# ÉTUDES ANGLAISES

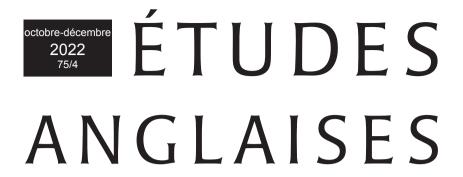
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## "My God, you're fun to kiss": Love, Lust, and Liminality in *Tender Is the Night*

Drawing upon classic theories of liminality, this article examines the ways in which *Tender Is the Night* presents characters, scenes, and narrative constructions that are "betwixt and between," crossing borders, or entering and exiting thresholds that signal personal and social change. Each of the three Book sections in the text centres on the impact and consequences of an initial dramatic kiss: between Dick Diver and Rosemary Hoyt that focuses on transition, between Dick and Nicole Diver that involves transference, and between Nicole Diver and Tommy Barban that results in transformation. The gyrospheric qualities of these liminal transactions lead to a vortex of consequences for the characters and to further implications within the novel's focus on mutability. With close-reading of textual details that demonstrate how Fitzgerald explores through liminal imagery and vocabulary the boundaries of love and desire, the theme of change deepens into a critique of post-war Western civilization and the emergence of unsettling cultural phenomena including the cinema industry, the rise of the clinic, and gender reconfigurations.

Le présent article s'inspire des théories classiques de la liminalité pour montrer les différentes façons dont Tender Is the Night déploie des personnages, des scènes et des constructions narratives qui sont « entre-deux », des passages de frontières et des franchissements de seuils qui sont autant de signes du changement personnel et social. Chacune des trois grandes sections du texte est centrée sur l'impact d'un premier baiser spectaculaire: celui entre Dick Diver et Rosemary Hoyt, qui marque une transition, celui entre Dick et Nicole Diver, qui implique un transfert, et celui entre Nicole Diver et Tommy Barban, qui amène une transformation. Les qualités gyrosphériques de ces transactions liminales entraînent un tourbillon de conséquences pour les personnages, et viennent enrichir d'implications supplémentaires le traîtement de la mutabilité dans le roman. À travers l'analyse de détails textuels qui montrent comment Fitzgerald utilise les images et le lexique de la liminalité pour explorer les frontières de l'amour et du désir, le thème du changement trouve à se prolonger dans une critique de la civilisation occidentale de l'après-guerre et de nouveaux phénomènes troublants comme l'industrie du cinéma, l'essor de la clinique, et la reconfiguration des identités genrées.

The narrative of *Tender Is the Night* revolves around three kisses. The novel effectively employs a dramatic analeptic shift in Book 2 that

William BLAŽEK, "My God, you're fun to kiss": Love, Lust, and Liminality in *Tender Is the Night*, ÉA 75-4 (2022): 426-443. © Klincksieck.

reveals the background to the marriage of Dick Diver and Nicole Warren. interdependent in their relationship as doctor and patient, whether as the brilliant psychologist compromised by the Warren family's wealth or as the incest survivor struggling with her psychic health and personal autonomy. Taken out of that intentionally distorted narrative schema, the three kisses taken in chronological sequence contain classic aspects of liminality, both in terms of characters moving through threshold changes and in the textual depictions of borderland spaces. The characters' convoluted emotional experiences closely relate to liminal settings ranging from European landscapes to movie studios, clinics, and hotels. In Book 2's earliest time period, the years encompassing the First World War, Nicole initiates the first kiss with Dr Dick Diver amid a complex Switzerland setting. The focus there is on the psychiatric transference of a doctor's clinical care and concern to a patient's perception of an emotional and even sexual bond. In the 1925 setting of Book 1, the Riviera beach. film sets, and a Paris hotel are the backdrop for the not-yet-eighteenyear-old movie star Rosemary Hoyt's first kiss with an initially resistant Dick Diver. At that point, a ritual transition to adulthood is depicted within post-war commercial and Machine Age cultural contexts, Book 3 involves Nicole's transformation, physically and psycho-socially, in taking Tommy Barban as her lover, protector, and husband-replacement. Their first kiss and sexual encounter open a contentious critical field of interpretation concerning Nicole's emergence from incest trauma and clinical treatment, yet that liaison also enfolds liminal aspects as much in textual details as in contextual matters. Whether in Book 2's transference, Book 1's transition, or Book 3's transformation themes, liminality features in formal and conceptual ways.

Liminality theory's application also reaches beyond narrative technique to engage in socio-historical concerns about "the broken universe of the war's ending" (276) and its aftermath, a fractured space depicted through characters in flux who inhabit a world both old and new in its fundamental values, standards of behaviour, and unresolved conflicts. My intention here is to explore some effects of applying a liminal lens to close-reading analysis of the text, focusing on the locations and circumstances surrounding the three significant first-kisses. They initiate fundamental shifts in personal lives and signal how the novel's emphasis on in-betweenness, borders, margins, and thresholds is allied to Fitzgerald's portrayal of the era's cultural insecurities and difficult transmutations. As narrative spaces and interactions among the novel's main characters illustrate a liminal relationship between love and lust, the text also incorporates a cultural critique of a world in flux.

Liminality studies must invariably trace their origins to the work of anthropologist Victor Turner, who from the late 1960s developed his theories in three key publications, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*" (1967), "Liminality and Communitas" (1969), and "Passages, Margins, and Poverty: Religious Symbols of Communitas"

(1974). Turner drew from the writings of Belgian folklorist Arnold Van Gennep, particularly *Les Rites de passage* (1909), about three stages in coming-of-age rituals: separation, liminal stage, reassimilation. Turner further developed the concept of the liminal as a transitional process with larger socio-cultural implications. He focused especially on individuals or groups who stand apart, betwixt and between, entering and exiting a "threshold" or "limen," before (partial or full) reintegration of the self or society. This focus led him to examine the relationship between hierarchically structured mainstream society and "communitas," a somewhat loosely applied term for less highly structured and usually outlying groupings of people. Those currently outside of dominant structural norms are in a liminal position, neither here nor there, but moving towards a new form of society which itself is becoming the standard. While some will remain on the margins (such as the homeless), other types of previously isolated individuals will find themselves accepted within the new normal.

In Tender Is the Night, this general framework might be applied to, for example, the increasingly more populated Riviera beaches, originally transformed by Dick Diver, who rakes detritus from the sand in order to create an exclusive beach at Juan-les-Pins and is admired for his "invention" of a summer season (9, 21). The opening of the novel hints at the subsequent transformation, as an influx of modern bungalows "cluster" near the Divers' beach haven, which itself had supplanted an old-world milieu of pre-war villas that "rotted like water lilies among the massed pines" (5). By the time the Divers' marriage dissolves, Nicole in free narrative discourse thinks: "Let him look at it—his beach, perverted now to the tastes of the tasteless" (315). The acceptance of the movie industry into mainstream culture and Albert McKisco's success as a popular novelist after his introduction as a bumptious poseur who aspires to write better than James Joyce are two other applications of liminal theory that might be made. Interdisciplinary literary and socio-anthropological studies such as those of Aguirre, Ashley, Soto, and Viljoen have shown how liminality can be a flexible tool for investigating in-betweenness and change, whether through explorations of textual matter or contexts. At the start of the twenty-first century, two groups of European scholars, working for the most part independently in Madrid and Liverpool, helped to establish new ground for utilizing liminality theory within literary and media analyses, initially by expanding the definitions of the threshold—theoretical work to which this article is indebted.1

<sup>1.</sup> The essay collection *Mapping Liminalities* (ed. Kay et al.), focuses on specific literary texts by European, American, and Middle Eastern authors and theorists in its aim to broaden the application of liminal studies. Aguirre et al. target margins and thresholds in part to explore overlapping genres including folklore, popular culture, and both canonical and postmodern fiction. Through the Gateway Press in Madrid and under Aguirre's leadership, papers and monographs in the series The Trellis Papers examine liminality within a variety of topics including folktales and gothic literature. The essay collection edited by Soto views literary texts through reinterpretations of the limen

A further consideration in appreciating *Tender Is the Night* as a liminal text is the novel's place within the modernist canon. Against earlier views of the text as a flawed construction because of the shifting perspectives in its narrative point of view—ostensibly a consequence of its sporadic nine-year gestation involving eighteen separate draft versions—Kirk Curnutt has demonstrated that by his final draft Fitzgerald arrived at a modernist narrative strategy that allowed for discontinuities, unsettling juxtapositions, and creative focalization shifts between, for example in Book 1, an omniscient voice and the character Rosemary Hoyt's point of view (Curnutt 136–41). That narratological analysis of the text can readily be connected to literary liminality's mixtures of stasis and movement, spatial and temporal transitions, and the unsettling reading experience of a novel that often suspends itself between external materiality and internal mental reconfigurations.

Milton R. Stern explains how "subtle references to war, weapons, and combat [...] pepper the novel," and he shows how imagery of America's wars is threaded within the fabric of the novel (106–07). In a similar manner, Fitzgerald infuses the text with liminal spaces, times, conditions, and vocabulary. The shore of the French Riviera is described in the opening paragraphs as "about half way between Marseilles and the Italian border," with the Mediterranean, the beach, and land border giving way to "the low range of the Maures, which separates the littoral from true Provençal France," leading to the Alps beyond. Compounded historical time there is both "[l]ately" and "a decade ago" as well as "[n]ow" and "when this story begins" (5)—illustrating in literary narrative Turner's concept of the limen as a point "both in and out of time" (Turner 1969, 96). Rosemary undergoes a skin-color change from a deep sunburn, while the once innovative but now failing composer Abe North is first depicted in and out of the sea; later, he is called "the entirely liquid Mr North" (82), and in his drunkenness alcohol becomes a liminal concoction that "made past happy things contemporary with the present, as if they were still going on, contemporary even with the future as if they were about to happen again" (116). During the First World War, "Switzerland was an island, washed on one side by the waves of thunder around Gorizia and on another by the cataracts along the Somme and the Aisne" (131), and before his military service with the United States entry into the conflagration, "Doctor Diver had seen around the edges of the war" (132). Betwixt and between places and states of mind when sailing from New York back to Europe after his father's funeral, Dick enters a half-way nowhere: "On the long-roofed steamship piers one is in a country that is

and close-readings that explore the kinds of wider cultural implications that I am concerned with here. Later work by Viljoen and Van der Merwe explores in-between zones and hybridity in South African literary and cultural contexts, while Ashley's preliminary study concentrates on the development of Turner's theories in social anthropology and literature.

no longer here and not yet there" (232). The liminal junctures extend to genealogical mixtures: Tommy is half American and half French; Nicole's family ancestry is another amalgam: "the granddaughter of a self-made American capitalist and the granddaughter of a Count of the House of Lippe Weissenfeld" (60). Chris Messenger demonstrates how the novel through Dick's "long decline is punctuated by repeated unstable boundary constructions of race and ethnicity" (160). The widowed Mary North from Newark, New Jersey, remarries across racial and geographic lines to Hosain Minghetti, "of the Kabyle-Sabaean-Hindu strain that belts across north Africa and Asia" and whose great wealth "flowed from his being ruler-owner of manganese deposits in southwestern Asia" (291). Dick takes Rosemary to a gathering of dissipating expatriates and hangers-on at a house in the rue Monsieur, and they "cross that threshold" (81) but soon leave, "moving over the brief threshold of the future to the sudden past of the stone façade without" (83). Marginal spaces often emphasize the risky territory and delicate balances that characters have to navigate.

Buildings take on the qualities of liminal constructions, such as the Swiss clinic established as both home and therapy-center for Nicole. It serves as an exit from the Divers' extravagant leisure on the Riviera and the threat of her psychotic collapse (after the incident in Paris involving the corpse of Jules Peterson), but the clinic also is an entrance to an illusory world of safety and stability. "We're beginning to turn in a circle," Dick admits, and agrees to allow the Warrens' money to finance the enterprise. The clinic itself is "of the modern type—no longer a single dark and sinister building but a small, scattered, yet deceitfully integrated village" (206), cleverly designed to camouflage its institutionalized therapeutic function. Nicole combines there her roles of patient and helpmate, who "designed the decoration and the furniture on a necessary base of concealed grills and bars and immovable furniture" (208). When her mental strain is exposed at the Agiri Fair episode of Book 2, chapter xv, the merry-go-round and ferris wheel, two machines spinning on central axes, symbolize the fixed mechanics of her treatment together with the incurable cyclical patterns of her disorder. Unable to aid her any longer, Dick "could only take the characteristically modern course, to interpose—he would get a nurse from Zurich, to take her over to-night" (217). His own downfall is highlighted in the Roman jail where he is badly beaten and humiliated. "He would be a different person henceforward, and in his raw state he had bizarre feelings of what the new self would be" (264), the narrative voice reflects, expressing the disorientating and transitive nature of the limen as Dick's status is diminished. From that threshold experience, the family social hierarchy is reconfigured because his sister-in-law, Baby Warren, has bullied the American consul in order to assist Dick. Her triumph there—"Baby had won" (263)—extends to moral superiority over Dick and a significant shift in their relationship. Her path to that success is traced through a liminal route, when Baby, having first ascertained Dick's dire situation in the jail and then attempted to find the consul, travels back to the jail; but her chauffeur gets lost so she "dismounted and explored a labyrinth of familiar alleys" (261) before eventually reaching her destination, after finding a roundabout resolution to Dick's immediate dilemma. His subsequent character change, in the recognition of his professional failure (or his profession's failure),<sup>2</sup> is sharply recognized by Nicole: "you used to want to create things—now you seem to want to smash them up" (300). Unlike Nicole's father, the Sisyphean Devereux Warren, who remains trapped in a liminal purgatory, unable even to die (277–83),<sup>3</sup> Dick in Book 3 is exiting the threshold of his six-year marriage, just as Book 2 depicts how he entered it.

A passage from Book 2, chapter IX of *Tender Is the Night* contains the quotation in this article's title:

As he held her and tasted her, and as she curved in further and further toward him, with her own lips, new to herself, drowned and engulfed in love, yet solaced and triumphant, he was thankful to have an existence at all, if only as a reflection in her wet eyes.

"My God," he gasped, "you're fun to kiss."

That was talk, but Nicole had a better hold on him now and she held it; she turned coquette and walked away, leaving him as suspended as in the funicular of the afternoon. She felt: There, that'll show him, how conceited; how he could do with me; oh, wasn't it wonderful! I've got him, he's mine. (177)

As with so many passages in this novel, the words here vibrate with themes and images that travel across the text—most notably, in this case, the diametrics of uncontrollable emotional engagement and the self-conscious assertion of power, the relationship between Dick and Nicole Diver beginning with rational professional authority but shifting to social and personal disruption, the mixtures of piety and desire ("My God [...] you're fun to kiss"—Would God be fun to kiss? Is Nicole to become his God?), questions about the nature of existence and human perception ("he was thankful to have an existence at all"), the place of beauty in artistic creation, and the ways that modern art might confound traditional aesthetics (contrasting the Victorian-era realist concept of art as a mirror to nature with "if only as a reflection in her wet eyes" and its assertion of a new way of seeing). The passage also contains underlying images of immersion and drowning, of unexpected and unexplored depths ("she curved further and further toward him"), as the characters' unsatisfac-

<sup>2.</sup> For this perspective, see my own essay "Some Fault in the Plan': Fitzgerald's Critique of Psychiatry in *Tender Is the Night*."

<sup>3.</sup> The clinic which the seemingly moribund Devereux Warren mysteriously walks out of is itself described as a liminal geographic and social space, treating as well as diagnosing patients with a mixture of mental and physical ailments before sending them onward: "Routes cross here—people bound for private sanitariums or tuberculosis resorts in the mountains, people who are no longer persona grata in France or Italy" (279).

tory past lives now fall into one another. The imagery is closely related to the Lake Geneva setting of the passage, too, and is developed in later descriptions of the lake itself with its eddies and dangerous swells that take in both the years of the Divers' marriage and the embattled social history of Europe. The lake as an international crossroad functions as a limen of geopolitical importance: "On the true centre of the lake, cooled by the piercing current of the Rhône, lay the true centre of the Western World. Upon it floated swans like boats and boats like swans, both lost in the nothingness of the heartless beauty" (169).

Within these dualities and shifting currents, though, another narrative design emerges—the use of liminal spaces and situations to register a change from one set of circumstances, states or conditions to another. The first kiss is compounded with pathetic fallacies of a liminal hue that enhance the sense of personal upheaval and the era's social tumult: "Two thousand feet below she saw the necklace and bracelet of lights that were Montreux and Vevey, beyond them a dim pendant of Lausanne [...]. Then the storm came swiftly, first falling from the heavens, then doubly falling in torrents from the mountains" followed by "savage filaments of lightning and world-splitting thunder" (177–78). In the chapter before the one from which this passage is taken, the Glion funicular is described in this way: "When the funicular came to rest those new to it stirred in suspension between the blues of two heavens. It was merely for a mysterious exchange between the conductor of the car going up and the conductor of the car coming down" (170-71). While this image could represent a chiasmus of upward and downward trajectories that reflects the transference theme in the text, I would also argue that it contains in the mechanically propelled cable car a transitional space (the machine within the landscape, interior compartment and exterior splendour, solitude and companionship) that functions as a limen, a gateway or threshold, or to follow the railway metaphor, a junction, both terminus and departure platform—for Dick Diver's professional plans and Nicole Warren's scarred past, as well as for a post-war society in which human relationships are forced to reconfigure themselves, in an effort to escape "a world well left behind" (170). The funicular is the most overt symbol in this section, but the passengers next transfer to a mountain train to reach Caux Palace, and the narrative presents another image that reinforces the liminal context: "But the approach was different—a leatherlunged engine pushed the passengers round and round in a corkscrew, mounting, rising; [...] they skirted a lost streak of wind with the hotel growing in size at each spiral, until with a vast surprise they were there, on top of the sunshine" (171).

I have elsewhere defined the concept of the limen as the central axis in a gyre, through which the dynamic individual, local, and global implications of narrative passages may combine, dissolve, or erupt (Blažek 2008, 20). This idea follows from a definition by Paul Giles, who explores the limen as a location or moment from which to look "backwards and forwards

simultaneously" and as an "uneasy threshold where history is refracted into various forms of discursive incoherence, thereby creating divisions within supposedly stable identities" (Giles 33). Manuel Aguirre defines the limen as "inflected: It is the interstitial, but also the straddling, the multiform, the rhizomatic, the nomadic" and, as significantly, it "tends to acquire width" (Aguirre 2022, 12). The spiralling journey of the mountain train above Montreux in Tender Is the Night functions in such a way within the text, to signal the personal changes about to happen for Dick and Nicole but also to recall the recent and more distant military and cultural upheavals in Europe that had swirled around Switzerland, the continent's central axis.

With these textual and theoretical prefaces in mind, then, I will now turn towards the substance of what seem the poles of love and lust in the novel, but what on closer inspection is revealed as a liminal construction with gyrospheric qualities. In Book 2, chapter IX, the one containing the first-kiss scene between Nicole and Dick, we also encounter the unusual acoustics of another liminal space, the circular salon of the Caux Palace Hotel, where voices can be heard forty yards away while transcending the central area in between speakers. Nicole calls to Dick and says:

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"Can you hear me? I'm speaking naturally."
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The passage encapsulates the mysterious, exciting, secretive, marginalizing, and unsettling events to come; it also presents a key to understanding how liminal concepts of transition and transformation can be used to interpret the tangled interactions between feelings of love and of compulsive desire in the story. Expressions of love in the novel are both interpersonal and often publicly performed or observed, with origins in private desires and individual needs that create tensions and gaps between what is on display and what remains hidden (the Divers' outwardly exquisite marriage and the secret of the Warren family incest, above all). While personal conversations can be held across a public space in the Caux Palace Hotel, the salon's architecture also excludes people from such conduits, and reminds us of the increasingly private experience of, for example, forms of entertainment in the early twentieth century (the radio replacing public forums of speech, the phonograph replacing concerts and other public performances). "Corner to corner—it's like wireless": each individual, speaker and listener, sits ensconced in a secluded corner, directly linked to one another but cut off from larger connections to the world around them.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Perfectly."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Hello, Doctor Diver."

<sup>&</sup>quot;What's this?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;You realize the people in the centre of the floor can't hear what I say, but you can?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;A waiter told us about it," said Miss Warren. "Corner to corner—it's like wireless." (172)

There is a direct relationship in the novel between new electronic communication devices, the liminal spaces in the text, and the threshold between love and lust. That relationship is anticipated in Book 1 at the Divers' Riviera retreat, the Villa Diana and its grounds, which "were made out of a row of peasant dwellings that abutted on the cliff—five small houses had been combined to make the house and four destroyed to make the garden" (31). Their home, situated within height and depth, among cliff and sea, old poverty and current wealth, destruction and renewal, is a liminal cornucopia. Here Dick "had many light mechanical devices" (31), and from his one-room work house he takes outside a megaphone to call across to Nicole. Fitzgerald's interstices across the settings of Books 1 and 2 position Nicole as the character in the marriage who is most attuned to nature in her garden reserve, and more naturally sensual. Her intuitive senses place her in charge of the Caux Palace echochamber, and here on the Villa Diana grounds she responds to Dick's mechanically enhanced voice in a repetition of that earlier encounter; and she undermines his masculine, machine-enhanced authority, just as their first kiss unnerved him:

The ease with which her reply reached him seemed to belittle his megaphone, so she raised her voice and called, "Can you hear me?" "Yes." He lowered the megaphone and then raised it stubbornly. (32)

In Book 3, the break-up of the Divers' marriage and the affair between Tommy and Nicole is often conducted by telephone. And in Book 2's flashback, before discovering the joy of kissing Nicole, when she was bombarding him with clinically obsessive letters, Dick Diver was involved with another young woman: "[...] the memory of [Nicole] became overlaid by the vivid presence of a Wisconsin telephone girl at headquarters in Bar-sur-Aube. She was red-lipped like a poster, and known obscenely in the messes as 'The Switchboard'" (144). The overlapping of technology and sex upon this axial image is clear, but note, also, the liminal relationship between "the memory of [Nicole]" and "the vivid presence" of Miss Switchboard: absence and presence, memory and flesh intermingling in the circuits of Dick's mind. To emphasize these connections and the ensuing disconnections, Fitzgerald provides an encore for the Wisconsin telephone girl not much later. Having spoken in a doctor-patient conversation with the teenage Nicole about her uncertain prospects for love, marriage, and happiness, Dick becomes distracted when his professional duty towards her intersects with his emotional involvement with her. His efforts to "[provide] antidotes" to his uncomfortable feelings take two forms: firstly correcting the proofs of his book and secondly meeting again "the telephone girl from Bar-sur-Aube, now touring Europe from Nice to Coblenz, in a desperate roundup of the men she had known in her neverto-be-equalled holiday" (167). This description is a sly and devastating comment on American attitudes towards Europe, if the Great War for "the telephone girl" can be equated to a holiday; and it brings to mind one of the early proposed, ironic titles for the novel, "The Drunkard's Holiday" (Bruccoli 10). But more pertinent to my concerns with liminal constructions in the text, the telephone girl's tour from sybaritic Nice to the Rhine-bordered city of Coblenz, home to the US Army of Occupation, presents a narrative trench line between Dick's commitment to Nicole and the distractions of other women (or girls).

Crucially, writing is the other particular distraction that he draws upon to avoid thinking about the consequences of a fixed liaison with Nicole as a wife-patient. His "projected new work" has a title that "would look monumental in German" (the title is provided by Fitzgerald in a footnote; 167), and its phallic bulk acts paradoxically as *coitus reservatus* or perhaps scriptorius interruptus for him during Nicole's pursuit of him and the professional care he could offer. Drawn toward Nicole's youthful beauty and assertive sensuality, Dick must also, at least subliminally, consider the convenient advantage of a potential union with her for the benefit of his writings, not only because her money would substitute for the professional-exchange fellowship that he considers applying for in order to have time for research (167), but also because—however unlikely that prospect would be among his confused thoughts at this liminal juncture—her medical condition would provide him with a longterm clinical case-study to exploit (as Carl Jung's marriage to his first patient, the young and wealthy Emma Rauschenbach—and later affairs with patients Sabina Spielrein and Toni Wolff—actually did; see Clay).

The self-reflective connection between the difficulties and the satisfactions of writing and the gap that opens for Dick between love and lust are continually reinforced within the narrative. This liminal gap or trench-line matrix is a transitional area; it can protect and conceal but at the same time trap and constrain its occupants. The division between writing and not writing, between ideal love and real love, between thinking or talking about sex and performing sexual acts is related to the way that another creative art that is central to the novel, moviemaking, involves complex intersections of work and pleasure, presence and absence, desire and action, disgust and fascination. David Seed, in his examination of cinematic qualities in twentieth-century American novels, argues that "the presence of film in *Tender Is the Night* is felt at every level of theme and treatment" (95). In his article on Tender Is the *Night* and Fitzgerald's conflicted reactions to the growing influence of the movie industry, Alan Bilton writes: "As for early filmgoers, the darkness of the movie theatre [referring to the story 'Jacob's Ladder'] appears as a border between worlds" (43), a phantom world of time past alongside the illusion of present reality. Although Rosemary Hoyt's first kiss with Dick connects with Turner's liminal theories mostly at the level of ritual transition from virginity to sexual consummation, in addition the movie world that she inhabits after her break-through role in the film *Daddy's* Girl emerges from the text as a form of communitas, one that seeks to inculcate Dick into the global phenomenon of movie culture. Tellingly,

Rosemary initiates the first kiss with Dick: "Suddenly she came toward him, her youth vanishing as she passed inside the focus of his eyes and he had kissed her breathlessly as if she were any age at all" (72). The action uses camera-like close-focus, a temporal montage in its liminal conjunctions and, as if in a film rewinding, a textual juxtaposition with Nicole's deliberate agency in *her* first kiss with Dick. Rosemary's initiation scenes in Book 1 contain tricky narrative anticipations, including a delicate olfactory link between Rosemary and Nicole when Dick accepts further evening kisses: "In the dark cave of the taxi, fragrant from the perfume Rosemary had bought with Nicole, she came close again, clinging to him" (72). When Dick reaches Rosemary's hotel room, "she comes close up against him with a forlorn whisper" and pleads "'Take me'" (73). "It is irrelevant to accuse Rosemary of naivety when she leans towards Dick and breathes 'take me,'" explains David Seed, "because she is well aware of its theatricality" (97). Yet whether sincere or artificial, the offer is resisted more than rejected, and the text defers Dick and Rosemary's sexual intercourse for another twenty-nine chapters.

However, the chapter following this first kiss takes them to the Paris film studio in Passy, where she presents a screening of *Daddy's Girl* for the Divers and their friends and has arranged a surprise screen-test for Dick, one that he refuses more firmly than the offer of sex with a minor. For Rosemary, "the dark cave of the taxi" and the extinguished lights in the film-projection room are comfortable and not dissimilar performance spaces, and they foreshadow the emergence of a global movie culture that the poet Hart Crane analyzes in the third stanza of "To Brooklyn Bridge" in his epic poem *The Bridge*:

I think of cinemas, panoramic sleights With multitudes bent toward some flashing scene Never disclosed but hastened to again, Foretold to other eyes on the same screen [...] (43)

The threat and promise of this emerging cultural communitas is presented in the novel through the Gaumont film-studio lot in La Turbie that Rosemary visits alone:

The studio manager opened a small door in the blank wall of a stage building and with sudden glad familiarity Rosemary followed him into half darkness. Here and there figures spotted the twilight, turning up ashen faces to her like souls in purgatory watching the passage of a mortal through [...]. A bank of lights went off with a savage hiss, went on again; the plaintive tap of a hammer begged admission to nowhere in the distance [...]. (27)

The Dantean imagery is modernized in form but in substance it is associated with sin and punishment, both tempting and caustic, as Rosemary is guided into this borderland of vapid artificiality and creative delight. "The Mediterranean world was less silent now that she knew the studio was there," we are told, with the added irony that the silent films being

produced there will go out to an expectant but quietly captive audience of international viewers. Ruth Prigozy argues that Rosemary "is the Frankenstein created by American industry. Her mask of innocence conceals the last act in American history" (216).

The liminal axis of love and lust in the novel operates within a similar transitional borderland—between producer and product, innocence and perfidy, past and present, longing and at least partial fulfilment, the unattainable and the unsatisfying. It would be extremely disturbing to suggest that the incest between Nicole and her father, Devereux Warren, could be a compassionate act of love in the novel; but when one considers the alternative relationships depicted it is difficult to find a more sympathetic description than the father's reported conversation in German with Dr Dohmler, in which Devereux explains: "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—[...]" (148). Of course, there are symptoms of hypocrisy and corruption even here—sentimental people wiping their eyes because they cannot see properly, and the daughter-father relationship is overly dependent and even possessive ("'We used to say,' 'Now let's not pay any attention to anybody else this afternoon—let's just have each other—for this morning you're mine'" [148]). Theirs has been both a public and a secretive union, too, creating a mysterious gap between what they do together in the morning and the desire to avoid other people in the afternoon. Yet other sexual relationships between men and women in the novel contain features that are equally conjunctive and disjunctive.

The depiction of those relationships sometimes takes the form of narrative omission, as when Rosemary, finishing a telephone call, overhears Dick and Nicole:

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"—So you love me?"
"Oh, do I." [...]
"I want you terribly—let's go to the hotel now" [...]
"I want you."
"Pil be at the hotel at four." (61)
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The "vast secretiveness" that vibrates in the conversation for Rosemary is widened further when we reflect on the odd combination of reassurance sought and given ("So you love me?" "Oh, do I") alongside the sex that Rosemary imagines will follow and that she compares with "the playing of certain love scenes in pictures" (62). The conversation implies that love and lust are good bedfellows—Dick later calls this "Active love" (85)—but two of the most important beds presented in the text are the one on which Jules Peterson is found murdered and the one whose coverings are used to hide the evidence of his blood.

When Rosemary and Dick meet again, long afterwards in Rome, Fitzgerald places their sex scene within a movie context that deepens the ties between love as illusion and sex as the reality of discontent: "'They say it's the first thing I've had sex appeal in," she states, adding an appreciation of voyeurism to her eavesdropping skills as vicarious ways to participate in sex. Liminal conditions often have these kinds of textured borders, but they also usually lead to a successful rite of passage into a new condition and ease the participant into that reconstituted state of being. The transition from imagined love with Dick to real sex with him, however, is located in a void: "She wanted to be taken and she was," the narrative curtly informs us, "and what had begun with a childish infatuation on a beach was accomplished at last" (213). Remembering the importance of Dick as a victim of writer's block, I would also argue that this sentence reflects the reader's own childish infatuation with the romantic vision of the opening scene on the beach and the narrative's progression into a more realist style and deterministic plotline. Thus we, too, transit through a threshold and eventually inhabit a space that reverberates with our past impressions and present understanding of the novel's themes and techniques.

Love and lust, then, are not so much dichotomies as twinned conditions necessary to the narrative form and thematic structure of the text. For example, when Nicole overhears two gardeners at Villa Diana talk about adulterous, *au naturel* sex ("I laid her down there." "I took her behind the vines there," 311), she is sitting on a wall by the sea, along a border line, but one with liminal qualities: she is thinking about her past with Dick and her potential future with Tommy. She recognizes that "it was a man's world that she overheard" but her transformation towards female independence is clear. The words of the lusty gardeners are allied to her own thoughts about beginning a love affair, and they talk "in a counterpoint of Niçoise and Provençal" (277) that reminds one of the conversations between Nicole and Tommy conducted in French and English.

Entering the threshold into the new life that she seeks intermingles love and lust, particularly when Nicole and Tommy first make love in a small shoreline hotel between Nice and Monte Carlo. "She bathed and anointed herself and covered her body with a layer of powder" (326) beforehand in ritual preparation. With self-directed determination, "Nicole did not want any vague spiritual romance—she wanted an 'affair'; she wanted a change" (327). As with social transitions and rites of passage, her choice is not without danger or difficulty. During Dick's pre-arranged absence, Tommy arrives at the Villa Diana, which becomes the site of Tommy and Nicole's first kiss: "Their cheeks touched and then their lips and she gasped half with passion for him, half with the sudden surprise of its force..." (329), a reaction that anticipates the ambiguous benefits of shifting her affections from Dick's control to Tommy's authority. Yet, caught up in the whirl of the liminal moment, "she had a thrill of delight in thinking of herself in a new way" and takes charge when the excited couple ride in Tommy's car towards Nice: "'Have we got to go all the way to your hotel in Monte Carlo," she asks (329).

The liminal qualities of her situation and actions are matched by the features of the coastal setting. The peninsula on which the small hotel stands, the American at the front desk arguing about the rate of exchange, the brawling American sailors and the prostitutes who follow their battleship's progress around Mediterranean ports, the two Englishwomen studiously avoiding the chaos of the ship's departure by talking about the weather, and above all Nicole initiating the transfer of her loyalties demonstrate the tornado effect of the liminal setting. Distance, time, and matter collapse here as she sees through her "white crook's eyes" (329) made in Chicago and enters "the eastward vision" of Tommy Barban. signifying an "un-blinding of eyes" (314), as Laura Rattray defines Nicole's emergence from Dick's waning influence, as "this personal loss of vision will come to operate as a metaphor for a wider narrative 'malaise'" (86–87). Immediately before the moment when the affair is consummated, "[s]truggling a little still, like a decapitated animal she forgot about Dick and her new white eyes, forgot about Tommy himself and sank deeper and deeper into the minutes and the moment" (330). At the centre of this limen, time is stilled and Nicole's metamorphosis is necessarily grotesque in order to fit her new shape, like a sloughing of old skin as she is reborn, out of a once-supportive therapeutic marriage and into a second marriage with its promise and uncertainty, "You are all new like a baby," Tommy observes (331).

In keeping with the gap in time that the transformation and transference require, the narrative employs three sets of ellipses in this section of the chapter: the first at the instance of their initial kiss, the second that screens out any description of the inaugural sexual act ("... When he got up to open a shutter," the narrative resumes, 330), but the third instance is more ambiguous. It inhabits another liminal location that demonstrates how sexual passions must be balanced with more realistic expectations of love ("l'amour de famille," as Dick later reminds Tommy, 346–47) and with the demands of living in an unstable society. Interrupted by a noisy fight between American sailors on shore leave, the lovers agree that the hotel has "outlived its usefulness," yet "they clung together for a moment before dressing, and then for a while longer it seemed as good enough a place as any..." (332). Their post-coital experience is further disturbed when their room is invaded by "two girls, young, thin and barbaric, unfound rather than lost" (333). Thus, Nicole and Tommy's exit from the transformative limen is accompanied by the crude and vulgar origins of the new era, symbolized in action as "[o]ne of the girls hoisted her skirt suddenly, pulled and ripped at her pink step-ins and tore them into a sizable flag" to wave at the departing sailors (333).

Tommy, whose polished sexual techniques correspond with his military prowess, is now a more suitable support for Nicole than the "mad puritan" Dick Diver (329). The mercenary soldier, who crosses national and ethical borders in his military employment, latterly aiding White Russian aristocrats to escape from the Bolsheviks, has re-entered the

narrative after a five-year gap and met Nicole aboard the aptly named motor yacht the *Margin*. No longer able to fight because of a skull injury, Tommy has refashioned himself in the brokerage business and claims to like movies that represent in artifice what he accomplished in warfare (223, 301, 308). Thereby he, too, has undergone a sea change, avoiding the kind of liminal marginalization that Dick Diver faces when he succumbs to dissipation and enables his marriage to end.

Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin argues, against the grain of earlier critiques of Tommy, that he offers Nicole an alternative to pathology as a basis for trauma diagnosis and recovery by his knowledge of "all the old Languedoc peasant remedies" (touching upon another liminal reference in the Languedoc region of southern France, with its roots in a distinctive Occitan language) and in his dismissal of constrictive psychiatric authority: "All this taming of women!' he scoffed" (Tavernier-Courbin 229, 231–32; Fitzgerald 331, 328). The physical and monetary union of the super-rich heiress Nicole and the capitalist protector Tommy also demonstrates how Nicole's psychological self and redirected strength combine with the narrative's historical vision at a crucial liminal juncture.

A narrative leap follows with some free indirect discourse about their exit from the limen of their hotel triste; in the evening of that first sexual encounter:

They dined at the new Beach Casino at Monte Carlo [...] much later they swam in Beaulieu in a roofless cavern of white moonlight formed by a circlet of pale boulders about a cup of phosphorescent water, facing Monaco and the blur of Mentone. She liked his bringing her here to the eastward vision and the novel tricks of wind and water; it was all as new as they were to each other. Symbolically she lay across his saddle-brow as surely as if he had wolfed her away from Damascus and they had come out upon the Mongolian plain. Moment by moment all that Dick had taught her fell away and she was ever nearer to what she had been in the beginning, prototype of that obscure yielding up of swords that was going on in the world about her. Tangled with love in the moonlight she welcomed the anarchy of her lover. (333–34)

In their sudden departure from the previous paragraph, marked by a line break, these words present in form and content a thrilling montage of lives and civilizations undergoing transmutation. In the passage's swirling mixture of times and places, natural elements, and perspectives, the physical and mental re-formation of Nicole is combined with Fitzgerald's acceptance and illustration of Oswald Spengler's theory of Western civilization's decline within the close of another cycle of world history.<sup>4</sup> The dynamic imagery and modernist juxtapositions and displacements reinforce the paragraph's vision of the post-war decade's vast

<sup>4.</sup> In letter and interview Fitzgerald acknowledged Spengler's influence on his thinking (*Letters* 289; Millen 83).

reconfigurations and of the coming decade's chaos, with its imminent destructions and reconstructions. James L.W. West III makes a convincing case for dating the narrative's ending in 1930, after the Wall Street Crash of October 1929 (2010, 530–33; 2012, xxxvii–xxxix), and that reading leads to further concerns for the stability of the lovers' future together and the potential repercussions of their anarchic bond. The proceeding scene in Book 3 chapter XI in which the simple brokage (or breakage) negotiations are conducted between Dick, Nicole, and Tommy to end the marriage takes place on appropriately liminal grounds. Their conversation is held outside of the Carleton Hotel along the beachfront of the Boulevard de la Croisette in Cannes. Tommy's impatience and fighting spirit are balanced by Dick's repose and degeneration as the younger man forces the splintered married couple out of shops conducting morning shaves and coiffures. Still with "his face half-shaved matching her hair half-washed" (347), Dick and Nicole (who earlier had signed their names together as "Dicole," 117) are finally separated from each other, betwixt and between, half-formed and half-deconstructed.

Within the novel's compounds of liminal imagery, spatial borders, emotional and physical change, and the vortex of consequences stemming from three initial kisses, Fitzgerald incorporates an underlying theme of historical decline and cultural transformation. Bruce L. Grenberg's summary from 1978 remains relevant: "F. Scott Fitzgerald characteristically interweaves personal and historical perspectives within his fiction to present a singularly intense and immediate commentary on the era. For him history is never abstract—something that happens to people; it is live and compelling, springing from the hearts and minds of individuals" (211). Furthermore, Spengler's comment in *The Decline of the West* seems particularly apposite to Dick Diver's condition: "Hitherto an incredible total of intellect and power has been squandered in false directions. The West-European, however historically he may think and feel, is at a certain stage of life invariably uncertain of his own direction; he gropes and feels his way and, if unlucky in environment, he loses it" (40).

In a novel that presents women as "representative of the enormous flux of American life" (60) and as gaining a newfound social authority, Dick becomes stuck in a whirlpool of opposing influences and desires, as in his early career "he used to think that he wanted to be good, he wanted to be kind, he wanted to be brave and wise, but it was all pretty difficult. He wanted to be loved, too, if he could fit it in" (153). Attracted to youth and propelled by desire, he feels in his incipient affair with Rosemary that "it could not stand still, it must go on or go back" (95), yet it does fizzle out through his conflicted loyalty to Nicole. Turner writes: "A further structurally negative characteristic of transitional beings is that they have nothing" (Turner 1967, 98). Without a successful passage out of the dark, then rather than reformulation the liminal person faces marginalization and disintegration, especially when in the

Jazz Age, as Mary North Minghetti tells Dick: "All people want is to have a good time" (351). "Marginals," explains Turner, "[...] have no cultural assurance of a final stable resolution of their ambiguity" (Turner 1974, 233). Although recognizing that the pursuit of Rosemary "marked a turning point in his life" (102–3), that limen becomes a trap for Dick, just as in his first encounter with Nicole when he finds himself "hovering between being centripetal and centrifugal" (165). Such liminal pirouettes also advance Fitzgerald's cultural critique. Orchestrating the personal, national, and universal within his narrative whorl, the author conducts a tour de force that involves uncertain resolutions, spins together the dilemmas of individuals in a world that is "all pretty difficult," and illustrates how, through the liminal drives of stasis and movement, "a terrible beauty is born" (Yeats 178).

William BLAŽEK Liverpool Hope University

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### Notes on Contributors

Claire BAZIN, ancienne élève de l'ENS Sèvres, est Professeure de littérature anglaise des XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles et du Commonwealth. Elle a puplié de nombreux articles sur les Brontë (*Jane Eyre* et *Wuthering Heights*), sur *Frankenstein* et *Dracula*. Elle est l'auteure des ouvrages suivants : La Vision du Mal chez les Soeurs Brontë (P.U.M., Toulouse, 1995), *Jane Eyre, le pèlerin moderne* (éditions du Temps, 2005), *Jane Eyre l'itinéraire d'une femme* (CNED/PUF, 2008), *Janet Frame* (Northcote Publishers, 2011). Elle est co-fondatrice du groupe FAAAM de Paris Nanterre. Elle enseigne la littérature à tous niveaux.

William BLAŽEK is professor of American literature and modern culture at Liverpool Hope University. He is a founding coeditor of the F. Scott Fitzgerald Review and has served on the executive board of the Fitzgerald Society since 2008 and as the society's vice president since 2020. He is the coeditor of three essay collections, *American Mythologies* (with Michael K. Glenday, 2005), Twenty-First-Century Readings of Tender Is the Night (with Laura Rattray, 2007), and F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Beautiful and Damned: *New Critical Essays* (with Kirk Curnutt and David W. Ullrich, 2022). He also edited the new Oxford World's Classics edition of The Beautiful and Damned (2022), and his other recent publications include essays on Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Edith Wharton, and Anglo-American literature of the First World War. The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review has been published annually since 2002 and is widely available on journal databases. The Fitzgerald Society's website < http://fscottfitzgeraldsociety.org/ > contains links to recent publications, teaching resources, web recordings, and conferences.

Shelly CHARLES est chercheuse au CNRS (CELLF 16-18, UMR 8599, CNRS-Sorbonne Université). Ses travaux portent notamment sur la poétique du roman et sur les interférences entre roman français et anglais. Parmi ses publications récentes dans ces domaines : *Pamela ou* 

les Vertus du roman, d'une esthétique à sa réception (Classiques Garnier, 2018) ainsi qu'une édition critique de *Pamela ou la Vertu récompensée* (Garnier, coll. « Classiques Jaunes », 2022).

Bénédicte COSTE teaches Victorian literature and culture at the Université de Bourgogne, France. She mainly studies Aestheticist and Decadent writers. Her latest monograph, *Walter Pater, du portrait littéraire à l'étude de cas*, was published by Classiques Garnier in 2022. Her other interests are nineteenth-century periodicals and translation. With Dr Caroline Crépiat, she has created "Décabase," a database of translations of Decadent poets in a selection of French periodicals between 1880 and 1914 (< https://decabase.u-bourgogne.fr >).

Claire GHEERAERT-GRAFFEUILLE est maîtresse de conférences HDR à l'Université de Rouen Normandie (ERIAC-UR 4705) en études anglophones. Ses recherches, à la croisée de la littérature, de l'histoire culturelle et de l'histoire des idées, portent sur la question du genre et de l'histoire dans l'Angleterre du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Elle est l'auteur de deux monographies, La Cuisine et le forum : l'émergence des femmes sur la scène publique pendant la Révolution anglaise (L'Harmattan, 2005) et Lucy Hutchinson and the English Revolution. Gender, Genre (Oxford UP, 2022). Elle a également co-édité plusieurs ouvrages, dont le plus récent est Anti-Catholicism in Britain and Ireland, 1600–2000: Practices, Representations and Ideas (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

Aude DE MEZERAC-ZANETTI est MCF à l'Université de Lille (CECILLE-ULR 4074) en civilisation et histoire britannique, et membre junior de l'Institut Universitaire de France (2022–2027). Spécialiste des pratiques religieuses à l'époque de la Réforme en Angleterre, elle a coordonné deux numéros de revue en 2017 (*Etudes Epistémè* et *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique*) et publié divers articles et chapitres consacrés à la liturgie. Elle co-dirige avec Olivier Spina (Histoire moderne, Lyon 2) un projet en humanités numériques (< https://reppol.meshs.fr/ >).

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Sandeep BAKSHI, Université Paris Cité Paula BARROS, Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3 Cécile BEAUFILS, Sorbonne Université Anne BESNAULT, Université de Rouen Normandie Yasna BOZHKOVA, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Byron CAMINERO-SANTANGELO, University of Kansas Thomas CONSTANTINESCO, Sorbonne Université Raphaëlle COSTA DE BEAUREGARD, Université Toulouse – Jean Jaurès Cornelius CROWLEY, Université Paris Nanterre Laurent CURELLY, Université de Haute Alsace Claire DAVISON, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Françoise DECONINCK, Université Paris Nanterre Agnès DERAIL, ENS Paris Michel FEITH, Université de Nantes Christiane FIOUPOU, Université Toulouse Iean Iaurès Laurent FOLLIOT, Sorbonne Université Marie-Agnès GAY, Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3 Xavier GIUDICELLI, Université de Reims Champagne-Ardennes

Louise GREEN, Stellenbosch University

Lindsey GREEN-SIMMS, American University, Washington, DC

Raphaëlle GUIDÉE, Université de Poitiers

Emily HORTON, Brunel University, London

Julie IROMUANYA, University of Chicago

Daniel JEAN, Université Paris Cité

Alain JUMEAU, Sorbonne Université

Xavier KALCK, Université de Lille

Daniel KATZ, University of Warwick

Florence LABAUNE-DEMEULE, Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3

Marie LANIEL, Université de Picardie Jules Verne

Maëline LE LAY, Sciences Po Bordeaux

Juliana LOPOUKHINE, Sorbonne Université

Fiona McCANN, Université de Lille

Nicholas MANNING, Université Grenoble Alpes

Giorgio MARIANI, Sapienza Università di Roma

Claire MASUREL, Sorbonne Université

Baudouin MILLET, Université Lumière Lyon 2

Muriel PECASTAING-BOISSIERE (Sorbonne Universite)

Caroline POLLENTIER, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle

Marc PORÉE, ENS Paris

Frédéric REGARD, Sorbonne Université

Christopher RINGROSE, Monash University, Melbourne

Lacy RUMSEY, ENS de Lyon

Jeanne SCHAAF, INSPE Académie de Paris, Sorbonne université

Cyril SELZNER, Université Paris 1-Panthéon-Sorbonne

Alexis TADIÉ, Sorbonne Université

Pascale TOLLANCE, Université Lumière Lyon 2

Daria TUNCA, Université de Liège

Juliette UTARD, Sorbonne Université

Nathalie VANFASSE, Aix-Marseille Université

Kate WALLIS, University of Exeter

Claire WROBEL, Université Paris-Panthéon-Assas

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