

Autobiographical and Cultural Influences in F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Tender is the Night"

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Abstract—Like most of his contemporaries of the American men of letter who spent long years as expatriates in Europe, F. Scott Fitzgerald's most works are influenced by either autobiographical elements or some philosophical, scientific, and historical sources, which are put together in terms of "cultural elements." The main sources and material of Fitzgerald's fictional works in general and in "Tender is the Night" in particular are those of autobiographical and cultural influences that played major roles in setting the environments, delineating the characters and suggesting the themes of his works. The present paper sheds light on the autobiographical influences on Fitzgerald's "Tender is the Night" besides the impact of the writer's readings in history, philosophy and poetry in making and shaping this novel.

Keywords—Fitzgerald, Autobiographical, Philosophical, Dick diver, Nicole.

I. INTRODUCTION

Fitzgerald's fourth novel "Tender is the Night" was introduced to the public in 1934. After several revisions and changes in sources, material and narrative techniques, "Tender is the Night" went to publication. However, it was in 1932 when Fitzgerald decided to use his personal crisis with his schizoid spouse, Zelda, and project it through the experience of the American expatriates in France during 1920 (Eble, 1963. pp. 1358).

Fitzgerald was obsessed with the theme of the corruption of the very rich (Rauf, 2020 p.68). In "Tender is the Night" as elsewhere, he attributed all the evils, moral, and social sicknesses to the rich people. So his jealous wife, Zelda's psychological sickness is blended with the, psychological, social, and moral sicknesses of the rich people represented by Nicole Warren in the novel. Dick Diver, who is a genuine heir of the old genteel tradition of morality, is confronted by this corruptive and "crooked" atmosphere of his wife Nicole. Corruption is made by our writer to consume all the favors of the ideal tradition to its best benefits and when it has nothing left of it, it gets expired and has to be ridden of. The result turns out to the favor of corruption on the account of the genteel order (Cowley, 1963. p. iii).

The psychological element is not by reason of Zelda's sickness only, rather nineteen twenties witnessed the rise of psychological studies. Most of the intelligentsia of the day used to read for Freud, Jung and others.

II. DISCUSSION

A. Autobiographical Elements

Almost all of Fitzgerald's works are full of his personal experience. "Tender is the Night" is not an exception; rather it has many of such elements (Rauf. 2015 p. 71) The first one is Fitzgerald himself. He usually delineates the characters of his protagonists' to express his personal ambitions, dreams, crises and ethics (Rauf. 2020 p.68). In this novel F. Scott Fitzgerald identifies himself with the character of his protagonist Dr. Dick Diver. He defines Dick in terms of the genteel tradition of the old order. Dick is made to show the promises of life that were open before him as one of the gifted young Americans. That was a "heroic period" in Dick's life; "for one thing he had no idea that he was charming, that the affection he gave and inspired was anything unusual among healthy people." During his last year at Yale (New Haven), his friends referred to him as "Lucky Dick" (Fitzgerald, 1963.p. 20). Dick's partner Franz describes him as the most serious and brilliant man of all the men who have recently taken their degree in neuropathology in Zurich, and that Dick has been regarded as the most brilliant (Fitzgerald, 1963. p. 259).

Fitzgerald's wife, Zelda's schizophrenic sickness comes to be the first source in "Tender is the Night." The sane Zelda's jealousy of any success Fitzgerald could achieve; her pushing him toward dissipation all the time were frequently recorded by his contemporaries (especially Hemingway) (Mizener, 1959. pp. 220-21), her subsequent mental breakdown (which

increased his debts) had a bad effect on the writer's morale. With the accumulation of worries, he began to crack under the strain. Much of his dissipation and gradual deterioration went into Dick Diver's experience, and much of Zelda's jealousy and schizophrenia went into Nicole Diver in "Tender is the Night." (Mizener. 1959. pp. 220-6).

Further autobiographical elements are found in "Tender is the Night." Fitzgerald delineates Abe North's character on his close friend Ring Lardner, the American writer. In "Tender is the Night" Abe's self-torture as one of the lost-generation American intellectuals who could not stand the vulgarity of the "Jazz Age," his dissipation, and finally his tragic death in an obscure New York town; all these are made to anticipate Dick Diver's gradual deterioration just the same way Ring Lardner anticipated Fitzgerald's destiny: In this regard, Fitzgerald wrote to Maxwell Perkins in 1932 that "...Earnest [Hemingway]... has long convinced himself that I am an incurable alcoholic.... I am his alcoholic just like Ring is mine..."

Fitzgerald was fascinated by the young actress Lois Moran in Los Angeles in 1928. Eventually he portrayed Rosemary's character on hers (Mizener, 1959. pp. 28, 250).

The Fitzgerald family spent about a month with Gerald and Sara Murphey at Antibes which overlooked the French Riviera in 1925. Fitzgerald took that place to create a sort of romantic environment as a setting for his novel. Moreover, the style of the Murphys' life captivated the zealous author so that he applied it to the setting of "Tender is the Night" and to the outer features of the Divers' marital life (Mizener. 1959. pp. 228). On the mountains of Montreux where "lay this true center of Western world," Dick decides to marry Nicole Warren, the product of ancestral corruption of western civilization (the Warrens are half German and half American).

This critical decision marks the countdown of Dick's decline. His bicycle-racing down the mountains suggests the beginning of Dick Diver, the genteel image of the American order's cycle of deterioration in the Warrens' material and moral corrupted world. And when Nicole, the very representative of them, betrays her genteel husband and gets divorced of him in order to marry the rising dark "ruler" as a final incarnation of the American plutocracy and western Barbarism, Dick's cycle then, as the bicycle-race in the street implies, ends in utter defeat (Fitzgerald. 1963, p. 329).

Then there is Fitzgerald's father; the southern business-failure, who did not leave for his son, when died, except a moral heritage. For Scott Fitzgerald, his father represented at once a material failure and a moral background that went back to the days of the Civil War. Nowhere else in all his fictional works did Fitzgerald explicitly employ that shadowy image of his father as he did in "Tender is the Night." Yet he never allowed his father to be among his persona in this work, rather just a moral reference that would juxtapose the current degenerated values to those wholesome ones of the genteel tradition. What Fitzgerald wrote about his own father went back to Dick's inner thoughts when his father died: "Dick loved his father... again and again he referred judgments to what his father would probably have thought or done.... And his father ... had saved him by becoming his

moral guide...." (Fitzgerald. 1963, p. 223). It was this image of an old moral guide that Fitzgerald and his generation kept nostalgic of. In a letter to his daughter Dorothy, Fitzgerald wrote about his generation that they "never found anything to take the place of old virtues" of the genteel tradition (Turnball. 1963. p. 249).

When his father dies, Dick gets shocked and dismayed; he "felt a sharp wince at the shock, a gathering of forces of resistance." The father dies in Buffalo and Dick returns to America to take the body south to Virginia and only there "did he feel once more identified with his surroundings." Dick's sense of nostalgia to the old order that, for him, is already dead:

It was very friendly leaving him there with all his relations around him. Flowers were scattered on his brown unsettled earth. Dick had no more ties here now and did not believe he would come back. He knelt on the hard soil. These dead, he knew them all, the spare violent bodies, the souls made of new earth in the forest-heavy darkness of the seventeenth century "Good-bye, my father...good-bye, all my fathers." (Fitzgerald. 1963. pp. 224-5).

Dick's father stands for the seventeenth-century European vision of the New World as the potential earthly paradise (Rauf. 2015 p 73). And with his burial by the "hard soil of the Virgin Land, "Virginia", which Dick kneels on, he believes that he has buried that old sound order, which was the very symptom of the American Dream of success, goodness and order; he believes that he is going to identify himself no more with it. Now Dick has no more ties to the principles of the Founding Fathers of good instinct, courage, courtesy, etc. Only then Dick rids himself of moral bounds and pursues Rosemary in Rome.

According to D. S. Savage (Savage.1965. p. 50), Dick's sexual relation with Rosemary is a recapitulation to Mr. Warren's incest with Nicole. Dick's paternal love turns into an incestuous one with "Daddy's girl" who in turn has decided to imitate Nicole's case. The comparison between the two cases, if traced, is an apparent one. Nicole's reaction to her loving father's, "fine American type" (just like Dick): "Never mind, never mind, Daddy..." (Fitzgerald. 1963 pp. 31, 350) quite balances Dick-Rosemary's case, and as Nicole demands an escape from her father's world, so does Rosemary in Rome:

"Oh, why did this have to happen?" There was a new flood of tears. "It's such a shame. Why did you come here? Why couldn't we just have the memory anyhow? I feel as if I'd quarreled with mother." (Fitzgerald. 1963. pp. 239-40)

Then, Dick replies with a sense of disintegration: "I guess I'm the Black Death... I don't seem to bring people happiness anymore." (Fitzgerald. 1963. pp. 239-40)

III. PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES

F. Scott Fitzgerald preferred Jung's psychological theories to those of Freud. "Jung's emphasis on the collective unconscious, on the social rather the biological foundations of human behavior, corresponds both to Fitzgerald's social

awareness and to the historical view of human cultures [which] Fitzgerald had learned from Oswald Spengler." Hence, Fitzgerald took from Jung what could contribute to his former belief in Oswald Spengler's "The Decline of the West." In his book, Spengler connects the laws of biology to the laws of history and believes that such culture is an organism which follows the pattern of birth, growth, maturity, and decay. Spengler also divides the Western history into three stages: "The Apollonian or Classical period, the Magian or medieval realm, and the Faustian or modern age... The Faustian period."

Spengler's main concern begins around the tenth century with papal reform, and finds man longing for the unattainable." Spengler goes on to prove that the eighteenth century was the "autumn of the Faustian age," and that the nineteenth century witnessed the "western man's wintery decline;" and by that decline of this final stage there will appear, as he dreads, the "new casers" who will "destroy the last Faustian man." The book, whose second volume was published in 1922, or rather in the aftermath of the "Great War," assumes the presence of such tyrannies according to the nature of the political and social discriminations of the countries: "In England and America, where the main distinction is between the rich and the poor, the new caser would be a cruel materialist — a millionaire, a banker, a man of wealth and success." (Lehan. 1966. pp. 30-31)

Spengler's influence on Fitzgerald can be marked more clearly in "Tender is the Night." His influence on Fitzgerald was an immense one. In a letter to his publisher, Fitzgerald said that he read Spengler the same summer he was writing *The Great Gatsby*, and he did not think he could ever recover from him. (Turnball. 1963, p. 310) Here, this topic extends beyond the symbolic gesture which Fitzgerald hints at in *The Great Gatsby*. The theme of love and war, the rise of the colored race, and the cycling racing are essentially those of Spengler. The first topic is quite clear when Dick refuses love into war at the French Front during World War One: "It was a love battle.... This was the last love battle." (Fitzgerald. 1963. p. 125).

IV. HISTORICAL ELEMENTS

Related to this influence, Fitzgerald believed that every Great War was a detour in the history of mankind. The civil war in the United States (1861-65) was no exception. The several references to Ulysses Grant, the Civil-War leader, particularly at the Western Front, connect that war to the late World War I. Grant was an owner of a grocery store in Galena, Illinois which he left to "fulfill in Civil War a destiny that was to end one order and establish another; that of the commercial and industrial, the new financier." Ulysses Grant's story of "the man who came back after a bitter defeat... seem to have touched Fitzgerald deeply while the new upstarts of the Gilded Age started using him, just as Dick Diver had been used by the very rich." (Lehan. 1966. pp. 137-38).

Fitzgerald considered Grant a scapegoat of his own idealism, and when he committed "mass butchery"

(Fitzgerald. 1963, p. 125) he was but an executive tool of "lies of generations" (Fitzgerald. 1963, p. 22). Fitzgerald connected Grant's destiny to Dick's at the beginning of his journey (Fitzgerald. 1963, p. 22), then at the end when Dick was defeated (Fitzgerald. 1963, p. 334). Realizing that his love-battle was like Grant's involvement in changing the old world to a new material one, Dick said at the French Front: "All my beautiful lovely safe world blew itself up here with a great gust of explosive love" (Fitzgerald. 1963, p. 125). Fitzgerald's love-battle was between the new American plutocracies, the Warrens who were the legitimate ancestors of Robber Barons of post-civil war, and the genteel American hero, Dick Diver; the war which ended in Dick's defeat and Nicole's triumph to crown Tommy Barban as a new ruler.

As it is suggested by his name, Barban, whose savage and barbarous "figure was darker and stranger than Nick," as Nicole observes after betraying her husband with him (Fitzgerald. 1963. p. 314), and as Rosemary sees that Barban was less civilized, more skeptical and scoffing (Fitzgerald. 1963. p. 86) and as he describes his identity as a professional mercenary: "Well, I'm a soldier. My business is to kill people" (Fitzgerald. 1963. p. 102), he is introduced as the end product of an archaic world, and hence, he is worthless (Fitzgerald. 1963, p. 103). When Dick pays Barban a visit in Munich, he surrenders to the fact that "Tommy Barban was a ruler, Tommy was a hero.... courage was his game and his companions were always a little afraid of him" (Fitzgerald. 1963. p. 216). All these aspects are due to Spengler's influence.

V. CONCLUSION

F. Scott Fitzgerald has an artistic craft in manipulating his autobiographical elements into his fictional works and fusing them with his cultural readings that have long influenced him. Nowhere else this craft is evident as it is in "*Tender is the Night*". Fitzgerald suffered a lot from his schizoid wife's jealousy to the extent that she had started consuming his morale, art and talent. He also had a very strong feeling about the very rich people towards whom he had ambivalent behavior. He used to enjoy their prestigious line of life; meanwhile, he kept criticizing them at every instant, even in his letters and short stories on the other. His talent in "*Tender is the Night*" is apparent by the artistic way with which he fuses all these elements to create the setting, characters and the theme of this novel.

Fitzgerald's readings in history and philosophy also contributed to his themes, settings and characters. Being one of the pioneers of the Lost-Generation literature, Fitzgerald was bewildered with the sudden and drastic changes in the American and Western culture after the Great War. His themes are those of notions of nostalgia to the past, to the old serene orderly life which his generation nourished on. "*Tender is the Night*" tackles these topics and themes artistically.

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