

TWO TYPES OF SHOCK IN MODERNITY

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The term ‘shock’ has been central to accounts of the origins of technological and artistic modernity. Its appearance ranges from Baudelaire’s use of the term to describe urban experience in the 1860s and the phenomena of ‘railway spine’ in the same decade to the psychology of shell-shock; from the aesthetic categories of Krakauer, Benjamin and Brecht in the inter-war period to later titles like *The Shock of the New*. Like all respectable terms in modernity it has even acquired a prehistory, a recent cultural historian, Jeffrey T. Schapp, insisting that the origins of modern notions of shock lie in the ‘carriage revolution’, in the speeded-up world of the late eighteenth-century, rather than in Baudelaire’s Paris.

This essay represents a tentative attempt to tease apart related types of ‘shock’ within what Schapp calls the ‘prevailing traumatocentric notions of modernity’.¹ The first is ‘shock’, with its origins in notions of collision, battle, ‘thrill’ and speed. The other is ‘trauma’, a term which has its origin, of course, in notions of wounding, and which in the late nineteenth century becomes central to the psychology of Janet, Freud, and others. Recently the study of what Mark Seltzer labels ‘wound culture’ has flourished, with titles like *Traumatic Pasts: Studies in History, Psychiatry and Trauma in the Modern Age*, focusing on the diverse legacies of the Holocaust, the Middle Passage, or child abuse. While I don’t at all wish to question the validity of such work, recent accounts of modernity tend to use the terms ‘shock’ and ‘trauma’ interchangeably, and it is worth asking whether they *can* be separated; worth recalling what is at stake when Freud in 1920 dismisses ‘the old, naïve theory of shock’ in favour of his own notion of trauma.² What we need to consider, in particular, is the *economic* model of shock, in which experience is conceived as a succession of stimuli which must be processed in time, in contrast to the timelessness of the unconscious wound.

Shock and the Wound

Medical practitioners had long noticed the effects associated with major wounds and surgery, but it was only in the later the nineteenth-century that traumatic shock received extensive discussion. Even in early studies, its status is uncertain: is it a physiological product of wounding, involving, say, the release of toxins; or more easily defined in psychic terms (since shock could be observed where little or no physical injury was present: a surprise blow; a bereavement)? Edwin Morris’s *A Practical Treatise on Shock* (1867) describes it with characteristic openness as ‘that peculiar effect on the animal system, produced by violent injuries from any cause, or from violent mental emotions – such as grief, fear, horror or disgust.’³ These issues were by no means clarified by the debate which erupted in 1866 about the shock associated with the railway. Writing in the *British Medical Journal* and the *Lancet*, John Eric Erichsen and others claimed that railway accidents could produce a new kind of spinal concussion, with a variety of hysterical symptoms.⁴ These claims produced intense debate in medical circles, centering on the issue of whether the new technology and new speeds could be said to have a *specific* effect. The problem was the invisibility of ‘railway spine’: no lesion was demonstrable, and as Wolfgang Schivelbusch points out, the fact that even Erichsen elicited phenomenological

factors – the lack of warning; the powerlessness of the victim; the ‘mental impression’ of the scene of confusion – suggested a general psychology of shock.⁵

In 1883, however, Erichsen’s views were countered powerfully by the railway surgeon Herbert W. Page in his *Injuries to the Spine and Spinal Cord*. Attacking Erichsen’s strong linkage between technology and pathology, Page attributed many of the symptoms of ‘railway’ spine to latent ‘neuromimetic’ disorders, including neurasthenia and hysteria, which might be triggered by an accident and – in a pointed irony – exacerbated by exhausting compensation litigation.⁶ As Eric Michael Kaplan shows, Page influenced the development of notions of masculine hysteria and traumatic neurosis in Charcot (and thus in Freud); Page in turn incorporated further references to Charcot in his later *Railway Injuries* (1891).⁷

Shock is, then, central to the shift from materialist to psychological accounts of mental life; from something requiring a literal wound to a description of experience which might take in the effects of litigation or other long-term events (starvation is ‘a kind of shock’ said one surgeon). It suddenly made sense for medical practitioners to stress the phenomenology of surgical shock, combining anesthesia with improved hospital environments.⁸ In World War I war the debate on railway spine reappeared in relation to shell-shocked but apparently uninjured soldiers; suggestions of spinal concussion (supported by slides of spinal fluid ‘locating’ the wound) gave way, as the war progressed, to therapy.⁹ It is this history which Freud alludes to in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, describing ‘traumatic neurosis’, a condition ‘which occurs after severe mechanical concussions, railway disasters and other accidents’, and for which purely mechanical explanations have, happily, been abandoned since the war (*PFL* xi 281).

But if shock does not require a literal wound, what is trauma? Does it require some kind of parallel to the wound, a single *event* in which the self is violated? (Early diagnoses of shell-shock required that the proximity of a shell, an explosion, be certified on Army form W.3436.) That is a question to which a variety of answers were possible. We can begin with George Crile and William Lower’s 1914 study of shock, one of the first in which the subject’s experience is stressed:

the essential pathology of shock is identical, whatever its cause. That is, when the kinetic system is driven at an overwhelming rate of speed – as by severe injury, by emotional excitation, by perforation of the intestines, by the sudden onset of an infectious disease, by an overdose of strychnine, by a marathon race, by foreign proteins, by anaphylaxis – the result of these overwhelming activations of the kinetic system is a condition which is identical, however it may be clinically designated, whether surgical or traumatic shock, toxic shock, anaphylactic shock, drug shock, exhaustion etc.¹⁰

This formula was cited by Frederick Mott in his influential *War Neuroses and Shell-Shock* (1919). What it suggests is what I would label the ‘neurasthenic paradigm’, in which shock is seen in terms of processing *speeds* (excitation, activation), rather than the wound. The theory of neurasthenia or nervous exhaustion was first advanced by the American physician George M. Beard in the late 1860s. Neurasthenia, with its huge variety of symptoms, was based on the conception of the body as a nerveo-electric system with a limited level of internal energy with which to cope with signals from the external world. For Beard, shock-effects are written into the *everyday* life of modern subjects, but are (as with railway spine) linked in particular to the rapid technologies of American urban life:

the telegraph, telephone, tram and train. Beard's early work, it is worth noting, tended to stress an organic lesion in the nervous system as a result of fatigue; his later work is more strictly economic: it is the level and speed of stimuli which overwhelms the individual.¹¹

The possibility that shell-shock might be neurasthenic – that is, produced by a general overload of the nervous system; by stress – remained problematic for Mott. As a medical man, he was, like Charcot, unwilling to abandon the idea that a physical weakness underlies neurosis. Nevertheless he differentiates hysteria, susceptible to 'contra-suggestion', from neurasthenia, which is linked to fatigue and is not susceptible.¹² Here another set of categories configures this debate. An 1895 medical encyclopedia entry by George Shrady routinely distinguishes 'two forms, the first the ordinary one, exhibiting the phenomena of torpidity, and the other those of excitement. The former is styled shock proper or torpid shock, the latter shock with excitement or erethistic shock.' Shock could involve either *paresis* (depletion of nervous energies) or hyper-excitability, to use the terms deployed by the surgeon Montague Handfield-Jones. Both effects could be produced *by the same causes*, Handfield-Jones had argued: either as a result of loss of energy, or as a result of attenuation of 'the resisting or controlling powers normally inherent in each cell'.¹³ Shock can be neurasthenic depletion, or it can be hysteric over-excitability.

In the work of Freud, these categories are developed and, eventually, separated. What he meant in 1920 by 'the old, naïve theory of shock' was neurasthenia. Despite the fact that he is ignored in most accounts of Freud's development, Beard clearly influenced psychoanalysis: neurasthenia was 'the first functional nervous disorder for which Freud proposed a sexual etiology', since in late 1892 he suggested to Fliess that it is produced by masturbation or incomplete coitus.¹⁴ This interest in masturbation links Freud to Victorian thinkers for whom seminal loss is central to economic conceptions of the body (within psychoanalysis, this concern culminated in the extended discussion of the subject in 1912 at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society). However in his 1895 paper on Neurasthenia and Anxiety Neurosis Freud begins to modify this own view: here the distinction is between seminal *leakage*, leading to masturbation, neurasthenia and a lowering of physiological thresholds; and seminal *blockage* – an 'alienation' between the somatic and the psychic typified by *coitus interruptus*, which can lead to anxiety neurosis with displaced versions of sexual excitation ('dyspnoea, palpitations').¹⁵ From 1895 Freud included neurasthenia in a sub-category of the neuroses, the 'actual neuroses' – *actual* meaning to do with the shocks experienced in the present rather than the past; by 1897 he could casually express his boredom with teaching Beard.¹⁶

In Freud's mature psychopathology, trauma is a complex entity: attached to an original traumatic external event which becomes increasingly dubious in its status (as in his abandonment of the seduction hypothesis circa 1897, and his later realization that the Primal Scene may itself be a fantasy rather than a real event, a construction under the heading of the *nachträglich*). For this reason the list of traumatic situations in Freud is restricted and almost mythic: 'birth, loss of the mother as an object, loss of the penis, loss of the object's love, loss of the super-ego's love', to quote one summary.¹⁷ This is a version of trauma radically different from the 'actual', the cumulative shock of the everyday in Beard. It is within this trajectory, too, that Freud posits the separation of the systems which govern experience and consciousness and those which govern memory. The consciousness is concerned with processing and defending the self against the stimuli it encounters; it exists in time. Memory is, Freud insists, handled by 'other, adjoining, systems' – a vague term which he later clarifies by implying that he means in fact the unconscious, where all is preserved outside time.¹⁸

But how does Freud *get* from the economic notion of ‘actual’ shock to the idea of an internal trauma? Or even more bluntly, how does shock become a wound rather than a draining of energies? One answer is: via the notion of an *economic* wound. Consider for example the account of melancholia in ‘Draft G’, probably of late 1894, which he sent to Fliess. He describes melancholia as a development of neurasthenia, involving ‘mourning over the loss of libido’. This, in turn, is depicted in terms of a wounding which is internalized: note the metaphoricity of what follows. Freud writes that the ‘in-drawing . . . into the psychic sphere’ produces

an effect of suction upon the adjoining amounts of excitation. The associated neurones must give up their excitation, *which produces pain*. The uncoupling of associations is always painful; there sets in, as though through an *internal hemorrhage*, an impoverishment in excitation (in the free store of it) – which makes itself known in the other instinctive drives and functions. As an inhibition, this in-drawing operates like a *wound*, in a manner analogous to pain (see the theory of physical pain). A counterpoint of this would be mania where the overflowing excitation is communicated to all associated neurones. Here, then, there is a similarity to neurasthenia. In neurasthenia a quite simple impoverishment takes place owing to excitation running out, as it were, through a hole. But in that case what is pumped empty is s.s. [somatic sexual excitation]; in melancholia the hole is in the psychic sphere.¹⁹

Freud’s attached topographic diagram makes clear this notion of wounding as ‘indrawing’; as attached to a *site*. Neurasthenia becomes a psychic wounding, involving an internal ‘shock’ which in Freud’s later work more typically involves the loss of an object or an existential predicament than any actual stimulus. In Freud’s most developed position as it is represented by in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926) ‘trauma’ can designate a massive shock which is either internal or external in origin: ‘real dangers and instinctual demands converge’ (PFL x 328).

Freud can thus be depicted as ‘saving’ the notion of trauma from the materialistic and historically-specific neurasthenic paradigm, with its attachment to the ‘actual’, the quotidian. Like the good doctor, he insists, as Beard and Page did not, that there *is* a wound attached to the traumatic situation; a wound which is at first neurological, then fantastic, and finally located somewhere between the two. Instead of Beard’s account of modernity as governed by the shock (a repetitive shock which in this period is also considered in studies of industrial production, fatigue, etc. in the period), Freud substitutes family melodrama, and the timelessness of the unconsciousness.

Stimulus and Shield

But if Freud decisively rejects the ‘old naïve theory’ of neurasthenia, its traces remain in the economic components of his thought. His account of trauma remains uncertain, since the traumatic rupture of the psychic apparatus can involve either a single massive psychic event or an accumulation of smaller ‘excitations’. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, which represents Freud’s post-war return to the economic model, he elaborates a model in which the organism is seen as a ‘living vesicle’ surrounded by a *protective shield* (*Reizschutz*). Trauma is a ‘widescale breach of the protective shield’. As Laplanche and Pontalis note,

Freud also gives the protective shield a broader, psychological sense implying no determinate bodily interpinning. He goes so far as to assign it a purely functional role, with protection against excitation being guaranteed by periodic cathexis and decathexis of the perception-consciousness system. Hence this system simply takes “samples” of the external world. The breaking-down of the mass of stimuli may therefore be treated as the work not of a purely spatial apparatus but of a temporal mode of functioning which assures a ‘periodic non-excitability’.

‘Sampling’ implies a temporal mode of dealing with shock. In ‘A Note on the Mystic Writing Pad’ Freud elaborates on this process, characterizing the top two layers of the pad – the cellophane and wax – as like the system perception-consciousness. Freud adds ‘I had a further suspicion that this discontinuous method of functioning of the system *Pcpt.-Cs.* Lies at the origin of the concept of time’. This makes time a function of the organic basis of mental activity, the on-off flickering of attention and the filtering of impressions in relation to any object of perception.

In fact, for all that the metaphor of permanent inscription seems to dominate the ‘Mystic Writing Pad’, Freud’s thinking on the ‘discontinuous method of functioning’ seems not so far from psychological orthodoxy. When William James in *Principles of Psychology* asks ‘To what cerebral process is the sense of time due?’, he answers that time is a product of the fact that sensations linger in the perceptual apparatus, like after-images:

to state it in neural terms, *there is at every moment a cumulation of brain-processes overlapping each other, of which the fainter ones are the dying phases of processes which but shortly previous were active in a maximal degree. The AMOUNT OF THE OVERLAPPING determines the feeling of the DURATION OCCUPIED.*

Duration is produced by the ‘overlapping of brain-processes of different phases’. As in Bergson the sense of time is not inbuilt, not a Kantian *a priori*, rather it is an effect of the mind’s functioning, affected by such factors as drugs, situation, and fatigue. Indeed, this description arguably makes time nothing but a kind of fatigue, the drag or noise which is built into the perceptual apparatus. The amount of time we can hold in ‘primary memory’ determines what can be processed as a unit – what, for example, we may hold as the unit of a sentence without having to consciously recollect its beginning. Thinking of time in this way returns us to the notion of ‘actual’ shock which Freud discarded in 1894; to the way in which everyday life is apprehended.

At this point we can turn to a familiar point in the modern history of shock, Walter Benjamin’s 1939 essay on Baudelaire, which draws on *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and (less overtly) on Beard in constructing a version of non-traumatic and time-bound shock.²⁰ Like Beard, Benjamin portrays the shock as written into the texture of modern life, with its movements of ‘switching, inserting, pressing’:

Moving through this traffic involves the individual in a series of shocks and collisions. At dangerous intersections, nervous impulses flow through him in rapid succession, like the energy from a battery. Baudelaire speaks of a man who plunges into the crowd as into a reservoir of electric energy. Circumscribing the experience of the shock, he calls this man ‘a kaleidoscope equipped with consciousness’. Whereas Poe’s passers-by cast glances in all directions which still appeared to be aimless, today’s pedestrians are obliged to do so in order to keep abreast of traffic signals. Thus technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of

training. Then came a day when a new and urgent need for stimuli was met by the film. In a film, perception in the form of shocks was established as a formal principle. (177)

For Benjamin the shock-effect is part of a genuinely dialectical view of technology, it which it offers new possibilities as well as new forms of alienation – the shock *is* a symptom of alienation; it is what the worker on the production line experiences, since each of his actions is disconnected from a total purpose, representing an empty jolting rather than a intentional making. Benjamin uses the notion of the ‘protective shield’ to portray Baudelaire as an author who strengthens the consciousness: ‘The acceptance of shocks is facilitated by training in coping with stimuli’, eventually producing the notion of the *correspondance*, ‘an experience which seeks to establish itself in crisis-proof form’ (164).

The flux of modern life described by Beard and Benjamin is linked in both these writers to another set of terms, *attention* and *distraction*, terms which are central both to turn-of-the-century psychology and to cultural analysis. Social critics depicted the modern world, with its flood of images, publications, its speeded up transport, in terms of a crisis of attentiveness and a collapse of culture into mere distraction; while psychophysical researchers followed Wundt in analysing reaction-times, attention-spans, divided attention, and the limits of attention. For William James intellectual life is the struggle to attend, to fix the flux of time and the stream of thought which moves through it: ‘the faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character and will’, he writes in the *Principles* (424). James mediates on the differences in attentiveness which might be related to creativity:

Geniuses are commonly believed to excel other men in their power of sustained attention. In most of them, it is to be feared, the so-called ‘power’ is of the passive sort. Their ideas coruscate, every subject branches infinitely before their fertile minds, and so for hours they may be rapt. *But it is their genius making them attentive, not their attention making geniuses of them.* And, when we come down to the root of the matter, we see that they differ from ordinary men less in the character of their attention than in the nature of the objects upon which it is successively bestowed. In the genius, these form a concatenated series, suggesting each other by some rational law. Therefore we call the attention ‘sustained’ and the topic of the meditation for hours ‘the same’. (423-24)

For James genius able to solve the problem that the human subject is always in a crisis of attentiveness, in which what appears to be concentration is usually a series of refocussings. But this is a passive and consequential triumph for the genius, and he adds that it may be those of ‘moderate intellectual endowments’ who can best train the attention. The ‘trick’ of genius is partly carried by the terms ‘coruscate’ and ‘fertile’: fixed ideas decay, where the mind-in-motion, as for Emerson, constantly displays the power of connection. Compare Benjamin on Baudelaire: ‘There is no one else who pursues the interconnected *correspondances* with such leisurely care’. The artist overcomes shock and distraction via a sustained sampling.

We can see this reformulation of genius as part of a broader cultural problem in which, in the work of Beard, James, Bergson and others, the ‘moment’ is dethroned, destabilized, rendered a moving continuum; in which there is a thickened sense of the *work* of moving through time. Moreover if shock is conceived in terms of the everyday, then the

materialities of perception – and technological apparatus such as film – tell us potentially more about the experience of modernity than Freud's sense of the trauma of origins. A final thought on Freud can be added here: in Freud's account of mental topography, the border between Consciousness and Unconscious is necessarily a 'soft' one, permeable and not subject to strong, direct defense. For this reason Freud sees the origins of the mechanism of projection in the fact that once a psychic danger is projected into the external world the tougher 'protective shield' can be deployed to defend against it. But that of course brings trauma into the open, as it were, rendering it 'actual', temporal and everyday.

***Tender is the Night* : wounding / neurasthenia**

The literary example which I want to turn to is Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* (1934). Most criticism of the novel, following its references to Freud, has focussed on the melodrama of incest, seduction and transference involved in Nicole's story and suggested by Rosemary's film, *Daddy's Girl*.²¹ But it is important to notice the neurasthenic psychology which co-exists with the overt Freudianism, conveyed in Dick – whom Nicole thinks of as having 'an inexhaustible energy, incapable of fatigue'²² – succumbing to modes of temporality characterised by fraying, loss of concentration, addiction. If these two psychologies coexist, the problem I will address tentatively is that of bringing them into a more dynamic relationship. Two aspects of the novel are particularly important here: its analysis of distraction-effects; and its analysis of the technologies of mass culture.

Descended from a line of clergymen, Dick Diver represents a Protestant seriousness in decline (a marker of the evolutionary paradigm of neurasthenia). With his medical ambitions, he is the closest the novel offers to James's notion of genius as attentiveness, always aware of situations and people. A comparison with a popular novelist late in the novel makes this point: 'Dick was always vividly conscious of his surroundings, while Collis Clay lived vaguely, the sharpest impressions dissolving upon a recording apparatus that had early atrophied' (239). By the end of the novel, however, Dick's vital reserves are depleted; he succumbs to fantasy, fatigue, alcohol, sexual compulsion, and finally fades from view. The question he asks Mary Minghetti, 'Have I been nourished?', is entirely to the point: he has nourished and protected others.

Most accounts of the novel are clear about what distracts Dick: women and money. But it is important to note the way in which the psychology of distraction operates at a more general level. Throughout there are descriptions of half-conscious or distracted processes taking place. This is the great novel of divided attention. We can run through some examples quickly, beginning with the trivial. As Doctor Dohmler listens to Devereux Warren's story 'one section of [his] mind kept thinking intermittently of Chicago' (142). At a dance a young Englishman talks to the sisters, 'but they were paying no attention, lulled to the staring point by the adolescent dance' (189). Daisy and Nicole discuss Dick while 'Baby considered whether or not to marry the latest candidate for her hand and money, an authenticated Hapsburg. She was not quite *thinking* about it' (335). Earlier Rosemary watches Dick while the director Brady talks to her:

she listened while he talked shop, her polite eyes never leaving his face, but her mind was so definitely elsewhere that she felt he must guess the fact. Intermittently she caught the gist of his sentences and supplied the rest from her subconscious, as

one picks up the striking of a clock in the middle with only the rhythm of the first uncounted strokes lingering in the mind. (41)²³

When Dick falls in love with Nicole we are told he ‘found himself washing without a memory of the intervening ten minutes’ (166). Subsequently, as Baby outlines her plans, he replies ‘automatically’. When he hears that Abe North is dead he is ‘scarcely aware’ of returning to his hotel with Tommy Barban. Finally, the climactic scene involving the transfer of Nicole from Dick to Tommy is enacted amidst pervasive distraction, interrupted by a newspaper-seller and then by the arrival of the Tour de France. The idea of semi-conscious processes also operates at the narrative level: ‘It was as though an incalculable story was telling itself inside him [Dick], about which she could only guess at in the moments when it broke through the surface’ (288). Nicole is ready for a new life but ‘she dare not bring the matter into the true forefront of consciousness’ (300); the same phrase, ‘forefront of her consciousness’, is used earlier (189).

Fitzgerald thus reaches towards a discourse of the distracted self. Distraction and shock are the markers of cumulative and economic processes, described in terms which recall the psychology of speed and shock, for example in Dick’s colleague’s appraisal: ‘Franz let himself believe with ever-increasing conviction that Dick traveled intellectually and emotionally at such a rate of speed that the vibrations jarred him’ (262). The novel includes both a car crash and displaced versions of shell-shock. Before it is linked to incest, Nicole’s ‘shock’ is tied to the war. Dick has a ‘long dream of war’ early in his decline, culminating in ‘a ghastly uprising of the mutilated in a dressing station’; on waking he writes ‘the half-ironic phrase: Non-combatant’s shell-shock’ (198). Indeed, we could compare his function as hired doctor to the Warren family to that of the tough protective shield, deadened in a sacrifice protecting the sensitive inner cortex from the dangerous influx of external stimulus (*PFL* XI 298) – one implication of Dick ‘hardening himself’ after Nicole’s relapses (185).

The psychology of distraction does not exist in a vacuum; as in Benjamin it is carefully aligned with the novel’s concern with glamour and mass-culture, thematized in terms of a complex mix of psychology, economics, and sexuality. Phrases like ‘he wanted to be alone so that his thoughts about work and the future would overpower his thoughts of love and today’ (184) depict the central male character struggling for a critical distance. Fitzgerald chastized Joseph Hergesheimer for misreading the novel as about Rosemary: ‘the actress fades out of it in the first third & is only a catalytic agent’.²⁴ This underestimates both the effect of catalysis (Rosemary initiates Dick’s decline), and the fact that both Rosemary and Nicole are conceived of as ‘stars’, as women who represent ‘not merely glamour but a practically irresistible glamour’, as Fitzgerald put it in a letter.²⁵ Frau Gregorovich makes the same connection: Nicole ‘ought to be in the cinema, like your Norma Talmage – that’s where all American women would be happy’ (259). *Tender is the Night* is a meditation on the *mechanisms* of stardom, as Zelda Fitzgerald intimated, using a metaphor which recalls Benjamin on film incorporating distraction at the formal level: ‘to expose the mechanics of the glamour of life in slowed-up motion rings of indecency’.²⁶ There is little space outside the ‘mechanics of glamour’. Early in the book a comment is made of Rosemary, supposed to suggest her independence: ‘she was In the movies but not at all At them’ (40). A more recent remark is closer to the truth, that of the replicant Rachael in Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner*: ‘I’m not *in* the business; I *am* the business’.²⁷

The self in the novels is thus always bound up with self-representation. Dick himself is a man with the face ‘that always tried to discipline itself into molds of attentive seriousness’

(158) – that is, someone for whom attention is a role. Accordingly the theory of acting which he expounds to Rosemary, with characteristic pomposity, seems akin to Brecht's in its use of distraction-effects, but in fact offers them in the service of a sustained illusion.²⁸ It hinges on the actor not being 'in character', but instead heightening the distance between situation and response in order to re-locate the audience's response. Dick is, of course, also expounding his own role, which includes removing the body of a black man from Rosemary's room:

'The danger to an actress is in responding. Again, let's suppose that somebody told you, "Your lover is dead". In life you'd probably go to pieces. But on the stage you're trying to entertain – the audience can do the "responding" for themselves. First the actress has lines to follow, then she has to get the audience's attention back on herself, away from the murdered Chinese or whatever the thing is. So she must do something unexpected. If the audience thinks the character is hard she goes soft on them – if you think she's soft she goes hard. You go all *out* of character – you understand?' (309-10)

This is a switching effect (Benjamin: 'switching, inserting, pressing'). The stage or cinematic self registers not the fixated trauma of the 'whatever the thing is', but instead a distracting shift in position, a shock-effect which shifts attention back into the temporal flow of the diegesis. In this cool mechanics of the self, the audience is moved on with a jerk like the gambler's throw in Baudelaire.

Even the incest which is Nicole's 'official' trauma can be read as involving the flux of modernity. As Richard Godden suggests, incest suggests a precise relation to late capitalism, and is itself commodified in *Daddy's Girl*.²⁹ And if Nicole's illness is a war hysteria, then her recovery is also linked to the historical period which follows, and to her assumption of economic control. The process of recovery is not simply 'natural'; the self is stabilized via its yoking to the order of consumer culture. The famous shopping episode is crucial here, as Nicole gathers props for a lifestyle; this is sampling with a vengeance. I would argue that if the novel represents the dialogue of trauma and distraction in modernity, it ultimately centers its analysis of the modern self on the latter term. At a crucial moment Fitzgerald includes a formula which is *both* timeless and economic; involving both wounding and attenuation:

One writes of scars healed, a loose parallel to the pathology of the skin, but there is no such thing in the life of the individual. There are open wounds, shrunk sometimes to the size of a pin-prick but wounds still. The marks of suffering are more comparable to the loss of a finger, or of the sight of an eye. We may not miss them, either, for one minute in a year, but if we should there is nothing to be done about it. (186)

Here we move from trauma to a fraying and diminishing of the self and a mourning for lost powers; from the timelessly open wound to the simply missing – and that is, of course, Dick Diver's final position, realizing what he has lost and vanishing into America.

My conclusion is not only the obvious point that fatigue and stress and the sense of depletion which accompany them – time-bound notions of shock – persist in our own sense of the demands and alienating effects of technological modernity and consumer culture, whose contradictions we all live with and are perhaps addicted to. Schapp's perception of shock in terms of the unstable border between 'regenerative thrill' and 'pathogenic wound'

is useful here.³⁰ More fundamentally, we also need to distinguish between notions of trauma grounded in the catastrophic wounding of the body or the psyche (and the kind of embodied memories which torture victims carry might offer one extreme here) on the one hand; and those shock-effects which exist within an economic, everyday conception of the body, which simply represent the flow and processing of its interchange with its environment (the feeling we have when the phone rings at for the sixth time in ten minutes). The paradigm in the one case is the splitting or fragmentation of the self, with the survival of unaccountable traces of trauma, seemingly outside time but re-worked in memory and fantasy; on the other, it is the quotidian attenuation and fraying of a distracted self which is nevertheless granted some *a priori* integrity; the self in time, most of the time, we feel we have.

¹ Jeffrey T. Schapp, 'Crash (Speed as Engine of Individuation)', *Modernism/Modernity* 6:1 (1999): 1-50 (4 cited).

² Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', *Penguin Freud Library*, XI 303. Subsequent references to *PFL* in text.

³ Edwin Morris's *A Practical Treatise on Shock* (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1867), 1.

⁴ The articles culminated in Erichsen's *Railway and Other Injuries of the Nervous System* (1866). The best-known discussion of this debate is Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980); on the medical literature, see Eric Michael Kaplan, 'Trains, Brains and Sprains: Railway Spine and the Origins of Psychoneuroses', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 69 (1995): 387-419. My account of shock is indebted to Schivelbusch, but differs from it in stressing the notion of a wound site in trauma and drawing out some of the implications of the economic view of bodily energies.

⁵ John Erichsen, *On Concussion of the Spine, Nervous Shock and Other Obscure Injuries of the Nervous System* (London: Longman, Green, 1875), 196; Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 141-43.

⁶ Herbert W. Page, *Injuries to the Spine and Spinal Cord without Apparent Mechanical Lesion and Nervous Shock in their Surgical and Medico-Legal Aspects* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1883).

⁷ Herbert W. Page, *Railway Injuries* (London: Charles Griffin, 1891). Kaplan neglects to mention this book.

⁸ George W. Crile, M.D. and William E. Lower, M.D., *Surgical Shock, and the Shockless Operation through Anoci-Association* (1914; 2nd rev. ed. Philadelphia and London: W. B. Saunders, 1920), 266.

⁹ See Chris Feudtner, 'Minds the Dead have Ravished: Shell-Shock, History and the Ecology of Disease Systems', *History of Science* 31 (1993): 387.

¹⁰ Crile & Lower, *Surgical Shock*, 264.

¹¹ M. B. Macmillan, 'Beard's Concept of Neurasthenia and Freud's Concept of the Actual Neuroses', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 12 (1976): 376-90 (379 cited).

¹² (Sir) Frederick W. Mott, *War Neuroses and Shell-Shock* (London: Henry Frowde, 1919), 130-31.

¹³ George F. Schrady, 'Shock', in *Twentieth-Century Practice: An International Encyclopedia of Modern Medical Science*, ed. T. L. Stedman, M.D. (London: Sampson Low, 1895), 141. Montague Handfield-Jones, *Medical Times and Gazette* 1878, cited Page, *Injuries of the Spine*, 200; cf. Handfield-Jones, 'On Hyper-excitability and Paresis', *British Medical Journal* (1874), I 370.

¹⁴ Macmillan, 'Beard's Concept of Neurasthenia', 376.

¹⁵ 'On the Grounds for Detaching a Particular Syndrome from Neurasthenia under the Description "Anxiety Neurosis"' (1895), *PFL* x. The 'Beard' in the letter is unspecified, but the only other candidate, embryologist John Beard, is unlikely.

¹⁶ Freud to Fliess, 5 Nov. 1897, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1877-1904*, ed. Jeffrey M. Masson (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1985).

¹⁷ Angela Richards, ed., *PFL* x 233. For an overview of trauma, see J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Karnac Books, 1988), 465ff.

¹⁸ Freud's insistence on the timelessness of the Unconscious has of course been challenged by Lacan, Derrida and others who argue that what he in fact suggests is a non-linear temporality: see *Writing and Difference*, 225.

¹⁹ *Complete Letters*, 103-4.

²⁰ Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 157-202. Benjamin does, of course, use the term 'trauma'.

²¹ See esp. Katherine Cummings, *Telling Tales: The Hysteric's Seduction in Fiction and Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

²² F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night: A Romance* (London: Penguin, 1986), 323.

²³ The striking clock is one of William James's examples of how the mind apprehends time.

²⁴ Inscribed copy cited in Matthew J. Bruccoli, *The Composition of Tender is the Night: A Study of the Manuscripts* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1963), 8.

²⁵ Fitzgerald to Mary Pritchett, 4 March 1938, *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli & Margaret M. Duggan (New York: Random House, 1980), 491.

²⁶ Zelda to Scott Fitzgerald, March 1934, cited in James R. Mellow, *Invented Lives: F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 425.

²⁷ See Erica Sheen, "'I'm Not in the Business, I am the Business': Women in the Hollywood SF Film", *Where No Man Has Gone Before: Women and Science Fiction*, ed. Lucy Armitt (London: Routledge, 1990), 139-61.

²⁸ The closest parallel I can think of is William James's injunction in 'The Gospel of Relaxation' for the would-be healthy person to empty themselves of interiority in order become an image of relaxation, *the thing imitated*, so that by a process of 'contagion' others may identify with this image.

²⁹ Richard Godden, 'Money Makes Manners Makes Man Makes Woman: *Tender is the Night*, a Familiar Romance', *Literature and History* 12:1 (1986): 16-37.

³⁰ Schapp, 'Crash', 26.