dream to see by." (Dyer 137). Similarly, Brucoli observes: "In *Tender Is the Night* the reader is compelled to admire a character whose appalling

decline is traced. The dominant mood, a compound of regret and disenchantment, is carefully built up to the marvelous final chapter.” (Brucoli 73) Fitzgerald’s writing style accounts for the reader’s sentiment at the close of the novel. However, many readers of the time were dissatisfied with Dick’s plot. Almost all negative critiques centered around Dick’s unconvincing plot, and Brucoli explains that “the attacks of the verisimilitude of Dick’s decline appear to have troubled Fitzgerald more than anything else the critics wrote” (Brucoli 7). It was difficult for critics to accept that “[Dick’s] resources have been so completely drained that there is no hope for him” (Brucoli 84). Dick’s decline—regardless of how hard it is to believe—is a blend of fact and fiction. F. Scott Fitzgerald projects onto Dick Diver his own experiences with drinking, depression, and fluctuating moods. The novel, which started as a portrait of the Murphys on the Riviera, “became a fictionalized account of Fitzgerald’s life during the period in which he was writing it” (Brucoli 17), which would explain his irritability and vulnerability towards criticism.

The novel’s feeling of incompleteness stems more from the incomplete, and even ignored, recovery that Nicole allegedly experiences. Berman considers Nicole to be “astonishingly successful as a survivor” (Berman 84), and goes on to observe that, “What we rarely see in *Tender Is the Night* is the full-blown marital warfare that inevitability accompanies the subtle betrayal of love” (Berman 85). With regard to marital conflict, Fitzgerald represses biographical information and avoids including it in his novel. He does, however, admit that the Divers’ marital conflict is lurking as early as Book I, when he writes: “[Dick] had become intensely critical of [Nicole]. Though he thought she was the most attractive human creature he had ever seen...he scented battle from afar, and

subconsciously he had been hardening and arming himself, hour by hour” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 100). The battle is played out—primarily—through infidelities and subtle dialogue. However, it is a part of the plot that Fitzgerald assumes the reader will accept, just as he assumes the reader will accept Nicole’s diagnosis and recovery. It is remarkable how Nicole is able to heal from her break with Dick; it is even more remarkable that she is able to heal from paternal rape. Furthermore, it is doubtful that the rape she experienced would have, realistically, resulted in the diagnosis of schizophrenia.

Berman doubts both Nicole’s diagnosis and recovery: “We may question Fitzgerald’s implication that the incest directly precipitated Nicole’s schizophrenia. Indeed, she hardly appears schizophrenic at all” (Berman 82). Nicole’s diagnosis reflects a lack of understanding, on Fitzgerald’s part, about the mental disorder. In the same way that he applies the Freudian concept of transference to the marriage between Dick and Nicole, Fitzgerald applies a simplified version of Freud’s Electra complex to Nicole. Her father’s incestuous advances result in schizophrenia. Edmund Wilson’s explains that “Electra is what we should call nowadays schizophrenic” (Wilson 261), which, likewise, reflects a misunderstanding of schizophrenia, or, at least, a reductive view of it. In the novel, it is assumed that “an incestuous attack upon her in girlhood has split her personality” (Canby 371). When speaking to Professor Dohmler, who owns the clinic, Devereux Warren explains his relationship with his daughter, when she was 16 years old: “and then all at once we were lovers” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 129). Mr. Warren has sex with his young daughter. What results are delusions, always related to men, “almost always about men going to attack her, men she knew or men on the street—anybody”

(Fitzgerald, *Tender* 127). To Dick, Franz unpacks the process of Nicole's shift from feeling responsible to feeling violated:

‘She felt complicity... First came the shock. Then she went off to boarding-school and heard the girls talking so from sheer self-protection she developed the idea that she had had no complicity—and from there it was easy to slide into a phantom world where all men, the more you liked them and trusted them, the more evil [they were].’

(Fitzgerald, *Tender* 130-131)

Nicole's delusions confirm that, in incest, she felt attacked, and therefore it was not consensual.

The novel never expands on the “horror directly” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 131). However, Mr. Warren's dialogue, coupled with details of some of Nicole's episodes of hysteria, provide evidence for the nature of the rape itself. When asked if the relations continued, Nicole's father explains that “she seemed to freeze up right away. She'd just say, ‘Never mind, never mind, Daddy. It doesn't matter. Never mind’” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 129). To use the language of “freezing up” is to imply a freezing up during the sex itself, which would physically result in a large amount of blood. During Nicole's interior monologue, she explains that “after my second child, my little girl, Topsy, was born everything got dark again” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 161), which suggests that there was potentially—with the birth of Topsy—a large amount of blood as well, and that the bleeding triggered a relapse. For Nicole, because of the nature of her father's relations with her, the sight of blood—particularly blood on sheets—is a trigger. So, when Dick hands her the linens with the dead black man's blood on them, it activates one of her

episodes: “There was a stain on the green coverlet, there would be faint blood on the blanket beneath” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 110). Nicole’s dialogue confirms blood as trigger: “‘It’s you!’ she cried. ‘—it’s you come to intrude on the only privacy I have in the world—with your spread with red blood on it...the bathroom, the only place I can go for privacy, dragging spreads with red blood on them and asking me to fix them.’” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 112). These lines of dialogue set up the bathroom as Nicole’s place of retreat. The bathroom episodes are similar to her other episodes—at The Fair, in the car—when she loses control and is hysterical. Her hysteria in the bathroom scene is described as: “a verbal inhumanity penetrated the keyhole and the cracks in the doors, swept into the suite and in the shape of horror took form again” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 112). In response, Dick repeatedly urges her to “‘Control yourself!’” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 112). At The Fair, Dick asks her, “Why did you lose control of yourself like that?” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 189). However, the bathroom scenes—the first being what “Violet McKisco had seen in the bathroom at Villa Diana” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 112)—are uniquely associated with her initial sexual relations with her father.

Berman questions the credibility of Nicole’s “apparent recovery” (Berman 70) and questions Dick’s role as therapist, arguing:

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 to 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.

(Berman 70)

Dick Diver certainly doesn't analyze his patient's symptoms, or else he would know not to hand Nicole blood-stained sheets. The only talking cure that takes place is the initial exchange of letters between Nicole and Dick; we are not allowed access to Dick's letters to Nicole, so we do not know how much of an active role he played in the quasi-talk therapy of the letters. Fitzgerald describes Professor Dohmler's clinic, where Dick works, as being "the first modern clinic for mental illness; at a casual glance no layman would recognize it as a refuge for the broken, the incomplete, the menacing, of this world" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 120). There is little description of patient-psychiatrist relations; the clinic functions as a home for the mentally ill, but not as a place to receive therapy and recover. Nicole's musings as an adolescent in a letter to Dick are seemingly naïve, but, in actuality, describe Dick's attitude toward psychiatry. She writes, "I am glad you are so interested in examining people and sending them back. It must be so much fun" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 122). Nicole's understanding of psychiatry is that it is simply a process of examination and dismissal; the fact that she calls it "so much fun" may be attributed to her naiveté. Or, it may be attributed to Fitzgerald's naiveté. He describes Dick's profession as one that "[sorts] the broken shells" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 177), without fixing them. The talking cure—or, "the magical power of language to relieve mental suffering" (Berman 1)—according to Berman, "has never informed [Dr. Diver's] therapy" (Berman 85). Instead, Dick practices what he tells Rosemary is "active love" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 75), and what Berman calls Dick's "rescue fantasy in which he

desires to cure his patient through love” (Berman 77). Instead of following standard psychotherapeutic procedures, he assumes the role of caretaker. Just as Nicole tends to her garden⁴, Dick tends to Nicole.

Therefore, without a clear, psychological explanation for Nicole’s recovery, it is difficult to believe. She is described as being suddenly “relaxed” and feeling “new and happy” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 289), following her decision to gain independence from Dick and have an affair with Tommy. “Her thoughts were clear as good bells—she had a sense of being cured and in a new way. Her ego began blooming like a great rich rose as she scrambled back along the labyrinths in which she had wandered for years. She hated the beach, resented the places where she had played planet to Dick’s sun” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 289). Although Fitzgerald’s description illustrates Nicole’s resentment towards Dick, which will inform her decision to choose Tommy, she only senses that she has recovered in some new way. She perceives herself as strong, as does Dick, when he explains to Tommy that ““Nicole is now made of—of Georgia pine, which is the hardest wood known, except lignum vitae from New Zealand”” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 276). However, no clinical work has been done to aid Nicole in her recovery; Dick’s emotional bankruptcy, although a compelling analogy, does not add up from a psychological standpoint, just as the rape of Nicole as the cause for schizophrenia is not credible. Nicole’s diagnosis itself is not credible.

Nicole can retroactively be diagnosed as having Borderline Personality Disorder, based on the evidence that *Tender Is the Night* provides. Sherry Eckrich explains that “the psychotic episodes experienced by borderline personalities are different from those

⁴ ““Nicole’s garden,” said Dick. ‘She won’t let it alone—she nags it all the time, worries about its diseases.’” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 28)

of truly psychotic individuals.... They are brief.... They are usually related to unusual stress in their lives” (Eckrich 168). Nicole’s episodes are like those of a borderline patient. Nicole’s hysterical bathroom scene at the hotel is triggered by the sight of blood, and is related directly to the incestuous relationship with her father. Eckrich identifies the role of parents in a borderline patient’s mental illness: “Predictably, an important intimate relationship that is fraught with difficulties for borderline personalities is their relationship with their parents” (Eckrich 167), and Nicole certainly experiences difficulties in the relationship with her father. Furthermore, Eckrich explains that, “in their more intimate relationships they can be demanding, clinging, manipulative, and devaluing.... The continually fluctuating feelings states lead to a history of stormy, erratic relationships” (Eckrich 167). Eckrich’s descriptions are comparable to Nicole’s relationship with Dick, in addition to her relationship patterns as a whole. Furthermore, a borderline patient’s “goal may be to find some immediate relief from the distress of depression or angry feelings, contorted interpersonal relationships, or ill-defined general feelings of emptiness and discontent” (Eckrich 167), which would explain Nicole’s motives for entering into an affair with Tommy Barban. Berman observes that “we certainly do not receive an inside account of [Nicole’s] madness. The few symptoms she manifests suggest hysteria and obsession compulsion” (Berman 82-83). There is no evidence of a split personality, even though Nicole admits: “I’m just a whole lot of different simple people” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 292). Nicole is described by Rosemary, after seeing her in the bathroom, as “seem[ing] Out of her Mind” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 163), but soon “Nicole seem[s] well-knit again” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 171). Although Mr. Warren and Baby Warren describe various delusions Nicole claimed to have in the early

stages of her mental sickness, there is no evidence provided in the text regarding delusions. It is possible that Nicole's mental illness changed over time. It is also possible that she could have suffered Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Like Virginia Woolf, or like Zelda Fitzgerald—as Adam Gopnik suggests—Nicole could have “*folie circulaire*, meaning a madness that rises and recedes” (Gopnik 102). There are multiple potential diagnoses for Nicole more credible than Schizophrenia.

The novel's structure suggests a Borderline diagnosis in its revelations and unmasking. Eckrich explains how one's appearance factors into one's Borderline Personality Disorder:

In contrast to schizophrenics, borderline clients may have a good record of achievement in work or school. Their dress may be appropriate and they may have superficially appropriate social behavior, thus making them appear indistinguishable from the typical person on the street to a casual observer or acquaintance.

(Eckrich 167)

Rosemary, as “casual observer or acquaintance,” finds Nicole to be “one of the most beautiful people she had ever known” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 33), with her browned skin and “thick, dark, gold hair like a chow's” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 14). Dick echoes this remark, when he remembers Nicole as being “the prettiest thing I ever saw” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 120). The first glimpse the reader gets of Nicole is an idealized one, although there are hints of a darker persona:

Nearest her, on the other side, a young woman lay under a roof of umbrellas making out a list of things from a book open on the sand. Her

bathing suit was pulled off her shoulders and her back, a ruddy, orange brown, set off by a string of creamy pearls, shone in the sun. Her face was hard and lovely and pitiful. Her eyes met Rosemary's but did not see her. (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 6)

Although she is cast as beautiful, glowing in the sun, the description of her face suggests a mask. Her face is hard and her eyes do not recognize or acknowledge Rosemary. There is a beauty and a coldness to Nicole, even as she engages with her children: "The child yelled with fear and delight and the woman watched with a lovely peace, without a smile" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 10). She does not often smile; yet, her hard face is still considered "lovely" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 14). Her face contains a duality, when it is described as "the face of a saint, a viking Madonna," (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 33) It is as if Nicole is performing in a Greek play, in which she retains the same mask—or persona—no matter what her emotion. She appears unreal, as opposed to a living, breathing human. Even though much description about Nicole emphasizes her beauty, and some description certainly complicates her apparent strength⁵, the underlying attributes of Nicole are hardness and power. Her voice is described as being "low, almost harsh" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 17), when speaking with Rosemary, who determines that "she would not like to have Nicole for an enemy" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 20). Furthermore, Nicole is depicted as something to be feared, unpredictable: "Nicole was a force—not necessarily well disposed or predictable like [Rosemary's] mother—an incalculable force, Rosemary was somewhat afraid of her" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 60). Rosemary's observations of Nicole as "a force," mirror those of Dick's when Nicole is first courting him and then kissing

⁵ "Her face was hard, almost stern, save for the soft gleam of piteous doubt that looked from her green eyes." (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 25)

him. And Nicole is aware of her personality: “‘I’m a mean, hard woman,’ she explained to Rosemary’ (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 21). Her outward appearance seems normal, but the truth of her hysterical episodes gets revealed at the conclusion of Book I, when “‘Rosemary’s seduced gaze uncovers what is in fact an elaborate masquerade” (Nowlin 66). The truth is uncovered more thoroughly in Book II, through the inner workings of Nicole’s psyche contained in her correspondence with Dick, and also through her interior monologue. Like the ripping of a scab to reveal the wound, the structure of the novel removes all masks, in effect.

Fitzgerald uses Nicole’s mask and unmasking to claim that everyone has something hidden behind a façade. The Divers compulsively keep up appearances. Dick explains to Rosemary that “‘Nicole and I have got to go on together. In a way that’s more important than just wanting to go on.’” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 75). Dick is referring to the importance of their transference-love relationship and the importance of his roles as her therapist and husband. Yet he refers to their love and marriage as necessities that must be sustained, as opposed to what he—or Nicole—desire. Rosemary—although she does not conclude that the Divers’ marriage is dissatisfying—begins to speculate about the marriage. “‘She knew the Divers loved each other because it had been her primary assumption. She had thought however that it was a rather cooled relation, and actually rather like the love of herself and her mother. When people have so much for outsiders didn’t it indicate a lack of inner intensity?’” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 75). Rosemary speculates that because the Divers host countless parties and pour their energy into their guests and friends they must not have enough energy left for each other and perhaps no desire either. However, the Divers maintain the illusion of a happy marriage through constant

performance. Ann Douglas asserts: “Fitzgerald’s protagonists are actors poised in the wings” (Douglas 56). The Divers perform for each other: “[Dick] saw Nicole in the garden. Presently he must encounter her and the prospect gave him a leaden feeling. Before her he must keep up a perfect front, now and to-morrow, next week and next year” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 166). The Divers especially perform for others, and, as Dick begins to analyze their performance, he becomes uneasy: “But he was currently uneasy about the whole thing... He felt a discrepancy between the growing luxury in which the Divers lived, and the need for display which apparently went along with it” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 165). Dick recognizes the marital performance he lives in as a charade.

Dick Diver goes from demi-god to emotional bankrupt over the course of Fitzgerald’s novel, what Berman describes as “his journey from the romantic French Riviera, in the beginning of the novel, to the obscure New York town, in the end” (Berman 67). The structure and changing points-of-view of the text create the paradox, the unveiling that is at the crux of the novel. Maxwell Perkins, Fitzgerald’s editor, commented: “When I read the book I realized that there was all this beautiful veneer, and rottenness and horror underneath” (Brucoli xi). The structure of the novel functions as a masquerade, in effect. The mask begins, then, with the appearance of the beach, the opening image of the novel: “On the pleasant shore of the French Riviera...stands a large, proud, rose-colored hotel...and before it stretches a short, dazzling beach” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 3); rose, as a color, represents nostalgia and beauty. Yet, to fully grasp the impact of the decay and breakage that the novel contains, the reader must see the Riviera and its cast of characters through the romanticizing eyes of a young adolescent: Rosemary Hoyt. Brucoli explains that “though...*Tender Is the Night* does

not have a narrator, its first third has a decided point of view. It is seen through Rosemary's eyes" (Brucoli 41). The close-third-person point-of-view is necessary in Book I to capture the French Riviera: its highlight reel but not the behind-the-scenes. "Rosemary's first glimpse of the Divers" (Dyer 138) portrays them as godlike, particularly Dick, who ignites in Rosemary a "spontaneous admiration" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 24). Dick Diver both enchants her and promises to protect her: "He seemed kind and charming—his voice promised that he would take care of her, and that a little later he would open up a whole new world for her, unroll an endless succession of magnificent possibilities" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 16). Dick promises the possibility of romance for Rosemary. In her first moment of eye contact with Dick, she falls for him: "He looked at her and for a moment she lived in the bright blue worlds of his eyes, eagerly and confidently" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 12). The eye contact sets up the potential for romantic relations between them, but it also demonstrates Rosemary's tendencies to romanticize Dick. She believes that "the Divers represented externally the exact furthestmost evolution of a class" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 21). She idealizes them, depicting them with sun and star imagery at their party: "The two Divers began suddenly to warm and glow and expand" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 34), like stars. To Rosemary, Dick is the sun, and "[brings] with him a fine glowing surface" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 83). He is also a constant, "something fixed and Godlike as he had always been" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 104). He is an ideal.

Fitzgerald uses Rosemary to diagnose Dick's obsession with younger women. The age difference between Dick and Nicole is troubling, and their courtship establishes a seduction pattern for Dick. And not unlike "the incestuous regression implicit in Dick

Diver's attraction to Nicole Warren" (Berman 257), Dick's affair with Rosemary—who is 16 years younger than him—is also a repeat of his and Nicole's courtship. "Dick's history thus seems to be a depression pattern of recurring affairs with women half his age and younger" (Berman 78). In fact, Dick begins to crave youth; he has an itch for affairs with younger women, generally. "He was in love with every pretty woman he saw now, their forms at a distance, their shadows on the wall" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 201). Rosemary does, however, act specifically as a "catalytic agent" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 53), and it is with Rosemary that Dick actually acts on his desires. Yet, his intimate relations with Rosemary are reminiscent of his first intimate encounters with Nicole: most notably, Dick desires absorption. In describing Nicole, he considers her to be a shell, and desires to know her inner workings: "When I see a beautiful shell like that I can't help feeling a regret about what's inside it" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 120). Likewise, Rosemary is also considered a shell: "He wanted to hold her eloquent giving-of-herself in its precious shell, till he enclosed it, till it no longer existed outside him" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 208). He desires to hold Rosemary's shell until he absorbs its interior inside of him. And, like Nicole, Rosemary gives herself, sexually, to Dick: "She wanted to be taken and she was" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 213). During the intimate scenes involving both Nicole and Rosemary, Fitzgerald uses similar—if not identical—language, in order to identify Dick's obsession. While Nicole and Dick are kissing, Fitzgerald describes Nicole's "face getting big every time she came close" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 155). Similarly, Fitzgerald describes Rosemary: "Presently she kissed him several times in the mouth, her face getting big as it came up to him" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 105). Furthermore, Fitzgerald describes their lips comparably. Of Nicole's he says: "Nothing had ever felt so young as her lips"

(Fitzgerald, *Tender* 156); likewise, he describes “the youth and freshness of [Rosemary’s] lips” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 65). In fact, Dick is “chilled by the innocence of [Rosemary’s] kiss” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 64), because he is obsessed with younger women and youth in general. That obsession is most clearly demonstrated through flower imagery. When Dick first falls for Nicole, it is her blooming beauty that seduces him. Nicole is described as “a creature whose life did not promise to be only a projection of youth upon a gray screen, but instead, a true growing” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 141). What draws him to Rosemary is her youthfulness. She is in bloom: “The color of her cheeks was real, breaking close to the surface from the strong young pump of her heart. Her body hovered delicately on the last edge of childhood” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 3-4). The best age for a girl, from Dick’s perspective, seems to be 18 years old; he prefers a girl who has exited adolescence, but is still in bloom. Because of this preference, he chooses Rosemary; he “looked at her with cold blue eyes; his kind, strong mouth said thoughtfully and deliberately: ‘You’re the only girl I’ve seen for a long time that actually did look like something blooming’” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 22). It is likely that the last girl he saw who was blooming, prior to Rosemary, was a younger Nicole.

While Dick’s idealization of Rosemary as a youthful flower reveals Dick’s sexual obsessions, Rosemary’s idealization of Dick is crucial to the larger, disillusioning tone of the novel. According to Bruccoli, “Rosemary provides the reader with a very partial view of Dick and Nicole” (Bruccoli 98), an idealized version of them. The shift in chronology in Book II penetrates deeper into Nicole’s past and the Divers’ present marriage, revealing the flaws beneath the surface. Bruccoli explains how the novel’s structure functions:

Book I shows the Divers through Rosemary's adoring eyes as they appear to the world. It is almost all brilliant surface, with only hints of the corruption beneath the façade Dick has erected. In Book II the reader is taken behind the portals of charm to learn the facts about Nicole as Dick did. The third book is concerned with Dick's attempt to work out his fate, to break the bond with Nicole, and to save himself.

(Brucoli 85)

Structure is not to be ignored in a novel like *Tender Is the Night*. Nowlin suggests that Fitzgerald "had intuited the significance of introducing Diver *in media res*, presiding over a charming social circle" (Nowlin 66). It is necessary for Dick Diver to appear "initially so promising" (Brucoli 109), so that his eventual collapse leaves a greater impression on the reader. Fitzgerald violates the conventional form of a narrative, what Kenneth Burke calls "categorical expectation" (Burke 204). The abrupt shift in chronology from Book I to Book II removes the Divers' façade. In terms of structure, Nicole's interior monologue functions to not only allow further interiority—a further unmasking—but it also brings the novel back from its flashback to where it began: on the beach.

Falling from a great height is one of Fitzgerald's obsessions, and he uses the novel to examine that obsession. It is very likely that Fitzgerald chose the name Diver to linguistically suggest decline; as Brucoli states, Dick Diver "dives from professional and social prominence into obscurity" (Brucoli 96). Although Fitzgerald's novel does not extensively explore fluctuations in mood, it certainly explores the fluctuations between highs and lows. Although he does not explicitly discuss bipolarism—a condition he

would not have been aware of⁶—the condition is represented in his novel through his exploration of heights, peaks, falls, and ruin. Through Dick’s plot, Fitzgerald explores his own early success and later decline. Nowlin argues that, like Fitzgerald, “Dick Diver, too is marked for a successful career: he is a graduate of Yale and Johns Hopkins ‘lucky’ enough to find himself in the aftermath of the war doing research and practicing at an exclusive Swiss sanitarium” (Nowlin 60). His education allows him to ascend to the height of his success: “In the spring of 1917, when Doctor Richard Diver first arrived in Zurich, he was twenty-six years old, a fine age for a man, indeed the very acme of bachelorhood” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 115). He is at his height in terms of career, age, youth and beauty. And, once in Switzerland, “Dick Diver’s moment now began” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 118). He has a hefty, vocational aspiration: “‘I’ve only got one, Franz, and that’s to be a good psychologist—maybe to be the greatest one that ever lived’” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 132). Certain aspects of Fitzgerald are reflected in Dick Diver, particularly Fitzgerald’s comparable education at Princeton, as well as his early success with the publication of *This Side of Paradise*, arguably the height of his career as a popular artist⁷. Not unlike Fitzgerald’s literary ambitions, Dick Diver has scholarly ambitions, mostly related to the psychology literature he hopes to publish⁸. Berman argues that “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

⁶ Fitzgerald references manic-depression, but didn’t seem to fully grasp the illness, especially in his own life.

⁷ “The novel went through nine printings in 1920 and was widely reviewed. Fitzgerald was celebrated in gossip columns, was asked to lecture, and was invited to innumerable parties.” (Tytell 99).

⁸ “[Dick] had projected a new work: *An Attempt at a Uniform and Pragmatic Classification of the Neuroses and Psychoses, Based on an Examination of Fifteen Hundred Pre-Krapaelin and Post-Krapaelin Cases as they would be Diagnosed in the Terminology of the Different Contemporary Schools*—and another sonorous paragraph—*Together with a Chronology of Such Subdivisions of Opinion as Have Arisen Independently*.” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 146).

himself” (Berman 68). Fitzgerald and Diver are linked, and, as Kim Moreland suggests, “Dick’s practice of psychiatry...becomes an analogue for Fitzgerald’s vocation as writer” (Moreland 360). In that way, *Tender Is the Night* functions as a masked memoir of the author’s life. However, instead of making Dick Diver a writer of fiction, Fitzgerald casts him as psychiatrist in order to explore mental illness, particularly Zelda’s condition.

Geoff Dyer argues that “Dick’s disintegration is...a prism refracting Fitzgerald’s own” (Dyer 140). He goes on to argue the importance of understanding Fitzgerald’s work through a biographical lens:

The three-way relation between the fictional world Fitzgerald created, the Fitzgeralds as they actually were, and the synthetic *myth* of the Fitzgeralds that emerged from this interrelation is as central to the enduring popularity of Fitzgerald’s work as it is to the dissenting view that the popularity is based on meager literary merit. Rather than disentangling these strands, consider, for a moment, just *how* intimately they are entwined.

(Dyer 140)

However, Dyer does not take into account Fitzgerald’s friends, the Murphys, who were the initial models for Dick and Nicole Diver. Fitzgerald “was fascinated by the Murphys” (Brucoli 19), and “while they are not portraits of Sara and Gerald Murphy, Nicole and Dick are partly derived from them” (Dyer 140). Like most characters, Dick and Nicole are composites, and they are only reminiscent of Gerald and Sara Murphy in Book I. Just as Dick Diver builds a beach “out of a pebble pile” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 20), the Murphys “pioneered the summer Riviera...were splendid hosts and imaginative party-givers” (Brucoli 19). Fitzgerald gave Dick Diver the character traits which he

found admirable in Gerald Murphy. “So complete was the identification that...after reading *Tender Is the Night*...[Murphy] was puzzled by the combination of himself and Fitzgerald in the character of Dick Diver” (Brucoli 19). Murphy recognized not only himself in the character, but also Fitzgerald, a combination of “the social sophistication [Fitzgerald] admired in Murphy and his own awareness of how he was disintegrating as a writer and as a man” (Tytell 127). However, that combination is not evident from the beginning. Dick Diver—throughout the novel—changes, not only in terms of his deterioration, but also in terms of who he reflects biographically. “Most critics argue that when living well has ceased to be the best revenge, in Gerald Murphy’s famous phrase, and for the Divers becomes a form of imprisonment, then the Fitzgeralds displace the Murphys as models” (Moreland 359-360). Yet, Fitzgerald’s displacement of the Murphys as models holds a direct relationship with Fitzgerald’s unveiling of the Divers psyches and marriage. Book II, because of its flashback structure, primarily functions as a marriage study and case study (of Nicole); yet, the cracks start to form from the beginning, as the reader begins to see the ways in which the Divers’ marriage may have a more corrugated surface. In wanting to explore his own marital difficulties with Zelda, Fitzgerald models the Divers’ marriage on his own. In wanting to explore Nicole’s schizophrenia thoroughly in Book II, Fitzgerald uses biographical material—namely, Zelda’s breakdown—in order to inform his narrative.

Fitzgerald used tangible materials to inspire his work, primarily “passages from letters that Zelda had actually written to him from the Swiss sanitarium in 1930” (Berman 64-65). Nicole’s letters, which not only provide Dick Diver with insight into her psyche but also result in their courtship, were derived from Zelda’s letters; however, the content

was not identical. While “his wife’s illness was the catalytic agent in Fitzgerald’s new approach to the novel...the incest factor in Nicole’s case was...pure invention” (Brucoli 82), most likely conceived by Fitzgerald under the influence of Freud. Like Nicole, Zelda was diagnosed as schizophrenic; “she had terrible nightmares, she heard voices, [and]...she began to blame dark external forces that were controlling her” (Tytell 128, 130). However, the symptoms of Nicole’s mental illness are vastly different. She suffered from fearful delusions involving men, brief psychotic episodes triggered by blood, and hysterical, reckless behavior. Although Nicole’s symptoms do not mirror Zelda’s, Nicole’s persona is certainly comparable. “Most of the time [Zelda] seemed taciturn, brooding, aloof, and remote, as disengaged as Nicole Diver...with very few words for anyone. When she did speak, she was capable of astonishing lucidity, Gerald Murphy recalled” (Tytell 119). There are recognizable traits of Zelda in the character of Nicole, blended with those traits belonging to Sara Murphy. The courtship between the Divers and the Fitzgeralds is comparable in the ways that many love stories are—a man falls in love with the youth, beauty, and spirit of a young woman. Nevertheless, there were differences: the Fitzgeralds were closer in age, their relationship did not begin with letters, and transference was not an issue. Yet in the two marriages, the change over time is compellingly similar, in terms of drains on vitality and in terms of emptiness. In a letter to his daughter Scottie, Fitzgerald explains, in retrospect, the reality of his marriage:

When I was your age I lived with a great dream. The dream grew and I learned how to speak of it and make people listen. Then the dream divided one day when I decided to marry your mother after all, even though I knew she was spoiled and meant no good to me. I was sorry

immediately I had married her, but being patient in those days, made the best of it and got to love her in another way. You came along and for a long time we made quite a lot of happiness out of our lives. But I was a man divided—she wanted me to work too much for her and not enough for my dream. She realized too late that work was dignity and the only dignity and tried to atone for it by working herself but it was too late and she broke and is broken forever.

(Fitzgerald, *On Authorship* 170)

Although hindsight gives Fitzgerald an incredible amount of insight, the letter illuminates Fitzgerald's duality in his artistic pursuits. It also illuminates the predominantly unhappy mood of their marriage, yet the necessity to remain together. He recognizes Zelda's artistic pursuits in writing, and also recognizes her permanent state of brokenness, as Dick does with Nicole.

Although Fitzgerald, in his letter to Scottie, recognizes Zelda's influence on his duality as an artist, that duality already existed. Zelda was the wedge between the duality, but not the agent that caused it. The artistic duality began at Princeton; Turnball explains that, even in college, Fitzgerald "wanted to be a serious artist yet make a great deal of money" (Turnball 104). Fitzgerald, like many of his fellow modern writers, was "following the dollar, ah, following the dollar" (Cowley, *Exile's Return* 82). Artistic duality was one aspect of the Lost Generation; Cowley observes: "All these people were living a series of contradictions... They were selling their talents" (Cowley, *Exile's Return* 209). Although "Fitzgerald's taste and his ambitions for his writing...were resolutely high-minded and literary" (Gopnik 104), there was clearly a

“doubleness...built into the economics of his career” (Gopnik 103). Although “his essential economic engine [was] the *Saturday Evening Post*...[Fitzgerald was] eager not to be seen as a *Post* writer” (Gopnik 103). The stories he wrote—sometimes for large sums of money—most often dealt with romantic relationships, and were deemed by many literary critics as “adolescent, flashy, and sensational” (Bruccoli 65). Nowlin claims that Fitzgerald’s “emotional happiness was contingent upon commercial success” (Nowlin 65); however, it was more specifically his financial sustainability that was dependent on commercial success. John Dos Passos explains how common this dependence was: “Everybody who has put pen to paper during the last twenty years has been plagued by the difficulty of deciding whether he’s to do ‘good’ writing that will satisfy his conscience or ‘cheap’ writing that will satisfy his pocketbook” (Dos Passos 340). Also common among modern writers, was the desire to “achieve literary stature” (Bruccoli 65), by writing something new. Most likely influenced by Eliot’s assertion that “novelty is better than repetition” (Eliot 37), Fitzgerald was determined to create *Tender Is the Night*, a novel he thought would be “really NEW in form, idea, structure—the model for the age that Joyce and Stein are searching for, that Conrad didn’t find” (Bruccoli 25). Fitzgerald’s struggle to complete a novel of that quality is mirrored in Dick Diver’s “inability to write the epochal work he projects” (Nowlin 59). While Dick fails to produce any ground-breaking psychological literature, Fitzgerald fails to produce the literature he, too, was aiming for. *Tender* did not achieve literary acclaim, and also failed to generate commercial success⁹.

⁹ “[The novel] received a poor reception at the hands of the critics and its sales were mediocre.” (Tytell 134)

While Fitzgerald's duality as an artist existed before he met Zelda, it was certainly made worse by their marriage. He "fell in love with a striking, spirited girl he saw dancing in a country club ballroom and pursued her heedlessly" (Tytell 5). While writing his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, Fitzgerald worked in New York in advertising, "hoping there to find the riches and fame that might make him acceptable in her eyes" (Tytell 94). Zelda, "who wanted anything and everything at once" (Tytell 100) married him only after he achieved popular success. As his letter to Scottie suggests, Fitzgerald was aware of—or became aware of—the financial pressure Zelda put on him. However, after Zelda's psychotic breakdown in 1930, the financial pressure increased: "Fitzgerald found himself literally writing to support Zelda.... Zelda wasn't simply threatening him as an artist, but as a caretaker, lover and commodity" (Nowlin 65). Suddenly, writing stories for the *Post* became an even greater necessity, because of "the financial burden of Zelda's care, as well as their daughter, Scottie's education" (Moreland 364). There was some value to the experience of writing a large number of short stories in that year. In writing the Josephine stories, Bruccoli explains: "Fitzgerald rather superficially worked out his theory of emotional bankruptcy, which is at the heart of *Tender Is the Night*" (Bruccoli 69). While Zelda's breakdown "brought to a halt" (Bruccoli 69) Fitzgerald's progress on *Tender Is the Night* for over a year, her treatment contributed to the novel's themes of schizophrenia and emotional bankruptcy. However, writing for necessity alone contributed tremendously to Fitzgerald's artistic duality, what John Dos Passos called "split personalities" (Dos Passos 340) in Fitzgerald's literature. Fitzgerald's own divided nature as writer was perpetuated by the necessity to write popularly successful short stories for money to pay for the treatment of his wife's schizophrenia.

Although Zelda was eventually diagnosed as schizophrenic¹⁰, she was first considered to simply have “an inferiority complex—particularly toward Scott” (Chesler 74). Zelda, like Scott, had an artistic nature, and she “insisted on acknowledgment of her own spirit and talent” (Tytell 6), particularly while being treated in Switzerland. When she began work on her own masked memoir—*Save Me the Waltz*—during treatment, Fitzgerald reacted with jealousy. Moreland suggests that “Fitzgerald actively sought to control and even to suppress Zelda’s writing, especially in 1932, when it seemed to replicate and compete with his own writing of *Tender Is the Night*” (Moreland 263). Zelda’s therapist wrote that “Zelda says she does not want to be ‘dependent’ on Scott, either financially or psychologically” (Chesler 66). She was rebelling against the financial terms on which she had agreed to marry him.

With Zelda’s breakdown, everything seemed to end for Fitzgerald. He writes about Switzerland—where Zelda received treatment—in multiple texts. In an essay he co-wrote with Zelda, he/she writes: “Then Switzerland and another life...” (Fitzgerald, “Show Mr. and Mrs. F...” 52), and in his “Note-Books”: “Switzerland is a country where very few things begin, but many things end” (Fitzgerald, “The Note-Books” 123). Zelda’s breakdown brought not only an end to their marriage, but also an end to Fitzgerald’s life as he had known it. After Zelda’s breakdown, Fitzgerald cracked up, and like Dick Diver he lost his sense of self. Fitzgerald writes, “So there was not an ‘I’ anymore, not a basis on which I could organize my self-respect” (Fitzgerald, “The Crack-Up” 79). Fitzgerald viewed his relationship with Zelda economically, not unlike the way

¹⁰ “In a 1930 letter to Zelda’s parents, Fitzgerald summarized the diagnosis offered by Dr. Forel and the consulting psychiatrist, Dr. Eugene Bleuler, the world’s leading authority on schizophrenia (which he actually named)... ‘skideophranie, a sort of borderline insanity that takes the form of a double personality.’” (Berman 61)

he viewed Dick and Nicole. Zelda's breakdown, for Fitzgerald, is comparable to the stock market crash of 1929. He explained to his secretary, Laura Guthrie, that "our love was one in a century. Life ended for me when Zelda and I crashed" (Turnball 261). Because of the emotional and economic investments he had in their marriage, when she crashed, the marriage crashed, and he crashed.

With the loss of love and of self, Fitzgerald lost a portion of his talent. Although Fitzgerald was able to maintain his vocation, completing *Tender Is the Night* after Zelda's breakdown, and working on *The Last Tycoon* before his death, he lost his ability to write with ease the stories he considered "ceaseless hack work" (Moreland 363). He recognized this specific loss of talent in a retrospective letter to Zelda in 1940:

It's odd that my talent for the short story vanished. It was partly that times changed, editors changed, but part of it was tied up somehow with you and me—the happy ending. Of course every third story had some other endings but essentially I got my public with stories of young love. I must have had a powerful imagination to project it so far and so often into the past.

(Fitzgerald, *On Authorship* 176)

Fitzgerald lost the ability to fabricate stories about young, hopeful love. After Zelda's breakdown, "his agent was unable to sell his stories, and he found it even more difficult than ever to write. The love stories which he had sold for so much money depended on a certain ebullency about frivolous matters which he could no longer muster" (Tytell 135). In losing the talent that had given him money and fame, he lost his identity.

Fitzgerald's preoccupation with money contributed to his contradictory feelings towards the rich. "Part of Fitzgerald's personal dream involved a fascination with the rich.... Though he was decoyed by his propensity for flamboyant extravagance, he maintained that he always had an 'abiding distrust' for the wealthy, an animosity that derived from invariably being the poorest boy in a rich man's club" (Tytell 76). Fitzgerald desired money but also loathed those who had it. Just as Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby* both observes and participates in Gatsby's extravagant parties, Fitzgerald was constantly an observer and participant in his own life: he spent time with the rich, was fascinated by them, but, in his literature, certainly critiqued them.

As a canonized writer, Fitzgerald is strongly identified with 1920s culture in America. Born in 1896, Fitzgerald "had been a child of boom America" (Chamberlain 372). Cowley explains that because many of the modernist artists "were in their teens when the twentieth century was also in its teens, it is no wonder that they fell into the habit of identifying themselves with the century" (Cowley, *Exile's Return* 7-8). Fitzgerald most likely identified himself with the century, but especially identified himself with the culture that erupted in the 1920s. Although much of his work aims to critique the era, it also romanticizes it with a rose-colored tint of nostalgia. "His incidental commentary is often shrewd. Mr. Fitzgerald knows his modern Americans; he has a firm grasp of their foibles and their slang; he is the prophet of a generation which, though it has passed away, has left a distinct mark on contemporary American literature" (Quennell 381). In his fiction, he documented the era. In his pursuits he was American: "Apocryphally or not, he claimed his very first word was *up*, which implies a perennial optimism once regarded as characteristically American" (Tytell 85). It is impossible to

determine whether or not he predicted his early success and the lasting legacy of his literary work; but, he certainly aspired to reach great heights, and did reach them. His first word foreshadowed his obsession with heights and the unfortunate deep lows that followed them.

Fitzgerald is listed in Appendix B of Kay Jamison's *Touched By Fire*, alongside other writers and artists who she believes to have had manic-depressive illnesses. The appendix is not necessarily definitive, given the difficulties of retroactively diagnosing the mental illnesses of those who are no longer living. Yet, her evidence is compelling. It is likely that Fitzgerald always had a predisposition to manic-depressive illness. His father had a depressive character; Fitzgerald exhibited a manic personality from an early age. It is also possible that his contemporary culture contributed to the disorder. It is likely that Fitzgerald's mood fluctuated repeatedly throughout his life, although there are no daily records to confirm it. The Fitzgerald of the 1930s, though, was certainly more of a depressed and depleted character. Cowley argues that it wasn't Zelda's breakdown or Fitzgerald's increasing alcoholism that alone caused his depression in the 1930s, but instead factors originating in the 1920s: "[Fitzgerald's] own tragic decline... was the result of events that took place not during the depression but during the boom. All emotional and intellectual foundations for what would follow were laid in the boom years" (Cowley, *Exile's Return* 244). There is a striking correlation between Fitzgerald's mood disorder and that of America.

According to Ann Douglas, America has a mood disorder with which it "is still... helplessly, afflicted" (Douglas 472). America's mood disorder during Fitzgerald's time, in broad brush strokes, consisted of a decade of mania, an economic crash, and a

period of depression. Its mood fluctuations were determined by economic fluctuations, and they influenced cultural fluctuations. Fitzgerald was writing in New York “as it took shape in the decade between the Great War and the Crash” (Douglas 26). America’s fluctuations were centered in Manhattan: “New York in the twentieth century was the site of...the American mood” (Douglas 18). New York was a Babylon-like symbol of glory, hope, vitality, and then the crash¹¹. Broadly, America experienced—and still experiences—economic fluctuations of booms and busts, the booms correlating to mania and the busts to depression. Fluctuations in the economy are volatile, as in the manic-depressive individual. “Manic and depressive spells range in duration from a few hours, days, or weeks, to as long as fourteen years” (Hershman 21). New York, with “its rapidly expanding, commercializing cultural scene” (Douglas 15), was certainly booming; the 1920s, as a decade of boom, was also one of mania. “During a manic episode people become excessively energetic, distractible, talkative, and full of ideas” (Andreasen 103-104); furthermore, Nancy Andreasen explains, from a psychological context, “the tendency of some to drink excessively may have been an effort to use alcohol as a central nervous system depressant to cope with their sensitivity to being flooded by stimuli” (Andreasen 103). Fitzgerald, in writing about Manhattan, explains that, “many people who were not alcoholics were lit up four days out of seven, and frayed nerves were strewn everywhere; groups were held together by a generic nervousness and the hangover became a part of the day as well allowed-for as the Spanish siesta” (Fitzgerald, “My Lost City” 30). Alcohol consumption was part of the culture; Fitzgerald describes his contemporaries as “a whole race going hedonistic, deciding on pleasure” (Fitzgerald,

¹¹ Macroeconomic theory is similar to the psychology behind manic-depressive illness; “a manic high is usually followed by a depressive crash.” (Andreasen 104)

“Echoes of the Jazz Age” 15). Cowley’s observations of the era echo Fitzgerald’s; he describes life in the 1920s as being “a life that required more and more stimulants to make it livable. There was alcohol always; there was the acting on sudden impulses; there were drugs” (Cowley, *Exile’s Return* 279). He is implying that alcohol was necessary in order to live in such a booming culture and city. Douglas asserts that “this was the generation that made the terms ‘alcohol’ and ‘writer’ synonymous” (Douglas 23). Because an excess of stimuli can result in manic highs, an individual who is sensitive to fluctuations in mood might use alcohol as a depressant to counteract the flood of stimuli. It is possible that Fitzgerald drank in reaction to the stimuli of 1920s New York. While America’s Great Depression did not cause Fitzgerald’s decline into alcoholism and depression, it is possible that America’s Roaring Twenties Mania may have caused Fitzgerald’s intake of alcohol to increase, and therefore led to an addiction.

Although thousands of parties and heavy drinking contributed to the emotional bankruptcy Fitzgerald experienced in his own life, his relationship with Zelda, not unlike Dick’s relationship with Nicole, resulted in immense drains on his vitality. Tytell both illustrates and perpetuates the Fitzgeralds’ mythology, when he recognizes them as “legendary emblems of romantic recklessness, hedonism and excess” (Tytell 76). He summarizes their story as: “a good-looking, talented couple get too much too soon and are poisoned in the process” (Tytell 78). Fitzgerald became aware of the poison-like effects of young success; in 1937, looking back, he observed: “The dream had been early realized and in the realization carried with it a certain bonus and a certain burden” (Fitzgerald, “Early Success” 89), the dream being—in part—literary success. Dyer argues that Fitzgerald was conscious of the necessity of fame in order to have ruin:

“Fitzgerald understand that he had to climb to a dizzy height if the fall was going to be spectacular enough to satisfy him. He needed to achieve success in order to be convinced of the colossal scale of his subsequent failure” (Dyer 129). There is no evidence to support this claim. Yet, Fitzgerald did recognize that after reaching such a height a decline was inevitable. Looking back, he explains his initial reaction to his early success: “I remember riding in a taxi one afternoon between very tall buildings under a mauve and rosy sky; I began to bawl because I had everything I wanted and I knew I would never be so happy again” (Fitzgerald, “My Lost City” 28-29). He had his book—*This Side of Paradise* was published, and was successful, in 1920—and he had his girl—Zelda Sayre married him that year. He had, in his words, “achieved the heights” (Fitzgerald, “Early Success” 88), “convinc[ing] him that life was romantic” (Tytell 75). However, in the taxi as Fitzgerald began to cry, he seemed to have some understanding of the depression that was to come, the inevitable crash.

“The aftermath of mania is usually depression” (Jamison 32), and just as Nicole predicts the crack-up of Dick in her observations of Abe North¹², *Tender Is the Night* predicts how Fitzgerald’s life would turn out. Scott Donaldson observes the predictive quality of the novel; he asserts:

It is true of Fitzgerald not only that his characters are modeled on himself but that he sometimes becomes his characters after the fact. Thus his retreat to Asheville, Tyron, Hendersonville in North Carolina during the two years of his personal depression virtually repeated Dick Diver’s drifting among the small towns of upstate New York.

(Donaldson 185)

¹² ““So many smart men go to pieces nowadays.”” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 99)

Not only does Dick Diver become Fitzgerald, but Fitzgerald becomes Dick: the work in his vocation is inconsequential, his drinking worsens, his marriage falls apart. “Dick Diver is what Fitzgerald was afraid of becoming” (Brucoli 73); to become Dick Diver was to fail. Fitzgerald recognizes the fate he shares with Dick, “counting himself among the failures... *He was Dick Diver*” (Turnball 239). Kim Moreland claims that “*Tender Is the Night* functioned as a cautionary tale for Fitzgerald—a warning to himself of what would happen if he did not cling to his artistic vocation despite compelling personal obligations that he was unwilling to ignore and about which he felt a sense of guilty responsibility” (Moreland 365). However, the warning went beyond art and an artist’s commitment to it. *Tender Is the Night* did function as a warning to Fitzgerald, a warning of the deadly consequences of alcoholism. Fitzgerald—perhaps, unknowingly—gave himself the same warning, when he jotted down the phrase: “Drunk at 20, wrecked at 30, dead at 40” (Fitzgerald, “The Note-Books” 196). The statement is ominous in its predictive nature: Fitzgerald was drinking and partying in his 20s, was wrecked—physically and emotionally—in his 30s, and died in his early 40s¹³. It is impossible to know the intention of this excerpt, whether it was meant for a piece of fiction, an observation about somebody he knew, or a fascination with increments of ten. But it is predictive—if not prescriptive—for the patterns his life would follow, and similar to the decade-pattern America would follow.

Although Moreland states that “*Tender Is the Night* is often read as Fitzgerald’s apologia for his own alcoholism, depression, and inability to complete a novel until some nine years after the publication of *The Great Gatsby* (1925)” (Moreland 360), the novel

¹³ “Fitzgerald depleted himself by drinking excessively...His heart had given out at forty-four” (Tytell 137).

functions less as an apologia and more of a predictor of what is to come in Fitzgerald's own life. In *Tender Is the Night*, Fitzgerald is beginning to explore his own mood changes and alcoholism. However, it isn't until years later in "The Crack-Up" that he more fully recognizes his depression and alcoholism. Yet, even in his nonfiction writing he is hesitant to admit those disorders.

While Fitzgerald's article "The Crack-Up" does not resemble confessional writing as recognized today—particularly the writing of the Confessional poets Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and Theodore Roethke—it is part of the confessional tradition and was influential in laying the groundwork for confessional writing. Gopnik explains how the essay "breaks with almost all earlier confessional writing" (Gopnik 106). It follows Harold Stearns' call to his contemporaries to do a "self-conscious and deliberately critical examination of ourselves" (Douglas 53). Fitzgerald humbles himself, recognizing that he "had prematurely cracked" (Fitzgerald, "The Crack-Up" 70). His essay is an exploration of obsessions, namely failure and vitality. His lack of vitality and fear of failure imply a deep depression. Fitzgerald writes: "My enthusiasm and my vitality had been steadily and prematurely tricking away" (Fitzgerald, "The Crack-Up" 80), explaining that, "of all the natural forces, vitality is the incommunicable one...vitality never 'takes.' You have it or you haven't it" (Fitzgerald, "The Crack-Up" 74). His discourse on vitality is reminiscent of the concept of one's nerve force; Fitzgerald therefore hints at his emotional bankruptcy. Turnball describes Fitzgerald's loss of vitality as: "the light had gone out of him" (Turnball 286). In addition to a fixation on vitality, Fitzgerald fixates on failure, considering himself to have failed, like Dick Diver, at his marriage and his vocation. He concludes: "I could no longer fulfill the

obligations that life had set for me or that I had set for myself” (Fitzgerald, “The Crack-Up” 81). His obsession with and fear of failure is a symptom of his depression. “Depression distorts the sufferer’s judgment of himself and his work to a degree corresponding to the depth of the mood. The worse he feels, the more he exaggerates the faults of his work” (Hershman 179). Fitzgerald, in exaggeration, claims to “[talk] with the authority of failure” (Fitzgerald, “The Note-Books” 181), and to consider himself among the failures that are his characters: Dick Diver, Abe North, McKisco. To his contemporaries, however, Fitzgerald appeared to be throwing a pity party. “The Crack-Up” was met with harsh reviews and critiques. “Some people thought he had demonstrated his lack of character by publishing the pieces in the first place. To Sara Murphy he seemed so wrapped up in himself as to be unable to sympathize with others.... John Dos Passos also proposed that Fitzgerald stop regarding his own navel” (Donaldson 173-174). This criticism is not unlike the critiques on Confessional literature as a “preoccupation with Self” (Phillips 7), the airing of one’s dirty laundry.

In the Confessional tradition, one “common theme is mental illness” (Phillips xiii). While Fitzgerald does not claim to be depressed—or, at least, does not use that language—“The Crack-Up” is cluttered with evidence for such a diagnosis, as Fitzgerald “[traces] the ebbings and flowings of several of his breakdowns” (Jamison 23). In exploring his own breakdowns, and his own unhappiness, Fitzgerald claims that melancholia is part of the human condition:

This is what I think now: that the natural state of the sentient adult is a qualified unhappiness. I think also that in an adult the desire to be finer in grain than you are, ‘a constant striving,’ (as those people say who gain

their bread by saying it) only adds to this unhappiness in the end—that end that comes to our youth and hope, and I think that my happiness, or talent for self-delusion or what you will, was an exception.

(Fitzgerald, “The Crack-Up” 84).

Fitzgerald is claiming to have never been truly happy, and is claiming that happiness is an impossible state once one has lost his youth and hope. Fitzgerald’s nonfiction provides concrete symptoms of depression, which correlate with the symptoms that Kay Jamison provide: “Depressive symptoms include apathy, lethargy, hopelessness, sleep disturbance (sleeping far too much or too little), slowed physical movement, slowed thinking, impaired memory and concentration, and a loss of pleasure in normally pleasurable events” (Jamison 13). Fitzgerald explains how he feels the need to withdraw, the need to distance himself from others:

But I had a strong sudden instinct that I must be alone. I didn’t want to see any people at all. I had seen so many people all my life—I was an average mixer, but more than average in a tendency to identify myself, my ideas, my destiny, with those of all classes that I came in contact with. I was always saved or being saved—in a single morning I would go through the emotions ascribable to Wellington at Waterloo. I lived in a world of inscrutable hostiles and inalienable friends and supporters. But now I wanted to be absolutely alone and so arranged a certain insulation from ordinary cares.

(Fitzgerald, “The Crack-Up” 71)

He also exhibits signs of insomnia, a symptom of agitated depression, which is “characterized by agitation and insomnia The insomnia of the agitated depressive appears in the form of difficulty falling asleep, frequent awakening during the night, waking early in the morning without being able to resume sleeping, or all of the above” (Hershman 30). Fitzgerald is the agitated depressive, suffering from sleep difficulties, “hating the night when [he] couldn’t sleep and hating the day because it went toward night” (Fitzgerald, “Sleeping and Waking” 72). Fitzgerald’s use of metaphor in “Sleeping and Waking” attempts to capture his battle with insomnia; it also provides evidence regarding his depression. He is “conditioned by intense fatigue of mind and perverse alertness of the nervous system—like a broken-stringed bow upon a throbbing fiddle” (Fitzgerald, “Sleeping and Waking” 67). Fitzgerald’s fatigue of mind reflects a depressive state, in which “intellectual processes become impaired and slowed down” (Hershman 13). Yet, Fitzgerald’s “throbbing fiddle” also suggests a manic mood.

In addition to containing evidence to support the claim that Fitzgerald was depressed, “The Crack-Up” also supports the claim that he was, at times, manic, or at least experiencing mild mania, or hypomania. Fitzgerald describes his restlessness in the form of list-making: “I made lists—made lists and tore them up, hundreds of lists” (Fitzgerald, “The Crack-Up” 71). Additionally, Fitzgerald jots down: “He was utterly unable to concentrate. His drawer was always full of such lists” (Fitzgerald, “The Note-Books” 167). This miscellaneous line in his journal may be a description of a fictional character or it may be a description of himself told in the third-person. Regardless of intent, it shows Fitzgerald’s understanding of the restlessness, the inability to concentrate, that causes one to obsessively make lists. Again, Jamison’s descriptions of manic

symptoms match Fitzgerald's introspective observations. Jamison explains that "during hypomania and mania, mood is generally elevated and expansive...activity and energy levels are greatly increased...thinking is fast, moving quickly from topic to topic" (Jamison 13). Fitzgerald's obsessive list-making was likely a result of hypomania or mania¹⁴.

There are many accounts which detail Fitzgerald's manic episodes; however, they often aren't labeled as being episodic or part of a disorder. Thomas Boyd, when interviewing Fitzgerald, commented:

Enthusiasm runs high in the nature of Fitzgerald. He is even enthusiastic in his dislikes and certainly he is whole-hearted over the things that he enjoys. To be with him for an hour is to have the blood in one's veins thawed and made fluent. His bright humor is as infectious as smallpox and as devastating as gloom.

(Boyd 67)

While enthusiasm for life, more generally, is not always criteria for mania, Boyd's description is compellingly reminiscent of psychologists' description of mania as euphoric. In his essay, Fitzgerald is aware of his euphoria: "My own happiness in the past often approached such an ecstasy that I could not share it even with the person dearest to me but had to walk it away in quiet streets and lanes with only fragments of it to distil into little lines in books" (Fitzgerald, "The Crack-Up" 84). Fitzgerald admits to experiencing exalted moods that he was unable to manage and explain to others, moods that went beyond happiness to a further extreme. Jamison explains that "mania is

¹⁴ Fitzgerald's list-making may have also been a symptom of obsessive-compulsive disorder: "Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is characterized by unreasonable thoughts and fears (obsessions) that lead you to do repetitive behaviors (compulsions)" ("OCD").

characterized by an exalted or irritable mood, more and faster speech, rapid thought, brisker physical and mental activity levels, quickened and more finely tuned senses, suspiciousness, a marked tendency to seek out other people, and impulsiveness” (Jamison 27). In addition to Fitzgerald’s characteristically exalted mood, he was known for his impulsive behavior. Cowley remembers Fitzgerald as “a high diver [who] sometimes leaps from great heights into a bathtub only partially filled with water” (Cowley, *Exile’s Return* 178). Because of his impulsive, drunken behavior, Fitzgerald was suspended from the Cottage Club in 1920. In the 1920s, Fitzgerald had “boundless optimism and energy” (Tytell 75), with “an instinct for quickening life, for taking the slag out of it” (Turnball 173). He was, at least, hypomanic.

The fact that Fitzgerald was unable to self-diagnose himself with manic-depressive illness reflects the lack of psychological knowledge in the time he was writing. Yet, Fitzgerald also resists telling the terrible truth. In “The Crack-Up”—after discussing a friend’s alcoholism—Fitzgerald writes: “the present writer was not so entangled—having at the time not tasted so much as a glass of beer for six months” (Fitzgerald, “The Crack-Up” 71). Fitzgerald does not admit that he was, very likely, drinking much more alcohol, much more frequently. In another essay, Fitzgerald admits, “I was drinking, intermittently, but generously” (Fitzgerald, “Sleeping and Waking” 65). Fitzgerald’s began by drinking socially; his drinking habits shifted, very quickly, towards lonely drinking and self-medication. Andrew Turnball describes “the terrible deliberateness about the way Fitzgerald dosed himself with gin” (Turnball 187). Furthermore, “his drinking...was something he went off and did by himself, like taking a pill. It had no connection with anyone else” (Turnball 153). Because Fitzgerald’s

drinking habit began when he was young, continuing the habit most likely was, in later years, an attempt to regain that youth, to regain the ecstasy he felt at the beginning of the decade.

In his nonfiction writing, however, Fitzgerald was unable to overtly express both the depression he was feeling and the drinking habit he was maintaining. Rather than expressing, he repressed. As a result, “‘The Crack-Up’ does not measure up to the best confessional writing” (Donaldson 185), mostly because of its evasion, its abstractness, and its inability to truly confess. Fitzgerald follows the tradition of metaphor¹⁵ in considering himself to be “a cracked plate, the kind that one wonders whether it is worth preserving” (Fitzgerald, “The Crack-Up” 75). Instead of being depressed, Fitzgerald has cracked up. Instead of being a depressive, he is a cracked plate. Metaphor can help the writer and the reader comprehend; Sontag explains that “saying a thing is or is like something-it-is-not is mental operation as old as philosophy and poetry, and the spawning ground of most kinds of understanding, including scientific understanding, and expressiveness” (Sontag 93). However, in describing himself as a cracked plate, Fitzgerald does not provide the reader with many details regarding his experience. Donaldson argues that, in metaphor, Fitzgerald is evading, as opposed to expressing. “Instead of providing specific detail, Fitzgerald compares himself to a cracked plate. . . . Saying that one is *like* provides an alternative to saying outright what one actually is. Like the wealth of learned references, it was a form of evasion” (Donaldson 181).

Furthermore, Fitzgerald’s essay lacks an established, respected confessional format. Donaldson argues that “Fitzgerald was searching for a form, but he had not quite found it” (Donaldson 181). Not only were readers, perhaps, not prepared to read

¹⁵ “A metaphor is the application of a word that belongs to another thing.” (Aristotle 105)

confessional writing; the form itself was evolving¹⁶. Just as Fitzgerald plays with masks in *Tender Is the Night*—unmasking the Divers while masking his own biographical input—he masks the truth of his own crack-up. Donaldson explains that the essay “tells us truth only between the lines” (Donaldson 182). It is “in the excessive artfulness of the essays” (Donaldson 181) that Fitzgerald is more of a Romantic than he is modern. “The Crack-Up,” by 21st-century standards, would be far more effective if its confession went beyond religious traditions and, instead, approached the talking cure used between psychiatrist and patient.

While Fitzgerald, in “The Crack-Up,” was evading the truth of his mental health and repressing the truth of his addiction, he was also avoiding psychiatric treatment for his alcoholism. Turnball explains Fitzgerald’s two-fold reason for resisting treatment:

Dr. Adolf Meyer...wanted Fitzgerald to face his drinking, to be treated for it if necessary, but Fitzgerald balked at psychotherapy—partly from pride...and partly from the artist’s instinctive distrust of having his inner workings tampered with. He was afraid that psychiatric treatment might make him a reasoning, analytic person instead of a feeling one, and he instanced several novelists who had been psychoanalyzed and had written nothing but trash ever since. He considered alcohol part of his working equipment.

(Turnball 233)

Resisting treatment is common in many artists. Fitzgerald considered alcohol to be a necessary tool for his creative process. It is common for “creative people [to] resort to

¹⁶ It would be Robert Lowell, the founding father of Confessional poetry, who would write characteristically confessional literature.

drugs and/or alcohol to stimulate creativity.... Drugs and alcohol may occasionally loosen the inhibitions that impede creativity, but they generally interfere with intellectual processes, while addictions to these substances limit the production of creative work and/or its quality” (Hershman 189). Although Fitzgerald perceived alcohol as a necessary tool, it ultimately damaged his ability to write. He admits, in a letter to Perkins in 1935, that he was under the influence while writing much of *Tender Is the Night*:

It has become increasingly plain to me that the very excellent organization of a long book or the finest perceptions and judgment in time of revision do not go well with liquor. A short story can be written on a bottle, but for a novel you need the mental speed that enables you to keep the whole pattern in your head and ruthlessly sacrifice the sideshows as Ernest did in ‘A Farewell to Arms.’ If a mind is slowed up ever so little it lives in the individual part of the book rather than in a book as a whole; memory is dulled. I would give anything if I hadn’t had to write Part III of ‘Tender is the Night’ entirely on stimulant. If I had one more crack at it cold sober I believe it might have made a great difference.

(Fitzgerald, *On Authorship* 144)

Although Fitzgerald was following in the tradition of pairing literature with liquor, self-medication not only affected his creative work but also his mental health. Jamison explains how “alcohol and drug abuse often worsen the overall course of manic-depressive illness, occasionally precipitates the diseases in vulnerable individuals, and frequently undermines the effect of the treatment” (Jamison 39). Alcohol likely worsened Fitzgerald’s mood disorder. However, because of the nature of manic-

depressive illness—with periods of normalcy built into the flux—it might have not seemed imperative that Fitzgerald seek treatment. Jamison explains that “most people who have manic-depressive illness are, in fact, without symptoms (that is they are psychologically normal) most of the time” (Jamison 5). Fitzgerald, and those around him, likely found his disorder less apparent and certainly less urgent, especially when compared to Zelda’s. Thus, by avoiding treatment, Fitzgerald was less knowledgeable of his alcoholism and manic-depressive illness, and therefore less able to definitively discuss these issues in “The Crack-Up.” Furthermore, he would not have had any therapeutic experience—such as talk therapy—which could have given him the practice of fully opening up to his readers.

Although Fitzgerald evades—with euphemisms and suggestions—more than he confesses, “The Crack-Up” is still influential and can be considered part of the long confessional tradition. Gopnik asserts that “‘The Crack-Up’ helped invent a genre: the addiction confession which become a strong form of American writing in the second half of the twentieth century” (Gopnik 102). Writers often have cathartic aims in their writing, often achieved best through confession. For the Confessional poets, “the goal is self-therapy and a certain purgation” (Phillips 8). Yet, not all was purged. Fitzgerald continued drinking, continued to have sleeping problems, and lived the rest of his life mostly in despair.

Robert Phillips explains that “all confessional art, whether poetry or not, is a means of killing the beasts which are within us, those dreadful dragons of dreams and experiences that must be hunted down, cornered, and exposed in order to be destroyed” (Phillips 2). Both Scott and Zelda attempted to create art in an attempt to kill the beasts

within: Zelda, in her writing of *Save Me the Waltz* (1932), and Scott, with a large portion of all of his literature. Berman asserts that they each “turned to literature in an effort to transmute suffering into enduring art...[but] could not achieve lasting therapeutic relief from their private horrors” (Berman 60-61). Although the Fitzgeralds may have not achieved the goal of complete purgation, they did create enduring art that examines and expresses their experiences with mental illness. By experiencing Zelda’s breakdown, Fitzgerald was not only able to write about the breakdown and how it affected him. He was also able to see introspectively into his own psyche to examine his own breakdowns, his own cracking up. The experience enriched the art, because “those paint sorrow best who feel it most” (Lawlor 99). The value of Fitzgerald’s art, though, rests in the reader’s experience, especially if the text is cautionary. Jamison argues that “to the extent that an artist survives, describes, and then transforms psychological pain into an experience with more universal meaning, his or her own journey becomes one that others can, thus better protected, take” (Jamison 120-121).

Fitzgerald’s viewpoint of the purpose of literature informed his writing. Turnball explains that Fitzgerald “thought the artist’s purpose should be to express emotions he had lived through in some palatable disguise” (Turnball 65). Fitzgerald, therefore, wanted to express truth and his own experience, but to cover it with a disguise that would be easier for his readers to digest, which is why he wrote *Tender Is the Night* as a masked memoir. He believed that “you [could] stroke people with words” (Fitzgerald, “The Note-Books” 207). He recognized the novel as being the best form in which to do this, claiming the novel as “the strongest and supplest medium for conveying thought and emotion from one human being to another” (Fitzgerald, “The Crack-Up” 78). He also

thought that one should write out of necessity, that “you don’t write because you want to say something; you write because you’ve got something to say” (Fitzgerald, “The Note-Books” 123). Fitzgerald wrote with intention. In a letter to his daughter in 1936, he writes: “Nobody ever became a writer just by wanting to be one. If you have anything to say, anything you feel nobody has ever said before, you have got to feel it so desperately that you will find some way to say it that nobody has ever found before” (Fitzgerald, *On Authorship* 157). On viewing his own literature, Fitzgerald both admired and critiqued what he had produced: “My sometimes reading my own books for advice. How much I know sometimes—how little at others” (Fitzgerald, “The Note-Books” 200). In terms of psychological content, Fitzgerald certainly did not know as much as he thought or would have wanted.

Tender Is the Night and “The Crack-Up” function as documents which provide insight into how manic-depressive illness was perceived in the 1920s and 1930s. Not only does Fitzgerald incorrectly diagnose Nicole, he does not fully diagnose Dick. He does not explicitly explore mania in his novel, and he only slightly hints at it in “The Crack-Up.” He did not have a full understanding of manic-depressive illness at the time, and, generally, psychiatrists did not either. There is not only a lack of knowledge, but also a lack of concern. Mania was often perceived as a positive, desirable mood, if recognized at all. Fitzgerald may not have recognized his mania, and, if he did, was likely to attribute his euphoria to the success of a novel, the atmosphere of a party, or the excitement of the creative process. Therefore, mania is difficult to trace as a theme in *Tender Is the Night*, and reflects a disregard for it during that time. The prevalent mood in the novel is depression; Fitzgerald, through Dick, is exploring his own depression.

Fluctuating moods—mania and depression—are not explored. However, Fitzgerald does exhibit an understanding of cycles, changes in mood, and oppositional forces, more generally, even if he does not have the psychological vocabulary for it. The language he uses is reminiscent of manic-depressive illness and its sudden changes in mood: “And then suddenly the change” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 124); “And then, suddenly, everything changed...” (Fitzgerald, “The Crack-Up” 86) Although, in many ways, his essays lack clarity and honesty by 21st-century standards, his writing does demonstrate an understanding of the cycles and seasons of the human experience. The highs come just as suddenly as the lows, for Fitzgerald. He is unwell and then suddenly, surprisingly better. He is at a height, and then suddenly cracks like a plate when given bad news. As an artist, Fitzgerald is in touch with cycles and seasons, and he is able to make parallels and connections between the world and his life.

Fitzgerald’s accounts of cycles and seasons are part of a longer tradition, its roots in Greco-Roman culture. Tytell explains this ancient tradition and its emphasis on cycles: “Dionysus, the reveling agricultural god of the grape, who lived through his senses until he was torn apart by his revelers only to reemerge and repeat the cycle the next year” (Tytell 7). Although there is no evidence that Fitzgerald studied mythology, he certainly read writers who were readers of myths. Mythology was—and still is—engrained in the tradition of writing. It is possible that Fitzgerald was aware of Dionysus when writing *Tender Is the Night*: Dionysus being the God of Wine, and alcohol being the primary thing that destroys Dick Diver. Yet, Dionysus’ myth also tells the story of rebirth: “Dionysius is a god who is broken into a higher life” (Hyde 33). To be broken is to be reborn. In his “Note-Books,” Fitzgerald reflects on rebirth and renewal: “Perhaps

that life is constantly renewed, and glamour and beauty make way for it” (Fitzgerald, “The Note-Books” 198). He is toying around with the ideal of renewal; to claim that life is constantly renewed is to argue that rebirth, as a cycle, is built into the movement of life.

Although Fitzgerald was unaware of his own manic-depressive illness, his literature captures the highs and lows of the human experience. Kay Jamison’s research supports the argument that manic-depressive illness, by nature, exhibits the extremes of human life. She explains that “seasonal variations in mood and behavior appear to be common in the general population as well as in individuals with mood disorders” (Jamison 134). Fitzgerald’s awareness of cycles and seasons might indicate a general awareness of the human condition. Jamison asserts that “the core themes of seasonal regeneration and life and death that are such part and parcel of artistic expression, bear inescapable resemblance to the rhythmic changes of light and dark and the turning of the seasons so central to the natural world” (Jamison 129). The natural world not only follows the seasons of the year, cyclically, but also fluctuates in other ways, day and night, light and dark. These opposites are almost always on an artists’ radar, if not part of his or her obsessions. The world functions naturally through seasons. Jamison argues that the use of cycles and seasons, in art, is common among artists:

The progression of seasons is among the most commonly used metaphors in art, signifying...the passage of time, extremes and contrasts in the natural world, the cyclicity of life, the inevitability of death, belief in rebirth, and the impermanence, as well as the stages, of human life. (Jamison 137)

Fitzgerald writes within this tradition: he explores the passage of time through seasonal changes in *The Great Gatsby*¹⁷. He explores the passage of time, with time as thief in “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.” Benjamin loses everything in the process of unaging: his business, his glory days of Harvard football, his body, his youth. Fitzgerald, similarly, considers time as thief in the loss of love both in *The Great Gatsby* and in his short story “Winter Dreams.” Additionally, he captures remarkably well the inevitability of death in “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.” As a writer of the modern era, Fitzgerald was hyper-aware of time. His generation saw the popularization of the wristwatch; they “lived by the clock and the calendar” (Douglas 39). Douglas asserts that “1920s culture is clock culture, and the clock is the ultimate reality check” (Douglas 39). Fitzgerald was obsessed with the images and the language of time. He “employed 450 ‘time words’ in *The Great Gatsby* (1925), by Matthew Brucoli’s count” (Douglas 39). Fitzgerald focused specifically on the image of 3:00AM. In his “Note-books,” he includes this image: “a watch pointing accurately and unforgivably at 3 A.M.” (Fitzgerald, “The Note-Books” 229). In “The Crack-Up,” this image represents agitated depression and insomnia. He writes, “in the real dark night of the soul it is always three o’clock in the morning, day after day” (Fitzgerald, “The Crack-Up” 75). He suggests that time—specifically 3 A.M.—represents melancholy. For Fitzgerald, images of cycles, seasons, fluctuations, and time are aspects of the human condition.

While it is not entirely necessary to understand Fitzgerald’s biography or psychology in order to understand his literature, it can be beneficial. Cowley echoes Virginia Woolf’s claim, when he writes “writers don’t exist in a vacuum” (*Exile’s Return*

¹⁷ Seasonal changes are discussed through narration and dialogue. The turn of the seasons are always sudden.

10). Literature exists “within a material (economic, social, political) context. [Woolf] compares fiction, for example, to a spider’s web: this web is not spun in midair...but is ‘attached to life at all four corners.’” (Habib 47). Fitzgerald was both observer and participant of the culture he lived in; his manic-depressive illness influenced the subject matter he wrote about and the metaphors, themes, and images with which he wrote. Yet, Brucoli counters Woolf’s assertion; he urges readers to study *Tender Is the Night* objectively instead of subjectively. “There is no denying that all of Fitzgerald’s best work is intensely personal, but this does not mean that it must be approached through biographical or historical methods” (Brucoli xiii). However, by viewing *Tender Is the Night* through a biographical context, one can begin to understand why Fitzgerald wrote what he did, and, more crucially, why he wrote in the form of the novel. Fitzgerald examined psychology extensively in his novel, a composite story that blended fact and fiction, a masked memoir in the form of the novel. Additionally, Fitzgerald respected the form of the novel, recognizing its unmatched ability in terms of human expression. He thought considerably about the novel, as a form, writing to John Peale Bishop in 1929: “Novels are not written, or at least begun with the idea of making an ultimate philosophical system—you tried to atone for your lack of confidence by a lack of humility before the form” (Fitzgerald, “Letters to Friends” 275).

Fitzgerald not only respected the novel, but was also amazed by the creative process. In a letter to H.L. Mencken in 1934, Fitzgerald glorified the creative process: “[H]aving once found the intensity of art, nothing else that can happen in life can ever again seem as important as the creative process” (Moreland 364). Art, and the process of creating it, was Fitzgerald’s lifeblood. Yet the creative process is elusive, as is

inspiration. Inspiration, which is not always readily available, was considered divine by early philosophers. Today, it remains inherently mysterious. “Divine madness and inspiration,” Jamison explains, “were thought obtainable only during particular states of mind, such as loss of consciousness, affliction with illness, madness, or states of ‘possession’” (Jamison 51). To be inspired was to gain access to a divine power. “The Greeks would have called it possession.... The work results from a sort of manic frenzy in which the artist acts as a transfer point of energies whose painful origins functions as a catalyst for release and expression” (Tytell 7). The Greeks, in their efforts to make sense of inspiration, referred to mania as the predominant mood experienced during onsets of inspiration. The connection is psychologically valid:

Mania endows the writer and poet with greater access to their vocabularies, with spontaneous similes and metaphors, with an expanded imagination, and an augmented native eloquence... Mania also bestows abnormal energy and an insistent urge to do something... The creator... uses mania’s excitement, energy, speed, and rush of ideas on his work and calls his condition ‘inspiration.’

(Hershman 13)

Mania’s characteristics, as they relate to the creative process, may explain why some artists suffering from manic-depressive illness are hesitant to participate in therapy. While therapy could treat their debilitating depression, it could also result in the elimination of the often glorified frenzy of creative impulse.

Fitzgerald was undoubtedly *touched*: touched with a vocational gift, but also touched with a malady, his mental illness. Edmund Wilson interprets the myth of

Philoctetes similarly: the hero—and by extension, the artist—has both wound and bow. Both are necessary and inseparable. He argues that “the superiority of Philoctetes does not reside entirely in the enchanted bow” (Wilson 257). Thus, an artist’s gift is most powerful when coupled with “an incurable wound” (Wilson 260). The bow, for an artist, represents his voice, his gift, his ability to produce art. The wound might be trauma, madness, psychological disorder. Wilson states that “genius and disease, like strength and mutilation, may be inextricably bound up together” (Wilson 259). In his interpretation of the myth, Wilson suggests that a mental illness in a gifted artists should go untreated. Adrienne Sussman argues the same thing, more explicitly: “If mental illness can produce powerful and important art, then perhaps, instead of trying to eliminate them by medication, we should embrace these mental states as valuable in their own right” (Sussman 21). Although many mentally afflicted artists have produced important art, there are obvious dangers to leaving illness untreated: alcohol and drug abuse, worsening mood swings, and suicide.

The ethical decision regarding the psychological treatment of exceptionally creative individuals with manic-depressive illness is a very difficult one to make. Yet, it is a decision that deserves discussion. Although Plato was wrong to assume that all poets are insane—especially since most writers, even those with mental illnesses, hardly approach insanity—there is a definite correlation between the artist and the manic-depressive. “Recent research strongly suggests that, compared with the general population, writers and artists show a vastly disproportionate rate of manic-depressive or depressive illness; clearly, however, not all (not even most) writers and artists suffer from major mood disorders” (Jamison 5). Those artists and writers who do suffer from mood

disorders, often resist treatment¹⁸. Yet, mood disorders, if left untreated, inherently carry with them huge risks, the most devastating being death. Writers, such as Fitzgerald, who possess inner gifts of exceptional creativity are called to give back. Hyde explains that “once an inner gift has been realized, it may be passed along, communicated to the audience” (Hyde 151). Allowing a writer’s mental illness to go untreated is to, potentially, strip him of his ability to participate in literary gift-exchange.

¹⁸ Ranier M. Rilke, after dropping out of therapy, was quoted saying, “I don’t want the demons taken away because they’re going to take my angels too.”

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