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Decorating the Performative Body in *Tender Is the Night*

Alyssa Q. Johnson

Descriptions of clothing and fashion in a novel can be effective tools to craft characters, particularly in books written during eras that boast a highly specific sartorial look. Clothing choices and descriptions of the body contextualize characters in a specific period while helping represent and heighten symbolic statements during periods of great change, such as that between 1915 and 1929. During this era, American culture experienced great economic changes as well as shifting gender politics; these changes are visible in garments from the period and in sartorial descriptions of characters in Jazz Age literature. Fashion has a clear and direct relationship to the culture it adorns; therefore, the actual garments a given culture wears are less important than the reasons they wear them. Not only is costume a cultural mirror, but it also serves a rhetorical purpose, particularly when utilized in literary works. Clothing in this period became an effective tool, allowing wearers to perform gender as well as social class and their own individual rhetorical goals, which often had to do with attracting a spouse. Significantly, distinctions between social classes in America grew to have more to do with wealth and performance than birth.

Additionally, American cultural values were shifting. Cultural values are typically reflected in a period's ideal silhouette, and in this time period, the shift in what constituted a desirable female figure demonstrated an increase in the value of youth. The pre-war ideal female figure had matronly curves, but the new woman was slim, youthful, and athletic (as well as independent). This figure was often achieved through garments. Ruth P. Rubinstein, author of *Dress Codes: Meanings and Messages in American Culture*, believes this straight post-war silhouette "denied the traditional elements that anchor the female identity to the womanly role" in its straight figure that emphasized youth and boyishness (237). In other words, even in the ideal silhouette it is clear that the appearance of youth became more valuable than conventional femininity. Clothing allowed women in particular to individually embrace—and perform—a more youthful persona because that was what their culture valued. In "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," Judith Butler writes that gender is performative. Clothing is one way in which gender is often performed. Additionally, garments enhance further performative components of life, such as socioeconomic status and personal identity. History reveals that clothing of this period was resourcefully utilized to display class and gender. Further, the seemingly more flexible boundaries that determined one's social status could be seen through clothing, particularly for Americans. By purchasing and wearing the right costume for a given social role, a person could enact a performance and play the part of someone born into a different class. Clothing not only provides a mirror for society, but it also gives the reader

the ability to understand more deeply the historical context of a literary work as well as to reflect upon the ways clothing as a symbol often becomes a vehicle for powerful statements. Fashion choices as described in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night* reflect not only the imagination of an American undergoing these changes, but the experiences of an expatriate writing abroad.

In *Tender Is the Night* (1934), Fitzgerald uses clothing and fashion to heighten the sense of the time period as well as to enhance the ways in which the world, on both sides of the Atlantic, was changing. However, changes on the surface frequently do not reveal a change in underlying motivations for dress. In *Tender Is the Night*, Fitzgerald uses attire and appearance in symbolic ways that allow characters to perform roles to achieve their goals. Through the ways bodies are shaped in the novel, Fitzgerald reveals that clothing, shopping, and perfectly bronzed skin have the power to make great economic statements about oneself. Additionally, clothing in *Tender Is the Night* demonstrates ways traditional gender roles and stereotypes were changing during the modernist era. Though many things had changed during the 1920s, characters continued to use their bodies as blank tablets upon which to write, enacting powerful and purposeful performances that always have rhetorical ends.

Clothing itself often figures prominently in Fitzgerald's work; this is true in *Tender Is the Night*, especially in the context of Nicole Diver. Nicole's wealth is her method of movement, her guiding power throughout the novel. Nicole's socioeconomic background affects her development and eligibility as a young woman who, despite her mental illness, is considered quite a catch. As "the granddaughter of a self-made American capitalist and the granddaughter of a Count," she comes from both old and new money (Fitzgerald 53). Nicole's body is considered beautiful not merely because of its aesthetic appeal; it is beautiful because it is wealthy. This socioeconomic status is demonstrated in her appearance. Her wealth and beauty, from the onset, help her attract a husband. During the courtship section of the novel, Fitzgerald describes her clothing frequently in terms of an angel. Dick is impressed by her "cream-colored dress, alternately blue or gray as they walked, and her very blonde hair," which is almost a halo that emphasizes her beauty described as "like an angel's" (135). Susan Keller notes in her article about tanning in *Tender Is the Night* that in Nicole's youth, she wears blues and grays and golds, colors meant to "represent a whiteness whiter than white," symbolizing her youth and the way she is perceived by Dick (148). Later in their youth, when Dick runs into Nicole with another young man, she is still "lovely to look at" with her "fine-spun hair, bobbed like Irene Castle's and fluffed into curls," almost like a halo (Fitzgerald 148). Even the colors she wears reflect her status as an angel in his mind: "a sweater of powder blue and a white tennis skirt" (148). These angelic, pale colors are noteworthy because her choice to dress in these shades demonstrates an angelic, desirable persona, particularly for a woman. Her tennis skirt marks her as an athletic, socially fashionable woman as well. Dressing in this way helps her attract Dick as a husband.

However, Nicole changes. In the opening section of the novel (before the flashback), her hair has darkened, her skin is now tanned, and she wears red, the opposite of the angelic shades she wore six years earlier. This shift in outward appearance symbolizes aging as well as a shift in the relational dynamic between Nicole and her husband. Whereas his initial perception of her was angelic, he now perceives her foremost through her wealth, wealth that he lacks on his own. She is the one who brought money to the marriage, and this economic paradigm

colors her relationship to her own clothing and appearance as well as that of others. For example, when she has an affair with Tommy Barban, she dresses him in her husband's clothing, which "move[s] her sadly, falsely, as though Tommy were not able to afford such clothes" (278). Nicole, as owner of the funds in the relationship, likely bought these clothes in the first place, and in an interesting economic reversal, she has dressed not only herself, but her male partners as well. Her finances give her "money as fins and wings" (280). This financial independence reminds readers that she is not simply an angel figure to be controlled; instead, she is herself a force with economic power.

Nicole is directly connected to ownership, particularly of clothes. Her excessive baggage contains a total of eight trunks, hat boxes, a filing cabinet, cases for medicine, a lamp, a phonograph, a typewriter, and materials for picnics and tennis (258). Nicole is linked to consumerism in ways that shape her relationships with others, particularly her husband and her lover. She is frequently depicted shopping, which functions not merely as her hobby but as a performance of her wealth. Purchasing excessive goods enables her to perform a role as a wealthy American woman abroad in the French Riviera. Additionally, the Divers' respective attitudes toward shopping yield insight into their fractured relationship. Nicole spends frivolously, but Dick is embarrassed by tailors who make "a fuss over him out of proportion to the money he spent," spending the whole time uncomfortable with the conspicuous display of Nicole's wealth and feeling shame from "making a tailor shift an inch of silk on his arm" (104). Dick does not independently have the wealth to purchase these expensive items, and he feels like a hypocrite as he buys these clothes. He performs his social status, but it proves to be a somewhat hollow world for him. He is not a good actor; therefore, he and his performances eventually crumble.

Nicole performs femininity as well as wealth. Her performance of the feminine is enabled by intense beauty rituals and shopping. When she prepares to meet her lover, she goes to great lengths to recapture her sense of youth through cosmetics. She scrutinizes herself, "wondering how soon the fine, slim edifice would begin to sink squat and earthward" (290). Nonetheless, she acknowledges that the

only physical disparity between Nicole at present and the Nicole of five years before was simply that she was no longer a young girl. But she was enough ridden by the current youth worship, the moving pictures with their myriad faces of girl-children, blandly represented as carrying on the work and wisdom of the world, to feel a jealousy of youth. She put on the first ankle-length day dress that she had owned for many years, and crossed herself reverently with Chanel Sixteen. (290-91)

Notably, the dress she wears that is shorter than the ones in vogue reflects the popular hemlines of her *own* youth, which she seems to be seeking to recapture for the purpose of seducing a lover. This section demonstrates and reiterates the power of the cult of youth worship, which makes Nicole nervous as she prepares to consummate her relationship with Tommy. Additionally, it shows how powerful an influence media and film wield over the cultural definition of "beauty." According to Keller, despite this ritual, Nicole cannot transform "back into the virginal girl she once was," even though "neither she nor [Tommy] Barban seem to care" (148). Their affair is no youthful dalliance; it is mature adultery. This focus on youth

demonstrates changed cultural values while historically contextualizing *Tender Is the Night*. Ultimately, it also paints a clear picture of who Nicole is: a woman defined by her performances of class and gender. These performances are heightened by her relationship to clothing, which Fitzgerald uses literally as well as symbolically throughout.

In contrast to Nicole's wealthy upbringing, Rosemary, a young actress on vacation, is thoroughly middle-class in origin: "catapulted by her mother onto the uncharted heights of Hollywood," she is a woman living out the rare success story of the Hollywood brand of the American Dream (Fitzgerald 53). Although Nicole also idolizes youth, Rosemary truly exemplifies what it means to be young and beautiful. Both of their gendered performances are commodified, but Rosemary in particular carries this burden. In her article on gender in this novel, Tiffany Joseph argues that because Rosemary's acting career is spent "masquerading," she "represents the socially constructed ideals to which many of the characters aspire" (76-77). One such ideal is youth. When the group of vacationers finally watch Rosemary's film, *Daddy's Girl*, she is described as a "school girl" with "hair down her back and rippling out stiffly," "young and innocent . . . embodying all the immaturity of the race" (Fitzgerald 69). Rosemary recalls that the dress itself made her feel "especially fresh and new under the fresh young silk" (69). On the screen, she represents youth and beauty, both highly prized at the time. Joseph argues that Rosemary "recogniz[es] and us[es] the performative" in order to make "gender less traumatic" (77). Both to live and to cope, Rosemary performs. By highlighting her appearance, Fitzgerald points out the utility of corporeal decoration to enable social climbing.

Significantly, Rosemary's desire for a romantic affair with Dick places her in a unique relationship with Nicole. The two shop together, and Nicole guides and initiates Rosemary into her own world: "With Nicole's help Rosemary bought two dresses and two hats and four pairs of shoes with her money. Nicole bought from a great list that ran two pages, and bought the things in the windows besides. Everything she liked that she couldn't possibly use herself, she bought as a present for a friend" (Fitzgerald 54). In many ways, Rosemary looks up to Nicole, seeking to be like her not only in her choice of sexual partner but in the way she negotiates her relationship with money and spending it. Rosemary's initiation into the American "in-crowd" on the French Riviera begins through shopping for an appropriate costume that will help her perform a role as a member of the social elite. One of Rosemary's first purchases is a "bottle of coconut oil," which she will use to begin enhancing her own tan, a sign of wealth in this expatriate culture (14). She admires Nicole's appearance, her "bright red" dress, bare "brown legs," and "thick, dark, gold hair like a chow's" (14). Rosemary's impression of Nicole is noteworthy because, as a girl who aims to seduce her husband, she would want to emulate her in some ways. Nicole wears abundant signs of wealth and enjoys buying more. As the two purchase fake flowers and beads, Rosemary admires "Nicole's method of spending" (97). Rosemary begins to mimic Nicole's shopping patterns of conspicuous consumerism and excessive purchasing. Shopping and ownership become her ways to perform not only Nicole's brand of femininity, but also her newly acquired class status.

Fitzgerald's female characters use clothing in performative ways, but Dick Diver, too, utilizes performative dress to specific ends in the novel. In contrast to Nicole, Dick does not come from money. His social status and wealth are largely earned through his marriage to Nicole, a reversal of gendered expectations. Dick initially uses military dress to appear more eligible and attractive. During their courtship, part of Dick's appeal for Nicole, in addition to his

attention, is the uniform which she regards as “so handsome” (121). Later, she notes that a picture she is given of him out of uniform is “not as handsome” (124). Nicole seems to be attracted to the masculinity of Dick’s apparel. This military attire serves as a costume that allows Dick to perform a role that renders him a suitable mate for the object of his desire. It enables him to transcend the limitations set upon him by his social class. Men also use clothes for purposes of sexual attraction, an important note in a society where gender roles were becoming ever-more flexible. Diver’s ambition and resourcefulness inspire him to use clothing as a tool in his arsenal to help him win a spouse. Clothing clearly enables people of all sorts to obtain goals of sexual attraction, and in this period, it is clear that attraction via garments can go both ways. Clothing helps Dick to attract Nicole, much like it helped Jay Gatsby in Fitzgerald’s earlier novel. Biographer Nancy Milford notes that Fitzgerald himself “cut a smart figure in his officer’s tunic, impeccably tailored,” and he wore “dashing yellow boots and spurs,” making him noticeable (25). Many of Fitzgerald’s male characters use this strategy of wearing a uniform to obtain female attention, possibly because dressing this way helped Fitzgerald perform the role that catalyzed his relationship with his future wife. Unfortunately, Dick’s cultivated, uniformed performance cannot lead to a substantial long-term, fulfilling relationship.

For Dick, clothing has the potential to disguise his true past and lack of financial means. He is a scholar, a doctor, not a wealthy man. Despite his “fine clothes, with their fine accessories, he was yet swayed and driven as an animal. Dignity could come only with an overthrowing of his past” (Fitzgerald 91). However, he cannot leave his past behind. When Nicole and Dick decide to get married, she asks her sister for money for “clothes and things,” but Dick seems to dislike the fact that she wants him to come into her world of wealth; instead, he believes Nicole should be willing to settle for his middle-class status (159). Ironically, it is precisely this assimilation that would be expected of a woman marrying a wealthy man. She tells him, “That seems unreasonable, Dick—we have every reason for taking the bigger apartment. Why should we penalize ourselves just because there’s more Warren money than Diver money[?]” (159). Money is clearly a primary source of conflict in their marriage. Although gender roles may have become less fixed, Dick’s mentality prevents him from being able to accept the economic manifestation of these changes in his own marriage. Dick experiences a tragic fall in part because, according to Keller, he “forgets that cosmopolitan style is a carefully crafted form of identity, the celebration of an artifice so well done that it appears natural,” and when he “comes to mistake this pose for the truth,” his world falls apart (146). John F. Callahan, who writes about the American Dream in Fitzgerald’s work, notes that though he tries, Dick cannot “find happiness as curator of the leisure-class expatriate American world he and Nicole create on the Riviera” (384). Dick’s existence in this class is, for the most part, performative. He wants success in his career, and he wants to be loved. Sadly, he does not really obtain either, and his dreams go unfulfilled. Although he is initially granted access to this world through travel and appearances, Dick is unable to maintain a convincing performance for long, leading to the dissolution of all he thought he wanted. In costume, he can enter the wealthy wonderland of the Riviera, but clothing and physical appearance cannot erase his true self. Garments, like in other Jazz Age literature, prove to be hollow emblems of the American Dream. This dream fails at home as well as abroad. Dick joins the likes of Jay Gatsby in discovering that dressing the part cannot change who a person is.

Clothing is powerful for characters in *Tender Is the Night*, but it is not the only component of appearance that functions as a status symbol. At this point in time, the ideal skin color had shifted so that skin itself became a marker of status through the suntan. Suntans and even sunburns became fashionable in the late 1920s, showing a historical shift between viewing paleness as a measure of wealth to tanned skin as a display of leisure time. Tanning was now a status symbol, a symbol that Fitzgerald and other members of the Lost Generation both mentioned and displayed. Susan Keller demonstrates how the emergence of the leisured suntan exchanged “white skin as a symbol of prestige” for “darker skin as an index of one’s wealth and leisure” (130). Though today’s readers may struggle to understand how shocking the eminence of the suntan was, it “directly challenged the standard of pale skin celebrated as beauty throughout most of Western history” (134). Tanning completely broke the historical status quo. As the American workforce began to shift indoors towards factory and office work, tanned skin was no longer tied to outdoor labor; instead, it was the product of privileged leisure time and travel. The suntan marked the wealth necessary to travel and the time required to obtain tanned skin. It, like clothing, was purchasable. Therefore, its presence in the works of expatriate authors is even more significant, suggesting that they themselves took part in the newly fashionable social practice of tanning. Although they might not have been wealthy (in fact, many chose the expatriate lifestyle not for its glitz but for its affordability on the American dime in a post-war Europe), authors like Fitzgerald found themselves with the time and the location necessary for this tan, allowing them to obtain this marker of wealth without the actual price many would pay for it. Fitzgerald’s writings played a part in remolding the fashionable complexion, “transform[ing] beaches and suntanning from a rare and shocking symbol of the lower classes to an eminently fashionable trend” (Keller 131). Although eventually tanning rules were created to maintain class distinctions, the suntan was a physical marker nearly anyone had the potential to don, regardless of their socioeconomic origin.

In *Tender Is the Night*, tanning becomes a frequent motif. As the story opens on the French Riviera, Fitzgerald repeatedly mentions how tanned the wealthy vacationers are. When Rosemary initially goes down to the beach, she becomes “conscious of the raw whiteness of her own body” because her lack of tan indicates her socioeconomic status (Fitzgerald 5). She has not yet become a member of the social elite, as evidenced by her pallor. On the beach she sees “a group with flesh as white as her own” who, like her, were “obviously less indigenous to the place,” meaning both the beach on the Riviera and the social hemisphere in which the bronzed wealthy take their leisure (5). Rosemary, as an actress, has the potential to move between classes; visual performances enable her social mobility. Her career fills her entire life with performance, which she achieves through her clothes and physical appearance as well as her craft. To become a part of the socially elite on the Riviera, she plans to tan. The first two things Rosemary does are to get sunburned in an attempt to tan and purchase coconut oil to tan better. Thus, the tan becomes “a symbol of purchasing power” rather than a sign of “intrinsic worth” that renders skin “a fashionable garment, part of a literal form of ‘body-building’ through consumerism” (Keller 140). Fitzgerald’s repeated references to the popular suntan demonstrate the ways skin, like clothing, can be performative. The ability of the suntan to mark one’s social class is why Rosemary wishes to attain one; however, it is important she takes her time in obtaining this look. After her first day on the beach, she is warned by Dick Diver, with whom she eventually has an affair, not to “get too burned right away” (Fitzgerald 11). It is

dangerous for her to get burned too quickly, symbolizing Fitzgerald's belief and recurring motif that to assimilate oneself into wealthy society unprepared can burn you; as the novel shows, Dick does eventually get burned. Significantly, he was not born into the elite classes; he cannot tan and instead turns red.

The contrasting complexions of Nicole and Dick reflect their respective economic backgrounds. Nicole is well-tanned at the opening of the novel, with brown, bare legs that need not be covered by stockings, as "her brown back hang[s] from her pearls" (Fitzgerald 16). Symbolizing another kind of wealth, her complexion is worn by her jewelry. The money in the Diver family comes from her inheritance, not Dick's success. Her tan demonstrates her belonging in a world of leisure and wealth, a world Dick does not quite fit into. Nicole's skin tone also matches her character development. Right after her marriage, she wants to live with Dick "near a warm beach where [they] can be brown and young together," two significant markers of fashion as well as status during this period (Fitzgerald 161). They choose to spend the summer in the Riviera, where they can be fashionable, young, and wealthy. Her later-tanned skin "matches the attitude of aloof sophistication that she projects while living on the Riviera, a presentation of leisured elegance that takes no effort and needs no instruction" (Keller 148). Her suntan is natural, easy, and dignified. In stark contrast, Dick's skin is "reddish and weatherburned" (Fitzgerald 19). Instead of glowing or being brown or tan, he is ruddy and has a burned look, implying that the world of wealth burns him despite his efforts to belong to a class he was not born into. His failed attempts to truly belong in Nicole's world of wealth further demonstrate Fitzgerald's critique of rigid class structures that permit only superficial or temporary movement between them. Although Dick can momentarily escape these structures in the French Riviera, they eventually catch up to him, and his story ends in alcoholism and divorce.

Importantly for these characters, being abroad enables not just the tan, but the possibility of freer sexualities. Keller posits that in addition to symbolizing wealth, the darkening of skin could signify this increase in sexual liberation. Most of the sexual freedom in the novel takes place abroad in the Riviera, where a tan is more easily acquired. In some ways, the suntan "affords white characters like Nicole and Diver a way safely to 'try on' a darker sexuality, to 'do' sensuality" in a way that their untanned bodies would not allow (Keller 144). Though this hypothesis is racially problematic, it is clear that Tommy and Nicole's affair is coded through and by tans. Tommy, her lover, has a very dark tan, and he is written as "hypermasculine but lacking in nobility" (147). Despite his dark complexion, he is "racialized unfavorably throughout the novel," and his tan is "leathery and ugly," which Keller reads as a marker that he does not fit in, even though he tries to perform a social class on the level of Nicole (147). Nicole's tan is described more positively than Tommy's, but it is nonetheless an element of her disguise. During their love affair, her naked body is described as an "oblong white torso joined abruptly to the brown limbs and head" (Fitzgerald 295). This reveals the artificiality of her tan—it is inherently performative. Her outward appearance does not necessarily reflect what goes on beneath. Her tan is a manufactured component of her social status. Like in Fitzgerald's other works, such as *The Great Gatsby*, characters use their carefully cultivated appearances as elements of their successful—and not so successful—performances.

The suntan itself can be read as a performative act that allows a person to play a role as a member of a social class not their own. Nicole's wealth is inherited; she already belongs to an

upper socioeconomic class. Other characters, however, tan partly in pursuit of their social image. The skin itself becomes a costume for a performance that allows characters to cross institutional socioeconomic boundaries. Tanned skin becomes a passport for these characters. As Rosemary enters the group, she stands out as uninitiated and pale. Conversely, the Divers' tans allow them to look natural on the beach, creating a hierarchy. As a code, artfully bronzed skin could proclaim one's economic status at a glance. Although a tan took time to acquire, it could be put on much like a costume. This costume was more easily donned abroad, where affordable leisure time could enable one to appear wealthier than one was, particularly for Americans who found Paris and other European destinations far cheaper than America due to the post-war economy. Tanned skin enabled wearers to fake a higher social class, and from a distance, it could be hard to tell the difference. A person who had the time could make it appear as if he or she had the money as well. Status was not merely something one had; it was something one performed.

As a class symbol, decorating the body in the novel can only get characters so far, but when it comes to gender, garments play a powerful performative role. *Tender Is the Night* demonstrates a subversion of some traditionally gendered aspects of dress. Costume historians Phillis and C. Willett Cunnington suggest that historically, women tended to dress for sexual attraction while men dressed for reasons of social class (18). In this novel clothing enables characters of both sexes and various socioeconomic classes to perform roles that convention typically would not have afforded them. Nicole and Rosemary use clothing as signs of wealth, whereas men—namely, Dick—use it to attract women. This subversion suggests Fitzgerald's use of clothing is indicative of a cultural shift in which people have greater flexibility to use clothes to perform however they wish, far less impeded by socioeconomic status and gender. Characters still use clothes to perform, but the way performances are coded and function is more open, reflecting a shift to a culture that has fewer economic and gendered restrictions, both on clothing and on individuals' lives.

Women living in this world had the chance to enjoy defining selfhood in a more independent way. They could vote, work certain types of jobs, and select their own spouses, all without having to wear the restricting corset. Nicole and Rosemary are different iterations of this "new" type of woman: economically independent and able to function more like men in their world. Nicole may not have earned her own money, but she spends it how she likes. She is fit, with a fashionable athletic figure. Rosemary's employment as an actress aligns her with New Woman ideals even more clearly than Nicole. Significantly, she makes money by performing; therefore, the roles she plays in the novel are highly relevant. Her mother tells her, "You were brought up to work—not especially to marry . . . whatever happens, it can't spoil you because economically you're a boy, not a girl" (40). Even as a child, Rosemary was raised to do more than find a husband; she was taught to work. In contrast, Nicole was raised with excessive money and the expectation to marry rich. Rosemary's life, both on screen and off, is a performance she has been trained for. She claims that economically, she is masculine. Gender is, for her, a performative masquerade that she manipulates. Rosemary negotiates the world of the French Riviera with the aid of her costume, which helps her achieve her goals: seducing Dick and assimilating into the world of the rich expatriates.

Clothing may have had fewer gendered restrictions during the 1920s; nonetheless, gender performance and roles are central themes in *Tender Is the Night*. Financial status itself is

a component of what Judith Butler considers to be stylized and ritualized acts that construct societal treatment and performance of gender. The fact that Nicole is the primary breadwinner in the Diver marriage shows that they do not adhere to the traditionally gendered schema of husband as provider. This makes Dick feel emasculated, exemplified symbolically when she makes for him a pair of “transparent black lace drawers . . . lined with flesh-colored cloth” (Fitzgerald 21). He puts on this feminine garment, to the delight of those watching, including Rosemary. Normally, lacy drawers might be used by a woman to attract male attention. Here, they serve as a representation of the inverted gender roles in this marriage. Joseph’s article on gender in this novel argues that trauma in *Tender Is the Night* stems from an inability to meet gendered ideals, focusing on Dick’s failures and the idea that he is matriarchal rather than patriarchal. She posits that “trauma disrupts gender performance and arises from it, exposing the artifice of gender in the postwar world” (64). In a world where gender roles have been exposed as unstable, many men like Dick struggle to reconcile their ideas about gender with reality, particularly because of the gendered markers that clothing provides. A blurring of the lines between masculine and feminine clothing reflects the loosening gender stereotypes of the time.

Gender roles were changing, and some men struggled to fulfill their ideas about what it meant to be masculine. Dick is one of these men; from an economic perspective, he feels financially emasculated in his marriage to Nicole. Both masculinity and femininity are highly performative, perhaps even a “masquerade,” and Michael Nowlin points out in his article on masculinity in the novel that because women in the book are “more practiced in the art of masquerading,” they may be more prepared “to exploit” their gender to specific ends (69). Dick is unprepared to use this ability, which leads to an ending where he is alone. Although societal gender changes had occurred during the 1920s, they did not do so without resistance, and “gender ideals frequently surfaced in traumatic ways in an atmosphere of heightened gender anxiety” (Joseph 66). Fitzgerald’s conception of his own masculinity was notoriously unstable, likely in part because of his artistic and financial rivalry with Zelda. His gendered anxieties fill this book, just as they filled his own expatriate world. Living abroad in a world of conspicuous displays of wealth, American men and women could more easily break out of traditional expectations because the rules were less rigid. When these expectations involve gender, however, nonconformity was not always welcomed.

A brief episode close to the end of *Tender Is the Night* demonstrates these anxieties. Minor characters Mary North and Lady Caroline cross-dress; they are arrested “dressed in the costume of French sailors” and require Dick to bail them out of jail for the riot they caused by “pick[ing] up two silly girls” who “made a rotten scene” (Fitzgerald 303). Although Dick uses a connection with a friend named Gause to get them out, Gause reacts negatively to these women, noting that he has respect for courtesans, but not for these women whom he has “never seen before” (306). His disrespect is tied to their gender performance. Gause can accept a woman who sells her body because that is traditionally femininized; he cannot accept a woman who does not dress in a feminine way. Because he “has no context for understanding Lady Caroline and Mary North,” he reacts negatively to this “blurring of sexual and gender identity” (Joseph 75). This scenario demonstrates the anxieties brought about by forms of cross dressing, such as uniforms worn by women who worked in factories or the military. In the clothing of men, women become somehow confusing to those who are less open-minded.

Joseph writes that the “presence of these ‘uniformed’ women before, during, and after the war could easily aggravate men already fearing the slip of masculine power and authority” (75). Herein lies an example of the resistance to the new type of woman in the early twentieth century. A woman so dressed sends unfamiliar signals to men who are unsure whether to perceive them as threats or as potential conquests. This sheds light on Gause’s negative reaction to this incident and assertion of his own masculinity. When the women perform masculinity, they “seem to suggest that gender identity can be donned as easily as a sailor suit, a suggestion that is as unsettling to Gause as it might be for other men who fear their territory is threatened” (Joseph 75-76). Gender unveils its flexible, constructed nature, and for some, like Gause, this revelation is threatening. Through this brief episode, Fitzgerald provides an instance of the tensions between gender norms and the modern woman, an instance that relies heavily on the gendered symbolism of clothing.

Clothing is a form of property that enables performances for characters in *Tender Is the Night*. When played—and costumed—properly, the roles they take on have the potential to help them obtain and achieve their goals. Whether these aspirations include social climbing or seduction, garments and appearance are effective tools. Unfortunately, without substance, many of their dreams are doomed to failure, and American dreams of ownership, great wealth, travel, and socioeconomic success frequently turn out to be hollow, a recurring theme in the works of F. Scott Fitzgerald. Rosemary is allowed to attain success due to her apt performance, but Dick experiences a tragic fall due to his inability to continually play a role. In *Tender Is the Night*, clothing and appearance reflect the ways societal conceptions and treatment of gender and class were changing; however, a study of its use displays that the underlying motivations for dress by and large remain the same. Decorating the body through clothing and a suntan could enable a person to rise above their class status, at least for a time. The Riviera is a sort of glamorous stage, and characters who can dress the part are allowed to continue performing.

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