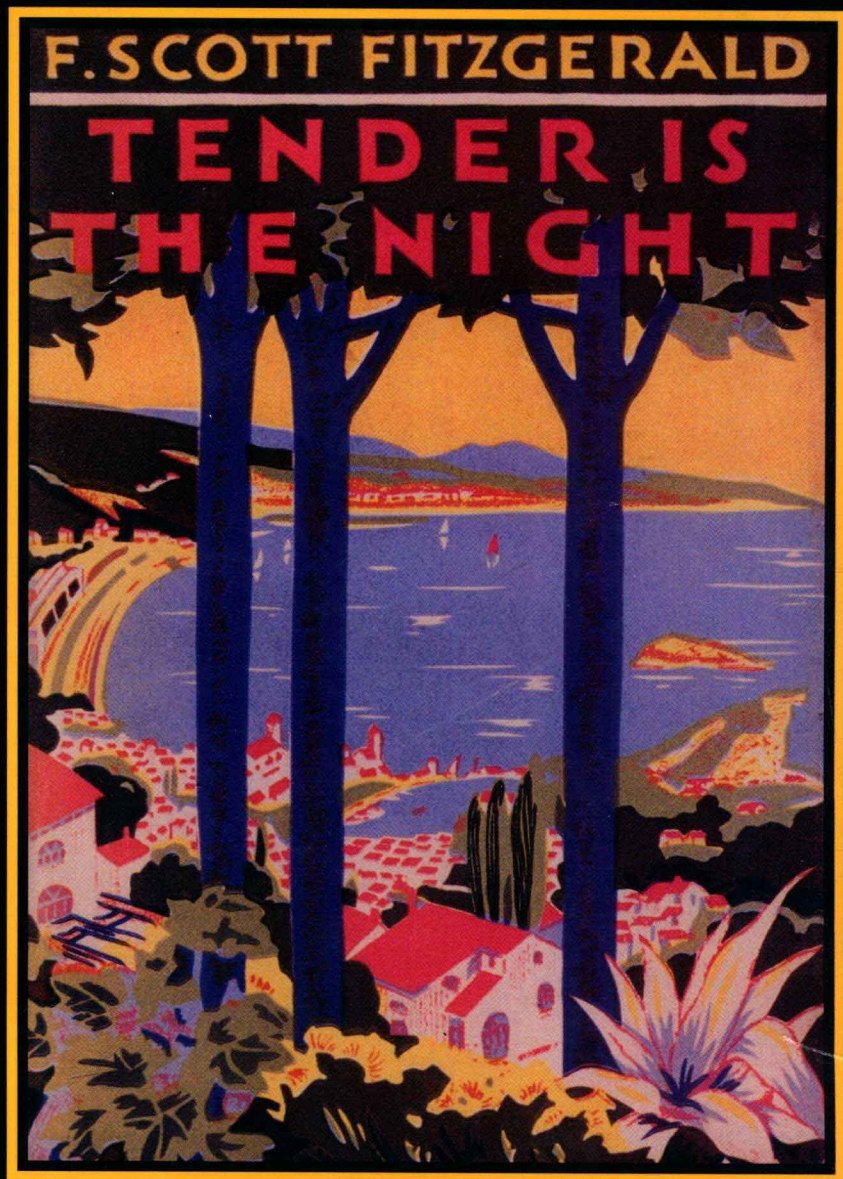


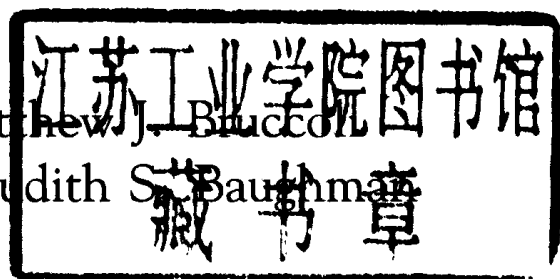
READER'S COMPANION



MATTHEW J. BRUCCOLI
with Judith S. Baughman

READER'S COMPANION TO
F. Scott Fitzgerald's
Tender Is the Night

Matthew J. Bruccoli
with Judith S. Baughman



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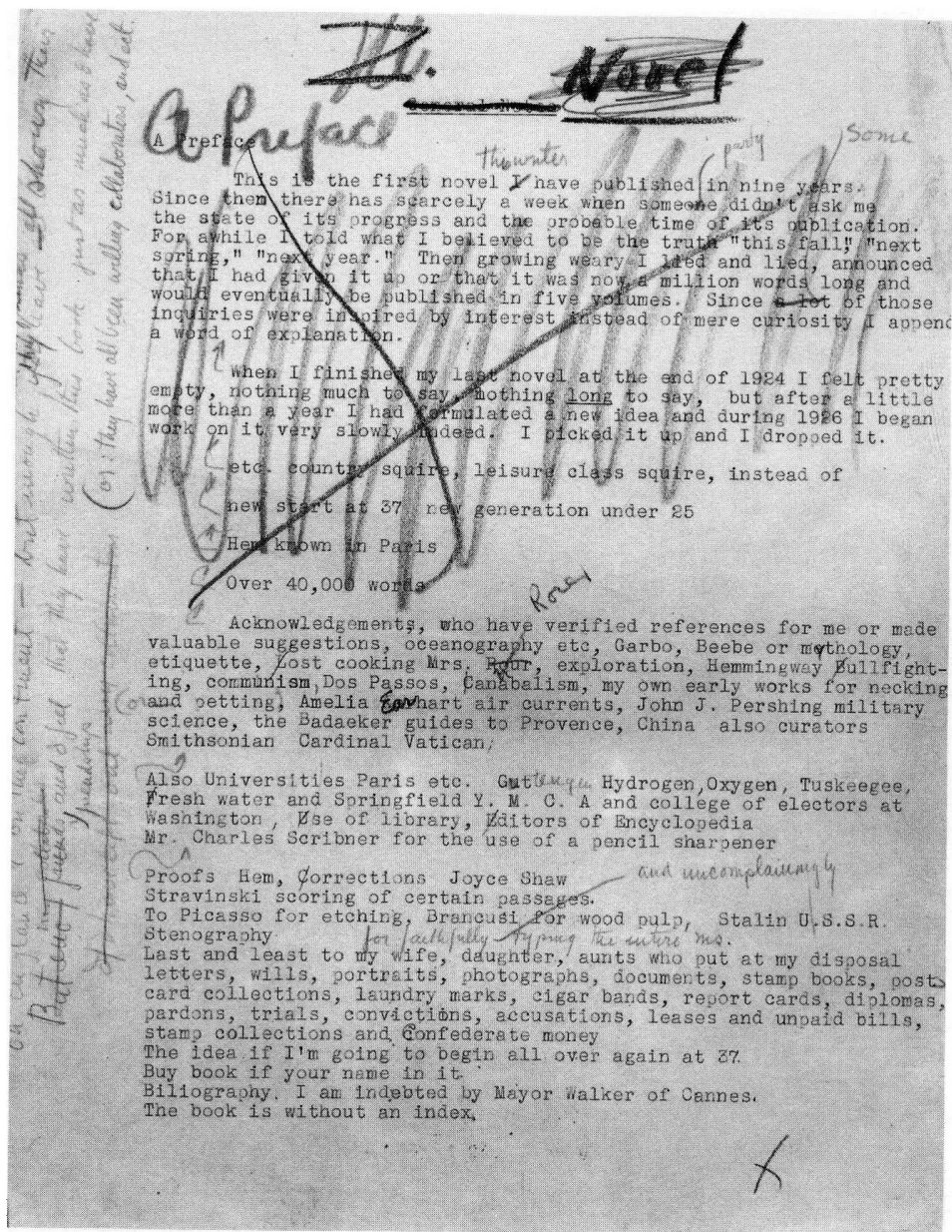
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Reader's Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald's
Tender Is the Night



F. Scott Fitzgerald's Preface to *Tender Is the Night* began as a serious statement but became a parody.

Still for Scottie
When the saint passes, the feast is over.

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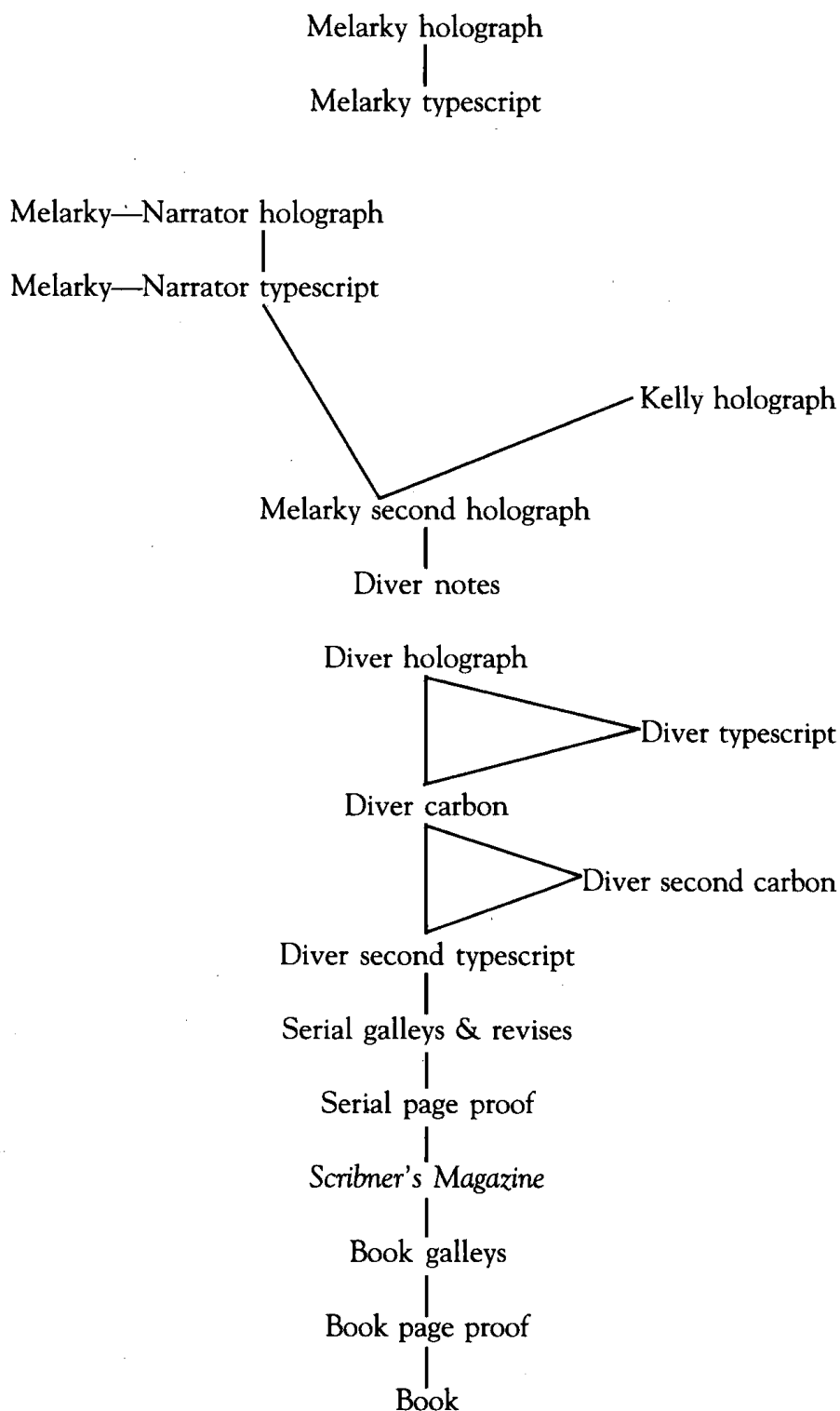
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My discussions with Fredson Bowers when we were planning the Cambridge Edition of the works of F. Scott Fitzgerald influenced the emendation policy advocated here.

See the dedication.

Diagram of the Development of *Tender Is the Night*



Reader's Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald's
Tender Is the Night

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Introduction

This volume is not a critical study: it does not analyze the putative meanings of *Tender Is the Night*.¹ The functions of this vade mecum are to encourage useful reading of the novel by explaining or identifying the references that F. Scott Fitzgerald expected fit readers to recognize, and to correct the errors—especially in the time scheme—that distract readers and damage the work. Competent fiction writers know what they are doing—or trying to do. Otherwise reading fiction would be a waste of time.

1. Composition

On 1 May 1925, three weeks after publication of *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote to Scribners editor Maxwell Perkins: “The happiest thought I have is of my new novel—it is something really NEW in form, idea, structure—the model for the age that Joyce and Stien are searching for, that Conrad didn’t find.”²

By late April 1926 Fitzgerald informed Harold Ober, his agent: “The novel is about one fourth done and will be delivered for possible serialization about January 1st. It will be about 75,000 words long, divided into 12 chapters, concerning tho this is absolutely confidential such a case as that girl who shot her mother on the Pacific coast last year.”³

The novel was to be about Francis Melarky, an American in his twenties who murders his domineering mother while they are traveling in Europe. The matricide version occupied Fitzgerald, with many interruptions, from 1925 to 1930. There were five drafts—

three in third-person and two with a narrator—but no draft progressed beyond four chapters. Francis Melarky and his mother arrive on the Riviera; he is taken up by attractive American expatriates Seth and Dinah Piper (Roreback) and the alcoholic Abe Grant (Herkimer); Francis, a movie technician, visits a Riviera movie studio, and he acts as a second in a duel; then Melarky, the Grants, and the Pipers go to Paris. There is a flashback opening chapter in which Melarky is beaten by the police in Rome. Many of these incidents are recognizable in *Tender Is the Night*.

The character of Francis Melarky was loosely based on Theodore Chanler, a young expatriate American composer—who was not involved in a violent crime. The Pipers are recognizable as Sara and Gerald Murphy (see Explanatory Notes, Dedication), the Fitzgeralds' close friends at Cap d'Antibes and later. Abe Grant is a portrait of Ring Lardner (see Explanatory Notes, 12.1). The Pipers and Grant were developed into the Divers and Abe North in the published novel.

Trans-Atlantic travel and the effects of Europe on Americans were the subjects of Fitzgerald short stories during the time he was working on the novel. As George Anderson demonstrates (see Appendix D), themes, descriptions, and phrases were transplanted from the novel drafts to stories or from stories to the novel. In June 1929 Fitzgerald reported to Perkins: "I am working night + day on novel from new angle that I think will solve previous difficulties."⁴ This "new angle" was a plot utilizing movie director Lew Kelly and his wife Nicole, who are going to Europe for an extended vacation. Fitzgerald wrote two manuscript chapters set on shipboard. Also aboard the ship is a young actress named Rosemary who hopes to impress Kelly. No transcript survives for the Kelly chapters, which indicates that Fitzgerald abandoned the angle. There is evidence that Fitzgerald returned to the Melarky material early in 1930, assembling 127 typescript pages from the previous drafts.

Zelda Fitzgerald's collapse and hospitalization in Switzerland, commencing in April 1930, interrupted work on the novel; and it provided Fitzgerald with material about which he felt strongly, superseding the unfelt Melarky plot. A signal to Fitzgerald's new concerns is provided by "One Trip Abroad," a story written in August 1930, while Zelda was at Les Rives de Prangins clinic on

Lake Geneva, Switzerland. This story published in *The Saturday Evening Post* in October is a forecast of *Tender*. An attractive young American couple, Nicole and Nelson Kelly, go to France intending to study music and painting; but they are caught up in dissipation and become patients in a Swiss clinic.

The Fitzgeralds returned to America in September 1931. In January 1932 Fitzgerald reported to Perkins: "At last for the first time in two years + 1/2 I am going to spend five consecutive months on my novel. I am actually six thousand dollars ahead Am replanning it to include what's good in what I have, adding 41,000 new words + publishing. Don't tell Ernest or anyone—let them think what they want—you're the only one whose ever consistently felt faith in me anyhow."⁵ Work was interrupted by Zelda Fitzgerald's February relapse and hospitalization at the Phipps Psychiatric Clinic of Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. Fitzgerald's plot outline ("Sketch"), chronologies, and character sketches were prepared in Montgomery, Alabama, early in the year or at "La Paix," the house he rented in May 1932 at Towson, Maryland, near Baltimore. In August 1932 he made this entry in his *Ledger*: "The Novel now plotted + planned, never more to be permanently interrupted."⁶



Fitzgerald's note on the Swiss clinic where Zelda Fitzgerald was treated (Brucoli Collection, University of South Carolina).

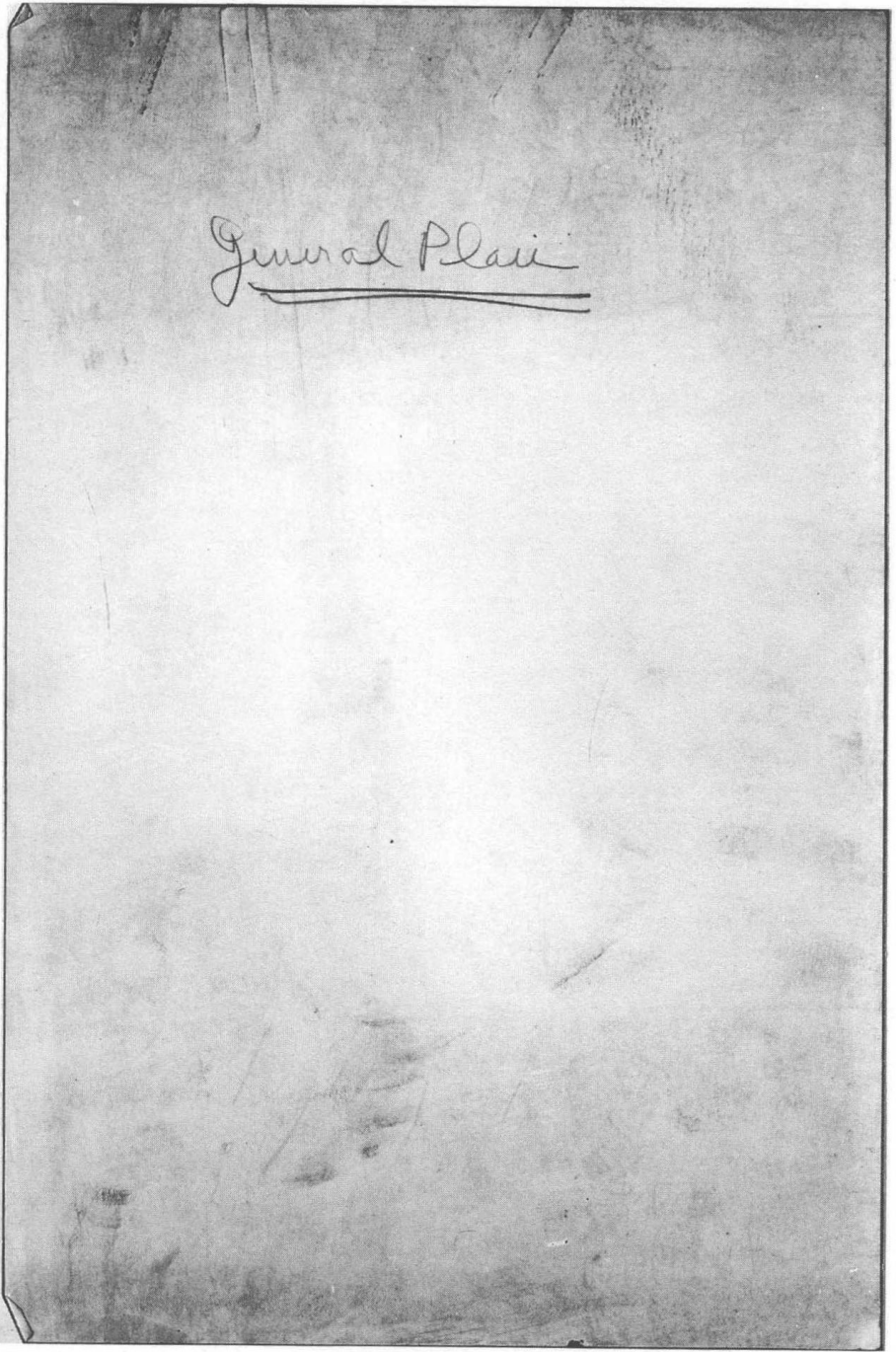
His wife's illness determined Fitzgerald's final approach to the novel. The details of Nicole Diver's illness were based on Zelda Fitzgerald's illness, as shown by the chart comparing the two case histories, although the incest factor in Nicole's collapse was apparently invention. Zelda Fitzgerald's illness supplied more than factual background for *Tender*: it provided the emotional focus of the novel. Diver's response to Nicole's illness derives from Fitzgerald's feelings about his wife's collapse and relapses.

In the published novel the major departures from the "Sketch" have to do with the nature of Nicole's insanity and Diver's political ideas. She does not manifest a homicidal mania in *Tender*, nor does she commit a murder that Diver conceals. Diver is not a communist in the novel; he is apolitical. Nothing in the surviving drafts indicates that Fitzgerald tried to develop these ideas.

The criticism has been made that Dick Diver is not a convincing figure as a psychiatrist. It is true that he is not surrounded with medical details, but *Tender* is not about psychiatry. Fitzgerald's note under "Method of Dealing with Sickness Material" indicates that the paucity of medical details was deliberate: "Only suggest from the most remote facts. Not like doctor's stories."

Fitzgerald's memo on the three-part structure establishes that the point-of-view shifts in the novel were planned from the inception of work. Book I shows the Divers through Rosemary's adoring eyes. It is brilliant surface, with hints of the corruption beneath the facade Diver maintains. "From outside mostly" provides the rationale for the introductory flashback. Although Fitzgerald reconsidered the flashback structure after the book was published, the plans and drafts show that he did not alter the structural plan during the writing of *Tender*. In Book II the reader is taken behind the barricade of charm to learn Nicole's case history as Diver did. Book III provides Diver's attempts to work out his destiny—to break the bond with Nicole, to cure her, and to save himself.

The preliminary planning material supports the conclusion that *Tender* is not just the result of work Fitzgerald began in 1932; the published novel is the product of a cumulative process, salvaging the seemingly wasted work on the Melarky drafts. The dominant theme—the deterioration of a personality under the distractions and dissipations of expatriate life in its most attractive form—endured throughout the process of composition.



Pp. 5-21: Notes for the Third Version of *Tender Is the Night*, working title "Dick Diver" (Princeton University Library).