

ANALYSIS

Tender Is the Night (1934)

F. Scott Fitzgerald

(1896-1940)

“As one who would rather have written *The Great Gatsby* than any other American novel published in the Twenties, we approached F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Tender Is the Night* with anticipation and trepidation. *The Great Gatsby* was so perfect in its feeling and its symbolism, such a magnificent evocation of the spirit of a whole decade, so great an improvement over Mr. Fitzgerald’s second novel, *The Beautiful and Damned*...that one could hardly see Mr. Fitzgerald striking the same high level twice in succession.... After reading *Tender Is the Night*, we now know that the gossip was—just gossip. Mr. Fitzgerald has not forgotten his craftsmanship, his marvelous sense of what might be called social climate, his sheer writing ability. Judged purely as prose, *Tender Is the Night* is a continually pleasurable performance. From a technical point of view, it is not as perfect a novel as *The Great Gatsby*, but once the reader has gotten past the single barrier to complete appreciation of the book, it proves to be an exciting and psychologically apt study in the disintegration of a marriage.

Seemingly, Mr. Fitzgerald begins well. He introduces us to a fledgling film actress, Rosemary Hoyt, a girl with the dew still on her, who is taken up by Richard and Nicole Diver during a summer stay at the Riviera. For some eighty pages or more we constantly expect Rosemary to develop, to become more and more important in the story. And then, suddenly, we realize that this innocent and as yet entirely plastic girl is introduced merely as a catalytic agent. When Dick Diver, who is a psychiatrist without a practice, falls in love with Rosemary, his marriage to Nicole commences to founder. But Rosemary, having started a chain of developments, is dismissed almost completely from the novel, and the reader pauses, at page 100, in rueful bewilderment. In the critical terminology of Kenneth Burke, Mr. Fitzgerald has violated a ‘categorical expectancy’.... What follows is a study of a love affair and a marriage between doctor and mental patient that is as successful a bit of writing as it must have been difficult to create in dramatic terms. Mr. Fitzgerald set himself an incredibly confused problem, but he draws the lines clearly as he works the problem out in terms of two human beings....

And, given the circumstances, it is a foregone conclusion that 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. Mr. Fitzgerald, in nervous scenes of great skill, traces the forces leading to this collapse. And Dr. Diver is ruined in the process. We see him, at the end, pursuing a meaningless career as a general practitioner in upper New York State, where he had lived as a boy....

No two reviews were alike; no two had the same tone. Some seemed to think that Mr. Fitzgerald was writing about his usual jazz age boys and girls; others that he had a ‘timeless’ problem on his hands. And some seemed to think that Doctor Diver’s collapse was insufficiently documented.... He had married Nicole against his better judgment, partially because she bought him memories of home after years spent abroad. He was drawn into accepting her money, for reasons that living up to a certain income and ‘cushioning’ existence were bound up with the cure.... And when Nicole, subconsciously jealous of Rosemary, comes to a new phase of her disease, and attempts to throw the car off the road when Dick is driving with her and the two children, it is enough to give anyone the jitters.... The wonder to us is that Dick didn’t collapse long before Mr. Fitzgerald causes him to break down.”

John Chamberlain
Review of *Tender Is the Night*
The New York Times (1934)

“Many of the features that go to making *The Great Gatsby* as fine as it is are also present in this latest novel of Scott Fitzgerald’s. There is still his power of seeming to lose himself in incident and letting the

theme emerge by itself, there is his sensitiveness (occasionally touching sentimentality) and his awareness of the brutalities in civilized people's behavior, and there is simultaneously his keen appreciation, not entirely ironic, of the superficialities of the same people's lives. This last is the feature that is most nearly lost in his new book. Here there is no more gusto, but right from the start an undercurrent of misery... The story is the acutely unhappy one of a young psychiatrist, brilliant in every way, who gradually deteriorates. In place of plot there is a fine string of carefully graduated incidents to illustrate the stages of the descent... In the first place the doomed hero is offered as the most admirable kind of modern man we can reasonably ask for, and throughout the novel he is made to stand out as superior to all the other personae....

His wife's wealth, with its heavy burden of smart leisure, Dick deals with like a disciplined artist; he shows himself heroically adequate to the strain of her recurrent mental trouble; and he has a full insight into himself and the strains his work imposes... On the one hand, Dick is the tragic fantasy hero who is so great and fine that everyone else expects to go on taking and taking from him and never give back; and so he gets tired, so tired; and he breaks under the strain with no one big enough to help him, and it's terribly pathetic and admirable. The vital point of this childish fantasy is that he should remain admirable and (posthumously) win everyone's remorseful respect. But the story is too obviously sentimental in those terms. To try ruthlessly to tear out the sentimentality, Scott Fitzgerald brings in a much more mature bit of knowledge: that people who disintegrate in the adult world don't at all win our respect and can hardly retain every our pity. He gets his intense painfulness by inviting our hearts to go out to the hero of the childish fantasy and then checking them with the embarrassment which everyone nearest him in the story, especially Nicole his wife, feels for the failure....

Even towards the end he is made to seem superior to the others so that they are inhibited from approaching him with help.... But it seems highly doubtful whether anyone could remain so formidable spiritually during a process of spiritual disintegration, especially to someone who has been as close to him as Nicole has been. But her another trick appears in the interests of plausibility: the patient-physician relationship between the two of them is now emphasized, and Nicole's abandonment of Dick is interpreted as an emergence from fixation, whereas much of the misery of the collapse springs from its wrecking what has earlier been made to seem a genuine and complete marriage. Once achieved, Dick's isolation permits of the further device making his suffering dumb.... His position at the end is the apotheosis of the hurt child saying 'Nobody loves me,' but the child's self-pity and reproaches against the grownups have largely been rooted out and in their place is a fluctuation between self-disgust and a fatalistic conviction that this is bound to happen to the nicest children."

D. W. Harding
"Mechanisms of Misery": Review of *Tender Is the Night*
Scrutiny (Cambridge, England 1934)

"Fitzgerald has grown steadily and now definitely promises to emerge as one of the really important interpreters of the upper middle class in our time. Unusually sensitive to the charm and excitement of the life of the idle and semi-idle rich and near-rich and the vast army of hangers-on they attract to them, he has slowly moved toward a position which allows him to abate very little his sympathetic attitude while definitely taking up the position of an observer rather than a participant in the revels. *Tender Is the Night* exploits to the full the feverish beauty of a class in decay, the polished charm of a decadence that is not yet self-conscious, the exciting insecurity of our betters....

Dr. Richard Diver and his wife Nicole, beautiful daughter of a wealthy household whose life has been distorted and made precarious by incestuous relations with her father. Fitzgerald has tried to use this situation, this extreme (according to our taboos) example of decadence, to symbolize the rottenness of the society of which Nicole is a part. This is well-nigh impossible. It is always difficult to argue from the individual to the social and when the social issues are so tremendous as they are here, the chances are that any individual will turn out to be an inadequate symbol....

[Dr. Diver is] in much the same relationship to her as the reformer is to the sick society which he wishes to cure because he cannot bring himself to abandon it and which in the end forces him either to accept it on its own terms or reject it and with it his life. That the reformer should fail and in the process be corrupted by the poisons flowing through the social veins, is as inevitable as the slow corruption of the charming

Dick Diver. And when he finally abandons the task, the chances are as good that he will plunge into an even more complete obscurity than overtakes those who reject the task from the first in favor of the more drastic cure of revolution as that he will go over to the masters and become at one with them in the tacit or self-conscious support of the corrupt values. Dick Diver when he finally realizes that his task of rehabilitating Nicole is accomplished and that he can do no more without abandoning the few remnants of physician's values he retains and accepting all those of her world, chooses the way to obscurity, the corruption that follows on the realization of a wasted life... He is divorced by Nicole and disappears into upper New York State. No one knows what has become of him."

C. Hartley Grattan
Review of *Tender Is the Night*
The Modern Monthly (1934)

"Early versions date back to 1925, and the one first published began with Rosemary's arrival in the Diver circle; but in the last two years of his life Fitzgerald reorganized the story into chronological order in a version first issued, with Malcolm Cowley's commentary, in 1948.

Dick Diver, a young American psychiatrist completing his training in Zurich at the end of World War I, becomes interested in the case of Nicole Warren, a beautiful American girl with acute schizophrenia resulting from an incestuous relation with her father. As she recovers, she falls in love with Dick and comes to rely on him for stability and identity in what is for her a new and uncertain world. He returns her love, but also allows himself to acknowledge, if not to accept, a suggestion from her wealthy family, represented by her sister Baby, that he remain with her in order to care for her. Thus, in their marriage, the psychiatrist is involved, and to a degree confused, with the lover and the companion, and 'her problem was one they had together for good now.'

Dick ceases 'temporarily' to practice, though continuing to work on a new book. They have two children, and settle into a life of leisure on the Riviera with a circle of friends including Abe North, an alcoholic composer, and Tommy Barban, a French soldier of fortune in love with Nicole. Dick's effortless charm, which lets people feel at ease, makes him an ideal host, but although he is loved and admired, he is spending emotional resources which are not being replenished. Rosemary Hoyt, a naïve American movie actress who joins the group, falls in love with Dick and, attending a party at the Divers' villa, sees their life as magnificent, tasteful, and free, but she is 'unaware of its complexity and lack of innocence.'

Out of touch with his work, his marriage and his very love for Nicole increasingly defined in terms of her illness, Dick becomes infatuated with Rosemary. He begins to drink more; his easy confidence begins to wear thin and though in moments of crisis and relapse Nicole appeals to him, both her confidence in him and her dependence on him are gradually undermined. The same 'transference' that partially drew her to him at the outset now draws his psychological strength toward her. Abe, long recognized by Dick as a hopeless case, fails in an effort to go back to America and to work, and is beaten to death in a Paris bar. Dick himself is involved in a brawl in Rome, and Baby, who extricates him, thus gains a 'moral superiority' as well as a financial one over him. He is without illusions, having 'managed to keep alive the low painful fire of intelligence,' but he has lost himself through the intricacies of his relation to Nicole and his habitual desire to please her. Tommy, who loves Nicole but does not try to understand her, becomes her lover, and after they confront Dick for a divorce, he returns to America to sink into final obscurity."

James D. Hart
The Oxford Companion to American Literature, 5th edition
(Oxford 1941-83) 748-49

"Writing what he himself called 'the novel of deterioration' [tradition of Naturalism] in *Tender Is the Night*, he kept to the glow, the almost hereditary grace, that was so natural to him. But he lavished it upon a world of emptiness there; he was working away in the pure mathematics of sensation. The subtlety of his last books was a fever glow, a neurotic subtlety."

Alfred Kazin
On Native Grounds:
An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature

“*Tender Is the Night* promises much in the way of scope but it soon turns out to be a backsliding into the old ambiguities. Love and money, fame and youth, youth and money—however one shuffles the antitheses they have a habit of melting into each other like the blue Mediterranean sky and sea of the opening background. To Dick Diver, with a mere change of pronoun, may be applied to Flaubert’s analysis of Emma Bovary.... And it is this Bovaryism on the part of the hero, who as a psychiatrist should conceivably know more about himself, which in rendering his character so suspect presents his meticulously graded deterioration from assuming any real significance. Moreover, there is an ambiguous treatment of the problem of guilt. We are never certain whether Diver’s predicament is the result of his own weak judgment or of the behavior of his neurotic wife. At the end we are strangely unmoved by his downfall because it has been less a tragedy of will than of circumstance.”

William Troy

“Scott Fitzgerald—the Authority of Failure,” *Accent* (1945)
reprinted in *Modern American Fiction*
ed. A. Walton Litz
(Oxford 1963) 134-35

“In *Tender Is the Night* schizophrenia is the theme, and he deals with it brilliantly. What compulsion, what flaw in the character of Dick Diver is it that drives him on inevitably toward spiritual collapse? It is his quest of individuality. Dick is all that is noble and fine; he is also a moral weakling. He is kind and cruel, loyal and contemptuous, insolent and melancholy, courageous and cowardly, forceful and weak, proud of himself, disgusted with himself, detached and yet drawn in. His was a longing for a unified selfhood, and everywhere was disunity—in his wife, his friends, his generation, his age. At the last he goes to pieces, is desolate and lonely and lost to the world.”

Weller Embler

“F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Future”
Chimera (1945)

“*Tender Is the Night* (1934) restates the essential theme and complicates it. If this novel seems somehow less successful than *Gatsby*, that is perhaps because the greater proliferation of thematic statement is not matched by a corresponding gain in clarity and control. But beneath the additional richness, and apparent confusion, the same general story can be made out. Dick Diver is like Gatsby the American as man of imagination. His chief difference from Gatsby is that he dispenses romantic wonder to others, in addition to living by and for it himself. Gatsby tries to purvey dreams, but doesn’t know how. But to Rosemary Hoyt (of whom, more later) Dick’s ‘voice promised that he would...open up whole *new worlds* for her, unroll an endless succession of magnificent possibilities’ (my italics). Diver is the man with the innate capacity for romantic wonder, temporarily a member of the American leisure class of the ‘twenties, an ‘organizer of private gaiety, curator of richly incrustated happiness.’ His intellectual and imaginative energies have been diverted from normal creative and functional channels and expended on the effort to prevent, for a handful of the very rich, the American dream from revealing its nightmarish realities....

Such is the man, potentially noble like Gatsby...who is brought against the conditions of temptation represented by Nicole. She is the grand daughter of a ‘self-made American capitalist’ and of a German Count, and her family is placed in perspective by Fitzgerald’s frequent analogies with feudal aristocracy.... Yet behind this façade of glamor and power lies unnatural lust and perversion. Nicole’s father, this ‘fine American type,’ has committed incest with his daughter—the very incarnation of the American vision of youth, beauty, and wealth—and made of her a psychotic for young Dr. Diver to cure. As Nicole says, ‘I’m a crook by heritage’.... She is an empty child, representative of her social class, of the manners and morals of the ‘twenties, and of the world of values for which America, like Diver, was once more selling its soul.... So Diver, at the end of the novel, but with full consciousness of the blasphemy, ‘blesses’ the Riviera beach ‘with a papal cross’...

The social ramifications of Fitzgerald’s great novels are broad indeed; at their base are criminal injustice and inhuman waste, on a world-wide scale, and at their apex the American girl, the king’s daughter, beautiful, forever young, and insane.... Although the pattern is more complex than in *Gatsby*, practically

the same controlling lines of theme can be observed. The man of imagination, fed on the emotions of romantic wonder, is tempted and seduced and (in this case, nearly) destroyed by that American dream which customarily takes two forms: the escape from time and the materialistic pursuit of a purely hedonistic happiness. On the historical level, the critique is of the error of American romanticism in attempting to transcend and thus escape historical responsibility. On the economic level, the critique is of the fatal beauty of American capitalism, its destructive charm and recklessness. Thematically, the lines come together when Nicole attempts to own Dick and therefore to escape time—keeping him clear of it, too—as when Gatsby tries to buy back the past. On the religious level, if indeed there is one, the critique must be defined more cautiously: perhaps one can say that Fitzgerald intermittently insinuates the possibility that human kind are inveterately prone to befuddle themselves with the conspicuous similarities between the city of man and the city of God, paying scant attention to their more radical difference.

In Rosemary Hoyt, who brings from Hollywood to Europe the latest American version of the dream of youthful innocence, Fitzgerald has still another important center of consciousness. It is through her eyes, for instance, that Fitzgerald gives us his first elaborate glimpses of the Divers, and their hangers-on, at the Americanized Riviera. Because of Rosemary's acute but undisciplined perceptions, Fitzgerald can insist perpetually on the ironic tensions between the richest texture of social appearance and the hidden reality of moral agony; her 'naivete responded whole-heartedly to the expensive simplicity of the Divers, unaware of its complexity and its lack of innocence...' ('Nursery-like peace and good will' is a good example of how Fitzgerald's subtly paradoxical prose style incessantly supplies the kind of religious-secular befuddlement alluded to above.)

Rosemary manifests the effects of Hollywood sentimentality and meretriciousness on the powers of American perception and imagination. The image-patterns that surround her movements are largely concerned with childhood... Immature and egocentric, she provides one more symbol of the corruption of imagination in American civilization; both deluded and deluding, she is without resources for escape such as are available to Nick Carraway and, to a considerably lesser extent, Dick Diver.... 'Rosemary didn't grow up.'... Nicole and Rosemary are for this novel the objectified images of Fitzgerald's 'brave new world.' Only occasionally, and only in pathos, does Dick Diver escape the limits of this terrifying world.... Only as this illusion fades, to the accompaniment of an almost unbearable 'interior laughter,' does Dick Diver achieve a minimal and ambiguous salvation, a few shattered fragments of reality, including the anonymity of professional and social failure."

Edwin Fussell
"Fitzgerald's Brave New World" (1952)
American Literature: A Critical Survey 2
eds. Thomas Daniel Young and Ronald Edward Fine
(American Book Company 1968) 359-65

"*Tender Is the Night* is a good novel that puzzles you and ends by making you a little angry because it isn't a great novel also. It doesn't give the feeling of being complete in itself. The theme of it is stated in a conversation among the three principal characters. 'What did this to him?' Rosemary asks. They are talking about Abe North, an American composer who became prominent shortly after World War I. He was shy and very talented; often he came to stay with Dick and Nicole Diver in their villa near the Cap d'Antibes and they scarcely knew he was there—'sometimes he'd be in the library with a muted piano, making love to it by the hour.' But for years now he hadn't been working; his eyes had a hurt look; he got drunk every day as if trying to escape from nobody knew what. And Rosemary wondered, 'Why does he have to drink?'...

The question remains victoriously buzzing in the reader's ears long after the story has ended. Fitzgerald tries to answer it, but obliquely. He tells us why Dr. Richard Diver went to pieces—because he married a rich woman and became so dependent on her money that his own work seemed unimportant and he no longer had a purpose in living; that is the principal reason, although he is also shaken by his love for Rosemary and by Nicole's recurrent fits of insanity, during one of which she came near killing not only her husband and herself but also their two children. Dick's case seems clear enough—but what about Abe North, whose wife was poor and sane and devoted? What about the other nice people who ended as

lunatics or drunkards? Fitzgerald is continually suggesting and reiterating these questions that he leaves in the air.

The Divers and their friends are, in reality, the characters he has always written about, and written well. They are the richer members of his own generation, the young women who learned to smoke and pet in 1917 and the Yale and Princeton men who attended their coming-out parties in new uniforms. In his early books, especially in *This Side of Paradise*, he celebrated the youth of these people in a tone of unmixed pride—‘Here we are,’ he seemed to be saying, ‘the children of the conquerors, the free and beautiful and very wicked youngsters who are setting the standards for a nation.’ Later, when he described their business careers and their life in great country houses on the north shore of Long Island, his admiration began to be mixed with irony and disillusionment. In the present novel, which chronicles their years of exile, the admiration has almost completely vanished; the prevailing tone is one of disillusionment mixed with nostalgia. ‘We had good times together,’ Fitzgerald seems to say, ‘but that was a long time ago.’

Dick Diver is now an unsuccessful drunken country doctor, divorced and living somewhere in central New York State. Rosemary is an empty and selfish movie star; Abe North is dead, killed brawling in a speakeasy—all the kind and sensitive people of their circle have gone to pieces, and there remain only the ‘wooden and onanistic’ women like Nicole’s sister, only the arrivistes like Albert McKisco and the cultivated savages like Tommy Barban. A whole class has flourished and decayed and suddenly broken into fragments.

Here is a magnificent subject for a novel. The trouble is that Fitzgerald has never completely decided what kind of novel he wanted to write—whether it should center round a single hero or deal with a whole group. Both types of approach are present, the individual and the collective, and they interfere with each other. We are conscious of a divided purpose that perhaps goes back to a division in the author himself. Fitzgerald has always been the poet of the American upper bourgeoisie; he has been the only writer able to invest their lives with glamour. Yet he has never been sure that he owed his loyalty to the class about which he was writing. It as if he had a double personality. Part of him is a guest at the ball given by the people in the big house; part of his has been a little boy peeping in through the window and being thrilled by the music and the beautifully dressed women—a romantic but hard-headed little boy who stops every once in a while to wonder how much it all cost and where the money came from.

Fitzgerald says, ‘There is a streak of vulgarity in me that I try to cultivate.’ In his early books, this divided personality was wholly an advantage: it enabled him to portray American society from the inside, and yet at the same time to surround it with an atmosphere of magic and romance that exists only in the eyes of people watching at the carriage entrance as the guests arrive in limousines. Since those days, however, the division has been emphasized and has become a liability. The little boy outside the window has grown mature and cold-eyed; from an enraptured spectator he has developed into a social historian. At the same time, part of Fitzgerald remains inside, among the dancers. And now that the ball is ending in tragedy, he doesn’t know how to describe it—whether as a guest, a participant, in which case he will be writing a purely psychological novel; or whether from the detached point of view of a social historian.

There is another reason, too, for the technical faults of *Tender Is the Night*. Fitzgerald has been working on it at intervals for the last nine years, ever since he published *The Great Gatsby* in 1925. During these years his attitude has inevitably changed, as has that of every other sensitive writer. Yet no matter how much he revised his early chapters, he could not make them wholly agree with those written later—or once a chapter has assumed what seems to be a final shape, it undergoes a process of crystallization; it can no longer be remolded. The result is that several of his characters are self-contradictory: they don’t merely change as living creatures change; they transform themselves into different people.

If I didn’t like the book so much, I shouldn’t have spoken at such length about its shortcomings. It has virtues that deserve more space than I can give them here. Especially it has a richness of meaning and emotion—one feels that every scene is selected among many possible scenes and that every event has pressure behind it. There is nothing false or borrowed in the book; everything is observed at first hand. Some of the minor figures—especially Gausse, the hotel keeper who was once a busboy in London, and Lady Caroline Sibley-Biers, who carries her English bad manners to the point of viciousness—are more

vivid than Rosemary or Dick; and the encounter between Gause and Lady Caroline is one of those enormous episodes in which two social castes are depicted melodramatically, farcically, and yet convincingly in a brief conversation and one gesture. Fitzgerald says that this book is his farewell to the members of his own generation; I hope he changes his mind. He has in him at least one great novel about them, and it is a novel that I want to read.”

Malcolm Cowley
“*Tender Is the Night*”
reprinted in *The Critic as Artist: Essays on Books 1920-1970*
ed. Gilbert A. Harrison
(1934; Liveright 1972) 86-90

“The plot appears for the last time in *Tender Is the Night*. ‘The novel should do this,’ Fitzgerald said in a memorandum to himself written early in 1932, after several false starts on the book and before setting to work on the published version. ‘Show a man who is a natural idealist, a spoiled priest, giving in for various causes to the ideas of the haute bourgeoisie’—that is, of the only moneyed class—‘and in his rise to the top of the social world being his idealism, his talent and turning to drink and dissipation.’ In the very simplest terms, Dick Diver marries Nicole Warren and is destroyed by her money.”

Malcolm Cowley
“Fitzgerald: The Romance of Money” (1953, revised 1973)
The Portable Malcolm Cowley
ed. Donald Stanford
(Viking/Penguin 1990) 254

“*Tender Is the Night* is laid in Europe, chiefly on the Riviera. Richard Diver, a young American psychiatrist, meets Nicole Warren, an attractive young American girl, in a sanatorium where she is being treated for schizophrenia. He marries her, cures her, but loses his strength as he pours it out to her. He returns to America and degenerates into a small-town practitioner who drowns his personal tragedy in drink. The story is told successively from the points of view of several characters, including Diver and Nicole. The theme of the novel is essentially the problem of...the intelligent and capable hero who gradually degenerates through the draining away of his spiritual forces. Nicole’s insanity is mainly drawn after the disease of Fitzgerald’s wife, and the character of Diver is modeled partly on Fitzgerald himself. Another notable character is Abe North, an eccentric and alcoholic musician.”

Donald Heiney
Recent American Literature 4
(Barron’s Educational Series 1958) 145

“In the decadent setting of post-World War I Europe, a wealthy mental patient, Nicole, falls passionately in love with Dick Diver, a young psychiatrist. She finds her cure in marrying him; but as soon as she achieves independence he deteriorates. Finally Nicole leaves him for a man who will be her lover, not her caretaker. Diver is perhaps a reflection of Fitzgerald’s own painful experiences with his mentally disturbed wife Zelda. Despite the book’s many terrifying scenes, the warm tenderness of its writing lifts it into the realm of genuine tragedy. Fitzgerald was not satisfied with the book and kept reworking it, never completing his task. After his death Malcolm Cowley examined all the manuscripts and made a new version (1951), carefully based on Fitzgerald’s intentions, in which the episodes were placed in chronological rather than semidramatic order.”

Max J. Herzberg & staff
The Reader’s Encyclopedia of American Literature
(Crowell 1962) 1121

“Working on *Tender Is the Night*, Fitzgerald’s life had...become a nightmare, with liquor necessary to work, and work necessary if he was to live. The novel was finished late in 1933... Much more complex than *The Great Gatsby*, the new novel, in spite of the circumstances of its composition, is probably Fitzgerald’s greatest achievement. A story of ‘emotional bankruptcy,’ it depicts not only the dissolution of a life but of a way of life. It is the elegy of the 1920’s, the allegory of the dream that Fitzgerald himself tried to make of reality and the dissipation of that dream. It is quite simply, one of the most moving novels

in all American fiction. And the reviews were lukewarm, obtuse, the sales trivial. It was Fitzgerald's greatest defeat.... His wife was now incurably insane."

Mark Schorer
Major Writers of America II
(Harcourt 1962) 682-83

Michael Hollister (2014)

6 Tender is the Night. "We'll stay three days and then go home. I'll wire right away for steamer tickets." 8 Tender is the Night. umbrella; besides there was much visiting and talking back and forth—the atmosphere of a community upon which it would be presumptuous to intrude. Farther up, where the beach was strewn with pebbles and dead sea-weed, sat a group with flesh as white as her own. Tender Is the Night exploits to the full the feverish beauty of a class in decay, the polished charm of a decadence that is not yet self-conscious, the exciting insecurity of our betters. Dr. Richard Diver and his wife Nicole, beautiful daughter of a wealthy household whose life has been distorted and made precarious by incestuous relations with her father. C. Hartley Grattan Review of Tender Is the Night. The Modern Monthly (1934). "Early versions date back to 1925, and the one first published began with Rosemary's arrival in the Diver circle; but in the last two years of his life Fitzgerald reorganized the story into chronological order in a version first issued, with Malcolm Cowley's commentary, in 1948. Tender Is the Night's history constitutes a veritable saga of textual changes, changes that did not stop even with F. Scott Fitzgerald's death. And since there are two versions of the novel presently in print, it is a potentially confusing situation for the student. The fact that must be realized is that there is no definitive text for Tender Is the Night. Fitzgerald had the germ of an idea for a story roughly a decade before it ultimately became the novel that was published. An early version of the novel, now mainly about Dick Diver, appeared in Scribner's Magazine in 1934, and the novel, revised again, finally appeared as a book later that year. It is this book version, the only full-length rendition of the text to appear in F. Scott Fitzgerald's lifetime, that the following study guide will use as its source.

