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The Acting Motif in Tender is the Night:

The Man and the Mask

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

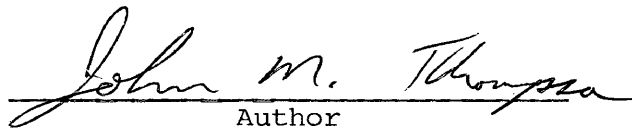
John M. Thompson

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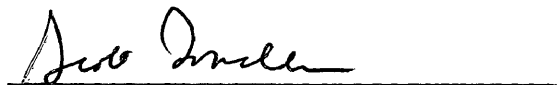
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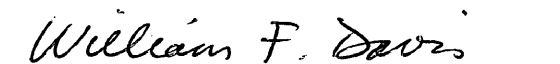
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ABSTRACT

Fitzgerald uses actors and acting throughout Tender is the Night to unify the novel and to illustrate Dick Diver's complex personality. First introduced by Rosemary, the only professional actress, acting becomes a motif attached to nearly all the main characters. Through his involvement with Rosemary, Dick comes to see himself as an actor, and his downfall is hastened by his ultimate inability to play his many roles and to accept acting as a natural part of life. By attempting to play too many conflicting roles, Dick alienates himself from his audience upon which he, as a real life actor, thrives. In this study, Dick's roles are divided into three pairs, each role being the facade of a major personality trait. Dick's progress toward ruin is then followed through the novel by noting how he, in awareness of his acting, fails to successfully play his roles.

THE ACTING MOTIF IN TENDER IS THE NIGHT:

THE MAN AND THE MASK

'I would but find what's there to find,
Love or deceit.'

'It was the mask engaged your mind,
And after set your heart to beat,
Not what's behind.'

from "The Mask"

by William Butler Yeats

Fitzgerald uses the theme of actors and acting throughout Tender is the Night to unify the novel and to illustrate Dick Diver's complex personality. First introduced by Rosemary, the only professional actress, acting becomes a motif attached to nearly all the main characters. Through his involvement with Rosemary, Dick comes to see himself as an actor, and his downfall is hastened by his ultimate inability to play his many roles and to accept acting as a natural part of life.

The world and language of theatrics, at first associated with Rosemary, becomes a metaphor for describing Dick's roles and for developing his character. Matthew Bruccoli's study of Fitzgerald's manuscripts shows that the author from the beginning had intended to employ actors and the acting world--the central character was to be Francis Melarky, a young film technician.¹ Fitzgerald's knowledge and interest in acting stems from his early days as a playwright and continues through his involvement with Hollywood. Many of his stories and novels, particularly The Last Tycoon, involve actors and literal or symbolic acting. Though neither Fitzgerald nor Bruccoli state explicit reasons for including acting in Tender is the Night, it becomes clear that professional acting provides a metaphorical way of perceiving the world as a stage, and thus calls attention to roles, the acting motif also implies the personality behind the mask, and the distinction between illusion and reality. ✓

Several critics, including Richard Lehan and James E. Miller, Jr.

feel that Dick is in some way responsible for his own downfall, and others, such as Sergio Perosa and Matthew Bruccoli, see Dick's downfall as the inevitable effect of the rich, expatriate society in which he moves. But perhaps the most perceptive opinion is offered by Brian Way, who says that Diver's fall is not attributable to a single cause but to a multiplicity of factors which are ultimately inscrutable and impossible to locate at an exact time or place. This multiplicity and mystery are the novel's main strengths, Way believes, for they are based on modern sociology and psychology.² Dick Diver, more than any other character, exemplifies the complexity and multiplicity of personality which makes the novel powerful.


Dick Diver is both an actor and a director of the actors that surround him, but it is not his acting or his lack of awareness of his facades that dooms him. Erving Goffman, in his sociological study, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, shows that it is human nature to act, to play roles. Although A.H. Steinberg maintains that Dick is unconscious of his role playing: "His sensitized blindness to the fact that he keeps playing the actor in real life is based on a conscious contempt for actors as empty persons,"³ Dick is very aware of his roles; and, through his involvement with Rosemary, he grows even more conscious of his acting on the stage of life. Through her, he begins to make the metaphorical connection of stage to real world. Robert Sklar notes that "Dick Diver is conscious of his contraries, aware of the dissimulation behind his magical, creative role."⁴ What does ruin Dick more than anything is his complex, multifarious nature--his several roles--

which he finally cannot control. As Sklar remarks, the "true neurotic in Tender is the Night is not Nicole Diver, but her husband."⁵ Dick's deterioration is fomented by a host of inner conflicts, which remain unresolved at the end. Desperate at his inner turmoil and in weariness and dislike for his role playing, he finally drops all masks, but he fails to cure his malady.

Before examining the novel, a few definitions are in order. In this study, a distinction will be made between Dick Diver's two basic parts--his exterior and his interior. Secondary characteristics--facades, masks, roles--are exteriors assumed by anyone at any time. Such characteristics are necessarily more transient and mutable than the primary characteristics, or the "personality"--the interior. Well aware that Dick's roles often overlap, I have, for the sake of analysis, distinguished six roles, each being the facade of an inner, innate personality trait. The six roles are subdivided into three pairs. The first pair of roles is the student and the detached, ironical observer; underneath these are, respectively, the idealist and the realist. The next pair is the lover and the scientist; these are underlain by the romantic and the intellectual. Finally, and most importantly, there is Dick the charmer and Dick the psychiatrist, and underneath are the desire to be loved and the desire to help. It is obvious that any person, especially one as complex as Dick, will defy a rigid, structural personality schema; these categories are therefore to be thought of as fluid and only as a means for examining and appreciating the multiple nature of Dick Diver.

Three sequential steps in Dick's deterioration arise from this division of his character and personality. First, as the principal character, he is assigned more roles than anyone in his society. Also, and perhaps because he has so many closely related roles, his roles often conflict, as do the deep personality traits from which they stem. Then, because of these inner conflicts, his roles often do not correspond to what is really underneath at the time. Thus Dick says things he does not mean or feel, and, especially near the end, he does and says the inappropriate thing--as for example by delivering a philosophical outburst on acting when he should be playing the charming husband to Nicole and lover to Rosemary on the beach.⁶ By playing the wrong role at the wrong time, Dick alienates ✓ himself from his audience upon which he, as an actor, thrives.

Dick Diver's idealism reveals itself at the chronological beginning of Tender is the Night in Book II, during his days as a student and neophyte physician. Dick's ideals include being a good psychologist--maybe "the greatest one that ever lived," he proclaims (p. 132). But from the beginning, the narrator undercuts his hero's idealism as a species of American illusion: "the illusions of eternal strength and health, and of the essential goodness of people; illusions of a nation, the lies of generations of frontier mothers who had to croon falsely, that there were no wolves outside the cabin door" (p. 177). His idealism is weakened when he reaches Dohmler's clinic in Zurich, and sees the reality behind his academic ideal of curing the mentally ill. Psychiatrists are willing to batten upon the riches of people who can afford to have imaginary



problems. Franz and Dick exchange these telling lines (p. 119):

"We have some shell-shocks who merely heard an air raid from a distance. We have a few who merely read newspapers."

"It sounds like nonsense to me."

"Maybe it is, Dick. But, we're a rich person's clinic-- we don't use the word nonsense."

If he can accept being paid to maintain the illusions of the wealthy, Dick finds it harder to accept his colleague's way of life, and his idealism is dealt another blow when he encounters the Gregorovious household. "He felt vaguely oppressed . . . by the sudden contracting of horizons to which Franz seemed so reconciled" (pp. 132-33). Confronting the shabby reality of this ascetic, white, sterile life--"Franz and his bride and a small dog with a smell of burning rubber"--it is hard for Dick "to think of deliberately cutting life down to the scale of an inherited suit." Dick becomes the aloof, ironical observer of the whole scene, and the narrator acutely comments that "for some months he had been going through that partitioning of the things of youth wherein it is decided whether or not to die for what one no longer believes."

Fitzgerald's initial plan was to portray a man losing his idealism and then falling from his social position⁷:

The novel should do this. 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 dissipation.

Bruccoli offers the following reason for Dick's lost idealism:

"When Fitzgerald applied it [the term "spoiled priest"] to Dick Diver, he appears to have meant that Dick tried to combine his function as doctor of medicine with the role of spiritual doctor to the sick souls around him, but that he lost his idealism and was finally corrupted by his own flock."⁸ Dick's lost idealism is a complicated process, and is the result of a combination of inner conflicts, including that between realism and idealism and the romanticism he saw in the "haute bourgeoisie." He was not necessarily corrupted by his own flock, but he was certainly tainted-- particularly in his involvement with Rosemary.

The only real actress, the young starlet, Rosemary Hoyt, initiates a motif which reverberates and becomes an integral part of the novel, and associated with all the main characters. And she serves as a catalyst in accelerating Dick's downfall. Bruccoli addresses the question of why Rosemary is used as the central intelligence in Book I: "Despite her somewhat limited intelligence, Rosemary is an ideal person to authenticate the attractiveness of the Diver life; she is herself a celebrity and has been unimpressed by the gaudy glamor of Hollywood."⁹ Her youth and innocence make her a good vehicle for establishing and symbolizing the actors' world. She is an inchoate personality, yet, because she is an actress, she influences Diver's downfall. And, symbolically, she loses her innocence as Dick loses his idealism.

Rosemary is always very self-conscious, and in the beginning of the novel, when she disrobes and moves toward the beach, she feels "the impactive scrutiny of strange faces" (p. 4). Again, strolling along the Cannes promenade, she feels as though her audience is with her: ". . . Rosemary, half in the grip of fashion, became a little self-conscious, as though she were displaying an unhealthy taste for the moribund; as though people were wondering why she was here . . ." (p. 14). Lee Whitehead uses the social psychology of George Herbert Mead to suggest that Rosemary and Dick are both "me" persons who, like actors, see themselves as objects viewed by others. They view themselves from the outside, and tend to take the position of others toward themselves. Nicole, however, is an "I" person--"the self as the center of action, subject rather than object."¹⁰ As Nicole says to Rosemary: "Most people think everybody feels about them much more violently than they actually do--they think other people's opinions of them swing through great arcs of approval or disapproval" (p. 66). Mead's psychology is a useful way of looking at Dick and Rosemary, but Whitehead ignores the fact that Rosemary is an important element in Dick's evolving awareness of himself as an actor.

No mention is made of acting in the first ten chapters of Book II (the chronological beginning), but acting metaphors occur with the introduction of Rosemary in the first chapter of the novel. Dick, entertaining his friends, is described in theatrical terms: "the man in the jockey cap was giving a quiet little performance for this group" (p. 6). Sklar notes that the opening scenes of


the novel, with the various entrances, performers, and exits, are conceived in terms of the stage.¹¹ These scenes are, of course, viewed from the perspective of Rosemary, who is inclined to perceive in terms and images of the stage; the narrative of Book I is thus replete with the acting motif. She is oppressed by the realities in the French newspaper, because she is "accustomed to seeing the starkest grotesqueries of a continent heavily underlined as comedy or tragedy," and she is "untrained to the task of separating out the essential for herself" (p. 15). She contemplates offering herself to her director, Earl Brady: "Yet she knew she would forget him half an hour after she left him--like an actor kissed in a picture" (p. 24). Later, in bed alone, she tries to envision a scene with Dick, but it is beclouded by her cinematic imagination: "Cloaked by the erotic darkness she exhausted the future quickly, with all the eventualities that might lead up to a kiss, but with the kiss itself as blurred as a kiss in pictures" (p. 39). Not only in her thoughts, but in her actions off stage, she relies on characters she has portrayed on the screen; for example, when she dramatically comforts the weeping Campion, "a scene in a role she had played last year swept over her irresistibly" (p. 41).

After coming in contact with Rosemary, Dick also begins to think in stage metaphors. Thus in one of their first, tentative scenes together he is "aware of the too obvious appeal, the struggle with an unrehearsed scene and unfamiliar words" (p. 38). He realizes her pretenses and sees the mask she wears in real life: "Not only are you beautiful but you are somehow on the grand scale. Everything

you do, like pretending to be in love or pretending to be shy gets across" (p. 63). On the following page, she sees the potential loss of her virginity as "one of her greatest rôles and she flung herself into it more passionately." Fitzgerald here undercuts her role-playing by making this act only a rehearsal for the real thing. Duck refuses her: "Let's drop it out of the picture" (p. 66). Rosemary is the perfect, pellucid character for demonstrating the role-playing of everyone, and for making Dick aware of his own role-playing. Her self-conscious actions are mirrored, on a somewhat less than grand scale, in those around her; and Dick, in his bantering with a young ingenuous actress, can see the analogy between acting a role and being a person.

Rosemary accelerates Dick's fall by making him see himself as an actor, and he becomes more distrustful of the facades that he, like everyone, must always assume. Brian Way argues that Rosemary makes Dick aware of his deterioration, which is manifested in his treatment of Nicole and Rosemary, his rudeness to his friends, and his impolite behavior at parties: "until his emotional involvement with Rosemary brings these obscure maladies to the level of consciousness, Dick is completely unaware that the fabric of his personality has been gradually weakened over the years." But, Way cautions, "in the process of Dick's deterioration, it should be clear that Rosemary is only a catalyst, not a cause."¹² It is after he views Daddy's Girl that Dick allows himself to fall for Rosemary, as though his love can only be evoked by the projected image of the attractive, young heroine. Thus it is "with an

inevitable sense of disappointment" that Dick sees Rosemary after carrying around a fanciful mental image of her (p. 104). And after seeing the film, he becomes more acutely aware of his own acting, which he distrusts. Thus an "awful silence" falls over Dick's clique when Rosemary suggests he take a screen test, and Dick abruptly ends the conversation with his "somewhat tart discussion of actors: 'The strongest guard is placed at the gateway to nothing,' he said. 'Maybe because the condition of emptiness is too shameful to be divulged'" (pp. 69-70). Dick is speaking not just of the theater and the movies, but of acting in real life. If an actor offstage drops his mask, then an actor in real life must sometimes drop his, and Dick is wary of what lies beneath his own public mask. He cynically dismisses as mere "emptiness," the conflicting personalities behind his mask.

Following Rosemary's suggestion of a screen test for Dick, she explains that her plan was to have him play her leading man in a Hollywood picture (p. 70). Dick, though cynical, has begun to see himself inevitably as an actor, and he soon does play her leading man. He admits his love for her (p. 74), and his moral deterioration, sustained by his distaste for acting offstage, proceeds rapidly and steadily to the end. It is with a wonderful stroke of irony and truth, which Sklar feels is the climax of Book I, that Rosemary, with italicized emphasis, says "her most sincere thing to him: 'Oh, we're such actors--you and I'" (p. 105). 

Though Daddy's Girl is not entirely responsible for Dick's consciousness of his acting, it plays a significant part in that

he sees himself as Rosemary's leading man--in this case her father. She had earlier told him that, like Dick, her father was a doctor (p. 63). And, incest motif aside, Dick imitates what he sees on film; he becomes Rosemary's "daddy." Oscar Wilde, in his famous essay, "The Decay of Lying," proclaims that "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life."¹³ Wilde further comments that the quality of the art notwithstanding, it is human nature to imitate art and to view life from the perspective of a mental image of some work or works of art. Daddy's Girl is maudlin and sentimental, but it is an artifice--something removed from reality. It is, however, close enough to reality to allure Dick by its insidious charm. Just as he later goes after a young English girl who merely "looks like somebody in the movies" (p. 222), so he falls for Daddy's Girl rather than Rosemary, and in falling he becomes what he disdains--a mere actor. Steinberg, previously quoted, accurately notes Dick's "conscious contempt for actors as empty persons." Whereas Rosemary, in her naïveté, sees only the glamor and beauty of the Diver world,¹⁴ Dick is not deluded by the artificial world of Hollywood that he enters with Rosemary. The tension between illusion and reality grows when Rosemary's world becomes symbolic of Dick's. B. W. Wilson states that in The Great Gatsby, "Fitzgerald cleverly develops this theatrical motif to emphasize the basic thematic conflict between illusion and reality."¹⁵ And Edwin Arnold addresses the issue of illusion and reality in Tender is the Night: "It is each character's reaction to this confrontation with reality that determines not his success or failure--for all

of the important characters eventually fail--but the tragic intensity of his struggle and hence the glory of his fall."¹⁶ In this regard, Dick's reaction is obviously the greatest and most destructive, for his confrontation with reality on several levels--his self, his family, and his society--leaves him disillusioned, cynical, and enervated.

In his study of the relation between the novel and "Ode to a Nightingale," from which Fitzgerald took his title, William Doherty, with a Keatsian turn, says that in both poem and book the illusions of joy and happiness are ultimately shattered: "Both the poem and the novel deal with these lovely illusions; but what they teach is that the fancy cannot cheat so well, that disillusionment is the coefficient of time."¹⁷ Doherty continues: "What the nightingale symbolizes and promises in the 'Ode,' Nicole symbolizes and promises too. The ecstatic union with the bird is a taste of oblivion in loss of self."¹⁸ Illusion and oblivion are necessary, and Dick unconsciously seeks this "loss of self" which he only finds in those few moments outside of time and reality--when he is deeply in love. Some of the novel's most poetic passages occur at these supreme moments. When Dick first touches Nicole, "there were now no more plans than if Dick had arbitrarily made some indissoluble mixture, with atoms joined and inseparable . . . he was thankful to have an existence at all, if only as a reflection in her wet eyes" (p. 155). Before he falls for Rosemary, Dick contemplates that "she did not know yet that splendor is something in the heart; at the moment when she

realized that and melted into the passion of the universe he could take her without question or regret" (p. 64). And when they arrive at "the happier stage of love," Dick and Rosemary are "full of brave illusions about each other, tremendous illusions, so that the communion of self with self seemed to be on a place where no other human relations mattered" (pp. 74-75). Though he has not yet taken her sexually, he has fallen in love before she could have had time to "melt into the passion of the universe." Having lost his idealism, Dick takes Daddy's Girl anyway and enjoys a few, brief moments of oblivion.

Dick's second major personality conflict is between his romanticism and his intellectualism. He attempts to play both the character of the lover and that of the scientist, and these two roles often compete. A Rumanian intellectual at the university, speaking of conflicts, tells Dick that he is only a scientist: "You're not a romantic philosopher--you're a scientist. Memory, force, character--especially good sense. That's going to be your trouble--judgment about yourself . . ." (p. 117). The Rumanian is half right; Dick does have trouble judging himself, but precisely because he is both a scientist and a romantic. One of the first examples of this dualism is his revulsion for Gregorovius' "cramped" living space, which "lacked grace and adventure" (p. 133). The narrator explains that Dick's outlook has been affected by "the lavish liquidations taking place under the aegis of American splendor," and also that "men and women had made much of him." Dick Diver is a bright and highly acclaimed young doctor; where

Franz is content to live quietly with his work and his wife, Dick needs life on the grand scale. He needs glamor, grace, women, and, as a true actor, much attention; he wants to be recognized as the greatest psychologist that ever lived. He admits that he became a psychiatrist because of a girl attending the same lectures (p. 138). And the lavish liquidations that turn his head provide further evidence of a similar internal struggle, for "watching his father's struggles in poor parishes had wedded a desire for money to an essentially unacquisitive nature" (p. 201). He is attracted by the splendor of wealth, yet repelled by the monopolizing excesses of Baby Warren, who can buy her sister a promising husband. ✓

As a romantic and an intellectual, Dick is also both a socializer and a loner. Nicole recognizes Dick's tendency to be a loner when they are newly weds on the ship: ". . . so go on alone, Dick. You will walk differently alone, dear, through a thicker atmosphere, forcing your way through the shadows of chairs, through the dripping smoke of the funnels" (p. 160). On the one hand, he enjoys playing the gregarious, extroverted host, and, on the other hand, he almost simultaneously withdraws from the surrounding gaiety into the thicker atmosphere of himself. Again, Nicole notices this capacity in Dick when he suggests giving "a really bad party" (p. 27):

Nicole saw that one of his most characteristic moods was upon him, the excitement that swept everyone up into it and was inevitably followed by his own form of melancholy . . . he had the power of arousing a

fascinated and uncritical love. The reaction came when he realized the waste and extravagance involved.

Dick continues to vacillate like this between enthusiasm and detachment all the way through the novel, but the enthusiasm grows steadily more ironical and bitter. On one momentous occasion, Dick manipulates the prevailing mood from jollity to sudden gloom then back to jollity. Abe and Mary North speak of Abe's imminent return to writing music, when it is obvious that he is past hope of recovery (pp. 61-62). Dick knows this and he feels a waning enthusiasm for his own work. He at first refuses to play along with the empty optimism of the party:

"I may even abandon what you call my 'scientific treatise.'"

"Oh, Dick!" Mary's voice was startled, was shocked. Rosemary had never before seen Dick's face utterly expressionless. . .

Way feels that Dick's most devastating act is his abandonment of his scientific work.¹⁹ It is indeed a serious act, growing out of his cynicism for the role of scientist, and out of a deeper malady as well: a dislike for all facades. Though Dick laughs off his momentous announcement--he'll "--abandon it for another"--he laughs alone and hollowly, for he knows his intellectual endeavors are over--there will not be "another one."

As so often happens in Fitzgerald, romanticism expresses itself as nostalgia for the past. Thus Dick often finds himself caught between two worlds. In a Paris restaurant, Dick is being the amiable entertainer, but the sight of war veteran's mothers

carries him back to an earlier time: "Over his wine Dick looked at them again; in their happy faces, the dignity that surrounded and pervaded the party, he perceived all the maturity of an older America . . . Almost with an effort he turned back to his two women at the table and faced the whole new world in which he believed" (pp. 100-01). Another war-related incident shows Dick's affinity for the past; on the French battlefield with Abe and Rosemary, Dick "mourned persistently": "All my beautiful lovely safe world blew itself up here with a great gust of high explosive love" (p. 57). Later a veterans' march removes him from the present and makes him sad (p. 200):

The column marched slowly with a sort of swagger for a lost magnificence, a past effect, a forgotten sorrow. The faces were only formally sad but Dick's lungs burst for a moment with regret for Abe's death, and his own youth of ten years ago.


It is not long after this that he goes to bury his father and pay homage to his ancestors and to his own irretrievable past. As Richard Lehan notes, both Jay Gatsby and Dick Diver attempt, like the subject of Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale," to make time stand still; Dick learns too late that it is impossible.²⁰

It is in an attempt to recapture the past and his youth of a few years ago, that Dick purposely runs into Rosemary in Rome (Book II, chapter xx). They finally consummate their romance, attempting to find in each other what they found three years before.

"For three years Dick had been the ideal by which Rosemary measured other men and inevitably his stature had increased to heroic size" (p. 211). She realizes with disappointment that he has "the same exigent demands" as other men. Bruccoli remarks how this scene shows Rosemary's crippling effect on Dick and how he tries to regain the past:


It is a significant scene, for both the novel and Dick's decline began at the time of his initial meeting with Rosemary, and this second meeting provides a gauge for measuring Dick's decline during the three intervening years . . . Dick's affair with Rosemary is the strongest symptom so far of his deterioration; stronger than the casual pick-ups at Innsbruck and on the ship for he takes advantage of Rosemary's old feeling about him.²¹

Just as she remembers how he was, so Dick resurrects the old screen image of her: "'I've seen you here and there in pictures,' said Dick. 'Once I had Daddy's Girl run off just for myself!'" (p. 209). Yet he is unable to re-create the romantic past, for, as Sklar says, his "genteel romantic mask," which earns him Rosemary's love, is gone once he is sexually involved with her. "Dick's dilemma is complete and he knows it," says Sklar.²² He is also doomed because of his attraction to the kind of romanticism found only on the screen, and represented by Rosemary. Though he knows the falsity of the stage world with its "great cardboard whale" and "monstrous tree bearing cherries large as basketballs"



(p. 22), it is with an almost self-destructive bent that he becomes involved in it through Rosemary. The backlash comes when he sees himself as an actor, and, because of his many roles, cannot accept himself. As he detests acting, so he comes to detest himself.

The third personality conflict is between Dick's desire to be loved and his desire to help. On the one hand, he plays the charming, lovable husband, father, and friend; and on the other hand, he plays the psychiatrist. These two major roles create a very important conflict, especially in his relation to his wife. As a young student, Dick had been unaware of his special charm: "he had no idea that he was charming, that the affection he gave and inspired was anything unusual among healthy people" (p. 116). Then, as a senior at Yale, "some one referred to him as 'lucky Dick'--the name lingered in his head" (p. 116). It is his tendency, as noted by Whitehead, to see himself as others do, that draws Dick's attention to his charm. Goffman, in speaking of people as "performers," captures the essence of Dick's charm when he says: "performers tend to foster the impression that their current performance of their routine and their relationship to their current audience have something special and unique about them."²³ Compare this with the narrator's description of Diver's magic: "to be included in Dick Diver's world for a while was a remarkable experience: people believed he made special reservations about them, recognizing the proud uniqueness of their destinies" (p. 27). And again, in the excitement of a Diver party, Rosemary notices Dick: "The enthusiasm, the selflessness behind the whole performance ravished her" (p. 77). Nicole thinks of Dick's charm as a "pleasingness"--



"there was a pleasingness about him that simply had to be used--those who possessed that pleasingness had to keep their hands in, and go along attaching people that they had no use to make of" (p. 87). Internal conflict develops in Dick when his profession of medical doctor and his role of charmer are merged. He finds his fellow psychiatrist's way of life distasteful, yet he attempts to conceal his distaste with his excessive charm, and he loathes this duplicity: "He made Kaethe Gregorovius feel charming, meanwhile becoming increasingly restless at the all-pervading cauliflower--simultaneously hating himself too for this incipience of he knew not what superficiality" (p. 133). A similar but opposite occurrence is when he becomes enchanted by a schizophrenic patient, Nicole: "He was in for it now, possessed by a vast irrationality. She was no near that he felt his breathing change but again his training came to his aid in a boy'd laugh and a trite remark" (p. 154). In this case, it is not charm that covers a desire to be aloof, but the converse.

Dr. Diver becomes too involved with his patients, without maintaining a healthy, professional detachment. Thus the news that "the scabbed anonymous woman-artist he had come to love" had died, has an exhausting and debilitating effect upon him (p. 242). Goffman warns that a performer "must offer a show of intellectual and emotional involvement with the activity he is presenting, but must keep himself from actually being carried away by his own show lest this destroy his involvement in the task of putting on a successful performance."²⁵ Dick's performances also become less and less successful because he tries to do too many different ones. *

Dick must play both Dr. Diver and husband Dick to his patient and wife, Nicole, and this creates a devitalizing dichotomy in him. He realizes this at the Agiri Fair when she begins having a spell: "The dualism in his views of her--that of the husband, that of the psychiatrist--was increasingly paralyzing his faculties" (p. 188). The same self-destructive tendency that makes him fall for Rosemary, seems to have made him fall for Nicole. Way concurs that "he is undoubtedly attracted by a situation in which defeat is almost inevitable."²⁴

Goffman states that for a performer to achieve a dramaturgical success, he must maintain "audience segregation" whereby the actor makes sure his different roles are played out to discrete audiences. And "if performers attempted to break down this segregation, and the illusion that is fostered by it, audiences would often prevent such action."²⁶ In Nicole, a clinical schizophrenic, Dick has two audiences, and his efforts to desegregate her--that is, to make her whole--are thwarted by his own dual role-playing in front of her. His inability to effect a cure for his wife increases the confusion between his roles of doctor and husband, and makes him feel impotent in both roles. Then this loss of self-confidence helps generate a cycle of doubt and cynicism which dooms him.

Dick's cynicism is mild at first. Mrs. Speers tells him that he is polite, and he responds: "My politeness is a trick of the heart" (p. 164). This gloomy statement reveals his underlying mistrust of appearances--"often he used [good manners] and just as often he despised them because they were not a protest against how unpleasant selfishness

was but against how unpleasant it looked" (p. 164). To Baby Warren, whom the narrator, in joining Dick's caustic attack, refers to as "an anonymous bundle of fur," Dick says: "Good manners are an admission that everybody is so tender they they have to be handled with gloves . . . if you spend your life sparing people's feelings and feeding their vanity, you get so you can't distinguish what should be respected in them" (pp. 177-78). Dick, who has made a career of sparing people's feelings and feeding their vanity, then experiments with dropping his charming facade, and he only succeeds in offending an Englishman. Again, when Baby Warren compliments him on his social skills, he responds with acerbity: "It's a trick" (p. 216). He says this "gently" as though it is less a disagreement with his sister-in-law than a self-laceration--he dislikes his skillful artificiality. Sklar notes Dick's scepticism of manners, "yet to break away from the manners he despises would be to break away as well from his most essential self: this is the tragic dilemma of the genteel hero."²⁷ Dick's charm and manners are, however, only one aspect of his "essential self," and his dilemma involves more than just manners.

Throughout the novel, Dick's dual desire to help and to be admired creates a conflicting motivation. Does he sincerely want to help others, or does he do good only to be admired? Dick wanted initially to be a good psychologist--"the greatest one that ever lived"--and this implies a desire to be recognized as well as to do good. It is not enough for him to care for his patients, he also allows them to fall in love with him. It is Dick's natural tendency to attach

himself to people who will appreciate his good qualities. In Naples, for example, he picks up "a miserable family of two girls and their mother" (p. 206): *use*

An overwhelming desire to help, or to be admired, came over him: he showed them fragments of gaiety; tentatively he bought them wine, with pleasure saw them begin to regain their proper egotism. He pretended they were this and that, and falling in with his own plot, and drinking too much to sustain the illusion, and all this time the women, thought only that this was a windfall from heaven.

Sklar feels that Dick creates such illusory situations in order to be the center of attention: "his created world is a stage world where the actors play their parts only so long as he directs and plays the lead."²⁸ While talking with Francisco, the homosexual, Dick analyzes himself and his compulsion to be admired--his charm (p. 245):

for Dick, charm always had an independent existence, whether it was the mad gallantry of the wretch who had died in the clinic this morning, or the courageous grace which this lost young man brought to a drab old story. Dick tried to dissect it into pieces small enough to store away--realizing that the totality of a life may be different in quality from its segments . . .

He attempts the complex task of dissecting his personality into

discrete, orderly, recognizable pieces, but he then realizes that he is made of several people: "it was as if for the remainder of his life he was condemned to carry with him the egos of certain people" (p. 245). He is aware that he is not a simple man, and it disturbs him. As he goes to visit his enchantress, Rosemary, at her studio, he moves through the rain, "demonic and frightened, the passions of many men inside him and nothing simple that he could see" (p. 104).

Dick's fatal craving for an audience also suggests an ultimate inability to give genuine love. He concludes his introspection on his charm with the lonely realization of the difficulty of loving: "There was some element of loneliness involved--so easy to be loved--so hard to love" (p. 245). Richard Lehan says that "Dick's main flaw is his desire to be loved and to be the center of attention,"²⁹ and William Hall further suggests that Dick realizes that he can only be loved, but cannot give love.³⁰ Before he marries Nicole, Dick reflects that "he wanted to be loved" (p. 133). When he enters his hotel after meeting Nicole on the Glion funicular, he feels the magic aura of her love, which elevates him above the "unimportant voices that did not know how much he was loved" (p. 150). Finally, when he goes to the rescue of Lady Caroline and Mary North, he ruminates over his past goals: "Wanting above all to be brave and kind, he had wanted, even more than that, to be loved. So it had been. So it would ever be . . ." (p. 302). Dick is capable of exciting the love of those around him, but such love is only the abstract emotion elicited by an actor. Thus when Dick attracts the attention of the

newspaper vendor in Paris, the narrator explains (p. 92):

So rigidly did he sometimes guard his exposed self-consciousness that frequently he defeated his own purposes; as an actor who underplays a part sets up a craning forward, a stimulated emotional attention in an audience, and seems to create in others an ability to bridge the gap he has left open. Similarly we are seldom sorry to those who need and crave our pity--we reserve this for those who, by other means, make us exercise the abstract function of pity.

An actor arouses emotion, but does not reciprocate: "The danger to an actress is in responding" (p. 288), Dick comments.

His preoccupation with his difficulty in giving love shows that he is suspicious of himself as an actor--as one who does not respond--and he is constantly made aware of the acting all around him. Real life actors in society mirror Dick and further convince him of his masks. The actors, schizophrenics, drunkards, homosexuals, and artists surrounding him have their own facades which they present to the real world, and they revolve around Dick like a supporting cast. Mrs. Abrams recognizes her secondary role in Dick's drama when she speaks of "the plot": "We're not in it. We're the gallery" (p. 8). But, like Dick, they also have their roles to act. The duel is the first thing McKisco "had ever done in his life" (p. 47), yet it is empty of honor and dignity. Champion deflates it to the theatrical level with his movie camera. The party that Dick takes Rosemary to has a futuristic, unreal quality: "The effect was unlike

that of any part of the Decorative Arts Exhibition--for there were people in it, not in front of it. Rosemary had the detached false-and--exalted feeling of being on a set" (p. 71). In this remarkable scene, the three women with heads waving like "long-stemmed flowers" and "cobras' hoods" talk of the Divers, who "give a good show." The cobra trio typifies the surreal and exhibitionistic quality of Dick's society.

Nicole deserves separate consideration, in that her roles have a more direct effect on Dick, who, as her husband and doctor, attempts to fathom her. On the funicular, he observes her many faces: "She was a carnival to watch--at times primly coy, posing, grimacing and gesturing--sometimes the shadow fell and the dignity of old suffering flowed down into her finger tips" (p. 149). She wears a hideous mask when she goes mad and crashes the car, and Dick wants "to grind her grinning mask into jelly" (p. 192). As with any actress, her facades are not interpreted in the same way by everyone. Kaethe Gregorovius feels that Nicole's insanity is only a pretense: "I think Nicole is less sick than any one thinks--she only cherishes her illness as an instrument of power. She ought to be in the cinema--like your Norma Talmadge" (p. 239). Tommy and Nicole, unlike Dick and Rosemary, do not need a large audience, but they do play roles for themselves near the end of the novel. Like Dick and Rosemary, they perceive reality through film and their actions are influenced by the movies. Tommy tells Nicole that his heroism and gallantry are inherited from the screen (p. 270):

"I only know what I see in the cinema," he said.

"Is it all like the movies?"

Nicole carefully prepares her body with oil and powder in preparation for Tommy, and she feels a jealousy of youth, because she is "ridden by the current youth worship, the moving pictures with their myriad faces of girl-children" (p. 291). But whereas Nicole is "just a whole lot of different simple people" (p. 292), Dick has "the passions of many men inside him and nothing simple that he could see" (p. 104). So it is with the rest of his society; they are simple where he is complex. They have one or two masks, he has several conflicting ones. As a young doctor, he asks himself, "God, am I like the rest after all? Am I like the rest?" (p. 133). The answer clearly is no.

Dick is different from the others in that he is forced, by the nature of his personalities, to play more roles than he can sustain. As a psychiatrist, he has made it his business to study personalities, and he is adept at piercing facades to the personality within. The result is that he becomes cynical about others and himself. Goffman defines the cynic as an individual who "has no belief in his own act and no ultimate concern with the beliefs of his audience," and he maintains that such a person "can come to experience a special kind of alienation from self and a special kind of wariness of others."³¹ Dick's cynicism leads to alienation and wariness and contributes to a massive "lesion" of enthusiasm and vitality, until he feels "the ethics of his professional dissolving into a lifeless mass" (p. 256). Cynical about the mask of good manners, Dick

experiments with dropping his, and becomes alienated from himself.
 Nicole rebukes him for saying "spic" in front of Mary and Hosain
 (p. 260):

"Dick, this isn't faintly like you."

"Excuse me again. I'm not much like myself any more."

His growing concern with actors reveals his concern with the relation between mask and personality, between illusion and reality, and his confused tirade on actors near the end illustrates his failing to reconcile the two (p. 288):

"If the audience thinks the character is hard she goes soft on them--if they think she's soft she goes hard. You go all out of character--you understand?"

"I don't quite," admitted Rosemary. "How do you mean out of character?"

"You do the unexpected thing until you've manoeuvred the audience back from the objective fact to yourself. Then you slide into character again."

Hall says that Dick is alluding to his sliding in and out of his charming character--rudeness followed by good manners: "The sense that this is only a role and not his true nature is, I think, the main significance of this passage for Dick himself."³² But Dick's "true self" is not easily discerned. Dick does play roles of which he is distrustful, but this dialogue is itself more an illustration of the heart of Dick's problem. While speaking, he is playing a

role, and playing the wrong one at the wrong time. Instead of playing the entertainer of the beach with his women, Dick plays the detached scientist, or, in this case, the drama critic--analyzing human behavior. His conflicting roles, causing him to speak out of character at the wrong time, become tedious and alienate him from the audience which sustains him--Rosemary becomes confused, and Nicole grows impatient.

He finally loses his wife and his friends through his inconsistent behavior. Performer consistency, says Goffman, is demanded by an audience.³³ Near the end of the novel, Mary protests Dick's new offensive manner (p. 313):

"But we're all there is!" cried Mary. "If you don't like nice people try the ones who aren't nice, and see how you like that! All people want is to have a good time and if you make them unhappy you cut yourself off from nourishment."

"Have I been nourished?" he asked.


Dick's rhetorical question reflects his bitter and low opinion of those around him, but in fact he has often been nourished by having an appreciative audience for his performances.

Dick is different from the others not only in his many roles, but in his ultimate inability to accept role playing. He becomes cynical of role playing not simply because he is a perspicacious psychiatrist, but because he never learns the necessity of masks. Way notes that "it is inevitable that Dick's attitude to the social virtues should become fundamentally cynical and disbelieving."³⁴ The

reason for this inevitability is Dick's refusal to accept that all the world's a stage. Goffman explains that masks are not only necessary, but a natural part of human existence and a definition of the inner personality: "To be a given kind of person, then is not merely to possess the required attributes, but also to sustain the standards of conduct and appearance that one's social grouping attaches thereto."³⁵ Assumed characters are as essential to one's true nature as their underlying personalities, and, as George Santayana poetically explains, they are inextricably related one to the other; the mask is as much a part of the personality as the personality is of the mask:

Masks are arrested expressions and admirable echoes of feeling, at once faithful, discreet, and superlative. Living things in contact with the air must acquire a cuticle, and it is not urged against cuticles that they are not hearts; yet some philosophers seem to be angry with images for not being things, and with words for not being feelings. Words and images are like shells, no less integral parts of nature than are the substances they cover, but better addressed to the eye and more open to observation. I would not say that substance exists for the sake of appearance, or faces for the sake of masks, or the passions for the sake of poetry and virtue. Nothing arises in nature for the sake of anything else; all these phases and products are involved equally in the round of existence. . . .³⁶

When Dick cannot approve of himself as an actor, he becomes a poor actor, and thus loses his audience: "He's not received anywhere any more" (p. 287). Goffman concludes his study of the self with a summary: "The self, then, as a performed character, is not an organic thing that has a specific location whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented, and the characteristic issue, the crucial concern, is whether it will be credit or discredited."³⁷ Dick's dramatic masks of student, observer, lover, scientist, charmer, and psychiatrist are all discredited at the end by those around him, and this is one definition of his downfall. The collapsed psychiatrist (p. 186), who foreshadows Dr. Diver, tries to read Dick's face for proof that he is improving, "since he hung on the real world only through such reassurance as he could find in the resonance, or lack of it, in Doctor Diver's voice." What Dick does not learn from his patient is that illusion is necessary, and is a part of the real world; the collapsed psychiatrist hangs on to the real world by his illusions. Dick's performances falter because he fails to incorporate illusion into his view of reality; as Goffman notes, "a rigid incapacity to depart from one's inward view of reality may at times endanger one's performance."³⁸ Though Dick refuses to accept acting, he cannot refuse to be an actor, for there is always a mask, and his papal blessing is a farewell gesture to the Riviera stage. Fitzgerald's human tragedy is not that his hero dies, but that he becomes a lesser actor on a lesser stage than the grand scale of his Riviera. Dick drifts



aimlessly about small New York towns, but he still has "fine manners" and makes a "good speech" (p. 315). The man and the mask are forever inseparable.

Notes

¹Matthew J. Bruccoli, The Composition of Tender is the Night: A Study of the Manuscripts (University of Pittsburg Press, 1963), p. xxii.

²Brian Way, F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Art of Social Fiction (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), pp. 122-23.

³A. H. Steinberg, "Fitzgerald's Portrait of a Psychiatrist," Tender is the Night: Essays in Criticism, ed. Marvin J. LaHood (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 140.

⁴Robert Sklar, F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Last Laöcoon (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 271.

⁵Sklar, p. 285.

⁶F. Scott Fitzgerald, Tender is the Night (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 288. All subsequent references to the novel refer to this edition and will be cited in the text.

⁷Sklar, pp. 250-51.

⁸Bruccoli, p. 83.

⁹Bruccoli, p. 95.

¹⁰Lee M. Whitehead, "'Tender is the Night' and George Herbert Mead: An 'Actor's' Tragedy," Literature and Psychology, 15 (Summer 1965), pp. 182-87.

¹¹Sklar, p. 266.

¹²Way, pp. 123-24.

¹³Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying," Intentions (New York: Brentano's, 1912), p. 55.

¹⁴Sklar, p. 270.

¹⁵B. W. Wilson, "The Theatrical Motif in The Great Gatsby," Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual, 1975, p. 108.

¹⁶Edwin T. Arnold, "The Motion Picture as Metaphor in the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald," Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual, 1977, p. 44.

¹⁷William E. Doherty, "Tender is the Night and the 'Ode to a Nightingale,'" from LaHood (see note 3), p. 199.

¹⁸Doherty, p. 201.

¹⁹Way, p. 137.

²⁰Richard D. Lehan, F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Craft of Fiction
(Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1966), p. 148.

²¹Brucoli, pp. 126-27.

²²Sklar, p. 277.

²³Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life
(Garden City; N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959), p. 49.

²⁴Way, p. 127, and see Eugene White, "The Intricate Destiny of
Dick Diver," from LaHood (see note 3).

²⁵Goffman, p. 216.

²⁶Goffman, p. 49.

²⁷Sklar, p. 285.

²⁸Sklar, p. 276.

²⁹Lehan, p. 130.

³⁰William F. Hall, "Dialogue and Theme in Tender is the Night,"
from LaHood (see note 3), p. 149.

³¹Goffman, p. 18, and p. 236.

³²Hall, p. 148.

³³Goffman, p. 54.

³⁴Way, p. 136.

³⁵Goffman, p. 75.

³⁶George Santayana, Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies
(New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), pp. 131-32.

³⁷Goffman, pp. 252-53.

³⁸Goffman, p. 71.

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