

A Study of Dick's Tragic Fate in *Tender Is the Night* from the Perspective of Binary Opposition

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Abstract

Tender Is the Night is a long autobiographical novel by Fitzgerald, focusing on the tragic fate of the protagonist Dick. This study analyzes Dick's tragic fate from the perspective of binary opposition, and believes that it stems from three aspects: the first is the realistic opposition in the context of the prosperity and decline of American society in the 1920s; the second is the inherent contradiction of Dick's personal qualities; and the third is the contradiction in interpersonal relationships between Dick and other characters. These oppositions reveal Dick's inner struggles and conflicts, driving his fate towards tragedy and profoundly reflecting the complexity of human nature and the cruelty of society.

Keywords

Tender Is the Night, Binary Opposition, Tragic Fate, Dick.

1. Introduction

Tender Is the Night, published in 1934, is an autobiographical novel by contemporary American writer F. Scott Fitzgerald, which is regarded as a romantic expression of serious realist themes. Fitzgerald is one of the most outstanding American novelists of the twentieth century, whose representative works include *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender Is the Night*, and is one of the speakers of the Jazz Age and representative writer of the Lost Generation in the 1920s.

Tender Is the Night depicts the talented psychiatrist Dick from the Midwest of the United States. While studying pathology in Switzerland, Dick met Nicole, a wealthy woman who suffered from mental illness which stemmed from her incestuous relationship with her millionaire father. During Nicole's treatment, she fell in love with Dick, who chose to marry her despite being discouraged by others and wholeheartedly loved and helped her. However, after ten years of marriage, Nicole, who had recovered, mercilessly abandoned Dick and pursued happiness with the wealthy young man Tommy. Dick and Rosemary fell into an emotional entanglement of depression and emptiness as a result.

In the dark and cold social context, what Dick once believed in gradually collapsed, and he lost himself and became a victim of the upper class. This novel not only reflects the ups and downs of Fitzgerald's personal life, emotions, and career, but also integrates and transforms his personal misfortune into a tragedy of human society, with strong tragic emotions expressed between the lines.

The academic community has conducted in-depth discussions on the study of this novel. The research mainly focuses on the psychological changes of Dick's character, his relationship with surrounding characters, and the social style reflected in the work. This paper intends to analyze Dick's tragic fate in *Tender Is the Night* from the perspective of binary opposition. By exploring Dick's own opposition, as well as the antagonistic relationship between Dick and his surrounding characters and social environment, it reveals the root of his tragic fate and explores how Fitzgerald shapes this complex and profound character image through the technique of binary opposition.

2. Literature References

Tender is the Night is a classic novel. It is full of profound meanings, such as the protagonist's self-loss and return, the destruction of the American dream and so on, which makes him favored by many critics at home and abroad, and the tragic fate of the main character Dick has been widely discussed. There are more studies from the moral and psychological point of view to analyze Dick's personal qualities and choosing mistakes. There are also studies from the perspective of the social environment and changing values to explore Dick's dilemma, but fewer studies adopt systematic theories, such as binary opposition theory, to analyze the inner mechanism of Dick's fate. In structuralist theory, binary opposition is a powerful tool for explaining human thought, culture and language at the grassroots level. As a well-established method of textual analysis, binary opposition is widely found in literary works, and the principle of binary opposition has become an important method of literary analysis.

Among the existing research on *Tender Is the Night*, foreign critics study more diverse perspectives, mainly focusing on Fitzgerald's writing skills, narrative and artistic techniques. From previous study of *Tender Is the Night* to today's study, writing skills has been a hot issue. For instance, Aiki (2010) explores the role of visual imagery in the novel. He analyzes the vivid descriptions and metaphors used by Fitzgerald to depict various scenes and characters, highlighting how these visual elements contribute to the overall narrative. By examining the interplay between words and images, Aiki delves into the complex emotional and psychological layers presented in *Tender Is the Night*. Pitcher (1981) delves into the structural intricacies of Fitzgerald's novel, exploring the fragmented narrative structure, noting the juxtaposition of chronological order and disorder within the story. By examining the interconnectedness of the various characters and their fragmented lives, Pitcher offers insights into the thematic significance of the novel's unconventional structure.

In addition to Fitzgerald's writing skills, the themes of *Tender Is the Night* have been the subject of many studies, particularly the theme of the shattered American dream and the tragic fate of the main character, Dick. For instance, Keshmiri and Mahdikhani (2016) focus on the socio-cultural context of Fitzgerald's novel. They analyze the narration against the backdrop of the American dream, exploring how the characters' struggles and shortcomings reflect the larger societal disillusionment of the time. The authors shed light on the historical implications and the portrayal of shattered dreams in *Tender Is the Night*. Merrill (1983) examines the novel through the lens of tragedy. Merrill explores the tragic elements presented in the story, drawing parallels to classical tragic narratives. By analyzing the downfall of the characters and the themes of loss and despair, Merrill offers a compelling reading of *Tender Is the Night* as a work of tragic literature.

With the development of Western literary criticism theory, the study of *Tender Is the Night* tends to be diversified. Philosophical perspectives are also carried on *Tender Is the Night*, providing a new perspective on the interpretation of the text. Zhou (2019) presents a philosophical perspective. The author explores the tensions between rationality and irrationality in the novel, analyzing the characters' struggles with conflicting desires and the consequences of their choices. By unraveling the philosophical implications embedded in the narrative, Zhou provides a thought-provoking study of *Tender Is the Night*. In the novel, Dick's rationality is defeated by irrationality and shattered by incest; War has become a symbol of irrationality and has appeared multiple times in novels, symbolizing the triumph of irrationality over rationality and leaving physical and mental trauma on humanity.

In summary, the selected studies provide a comprehensive exploration of *Tender Is the Night* from various angles. They delve into the visual imagery, socio-cultural context, tragic elements, narrative structure, and philosophical implications of the novel, offering valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of this literary work.

In China, in recent years, domestic scholars have made a great deal of insightful commentaries on *Tender Is the Night* from different perspectives, mainly including thematic studies: especially the theme of tragedy. Ji (2005) examines the tragic elements and themes represented in Fitzgerald's novel. Ji analyzes the downfall of the characters and the conflicts they face, delving into the psychological and emotional aspects that contribute to the overall tragic atmosphere of the story. The thesis provides a comprehensive study of the tragic nature of *Tender Is the Night*.

Most studies start from the perspective of self-disillusionment and broken ideals. For example, Liu (2020) focuses on the exploration of the novel's tragic aspects, examining the characters' experiences of loss, disillusionment, and the disintegration of their ideals, unraveling the tragedy that permeates the narrative. The article offers a comprehensive analysis of the tragic elements within *Tender Is the Night*. Li (2015) expounds the psychological disintegration of the character Dick by examining the factors and events that lead to Dick's mental breakdown, analyzing the effects of his interactions and experiences within the novel. By exploring the themes of disillusionment and the collapse of ideals, Li provides insights into the psychological journey of Dick in *Tender Is the Night*.

Exploring the protagonist's self-discovery and identity has been another important theme of *Tender Is the Night*. For instance, Wei (2008) delves into the exploration of the theme of self-discovery and identity in *Tender Is the Night* by analyzing the journey of the characters in search of their lost selves and examining the process of self-realization and restoration. By examining the psychological and emotional transformations of the characters, Wei offers a deep understanding of the novel's exploration of the self. Zhang and Xiong (1999) examine the novel's exploration of the characters' quest to escape from an idealized world and their subsequent return to reality, analyzing the tragic implications of this journey and discuss the aesthetic significance of the novel's portrayal of the human condition. Their study provides valuable insights into the tragic aesthetic aspects of *Tender Is the Night*.

Some scholars interpret the story in terms of the Dick character himself. Ma (2022) explores the character of Dick in *Tender Is the Night* as an individual who withdraws from a society that has lost its moral compass. Ma examines the reasons behind Dick's retreat and analyzes the implications of his actions within the novel's social context. By focusing on Dick's role as a representative of societal disillusionment, Ma provides valuable insights into the larger themes of the novel. Other scholars examine the conflicts within Dick's persona, analyzing his descent into despair and the factors contributing to his tragic downfall. For instance, Cheng (2012) delves into the tragic elements of Dick's character. By exploring Dick's tragic trajectory, Cheng provides an insightful analysis of the character's tragedy within the context of *Tender Is the Night*.

Some scholars interpret the story by examining the historical and biographical contexts, which shed light on the connections between the fictional world of *Tender Is the Night* and the author's personal experiences or influences. Duan (2014) explores the real-life inspirations and prototypes behind the characters and events in Fitzgerald's novel.

In recent years, *Tender Is the Night* has been studied from newer perspectives, adopting a systematic binary opposition theory to interpret the story. Scholars focus on the concepts of binary opposition and transformation in the novel, exploring the tragic fate of the character of Dick through the lens of dichotomy. He (2016) analyzes binary oppositions, such as light and darkness, innocence and corruption, and explores how these dichotomies contribute to the overall narrative structure and character development in *Tender Is the Night*. Zhong (2022) analyzes the contrasting elements and forces that shape Dick's tragic trajectory, examining the conflicts between love and ambition, dreams and reality. By utilizing a binary opposition framework, Zhong offers a fresh perspective on Dick's tragic journey in the novel.

In summary, the studies in China provide further insights into *Tender Is the Night*. They explore various aspects of the novel, including the withdrawal from a lost society, the theme of self-discovery, the analysis of tragic fate from binary opposition perspective, and the examination of the characters' escape from ideals. These studies contribute to a holistic understanding of the novel's themes and literary significance. This article adopts the systematic theory of binary opposition to analyze the reasons for Dick's tragic fate.

3. The Theory of Binary Opposition

Domestic scholars have already elaborated the structuralist binary opposition analysis method and applied it to the appreciation of foreign literary works. Compared with the traditional textual analysis method, the introduction of structuralism's binary opposition analysis method into the research can help us to examine and understand the novel from a new perspective, and expand the horizons of novel research. In structuralist theory, binary opposition is a powerful tool to explain human thought, culture and language at the grassroots level. The principle of binary opposition is the theoretical foundation of modern structuralist linguistics founded by the famous linguist Saussure. He put forward a series of dichotomous concepts in his famous book *Cours de linguistique générale*: Signifier and Signified, Diachronic and Synchronic, Langue and Parole, and Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic.

Binary opposition, a principle to which the structuralist school attaches great importance, has been equally emphasized by Western scholars in addition to the structuralist school. In Western literary criticism, the principle of binary opposition is a common method of analysis, usually used to contrast and oppose two opposite concepts or elements, embodied in poetry as well as other kinds of literary and artistic works. For example, in *Pride and Prejudice*, the author Jane Austen explores the conflict and balance between reason and sensibility through the relationship between the main characters, Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. Some texts explore the opposition between individual will and fate. For example, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the protagonist Hamlet tries to free himself from his fate but is ultimately subject to it, demonstrating the complex relationship between freedom and fate. Literature often explores the opposition between good and evil. For example, Frank Herbert's *Dune*, which describes the struggle between the good heroes who fight against the forces of evil, demonstrates the theme of the opposition between good and evil. These oppositions not only make the text more colorful, but also help to delve into the themes and meanings behind the work. Literary critics in the West, mainly use the principle of binary opposition to analyze some typical texts. This study starts from the perspective of binary opposition and analyzes Dick's tragic fate from three aspects: the first is the realistic opposition in the context of the prosperity and decline of American society in the 1920s; the second is the inherent contradiction of Dick's personal qualities; and the third is the contradiction in interpersonal relationships between Dick and other characters.

4. Dick's Tragic Fate Caused by Binary Opposition in American Dream

The American Dream refers to the ideal of achieving a better life in the United States through hard work, courage, creativity, and determination, rather than relying on the assistance of specific social classes and others. The American Dream is a widely believed belief among Americans. Opportunity is the core of the soul. Wisdom, diligence, and perseverance are necessary conditions for the American Dream and the enormous vertical mobility of social classes. In particular, the most prominent feature of the American Dream is the mobility from lower to upper social classes. However, the American Dream has both positive and negative aspects. Although the United States vigorously advocates equality, inequality still exists, and the lower class is still subject to some restrictions in the pursuit of freedom and equality. Therefore,

grasping the American Dream from the perspective of binary opposition can enhance our understanding of its complexity. Dick's tragic fate also stems from his pursuit of the American Dream in the context of this era.

4.1. Dream and Reality

"The American Dream" is the core value that Americans believe in, and freedom and democracy are the core values of the United States. In a narrower sense, it means that as long as one can make achievements in the United States through one's own positive and unremitting efforts, one can live the life one wants. However, in real life, people often face obstacles and difficulties, such as social class, racial discrimination, economic inequality, etc., and these real-life challenges may limit an individual's pursuit of the American dream. Dream and reality are also the themes of *Tender Is the Night*, which deeply explores the protagonist's difficulties and dilemmas encountered in the process of pursuing dreams, and ultimately defeated by reality.

As for the protagonist Dick, his fantasies about love and career achievements collapsed. Dick came from a pastor's family and was taught by his father to aspire to become an excellent psychologist. He received a good education from a young age, worked hard to study, and performed exceptionally academically. "He was an Oxford Rhodes Scholar from Connecticut in 1914. He returned home for a final year at Johns Hopkins, and took his degree" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 124).

However, after marrying Nicole, Dick devoted a lot of time to caring for and treating Nicole, so he didn't have time to improve his career. At the same time, in order to enter the upper class, and narrow the class gap between himself and Nicole, Dick participated in many activities to please and cater to the upper class, such as attending parties, drinking with them, dancing, and gaining more opportunities to communicate with them. So Dick slowly deviated from the main path and abandoned his career.

Furthermore, Dick's love also collapsed and shattered. In Dick's heart, he has always yearned for pure and romantic love. When he first met Nicole, Dick was deeply infatuated with her and fell in love with her. "Her cream-colored dress, alternately blue or gray as they walked, and her very blonde hair, dazzled Dick——whenever he turned toward her she was smiling a little, her face lighting up like an angel's when they came into the range of a roadside arc" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 147). He admitted that he had fallen in love with Nicole and wanted to marry her. As Dick says: "I'm half in love with her——the question of marrying her has passed through my mind" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 153). Dick believed that love should be loyal and faithful, so initially he repeatedly rejected Rosemary's pursuit, who was attracted by Dick's restrained temperament and pursued him fiercely especially during his trip to Paris. But Dick refused Rosemary in order not to harm Nicole and Rosemary, and to maintain his love for Nicole. However, Nicole's feelings towards her and Dick were not as loyal as this. After Nicole's condition gradually improved under Dick's care, she realized that she did not love Dick. After meeting Tommy, Nicole had an affair with him and abandoned Dick. From then on, Dick's love completely disappeared. Under the contradiction between dreams and reality, Dick's fate was moving further and further towards the path of tragedy.

4.2. Equality and Inequality

Since the founding of the United States, equality has been a fundamental tenet of the nation. The Declaration of Independence in 1776 explicitly proposed the concept that "all men are created equal" and that "they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights", laying the foundation for American democracy. However, in early American history, this concept of equality was not fully realized. Initially, only white men who owned land were allowed to participate in political decision-making, and the rights of women, black people, and other ethnic minorities were deprived or severely restricted. Over time, American society has gradually

developed towards greater equality. The abolition of slavery, the expansion of suffrage, and the realization of women's suffrage are all important milestones in the democratic process of the United States. However, even after these reforms, issues of racial and gender inequality still exist and have not been fully resolved in certain aspects to this day. In addition to racial and gender inequality, there are other forms of inequality in American society. For example, the unequal socio-economic status has led to the widening wealth gap, making it difficult for some people to enjoy basic living security and opportunities.

In Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*, in Dick's pursuit of the American Dream, inequality also existed. Dick was born into an ordinary family and falls in love with and marries Nicole, a rich girl, while Nicole's sister believes that Dick married Nicole for money rather than love, simply because Dick is not in the same social class as they are, and she has always viewed the marriage as nothing more than a doctor paid for by Nicole. They view Dick as being from the lower class and wanting to make the leap to the upper class, and they are resentful of him. As Baby says: "We own you, and you'll admit it sooner or later. It is absurd to keep up the pretense of independence" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 195).

The difference in Nicole and Dick's way of thinking and concept of money stems from the huge class difference between their births and the money-oriented American society of the time. While Dick was born into a family of ordinary ministers, Nicole's father was a famous American plutocrat. Dick was influenced by his father and grew up with a frugal life, while Nicole lived a profligate life. After getting married, Dick, faced with the luxurious and unrestrained life of the upper class and Nicole's money, gradually deviates from his self-possessed and thrifty middle-class track. With Nicole's encouragement, their life is no longer as simple as it was when they were first married, but more and more tends to be extravagant. Under the influence of this unequal economic situation and social class, the marriage and love between Nicole and Dick were also unequal. Dick is overwhelmed by the wealth of the Warren family and becomes subservient, gradually losing himself and withering away. Eventually, Dick embarked on a tragic path.

4.3. Material Affluence and Spiritual Decay

After the end of World War I, the United States entered the Jazz Age. The Jazz Age (usually referring to the 1920s to early 1930s) was a prosperous and dynamic era, characterized by a thriving stock market, thriving industries, and economic prosperity, social change, and cultural innovation. In this era, the American economy is flourishing, and people are enjoying unprecedented material wealth and social pleasure. In this materialistic world, from the wealthy and cultured upper class to the impoverished and destitute class, the entire society exhibits a pathological appearance. People are indifferent, selfish, heartless, ungrateful, morally collapsed, lacking faith, moral standards, or social order. The once advocated noble human nature seems to have disappeared. Fitzgerald is one of the famous writers of the Jazz Age, whose works reflect the richness of the material world and the barrenness of the spiritual world. By analyzing the opposition between the material world and the spiritual world in *Tender Is the Night* through binary opposition, he presents the overall appearance of the American Jazz Age. In Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*, firstly, material wealth is mainly reflected in the living conditions and material environment of the characters in the novel. The protagonist's social and economic development is rapid, and many people have begun to pursue material enjoyment and wealth. Material wealth is evident at the gatherings of the protagonists, who often attend luxurious and extravagant parties. Dick was quite grand at his party, welcoming his guests. "At eight-thirty that evening he came out to meet his first guests, his coat carried rather ceremoniously, rather promisingly, in his hand, like a toreador's cape" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 32). And these guests were just the first batch of guests he welcomed, which means there will be guests coming one after another, many of whom were invited to his party. "He greeted his

new guests with a proud bearing and an obvious deference to their infinite and unknown possibilities" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 33). People are immersed in the joy and satisfaction brought by the party. Material wealth is also reflected in shopping, and Nicole is a typical example. She purchases items based on a list of two sheets of paper, as well as items displayed in the showcase. As described, "She bought colored beads, folding beach cushions, artificial flowers, honey, a guest bed, bags, scarfs, love birds, miniatures for a doll's house and three yards of some new cloth the color of prawns. She bought a dozen bathing suits, a rubber alligator, a travelling chess set of gold and ivory, big linen handkerchiefs for Abe, two chamois leather jackets of kingfisher blue and burning bush from Hermes" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 60). Although she does not lack or need these items, she will still buy them as long as she likes them.

However, the phenomenon of spiritual decline corresponds to material prosperity. In the novel, Dick and those characters around him often feel empty and confused inside, and people often hold parties where they can use alcohol and laughter to escape various problems in real life and find a temporary comfort and satisfaction. Frequent gatherings also expose the inner emptiness and unease of the protagonists. They try to conceal their inner loneliness and loss through external noise and excitement. Spiritual decay can also be reflected in Nicole's actions. Nicole is a selfish person. After marrying Dick for many years, she fell in love with Tommy and had an affair with him. At this time, thanks to Dick's care and concern for many years, Nicole's condition has gradually improved. She realizes that Dick is no longer useful to her, and in order to satisfy her own selfish desires, she abandons moral ethics and abandons Dick. "Naturally Nicole, wanting to own him, wanting him to stand still forever, encouraged any slackness on his part, and in multiplying ways he was constantly inundated by a trickling of goods and money" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 187) Nicole just wanted to possess Dick, and her feelings for him were not love but possessiveness. She also did not consider Dick's future.

It can be seen that in this materialistic upper class society, people's hearts are empty and lack morality. The values and moral concepts of this society conflict with his original ideals and traditional beliefs. This environment made Dick feel confused and lonely. Finally, Dick gradually lost himself in this society, and his personality, emotions, and career all disintegrated in this conflict. His tragic fate is not only his personal failure, but also a profound critique of this materialistic and morally corrupt society.

5. Dick's Tragic Fate Caused by Personal Binary Opposition

In *Tender Is the Night*, Fitzgerald portrays contradictory character images through binary opposition. The fusion of these contradictory elements makes the character images in the novel three-dimensional, enriching the character images in the novel. Analyzing Dick's corruption from an objective perspective of social status and a subjective perspective of inner contradictions can add authenticity and credibility to the novel.

5.1. Social Status of Subject and Subordinate

At first, Dick was an independent individual in terms of external status. Although he was born in an ordinary priest's family, he received a good education from childhood. He was in his prime and talented, and was determined to become an outstanding psychologist. "He was an Oxford Rhodes Scholar from Connecticut in 1914. He returned home for a final year at Johns Hopkins, and took his degree" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 124).

However, after he met Nicole, everything changed. After a series of emotional entanglements, Dick was gradually reduced from a subject to a subordinate in terms of status; he managed love, deserted his career, and stepped into the upper class, but was always abandoned on the fringe of the upper class.

In the American society where money is the most important thing, the huge difference between Dick and Nicole's status and class, and the huge difference in their way of thinking, pushed Dick to the position of a vassal. The binary transformation of Dick's status from subject to subordinate also sounded the death knell of Dick's failure to pursue his dream. Nicole's sister, Baby, has always wanted to pay for a doctor to take care of Nicole. Even a doctor who was completely at their mercy needed to be carefully selected, and Baby initially did not consider Dick. She thinks that Dick is nothing more than a lonely and poor son of the poor. "She had looked Dick over with worldly eyes, she had measured him with the warped rule of an Anglophile and found him wanting—in spite of the fact that she found him toothsome. But for her he was too 'intellectual' and she pigeonholed him with a shabby-snobby crowd she had once known in London—he put himself out too much to be really of the correct stuff. She could not see how he could be made into her idea of an aristocrat" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 172). However, during the course of her treatment, Nicole falls in love with Dick, and Dick takes on the role of husband and doctor without even realizing it. He is deeply in love with Nicole and devotes himself to Nicole's treatment, and his status is reduced from that of a subject to that of a subordinate. As Baby describes: "We own you, and you'll admit it sooner or later. It is absurd to keep up the pretense of independence" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 195). However, Baby does not believe in Dick's true love for Nicole; she thinks that it is just a passport for Dick to become a member of the high society. In her mind, Dick is marrying Nicole for money and prestige status. She views Dick and Nicole's marriage as a shallow transaction. When Nicole gradually recovers, gets better and boldly pursues her love, Dick is like a useless product and is mercilessly cast aside.

5.2. Internal Cognition of Restraint and Indulgence

Dick was born into a middle-class family and received higher education. He did not have abundant wealth and needed to be self-sufficient. Science and technology elevated his status. Dick has always adhered to the principle of rational behavior. As a young and promising psychiatrist, Dick appeared as a typical representative of scientific logic. He is good at observation and analysis, and science and thinking are his sharp tools. He exudes a temperament of self-restraint. He is good at controlling his emotions and believes that self-indulgence is a shameful behavior. Like his own father, Dick was kind-hearted and firmly believed that there was nothing more precious in the world than conscience, honor, politeness, and courage. "He used to think that he wanted to be good, he wanted to be kind, he wanted to be brave and wise" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 145). When he met Nicole, he was attracted by her sweet appearance, but when he saw Nicole fall ill, his thoughts were of sympathy and helping her, rather than desire to possess her. "When I see a beautiful shell like that I can not help feeling a regret about what's inside it" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 130). After marrying Nicole, when Nicole fell ill, Dick was able to control his emotions if necessary. From a doctor's perspective and professional habits, he distinguished between normal Nicole and sick Nicole, and adopted dietary control therapy, hypnosis therapy, and other methods. He would also keep detailed records of her conditions.

Dick is good at self-restraint, and this can also be seen from his handling of his relationship with Rosemary. When Rosemary first met Dick, she was deeply attracted by him and pursued him. Despite her repeated expression of her feelings to Dick, he remained unmoved. When Rosemary accompanied Dick and his wife to Paris for a trip, she pursued Dick even more fiercely. Rosemary says to Dick: "I fell in love with you the first time I saw you" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 35). Dick resisted temptation and could rationally think about the consequences of this matter. He advised Rosemary to forget about it as soon as possible. Dick says to Rosemary: "For one thing, have you thought how much it would hurt Nicole?...Then there's the fact that I love Nicole...the fourth place you're not in love with me but you might be afterwards, and that would begin your life with a terrible mess" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 71). His inner moral perception told him that doing

so would cause harm to both Nicole and Rosemary. At this moment, self-restraint overcame instinctual desires, and he thought of his love and responsibility for Nicole.

In the Jazz Age of America, the moral principles that Americans had previously followed no longer existed, and people squandered money and indulged in pleasure. The self-control and rationality possessed by Dick, who entered the upper class society, were gradually eroded by the indulgence and irrationality of the surrounding environment. In Dick's heart, he was indeed tired of poverty and coveted wealth, but his subconsciousness still harbored desires and impulses. After marrying Nicole, facing the considerable wealth of the Nicole family, Dick gradually succumbed to the temptation of money. However, the exploitative values and morals of the upper class had a great impact on Dick, and his will was quickly worn away. Dick, who originally had a good moral understanding, gradually embarked on a path of corruption and spiritual decadence. In the entanglement with rising star Rosemary in the film industry, Rosemary disregarded moral constraints and boldly confessed to Dick, who already had a family. She never restrained her emotions. Initially, Dick was able to rationally restrain his emotions when Rosemary disrupted his thoughts. However, Dick, who gradually became disillusioned and depressed in his marriage, eventually gave way to his desires and had an affair with Rosemary. This had a profound impact on Dick's tragic fate. This relationship not only disrupted his marriage with Nicole, but also plunged him into moral and emotional dilemmas, ultimately leading to the failure of his career and the downfall of his life.

6. Dick's Tragic Fate Caused by Interpersonal Binary Opposition

Using binary opposition to analyze different characters in novels can help us better understand their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. In this section, we will mainly analyze the conflicts and contradictions between Dick and Nicole, Rosemary, and Franz, which have had a huge impact on Dick's life. In addition, the conflicts between the characters pushed the novel to a dramatic climax. Dick would also be influenced by these characters due to his interactions with them.

6.1. Dick and Nicole: Doctor and Patient

Fitzgerald's portrayal of Dick and Nicole's identities presents a binary opposition. This binary opposition reflects the power dynamics and emotional entanglements between the two persons. In the novel, Dick is a successful psychiatrist, while Nicole is a psychotic with schizophrenia; Nicole's illness results from her father's incest with her. Dick demonstrates authority and control in his profession. As a doctor, he is accustomed to analyzing and dealing with his patients' problems, displaying rationality and calmness. However, despite his professional authority, he feels powerless when it comes to dealing with his wife Nicole's emotional problems, as he is unable to treat her in the same way as any other patient. At first, Dick is confident that he will be able to cure Nicole, taking care of Nicole carefully, calming Nicole during her attacks, keeping detailed records of Nicole's condition, and trying to treat Nicole in various ways, which does improve Nicole's condition to some extent. However, as Nicole's attacks become more severe and frequent, Dick gradually loses faith that he can cure Nicole. "He slunk back in the crowd, a crowd which, at the wheel's next revolution, spotted the intensity of Nicole's hysteria" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 208). Nicole lost control in front of many people. As a doctor, he becomes less and less confident in being able to cure his patients and gradually becomes exhausted and depressed. "He felt it necessary that this time Nicole cure herself" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 210).

Nicole, as a patient, is an emotionally complex and psychologically vulnerable character. She has had psychiatric treatment and has her own psychological issues and struggles. In her relationship with Dick, she often shows dependence and instability on him. As a patient, she needs care and support, but refuses to accept Dick's help as a doctor, making the relationship between the two even more twisted and complicated. This binary opposition between the

identities of doctor and patient in the novel highlights the psychological conflict and the insurmountable gap between Dick and Nicole. Their relationship is no longer just an intimate one between husband and wife, but more like a complex therapeutic relationship between doctor and patient, which makes the emotional entanglement between the two even more confusing.

In addition to their different identities, Dick and Nicole are of different classes, with Dick coming from an ordinary pastor's family and Nicole from an upper-class plutocratic family. During their therapy sessions, Dick and Nicole fall in love with each other; however, to Nicole's family, Dick is just a doctor, a doctor they pay to take care of Nicole. Nicole's sister, Baby, has always believed that Dick married Nicole in order to step into upper-class society. This binary opposition in identity and status causes Dick to gradually lose himself and wither away.

6.2. Dick and Rosemary: Self-deception and Self-consciousness

Fitzgerald created two opposing characters, Dick and Rosemary. Dick is self-deceived and has wasted and abandoned his career as a doctor. Rosemary, on the other hand, has a strong sense of self, knows exactly what she wants, and succeeds in her career.

Dick was born into an ordinary clergyman's family, lived a hard life, witnessed his father's financial embarrassment, and actually had an inner aversion to poverty and a lust for rich life. Dick has been self-deceived that he married Nicole because of love. On the surface, his union with Nicole was because of love, but in fact, he also could not resist the wealth and status given to him by the Warren family, and with the help of the Warren family's power he could achieve success in his career. After marrying Nicole, in order to step into the upper-class society, Dick participates in a lot of activities to please and cater to the upper-class society, such as attending parties, drinking and dancing with them, and gaining more opportunities to interact with them. He wanted to be better, more friendly and smarter, all in order to gain respect and acceptance from others, so Dick slowly strayed from the main path and deserted his career. However, no matter how hard Dick tries to become a part of the upper class, he just hovers on the edge of the upper class, never able to cross the huge gap between birth and class difference, and the upper class people always regard him as a poor doctor. Baby Warren says that "she only wanted to use him innocently as a convenience" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 173).

Rosemary, as a rising star in the film industry, is very clear about what she wants. When she first met Dick, she was deeply attracted by the self-control and self-restraint emanating from him, and fell in love with him. "His voice, with some faint Irish melody running through it, wooed the world, yet she felt the layer of hardness in him, of self-control and of self-discipline, her own virtues" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 22). She never concealed her emotions and generously expressed her feelings towards Dick and her mother, launching a passionate pursuit towards Dick. As she says to her mother: "I love him, Mother. I'm desperately in love with him—I never knew I could feel that way about anybody. And he's married and I like her too—it's just hopeless. Oh, I love him so!" (Fitzgerald, 1933: 25) Although Dick refused her many times, she still didn't give up her love for him. And many years later, Rosemary experienced more, had richer experiences, and became more mature. When she met Dick again, she found that he was no longer as self-controlled, gentle, and polite as before. He became rude and indulged his desires. She found that Dick's inner morality no longer existed, so she no longer liked Dick, gave up her love for him, and ended this relationship. In terms of career, before meeting Dick, Rosemary had already achieved some success in her career. Rosemary was raised by her mother alone from a young age, and her mother demanded that she be independent both mentally and materially. As a charming and beautiful film and television star, although Rosemary liked Dick, she did not rely on him. She has her own career, is financially independent, works hard, and goes further in her career. "Rosemary spent money she had earned—she was here in Europe due to the fact that she had gone in the pool six times that January day with her

temperature roving from 99° in the early morning to 103°, when her mother stopped it” (Fitzgerald, 1933: 60). It can be seen that Rosemary is economically independent and relies on herself to make money.

6.3. Dick and Franz: Half-hearted in Career and Persistent in Career

Dick and Franz are two of the key characters in *Tender Is the Night*, and they display a typical friendship between them. Although outwardly the two have different personalities and lifestyles, they develop a deep friendship and mutual understanding between them. They complement each other, support each other and play important roles in each other’s lives. They are both psychiatrists, but after they build a clinic together, their status changes to a relationship of employer and employee, as Franz does not have enough money to open a clinic and he turns to Dick for help. In addition to the shift in status and antagonism, their attitudes toward their careers have also become antagonistic.

Since Dick and Nicole’s marriage, Dick has been living a life of luxury, neglecting his career and treating his patients casually, choosing to travel when there are patients in the clinic in need of treatment. As mentioned in the novel: “A vast persuasive quiet stole over him, and he abandoned sickness to the sick, sound to the motors, direction to the pilot” (Fitzgerald, 1933: 213). He does not want to manage affairs of the clinic and ignores patients, which is one of the important aspects of his negative attitude towards his career. In the course of running the clinic, Dick’s behavior is also contrary to the professional ethics of doctors. He blurred the boundaries between doctors and patients and even seduced his patient’s daughter. As mentioned in the novel, Dick received a letter from his patient’s mother. “It accused him in no uncertain terms of having seduced her daughter, who had been at her mother’s side during the crucial stage of the illness” (Fitzgerald, 1933: 205). However, Dick denied the fact. He also treats his profession in a less than serious manner, his patients’ fathers send their sons to the clinic because of their alcoholism, while their sons say that they have twice smelled the smell of alcohol in Dick’s breath. As the patient’s father says to Dick: “Not once, but twice Von Cohn says he has smelt liquor on your breath. I and my lady have never touched a drop of it in our lives. We hand Von Cohn to you to be cured, and within a month he twice smells liquor on your breath! What land of cure is that there?” (Fitzgerald, 1933: 274) A child who is addicted to alcohol is coming to the clinic for treatment, but the doctor Dick drinks wine when treating with the patient. It can be seen from those acts that Dick is frivolous and tired of his career.

In contrast, Franz is more rational, restrained and thoughtful, with more planning and pursuit of intrinsic value in his life. Firstly, this is reflected in Franz’s serious attitude towards his profession. He takes every patient’s condition seriously and actively seeks Dick’s help when encountering unfamiliar cases. Secondly, when he discovered that Dick was drinking while treating patients, he advised him not to drink. Dick’s actions would cause damage to their clinic, and he hoped that Dick could seriously devote himself to the clinic’s career, which also shows his sense of responsibility towards this profession. In addition, when he found out that Dick did not listen to his opinions, he ultimately chose not to cooperate with Dick. It can be seen that Franz treated his career with rigor, seriousness, and planning.

The contrast between the two personalities highlights Fitzgerald’s portrayal and critique of people from different classes of society at the time. In the ending of the novel, Dick and Franz’s fates take very different directions, reflecting the impact of their respective personalities and life choices. Dick fell and perished due to indulgence and extravagance, while Franz may achieve more fulfillment and satisfaction in life due to his rationality and foresight. This contrast in endings demonstrates Fitzgerald’s thoughts on life choices and values, and how society influences and shapes individuals.

7. Conclusion

Studying *Tender Is the Night* from the perspective of binary opposition and using the relevant binary opposition theory to analyze the problem of the tragic fate of the protagonist Dick breaks through the traditional mode of studying the theme of this work from the perspective of tragedy and morality and ethics. Meanwhile, expanding the novel's viewpoints and introducing binary opposition theory into the study of literature is a new attempt to provide a new interpretative approach to the study of the tragic fate of Dick and to give the study of the tragic fate of Dick a new and comprehensive systematic explanatory framework. It helps to understand the logical relationship behind the psychological changes and behavioral motives of the characters in the novel. It can enrich the application of binary opposition theory in literary studies and expand its theoretical scope.

Analyzing the social factors behind the tragic fates of the novel's characters is of great significance in guarding against the unfavorable influences in real life. The results of the study are conducive to enhancing readers' level of knowledge and reading experience of the novel.

In conclusion, analyzing the tragic fate of Dick in *Tender Is the Night* from the perspective of binary opposition is conducive to helping us understand the work comprehensively and further digging out the deeper meanings in the creation of the work, and it is also conducive to helping every person who chases his or her dreams to make rational thinking and correct choices about the real world.

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