

Tragic Downfall of Promising Psychologist Dick Diver

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Abstract

The work of F. Scott Fitzgerald *Tender is the Night* shows us how a character like the psychologist Dick Diver having strong qualities such as education and career may collapse upon entering into a new social status which results in hamartia while it causes him to suffer from some mental illnesses such as hysteria and melancholia in his tragic fall down. In this perspective, to understand the tragic downfall of the protagonist Dick Diver who was once known well and respected for his psychology treatments for his mental patients then Dick Diver's getting lost in his sexual drives with his interaction with women this study aims to analyze the novel's structure and the gaps between the parts of the novel with Freud's theory of hysteria and melancholia.

Keywords: Fitzgerald, Downfall, Hysteria, Freud, Melancholy

Yetenekli Psikolog Dick Diver'in Trajik Yok Oluşu

Özet

F. Scott Fitzgerald'ın *Buruktur Gece* adlı romanı eğitim ve kariyer gibi güçlü özelliklere sahip bir psikoloğun yeni bir sosyal statüye geçerken ortaya çıkan histeri ve melankoli gibi ruhsal bozuklukların karakteri nasıl trajik bir yok oluşa götürdüğünü göstermektedir. Bu bakımdan romanın başkahramanı ve bir zamanlar ruhsal hastalar için uyguladığı psikolojik tedavilerinden dolayı çok iyi bilinen ve saygı duyulan Dick Diver'in trajik çöküşünü ve kadınlara karşı cinsel arzularından dolayı yok oluşunu anlayabilmek için bu çalışma romandaki parçalar arasındaki yapı ve boşlukları Freud'un histeri ve melankoli teorileri üzerinden açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fitzgerald, Çöküş, Histeri, Freud, Melankoli

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The work of F. Scott Fitzgerald *Tender is the Night* shows us how a character having strong qualities such as education and career may collapse upon entering into a new world which results in hamartia or a fatal flaw. It is the protagonist young American Doctor Dick Diver's tragic downfall which attracts many critics' attention to the work of F.S. Fitzgerald. Dick is a promising educated psychiatrist and a traveling man who shuttles between Vienna and Zurich in the pursuit of "to be a good psychologist – maybe to be the greatest one that ever lived" (Fitzgerald 2000: 134). This study focuses on irony of how a talented psychiatrist Dick Diver who has a published book *A Psychology for Psychiatrists* and desire to find out ways for the mental illness ironically gets caught to a kind of mental illness that causes his frustration both socially and mentally. In this perspective, in the novel, the protagonist Diver's trauma is considered in a way as a good example for many psychiatrists who are in search of causes and solutions for mental illnesses together with the Nicole character in the novel.

Brucoli claims that the novel is "a new plot set in Europe about an American psychiatrist who is ruined by his marriage to a wealthy mental patient" (Brucoli 2002) while others consider the novel as "breakdowns: breakdowns in marriage, friendships, and individuals" (Lucas 2011). It has been argued that the title of Fitzgerald's novel *Tender Is the Night* has taken it from the work of John Keats's Ode to A Nightingale. According to William E. Doherty, the novel *Tender Is the Night* also gets its essence from Keat's work.

The title of the novel and the epigraph Fitzgerald offers to illuminate the significance of "night" and "darkness" in the story. An inquiry reveals a complicated and careful symbolic structure in *Tender Is the Night* involving a contrast between the night and the day, darkness and light (Doherty 1985: 6)

Although the novel is the last completed work of Fitzgerald, one of the difficulties that the novel presents is its ambiguity in understanding the chronological order of the work. In the masterpiece of Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, the protagonist Gatsby's downfall results from his passionate love for attractive woman Daisy. But in the novel *Tender is the Night* Dick Diver's disaster cannot be understood so easy when it is compared to *The Great Gatsby*. Regarding this, Malcom Cowley emphasizes the structure and chronological order of the novel; "One fault of the earlier version was its uncertainty of focus. We weren't quite sure in reading it whether author had intended to write about a whole group of American on Riviera. . . or whether he had intended to write a psychological novel about the glory and decline of Richard Diver as a person" (Cowley 1953: 5).

However, the writer Cowley in his revised publication of the novel arranged all stories chronologically in order to sustain integrity and consistency, but it did not fix the problem in the novel. Therefore the literary critics in 1960s considered the ambiguity as an important quality in the novel. According to Arthur Mizener, Dick's disaster can be hardly grasped or felt. He claims "perhaps he did not manage to give Dick all the cohesion he might have" (1967: 115), which leads Dick's disaster incomprehensible. To some literary critics, the ambiguity in Dick Diver's fall in the novel mainly stems

from Diver's character and his mental status as his being a representative of the American dream-neurosis. In other words, it is Diver's career and sexual desire together with his insecure and inconsistent desires that increase and affect Diver's ambivalence. In this perspective, it might be helpful to analyze the novel's structure and the gaps between the parts of the novel to understand Diver's tragic fall. According to Stern, "*one of the most common situations faced by people in medicine is the attachment a doctor can develop with a patient. The doctor may be psychologically empowered by the weakness and dependency of a person under his care. This impulse may be emotionally and mentally misinterpreted in a dramatic and romantic direction, and the doctor may soon find himself in love with his patient*" (Stern 2008: 29). For instance, Nicole's writing letters to Dick and showing her feelings to him can be considered in this perspective. In the Novel, Nicole says, "*I write to you because there is no one else to whom I can turn.... I am completely broken and humiliated.... I am lonesome all the time...in a half daze*" (Fitzgerald 2000: 181). So while Nicole tries to get the emotional support from Dick Diver by showing her dependency to him, she also takes advantage of her beauty to seduce him. "*Nicole took advantage of this to stand up, and the impression of her youth and beauty grew on Dick until it welled up inside him in a compact paroxysm of emotion. She smiled a moving childish smile that was like all the lost youth in the world... Her very blonde hair dazzled Dick...her face lighting up like an angel's*" (Fitzgerald 2000: 199).

Diver's disaster is also strongly connected to his beginning to show a tendency to be part of the upper class with the help of his relationship with Nicole. On the one hand, as he tries to build up himself a status as a promising psychiatrist, on the other hand, alcohol plays an important role in ruining his career, marriage, friendships, and sanity by leading him to delusions and also makes him lose his ability to control of his life and enjoyment in it. For instance, in the novel, one of the friends of Dick criticizes Diver saying "*your friends still like you, Dick. But you say awful things to people when you've been drinking,*" (Fitzgerald 2000: 455) which shows Diver's weakening social relationship with his friends.

The character Rosemary in the novel is also another factor that leads to Dick Diver's collapse. Although having feelings are generally considered as a positive characteristic for excessive vitality in one's life such as happened to Diver his desire for girls and youth drives him to the success in his social life and career it also recovers Nicole from her mental illness who normally forced to live in an asylum. But it is Diver's unluckiness that his enjoyment and pleasure drives lead him to destruction at the end. He feels an attachment to the two beautiful young women Rosemary and Nicole, and their worshipful characteristics are important elements for Dick to satisfy his internal sexual hunger for the vitality but these sexual desires disturb the balance in his life and cause Dick's frustration and collapse. When we considered the relationship between Dick and Rosemary, he feels "*something blooming*" in his senses against her (Fitzgerald 2000: 33). Although Dick thinks that he can regain the joy and vitality in his life with love for Rosemary, it only makes his life worse than ever. His inability to manage his senses and feelings in both his working and social environment ruins Diver both socially and professionally.

However, at the end Diver considers his love against Rosemary is a kind of negative and the narrator in the novel says, “*if he had to bring up all the bitterness and hatred of the world into his heart, he was not going to be in love with her again*” (Fitzgerald 2000: 324).

Both love and money are a crucial part of life; they also play an important role in Dick’s losing balance in his life as famous psychiatry. Dick meets Nicole in a mental hospital and Diver’s getting married Nicole cannot be directly associated with Nicole’s wealth but the wish as a promising psychiatric to find a solution for Nicole’s psychological illness also plays an instrumental role in Dick Diver and Nicole’s relationship. However, it can be claimed the relationship between Dick and Nicole is not based on the economic reasons at first but after the marriage, he becomes depended on Nicole’s generous wealth. Therefore the imbalanced partnership with Nicole undermines Dick’s wish to self-commitment to his career. As Blazek said the relationship between Nicole and Diver was not an ordinary patient and doctor relationship so “*the workings of cause and effect, of stress and disorder in the marriage of Dick and Nicole Diver went beyond therapeutic exegesis and training exemplar*” (Blazek, 2007: 68) which brings Dick to the edge of cliff in his life. Blazek also argues that it is not Nicole but Dick himself who suffers the real disorder and trauma in his life.

Although during the early stages of his career Dick used to balance his own life within self-discipline, “*living rather ascetically, travelling third-class when he was alone, with the cheapest wine, and good care of his clothes, and penalizing himself for any extravagances and maintained a qualified financial independence*” (Fitzgerald 2000: 250-51); his passion as an ambitious psychiatrist is deteriorated. The illusion of a happy marriage is destroyed by both increasing internal and external factors in their relationship. Externally, while the economic dependency destroys the moral characteristic of Dick, internally, the excessive ambition to recover Nicole from her illness and her excessive desires from Dick to take a position of both her husband and physiatrist in the process of her recovering which makes passionate physiatrist Dick tired in his relationship with Nicole and leads his down fall both in his marriage and career. Dick tried to rest... A "schizophrene" is well named as a split personality... It was necessary to treat her with active and affirmative insistence, keeping the road to reality always open, making the road to escape harder going. But the brilliance, the versatility of madness is akin to the resourcefulness of water seeping through, over and around a dike. It requires the united front of many people to work against it... In a tired way, he planned that they would again resume the regime relaxed a year before (Fitzgerald 2000: 282). Although Diver as a psychiatrist was aware of the possible difficulties in his relationship with Nicole, the lack of balance in their roles in marriage derives both of them into inescapable destruction.

However, Dick refuses to accept and use the Warren family’s wealth. It is Nicole’s requests that break his resolution and leads the fall of Dick in his life and career. In this perspective, Dick enters into a new phase in his life by neglecting his career. Nicole asks and criticizes Dick by questioning, “*Why should we penalize ourselves just because there’s more Warren money than Diver money?*” (Fitzgerald

2000: 235). After having their second baby, Nicole's desires continuously increases. She expresses Dick her wish to move a much more luxurious house and says "*we must spend my money and have a house—I'm tired of apartments and waiting for you*" (Fitzgerald 2000: 237). So that she pulls Dick deep into to the well by Nicole's pushing Dick to feel alienated from his promising career. The imbalance between Nicole and Diver's financial expenses forces Diver to act as a slave, a kind of dependent on his relationship with Nicole. So the financial enslavement of Diver to Nicole destroys Diver's self-esteem and causes "*his emotional bankruptcy at the end of the novel*" (Rollyson & Magill 2000: 1101). It is the Warren family's clinic that puts Dick into a professional academic circle in psychiatry by providing him a practice place for the progress of his promising career and reputation. Thus his previous passion to become a reputable psychiatrist can be considered to have been distorted by the wealth provided by the Warren family before his marriage with Nicole.

He glanced about at the house that Nicole's grandfather had paid for...His work became confused with Nicole's problems; in addition, her income had increased so fast of late that it seemed to belittle his work. Also, for the purpose of her cure, he had for many years pretended to a rigid domesticity from which he was drifting away, and this pretense became more arduous in this effortless immobility, in which he was inevitably subjected to microscopic examination. When Dick could no longer play what he wanted to play on the piano, it was an indication that life was being refined down to a point (Fitzgerald 2000: 250-51).

Although Diver lives in a luxurious and comfortable life with a beautiful and rich wife and two children, all these wealth under his feet starts not to make a sense for Dick; on the contrary, it brings unhappiness to his life. So Dick's frustration and contradiction in his life essentially is the result of his not getting any enjoyment from his wealthy life and later part of his life that turns him into a poor man both in his profession and life. To Freudian theory, Dick Diver's frustration after achieving some comfort and wealth in his life is neither a unique case nor a common phenomenon for many psychiatrists. Freud claims "*people occasionally fall ill precisely when a deeply-rooted and long-cherished wish has come to fulfillment. It seems then as though they were not able to tolerate their happiness; for there can be no question that there is a casual connection between their success and their falling ill*" (Freud 1916: 316). However, the narrator claims that it is an irony for Dick; while Nicole as his wife and patient may see his downfall, Dick cannot realize his devastating illness in his mind. As a promising psychiatry doctor, "*one of his most characteristic moods was upon him, the excitement that swept everyone up into it and was inevitably followed by his own form of melancholy*" (Fitzgerald 2000: 41). According to Burton, it is Fitzgerald's wife Zelda who makes him a deeply knowledgeable about mental illnesses. So while the illness of Fitzgerald's wife Zelda provides the novel so many fruitful descriptions and information about the mental disorder in his novel, it lets Fitzgerald present Dick Diver as a professional psychiatrist. While Burton expresses the reason behind the success of Fitzgerald's heroic doctor Dick Diver, he also comments on this heroic psychiatrist tragic downfall saying "*[Diver] could best illustrate*

the nature of neurosis in his society and the tragedies it inevitably produces" (Burton 1971: 143) but it is unluckiness of Dick to "*like all neurotics, [Diver] conceals his neurosis from himself*" (Burton 1971: 144). Thereby, it may be claimed that there is a role shift undergoing between the characters Diver and his wife Nicole to the end of the novel.

In the novel, it can be understood that Dick seems to highly appreciate the form of melancholia, and to the Freudian perspective, it is "*somatic rather than psychogenic affections*" (Freud 1997: 243). In this regard, when we considered the relationship between Dick and Rosemary, they are "*full of brave illusions about each other, tremendous illusions; so that the communion of self with self seemed to be on a plane*" (Fitzgerald 2000: 111). To the end of the novel when Dick meets Rosemary after coming back to Rome from his father's funeral in America, he is aware of the fact that "*Rome was the end of his dream of Rosemary*" (Fitzgerald 2000: 326). However, Rome is considered as a romantic city for lovers, but it ironically turns out the opposite for Dick and becomes a place of frustration and deterioration. After the break up with her, Diver's life becomes much more complex and ruined, and he becomes much more obsessive to the woman: "*he [Dick] was in love with every pretty woman he saw now, their forms at a distance, their shadow on the world*" (Fitzgerald 2000: 297). It is Diver's escapism from the reality that after his separation from Nicole, he even "*became entangled with a girl who worked in a grocery store*" (Fitzgerald 2000: 458).

Another important perspective that has been claimed by some critics about Dick Diver's collapse is related to Freud's theory of hysteria. They claim that it is Diver's hysterical fantasy and his unsatisfied wishes that drag Diver into uncertainty and a dead well. To Freudian Theory, Diver can be assumed to show "*a conflict between [his] libidinal wishes and the part of his personality we call his ego, which is the expression of his instinct of self-preservation and which also includes his ideals of his personality*" (Freud 1916: 316).

It is a fact that Diver's desire can be considered as insecure and irresponsible in his decisions both his love and professional career. At the early stage of his career Diver exhibits his vulnerability to the woman and confesses his irrational behaviors saying that he "*got to be a psychiatrist because there was a girl at St. Hilda's in Oxford that went to the same lectures*" (Fitzgerald 2000: 204). Although we do not know the further details in his relationship with that woman, it can be considered as a good example to understand how a big decision could be easily taken by Diver with an irrelevant emotional desire. However, Diver's emotional relationship is not limited to only that girl; Nicole Warren, his wife, and Rosemary are also other love-objects of in later parts of his life. In other words, Diver's sexual desires and career goals are linked to his unstable and insecure desires so that makes him fluid and contradictory character. To Shannon Ratliff, "*the importance of satisfaction and fulfillment in one's life is created through an ideal future an individual has for himself or herself*" (n.d.), and she claims that this is how Dick Diver understands the American Dream.

According to Ronald Berman, Freudian psychology and theories played an important role in Fitzgerald's literary writings, ideas, and language. Berman claims that Freudian concepts can be observed in his early short writings and especially in his last completed novel in *Tender is the Night*. To Berman, Fitzgerald from the beginning of his education and professional career was deeply interested with the explanation of psychological phenomena which in later part of his life turns into a Freudian writing "*within the orbit of Freudianism*" (Berman 2005: 53). According to James West, "*Fitzgerald had a good layman's knowledge of the current state of psychiatric treatment, both in Europe and in the United States*" (West 2011: 63). In that perspective, he claims that although the Freudian theories can be observed in Fitzgerald's almost all literary works, it can be claimed that it is best expressed in his latest novel *Tender is the Night*. To Freud, "*the psychological novel in general no doubt owes its special nature to the inclination of the modern writer to split up his ego, by self-observation, into many part-egos, and, in consequence, to personify the conflicting currents of his own mental life in several heroes*" (Freud 1908: 150). In this perspective, Fitzgerald's getting the happiness and pleasure beside pain and sadness in his life lets him create a well-structured novel by understanding the role of characters and make the novel much more fruitful in detail.

To the Freudian perception, "*the motive forces of fantasies are unsatisfied wishes and every single fantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality*" (Freud 1908: 146). However, Freud further claims that "*a common source and normal prototype of all these creations of fantasy is to be found in what are called the day-dreams of youth*" (Freud 1909: 159). So considering Freudian theory, it is possible to claim that daydreams can be observed in both male and female sexes "*in men they may be either erotic or ambitious*" (Freud 1909: 159), and coming to its relation with Dick Diver's case, it is Diver's sexual cravings in his personal development that are one of the main factors that contribute him to be a day-dreamer.

At the end of the novel, we see that Dick Diver is no longer the "*fine man*", an ambitious psychiatrist as he used to be. Freud claims that "*melancholia borrows some of its features from mourning, and the others from the process of regression from narcissistic object-choice to narcissism*" (Freud 1917: 250). It is of course not only Dick himself that suffers from hysteria and melancholia in the novel but also the importance of Diver's case stems from his being one of the most important representatives of ambiguous personality in the modern Western world. However, he was once a successful psychiatrist dealing with the reasons and solutions of the illness, but then Diver himself is caught to illness in the later part of his life. So the decline of the successful psychiatrist Dick Diver to a character of "*nobody*" can be considered as one of the most ultimate breakdowns among the characters in Fitzgerald novels.

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