“An Incalculable Force”: The Influential Absence of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Revised *Tender Is the Night*

**Abstract**

The 1934 edition of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Tender Is the Night* is not the sole published version of the novel, as in 1951 the literary critic Malcolm Cowley brought out a revised edition of the book. The Cowley edition of *Tender Is the Night* is based on Fitzgerald’s post-1934 wish to reorder the book chronologically and is an overlooked comparison point which can help readers and scholars better understand the 1934 *Tender Is the Night* text. Evaluating the chronological shift between the 1934 and 1951 editions illuminates a previously ignored area of scholarly discussion: the influence that the mystery surrounding Nicole’s illness exerts over readers’ attention. Through an examination of *Tender Is the Night*’s publishing history and its critical reception, we can understand Fitzgerald’s revision process and the outside influences which encouraged, first, his post-publication changes to *Tender Is the Night* and, later, the general omission of the 1951 version from scholarly discussions. Then by looking at the effects the 1951 edition’s chronological reordering has on the novel’s mystery, we can see the negative impact the Cowley edition’s obscurity has had on feminist criticism, as the revised text’s absence has hindered feminists’ ability to evaluate the extent of Nicole’s control in the novel. This revelation, in turn, opens up discussions about critics’ influence on authorial and textual histories, as scholars are the ones who have largely shaped *Tender Is the Night*’s legacy.