<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>The Power of Words in Tender is the Night: Facing up to Paternal Authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Tachibana, Sachiko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>待兼山論叢. 文学篇. 34 P.29–P.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue Date</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Version</td>
<td>publisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/11094/47889">http://hdl.handle.net/11094/47889</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Osaka University Knowledge Archive : OUKA**

https://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/repo/ouka/all/

Osaka University
The Power of Words in *Tender is the Night*: Facing up to Paternal Authority

Sachiko TACHIBANA

It is evident that the image of father and child haunts *Tender is the Night*. As to the real relationship between father and child, almost all critics have focused on Nicole's relationship to her father and Dick's relationship to his father. They state that both fathers have great authority over their children, merely referring to definite representations in the text. The critics point out Warren's violent imposition of incest on Nicole which caused the schizophrenia she is suffering from and Dick's deep grief over the death of his father, quoting from the text a passage, "Dick loved his father — again and again he referred judgments to what his father would probably have thought or done."¹ Most critics have also expressed common views on the unreal relationship between father and child about Dick Diver. They insist that Dick is "a surrogate father for Nicole, replacing the father who had violated her,"² because Nicole's love for Dick, a psychiatrist, is in part classified into "transference" (128) as his colleague analyzes in the text; that Dick's relation to Rosemary, whose most famous film is entitled *Daddy's Girl*, has an "incestuous overtone"³ because Dick frequently refers to her as a child in the text. The critics draw their views on the image of father and child too simply from overt and direct expressions in the text. In this paper I would like to show the strong power of words which paternal authority can possess and consider what attitudes the characters in the position as children take toward the power to explicate the image of father and child.

I

In the novel, it is Nicole's father, Devereux Warren, that represents paternal authority. He forced incest on Nicole through which
he violently intensified his relationship to his daughter. According to Lévi-Strauss, incest is integrative in its denial of the mixing of different blood and classes. Based on this, incest is considered as the action to hold the world together, in a way, peacefully. Warren imposed incest on Nicole to lead his world into the unnaturally enforced integration and to strengthen the control of his world, his paternal authority over his daughter.

Warren exercises the power of words that makes the unnatural seemingly natural to rationalize his paternal authority and maintain the enforced integration of his world. He confesses the fact of incest to Doctor Dohmler in these words: “People used to say what a wonderful father and daughter we were — they used to wipe their eyes. We were just like lovers — and then all at once we were lovers” (138). He tries to naturalize incest with the explanation of a change in their relation tucked into one sentence where he cunningly smoothes over a difference, exerting the magical power of words: his expression of incest, “we were lovers,” is different from that of their relationship before incest by no more than two words, “just like.” Warren also assimilates and exploits others’ words. He introduces others’ remark on the “wonderful” relationship between him and Nicole before his confession of incest, so that he can gloss over the fearful development of their relationship into incest. Warren is cocksure of the power of words which he in paternal authority utters. In a first consultation with Doctor Dohmler, Warren describes Nicole before having schizophrenia: “She was smart as a whip and happy as the day is long” (135). Seiters aptly says: “Once sufficiently close to his daughter to know her in the Biblical sense, he can now describe her only through a mixture of clichés.... For Devereux Warren, safety exists only within the cliche. The more weary the phrase, the safer he feels.” Warren utilizes the words which are stable and authorized by heritage for describing his daughter to keep his paternity regarded as stable and authorized against the revelation of his irrationality: incest. Paternal authority, seeking integration around itself, claims that its words and what the words signify are inevitably integrated into a
secure truth. Warren can exercise the strong power of words to support integration he wants.

While Warren represents paternal authority, it is Rosemary who is a representative of children. She inclines to be influenced by others’ words more than anyone else in the novel. I should begin to explain her characteristic in regards to the power of words with the aid of Sigmund Freud who is referred to in the text several times. Freud takes an instance in *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* to show how an infant trusts the voice of those who have the authority over the infant. In this case, a three-year-old boy in a dark room implores his aunt outside the room to talk to him. He says to hear her voice gives him a relief as if the room grew light, even though he cannot see her figure.  

It is just like the beginning of the Bible, “God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” Freud explains that the boy regards her voice as evidence of her presence and comforts himself in an infantile way. The child relies on the power of his aunt’s voice to make the world which surrounds him clear and secure.

Rosemary similarly trusts in the power of her mother’s voice in the infantile way. Rosemary is recommended to go to see the duel between Tommy and McKisco by her mother who “always ha[s] a great influence on her” (35). Her mother attempts the “final severance of the umbilical cord” (52) and proposes that Rosemary should act on her own initiative without her mother. Rosemary decides to go to the duel against her will, and what motivates her is not her mother’s idea but her mother’s voice: “Still Rosemary did not see why she should go, but she obeyed the sure, clear voice that had sent her into the stage entrance of the Odéon in Paris when she was twelve and greeted her when she came out again” (60).

Rosemary emphasizes over and over in the text that Dick is equivalent to her mother, as she says, “You [Dick] and Mother are the only two people in the world I care about” (222). She authorizes Dick’s voice, imagining that “his voice promised that he would take care of her” (30) and “[h]is voice, with some faint Irish melody running through it, wooed the world” (33). Dick’s authority over Rosemary
seems to be equal to, or rather, more powerful than her mother's. As evidence of his strong authority over her, Rosemary receives every word that his voice carries as truth, saying to him, "You know everything" (69). She accepts Dick as the paternal authority over her. She likes "Dick's telling which things were ludicrous and which things were sad" (69). It implies that she trusts the power of Dick's words to rationalize what surrounds her and keep order. In the scene where they go to a historic battlefield with their friends, what is more, it seems to Rosemary that the power of Dick's words can metamorphose the entirely irrational into the rational: "If Dick had added that they were now being shelled she would believe him that afternoon" (68). Rosemary is an obedient child who feels secure under the predominance of paternal authority with the strong power of words.

II

Dick Diver realizes the influence of his words on Rosemary who looks up to him as the paternal authority over her. In addition, he even solemnifies his words, sending them "to her like letters, as though they left him some time before they reached her" (214). Once he takes advantage of the power over her to come through a trouble with her. On the day after her birthday, she declares her love for Dick straightforwardly: "Take me" (75). Dick replies, regulating the meaning of the word "take" which she extended: "Take you where?" (75). Subsequently he succeeds in calming her down by giving her "two lines of hospital patter to go to sleep on," saying, "Good night, child" (77). He exploits the power of the banal and authorized words over her, according to his convenience. Rosemary is, under the strong power of words, compelled into submission to Dick against her desire.

Dick, before this, attempts the same tactics to come through a trouble with Nicole previous to their marriage. When he meets her discharged from Doctor Dohmler's clinic a short time ago, she intimates her love for Dick indirectly. He knows she is still under the influence of incest Warren in paternal authority imposed on her. Dick is also aware that Nicole has been further educated "by Dohmler and the
The Power of Words in *Tender is the Night* 33

ghostly generations behind him” (161) in the clinic, that is, by men as doctors who seem to have the authority to make Nicole as a patient obey their order. Therefore he supposes that she has been made to be influenced by authorized words. Dick tries to lead Nicole into submission to him by exerting the power of his words absorbing the authorized. He gives her “a trite remark” (161), the authorized words by tradition, to calm her down, but she disobeys: “You’re teasing yourself, my dear. Once I knew a man who fell in love with his nurse—’ The anecdote rambled on, punctuated by their footsteps. Suddenly Nicole interrupted in succinct Chicagose: ‘Bull!’” (161). She vehemently defies the trite and authorized words uttered by him with a slang word.

In this way it is only over the infantile Rosemary that Dick can exert the strong power of words like those in paternal authority, because he himself is still a compliant child to the power of words the paternal authority over him exercises, though he is not entirely willing. In his youth he makes a faint resistance to the authorized words to him thus: “Dick burned for fuel almost a hundred textbooks that he had accumulated; but only, as he laid each one on the fire, with an assurance chuckling inside him that he was himself a digest of what was within the book” (124). His burning textbooks, his negating the power of the authorized words “with an assurance chuckling inside him” in this scene is passive, self-satisfied, and faintly grotesque.

Finally Dick meets Warren in actuality. Warren is thought to be dying and he speaks to Dick “with his voice summoned up a thick burr of individuality” (250):

“We got a lot of understanding at the end of life. Only now, Doctor Diver, do I realize what it was all about.”

Dick waited.

“I’ve been a bad man. You must know how little right I have to see Nicole again, yet a Bigger Man than either of us says to forgive and pity.” The rosary slipped from his weak hands and slid off the smooth bed covers. Dick picked it up for him. “If could see Nicole for ten minutes I would go happy out of the world.”
“It’s not a decision I can make for myself,” said Dick. “Nicole is not strong.” He made his decision but pretended to hesitate. (250)

Mentioning Christian words, Warren, here again with the power of words, rationalizes his paternal authority. Dick bids no defiance to his words. He merely waits and pretends to receive them. It is symbolic of his compliant attitude that he assists Warren by picking up his rosary falling from “the smooth bed cover” that embodies the power of Warren’s words, on which Warren relies to smooth and cover over the irrationality of incest, his bed with Nicole. Dick never defies the power of words with paternal authority. Gindin considers Doctor Dohmler, who “is fiercely moral, an instructor, a guide” to Dick, as his surrogate father. Gindin thinks “Dick disobedys one of Dr. Dohmler’s strongest injunctions,” that is the injunction against Dick’s marriage to Nicole. In this case, nonetheless, Dick ostensibly agrees on not marrying her to the face of Doctor Dohmler, saying to Franz, his colleague, “I’ll do whatever Doctor Dohmler says” (147).

Dick, futilely, hopes to gain the equal power of words to paternal authority that can maintain the integration of its world. It is typical of a lack of his power that the world Dick seems to hold together always involves a sign of disintegration. At the beginning of the novel, when Rosemary first meets Dick on the Riviera, he gives “a quiet little performance” (20) for his friends and seemingly develops togetherness in the group, excluding Nicole who “respond[s] to each salvo of amusement by bending closer over her list” (21). Rosemary reports on the sight: “presently he and his friends grew livelier and closer together and now they were all under a single assemblage of umbrellas — she gathered that some one was leaving and that was a last drink on the beach” (24). Despite their getting “closer,” the mood of the group leads Rosemary to infer that it is a parting, the disintegration of the group that motivates them to gather. It seems to Rosemary that its mood “all came from the man in the jockey cap” (25), who is Dick Diver. Another case is in the scene where friends come to see Abe off at the station. Abe and three women stand in “an uncomfortable little group” (92) and shortly Dick comes. Then
Dick saw the situation quickly and grasped it quietly. He pulled them out of themselves into the station, making plain its wonders. Nearby, some Americans were saying good-bye in voices that mimicked the cadence of water running into a large old bathtub. (92-3; emphasis added)

Here again, to bring the group into integration, he directs their attention to the disintegration around them. Thus “his amusing world” (41) which Dick seems to hold together evaporates leaving “little communicable memory of what he had said or done” (41) to people “included in Dick Diver’s world for a while” (40).

Elizabeth Wright affirms that the severance from paternal authority makes it possible that the established order by paternal authority which has controlled a child becomes ineffectual and the child produces a new one as substitute. Then, she declares, the child attains its own power. Dick has been controlled by the order of his father, referring “judgments to what his father would probably have thought or done,” as cited at the beginning of this paper. The death of his father may free him from the paternal authority of his father, the “earliest and strongest of protections” (207). It seems to Dick that the loss of the paternal authority permits him to replace it and to get the strong power of words. When he receives the message that his father died, he makes a trial of his own power of words. Reading the message, “[h]e felt a sharp wince at the shock, a gathering of the forces of resistance; then it rolled up through his loins and stomach and throat” (207). The “forces of resistance” to paternal authority rise from “loins” symbolic of procreative power to “throat” as if he tried to exercise the power of words. Yet he procreates not a word. He only “walk[s] the room still” (207). The emancipation from paternal authority through its death means a mere escape from it. Dick never confronts the strong power of paternal authority. He only avoids it in the anxiety of its influence, and in case he is faced by it, Dick assumes to be compliant. As a result, he keeps himself subordinate to paternal authority. According to Harold Bloom who explicates his theory about a poet under the influence of prior poetry with paternal authority,
there are needed "[b]attle between strong equals, father and son as mighty opposites, Laius and Oedipus at the crossroads"11) so that the child can achieve its strong power of words. Dick, who dares not to defy the strong power of words paternal authority exercises, never becomes truly powerful.

III

Nicole fell into schizophrenia which was caused by incest Warren forced on her in order to intensify his paternal authority over her. Nicole as a patient in Doctor Dohmler's clinic is in awe of the word "father" under the tyranny of paternal authority and assumes enough power of the word to integrate her into the world of her father immediately she mentions the word to conjure with. In the letters to Dick, she says: "I will be here always on this green hill. Unless they will let me write my father, whom I loved dearly"; "today I have written my father to come and take me away" (130). The yoke of paternal authority appears to deprive Nicole of her power of words. Franz in charge of her concludes that "she is reticent" (139). Discharged from the clinic, still, she suffers from the aftereffect of incest and sometimes breaks into a fit of schizophrenia. Dick notices that "Nicole [is] silent" (193) when she is seized by the aftereffect of incest, the oppressive revival of paternal authority.

Nicole, however, differs from Dick and Rosemary who accept that authorized words have the strong power enough to make them obedient and who have been subordinate to paternal authority. She makes a desperate effort to gain her own power of words. Nicole as a patient attempts to express herself in her own words, but it results badly as a speech impediment. She says to Dick: "When I was ill I didn't mind sitting inside with the others in the evening — what they said seemed like everything else. Naturally now I see them as ill and it's — it's—" (149); "If I hadn't been sick would you — I mean, would I have been the sort of girl you might have — oh, slush, you know what I mean" (161). In a fit of schizophrenia she unsuccessfully strives for discourse with Dick, "tearing the words from some story
spinning itself out inside her, too fast for him to grasp" (193). Dick describes the characteristic state of Nicole in a fit of schizophrenia, where she secretly tries to fight against the oppression of paternal authority, as the mixture of "the tight mouth" and "the unfathomable remark" (177). At any rate, it is certain that Nicole, no matter how abortively in her state as a patient or in a fit of schizophrenia, endeavors to rid herself of the oppression.

As she convalesces, Nicole begins to show active disobedience to the power of authorized words. As mentioned above, she defies Dick's trying to calm her down with the authorized words. Nicole as a convalescent challenges even the strongest power of words. She tells on the beach:

"We found some fine ones in the news of Americans last week," said Nicole. "Mrs. Evelyn Oyster and — what were the others?"

"There was Mr. S. Flesh," said Dick, getting up also. He took his rake and began to work seriously at getting small stones out of the sand.

"Oh, yes — S. Flesh — doesn't he give you the creeps?" (32)

The power of words is embodied in two names she refers to. "Flesh" is a Biblical word, meaning body itself and sexual desire. As for Evelyn Oyster, her first name includes Eve, the original woman in the Bible and her family name is a slang word for pudenda. Both names are related to the Bible, that is Logos, the most authoritative word. Both are also associated with sexual intercourse which can lead to conception and produce the world under paternal authority: it is important that Mrs. Evelyn Oyster is married, so her family name, meaning her genitals related to her procreative power, is granted to her under the power of the patriarch of her husband's family. Name itself fundamentally signifies patrimonial words. Nicole reveals her disobedience to the strong power of words paternal authority maintains, insisting that these names give her "the creeps," a feeling of repugnance.

When she hears her father, Warren, is dying in Chapter II of Book III, she shows her wish to confront him before his death, though still having a little unstableness: "... If my father is dying I must —
She left this in the air, afraid to formulate it. ‘I must go. I’ll have to run for the train’” (252). Yet Warren has disappeared after his meeting with Dick, so she cannot catch him.

Dick by then, while he has functioned as both a husband and a doctor, comes to consider that Nicole must be subordinate to him, looking upon her “gradually as upon a chessman to be moved” (273) at his demand. He thinks “[i]t [is] awful that such a fine tower [Nicole] should not be erected, only suspended, suspended from him” (196). Dick recognizes himself as the principal under which she belongs. As a doctor he wishes to cure Nicole of Warren’s influence merely through his reaching the same position as Warren has occupied. Dick’s desire to dominate Nicole and integrate her into his world as the paternal authority over her emerges into the word “Dicole” (112) he signs. Nicole comes to notice his predominance over her and objects to it: “Her ego began blooming like a great rich rose. . . . She hated the beach, resented the places where she had played planet to Dick’s sun” (288).

Dick expects that Warren’s vanishment offers him a chance to fulfill his desire to take Warren’s place. After Nicole has arrived late, Dick explains to her about the miraculous vanishment of Warren:

“It was instinct,” Dick said, finally. “He was really dying, but he tried to get a resumption of rhythm — he’s not the first person that ever walked off his death-bed — like an old clock — you know, you shake it and somehow from sheer habit it gets going again. Now your father —”

“Oh, don’t tell me,” she said.

“His principal fuel was fear,” he continued. “He got afraid, and off he went. He’ll probably live till ninety —”

“Please don’t tell me any more,” she said. “Please don’t — I couldn’t stand any more.” (253)

Dick shows off to Nicole the power of his words which can rationalize away the irrational vanishment of Warren whom he compares to “an old clock,” which is not able to carry out its function any longer. Dick, further, authoritatively defines Warren as a fearsome fugitive, whereas
Dick himself is really a timid fugitive from paternal authority. He undermines Warren's influence and pretends to the strong power of words which is adequate for paternal authority. Dick, too positive of the power of his words here, desires to supplant Warren without a fight, taking advantage of the disappearance of paternal authority. He swells his words, but Nicole interrupts him, refuses to receive his words. She foils his desire to replace Warren through the power of his words. She cannot stand Dick's persisting in his predominance over her any more, because she, unlike Dick, has strived to confront paternal authority and comes to rebel against the power of words paternal authority possesses.

Finally, since her real father has vanished from the novel, Nicole decides to confront Dick who wishes to become her surrogate father. She heralds her battle against him thus:

She had somehow given over the thinking to him, and in his absences her every action seemed automatically governed by what he would like, so that now she felt inadequate to match her intentions against him. Yet think she must; she knew at last the number on the dreadful door of fantasy, the threshold to the escape that was no escape.... Either you think — or else others have to think for you and take power from you, pervert and discipline your natural tastes, civilize and sterilize you. (288-9)

Nicole realizes that she must face those who control her, with "no escape," to secure her self. She grows confident in her self, and now, she no longer admits the power of the word "father." Dick plays a tune on the piano and Nicole sings:

"Thank y' father-r
Thank y' mother-r
Thanks for meetingup with one another —"

"I don't like that one," Dick said, starting to turn the page.

"Oh, play it!" she exclaimed. "Am I going through the rest of life flinching the word 'father'?" (289)

In the scene where she confronts Dick in Chapter IX of Book III, at first she struggles with "the old hypnotism of his intelligence, some-
times exercised without power but always with substrata of truth under truth” (300). Then her “fighting bravely and courageously” against him with the exposure of her whole self “for this inner battle,” using “even her weakness” (300), is depicted over fourteen lines in the text. After she achieved her victory, she walks “toward the household that [is] hers at last” (300). Nicole succeeds in liberating herself from Dick’s control through fighting a fair battle against him.

In the novel paternal authority oppresses children, whether male or female. I have discussed what attitudes the characters in the position of children take toward the power of words paternal authority possesses. Dick and Rosemary are subordinate to paternal authority and believe in the strong power of words. Only Nicole rebels against it and fights against Dick who oppresses her to secure her self. Therefore I shall conclude that she is the winner as opposed to the others, though she cannot confront her real father, Warren, because of his miraculous vanishment.

Notes

1) F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1996) 208. All the subsequent quotations from the text are referred to this edition, and are followed by page-number.


7) The quotation from the Bible is taken from King James Version.
The Power of Words in *Tender is the Night* 41

8) Gindin 120.

9) Doctor Dohmler interrogates Dick's involvement with Nicole who is a patient in his clinic:

   "How do you feel about that?" Professor Dohmler asked Dick.
   ...he [Dick] realized in the silence after Dohmler's pronouncement that the state of inanimation could not be indefinitely prolonged; suddenly he spilled everything.
   "I'm half in love with her — the question of marrying her has passed through my mind." (148)

Then Dohmler exercises his paternal authority on Dick, by using Franz as his agent who is an obedient follower of the paternal authority over him, "deliberately cutting life down to the scale of an inherited suit" (141). Franz says to Dick, "better never see her again!" (149). Dohmler again asks Dick, "What do you think?" and Dick, saying, "Of course Franz is right" (149), receives without protest the power of words with paternal authority exerted by the agency of its follower.


(Graduate Student)