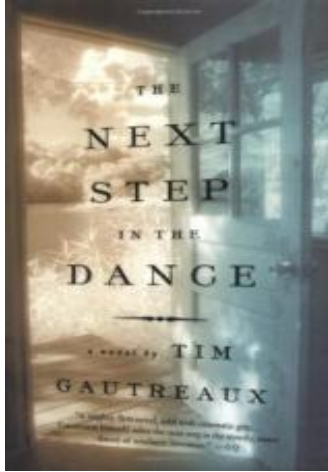


# The Next Step in the Dance

by Tim Gautreaux

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## About the Book

From the author of the acclaimed story collection **Same Place, Same Things** comes a novel filled with a rare and affecting sense of tradition and possibility. Paul Thibodeaux is a handsome young man married to Colette, the most beautiful woman in the small Louisiana town where they grew up. For Paul, life is complete: a wife he loves, machines to repair, and a lively local dance hall. But Colette wants more, and when she sets off for California in search of something better, Paul follows her there and back, waiting to see if she'll change her mind about him and their life together.

How they come to realize the importance of home and marriage makes for a novel that is at once an adventure, a love story, and a moving portrait of a place and a culture rarely explored in contemporary fiction. Tim Gautreaux writes with wit, compassion, and a sharp eye for the details that make us who we are, wherever we are.

## Discussion Guide

1. Does the intense use of regional details limit the universality of the novel?
2. For what reasons does Paul not give up on his wife when many other men would have walked away?
3. Does Colette dislike her husband as much as she thinks she does?
4. What is the thematic function of the Larousse twins?
5. What part does religion play in the action of this novel?

6. Which characters do you feel alien to in the beginning that you warm up to toward the end?
7. What does each main character give up by the end of the novel? What do they get in return?
8. Explain the metaphor of dancing as it relates to the novel as a whole.

## Author Bio

Tim Gautreaux is the author of three novels and three collections of stories. His work has appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *GQ*, *Harper's Magazine* and *Zoetrope*, as well as in volumes of the *O. Henry* and the *Best American Short Story* annuals. A professor emeritus in the creative writing program at Southeastern Louisiana University, he lives with his family in Hammond.

## Critical Praise

"A smartly turned-out first novel, about the push and pull between a young Louisiana couple, that holds you snug and won't let go...[an] A."

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