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## F. S. FITZGERALD: TENDER IS THE NIGHT

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**F. S. FITZGERALD**  
***TENDER IS THE NIGHT***

**1. A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Although modern criticism has disavowed any attempt to evaluate literary works in terms of the personality and life of their author (this cardinal sin is called "biographic fallacy", *i.e.* the attempt at a literal one-for-one equation of fiction with the details of the life from which it grows), it is very difficult to read F's novels without placing them in a biographical context. Imagination never works out of a vacuum and F. incorporated much of his experience into his work; consequently, just as F's life illuminates his work so his work does his life. However, in going over the main events of his life, I shall confine myself to factual particulars having a direct bearing on the novel under consideration.

***FAMILY BACKGROUND***

F. who was born on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1896, in St Paul, the conservative, aristocratic and smug capital city of the state of Minnesota, remained throughout his life the man from the provinces, a provincial with his bedazzlement at wealth and power. His father descended from a Maryland family and preserved all the sensitivities and genteel manners of a Southern gentleman. On the distaff side, we find representatives of the merchant class with wealth and prestige of the kind generally labelled "*nouveau riche*". Mary McQuillan, F's mother, came of an Irish family that immigrated in 1850 (hence F's reference to his "straight potato famine ancestors") and became prosperous. However, after being divided up among several heirs, the McQuillan fortune was not sufficient to maintain the family on a grand scale and F's father had to support his family by his own efforts. Being totally ineffectual, he failed in business, then worked for Proctor & Gamble until he was fired in 1908. This came as a shock to young F.: "He came home that evening a broken man. He had lost his essential drive, his immaculateless of purpose. He was a failure the rest of his days". He then became a wholesale grocery salesman, which was a constant humiliation to his son who was very early aware of the dubious status and inadequate income of his family. In fact, the F's lived in "shabby gentility", which perhaps accounts for F's later predisposition to live grandly if not flamboyantly: his profligacy was some sort of reaction formation (defence mechanism by which an unacceptable impulse is mastered by exaggeration of the opposing tendency: solicitude may be a reaction-formation to cruelty) against the fact that his family had been more often than not in strait circumstances (see rôle of Money & theme of Expenditure in *Tender*). F. was to write much later about his father that "his own life after a rather brilliant startback in the seventies has been a 'failure' he's lived always in mother's shadow and he takes an immense vicarious

pleasure in any success of mine" (we find pretty much the same pattern in Dick Diver's life). So F's admiration for his father and his aristocratic family past was somewhat undermined by the awareness of his impracticality and the sense of decadence that haunted the young F. as his family moved from one neighbourhood to another, farther and farther away from the residential and fashionable districts of St Paul. (same restlessness or urge to change one's residence in F's and Diver's lives). Nevertheless much of his father went into the characterization of Dick Diver's father (see, for instance, p. 223). Mary McQuillan exerted a great influence over her son; she was an eccentric character with a taste for literature and F. apparently inherited both these traits. So much for F's family background which brought into relief a further connection with the novel: the males' dependence upon the females for financial security.

### **EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

F. went to St Paul's academy in 1908 and three years later to the Newman Academy, a Catholic School in New Jersey (I'll revert to F's Catholicism later in the course) but his record as a student is poor: he wasted his time in a thousand activities, alternating between dreams of being a great athlete and becoming a great writer. Although he tried to be a football hero, he never achieved athletic success; F. was shorter and lighter than the other boys and performed bravely but poorly. He was more successful in attaining his second goal since he wrote short stories that were published in the student magazine and composed two plays which were staged in St Paul in the summers of 1912 and 1913. However, he was unpopular with the other students because of his independence of spirit and his arrogance. In 1913, he enrolled in Princeton, which meant leaving the Middle West, which was closed and conservative for the East, which was rich and unprejudiced. The years at Princeton were the most determinant phase in F's formative years:

"They were years of exultation and depression, of intellectual awakening, as well as of misdirected energy. His athletic ambitions were shattered, he suffered repeated humiliations from companions richer than he; but at Princeton he found his way to literary achievement" (Perosa).

The stay at Princeton reinforced his sense of being "*déclassé*": "I was one of the poorest boys in a rich boys'school". Life on the campus followed the same pattern as before: little academic work, a lot of extracurricular activities (including petting and necking!) and a steady output of librettos for musicals and various literary material including the 1st draft of *This Side of Paradise*, his 1<sup>st</sup> novel. F. suffered at Princeton one of the great blows of his life: his failure to become a member of the most prestigious clubs: "I was always trying to be one of them! [...] I wanted to belong to what every other bastard belonged to: the greatest club in history. And I was barred from that too" ("The Triangle Club"). If F. was foiled in his social aims, he was more successful in his cultural ambitions: he became acquainted with J. Peale Bishop E. Wilson, "his intellectual conscience", and Father Fay, a man of taste and cultivation a Catholic with a catholic mind who exerted a great intellectual influence on F. (possible connection with Diver's priestlike attitude in *Tender*; I'll revert to that point) and read the great classics. He met

Ginevra King, a beautiful and wealthy girl from Chicago it was a romantic love-affair but F. was turned down by her parents who had better hopes for their daughter. Nevertheless, F. was to make her the ideal girl of his generation to the point of having all her letters bound in a volume. In 1917, he left Princeton: "I retired not on my profits, but on my liabilities and crept home to St Paul to finish a novel". In the words of a critic, K. Eble: "The Princeton failure was one of the number of experiences which helped create the pattern to be found in F's fiction: success coming out of abysmal failure or failure following hard upon success". On leaving P., he enlisted in the Army, was commissioned 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant but never went overseas and never had any combat experience: 2<sup>nd</sup> juvenile regret war heroism (connection with the novel: visit to battlefields under the guidance of Dick, who behaves as if he had been there, pp. 67-69 and the character of "Barban", the thunderbolt of war. See also p. 215 "Tommy B. was a ruler, Tommy was a hero"). The same year, he met Zelda Sayre, a Southern Belle, but F. came up against the same opposition as before; he did not have enough money to win the girl's parents' approval; so he went to New York in search of a job for Zelda was not overanxious to "marry into a life of poverty and struggle". In 1919, F. worked in an advertising agency; quit to rewrite novel and staked all his hopes on its publication: "I have so many things dependent upon its success including of course a girl not that I expect it to make me a fortune but it will have a psychological effect on me and all my surroundings". An amusing detail: at the time of publication, telegrams to Zelda consisted largely of reports of book-sales. Married Zelda in 1920 F's early success (*This Side of Paradise*) gave him the things his romantic self most admired: fame, money and a glamorous girl.

### **THE GROWTH OF THE LEGEND**

With the publication of *This Side of Paradise* (sold 40,000 copies in less than a year), F. had become a hero to his generation, "a kind of king of our American youth"; Zelda was seen as "a barbarian princess from the South"); both made a strong impression on people and caused a stir wherever they went. The Fitzgeralds, as a critic put it, "were two kinds of brilliance unable to outdazzle the other; two innocents living by the infinite promise of American advertising, two restless temperaments craving both excitement and repose". (Obvious parallel between this description and the Diver couple). Z. played a prominent part in F's life. She admired her husband, but was also jealous of his literary success:

"She almost certainly served to accentuate his tendency to waste himself in fruitless endeavours; she stimulated a certain fatuity of attitude in him and accentuated the split between a taste for popular success and the obligations imposed upon him by his literary talent. [...] she speeded up the pace of his existence and the rhythm of his activity" (Perosa).

The kind of life they led meant making money hand over fist so F. set to work, all the more earnestly as he was convinced that money in large quantities was the proper reward of virtue. He averaged \$ 16,000 to 17,000 a year during his career as a writer but he was in constant debt and had to write himself out of his financial plight, which led to the composition of numberless short pieces of little or no value. Made 1<sup>st</sup> trip to Europe in 1920; met J. Joyce in Paris; disappointment. Back to St Paul for the

birth of Frances Scott F. in 1921. Next year was marked by a burst of creativity: published *The Beautiful and Damned*, *Tales of the Jazz Age*, *The Vegetable*, a play was a failure.

1923: made the acquaintance of Ring Lardner, the model for Abe North and the symbol for the man of genius dissipating his energy and wasting his talent.

1924: With the illusion of reducing expenses the family went to live in France: trips to St Raphaël, Rome, Capri and Paris. F. finished *Gatsby* but his serenity was marred by Z's restlessness and by her affair with a French aviator, Edouard Josanne. F. was deeply hurt: "I knew that something had happened that could never be repaired" (Obvious parallel with *Tender*).

1925: Summer in Paris described as "one of 1,000 parties and no work". Meets E. Hemingway: a model cf. "Beware of Ernest" when F. was influenced by his stylistic devices and also "I talk with the authority of failure, Ernest with the authority of success". F. began to be drunk for periods of a week or ten days: "Parties are a form of suicide. I love them, but the old Catholic in me secretly disapproves." Began *Tender*...

1926: 3<sup>rd</sup> collection of stories *All the Sad Young Men*, title betrays different attitude to his former subject matter.

1927: Stay in Hollywood; gathered new material in preparation for the chapter of Rosemary Hoyt. Failure: his script was rejected. Left for Delaware. Meanwhile Z. was getting more and more restless and showing signs of hysteria (as a friend of theirs put it: "Z. was a case not a person"). Z. gets dancing obsession and wants to become a ballet dancer.

1928: New trip abroad to Paris for Z. to take dancing lessons

1929: 2<sup>nd</sup> long stay; F. continues to drink heavily; creates disturbances and disappoints his friends. Was even arrested once.

1930. Trip to Montreux to have Z. examined: diagnosis of schizophrenia. F. remembered with special horror that "Christmas in Switzerland". Z. suffers from nervous eczema (like the woman painter in the lunatic asylum in *Tender*, see p. 201-2). While in hospital, Z. composed in six weeks *Save me the Waltz*, a thinly fictionalized account of the Fs' lives; F. revised the manuscript and made important changes when some allusions were too obvious; he changed the original name of the hero (Amory Blaine, cf. *This Side...*) to David Knight. Hence, a possible connection with the title of the novel he was at the time working on: *Tender is the Knight*.

1931: Death of F's father (see corresponding episode in *Tender*: F used in *Tender* an unpublished paper that he wrote on the death of his father). In September, F. returned permanently to the USA; to Hollywood for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

1933: *Tender* is completed. Z's 3<sup>rd</sup> collapse. Confined to a sanitarium and was to be in and out of similar institutions through the rest of her life. F. tried to commit suicide; his mental state contributed to making Z's recovery more difficult, but as Mizener puts it "at bottom Z's trouble was something that was happening to them both".

1934 April 12<sup>th</sup> publication of *Tender* which had a limited success while F's private life was getting more & more pathetic and lonely: "the dream of the writer was wrecked and so was his dream of eternal love".

1935-37: Period of "Crack Up", increasing alcoholism and physical illnesses. F. having apparently exhausted all literary material turned to introspection and laid his heart bare; defined exactly his own "malaise" and analyzed his own decay.

June 1937 signed contract with MGM at \$ 1,000 a week. Met Sheila Graham and this affair had the effect of putting a little order into his life and of enabling him to work on *The Last Tycoon*. So, "the last three years of his life were marked by a reawakening of his creative forces and by his last desperate struggle with the specter of decadence. He worked with enthusiasm at various film scripts, minimized his social life and succeeded in abstaining from alcohol" (Perosa).

November 1940: 1<sup>st</sup> heart attack;

December 21<sup>st</sup>: 2<sup>nd</sup> and fatal one. Death. His books were proscribed and as he had not died a good Catholic, the Bishop refused to allow him to be buried in hallowed ground.

1948: March, 10<sup>th</sup>, Z. dies in fire at Highland Sanitarium.

Difficult to find an appropriate conclusion after going over such a dramatic and tragic life; most striking characteristic however, "a sharply divided life": F. was "a man of self-discipline at war with the man of self-indulgence" (Lehan), a situation made even more complex by the rôle Z. played in his life. She hindered his ambitions because, he said, "she wanted to work too much for her and not enough for my dream". "[...] I had spent most of my resources, spiritual and material, on her, but I struggled on for 5 years till my health collapsed, and all I cared about was drink and forgetting" (which points to the very theme of "expenditure" explored in *Tender*). A final ironical touch, however, to this portrait: F's life testifies to the truth of L. Fiedler's opinion that "Among us, nothing succeeds like failure" since F. is now considered as one of the literary greats and sales of his books have averaged 500,000 copies a year since he died in 1941.

## **SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

F. often assumed the rôle of "a commenter on the American scene". Well, what was the American scene like during the period depicted by *Tender*? The novel spans the period known as "the Jazz Age" *i.e.* from the riots on May Day, 1919, to the crash of the stock market in 1929. That period was marked by the impact of W.W.I, a conflict which ushered in a new era in the history of the USA. Until the outbreak of the war, the USA was a provincial nation with a naive and somewhat parochial outlook; the conflict changed all that:

la guerre apparaît soudain comme le viol d'une conscience collective exceptionnellement paisible, satisfaite et pour tout dire innocente... Pour tous les jeunes Américains, ce fut un appel individuel à l'expérience. Avril 1917 sonne le glas d'une certaine innocence typiquement américaine [...] l'Amérique rentrait dans l'Histoire. (M. Gresset)

The typical representative of that post-war period was "the lost generation" (a phrase coined by G. Stein), a war-wounded generation hurt in its nerves and bereft of all illusions concerning society and human nature after witnessing the atrocities committed on European battlefields. It was also suspicious of the spurious values of a society that had turned into "Vanity Fair". The Jazz Age was also a time of great upheaval in social mores:

dans la société déboussolée et fausement libérée des années vingt, [la sexualité] commença à devenir une manière de prurit endémique, une obsession nourrie d'impuissance et de stérilité, ce que D.H. Lawrence allait appeler "le sexe dans la tête". [...] Les rôles traditionnels tendent à s'invertir: les hommes se féminisent, les femmes se masculinisent et les jeunes filles sont des garçons. On voit poindre là une "crise des différences" déjà manifeste dans la littérature du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, et dont témoigne, notamment dans le roman français (Balzac, Stendhal, Gautier, Flaubert) la multiplication des personnages masculins dévirilisés et des personnages féminins virils, sans parler des cas-limites androgynes et castrats dans le bas-romantisme et la littérature de la Décadence" (A. Bleikasten).

As a historian put it: "soft femininity was out and figures were becoming almost boyish" and said another "the quest of slenderness, the vogue of short skirts, the juvenile effect of the long waist. [...] all were signs [...] that the woman of this decade worshiped not merely youth but unripened youth". Two typical figures of the period were the "flapper" (*la garçonne*) and the "sheik" (the young lady-killer, Rudolf Valentino style). All these elements went into the composition of *Tender* which, as we shall see, was aptly defined as "a portrait of society's disintegration" in the troubled post-war years.

### **LITERARY BACKGROUND**

A short examination of F's literary consciousness and evolution as a writer. A just evaluation, both aesthetic and critical of the F. case is all the more difficult as he never attempted any comprehensive definition of his art and technique; apart from a few observations in his private correspondence, we have precious little to go on. His beginnings as a writer were marked by the dominant influence of such realistic or even naturalistic authors as H. G. Wells and Th. Dreiser or Frank Norris who insisted on a life-like and documentary representation of reality. But pretty soon, F. shifted his allegiance and acknowledged a debt to H. James, and J Conrad. When James's *The Art of the Novel* was published in 1934 F. immediately read the book; in this collection of prefaces, James put forward his arguments in favour of the "selective" type of novel as opposed to the "discursive" type advocated by Wells. This controversy dominated the literary stage in the early XX<sup>th</sup> century; Wells wanted to "have all life within the scope of the novel" and maintained that nothing was "irrelevant" in a novel i.e the novel was to be well-documented; he insisted that characterization rather than action should be the center of the novel, and claimed the author had a right to be "intrusive" since the novel was a vehicle for problem discussion. James on the contrary proposed "selection" as the preferred alternative to "saturation", the extract from life as a substitute for the slice of life. For him the true test of the artist was his tact of omission; moreover the novelist must have a "centre of interest", a "controlling idea" or a "pointed intention". This is of course a gross oversimplification of what was at stake in this controversy, but it enables us to place F. within the wider context of a particular literary tradition. Thus F. took sides with the advocates

of "the novel *démeublé*" (as Willa Cather put it) *i.e.* presenting a scene by suggestion rather than by enumeration: "Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there—that, one might say, is created" (W. Cather). Another preface played a decisive rôle in F.'s evolution as a writer: Conrad's preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*: "I keep hinking of Conrad's *Nigger of the Narcissus*' preface and I believe that the important thing about a work of fiction is that the essential reaction shall be profound and enduring". (F. in a letter). From Conrad F. borrowed several principles and devices: first of all he subscribed to Conrad's definition of the function of the artist which is "by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel [...] to make you see". F. also learnt from Conrad that "the purpose of a work of fiction is to appeal to the lingering after-effects in the reader's mind". He also adopted the Conradian motif of "the dying fall" *i.e.* "*la fin en lent decrescendo*", which, in contrast to the dramatic ending, is a gradual letting down or tapering off, and the device known as "chronological muddlement" *i.e.* arranging narratives not as a chronological sequence of events, but as a series of gradual discoveries made by the narrator. Instead of going straight forward, from beginning to end, in order to gradually disclose the true nature of a particular character, a novel should first get the character in "with a strong impression, and then work backwards and forwards over his past" (F. Madox Ford). This has far-reaching implications: when a novel has a straight unbroken narrative order, it usually means that the author and his readers share a certain confidence about the nature of moral and material reality. Their narrative world is orderly: chaos is elsewhere and unthreatening. But when we get books in which the narrative order has broken up, melted and regrouped into scattered fragments, when we find gaps and leaps in the time sequence, then we have moved into the modern age, when the author and his public are doubtful about the nature of the moral and material worlds. Conrad's dislocated narrative method "working backwards and forwards" reflects a conviction that the world is more like a "damaged kaleidoscope" than an "orderly panorama". Since we are dealing with technique, let me mention another device, which F. borrowed from James this time and made good use of in *Tender*: "the hour-glass situation" *i.e.* a form of reversed symmetry: A turns into B, while B turns into A or a strong character gradually deteriorates while a weak character becomes stronger etc., a situation perfectly illustrated in *Tender Is The Night*, a novel of deterioration. F. combined all these borrowings into a unique technique which enabled him, in his own words, to aim at "truth, or rather the equivalent of the truth, the attempt at honesty of imagination". To attain this goal he developed "a hard, colorful prose style" not unlike Hemingway's. In an independent way, F. recreated certain stylistic features typical of Hemingway: the hardness and precision of diction, the taste for the essential and the concrete, the predominance of the dialogue, the directness of statement, a refinement of language disguised as simplicity. However, F. himself was aware of the strong influence H's style exerted over him: "remember to avoid Hemingway" or "Beware of Hemingway" are warnings one can read in his manuscripts. He was also threatened by a certain facility: "I honestly believed that with no effort on my part I was a sort of magician with words..." Hence, no doubt, the tremendous amount of second rate work he turned out to pay off his debts. To achieve his hard colorful prose style, F. used verbs whenever possible ("all fine prose is based

on the verbs carrying the sentences. They make sentences move"); he strove for naturalness ("People don't begin all sentences with and, but, for and if, do they? They simply break a thought in mid-paragraph...") and often resorted to the "dramatic method" *i.e.* what the characters do tells us what they are; and what they are shows us what they can do (cf. James: "What is character but the determination of incident?" "What is incident but the illustration of character?"):

The dramatic method is the method of direct presentation, and aims to give the readers the sense of being present, here and now in the scene of action...Description is dispensed with by the physical stage setting. Exposition and characterization are both conveyed through the dialogue and action of the characters (J. W. Beach).

F. laid great stress upon the writer's need of self-conscious craft: "The necessity of the artist in every generation has been to give his work permanence in every way by a safe shaping and a constant pruning, lest he be confused with the journalistic material that has attracted lesser men". F. was not like Th. Wolfe or W. Faulkner a "putter-inner" (Faulkner said "I am trying to say it all in one sentence, between one Cap and one period") *i.e.* never tried to pile words upon words in an attempt to say everything, on the contrary, he was a "leaver-outer", he worked on the principle of selection and tried to achieve some sort of "magic suggestiveness" which did not preclude him from proclaiming his faith in the ideal of a hard and robust type of artistic achievement as witness the quotation opening his last novel: "*Tout passe. L'art robuste Seul a l'éternité*". (Gautier, *Émaux et camées*).

## 2) AN INTRODUCTION TO *TENDER IS THE NIGHT*

It took F. nine years, from 1925 to 1934 to compose his most ambitious work: he stated that he wanted to write "something new in form, idea, structure, the model of the age that Joyce and Stein are searching for, that Conrad did not find". As we have seen, it was a difficult time in F.'s life when both Zelda and himself were beginning to crack up: F. was confronted with moral, sentimental and financial difficulties. So, it is obvious that the composition of the novel was both a reply to Zelda's *Save me the Waltz* and a form of therapy, a writing cure. There were 18 stages of composition, 3 different versions and 3 different reading publics since *Tender Is The Night* was first published as a serial (in Scribner's Magazine from January to April 1934); it came out in book form on April 12th 1934 and there was a revised edition in 1951. *Tender Is The Night* sold 13,000 copies only in the first year of publication and F.'s morale dropped lower than ever. Needless to say, I am not going to embark upon an analysis of the different stages of composition and various versions of the novel; it would be a tedious and unrewarding task. Suffice it to say that the first version, entitled *The Melarky Case*, related the story of Francis Melarky, a technician from Hollywood, who has a love affair on the Riviera and eventually kills his mother in a fit of rage. This version bore several titles: *Our Type*, *The World's Fair*, or *The Boy who Killed his Mother*. F. put it aside and sketched another plan for a new draft, *The Drunkard's Holiday* or *Doctor Diver's Holiday*, that was closer to the novel as we know it today since it purported to "Show a man who is a natural idealist, a spoiled priest, giving in for various causes to the ideas of the haute Bourgeoisie, and in his rise to the top of the social world losing his idealism, his talent and turning to drink and dis-

sipation...". Somewhere else we read that "*The Drunkard's Holiday* will be a novel of our time showing the breakup of a fine personality. Unlike *The Beautiful and Damned* the break-up will be caused not by flabbiness but really tragic forces such as the inner conflicts of the idealist and the compromises forced upon him by circumstances". Such were the immediate predecessors of *Tender Is The Night* which integrated many aspects and elements from the earlier versions, but the final version is but a distant cousin to the original one. The action depicted in the novel spans 10 years: from 1919, Dick's second stay in Zurich, to 1929 when he leaves for the States. The novel is a "triple-decker": the first book covers the summer of 1925; the first half of the second is a retrospection bringing us back to 1919 then to the years 1919-1925. The 2<sup>nd</sup> half (starting from chapter XI) picks up the narrative thread where it had been broken in the first book, *i.e.* 1925 to describe the lives of the Divers from autumn to Xmas, then skips a year and a half to give a detailed account of a few weeks. The 3<sup>rd</sup> book just follows from there and takes place between the summer of 1928 and July 1929. Except for two brief passages where Nicole speaks in her own voice, it is a 3<sup>rd</sup>-person account by an omniscient narrator relayed by a character-narrator who is used as a reflector; we get 3 different points of view: Rosemary's in Book I, Dick's in Book II, Nicole in Book III. Dick gradually becomes "a diminishing figure" disappearing from the novel as from Nicole's life. This, as you can see, was an application of the Conradian principle of "chronological muddlement" but such an arrangement of the narrative material had a drawback of which F. was painfully conscious: "its great fault is that the true beginning – the young psychiatrist in Switzerland – is tucked away in the middle of the book" (F.). Moreover, the reader is often under the impression that Rosemary is the centre and focus of the story and it takes him almost half the book to realize the deceptiveness of such a beginning: the real protagonists are Dick and Nicole. To remedy such faults, F. proposed to reorganize the structure of the novel, which he did in 1939 (it was published in 1953). There is no question that the novel in this revised form is a more straightforward story but in the process it loses much of its charm and mystery; Dick's fate becomes too obvious, too predictable whereas the earlier version, in spite of being "a loose and baggy monster", started brilliantly with a strong impression and a sense of expectancy if not mystery that held the reader in suspense. But the debate over the merits or demerits of each version is still raging among critics, so we won't take sides. The subject of *Tender Is The Night* is a sort of transmuted biography which was always F.'s subject: it is the story of Dick's (and F.'s) emotional bankruptcy.

Now I'd like to deal with four elements which, though external to the narrative proper, are to be reckoned with in any discussion of the novel: the title, the subtitle, the reference to Keats's poem and the dedication. F.'s novel is placed under the patronage of Keats as witness the title and the extract from "Ode to a Nightingale" which F. could never read through without tears in his eyes. It is however useless to seek a point by point parallelism between the structure of *Tender Is The Night* and that of the poem; the resemblance bears only on the mood and some of the motifs. "The Ode" is a dramatized contrasting of actuality and the world of imagination; it also evinces a desire for reason's utter dissolution, a longing for a state of eternity as opposed to man's painful awareness of his subjection to tem-

porality. Thus seen against such background, the title bears a vague hint of dissolution and death, a foreboding of the protagonist's gradual sinking into darkness and oblivion. In the novel, there are also echoes of another Keatsian motif: that of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci".

The subtitle, "A Romance", reminds us that American fiction is traditionally categorized into the *novel* proper and *the romance*. We owe N. Hawthorne this fundamental distinction; the main difference between those two forms is the way in which they view reality. The novel renders reality closely and in comprehensive detail; it attaches great importance to character, psychology, and strains after verisimilitude. Romance is free from the ordinary novelistic requirements of verisimilitude; it shows a tendency to plunge into the underside of consciousness and often expresses dark and complex truths unavailable to realism. In the Introduction to *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), N. Hawthorne defined the field of action of romance as being the borderland of the human mind where the actual and the imaginary intermingle. The distinction is still valid and may account, as some critics have argued, notably R. Chase in *The American Novel and its Tradition*, for the original and characteristic form of the American novel which Chase calls "*romance-novel*" to highlight its hybrid nature ("Since the earliest days, the American novel, in its most original and characteristic form, has worked out its destiny and defined itself by incorporating an element of romance"). Of course, this is not the only meaning of the word "romance"; it also refers to "a medieval narrative [...] treating of heroic, fantastic, or supernatural events, often in the form of an allegory" (*Random Dict.*); the novel, as we shall see, can indeed be interpreted in this light (bear in mind the pun on Night and Knight). A third meaning is apposite: romance is the equivalent of "a love affair", with the traditional connotations of idealism and sentimentalism. It is useful to stress other characteristics of "romanticism", for instance Th. Mann stated that: "Romanticism bears in its heart the germ of morbidity, as the rose bears the worm; its innermost character is seduction, seduction to death". One should also bear in mind the example of Gatsby whose sense of wonder, trust in life's boundless possibility and opportunity, and lastly, sense of yearning are hallmarks of the true romantic. Cf. a critic's opinion:

If Romanticism is an artistic perspective which makes men more conscious of the terror and the beauty, the wonder of the possible forms of being [...] and, finally, if Romanticism is the endeavor [...] to achieve [...] the illusioned view of human life which is produced by an imaginative fusion of the familiar and the strange the known and the unknown, the real and the ideal, then F. Scott Fitzgerald is a Romantic".

So, be careful not to overlook any of these possible meanings if you are called upon to discuss the nature of *Tender Is The Night*. Lastly, a word about the identity of the people to whom *Tender Is The Night* is dedicated. Gerald and Sarah Murphy were a rich American couple F. met in 1924. The Murphys made the Cap d'Antibes the holiday-resort of wealthy Americans; they were famous for their charm, their social skill, and parties. F. drew on G. Murphy to portray Dick Diver. So much for externals; from now on we'll come to grips with the narrative proper.

### 3) MEN AND WOMEN IN *TENDER IS THE NIGHT*

F.'s novel anatomizes not only the break-up of a fine personality but also of various couples; it is a study of the relationship between men and women at a particular period in American history when both the times and people were "out of joint". The period was unique in that it witnessed a great switch-over in rôles as a consequence of the war and of America's coming of age. I have already alluded to "*la crise des différences*" in the historical and social background to the novel and by way of illustration I'd like to point out that in F's world, the distinction between sexes is always fluid and shifting; the boy Francis in *The World's Fair* (an earlier version of *Tender*) becomes with no difficulty at all the girl Rosemary in *Tender* and with the exception of Tommy Barban, all male characters in the novel evince obvious feminine traits; their virility is called into question by feminine or homosexual connotations: Dick appears "clad in transparent black lace drawers" (30), which is clearly described as "a pansy's trick" by one of the guests. Nicole bluntly asks him if he is a sissy (cf. p. 136 "Are you a sissy?"). Luis Campion is sometimes hard put to it to "restrain his most blatant effeminacy...and motherliness" (43). Mr. Dumphy is also "an effeminate young man" (16). Women on the contrary display certain male connotations: Nicole is described as a "hard woman" (29) with a "harsh voice" (25). Her sister Baby Warren, despite her nickname, is also "hard", with "something wooden and onanistic about her" (168); she is likened to an "Amazon" (195) and said to resemble her "grandfather" (193). Oddly enough, Rosemary herself, is said to be economically at least "a boy, not a girl" (50). Thus, there is an obvious reversal of traditional roles or at least attributes, and *Tender* may be interpreted as a new version or re-enactment of the war between sexes (cf. motif of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci"). Let's review the forces in presence whose battle array can be represented as follows: two trios (two males vying for the same female) with Dick in between.

#### **DICK**

Belongs to the tradition of romantic characters such as Jay Gatsby: "an old romantic like me" (68); entertaining "the illusions of eternal strength and health, and of the essential goodness of people" (132). He's got "charm" and "the power of arousing a fascinated and uncritical love" (36) and like Gatsby makes resolutions: he wants to become "a good psychologist [...] maybe to be the greatest one that ever lived" (147) and also likes "showing off". At the same time, Dick's personality is divided and reveals contradictory facets: there is in him a "layer of hardness [...] of self-control and of self-discipline" (28) which is to be contrasted with his self-indulgence. Dick is the "organizer of private gaiety" (87) yet there is in him a streak of "asceticism" (cf. p. 221) prompting him to take pattern by his father and to cultivate the old virtues: "good instincts, honor, courtesy, and courage" (223). Cf. also p. 149 "he used to think that he wanted to be good, he wanted to be kind, he wanted to be brave and wise, but it was all pretty difficult. He wanted to be loved, too, if he could fit it in". The most prepossessing aspect of Dick's personality is a certain form of generosity; he spares no effort and gives away his spiritual and material riches to make people happy and complete: "They were waiting for him and incomplete with-

out him. He was still the incalculable element..." (166) almost like a cipher which has no value in itself but increases that of the figure it is added to. Dick sometimes assumes the rôle and function of a "but-tress" (cf. p. 265: "it was as if he was condemned to carry with him the egos of certain people, early met and early loved"), or even of a "Saviour" (p. 325: "he was the last hope of a decaying clan"). His relationship with Nicole is based on the same principle: his main function is to serve as a prop to keep her from falling to pieces ("he had stitched her together", p. 153). Dick's downfall will be brought about by two factors: his confusing the rôle of a psychiatrist with that of a husband and the lure of money ("Throw us together! Sweet propinquity and the Warren money" 173); I'll revert to the question of money, but for the time being, I'd like to stress its evil nature and the double penalty Dick incurs for yielding to his desire for money: castration and corruption (p. 220: "He had lost himself [...] Watching his father's [...] his arsenal to be locked up in the Warren safety-deposit vaults"). But the most fateful consequence is that, Nicole gradually depriving him of his vital energy, Dick loses his creative power, enthusiasm and even his soul: p. 187 "Naturally, Nicole wanting to own him [...] goods and money"; p. 227 "a lesion of enthusiasm" and lastly p. 242 "a distinct lesion of his own vitality".

At this stage it is useful to introduce the motif of the "hour glass" situation already mentioned in the "Introduction": as Dick grows weaker and weaker, Nicole gets "stronger every day...[her] illness follows the law of diminishing returns" (p. 288). Dick's process of deterioration parallels the emergence of Nicole's "new self" (254). Dick takes to drink, becomes less and less presentable and efficient as a psychiatrist; moreover he's no longer able to perform his usual physical stunts (cf. 304-6). There's a complete reversal: "I'm not much like myself any more" (280) and "But you used to want to create things- now you seem to want to smash them up" (287). He eventually loses and this is the final blow his moral superiority over his associates ("They now possessed a moral superiority over him for as long as he proved of any use", 256). Dick, being aware of his degradation, tries to bring retribution on himself by accusing himself of raping a young girl (256). His deterioration assumes spiritual dimensions since it imperils not only his physical being but his soul ("I'm trying to save myself" "From my contamination?" 323). Dick proves to be a tragic character cf. reference to Ophelia (325) whose main defect is incompleteness ("the price of his intactness was incompleteness", 131) and like tragic heroes he has his fall. The dispenser of romance and happiness eventually conjures up the image of the "Black Death" ("I don't seem to bring people happiness any more", 239) and of the "deposed ruler" (301) whose kingdom has been laid waste by some great Evil (*Tender* calls to mind the motifs of *The Waste Land* and the Fisher King). There are two important stages in Dick's progress: his meeting with Rosemary and his father's death. Meeting Rosemary arouses in Dick a characteristically "paternal interest" (38) and "attitude" (75); Dick sees Rosemary as a child (77) and she, in turn, unconsciously considers him as a surrogate father figure. It is interesting to note that with, her youthful qualities, Rosemary fulfills the same function towards Dick as Dick does to Nicole *i.e.* she is a source of strength, renewal and rejuvenation. Dick is attracted by Rosemary's vitality (47) and he uses her to restore his own diminishing vigour. But, at the same time, his affair with Rosemary is a "time of self-indulgence" (233), a lapse from virtue and morals,

a turning-point: "He knew that what he was doing..." (103). Dick is unable to resist temptation the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, as the saying goes, so this is the 1<sup>st</sup> step (or the 2<sup>nd</sup> if we take into account his marrying Nicole) to hell whose way, as you all know, is paved with good intentions. However the promises of love are blighted by the revelation of Rosemary's promiscuity cf. the episode on the train and the leitmotif "Do you mind if I pull down the curtain?" (113). Dick eventually realizes that the affair with Rosemary is just a passing fancy: "he was not in love with her nor she with him" (236) and (240) "Rome was the end of his dream of Rosemary". His father's death deprives Dick of a moral guide, of one the props of his existence ("how will it affect me now that this earliest and strongest of protections is gone?", p. 222 "he referred judgments to what his father would probably have thought and done"). Although a minor figure at least in terms of space devoted to his delineation, Dick's father plays an important rôle as a representative of an old-world aristocracy with a high sense of honour, a belief in public service and maintenance of domestic decorum. He represents the Southern Cavalier (gentleman, a descendant of the English squire) as opposed to the Yankee, the product of a society absorbed in money-making and pleasure-seeking. He is a sort of relic from the past, a survival from a phased-out order of things, hence the slightly anachronistic observation to be found on p. 181: "From his father Dick had learned the somewhat conscious good manners of the young Southerner coming north after the Civil War". Dick, whose name, ironically enough, means "powerful and hard", will prove unable, as heir to a genteel tradition, to live up to the values and standards of the Southern Gentleman. He is hard on the outside and soft inside and reminds one of F's desire "to get hard. I'm sick of the flabby semi-intellectual softness in which I floundered with my generation" (Mizener). Hence also, the note of disappointment struck by F. when he stated that "My generation of radicals and breakers-down never found anything to take the place of the old virtues of work and courage and the old graces of courtesy and politeness" (Lehan) *i.e.* the very same virtues advocated by Dick's father.

### ***THE WARREN SISTERS***

Both sisters are the obverse and reverse of the same medal. Nicole is the seducer, as witness her portrait on p. 25; the reference to sculpture (Rodin) and architecture reminds one of an American writer's description of the American leisure woman as a "magnificently shining edifice" (P. Rosenfeld, *Port of New York*, 1961). F. uses the same image since N. is compared to "a beautiful shell" (134) "a fine slim edifice" (312). Nicole is endowed with a complex and deceptive personality combining both ingenuousness and the innate knowledge of the "mechanics of love and cohabitation" (*Wild Palms*, 41) that W. Faulkner attributes to his female characters. Nicole also assumes almost allegorical, symbolical dimensions in that she "represents the exact furthestmost evolution of a class" (30) and stands for *the* American woman, some sort of archetype, if not for America itself. Her own family history is an epitome of the creation of the New Republic since it combines the most characteristic types evolved by Europe and the New World: "Nicole was [...] the House of Lippe" (63). This emblematic quality is further emphasized by the fact that Nicole is defined as "the product of much ingenuity and toil" (65), so she brings Dick "the essence of a Continent" (152). She is quite in keeping with the new spirit of the times;

she partakes both of “the Virgin and of the Dynamo” (H. Adams) and is described as an industrial object cf. 301: “Nicole had been designed for change [...] its original self”. Not unlike Dick, Nicole has a double personality, which is to be expected from a schizophrenic; so there is a “cleavage between Nicole sick and Nicole well” (185). She is also incomplete and dependent upon other people to preserve a precarious mental balance: “she sought in them the vitality...” (198). The relationship between Nicole and Dick is not a give-and-take affair but a one-way process; Nicole literally depletes, preys upon him, saps his strength: “she had thought of him as an inexhaustible energy, incapable of fatigue” (323) and she eventually absorbs him: “somehow Dick and Nicole had become one and equal...” (209). Cf. also the fusion of the two names in “Dicole” (116). Thus there is a double transference both psychological and vital (cf. the image of breast feeding p. 300). Actually, Nicole “cherishes her illness as an instrument of power” (259) and uses her money in much the same way: (“owning Dick who did not want to be owned” 198). However, after “playing planet to Dick's sun” (310) for several years, N. gradually comes to “feel almost complete” (311) and comes to a realization that “either you think...sterilize you” (311). From then on, begins what might be called N's bid for independence (“cutting the cord”, 324); after ruining Dick, she “takes possession of Tommy Barban” (293), unless it is the other way round; however that may be the experience is akin to a rebirth: “You're all new like a baby” (317). The “coy maiden” gives way to the ruthless huntress: “no longer was she the huntress of corralled game” (322). By the way, it is worth noting that “Nicole” etymologically means “*Victory*” and that “Warren” means “*game park*”. Thus Nicole reverts to type: “And being well perhaps [...] so there we are” (314) and “better a sane crook than a mad puritan” (315). She becomes exactly like her sister Baby Warren, both “formidable and vulnerable” (166), who had anticipated her in that transformation: “Baby suddenly became her grandfather, cool and experimental” (193) *i.e.* Sid Warren, “the horse-trader” (159). She is described as “a tall, restless virgin” (167), with “something wooden and onanistic about her” (168). She is the high priestess of Money, the Bitch-Goddess, and as such she symbolizes sterility. So much for the portrait of those two society women.

### ***ROSEMARY HOIT***

Cf. the connotations of the name: Hoit→“*Hoity-toity*”: “riotous”, “frolicsome”. A hoyden (a boisterous girl)? One preliminary observation: Rosemary plays an important rôle as a catalytic agent and stands between the two groups of people *i.e.* the hard, practical people and the dissipated, run-down romantics. She is a complex character in that she combines several contradictory facets the child woman (ash blonde, childlike etc p. 12) “embodying all the immaturity of the race” (80) and its wildest dreams of success, everlasting youth and charm (she is surrounded by a halo of glamour and the magic of the pictures; note also that she deals with reality as a controlled set and life as a production) and the woman of the world. In spite of her idealism, grafted onto “an Irish, romantic and illogical” nature (181), she is said to be “hard” (21) and to have been “brought up on the idea of work” (49), she embodies certain “virtues” traditionally attached to a Puritan ethos. Her infatuation with Dick is just a case of puppy love, a stepping stone to numerous amorous adventures. In spite of the rôle she plays in the

opening chapter of the novel, she turns out to be no more than a "catalytic agent" (63) in Dick and Nicole's evolution but she also fulfills an important symbolical function. This is precisely what I propose to do now, *i.e.* take a fresh look, from a symbolical standpoint, at the question of men and women in order to bring to light less obvious yet fundamental aspects.

### **THE FATHER DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP & INCEST**

The father-daughter relationship is of paramount importance in *Tender* and most encounters between men and women tend to function on that pattern so much so that I am tempted to subscribe to Callahan's opinion that *Tender* describes a new version of the American Eden where, the male being ousted, the female is left in blessed communion or tête à tête with the Father *i.e.* God. A case in point being of course Nicole & Devereux Warren, who was in his words "father, mother both to her" (141) and candidly confesses that "They were just like lovers-and then all at once we were lovers..." (144). Nicole will, to a certain extent, continue the same type of relationship with Dick, thus fulfilling the female fantasy of having both father and husband in the same person; Nicole is a kind of orphan adopted by Dick. Rosemary seeks the very situation responsible for Nicole's schizophrenia: uniting protector and violator in the same man. Brady for instance turns her down by "refusing the fatherly office" (41) that Dick eventually assumes but there is such a difference in their ages as to render their embrace a kind of reenactment of the incestuous affair between Nicole and her father. It is also worth noting that Rosemary owes her celebrity to a film "Daddy's Girl" which is obviously a euphemistic fantasy of the Warren incest, a fact which does escape Dick's attention: "Rosemary and her parent...the vicious sentimentality" (80). Such interpretation is borne out by the reference to the "Arbuckle case" (124) ('Fatty', grown-up fat boy of American silent cinema whose career was ruined after his involvement in a 1921 scandal in which a girl died. Though he never again appeared before a camera, he directed a few films under the name 'Will B. Good'). To this must be added Dick's own involvement in a similar scandal since he is accused of seducing one of his patients' daughter (205).

### **THE WAR BETWEEN THE SEXES**

The relationships between men and women are also described in terms of war between the sexes, cf. what one of the patients in the asylum says: "I'm sharing the fate of the women of my time who challenged men to battle" (203). Thus, just as war is seen through the language of love, so love is told through the metaphor of war. In the description of the battlefield (67-70), we find echoes of D. H. Lawrence's interpretation of WWI as the fulfilment in history of the death urge of men whose marriages were sexually desolate. The diversion of erotic energy to war is further illustrated by Mrs Speers (a very apt name: "Spear" refers to a weapon for thrusting) who often applies military metaphors to sex: "Wound yourself or him.." (50). Notice the recurrence of the word "spear" to describe Dick's emasculation and also the use of the word "arsenal": "the spear had been blunted" (220) "Yet he had been swallowed up like a gigolo, and somehow permitted his arsenal to be locked up in the Warren safety-deposit vault". Last but not least, there is a kind of cannibalism or vampirism going on in the

novel. Women, metaphorically feed or batten on their mates and the novel teems with images turning women into predatory females, cf. "dissection" (180), "suckling" (300) or even "spooks" (300) *i.e.* terms having to do with the transference of vital energy from one person to another. On a symbolical and unconscious level, woman and America are seen as vampires; L. Fiedler, who maintains that many female characters in American fiction can be divided into two categories "the fair maiden" (the pure, gentle virgin) and "the dark lady" (the dangerous seducer, the embodiment of the sexuality denied the snow maiden), also stated that very often, in the same fiction, "the hero finds in his bed not the white bride but the dark destroyer" (313): characteristically enough, Nicole's hair, once fair, darkens (34). In the American version of Eden, Eve is always vying with Lilith (Adam's wife before Eve was created, symbolizing the seducer, "*l'instigatrice des amours illégitimes, la perturbatrice du lit conjugal*"). Moreover, it is also interesting to note that if (the) man can create (the) woman, she seems to absorb his strength and very being; there is in *Tender* an echo of Schopenhauer's philosophy (cf. Faulkner's *Wild Palms*) which claimed that "the masculine will to creativeness is absorbed in the feminine will to reproduction"; cf the description on p. 253 "The American Woman, aroused, stood over him; the clean..that had made a nursery out of a continent". However, in *Tender* it is absorbed in woman's will to assert herself. Consequently, in F.'s fiction, women are seen as embodiments either of innocence (woman and the Continent before discovery, cf. *Gatsby*) or of corruption (woman and the Continent spoiled by male exploitation). As in Faulkner's fiction, it is actually the male protagonist and not woman who symbolizes innocence and the American dream although the hero is too ineffectual to carry out its promise.

#### 4) MOTIFS, IMAGES, AND SYMBOLS

We are far from having exhausted the symbolical connotations attaching to the various characters appearing in *Tender*; a work of art aims at plurality of meanings and several levels of significance are at play in any novel. To give you an example of such complexity of how things work I'd like to call your attention to the fact that women are consistently described in terms of flowers; there runs throughout the narrative a symbolic vein pertaining to flora. As a starting-point, I'll refer to an observation F. recorded in *The Lost Decade*: "girls had become gossamer again, perambulatory flora..." (91), an image perfectly illustrated by *Tender*.

##### **FLORA & FAUNA**

Rosemary Hoit is a case in point; her first name means "*romarin*" and derives from the Latin "*ros marinus*" *i.e.* "sea-dew". Now, "dew", as you all know, or at least are about to know, symbolizes "spiritual refreshment; benediction; blessing. Sweet dew is peace and prosperity. Dew can also represent change, illusion and evanescence. It is also related to the moon, nightfall and sleep". Consequently, the various references to "dew" that may have escaped the notice of the unwary reader, assume with the benefit of hindsight, deeper significance than one at first realizes: "she was almost eighteen, nearly complete, but the dew was still on her" (12); "Rosemary, [...] dewy with belief" (43) etc. All these images stress the youth and alleged innocence of Rosemary. Moreover, her growth to adulthood is seen as the

flowering of talent: "blossomed out at 16" (49); "looks like something blooming" (30); "bright bouquet" (89); "her body calculated to a millimeter to suggest a bud yet guarantee a flower" (117). However, Rosemary, "the white carnation" (75) evolves into different types of flower or plant such as the "blinding belladonna [...] the mandragora that imposes harmony" (181). The connotations are totally different and point to a lapse from innocence or virtue on the part of Rosemary: mandrake, "the plant of enchantment is the emblem of Circe" (a goddess and sorceress who changed Odysseus's men into pigs"). Incidentally, Rosemary is also compared to animals; she is seen as "a young mustang" (181), a "young horse" (226) and Nicole in her turn is likened to "a colt" (157); Dick with his crop and jockey cap rides them both before being thrown (cf. also the reference to "other women with flower-like mouths grooved for bits" p. 166). Nicole too is associated with "gardens" (cf. description on p. 34 and on p. 172 "waiting for you in the garden-holding all myself in my arms like a basket of flowers") and such flowers as "camellia" (34) and "lilac"; note also that she is in charge of the decoration of two wards called "the Eglantine" and "the Beeches" (201). Nicole is also said to "be blooming away" (48) and the more self-reliant and self-confident she grows the more numerous are the references to flora: "Nicole flowering" (220); "She reasoned as gaily as a flower" (297); "Her ego began blooming like a great rich rose" (310). After her preparations to greet her lover, Tommy Barban, she is "the trimmest of gardens" (312).

As far as animal imagery is concerned, N.'s tragedy turns her into "the young bird with wings crushed" (143); while she is under the sway of Dick's personality, she's like "an obedient retriever" (35). All these references to flora (cf. Violet McKisko) and fauna with their attractive and repulsive connotations culminate, as regards female characters, in the description of the trio of women on p. 84: "They were all tall and slender...cobra's hoods"; cf. a few lines further down the phrase "cobra-women" or the reference to "Amazons" (195). Thus, women in the the world depicted by *Tender* are, to use Keats's words, seen as "poison flowers", evil flowers, one has to guard against. Far from being gratuitous, such a bias can be accounted for by the rôle F. ascribed to women in his own life and in American society at large (cf. previous lecture). Two further observations as far as Nicole is concerned: they have to do with two classical refernces to Diana (name of her villa p. 38) and to Pallas Athene (177). They merely highlight her twofold nature since Diana/Artemis is a goddess associated with wooded places, women and childbirth and a virgin huntress, associated with uncultivated places and wild animals. As for Pallas Athene, she was the goddess of war, the patron of the arts and crafts. Lastly, to restore the balance in this presentation, it is necessary to point out that animal similes are also applied to men (McKisko is a rabbit, 59; Dick a cat, 136; Tommy a watch-dog, 53 etc.) even if they don't fall into such a coherent pattern as in the case of women.

## **RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS**

F. called *Tender* "my testament of faith" and the novel abounds in images having a clearly religious flavour quite in keeping with F.'s avowal that "I guess I am too much a moralist at heart and real-

ly want to preach at people in some acceptable form rather than to entertain them". As critic A. Mizener stated:

all his best work is a product of the tension between these two sides of his nature, of his ability to hold in balance "the impulses to achieve and to enjoy, to be prodigal and open-hearted, and yet ambitious and wise, to be strong and self-controlled, yet to miss nothing--to do and to symbolize". Not until 1936 did he lose faith in his ability to realize in his personal life what he called "the old dream of being an entire man in the Goethe-Byron-Shaw tradition, with an opulent American touch, a sort of combination of J.P. Morgan, Topham Beauclerk and St. Francis of Assisi" (64).

*Tender* is to a certain extent an allegory of sin and penitence, fall and retribution with Everyman Diver journeying through a multitude of temptations and yielding to all of them: money, liquor, anarchy, self-betrayal and sex. In the General Plan, F. calls Dick "a spoiled priest" and the hero of *Tender*, "the son of a clergyman now retired" (175), can indeed be seen as the high priest of a group of devotees of a new religion worshipping leisure, entertainment and money, the Bitch-Goddess, eventually deposed by his followers. This religious motif is introduced in the opening pages with various images which, on second reading, endow the setting or the characters with new significance: see, for instance "the hotel and its bright tan prayer rug of a beach" (11); the woman with "a tiara" (14) and the general atmosphere of a community upon which Rosemary dare not intrude. She looks like a novice eager to be admitted into the Sacred College. Dick holds the group together; in a true spirit of ecumenicism and "as a final apostolic gesture" (36) he invites Mrs Abrams to one of his ritualistic parties. His relationship with Rosemary conjures up the notions of "adoration" and "conversion", see for instance the description on p. 48 "She was stricken [...] chasuble [...] fall to her knees". Nicole too is said "to bring everything to his feet, gifts of sacrificial ambrosia, of worshipping myrtle". Note that Nicole herself who has "the face of a saint" and looks like "a Viking madonna" (43) is also idolized by Tommy Barban whose vindication of the Divers' honour prompts Mrs McKisko to ask: "Are they so sacred?" (53). Dick's process of deterioration is also punctuated with religious references (cf. p. 104 "in sackcloth and ashes"; "let them pray for him", 281) down to the two final scenes when Dick is confronted, "like a priest in a confessional" (326), with the spectacle of depravity, lust and corruption (Mary North and Lady Caroline as embodiments of the Scarlet Woman) and when he makes a sign of (pronounces the) benediction before turning his back on his former associates:(337) "He raised his right hand and with a papal cross he blessed the beach from the high terrace". With this highly symbolical gesture, Dick assumes the rôle of a scapegoat, taking upon himself the sins of the community before being sent out into the wilderness. Now is the time to call attention to Dick's double personality as "spoiled priest" and "man about town"; Dick's yearning for essential virtues is at odds with the kind of flamboyant life he's living, hence the numerous references to "asceticism" ("the old asceticism triumphed", p. 221; "living rather ascetically", p. 187; "the boundaries of asceticism", p. 148) and a "hermit's life", p. 234. There is an obvious kinship between H. Wilbourne, the hero of Faulkner's *Wild Palms* and Dick Diver; both are would-be ascetics, whose naiveté or innocence are shattered by experience *i.e.* the encounter with woman and society at large. Dick, after assuming the rôle of a missionary or an apostle and "wast[ing] 8

years teaching the rich the ABC's of human decency" (325), is sent into exile, like "a deposed ruler" (301), "his beach perverted now to the tastes of the tasteless" (301). All the values he stood for are crushed by contact with reality; the forces both external and internal against which the hero conducted a struggle eventually destroy him. Thus, the romantic idealist who wanted to be brave and kind and loved, and thought he "was the last hope of a decaying clan" (325), is utterly defeated and even if his fate illustrates the "futility of effort and the necessity of struggle" one may doubt it is a "splendid failure".

## **PLACES**

The characters of *Tender*, apparently bereft of any spirit of place, are constantly on the move, and the reader is vicariously taken to numerous foreign countries: France, Italy, Switzerland, the French Riviera and the USA. Some of them even seem to overlap as their distinctive features are not always clearly defined and the characters tend to move in similar circles. Places in *Tender*, besides providing a setting for the events depicted in the novel, also convey symbolic oppositions. Europe is a sort of vantage point from which America is, to use the biblical phrase, "weighed in the scales and found wanting". Broadly speaking, the novel is the locale of a confrontation between East and West and in Dick Diver, F. questioned the adequacy of postwar America to sustain its heroic past; as I have already pointed out the virtues of the Old South as embodied by Dick's father were discarded in favour of the wealth and power associated with the North. Hence, F.'s vision of Dick as "a sort of superhuman, an approximation of the hero seen in over-civilized terms". Dick is too refined for the world he lives in and he is torn between civilization and decadence; he is heir to a vanishing world whereas Nicole is a harbinger/herald of a brave new world; hence the characteristic pattern of decay and growth on which the novel is based. The protagonist, being confronted with the tragedy of a nation grown decadent without achieving maturity (as a psychiatrist he has to look after culture's casualties cf. what R. Ellison said of the USA: "perhaps to be sane in such society is the best proof of insanity") will move to milder climes *i.e.* the Riviera. This reverse migration from the New to the Old World represents a profound displacement of the American dream; Dick, at least in the first half of the novel, yields to the lure of the East and responds to "the pastoral quality of the summer Riviera" (197) (note by the way that American literature is particularly hospitable to pastoralism *i.e.* the theme of withdrawal from society into an idealized landscape, an oasis of peace and harmony in the bosom of Nature). Thus the Riviera, Mediterranean France, are seen as "a psychological Eden" in which F. and his heroes take refuge. The Riviera is a middle ground between East and West, an alternative milieu (it is a feature of "romances" to be located at a distance of time and place from their writer's world) where Dick tries to make a world fit for quality people to live in and above all for Nicole (see, for instance the way people are transfigured during one of Dick's parties; p. 42 "and now they were only their best selves and the Divers' guests"). So, L. Fiedler is perfectly right to define *Tender* as "an Eastern, a drama in which back-trailers reverse their westward drive to seek in the world which their ancestors abandoned the dream of riches and

glory that has somehow evaded them". Yet Europe itself is not immune from decay; the Italian landscape exudes "a sweat of exhausted cultures taint[ing] the morning air" (244); the English "bearing aloft the pennon of decadence , last ensign of the fading empire" (291) "are doing a dance of death (292); and Switzerland is seen as the dumping-ground of the invalids and perverts of all nations: cf. description of the suite on p. 268). Actually, it is the whole of Western civilization that bears the stigmas of a gradual process of degeneracy; F. was deeply influenced by the historical theories of Oswald Spengler, a German philosopher, who in *The Decline of the West* predicted the triumph of money over aristocracy, the emergence of new Caesars (totalitarian states) and finally the rise of the "colored" races (by which Spengler meant not only the Negroes and Chinese but also the Russians!) that would use the technology of the West to destroy its inventors. F. incorporated some of Spengler's theories into *Tender*, all the more easily as they tallied with his racial prejudices (in a 1921 letter to E. Wilson, F. wrote such things as "the negroid streak creeps northward to defile the Nordic race", and "already the Italians have the souls of blackamoors", etc...). *Tender* prophesies not only the decline of the West but also the triumph of a barbaric race of a darker complexion. This enables one to see in a totally different light the affair between Tommy Barban and Nicole Warren. Tommy Barban whose last name is akin to "barb(ari)an" is said to be "less civilized" (28), "the end-product of an archaic world" (45); he is "a soldier" (45), "a ruler, a hero" (215), and the epithet "dark" always crops up in his physical portrait: "Tommy [...] dark, scarred and handsome [...] an earnest Satan" (316) "his figure was darker and stronger than Dick's, with high lights along the rope-twist of muscle" (*Ibid.*) "his handsome face was so dark as to have lost the pleasantness of deep tan, without attaining the blue beauty of negroes--it was just worn leather" (289). Tommy, "the emerging fascist", as a critic put it, literally preys upon Nicole, the representative of the waning aristocracy; he usurps the place of Dick, the dreamer, the idealist, the "over-civilized" anti-hero and F. suggests that Tommy's triumph is one of East over West when he tells us that Nicole "symbolically [...] lay across his saddle-bow as surely as if he had wolfed her away from Damascus and they had come out upon the Mongolian plain [...] she welcomed the anarchy of her lover" (320). The echo of hoof-beats conjures up the image of barbaric hordes sweeping across Western countries: "the industrial Warrens in coalition with the militarist Barban form a cartel eager for spoils, with all the world their prey" (Callahan). What are the grounds for such an indictment of western civilization in general and of American culture and society in particular?

## **MONEY**

America seems to have rejected certain fundamental values, such as "pioneer simplicity" (279) and "the simpler virtues", to adopt an increasingly materialistic outlook. After the "first burst of luxury manufacturing" (27) that followed WWI, society became a "big bazaar" (30), a "Vanity Fair"; this adherence to a materialistic credo is illustrated by the wealth of objects and commodities of every description such characters as Nicole or Baby Warren are surrounded with; see for instance, the description of Nicole's trip list on p. 278. This brings us to the rôle of money whose importance will be underlined by

two quotations from F.: "I have never been able to forgive the rich for being rich and it has colored my entire life and works" and also declared that they roused in him "not the conviction of a revolutionist but the smouldering hatred of a peasant". Money is indeed a key metaphor in F.'s fiction where we find the same denunciation of "the cheap money with which the world was now glutted and cluttered" (*The Wild Palms*, p. 210). Note also that both novels resort to the same monetary image to refer to human feelings; Faulkner speaks of "emotional currency" and Fitzgerald of "emotional bankruptcy". People have become devotees of a new cult whose divinity is Mammon (a personification of wealth). Modern society dehumanizes man by forcing him to cultivate false values and by encouraging atrophy of essential human virtues; money has taken their place and, as F. once said, "American men are incomplete without money" ("The Swimmers"). Thus love and vitality are expressed in terms of money; just as the rich throw money down the drain so Dick Diver wastes his talents and feelings on unworthy people. The motif of financial waste culminating in the 1929 crisis runs parallel to the motif of intellectual and emotional waste *i.e.* Dick's emotional bankruptcy ("*la banqueroute du coeur*"). At this stage it is necessary to stress the obvious similarity between the author and his character; F. also wanted to keep his emotional capital intact and was beset by fears of bad investment. Mizener points out that F. regarded "vitality as if it were a fixed sum, like money in the bank. Against this account you drew until, piece by piece, the sum was spent and you found yourself emotionally bankrupt". In *The Crack-Up*, F. says that he "had been mortgaging himself physically and spiritually up to the hilt". So Dick uses up the emotional energy which was the source of his personal discipline and of his power to feed other people. "I thought of him," said F., "as an '*homme épuisé*', not only an '*homme manqué*' ". This "lesion of vitality" turns Dick into a "hollow man" and here again F. transposed his personal experience "the question became one of finding why and where I had changed, where was the leak through which, unknown to myself, my enthusiasm and my vitality had been steadily and prematurely trickling away" ("Pasting It Together"). Cf. also letter to his daughter: "I don't know of anyone who has used up so much personal experience as I have at 27". So both Dick and Fitzgerald were victims of an extravagant expenditure of vitality, talents and emotions; the former wasted it upon "dull" people (336) and the latter upon second-rate literary productions. F. once declared "I have been a mediocre caretaker of most things left in my hands, even of my talent", so were both Dick Diver and America.

### **PERVERSION AND VIOLENCE**

Although F.'s work is "innocent of mere sex", sexual perversions bulk large in *Tender* and they are just further proof of the fact that both society and the times are out of joint. There are so many references to incest, rape, homosexuality and lesbianism that one feels as if love could only find expression in pathological cases. But sexual perversion, whatever form it may assume in *Tender*, is but one variation of the other perversions that corrupted a society with an "empty harlot's mind" (80): the perversion of money, the perversion of ideas and talents. This emphasis also indicates that sex or lust has ousted love; *Eros* has taken the place of *Agape* (spiritual or brotherly love); relations between men and

women are modeled on war or hunting cf. Nicole's definition of herself as "no longer a huntress of corralled game". There runs throughout the novel an undercurrent of violence, "the honorable and traditional resource of this land" (245); it assumes various forms: war, duelling, rape, murder (a Negro is killed in Rosemary's bedroom), to say nothing of bickerings, beatings, and shootings. As a critic noticed, moments of emotional pitch, are often interrupted by a loud report; when Dick falls in love with Nicole, when Abe North leaves on the train from Paris, and when Tommy becomes Nicole's lover, each time a shot is heard that breaks the illusion; it is a recall to reality, a descent from bliss. After the assault at the station, it is said that "the shots had entered into their lives: echoes of violence followed them out onto the pavement..."(p. 97). So, sex, money, violence contribute to the disruption of the fabric of human relationships; *Tender* is a sort of prose version of "The Wasteland" and the depiction of the disintegration of both the protagonist and society is all the more poignant as it is to be contrasted with the potentialities, the dreams and the promises they offered. Whereas *The Great Gatsby* was a novel about what could never be, *Tender Is The Night* is a novel about what could have been. Dick diver had the talent to succeed and he also had in his youth the necessary talent and sense of commitment but he is betrayed by the very rich and by his own weaknesses. Hence the circularity of the plot and of the protagonist's journey that begins with the quest for success and ends with the reality of failure. Thus Dick returns to the States to become a wandering exile in his own country: "to be in hell is to drift; to be in heaven is to steer" (G. B. Shaw).

### **DREAMS, ROMANCE & MAGIC**

As a starting-point for this section, I'd like to remind you of the words of L. Trilling: "Ours is the only nation that prides itself upon a dream and gives its name to one, 'the American dream'". F. is a perfect illustration of the fascination of that dream; in a letter to his 17-year-old daughter, Scottie, he wrote:

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...

Dreams and illusions are thus the hallmark of the romantic character who, like Dick, entertains "illusions of eternal strength and health and of the essential goodness of people" (132). A profession of faith that is to be contrasted with the final description of Dick on p. 334 "he was no t young any more with a lot of nice thoughts and dreams to have about himself". Dick's function is to dispense romantic wonder to others and the same function is fulfilled by the cinema with its glamour and magic suggestiveness. Rosemary is also another version of the romantic the romantic at a discount her emotions are fed on "things she had read, seen, dreamed" (75); she often has the "false-and-exalted feeling of being on a set" (p. 83) but unlike Dick, she does not know yet "that splendor is something in the heart" (74). Her dark magic is nonetheless dangerous for it encourages a certain form of escapism and infantilism. So there's in the novel a constant interplay between actuality and illusion; certain scenes seem to take

place on the borderline between the two: the characters and the objects surrounding them seem to be suspended in the air; see, for instance, the description of the party on p. 44: "There were fireflies...and became part of them". The motif of "suspension" emphasizes the contrast between actuality and the world of the imagination.

## **NIGHT AND DAY**

The opposition of night and day has always held symbolic meaning and has been used by writers for centuries to suggest evil, confusion, the dark side of human nature as opposed to light, honesty, reason, wisdom. It is a fundamental opposition and motif in Fitzgerald's fiction (see for instance *The Great Gatsby* and the title of the novel he started on after *Tender: The Count of Darkness*) and in his life; in *The Crack Up* he wrote that he was "hating the night when I couldn't sleep and hating the day because it went towards night" (p. 43); however, he welcomes "the blessed hour of nightmare" (*Ibid.*). Thus the symbolic structure of *Tender* reveals a contrast between the night and the day, darkness and light. The title indicates that night is tender, which seems to imply that the day is harsh and cruel. Actually, the opposition is not so clear-cut (the narrative mentions "the unstable balance between night and day", p. 247) and night and day carry ambivalent connotations. The opening scene is dominated by the glare of sunlight; it troubles the Divers and their friends who seek shelter from it under their umbrellas; Rosemary retreats from the "hot light" (12) and the Mediterranean "yields up its pigments...to the brutal sunshine" (12). Noon dominates sea and sky (19) so that it seems "there was no life anywhere in all this expanse of coast except under the filtered sunlight of those umbrellas" (19). Dick also protects Rosemary from the hot sun on p. 20 and 26. It is also interesting to observe that when Nicole has a fit of temper or madness "a high sun is beating fiercely on the children's hats" (206). Thus the sun is seen as something harsh, painful and even maddening. Conversely, darkness and night are at first referred to in positive terms: cf. "the lovely night", the "soft warm darkness" (296), the "soft rolling night" and also on p. 294 "she felt the beauty of the night"; Rosemary is at one point "cloaked by the erotic darkness" (49). The opposition between night and day is pointed up in F.'s description of Amiens cf. p. 69: "In the daytime one is deflated by such towns [...] the satisfactory inexpensiveness of nowhere". Thus night is the time of enchantment, obliterating the ugliness of reality that the day mercilessly exposes; night is the time of illusion and merriment cf. p. 91 "All of them began to laugh...hot morning". However the symbolism of the night is not merely opposite in meaning to that of the day, for night itself is ambivalent; it signifies according to *The Dictionary of Symbols* "chaos, death, madness and desintegration, reversal to the foetal state of the world"; such sinister connotations are apparent in the reference to "mental darkness" (236), to "the darkness ahead" (263) to mean death and in Nicole's statement that after the birth of her second child "everything went dark again" (177). Night is threatening and deceptive; it is the refuge of those who are unable to cope with practical daylight reality which is totally uncongenial to the romantic.