

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD IN THE CITY OF LIGHTS:
SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN *TENDER IS THE NIGHT*
THROUGH THE LENS OF BUFFALO, NEW YORK

by

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F. Scott Fitzgerald's spent the early part of his childhood growing up in Buffalo and the region of Western New York, from 1896-1908. New York plays an important role in the way he conceptualizes success and failure. This can be seen most notably played out in *Tender is the Night*, where Buffalo serves as a location of, and catalyst for, failure of morality and failure of the American Dream. Both of these failures operate under an umbrella of ambition and social class that can be seen through the lens of Buffalo, New York. Through explorations of the social and cultural history of Buffalo, Fitzgerald's experiences as described in his *Ledger*, and a close reading analysis of *Tender is the Night*, this thesis explores the way that Buffalo is employed to play into a wider thematic function of ideas of success and failure.

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
STUDY OF PLACE	4
HISTORY OF BUFFALO	8
FITZGERALD'S BUFFALO	12
TENDER IS THE NIGHT	18
PART ONE: THE FAILURE OF MORALS	20
PART TWO: THE FAILURE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM	33
CONCLUSION	43
WORKS CITED	46

INTRODUCTION

“I must hold in balance the sense of the futility of effort and the sense of the necessity to struggle; the conviction of the inevitability of failure and still the determination to “succeed” — and, more than these, the contradiction between the dead hand of the past and the high intentions of the future.”

–F. Scott Fitzgerald in “The Crack-Up”

“I talk with authority of failure, Ernest [Hemingway] talks with authority about success”

–F. Scott Fitzgerald

The American fixation with F. Scott Fitzgerald continues to prevail, as evidenced most recently by the 2013 movie remake of The Great Gatsby starring Leonardo DiCaprio, the multitude of pop culture references and the continuing popularity of Fitzgerald’s novels. This is not surprising given the era in which Fitzgerald was writing in, and about, as “no decade inspires as much fascination as the 1920s. After nearly a century, its representative figures- whether Charlie Chaplin (1889-1977), Charles Lindbergh (1902-1974), or, of course, F. Scott Fitzgerald- remain American icons, while both the era’s high art and its passing fads still serve as defining cultural reference points” (Curnutt 28). But there also seems to be some thematic truth to Fitzgerald’s works that even now, nearly a century later, we can still connect with. Whatever the reason, the popularity of Fitzgerald renewed in the 1960’s and has continued to this day.

What is it about Fitzgerald's writing, or these thematic truths that he conveys, that continues to enchant us, astound us and capture our imaginations? It is this question that sparked my interest and spurred me on to my next question: what drove Fitzgerald to write his masterpieces and what influenced him in his writing journey? My own interests combined with these questions when I discovered that Fitzgerald spent approximately ten years of his childhood in the city of Buffalo, New York, a place that I have personal connections to. My own personal connection to the city of Buffalo was the impetus for my continued research and my thesis idea. My father was born in the city of Buffalo in 1963 and, while he migrated west to Oregon in the 1980s and has been here ever since, the rest of his family including eight siblings still reside in and around Western New York. Buffalo has been part of my childhood and cultural understanding and it seemed only logical that I incorporate it into my thesis. In order to analyze the connections between Fitzgeralds' writing and his time spent in Buffalo, I traveled to the city and explored the history of Buffalo, the author, and his childhood. In this thesis, I will analyze the literature of F. Scott Fitzgerald's through the lens of Buffalo and Western New York.

In particular, I dissect the way that geography interacts with the social and cultural contexts of the time period. I do this through close reading of Fitzgerald's works in correspondence with his biographical information, his *Ledger* (a personal journal written in a ledger book) and personal documents and the historical context of Buffalo. Through this, I make clear a connection between the city and Fitzgerald's childhood, which would eventually translate into themes of social class, social differentiation and success versus failure. Fitzgerald himself admitted that failure

colored his works and, “more than most other writers, Fitzgerald drew upon his own feelings and experiences for his novels and short stories” (Baughman). Fitzgerald claimed in his essay “One Hundred False Starts:”

Mostly, we authors must repeat ourselves, that’s the truth. We have two or three great and moving experiences in our lives, experiences so great and moving that it doesn’t seem at the time that anyone else has been so caught up and pounded and dazzled and astonished and beaten and broken and rescued and illuminated and rewarded and humbled in just that way ever before. Then we learn our trade, well or less well, and we tell our two or three stories, each time in a new disguised, maybe ten times, maybe a hundred, as long as people will listen” (Fitzgerald 132).

Buffalo, though Fitzgerald spent a relatively short amount of time there, had a great impact on young Scott. As Joel Kabot points out in his chapter on Fitzgerald’s time in Buffalo and Syracuse, “It was in upstate New York where young Fitzgerald first encountered the social and economic elite and his first loves; where he developed interests in reading, theater, and history; where he began to write. Fitzgerald’s childhood experiences in Buffalo and Syracuse laid the foundation for the themes and interests he would continue to explore the rest of his life” (Kabot 89). While I found these themes of success and failure in many more of Fitzgerald’s works than I will be analyzing in this thesis, I chose to focus specifically on *Tender is the Night* because of the specific references to Buffalo and its broader themes of success and failure. However, I also chose to analyze the manner in which Fitzgerald’s life (specifically his early childhood) connects to Buffalo and to *Tender is the Night* because there are themes of success and failure in both. Buffalo serves as a lens and catalyst for this concept of failure, specifically through the ideas of failure of morality and failure of the American Dream.

STUDY OF PLACE

Place, or setting, has long been one of the formal elements of literature. As children, we are taught to identify main characters, plot, setting and more as key elements of novels and short stories. But much research and theoretical work has also been done on setting and place and how we can use it to interpret literature in new ways. In his book, *The Role of Place in Literature*, Leonard Lutwack argues,

Place gets into literature in two ways, as idea and form: as attitudes about places and classes of places that the writer picks up from his social and intellectual milieu and from his personal experiences, and as materials for the forms he uses to render events, characters, and themes. (Lutwack 12)

It is this first way of thinking about place in combination with the second that interests me: how a writer's personal experiences and attitudes about places can influence the formal setting that he uses in his own writing. Lawrence Buell says "There never was an is without a where" (Buell 55). That is, everything that happens does so within a certain location. F. Scott Fitzgerald provides a unique juncture of this combination of place as an idea and a form. His use of place in his writing is rich and full of geography and its influence on social class, but his detailed journals and *Ledger* also provide critical readers with his own experiences that often coincide with the ideas reflected in his works.

Fitzgerald writes of many locations in his novels and short stories: St. Paul, Minnesota (where he was born and lived much of his childhood), New York City, Baltimore, Maryland, Hollywood and even Montana. However, his use of Buffalo intrigues me the most because of my own personal connection to the city and region as

well. Indeed, though Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, “A writer need not have been born in the hometown for that place to be the central place of his or her upbringing and writing” (Cahalan 250). In my reading of *Tender is the Night*, Buffalo serves as another one of Fitzgerald’s hometown, as he lived in Western New York from 1898 to 1908 as a young child. It may not be the “central place” that defined his childhood, but I argue that it obviously had an important influence on Fitzgerald and I will analyze this through his *Ledger* and through the novel, *Tender is the Night*.

Fitzgerald’s writing often has autobiographical tendencies, which I will analyze specifically in *Tender in the Night* later in this thesis. Many of these autobiographical aspects rely heavily on location and geography—the locations of his youth, where he lived, and the experiences he had there. In his article “Scott, Ruskin, and the Landscape of Autobiography”, Stephen Finley argues that there is a "kind of autobiographical narrative where to recollect the self is to remember landscape, where the naming of the mysterious and indecipherable 'I' is a listing of dwelling places. What is remembered in such autobiographical acts is what has been sponsored by a particular place; a life that is written in which a narrative about life in place comes to pass" (Finley 550). Buffalo literally becomes this “listing of dwelling places” at the end of *Tender is the Night*, and Buffalo serves as this place in which life come to pass both in Fitzgerald’s life and in Dick Diver’s. When I discuss Buffalo in this thesis, I conceptualize it not as the city itself, since, especially in literature, cities can never simply be the location itself. The city and the region of Western New York themselves are a combination of cultures, social demographics, facts and experiences. These experiences are important both to the author and the reader because “it is not knowing the place that counts... but knowing

oneself or finding the truth about oneself in a place” (Lutwack 15). Thus, the experiences themselves color the location; what happens to someone in that setting is how they define it. This lived experience is often more meaningful than the facts about a place. “Places,” Edward Casey notes, “are not so much the direct objects of sight or thought or recollection as what we feel *with* and *around*, *under* and *above*, *before* and *behind*” ourselves (Casey 313). Fitzgerald himself writes of this concept in *Tender is the Night*: “He cared only about people; he was scarcely conscious of places except for their weather, until they had been invested with color by tangible events” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 220). It is exactly this that colors *Tender is the Night*: the places themselves have very little description and are often mentioned in what seems like passing, but upon closer inspection, we might find that the color that they take on through tangible events is of significance to the overall themes. As I will argue later in this thesis, Fitzgerald constructs a web of experiences and themes around the city of Buffalo and the Western New York region to play upon the themes of success and failure. While the city is not itself described, or even of particular importance in the novel, the way that it serves as a central catalyst for moments of success and failure is notable.

In my thesis, I did not want to focus specifically upon the way Buffalo is used rhetorically in the novel for three reasons. The first is that there simply are not enough references. The second is that I don’t want to create a dialogue of ‘which city influenced Fitzgerald’ the most? I feel that every city or region referenced is used deliberately and with its own equal importance and debating the influence of one hometown or another defeats the purpose of reading critically.

Third and finally, I simply feel that there is more that can be gained from reading the novel thematically through the lens of this specific city and region, rather than reading specifically for usage of Buffalo.

HISTORY OF BUFFALO

The area that is now Buffalo was originally inhabited by a tribe of Iroquois. Buffalo was the site of dispute during the French and Indian War, after which it was under British control. The British evacuated Fort Niagara in 1796, after which more settlement by Americans was permitted. Dutch investors purchased the area from the Seneca Indians as part of the Holland Purchase and later parcels were sold through the Holland Land Companies office in Batavia, New York. The area was called multiple names: Lake Erie, then Buffalo Creek and finally Buffalo.

Buffalo was first formed from the town of Clarence in 1810. The British troops and their allies mostly burned the city to the ground in 1813 as part of the War of 1812 but it was rebuilt and upon completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, population spiked (*High Hopes* 21-24). The Erie Canal allowed both Buffalo and New York City to become economic hubs. It was the first transportation system between the east coast and the central United States (via the Great Lakes) that did not require portage. This cut transportation costs by 95% and allowed the East to ship goods to the Midwest and increased trade especially in New York state. This, combined with a huge increase in steel and grain mills and the invention of the Dart grain elevator, allowed Buffalo to become a giant manufacturing, agricultural and industrial hub. Buffalo officially became a city in 1832 with a population of around 9,000 (*City on the Lake* 169).

At the start of the 20th century, Buffalo was a fast-growing city with a strong economy. The automobile industry took off in Buffalo and the city was home to many early car manufacturers including Pierce Arrow and Seven Little Buffaloes. “While trade in grain led to the manufacture of flour, cereal, and beer, the passage of lumber

through the port of Buffalo made the city one of the nation's great lumber centers" (*City on the Lake* 38).

At the very beginning of the twentieth century, a group of influential "barons" of Buffalo's industrial economy convinced Walton Scranton to move the Lackawanna Steel company (later Bethlehem Steel) to Buffalo. Immigrants came from all over Europe to work in the steel and grain mills. These immigrants settled in neighborhoods that would eventually be characterized by the prevalence of their ethnic populations. The power of Niagara Falls was employed at the turn of the century to help power grain mills and also allowed Buffalo to have some of the most electric lighting of any city at the time, giving it the nickname "City of Lights". Buffalo was also home to the 1901 Pan-American Exposition (*A History of the City of Buffalo*).

Unfortunately, as steel and grain mills became less prevalent, and as transportation technology made the Erie Canal barges and then steamships and even trains irrelevant, Buffalo's importance as a city declined. Buffalo's population growth slowed to a halt in the nineteen-forties and fifties and starting in sixties, Buffalo began experiencing population loss, which has continued to this day ("Publications"). The steep decline of the city began in the sixties and seventies and was in some ways finalized with the closure of Bethlehem Steel in 1982. However, at the turn of the twentieth century, when the Fitzgeralds were living in Buffalo, the city was thriving.

Let us turn to the social institutions and interactions in Buffalo at the turn of the century. They were a result of many changes that occurred from 1850-1900:

The population of Buffalo in 1860 was 81,000 and by 1900 it had reached 352,000, after a wave of immigration brought many new residents to Buffalo. One surveyor for the 1900 census concluded that

scarcely more than one-fourth of the city's population was of Native American stock. Joining the immigrants were Americans who had left their farms for the cities. Social distinctions were difficult to discern due to population growth and newly acquired wealth. With traditional notions of social relations, manners, and appropriate behavior in a state of flux, traditional methods of displaying oneself and recognizing others of similar status became more difficult. In such a climate, elite women worked to monitor and control access to class status through intricate social rituals and conspicuous leisure activities and goods consumption (Rockwell 153).

There were other changes too. In the 1850s, "the city's bourgeois class dominated society through its commonly held commercial interests and their mutually understood moral code that stressed individualism, self-reliance, and temperate rationalistic behavior. It also stressed decency and humility in social and personal relations" (Rockwell 154). However, by the 1900s, the elite placed emphasis on "elaborate social events and other conspicuous displays of wealth" (Rockwell 154). I saw some examples of these as I read through newspapers from Buffalo in the early years of the 1900s. These newspapers had an entire section dedicated to society news, including documenting when a member of the elite left or returned from vacation, advertising charity balls and event put on at their fabulous Delaware Avenue mansions, and even recording what they wore.

Reading through documents like the *Buffalo Society Blue Book* or the *Social Register* gives us an idea of the distribution of those that were considered upper class. Of the 2,375 families listed in the 1900 *Buffalo Society Blue Book*, "Delaware Avenue housed the largest number of these families, 332 total, or 15%" (Borchert 320). By 1906, the *Social Register* reported "almost one-quarter of Buffalo's upper class living there" (Borchert 320). Buffalo's upper class did expand as the years went on, however,

there were notable “intermarriage patterns among Buffalo’s elite [which] confirms the solidification of class position through family connections” (Rockwell 164). It was difficult to break into the social elite of Buffalo if you were not already socially elite yourself.

Delaware Avenue was obviously a very clear delineation for the division of wealth—it was well known for its elegance as well as for its upper class residents. As I’ll point out in the next section, the Fitzgeralds were well aware of the social and financial meaning behind being a resident of Delaware Avenue and lived quite close, even being adjacent to a Delaware Avenue home at one point.

FITZGERALD'S BUFFALO

The importance of neighborhoods and the location where you lived in Buffalo at this period in time cannot be overestimated. Where you lived determined whom you knew, your business contacts, the schools your children attended, colleges you were accepted into, the parties you were invited to, and more. Moving one street up or over could completely change your status in the social order. It was quite literally a physical representation of money and power.

Perusal through Fitzgerald's *Ledger*, which he updated with memories and a general timeline of his life, gives us far more information about the Fitzgeralds life in Buffalo. Fitzgerald began his *Ledger* in 1919 or 1920 sometime after leaving the army and moving to New York City, and stopped recording in 1938 ("F. Scott Fitzgerald's Ledger"). In addition to his sections on his own memories, he also meticulously recorded spreadsheets of his writing and tracked his earnings for his works, as well as Zelda's earnings. Before the *Ledger* was digitally scanned and reproduced by the University of South Carolina, a black and white reproduction was issue in 1972 that was edited by Matthew Bruccoli, one of the foremost bibliographers on F. Scott Fitzgerald. Since that time, biographers and literary critics have referenced the *Ledger* in order to get a greater understanding of Fitzgerald's life. Interestingly enough, many of his memories recorded in his journal show up again in his works with almost identical wording.

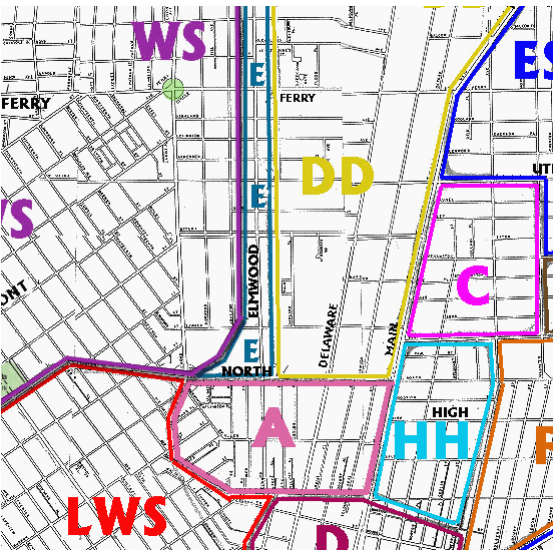
According to the *Ledger*, when Fitzgerald and his parents first came to Buffalo, they settled at the Lenox. The Lenox Hotel first opened in 1896, perhaps to capitalize

on the wealthy guests arriving a few years later for the 1901 Pan American Exposition. This sort of luxury multi-family housing would increasingly become more popular as the years went on. The family moved almost a year later into a flat at Summer Street and Elmwood, in a building that is no longer standing. The Fitzgeralds moved to Syracuse in 1901, but during that time the family also returned to visit the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo. When they returned in 1903, Fitzgerald began attending the school at the Holy Angel's convent under the arrangement that he only needed to attend half a day and could choose which half. The Fitzgeralds lived at 29 Irving Place, and moved in 1905 to 71 Highland Avenue. Scott transferred schools to Nardin Academy, only a few blocks away (*Ledger* 152-160). It was at schools like these that Scott could, and did, meet the children of wealthier residents, including those who lived on Delaware Avenue that he would later interact with. Fitzgerald's *Ledger* describes in great details his friends (many from some of the wealthiest and most influential families of Buffalo), the charity balls and parties, and many incidents at Mr. Van Arnum's Dancing School.

In order to explain something about the city of Buffalo and Fitzgerald's physical and social location in this hierarchy, something needs to be said about the layout of the city. At this point in history, Buffalo had more millionaires per capita than any city in America and the street Delaware Avenue was nicknamed Millionaire's Mile ("Scandals, Millionaires and Masters"). Fitzgerald's family never lived on Delaware Avenue, but they lived around and near it during their time in Buffalo. Delaware Avenue is extremely close to downtown Buffalo, but quite a distance away from where the blue-

collar workers would have lived at the town. These neighborhoods truly defined Buffalo at the time, and to an extent, still do today.

The figure on the left shows downtown Buffalo divided into its neighborhoods.¹



The area that the Fitzgeralds lived in is in the area between Allentown, the Delaware District and the Elmwood strip. All of the houses (and the one hotel) in which they lived are in and around these three neighborhoods. The Delaware District is noted by the 'DD' in yellow, Allentown is the 'A' in pink and Elmwood is the skinny

strip to the right of the Delaware District labeled 'E' in teal. Delaware Avenue runs diagonally through the yellow Delaware District in the center of the figure.

The figure on the right shows three of the Fitzgerald's residences. Delaware Avenue is demarcated in orange in the upper right corner. While Delaware contains many large and impressive houses both north and south of this marked section, only the segment between Bryant and North streets was truly considered



¹ Photo courtesy of City of Buffalo library

“Millionaire’s Row”. The box in red at the upper left corner was the flat at Summer and Elmwood, the box in purple in the center is the location of the Lenox Hotel and the box in light blue is the 29 Irving Place residence.²



The figure at left moves our map northward, so we can see the red box representing the Summer and Elwood location is now on the bottom right and the orange line representing Millionaire’s Row is now at the bottom. The green square represents the 71 Highland Ave residence and the black square at the top represents the tip of Nardin Academy, where Fitzgerald attended school for three years.³

One family that Fitzgerald was close with was the Knox family. Mr. Seymour H. Knox and his wife Grace moved from Linwood Avenue to 1035 Delaware Avenue in 1904 (LaChiusa, “Seymour H. Knox Family”). Fitzgerald notes being invited to sit in Earl’s (the youngest son) box at a charity ball and a dance card lists Dorothy Knox (*Ledger* 162). The Knox family later went on to be incredibly influential, ultimately building one of the quintessential mansions on Delaware Avenue, contributing money to create the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and ultimately owning the Buffalo hockey franchise the Buffalo Sabres. Fitzgerald also wrote about Harriet Mack, whose family owned the

² Photo courtesy of the City of Buffalo library

³ Photo courtesy of the City of Buffalo library

Buffalo Times. The family lived in the Norman Mack house, at the head of Highland Avenue. Another influential childhood friend was Kitty Williams, whom Fitzgerald fell in love with. Williams was reportedly from another influential family, possibly related to the Williams of the Williams-Butler mansion (LaChiusa, "Fitzgerald in Buffalo"). Ultimately, Fitzgerald's *Ledger* provides us with a large array of experiences and stories while he lived in Buffalo. Many of them talk about these charity balls and parties thrown by Buffalo's elite, but Fitzgerald also talks about his parents social-climbing aspirations.

While in Buffalo, Fitzgerald visited Orchard Park, Chataqua, Niagara on the Lake, Lake Placid, Georgetown, and Orillia, Ontario (*Ledger*). His familiarity with Western New York would later be demonstrated in his works; most particularly in *Tender is the Night*.

The Fitzgeralds moved from Buffalo in July of 1908 when his father was fired from Proctor and Gamble. Scott would later note feeling "that disaster had come to us," praying "Dear God, don't let us go to the poorhouse" (Mok 196). They did not, but near the end of his life Fitzgerald wrote that he had lived as if they had: "That was always my experience -- a poor boy in a rich town; a poor boy in a rich boy's school; a poor boy in a rich man's club at Princeton.... I have never been able to forgive the rich for being rich, and it has colored my entire life and works" (Fitzgerald, *Letters* 352). It is obvious that this experience was the same in Buffalo and that Fitzgerald was referring to his experiences in this quote as well.

This idea continues to reverberate through Fitzgerald's works and he makes many references to his family's interest in money and social class in his *Ledger*. Some examples include his mother's insistence on telling Fitzgerald's friends that he is related to *the* Francis Scott Key, how his father sent Scott to dancing school in black suits rather than blue because blue was "common" (*Ledger*).

TENDER IS THE NIGHT

Tender Is The Night was Fitzgerald's fourth and final completed novel. It was first published in *Scribner's Magazine* between January and April 1934 in four issues. Fitzgerald spent many years working on this novel and it evolved through countless drafts. It began in 1925 with a draft of a novel intended to deal with "American expatriate life on the French Riviera" and was centrally focused on matricide (Brucoli, *Composition* xxvi). In 1926, it evolved with a narrator who is passively involved in the story. This draft, and the matricide plot, was discarded in 1929 in exchange for the Kelly version of the plot. In 1930, Fitzgerald returned to the matricide plot with straight third person narrative. Finally, in 1932, Fitzgerald drafted the first Dick Diver version of the novel (Rizza).

Set in the French Riviera in the 1920s, *Tender is the Night* focuses on Nicole and Dick Diver and their glamorous life. It begins with a young movie star, Rosemary Hoyt, vacationing in France where she meets the Divers and falls in love with Dick. As she learns about their fabulous life, Dick begins to reciprocate her feelings until the Divers' friend, Abe North, is involved in murder and Nicole has a mental breakdown. The story shifts back in time in Book II to describe the early life and courtship of Dick and Nicole. Dick was a promising young psychiatrist who moved to Vienna to study in a clinic. It was in Zurich that he met sixteen-year-old Chicago heiress Nicole Warren who was a mental patient who had been sexually abused by her father. Dick and Nicole fall in love and Dick serves as both Nicole's husband and doctor. The Divers invest in a clinic in Switzerland where Dick is accused of infidelity by a former patient and Nicole

gets in a car accident. Upon learning of his father's death, Dick returns to America for the funeral and, when he returns to Europe, he consummates his affair with Rosemary, realizes his world is falling apart, gets in a drunken fight and is imprisoned and must be bailed out by his sister-in-law Baby Warren, and finally is asked to leave from his clinic. As Dick is slowly descending into alcoholism, Nicole has an affair with Tommy Barban and asks Dick for a divorce. Dick disappears to America, ultimately fading away into anonymity.

Predominantly, I will argue in this thesis that *Tender is the Night* is ultimately a novel of failure. Analysts have undertaken the project of finding the root "cause" of Dick Diver's collapse and ultimate failure over the years. In his essay "The Unconscious Dimension of *Tender is the Night*", George D. Murphy notes that these reasons can be arranged in two categories: "The first is socioeconomic: An idealistic, middle-class hero is used and discarded by a rich and careless leisure class. But Fitzgerald was more subtle and more honest than to confine himself to such a badly dialectical motivation, and provided a second, psychological category of motivation by ascribing to Dick some flaw of character which made him extraordinarily susceptible to the fate which overtook him. This psychological flaw has been designated by most of the critics of the novel as a compulsive addiction to charm...or as a fatal vulnerability to the need to be loved" (Murphy 314). Others, like critic Heather Brown, argue that the relationship (and failure of that relationship) between Dick and Nicole is what causes Dick's final downfall (Brown 114).

My reading of *Tender is the Night* deals with this idea of failure through two main paths: the failure of morality or a moral code, and the failure of the American

Dream. In both types of failure, Buffalo serves as a lens or catalyst through which the failure occurs or comes about. Further, my reading explores the connections of Fitzgerald's own experiences in Buffalo with those experiences that occur in *Tender is the Night* and the way in which we can read Buffalo (and the greater region of Western New York) as a location of failure—professional, moral, and social—for both Fitzgerald and Diver. I argue that both of these types of failure (moral and of the American Dream) can be viewed under the umbrella of the circumstances of Buffalo at the time, particularly the geography of social class. It is for this reason that I reference so heavily the influence of place studies, particularly the experiential aspect, and emphasize the social class patterns and geographic layout of the city of Buffalo at the turn of the twentieth century.

PART ONE: THE FAILURE OF MORALS

The first type of success and failure dichotomy that emerges in *Tender is the Night* is that of morality through the lens of Dick's father and ultimately Buffalo. Fitzgerald is very clear that Dick's moral code is inextricably connected to his father. His father as his "moral guide" defines Dick's idea of success. Morality is oftentimes hard to define, which is part of what makes Dick's success and failure less than black and white, and something that is so intriguing to discuss and analyze.

Readers of *Tender is the Night* have often seen the novel as a parable of moral failures; in fact many of the characters are very concerned with their moral compass. For example, at the beginning of the novel, Rosemary is talking to Abe North: "Abe North was talking to her about his moral code: "Of course I've got one," he insisted,

“—a man can’t live without a moral code. Mine is that I’m against the burning of witches. Whenever they burn a witch I get all hot under the collar.”” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 32-33). Indeed, Dick states that his father “had saved him from a spoiling by becoming his moral guide” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 203). Morality is obviously a large concern and discussion point for the characters of *Tender is the Night*, and there is a lot of dialogue about true morality versus manners. The narrator notes, “From his father Dick had learned the somewhat conscious good manners of the young Southerner coming north after the Civil War. Often he used them and just as often he despised them because they were not a protest against how unpleasant selfishness was but against how unpleasant it looked” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 163). Thus, we see a differentiation between morality and manners—how something *is* morally versus how something *looks*. Dick’s definition of manners is a protest against how unpleasant selfishness looks. Dick later says to Baby Warren, “Good manners are an admission that everybody is so tender that they have to be handled with gloves. Now, human respect—you don’t call a man a coward or a liar lightly, but 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” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 177). It might be true that Dick recognizes this difference in manners and what I would term “morality”, but it’s also true that Dick is recognized for his manners throughout the novel, and that by the end we are left wondering if Dick has this morality that he spoke of, or if it has been lost.

In this view of Dick Diver’s failure, Buffalo serves as a representation of multiple things. It is directly tied to Dick’s father and his childhood. Dick was raised in Buffalo and his father still resides there as a clergyman. Buffalo is Dick’s past, and also

the place from which he is escaping in a search for a better life. Buffalo, through his father, taught Dick his earliest lessons about himself and about his “moral code”.

Ultimately, Buffalo is also Dick’s ending point, as well as his starting point, for it’s the location where we last hear from Dick as he lives out the remainder of his life. Buffalo is the locale of the creation of Dick’s formative framework, and the catalyst, and possibly accelerant, for his break down.

Fitzgerald had a complicated relationship with his own father that informs some of the intricacies of Dick Diver, and especially his relationship to Buffalo, in *Tender is the Night*. Edward Fitzgerald was born in Maryland and had many connections to the Old South. After failing as a wicker furniture manufacturer in St. Paul, Edward relocated his family to Buffalo to become a salesman for Proctor & Gamble. Scott Fitzgerald wrote little of his parents. In fact, noted Fitzgerald biographer Matthew J. Bruccoli argues that there “is little documentation for young Scott’s relationship with his parents... Scott rarely spoke about them...it is as if they scarcely existed” (Bruccoli, *Grandeur* 24). When he did write of them, it was often in a harsh light: “My father is a moron and my mother is a neurotic, half-insane with pathological nervous worry... Between them they haven’t and never had the brains of Calvin Coolidge” (Bruccoli, *Letters* 138). Scott’s mentions of his father in his *Ledger* are few and often in passing, things like remembering “a history of the United States which my father brought me” that caused Fitzgerald to become “a child of the American Revolution”. In the same entry, Fitzgerald notes that he “boxed with Edgar Miller the grocery man’s son, egged on by his father” (*Ledger* 157). While the mentions may be small, Scott notes far more

about his father than he does his mother, and the traumatic event of his childhood starred his father, when he was fired.

It was while living in Buffalo that Fitzgerald remembers his father being fired: “His father’s services were no longer required by Proctor and Gamble. He remembers the day, and that he gave his mother back his swimming money after he heard her at the phone, and that father said he thought Taft would be president” (*Ledger* 162). His father’s firing was obviously of importance to young Scott, who recorded it in his *Ledger*. He remembers specific happenings that occurred right before and after, indicating that it was something that stuck out in his memory and the aftershock of it remained with him through the rest of his life. Indeed, he commented on the incident’s effect on his father much later in his life, “That morning he had gone out a comparatively young man, a man full of strength, full of confidence. He came home that evening, an old man, a completely broken man. He had lost his essential drive, his immaculateness of purpose. He was a failure the rest of his days” (Brucoli, *Grandeur* 22).

Fitzgerald’s declaration of his father as a failure reflects both on the truth of the situation and on his own ideas of what constituted success or failure. Biographer Andrew Turnbull states, “He [Fitzgerald] admired his father’s style and breeding, and the beautiful manners which were more than breeding—which sprang, Fitzgerald knew, from a gracious heart. But Fitzgerald was ambitious, and it strengthened his ambition to feel that in a sense *he* was the man in the family and that great things were expected of him” (Turnbull 16). Turnbull claims that although Fitzgerald admired his father’s manners and “gracious heart”, his ambition was surely part of how Fitzgerald viewed

his father. When viewing his father's firing in his own ambitious frame of mind, Fitzgerald believed that this had been Edward's key moment of failure, and it strengthened Scott's own ambition to be great. Regardless of whether Edward Fitzgerald was truly a failure after he was fired from Proctor & Gamble, Scott Fitzgerald believed him to be so. This belief colored his own experiences, his memories, and the way that these worked themselves into his novels and short stories. The fact that Buffalo served as the locale of Edward Fitzgerald's failure that would continue to define the rest of his life is notable when we add in the fact that Dick Diver's ultimate failure ends in Buffalo as well.

And yet there are still other connections between Buffalo, Dick's father and Fitzgerald's father:

As young Fitzgerald shared intensely the embarrassment of his father's being fired from his job with Proctor and Gamble in Buffalo, New York, he found there the first of three new and important male role models. As a boy of seven living in Buffalo, Fitzgerald "fell under the spell" of Reverend Michael Fallon of the Church of the Holy Angels, an educated scholar, able administrator, skilled rhetorician, and mesmerizing homilist—quite a different priest and Irishman from the peasant-class Irish clergy the Fitzgerald and McQuillan families were accustomed to in St. Paul (Bryer 79-80).

It is interesting to note that the first of Fitzgerald's substitute "father figures" was a reverend of a Church in Buffalo, just as Dick's father is the reverend of a church in Buffalo.

Dick Diver's father in *Tender is the Night* is portrayed much differently than Fitzgerald portrays his own father, but there are many similarities between the two:

One aspect of his father which seemed to have particularly struck Fitzgerald was his capacity for ingratiating and self-abnegation. After his father died in 1931, Fitzgerald recalled a story that the father had told of himself and which disarmingly reveals these qualities: “Once when I went into a room as a young man I was confused, so I went up to the oldest woman there and introduced myself and afterwards the people of that town thought I had good manners.” The anecdote appears almost word for word in *Tender Is the Night* where it is attributed to Dick’s father (Murphy 316).

Here again we see some complications with morality and manners that raise questions. The capacity for this “ingratiating and self abnegation” seems to be of moral value and yet Edward Fitzgerald notes that the people of the town thought he had “good manners”. This reminds us of the concerns raised in *Tender of the Night* of the differences between morality and manners, and whether good manners indicates having morality or whether manners are simply a show, or a façade.

A final note from literary critic George Murphy about the similarity in the way that Fitzgerald writes about his own father and Dick Diver’s father, and the connection between the two fathers and morality:

“I loved my father- always deep in my subconscious I have referred judgments back to him, to what he would have thought or done.” Fitzgerald wrote this about his own father when he died in 1931, and readers of *Tender is the Night* may recall that he used essentially the same words in describing the psychological significance of the death of Dick Diver’s clergyman father: “-again and again he referred judgments to what his father would probably have thought or done (Murphy 314).

So, readers may see a great similarity in the verbiage and experiences shared by Fitzgerald and Dick Diver in regards to their fathers: both in the way that they speak of their father’s influences, and notably, the importance of the city of Buffalo in the careers of both fathers.

I have established this connection between Fitzgerald's father and Dick's father, between the childhood of Scott and Dick, and a little bit about how morals and morality might play into this relationship, but next I will explore how morality plays out in *Tender is the Night*. Dick ruminates on his father after his death: "Dick was born several months after the death of two young sisters and his father, guessing what would be the effect on Dick's mother, had saved him from a spoiling by becoming his moral guide. He was of tired stock yet he raised himself to that effort" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 203). Dick's moral compass is embedded in his father: what his father would have done, and what his father did. It is important then how Dick describes his father and his father's morals, because they become what Dick models himself after. Dick notes: "...his father had been sure of what he was, with a deep pride of the two proud widows who had raised him to believe that nothing could be superior to "good instincts," honor, courtesy, and courage" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 204). For his father, morality were these good instincts, honor, courtesy and courage. To follow this moral compass was to be successful in life.

However, we see a slight deviation in Dick's indication of success from his father's, and this deals with ambition, social class and money. Money and wealth do not seem to be important in Dick's father's life. As a clergyman, he probably did not make much money. Dick notes that the "cousins in Virginia" were poor and that his father came from "tired stock", more indications that his father's family was not wealthy. Dick hints that his father may not have been traditionally educated when he writes, "He told Dick all he knew about life, not much but most of it true, simple things, matters of behavior that came within his clergyman's range" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 204). Dick's

father didn't know much, but what he did was matters of behavior and interactions, not matters of formal education like Dick himself would have. However, despite his father's seemingly few cares for the pursuit of success through money, in the novel, Dick notes: "Watching his father's struggles in poor parishes had wedded a desire for money to an essentially unacquisitive nature. It was not a healthy necessity for security—he had never felt more sure of himself, more thoroughly his own man, than at the time of his marriage to Nicole. Yet he had been swallowed up like a gigolo, and somehow permitted his arsenal to be locked up in the Warren safety-deposit vaults" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 201). Dick's concern about money is never clearer than in this description. His desire for money is not a healthy one—to ensure financial success—but one that "swallow[s] him up" and almost chains him to this desire for money, specifically to Nicole's family's money.

Thus, one of the key differences in the measurement of success between Dick and his father was this ambition, especially toward money. Dick writes of his father, "He was one of those about whom it was said with smug finality in the gilded age: "very much the gentleman, but not much get-up-and-go about him.'" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 204). Dick seems to have attempted to take his father's morality and add this "get-up-and-go". He wanted to create the level of professional and monetary success that his father never had. In his essay, George D. Murphy argues, "one way in which Dick Diver had patterned his life after his father's example is by his choice of profession, for his practice of psychiatry can be taken as the secular equivalent of his father's care of souls" (Murphy 315). Dick models himself after his father in multiple ways- in his morality and in his choice of profession- but Dick has an added

requirement of success with which he measures his own life, and that is this ambition for success in career, improvement in social standing and a desire for money.

We see this ambition begin to have a strain on Dick in the middle of the novel; however, it is really after the death of Dick's father that Dick's life begins to fall apart. I argue that it is because Dick's moral guide and the person upon which he models his moral life is now gone, and thus his ambition can proliferate with no moral guide to hold it back.

Upon his father's death, Dick ponders his life and his own morality: "remembering so many things as he waited, and wishing he had always been as good as he had intended to be" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 204). We see here an indication of Dick's idealism- Dick had always intended to be good, but he got swept up in life. Fitzgerald mimics this sentiment toward the end of the novel when he claims that Dick had "chosen the sweet poison and drunk it. Wanting above all to be brave and kind, he had wanted, even more than that, to be loved" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 300). His desire to be loved trumped these desires to be morally good. However, it is not just any kind of being loved, but it is a desire to be loved for this act that he is putting on—a carefully constructed act in which he and Nicole represent "externally the furthestmost evolution of a class" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 20). We can see this desire to be loved relate back to the difference between manners and morality. Dick's desire to be loved is not true love, but this façade that everyone loves him and he is the center of attention. Therefore, it's not the true act itself of being loved but this appearance of being loved by everyone, just as Dick's manners give the appearance of morality.

It is when Dick's father passes away and Dick returns to the United States that the plot of *Tender is the Night* (and Dick himself) shifts. Dick's morality and success, which before was cracked, now explodes and we see his sharp decline throughout the remainder of the novel until his ultimate failure. Dick first finds out about his father's death at Innsbruck as he is ruminating about his desire and a young girl in the lobby:

Being alone in body and spirit begets loneliness, and loneliness begets more loneliness. Upstairs he walked around thinking of the matter and layout out his climbing clothes advantageously on the faint heater; he again encountered Nicole's telegram, still unopened, with which diurnally she accompanied his itinerary. He had delayed opening it before supper- perhaps because of the garden. It was a cablegram from Buffalo, forwarded through Zurich.

"Your father died peacefully tonight. HOLMES."

He felt a sharp wince at the shock, a gathering of the forces of resistance; then it rolled up through his loins and stomach and throat.

He read the message again. He sat down on the bed, breathing and staring; thinking first the old selfish child's thought that comes with the death of a parent, how will it affect me now that this earliest and strongest of protections is gone?

The atavism passed and he walked the room still, stopping from time to time to look at the telegram. Holmes was formally his father's curate but actually, and for a decade, rector of the church. How did he die? Of old age — he was seventy-five. He had lived a long time (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 203).

Dick's father's curate, Holmes, is an obvious pun on the word "home", another reminder that Buffalo is the place that Dick truly calls home. (Nyerges xi). MORE

The death of Dick's father comes at the crux of the conflict and from there; Dick's failure is set in place. Murphy elaborates on this point in his essay, "The Unconscious Dimension in *Tender is the Night*":

Indeed how does that death affect Dick Diver? Within thirty pages, Fitzgerald compresses the father's funeral, the consummation of the affair with Rosemary, the drunken aggressiveness of the following hours

in Rome, the fight with the taxi drivers, Dick's arrest, the fight with the police and his release from prison by the despised Baby Warren who then "possessed a moral superiority over him for as long as he proved of any use" (p. 235). On these words Book II ends: the disintegration of Dick's personality is fairly underway, and there only remains for Fitzgerald the task of charting its consequences in Book III (Murphy 318-319).

Literary critic Robert Merrill says, "Fitzgerald once remarked that American lives have no second acts, and it seems clear that he saw Dick Diver as an excellent example" (Merrill 600). Dick's "second act" of his life is unequivocally a failure, but notably, he does not have a voice about his own failure. Instead, Nicole is given the narrative control of reporting what she knows of Dick's life after the divorce. Dick's ultimate outcome ending in the same place as his father's death creates a mimicry between father and son. However, if we do read Dick's ultimate outcome as equivalent to his father's, because of the same location, then it means that Dick's outcome is set equivalent to death, which was his father's final end in Buffalo. The final chapter, and conclusion to the novel ends this way:

Nicole kept in touch with Dick after her new marriage; there were letters on business matters, and about the children. When she said, as she often did, "I loved Dick and I'll never forget him," Tommy answered, "Of course not — why should you?"

Dick opened an office in Buffalo, but evidently without success. Nicole did not find what the trouble was, but she heard a few months later that he was in a little town named Batavia, N.Y., practising general medicine, and later that he was in Lockport, doing the same thing. By accident she heard more about his life there than anywhere: that he bicycled a lot, was much admired by the ladies, and always had a big stack of papers on his desk that were known to be an important treatise on some medical subject, almost in process of completion. He was considered to have fine manners and once made a good speech at a public health meeting on the subject of drugs; but he became entangled with a girl who worked in a grocery store, and he was also involved in a lawsuit about some medical question; so he left Lockport.

After that he didn't ask for the children to be sent to America and didn't answer when Nicole wrote asking him if he needed money. In the last letter she had from him he told her that he was practising in Geneva, New York, and she got the impression that he had settled down with some one to keep house for him. She looked up Geneva in an atlas and found it was in the heart of the Finger Lakes Section and considered a pleasant place. Perhaps, so she liked to think, his career was biding its time, again like Grant's in Galena; his latest note was post-marked from Hornell, New York, which is some distance from Geneva and a very small town; in any case he is almost certainly in that section of the country, in one town or another (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 312-313).

Dick's outcome is described as he tries to find success in smaller and smaller towns in Western New York. First he begins in Buffalo, where he opens an office, but Nicole notes that this is "without success". Although she is not sure what causes his failure in Buffalo, she knows that he moves on to Batavia, New York. Batavia is a small town in Genessee County. It is much smaller than Buffalo. In Batavia, Dick practices "general medicine", obviously unable or unwilling to practice his specialty. For one reason or another, Dick moves on again, this time to Lockport. There seems to be some more optimistic hope in Lockport for Dick: he is "much admired by the ladies" which gives a semblance of his old popularity and "considered to have fine manners", although I have discussed the potential pitfall of manners versus morality. However, we can see problems even through Nicole's description of his time there. She writes that he "always had a big stack of papers on his desk that were known to be an important treatise on some medical subject, almost in process of completion". Even this wording indicates that Dick's success is not fulfilled: Nicole notes that this treatise is "almost in process of completion", but note that she doesn't say "in process of completion", as in, Dick is working on them and they are almost complete. Instead she says "almost in process", as if Dick has them in front of him and is almost, but never quite, working on

them. Ultimately we see more problems beset Dick in Lockport as “he became entangled with a girl who worked in a grocery store, and he was also involved in a lawsuit about some medical question”. Dick moves on to Geneva, New York, which Nicole needs to look up in an atlas. Finally, Dick ends up in Hornell, which Nicole says is “a very small town”. Fitzgerald’s choice of Hornell is worth noting because “In electing this location, Fitzgerald—ever meticulous as tragedian—passed over Hopewell, with its semantic optimism, a town much closer to Geneva, so that Nicole loses track of her already lost love in Hornell” (Nyerges x).

All of this constant moving, from smaller to smaller towns, means that Dick ultimately fades into obscurity. Eventually, Nicole has no idea where he is, but says, “He is almost certainly in that section of the country, in one town or another “. He may be described as “Homeless in spirit” as he drifts among these smaller and smaller towns and “whatever dreams he has, he dreams in oblivion without his former promise and intensity of feeling and action” (Callahan 385). The series of connections between Scott and Edward Fitzgerald and Dick Diver and his father are surprisingly many, and they become meaningful when we consider the fact that “failure” for both Edward Fitzgerald and Dick occurred in Buffalo. Further, Fitzgerald clearly creates a tie between Dick’s father and his sense of morality, thus tying this idea of morality (and its ultimate failure) to Buffalo as well. Upon his father’s passing, Dick’s tenuous tie to morality is snapped and the part that differentiated his moral code and definition of success from his fathers—ambition—can proliferate and run free. Ultimately, this ambition and failure of morality leads to even greater failure; a social and professional failure that no longer resembles anything like Dick’s initial dreams.

PART TWO: THE FAILURE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

As Milton Stern analyzed: “the central subject of *Tender is the Night* is the moral history of the Western world just before and after World War One, and most especially it is the continuing history of the American Dream” (Stern 2). Thus, the final dichotomy of success and failure we see in *Tender is the Night* is a much broader one. Through the lens of Buffalo, we see the failure of the American Dream post WWI and how this failure affects Dick’s worldview and mimics his own personal failure. In this dichotomy of success and failure, Buffalo serves as an example of the failure of the American Dream. By this I mean that Buffalo is a representation of a city that is torn between two types of ideals: the American Aristocracy and the American Dream. The American Aristocracy is a term that I employ to refer to the old American elite, in the case of Buffalo, often steel and manufacturing barons. It is this class that retains their wealth through generations, often intermarrying, and this class that resided on Delaware Avenue. These are the Knoxes, the Albrights, the Goodyears, and the Macks. The American Dream is the idea that with hard work, anyone can improve their lot in life and be successful.

Diver’s American Dream fails for two reasons: the first is that he is trying to live this American Dream abroad in Europe, and the second is that Dick mutates the American Dream into something that it is not. Dick’s initial ambitious dream to be successful in his professional life and maybe fall in love mutates through the novel into a dream of wealth, luxury and popularity. Buffalo again serves as the formation of Dick’s convoluted ideas about the American Dream as well as the catalyst for its final failure and Dick’s final location for the rest of his life.

The goal of the American dream is, as Parvin Ghasemi and Mitra Tiur note,

...simply enough, money. The search for wealth is the familiar Anglo-Saxon Protestant ideal of personal material success, most succinctly embodied for the American culture in the saga of young Benjamin Franklin. It is the romantic assumption of this aspect of the “American dream” that all the magic of the world can be had for money. Both from a moral, and from a highly personal and idiosyncratic standpoint, Fitzgerald examines and condemns the plutocratic ambitions of American life and the ruinous price exacted as to be for all practical purposes one: the appearance of eternal youth and beauty centers in a particular social class whose glamour is made possible by social inequality and inequity (Tiur 124-125).

While this search for money and wealth was what defined the American Dream, Buffalo occupied an interesting space between this search for the American Dream and the ideals of the American Aristocracy. Thus, for Dick, his American Dream was not simply money, because in Buffalo, money was not enough to boost you to the elite inner class. For Fitzgerald, money and professional success played into a wider American Dream that also included a desire to be part of the social elite.

Moreover, the American Dream for Dick, in his youth, is success in his career. Everything he does is in pursuit of professional success. As mentioned earlier, Dick’s family was relatively poor, and yet “Dick in his youth easily acquired all the badges of conventional middle-class success: a scholarship to Yale, a Rhodes Fellowship to Oxford, a medical degree at Johns Hopkins, and three years of post-doctoral study with the finest Viennese psychiatrists” (Piper 213). Dick’s ambition is “to be a good psychologist—maybe to be the greatest one that ever lived” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 130-131). Not only does he want personal success, but also he wants to be the best, someone that everyone else knows. Dick wants to be the best; not just in this generation, but every generation: the greatest that ever lived. His ambition at this point knows no

bounds, and he does not want anything else. As he dreamed about his life, Dick thinks that “he used to think 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” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 132). At some point, Dick’s measure of success had included moral aspects of being “good” and a desire to be loved, but already by the time he is a young man this has all melted away into a desire to be the best in his career.

However, Fitzgerald contradicts this American Dream with “an older, simpler American, generally identified as pre-Civil War; the emotion is that of pastoral, the social connotations agrarian and democratic. In such areas, he continues to find fragments of basic human value, social, moral, and religious” (Tiur 125). Most of these hints of this older American belief come from Diver’s father, who emphasizes Southern manners and morality, as I discussed in the previous chapter. Dick’s father appears perfectly content in his professional and social life, despite his low class background, because he is respected and well liked in the community. We can see these contradictions between the American Dream or “ambition” and the old American aristocracy, in which social status is essentially locked in, similarly in the historical positioning of Fitzgerald and Dick Diver’s early childhood, and through the lens of the city of Buffalo.

Scott Fitzgerald’s historical positioning played into his view of the American Dream:

His youth straddled the end of one century and the beginning of another. It also came at the close of one historical period, the Gilded Age, and the dawn of another, the Progressive Era. The former was a time in which wealth and power resided with the select few. In the latter, there was renewed attention to the rights and interests of the lower and middle

classes. Fitzgerald's personal ambitions and the themes he frequently addressed in his art mirrored the conflicting attitudes dominant during these respective eras (Kentz 1).

The Gilded Age conferred power “upon those few who through a combination of talent, ambition, toil, family background and a certain amount of luck had amassed enormous wealth and assumed control of the nation's most profitable assets. Economic, political and social rewards were granted to those who aggressively won them even if at the expense of others” (Kentz 1). This was the era of the American Aristocracy, the wealthy class that kept their money, intermarried and defeated others to become the new “ruling class”. Fitzgerald, for his part,

...glorified the rich, many of whom emerged from the Gilded Age with their fortunes. They seemed to possess a sophistication, beauty and splendor not found in his Midwestern home. But he also retained a faith in the American promise, which effectively was being defended during the Progressive Era of his youth, that every man, including Fitzgerald himself, had a chance to improve his standing. Thus, Fitzgerald believed in both central facets of the American Dream represented respectively by the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era. He was certain that with his talent and ambition coupled with the American promise of a fair opportunity, he could enjoy the social *éclat* of the elite who win the competition (Kentz 2).

Further, the city of Buffalo exemplifies this tension between the American Dream and the American Aristocracy. Delaware Avenue was a physical and geographical indication of the wealth of this “Aristocratic Class” and one that both Fitzgerald and Diver would have been entirely aware of. For Fitzgerald, the houses that he grew up in were in the same neighborhood as, or in one case adjacent to, Delaware Avenue. Fitzgerald knew and played with the children who lived on Delaware Avenue, attended charity balls with them, learned to dance with them at the Twentieth Century

Club, and in many cases, was socially rejected by them. He notes in his *Ledger*, “Some boys around a potato roast told him they didn’t want him around there” and he also fantasizes that “he is a changeling”, or someone from royal descent (*Ledger* 160). Fitzgerald’s parents, especially his mother, were social climbers with aspirations of moving up the ladder in Buffalo. They would buy Fitzgerald the newest and best things in an attempt to be elite: skates that were “too fancy to be any good” and black suits because “blue was common in dancing school” (*Ledger* 160-161). And yet the Fitzgeralds were still not the same standing as the Delaware Avenue families. For a city that was growing in industry, that attracted thousands of immigrants pursuing this American Dream, Buffalo was still torn between these two ideals.

The American Dream fails for the Divers in one part because the Divers attempt to make it work in a place that is not America. Fitzgerald’s phrase “willingness of the heart” has often been interpreted as his version of this American Dream, but for Dick Diver, as with many American expatriates of the time, it matured in Europe. The disillusion of the young American generation after World War I led many to head abroad, in search of some sort of hope to restart their lives. Viewing the Divers as “self consciously trying for a new means of survival amidst ruins of an inter-war Europe” raises the question of how successful this new American Dream can be when it is being lived in Europe (Glenday 145). Dick’s ambition “to be a good psychologist—maybe to be the greatest one that ever lived” is considered by Franz to be “very good—and very American”. He says, “It’s much more difficult for us” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 131). Already we see the rift between the European and American ambition, and the ease (or

perceived ease) with which one can rise above a social station in order to achieve success.

Dick's ambition shifts when in Europe. As a young man, "Dick got up to Zurich on less Achilles' heels than would be required to equip a centipede, but with plenty — 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" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 115-116). Dick had had an idealistic outlook of himself, of others and of his nation as a young man. However, even early in his time spent there, the narrator notes, "The post-war months in France, and the lavish liquidations taking place under the ægis of American splendor, had affected Dick's outlook" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 132). Dick already yearns for something more than the small cottage with Franz, where he feels "vaguely oppressed... by the sudden contracting of horizons to which Franz seemed so reconciled. For him the boundaries of asceticism were differently marked — he could see it as a means to an end, even as a carrying on with a glory it would itself supply, but it was hard to think of deliberately cutting life down to the scale of an inherited suit" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 131-132). Though Dick's early years could not have been much more extravagant, his mindset has changed and he now has an ambition for more—not just professional success but a way of living life.

However, even in Europe early on, there are hints that the American Dream may not be as successful as Dick Diver wishes it. When he first meets Nicole's sister, both of them understand their difference in social standing: "Baby was right and she knew it. Face to face, her father would have it on almost any clergyman. They were an American

ducal family without a title — the very name written in a hotel register, signed to an introduction, used in a difficult situation, caused a psychological metamorphosis in people, and in return this change had crystallized her own sense of position. She knew these facts from the English, who had known them for over two hundred years.” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 157-158). This was the same interaction that Dick would have had with wealthy families in Buffalo, who might have looked down on his clergyman father. Despite Dick’s search for success in his career and his social standing, even his move to Europe cannot disguise the fact that he and Nicole are from different walks of life. Even more notably, even the fact that this interaction takes place in another country does not stop the American social standing from being of importance.

Despite Baby’s mistrust of Dick, Dick and Nicole are married and begin their lives together in France. Thus we see the second factor that leads to the failure of this “American Dream”—the fact that it becomes mutated. Quickly, Dick’s life turns from his one main ambition of being “the greatest psychologist to ever live” to attempting to be the center of society, making other people happy and living a life of blatant aestheticism. However, again early on, the reader sees cracks in this façade, such as when Rosemary surveys the Diver’s act and performance, “unaware of its complexity and its lack of innocence... At that moment the Divers represented externally the exact furthestmost evolution of a class, so that most people seemed awkward beside them—in reality a qualitative change had already set in that was not at all apparent to Rosemary” (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 20). Dick so obviously strives to create this act of apparent wealth and luxury, but those like Baby who represent the American Aristocracy can see through it.

I earlier analyzed Dick's leave to Buffalo and return as the impetus for his final moments of failure (getting beat up, getting asked to leave the clinic, Nicole having an affair and asking for a divorce). Dick's visit to Buffalo upon his father's death serves as a tipping point for him as a character. Where before he had had only cracks in his virtually perfect façade, his visit to the US (and Buffalo as an example of that) is a catalyst for his ultimate destruction, or failure. Dick is ultimately oblivious to these dramatic changes happening to him: he "had no suspicion of the sharpness of the change; he was profoundly unhappy and the subsequent increase of egotism tended momentarily to blind him to what was going on round about him, and deprive him of the long ground-swell of imagination that he counted on for his judgments" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 86).

It is during this period in Zurich that Dick's father, his last connection to his childhood, dies. The true beginning of Dick's breakdown occurs when he buries his father, an event that "seems to extinguish that last impulse to hold onto the old goals" (Miller 91-92). It is in his father's death that Dick realizes he will never accomplish his American dream; a dream that deals with professional and financial success, but more importantly in some ways, his goal to gain admittance to an Aristocracy of taste and social exclusivity. He feels that he has "no more ties" to America now, and "did not believe he would come back (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 229). Ironically, America is Dick's own final resting place, and this statement foreshadows and seals his own doom. Dick's final words to put his father, and from his perspective, his homeland to rest further this irony: "Good-bye, my father—good-bye, all my fathers" (Fitzgerald, *Tender* 205). From

this point on, “Dick’s life continues to deteriorate until all elements of success are nearly unrecognizable” (Stetson 34).

The fact that this impetus for Dick’s final descent into failure happens both in the United States, and in Buffalo in particular has a unique significance when we look at the idea of the American dream. Dick’s father represents the old American ideal; the consent that you may not be able to dramatically change your social standing but you can have manners and morality. So his death signals the end of the era of the American dream that Fitzgerald/Dick are used to.

The final fall of Dick into oblivion in Western New York is now, as Zelda Fitzgerald wrote, “tear-envoking to witness individual belief in individual volition succumbing to the purpose of a changing world” (Brucoli, *Grandeur* 365). This changing world has shifted what is important. Instead of morality and manners, the “gentleman”, the world is now based on a desire for money and power, a need to continue to strive toward the next rung on the social strata ladder. This “American Dream” though is exactly what causes the downfall of Dick. Though it can be viewed positively as the belief that anyone can be successful with hard work and ambition, Dick and, ultimately the American ethos itself, has twisted and mutated it into a world where we identify ourselves based on wealth and power, and as Stern pointed out, it is exactly this world of wealth and power (exemplified in Buffalo) that victimizes and creates failure of men like Dick Diver. What was the American Dream in Europe is now the American Failure in the United States.

Ultimately, I see a connection between Dick Diver’s pursuit of the American Dream and Edward and Mollie Fitzgerald’s. Each came from families that may have

been wealthy and socially prestigious at one point, but had fallen upon hard times. They looked to improve their standings through a mix of ambition and social graces, but using money to buy things and this atmosphere of wealth and luxury fails. Despite their façade, they ultimately cannot fit into these lives of the social elite. For Edward Fitzgerald, this failure happens in Buffalo when he loses his job. The money, the attempt to avoid being “common” and the hard work has failed, and Scott says this moment ruined his father. For Dick Diver, this failure is a long time coming, but it comes to a head in Buffalo when he returns to bury his father, and it is finalized in Buffalo, where he lives out the remainder of his foreseeable days in failure—at least a failure of his original American Dream.

CONCLUSION

So, where does all of this leave us with themes of success and failure and their connection to the city of Buffalo? As I have explored in this thesis, the city of Buffalo at the beginning of the twentieth century was a model example of the American dream combined with the earlier American blue-blooded “nobility”. I have discussed how Fitzgerald himself was caught between this idea of the American dream and the American nobility, and also a little bit about how this tension functions when playing into the idea of success and failure in *Tender is the Night*. Overall, this scale of failure operates on two separate levels through *Tender is the Night*: the failure of morals, and in a connected way, the failure of an American Dream abroad. In each spectrum of failure versus success, Buffalo serves as a backdrop, or often as a catalyst for how this success or failure plays out for Dick Diver.

Tender is the Night serves as a novel of moral failure. Fitzgerald sets Dick Diver up in relation to his father’s morality, but at the same time makes us question whether Dick is actually moral or if he has simply taken his father’s good manners and interpreted them as his own morality. Dick’s father’s passing occurs right before a great shift in the novel, in which Dick goes from having cracks in his façade to ultimately becoming a failure of his original dreams of success and social ambition. His father’s death serves as a concrete metaphor for Dick’s loss of his moral guide and code, and in the end he is left with his ambition- both for money, fame, success and popularity. Ultimately, he ends up with none of those.

Tender of the Night is also, however, a novel of the failure of the American Dream. The Diver's flee to Europe in order to make a new life, one that mimics the old-world royalty, and free from the post WWI ruins. What began as ambition to "be the greatest psychiatrist who ever lived" mutated during Dick and Nicole's time abroad into a warped version of this European aristocracy: a pursuit of indulgence and elitism. Ironically, the more that the Diver's attempt to cut ties with America, the more foreign they are and feel.

These two types of failures, though very different, both rely heavily on the themes of social class and ambition, and the connections between these themes and the city of Buffalo become clear as you read *Tender is the Night* and investigate Fitzgerald's own personal history, memories and experiences in the city of Buffalo and the region of Western New York. The connections between Fitzgerald's experiences and those that he wrote in *Tender is the Night* as attributed to Dick firmly ground these memories to Buffalo, and I have elucidated how Buffalo serves as a catalyst for these different types of failures. Finally, Buffalo serves both as the beginning point for Dick Diver's life and formation of his ideals and morals, and the ending point where these ideas and dreams that he had formed are deemed a failure. While the city itself was neither a success nor failure, nor took on these evaluations for others, to Fitzgerald, it is obvious that the city represented the place where failure occurred, and this idea seeped into his works, most particularly *Tender is the Night*.

Ultimately, looking at *Tender is the Night* and F. Scott Fitzgerald through the lens of Buffalo—a city in which he grew up—helps shed light on themes both in his work and in his life. Fitzgerald's works speak to the people and times of the 1920s and

1930s, but they also have long-lasting themes that still connect with readers today— success and failure, the American Dream, and a struggle with morality. There is a great deal of research and scholarship done about Fitzgerald’s time in Minnesota, New York and Europe, however there is little done on his time in Buffalo. I don’t argue that Buffalo is *more* influential than other geographic areas; I simply analyze the way in which it is. The research also works in an interdisciplinary way to combine geography, literature, history and sociology. I hope that the way that it crosses lines in research will illuminate methods of understanding literature through context. Finally, the thesis brings awareness to Fitzgerald’s time in Buffalo to a city that desperately needs cultural heroes. It is my hope that Buffalo and other cities recognize the cultural and historical background of their pasts and embrace them as a way to keep hold of a strong sense of culture and literature.

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