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DICK DIVER-A VICTIM OF HIS PERSONA IN "TENDER IS THE NIGHT"
BY SCOTT.F.FITZGERALD

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ABSTRACT

Imagination is essential for every human being- it has the potential to create, and at times it proves to be bliss when one wants to break free from monotony. But dwelling in the world of imagination gives birth to another world-fantasy. Fantasy may seem a panacea to struggles and dullness; but its consequences prove fatal. This is true of many characters in the fiction of Scott. F.Fitzgerald. The protagonist of *Tender Is the Night* is an apt example. The paper focuses on Dick Diver, the central character, who falls a prey to his own persona.

Key Words: Dick Diver, persona, mask, Jung, repress

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INTRODUCTION

All the world's a stage and men and women are mere players is a meaningful statement by the greatest playwright of all times-William Shakespeare. It is true that the world is only a stage set for its characters to play their part. Interestingly, in the modern times, if a man plays his own part, then his purpose in life is fulfilled. If he fails to play his part, or rather if he tries to play another man's part then he not only becomes a social failure, but is also prone to exhibit psychic disturbances.

A work of art is understood completely, only when the entire field surrounding it is comprehended. In other words, a background of the author, his age and the circumstances under which he wrote the novel helps the readers to justly appreciate or depreciate his work. The world-renowned Greek Classic epic, *The Iliad* is a story of Helen's abduction and the war that pursued. Imagine the same story being retold in the modern times. Nobody would laud Helen's disappearance nor would a war follow the incident. The two

families involved would only end up in the police station seeking help; and the incident flashed in the papers, and if it is a celebrity, then it would be a juicy page for gossip. In the ancient days, bravery and war settled disputes. It is this background of the age and its paraphernalia that adds value to a text.

To grasp the works of Scott.F.Fitzgerald, a brief knowledge of the age is certainly the minimum criterion. An American novelist, who is reputed for his great work, *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald is very much the son of his times. The America of the twentieth century presented a very different and a disturbing scene to any person. Before the dawn of the twentieth century, progress happened at a normal pace in all the professional fields. There was a shift from the days of the Wild West- moving from the gunfighter, mining, homesteading and outlaw mentality into becoming a fierce competitor to occupy the number one status in the world.

Enormous changes occurred in almost all the fields in America of the twentieth century. The

tremendous industrial growth, luxurious standard of living and the promise of American life yielded temporal proliferation. In an effort to industrialize and civilize the nation, America had to face challenges in dealing with the Child Labor Laws and Prohibition. This led to the outlaw mentality spawning a new breed of people who resorted to bootlegging. There was a huge leap in material sophistication that strengthened the economic strata of a man's life- but a price had to be paid for it. Though monstrous strides were taken to facilitate materialistic growth, the moral face of man suffered a huge dent. It resulted in impairment of virtues and moral principles. The American society revealed that constructing a house was far easier than to build a home. The moral decadence of the twentieth century is a picture of 'white washed tombs' where man seemingly appeared to be wealthy outside only to have a rotten, ruined, stinking inside. This is the portrait of man in the fiction of Fitzgerald. Hence, the background plays a dominant role in his novels. Ioana Stamatescu in an article on the novel comments on the age and the hero of Fitzgerald:

Fitzgerald's goal in *Tender Is the Night* was to create a novel without a hero, or rather a modern Odyssey that would show the present condition of man as lacking in heroism. Heroism, Fitzgerald implies, is no longer possible in an era of corruption and moral disintegration that threatens and finally annihilates any attempt at noblesse. Heroism is an anachronistic value in the America of the twenties and thirties. (64)

Tender is the Night published in 1934, is Scott Fitzgerald's last completed novel. The story primarily deals about human deterioration, the disintegration of love and marriage, and the mental illness of the central characters. Dick Diver, the protagonist is a psychiatrist married to the beautiful Nicole Warren. The novel is divided into three parts. The first part is narrated from Rosemary Hoyt's perspective. She is a beautiful actress, portrayed as a child of eighteen years old. When the novel begins, she is yet to leave her childlike qualities behind. She is attracted to Dick Diver when she first sets her sight on him at the French Riviera. The second part of the novel digs into the past life of the central characters- Dick and

Nicole. Dick Diver is very intelligent and excels in his professional field. Nicole suffers from schizophrenia and is taken care of, by Dick. He marries her though he himself is unsure about his feelings for her-but finally believes that he truly is in love and gets settled in spite of repeated warnings from Franz [Gregorovius](#), his fellow practitioner. Their marriage races off to a fabulous start. The final part of the novel returns to the present where the protagonist yields himself to the attractions of Rosemary, finally losing everything he has earned-marriage, love, profession and reputation.

Fitzgerald's novels, in general are psychological. It reveals the psyche of his characters with the background of the country's moral decadence. Alcoholism, shallow relationships, emotional losses, financial stability and flapper culture are the common themes which surfaces his novels. Dick Diver is a victim to all these societal breakdowns in his life. Astonishingly, he is a psychiatrist and had showed signs of becoming a promising individual in his life.

Dick Diver's character poses an interesting platform for psychological analysis. Among various interpretations, the study focuses on Jung's concept of 'Persona' in delineating the inner self of Dick Diver. Carl Gustav Jung is a notable Swiss Psychologist and Psychotherapist who dealt in Analytical Psychology. He is very popular for his concept-the Collective Unconscious. He elaborates on the common traits of persona in "The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious": "The persona is a complicated system of relations between individual consciousness and society, fittingly enough a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and, on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual." (305)

Diver's life exhibits phenomenal traits of the Persona. Even as the novel begins, the Divers way of life is evident. The novel opens with a description of the "large, proud, rose-colored" Gausse's Hotel on the French Riviera. It has only recently become a coveted resort of the "notable and fashionable people." (3) The world of the Divers is full of people and parties and gaiety. Dick Diver has always made people happy and he considered it

his duty, perhaps a part of his profession to satisfy the needs of his people.

The parties Dick throws are extravagant, and he takes a pleasure in sweeping all of his guests into the excitement of the evening, into his "carnivals of affection," but later after the parties, he reflects on "his own form of melancholy" In those moments, he ponders over "the waste and extravagance involved" (27). The novel begins in 1925, focusing on the post-marital life of Dick. He has not descended from a wealthy family like his wife Nicole. But after his marriage, he slips easily into the shoes of an extravagant lifestyle. In his appetite to make people happy, he begins to lose his true identity right from the beginning of the novel. He begins to wear the mask of pleasing people, as is the social custom of the elite.

The persona of Dick does not take control over his conscious self suddenly. Nor does it rule over him when the novel begins. On close observation, it is not Nicole, but Dick Diver's psyche that appears to be disturbed. As the second part of the novel shifts to 1917, revealing the past life of Dick, one sees him as a twenty-six-year-old doctor. He hails from Connecticut, and was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford in 1914 before returning to get his degree at Johns Hopkins University. His professional excellence as a valuable scholar protects him from participating in the First World War. He later goes to Vienna to meet Freud and writes a pamphlet that was later published. This was the great "heroic period" (116) in Dick's life. He was known as the "lucky Dick" in New Haven. He showed great signs for a successful doctor in his profession.

At Yale, he finds his own mind similar to that of Ed Elkins, his roommate. Dick thinks that he must be "less intact, even faintly destroyed" (116). He resolves that "the price of his intactness was incompleteness" (p. 117). The novel shows that Dick's belief in long-lasting success: he thinks that he is a complete and successful human and a professional only when he has withstood misfortune and adversity. He shows vigor and life when he arrives in Zurich. But his outlook towards life is not realistic. He begins to dwell in an illusory world of "eternal strength and health, and of the essential goodness of people" (p. 117). He joined at a

neurological unit in Bar-sur-Aube in France, where the work was merely executive. He even completed his short textbook and returned to Zurich. Though he felt like a mere "toy-maker" (p. 118) of a doctor in Zurich, he decides to stay for another two years. It is during this span of two years that he meets Nicole as a patient suffering from psychic disturbances. Dick's life as portrayed in the second part may seemingly appear to be the 'heroic period' in his life. But his true character begins to suffer loss from this initial period. The novel clearly says that Dick was never interested in Psychiatry. He chose this field not because he was interested in the subject but only to set eyes on a girl whom he was attracted to. This brings out the nature of Dick. From a young age, he develops a character to please others and this later becomes his second skin. In the essay "The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious", Jung compares the true self with the persona using the image of a mirror:

Whoever looks into the mirror of the water will see first of all his own face. Whoever goes to himself risks a confrontation with himself. The mirror does not flatter, it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely, the face we never show to the world because we cover it with the persona, the mask of the actor. But the mirror lies behind the mask and shows the true face. (43)

Dick Diver's mask of making other people happy by putting on a pleasant face, serves a major cause for his downfall. His affair with Rosemary Hoyt ruins his marriage life. In the beginning, he tries to show off his good self by rejecting Rosemary's advances. He tells her that she is only a child and tries to exhibit fatherly love towards her. But his true sexual desires overpower him; and his mask begins to tear off, revealing his vulnerabilities. It is in this third part of the novel, when he deteriorates morally, psychologically and socially, does he begin to realize that his identity is heavily dependent on the financial affluence of his wife-patient Nicole. When she provides money to set up a clinic, for the first time, a dawn of realization comes on him. He realizes that it is not his money but Nicole's. His affair with Rosemary gradually brings out his true

self which he has repressed so far in the garb of his persona. Ultimately it becomes too late to mend his persona-mask because Nicole walks out of marriage. Meanwhile, he becomes an alcoholic, is thrown in prison, shouts at the guards, resorts to violence in beating up a taxi driver and tarnishes his reputation. He also loses his license as a psychiatrist.

Conclusion

Dick Diver's persona costs him his profession as well as his personal life. One also sees that Nicole, a psychologically disturbed character becoming more and saner while Dick Diver sinking deep into insanity because of his social face which he fabricates to create a definite impression upon others. In this process, he tries to conceal his true nature by wearing the persona like he wears his clothes. And in Dick's own words, when misfortune strikes, his mask is ripped open, resulting in his fall from the heights of prosperity deep down to the depths of adversity.

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