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Gabrielle Vatthanatham
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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Memory Hunger: a Geocritical Study of Nostalgia and the Glorification of Paris in Works Written by Lost Generation Writers During the Interwar Period.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the honors requirement

For the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English

By

Gabrielle Vatthanatham

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J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences

University of Arkansas

Fayetteville, AR

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Introduction

Paris—whether through merit or a collective, subconscious, cultural agreement to elevate the city from its physical confines to the realm of myth—is depicted, ruminated upon, and obsessed over in literature with such frequency it justifies the question: what purpose is served in the literary glorification of Paris?

The Lost Generation—writers and artists who came of age during the first world war who fled their natal countries to install themselves in Paris are, perhaps, the group most recognizably associated with the creation and perpetuation of the myth of Paris through their works which were produced and set in the city. Such works: *Tender is the Night, Good Morning, Midnight, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas,* and *A Moveable Feast* use the symbol of Paris to convey the pervasive nostalgia and longing for the past.

This thesis will use geocritical theory which is "an interdisciplinary method of literary analysis" promoted by literary theorist, Westphal, "that incorporates the study of geographic space" (Sàrdi 18). This thesis will use a geocritical lens to investigate the extent to which "the author [of the primary works analyzed in the thesis] writes the truth." Furthermore, it will investigate "whether the literary images of the real place are merely fictional and subjective, transformed and reinterpreted by our memory," or otherwise holding "some objective reality behind the perceptions" (Sàrdi 21). The goal is to trace the conception of the myth of Paris from the time of La Belle Époque until the interwar period when the Lost Generation writers were most productive. Central questions that remain at the forefront of this analysis are: what does Paris mean to the Lost Generation? What purpose did their attachment to the city serve?

In the section "A False Spring" of Ernest Hemingway's memoir *A Moveable Feast,* Hadley Richardson reflects that "there are so many sorts of hunger. In the spring there are more.

But that's gone now. Memory is hunger." Appropriately, Hemingway himself explained the association of Paris as "a moveable feast": an abstraction, a symbol of happiness lost but never forgotten. Paris is the unviolated sanctuary of the past where good times can be amplified and bad times temporarily forgotten. In acting as an anchor for memories, the abstraction of Paris acts as a reassurance of what could be again if only it were possible to repeat the past.

"The Last Messiah," argues that humans are "a breach in the very unity of life, a biological paradox, an abomination, an absurdity, an exaggeration of disastrous nature. Life had overshot its target, blowing itself apart" (Zapffe 35). Mankind is a species suffering from the accidental product of evolution: the over-evolved mind which has served to install humans as "mighty in the near world" but which also inhibits, as man is forced to relinquish the tranquility and inner peace of a still and simple mind. Arguing that our over-evolved consciousness allows us, more so than other sentient beings, to reflect upon the nature of our suffering, the inherent lack of meaning in the world, and our inevitable mortality, Zapffe poses the inevitable question: "Why, then, has mankind not long ago gone extinct during great epidemics of madness? Why do only a fairly minor number of individuals perish because they fail to endure the strain of living – because cognition gives them more than they can carry?" (Zapffe 36). Zapffe's conclusion is that everyone, whether consciously or subconsciously undergoes an artificial restriction of consciousness by methods he identifies as "repressional mechanisms" (Zapffe 36). If one is able to limit the scope and content of one's consciousness, one is better equipped to cope with the constant flux and chaos of everyday life.

The literary representations of Paris in the works of the Lost Generation communicate a nostalgia, longing for, and glorification of an irrecoverable past. The romanticization and abstraction of the setting of Paris in the works of the Lost Generation elucidates the emotional

situations of their characters as they contemplate the nature of their existence. The abstraction of Paris liberates the city from its physical locale and demonstrates the repressional mechanisms of anchoring and sublimation outlined by existential philosopher Peter Wessel Zapffe in his essay "The Last Messiah." In the connection of Paris with Zapffe's existential theory, Paris becomes, for certain writers of the Lost Generation, a bank of good memories from which they might draw upon and revisit to justify and cope with life in the din and chaos of the modern world.

This thesis will argue that the Lost Generation's pervasive nostalgia for and glorification of Paris is a manifestation of what Zapffe calls: "anchoring." A repressional mechanism whereby these writers were able to conceive of Paris as an abstraction—a paradoxical safe-haven, a symbol of the values that existed before the chaos and loss of World War I, one that gave a sense of necessity and order to their lives.

Of the four repressional mechanisms Zapffe outlines in his essay, the mechanisms of "anchoring" and "sublimation" correspond with and give insight into the glorification of Paris and the subsequent creation of the myth of Paris in the works of the Lost Generation.

Anchoring, as Zapffe explains, is the "fixation of points within, or construction of walls around, the liquid fray of consciousness. Though typically unconscious, it may also be fully conscious" like the adoption of a life goal (Zapffe 36). Though rather broad in his initial description, Zapffe later explains anchoring as an attachment to social constructs, or "firmaments" that give shape and enforce purpose. They can be as broad and collective as the ideas of: "God, the Church, the State, morality, fate, the law of life, the people, [and] the future." In anchoring oneself to a concept, a structure, or cultural expectation that gives shape, order, and routine to one's life, Zapffe argues that one finds that they are needed in the interconnectedness

of the firmament to which they are anchored and in this discovered purpose, the chaos of the turning world is stilled just a bit more (Zapffe 37).

Further building upon the function of anchoring, Zapffe introduces the possibility and peril that follows the rupture of a firmament. The Rupture of a firmament occurs when the anchoring value, structure, or metanarrative no longer holds and is revealed to be nothing but: "threads of [the mind's] own spinning." Offering the historical incidents of German officers after World War II and Chinese students after the revolution, he intuitively asserts that: "the very foundational firmaments are rarely replaced without great social spasms and a risk of complete dissolution (reformation, revolution). During such times, individuals are increasingly left to their own devices for anchoring, and the number of failures tends to rise. Depressions, excesses, and suicides result" (Zapffe 37). Thus, in times of social and political upheaval, when the routine and stability of quotidian life is disrupted and the firmaments and values attached to these fabricated structures is dissolved, the individual is left in an existential limbo being thrown into the chaotic tossup that is having to find and create meaning out of the seemingly silent and indifferent world. When they fail to do this, as Zapffe outlines, despair follows. In the case of the Lost Generation, particularly in the works of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Jean Rhys, the abstraction and existential firmament of Paris is revealed to be nothing more than an arbitrary social construct to impose a sense of order on the inherently chaotic world. When characters like Dick Diver and Sasha Jansen recognize the inherent fragility of the abstraction and firmament of Paris, they fall into depression and existential crises.

The fourth repressional mechanism outlined by Zapffe, the least common technique, is Sublimation: "a matter of transformation rather than repression. Through stylistic or artistic gifts… the very pain of living at times [can] be converted into valuable experiences" (Zapffe 39).

Here trauma is transmuted onto the page, the canvas, and the movie screen. Within these artistic depictions of suffering are depictions of the other repressional mechanisms used to bear the weight of living. In the case of the Lost Generation, the fixation upon Paris and the continual appearance of the city in certain text by Lost Generation writers demonstrates the repressional mechanism of sublimation whereby writers of the Lost Generation, struggling from the upheaval of conflict, illness, and a world war, anchored themselves to the abstraction of Paris and the values of joy, happiness, love, and regeneration attached to the city. These writers subsequently sublimated their remaining trauma through the creation of their works hence perpetuating the pervasive myth of Paris for future consumers of their literature.

Chapter 1: Memory and Dissatisfaction in *A Moveable Feast*

Hemingway explained that "Paris is a moveable feast," for those who have had the good fortune to have lived there in their youth because "wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you" (Hemingway *to a friend,* 1950).

The quote above gives direction on how to analyze the significance of Paris in the memoir. Hemingway begins the memoir with a preface: "for reasons sufficient to the writer, many places, people, observations and impressions have been left out of this book." Then, as if he anticipated criticism, he concluded with the addition that "if the reader prefers, this book may be regarded as fiction. But there is always the chance that such a book of fiction may throw some light on what has been written as fact." The preface is ambiguous but seems to allude to any inconsistencies that may arise in a memoir written so long after the fact. It also captures the very essence of the Lost Generation's creation of Paris: one that is not simply a physical city but a symbol of the past. Paris is, in *A Moveable Feast,* a bank of glorified, selective memories from which The Lost Generation could draw upon in hard times, to remind themselves that, like all things, difficulties are impermanent and will pass. The Paris created by writers of the Lost Generation is one of a purposefully manipulated reality: one that they had to glorify and keep unviolated in order to anchor themselves to the present reality whilst limiting the scope of their consciousness. This disclaimer then adds to his authority in speaking of the times in Paris when they were "very poor" and yet "very happy" (Hemingway 207).

Moving through the most significant depictions of Paris in the order that they appear, the first notable mention of Paris occurs in the opening section "A Good Café on The Place St. Michel" as Hemingway describes a moment when he's sitting, with a drink, writing a short-story whilst watching a beautiful woman seated farther away. He remarks: "I've seen you, beauty, and

you belong to me now, whoever you are waiting for and if I never see you again, I thought. You belong to me and all Paris belongs to me and I belong to this notebook and this pencil" (Hemingway 13). As noted by Hemingway scholar, Dr. Gerry Brenner, in this section Hemingway reflects upon the process of artistic reproduction and creation which "arrests and captures a fleeting moment from the flux of time. That grants [the artist] the 'possession' of that moment and its details" (Brenner 38). What moves Paris in this reflection into the realm of abstraction is the way Hemingway asserts ownership of the ambiguous "beauty" which could reference the woman he sees, but may also represent the abstract ideal of beauty encountered in everyday things. One cannot own Paris but in a subjective representation and idealization of the city and the values and memories the individual attaches to the physical locale.

It is because Hemingway, through his depictions of Paris, inevitably intertwines his thought processes through his subjective representation of Paris that it can be said to belong to him. In equating two unownable things—the abstract ideal of beauty and the physical locale of Paris as his possessions, Hemingway links the two ideals so that the readers are given a direction as to what Hemingway's subjective conception of Paris is—beauty itself.

Nearing the end of the section "People of the Seine" Hemingway reflects upon the beauty of the Seine: the way that the trees lining the river abated his loneliness as they reflected and anticipated the changing of the seasons—namely the coming of spring. Introducing the concept of a false spring, he reflects that sometimes, though already expected, heavy rains would keep the area in a state of limbo where it appeared as if spring would not come. Hemingway reflects further on this phenomenon as "the only truly sad time in Paris because it was unnatural" (Hemingway 48). He goes further to explain how part of the self "dies" when the bareness of winter hits but that "[one] knew there would always be the spring, as [one knew] the river would

flow again after it was frozen. When the cold rains kept on and killed the spring, it was as though a young person had died for no reason" (Hemingway 48).

Hemingway plays on the established symbol of changing seasons as a reflection on the human life cycle of birth and death and the oscillation of one's emotional state. More grave is the possibility that the sadness Hemingway felt at the changing seasons was Hemingway, as an old man, reflecting upon his impending mortality as he collated the primary sources he produced in the 1920s into the memoir which would be published posthumously in 1964. Brenner comments on the narrative shift of the section namely how the "lack of specific Paris imagery suggests this doesn't look back solely on sad times in Paris. It looks back also on the cold rains that 'killed' other springs in other places and looks forward to the question of how many more springs this aged narrator would live to see" (Brenner 136). There's a true sense of solitude, melancholy, and fear in the idea of retrospective reflection leading to the recognition of so many regrets of one's youth—of so many killed springs without hope of recovering that lost time.

Hemingway mentions the unsettling, unnatural, and presumably unfair loss of those who die in their youth which may reference those who lost their lives in the first World War. The unnaturalness he speaks of here is the theft of time, of youth, of hope, and of dreams and ambitions that die along with the death of an enthusiastic youth. Though the loss he mentions here is severe, in the imagery of the frozen Seine, Hemingway alludes to a fate worse than death: an existence in which one is frozen, in which one's way of life, one's emotional, spiritual, or intellectual or artistic growth has been totally stagnated by the violence and political and social upheaval of war. The Seine is a symbol literally and physically inseparable from the city it bi-sects. Its stillness during a false spring represents the delay or perpetual doubt of regeneration.

Nearing the end of the section “A False Spring,” Hemingway recounts a moment spent reminiscing with his wife whilst crossing a bridge in Paris when the pair realized that they were hungry after already having eaten. After having eaten for a second time that night at Michaud’s, Hemingway ruminates on the previous recognition of his hunger wondering: “how much of what [they] had felt on the bridge was just hunger.” After posing the question to his wife, Hadley responded: “I don’t know, Tatie. There are so many sorts of hunger. In the spring there are more. But that’s gone now. Memory is hunger” (Hemingway 57).

The connection between hunger and memory is striking here but intuitive and succinctly captures the essence of what Paris was to the Lost Generation: existential food. When one is hungry, one looks to fill the gnawing void felt in the stomach until the discomfort subsides. Likewise, memory and recollection of the past leads one to recognize the voids in one’s present situation, the discomfort, dissatisfaction, and unhappiness which are inevitable conditions of living are hunger-like voids. Enforcing again the theme of the passage of time is the physical locale of the bridge on which Hemingway first recognized the feeling of his ambiguous hunger. A bridge, not only representing a threshold between one physical space and the next, also represents a journey from one moment in time to the next as follows from the inextricable existence of space-time. The Seine underneath the bridge flows incessantly like the flow of linear time as perceived with a past, present, and future. In this interpretation rather than representing the connection between two moments in time, the bridge on which Hemingway and his wife talk is a liminal space. It is not on land yet not on water. It is suspended above the movement and mutability of the Seine beneath it: much in the same way that Paris, as glorified and idealized by the Lost Generation, became a mental construction of stillness in the constant churning, movement, and chaos of the modern world. The idealized, subjective mental construct of Paris is,

by its nature, inaccessible to others and is therefore an ideal anchor upon which to associate values of happiness, of joy, of creation, of regeneration, of discovery, and of wonder—values which would be useful in years of dearth and both financial and emotional hardships.

The most revealing prose identifying Paris as a mental and symbolic construct is the concluding paragraph of the memoir. Hemingway asserts that "there is never any ending to Paris… We always returned to it no matter who we were or how it was changed or with what difficulties, or ease, it could be reached. Paris was always worth it and you received return for whatever you brought to it" (Hemingway 207). In the conclusion the Paris of paradox is revealed—one forever changed and yet still the same—one that is both difficultly and easily reached, yet not visited. Even the chosen verb "reached" denotes a significant effort expended whether physically or mentally. How can Paris be never ending unless it represents the eternal hope of renewal.

Paris represents the past—but more than that—it is an acknowledgement that humans with the capacity to think, to dream, to be unfulfilled, and to suffer as a cause of attachment to the past—the very conception of which is the sole reason of man's ability to regard the self as a distinct being existing across time—sometimes need to limit the scope of consciousness to keep from becoming overwhelmed by the constant flood of stimuli. Paris is an acknowledgment of the choosy chancy nature of memory, and the ways in which nostalgia can be used as a tool to persevere in difficult times.

Chapter 2: "But here there is no light": an Analysis of Nostalgia and Illusion in *Tender is the Night*

Largely set in Rome, the French Riviera, and Zurich, Fitzgerald's last completed novel, *Tender is the Night,* is perhaps the epitome of Hemingway's preface in *A Moveable Feast:* "that a book of fiction may throw some light on what has been written as fact" (Hemingway 6). Representative of the expatriate situation of travel and discovery, "Fitzgerald avails himself of setting in order to dramatize a character's existential situation" so that every excursion in *Tender is the Night* holds thematic weight (Huonder 104). Through his characters: the fading psychiatrist Dick Diver, his former patient turned wife then ex Nicole Diver, and budding starlet Rosemary Hoyt, Fitzgerald throws light on his own artistic and moral decline and reflects upon the nature of his regression and nostalgia in a scene of the excursion to Paris and the references to Paris later in the narrative.

The theme of the past in *Tender is the Night* and the incessant yearning to return to that irrecoverable past differ drastically from depictions of nostalgia, defined by psychologist Barbara Stern as "the longing for one's remembered past" in other works of Lost Generation writers (Batcho 357). Because humans are higher thinking animals who can conceive of a self that persists through time, they are then able to make emotional attachments to things, people, places, and memories. It is from an overattachment to the past and the material world, which are subject to the laws of impermanence, that nostalgia can become painful. Here, yearning for the past is self-conscious, adding to the bitterness and tragedy of the novel. The characters long for a present where they maintain the fame, prestige, success, independence and/ or marital stability they enjoyed in the past, yet they understand that this return is impossible and that their continued attachment to this elusive past only compounds their present misery. Dick Diver,

Rosemary Hoyt, and Abe North are characters who try to "temporarily escape their emotional difficulties in each other's presence and in the calm beauty" of their environment. The setting of Paris specifically "offers an escape from reality" and "the individuals' response to [that setting] reveals the nature of their illusions" (Huonder 92). Dick and Abe especially are unable to divorce themselves from the hope that their current conditions might stabilize or improve against all odds. Because of this theme, as well as Dick's slow and inevitable decline by the end of the novel, *Tender is the Night* is an example of the symbolic failure of Paris to serve as an existential anchor for Dick Diver's clearest counterpart: F. Scott Fitzgerald. Being that, as literary scholar Harvey Eagleton asserts, '"he [Fitzgerald] cannot create beyond himself nor imagine experiences very different from his own. He is continuously autobiographic. His heroine his wife, and the hero himself'" (Curnutt 4).

Enhancing the complexity and sense of tragedy in the novel are the characters' open acknowledgment of their inevitable decline. Not only do the characters acknowledge their decline but they do so with an understanding that the human mind selectively recreates memories that tether one emotionally to pasts that are not only irrecoverable but are often little more than subjectively cataloged sensory phenomena. One such admission of a desire to regress into the past takes place in a bar sometime after Abe North takes a plane back to Paris, the city he attempted to quit. The narrator describes Abe as having scarcely touched the drink he has ordered, but that "the drink 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" (Fitzgerald 103). Here, not only do Abe's physical movements mimic the will-ful return to the past, as he, in this scene, returns to a physical locale he has just left, but the fact that the admission of a desire to return to or re-create the past involves alcohol further indicates the

distortion of reality required to entertain the prospect of reliving the past. The cyclical nature of memory—here being a loop that ties the past to the present and the future—conveys the sense of being stuck not only in time but in space; it is the reason Abe is unable to leave Paris. Here, the reader must entertain the question of why Abe returns to Paris in the first place, given the contradictory nature and inadequacy of his rationale. When asked by Dick why he was back in Paris he says only that he did not want to miss the next installment of his serial. (Fitzgerald 101).

His desire to return to Paris, to physically undo the progress he made on his journey home, seems counterintuitive. It is not until the setting is analyzed that we see how Paris is an anchoring firmament. It is an abstraction that represents the glory of days past. With this frame of reference and Abe's eventual return to America and the violent death he faces there in the alcoholic haze of a New York speakeasy (Fitzgerald 200), his physical return to Paris represents a final attempt to regain the composure, genius, happiness, and peace he had experienced in the past as a renowned composer before his self-destruction by alcoholism.

This return, the desire to maintain the existential anchor of Paris, and illusion that Paris could remain a sacred and unviolated ground upon which the Divers and their friends could exist, is spoken about as if it were a "waking dream" (Keats 366). As Dick, Nicole, and Rosemary see Abe off at the train station before his departure from Paris, they witness Maria Wallis shooting a man to death. The random act of violence reveals the war as what shattered their ability to maintain peace; "everything had happened—Abe's departure and Mary's impending departure for Salzburg this afternoon had ended the time in Paris. Or perhaps the shots, the concussions that had finished God knows what dark matter, had terminated it. The shots entered into all their lives : echoes of violence followed them." When the two porters come to take away the body of the dead Englishman from the platform of the train station, they reflect that there is enough blood

on the murderess' shirt for one to "se croire à la guerre"—for one to believe himself to be at war (Fitzgerald 86).

Readers understand the desperation of Abe's final return to the existential anchor of Paris when he expresses to Rosemary that he wishes it were he who was engaged in a duel with Tommy Barban as he "might as well be killed now" because he has "nothing to live for" (Fitzgerald 42). The narratives, values, people, and places Abe had previously used to orient himself in the changing world have all ruptured. In the disorientation caused by the sudden realization of widespread chaos, Abe turned to the abstraction of Paris.

Rosemary and Nicole talk about Abe's decline and try to understand the cause of Abe's alcoholism. Alluding to Abe's blatant degradation, Nicole tells Rosemary: "Abe used to be so nice…Long ago when Dick and I were first married." When Rosemary questions the change in Abe's behavior caused by his alcoholism Nicole explains that "so many smart men go to pieces nowadays" (Fitzgerald 99). Here, Nicole links intelligence with an emotional inability to cope with reality—with an inability to sustain emotional composure caused by the war. She specifically links introspection, being "smart" with falling "to pieces". Nicole's reflection embodies Zapffe's theory of the handicap which is the over-evolved consciousness of the human mind which hinders by allowing for a deeper, more intense, and more nuanced experience of suffering.

Abe is not the only character in the novel to exhibit a self-conscious awareness of his desire to return to the past. Nicole also acknowledges the tricky, chancy nature of memory and the ways our attachments to the past can inhibit us. On a solo trip to Innsbruck, Austria, indulging in a flashback to the bliss of their early marriage, Dick reflects on his ability to love Nicole "for her best self" as Nicole had, when she was well, reflected upon the inevitable

complexities they would face in their union because of the unpredictable manifestations of her mental illness. Understanding that he would not always love her in the ways that newlyweds might, she instead asks Dick to remember that "somewhere inside of [her] there'll always be the person [she]" was that night when she was well, and they were happy. In this acknowledgment, rather than indulging in the idea of everlasting marital bliss, Nicole signals the inevitability of decline and the bitter-sweet pangs of remembrance that come with recognizing that one's present state may never be as good or as happy as a state in the past because of the human propensity for nostalgia.

Nicole recalls the "night" here, the same "tender night" of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale", a butchered excerpt of which, precedes the novel: "Already with thee! Tender is the night…/ but here there is no light save what from heaven is with the breezes blown/ Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways." The night evoked in Keats's poem, lamenting the universal condition of mortality, is the night of non-existence in death. This non-existence saves men from suffering. In Nicole's plea, she asks Dick to love her for the self she was that night. The night she invokes is a bitter form of decline. She invokes a decline that encapsulates the loss of former glory and the ability to reflect on and yearn for one's greater, former self. The intertextual reference Fitzgerald makes to the "tender night" of Keats's ode, serves as a place of enchantment because "it functions as the location of both beauty and illusion. A night everlasting, one capable of suspending time" (McGowan 217). It is an abstract plane of existence where past glories can seem contemporary with the present—as if they might happen again. But like the beauty of the night, the concept of a return to the past is only an illusion. With the ellipses, Fitzgerald chooses to omit the lines "And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne, / Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;" which omits the image of celestial light. In the world of

Tender is the Night light and, by extension, hope is inaccessible to Dick, Nicole, Abe and Rosemary without following the difficult, at times painful "verdurous glooms" on the "winding mossy ways" to finally reach a point of liberation from the incessant pull toward the irrecoverable past.

Nicole understood that the nature of memory might lead the couple to yearn for the past when they were both young and well. She understands that because of the nature of impermanence, because of the unpredictable nature of mental illness, and because of the inherent unpredictability of life, they will undergo conflicts that challenge their union. She understands that even this question of the persistence of a unified self is tricky to define, and so she offers her compromise: that he remembers that through the layers of change, the callousness of growing resentment, and unspoken frustrations, a part of the person he once shared his happiness with lives on in the present Nicole, as the present cannot be divided from the causal chain of events which came before. Like Abe, Nicole is conscious of a fuller, uglier, more realistic nature of memory, reality, and human attachment to the past developing the tragedy of *Tender is the Night*.

In the similarities between the introspection of both Abe and Nicole, Abe is inherently and thematically linked to the Divers. Furthermore, he signifies the inevitable decline of the prodigious Dr. Diver "as he too has bartered his ideals for the complacency of a morally abeyant existence" unable to accept the fact the glory of his former existence is no longer available to him (Huonder 88).

One of the most striking features of his fourth novel are the subtle intertextual references to Keats's ode. In *Tender is the Night,* Fitzgerald references the nightingale which is a bringer of both beauty and destruction. This motif is introduced in the first book and thematically carries the novel to its end. The symbol of the nightingale reinforces not only the inevitability of Dick's

decline but the inevitable liberation and self-actualization of Nicole who, not made for death, frees herself from the confines of a misogynistic and unfaithful husband to live out the rest of her days with her long-time admirer—Tommy Barban.

Sleepless from the anticipation of the duel between Tommy Barban and Mr. McKisco to settle the slight on Nicole's honor, Abe conjectures that he and Rosemary are sleepless because they are: "plagued by the nightingale… probably plagued by the nightingale" (Fitzgerald 42). Abe invokes the nightingale twice, alluding to the symbolic duality of the nightingale. John Grube asserts that the duel fought over Nicole's honor brings to the forefront of the mind the fact that the nightingale has traditionally two literary interpretations. The nightingale "is it a bird whose beautiful notes have been celebrated by poets throughout the entire history of literature, but it also has a long mythological association with blood and violence…And Nicole creates both beauty and violence wherever she goes" (Grube 437). Nicole is the nightingale, the bringer of beauty, who is restored to greatness and prevails by breaking from the chains that is an over attachment to the past and the conflated beliefs that Dick could change for her: that he could remain faithful, that he could overcome his pride enough to stop chasing validation from his medical practice and sexual conquests. With Nicole's self-focus and recovery, Dick "loses his hold over her. Nicole shows her independence (i.e. her ability, as she says, 'to stand alone') when she leaves him to become Barban's mistress" (Huonder 78).

Dick is merely the shadowy echo of the nightingale's song: devoid of hope, signaling destruction. He is overly concerned with superficial beauty, prestige, and physical good form. It is because of Dick's attachment to these morally irrelevant features as definitive of his sense of self and his sense of the past that he succumbs to a slow and grueling decline: losing his wife and children.

In Dick's case the implication of the nightingale's song is frightening because with it comes the risk that he will never escape the slope of moral decline. Using Nietzschean philosophy to contextualize the symbolic meaning of the nightingale of Keats's ode, literary scholars have theorized that because the bird's song has been heard throughout the ages, the prospect of the speaker hearing a mere echo or repetition of the song is very likely. Because of this, the nightingale is chained like all living things, to the cyclical nature of existence as explained by Nietzsche's Eternal Return. Because individual existence is finite, and because the space one inhabits, namely the universe, is infinite, all beings are subject to live "in the same series and sequence" over and over again (McGowan 212). Likewise, if Dick fails to overcome his attachment to the past, and his self-conception as tied to that past, he will forever be caught in the cycle of suffering.

Though aware of his own attachment to the past, and the resulting suffering he inflicts on himself and on others, Dick does nothing more than yearn for the irrecoverable past and verbalize his own moral decline. In Paris, the Divers and their circle of friends see Abe off on his journey to America (Fitzgerald 38). One of the most explicit instances of Dick's own acknowledgment of his moral decline acknowledgment in a meeting, in Dick's room at the Quirinal hotel in Rome, between him and Rosemary after they had consummated their affair. Previously, in a show of moral fortitude, Dick refuses Rosemary's sexual advances in her Paris hotel room, citing his love for and responsibility toward Nicole as his deterrent to infidelity. Carrying the motif of Paris into their later conversation in Rome, Dick, in a fit of unjustified jealousy, tries to gauge Rosemary's affections for a young Italian, Nicotera. Trying to understand the evolution of Dick's feelings for her she asks if "this was how [he] felt toward [her] in Paris." Dick responds to her by saying that though he feels "comfortable and happy" around her "in

Paris it was different. But you never know how you once feel do you?" Here Dick acknowledges the false idea of memory as conflated with reality. Paris, for them, was the illusion of grandeur, the illusion that what they had was anything more than a fleeting, half-construed intimacy or, as Dick himself put it, "a romantic memory" rather than "an infatuation" (Fitzgerald 213).

Dick asserts that one never understands how one once felt in the past because memory is little more than a subjective recollection of external stimuli. Even recollection can be tainted by the contemporary mental and emotional state of the person recalling the memory. Paris here is something mythic, indescribable, eluding attempts to be pinned by any adjective it is only the place where things were "different" able to encapsulate a range of emotions or a lack thereof. Paris is the hope of preservation whereas "Rome was the end of his dream of Rosemary" (Fitzgerald 220).

Rosemary, understanding her insignificance to Dick breaks down into tears and cries out to Dick asking why he had to come to see her just to taint the mental construction of him she had created through the conglomerate of memories they shared when she asked why they "couldn't just have the memories," of their time together. When Rosemary questions Dick further asking, ambiguously, "what was it all about anyhow?" Dick responds with the following: "I guess I'm just the Black Death…I don't seem to bring people happiness anymore" (Fitzgerald 219). Dick's moral decline is so severe that he becomes the driver of such chaos and misery like the Bubonic plague. In his self-characterization as "the Black Death," Dick becomes the complete absence of light itself. Rome is the city of Keats's demise: of his failure to overcome the consumptive disease of tuberculosis. Likewise, Diver's progressive movement from Munich to Innsbruck ending finally in Rome is a flight "that ultimately brings him closer to the reality from which he is trying to escape." It is "an odyssey in self-finding that ends in an emotional Hades" when Dick

realizes the height of his fall from grace and the complete consumption and dissolution of his morality and potential (Huonder 88).

The ambiguity in Rosemary's question: "what was it all about anyhow?" could be interpreted to be existential rather than situational pertaining to the personal relationship between herself and Dick. It could be that considering the rupture and hurt their affair has caused that Rosemary is forced to acknowledge firsthand the existence of chaos and the inherent lack of meaning in the world. Here lies the failure of the existential anchor of Paris: faced with the inherent lack of meaning in the world, the characters of *Tender is the Night* are unable to keep up the ruse that there exists a realm of memories and, by extension, a plane of innocent existence where love is simple and kind and good because the world is neither simple nor kind nor good and a modern world even less so. In the naiveite of Rosemary's question one is reminded of the Hemingway's reflection in *A Moveable Feast* after he recognizes the feeling of his memory hunger: "Paris was a very old city and we were young and nothing was simple there not even poverty, nor sudden money, nor the moonlight, nor right and wrong nor the breathing of someone who lay beside you in the moonlight" (Hemingway 58). From the complete physical destruction of the old world with the first world war followed the destruction of ideals and metanarratives which gave direction to those coming of age in the twenties. In this brave new world, concepts as intense and intuitive as love and light were rendered more complex and nonsensical than they had previously seemed to be.

Allusions to Keats's ode deepen the reader's understanding of Rosemary's confusion toward the modern world as the entire ode is structured on a series of oxymorons. Numbness gives way to pain. The wine allows the speaker to sink into the joys of reminiscence but also condemns the speaker to fade into oblivion (Keats 366). Keats develops a conceit greater than

the cyclical nature of time, history, and existence. He speaks on the rejection of the material world restricted by illusion in favor of the true forms existent only in the heavens, for that is where "light"—the absence of illusion—is present. Where the speaker will be immune to the "hungry generations" or the "passing" and therefore transient and artificial life. Dick, and one could argue, Fitzgerald, was an echo of the nightingale chained, part of the consumptive blur of the roaring twenties and unable to escape his own artificiality.

Additionally, Dick reflects on the inutility of his own existence as he is unable to bring joy and meaning to the lives of other people. Faced with his own moral degradation and the decline of his genius in the field of psychiatry due to a lack of motivation, he is forced to confront the fact that the socially constructed self and the worth he has attached to that sense of self is nothing more than a figment as fragile as the illusion of Paris and the idea that anyone so inclined can return to the elusive and irrecoverable past. Here is Dick's first explicit acknowledgment that the existential anchors to which he has attached himself have failed. In this, readers see the true tragedy of *Tender is the Night* and Fitzgerald's conception of Paris as fuller, uglier, and more well-rounded than those of other writers of the Lost Generation.

Tender is the Night is a novel of recollection, of yearning, and of grief: grief for a past filled with the possibilities of what could have been, but which has been either proven false, or has eluded the main characters much in the same way that happiness seemed to elude the Fitzgeralds in real life, as revealed in Hemingway's memoir, Fitzgerald's notebooks, and secondary biographical accounts.

Detailing his early friendship with Fitzgerald in Paris, Hemingway said that despite Fitzgerald's efforts to write that "each day he would try and fail. He laid the failure to Paris, the town best organized for a writer to write in that there is, and he thought always that there would

be someplace where he and Zelda could have a good life together again" (Hemingway 179). Like the prodigious Dick Diver of *Tender is the Night,* Fitzgerald, caught up in the superficial, consumptive, alcoholic blur of the twenties, was unable to stop his artistic decline. He was able to recognize that his former state of existence with Zelda was better and attempted to invoke the ideals and hopes he had attached to Paris on the life in which he saw nothing but inevitable decline. Hemingway chooses the word "again" to convey the desire not only to recreate the past but to repeat it. Fitzgerald's implicit acknowledgment of the impossibility of this return to the past is depicted by the dissolution of Dick and Nicole's marriage in *Tender is the Night* and the death of Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby*. These works are tragic because they feature characters with intense, self-conscious, often self-destructive attachments to the past. These attachments are intuitive to higher thinking creatures selected by evolution for their ability to think, reflect, and, therefore, to suffer. And the Fitzgeralds suffered.

Alongside and acting upon his creative degradation were the multiple personal struggles the Fitzgeralds would face in the course of their union: "financial struggles, Scott's alcoholism, multiple infidelities, and Zelda's mental decline" (Curnutt 4). Blaming Paris for his inability to attain the level of success and happiness he had when Zelda was well, Paris embodies the irrecoverable past, the intense desire to return to that past, and, in the case of Scott Fitzgerald, the inability to attain his former level of happiness. In a final resignation to his fate Fitzgerald reflected that he "left [his] capacity for hoping on the little roads that led to Zelda's sanitarium" (Fitzgerald and Bruccoli 204). For the Fitzgeralds, there was no light—no hope of Scott's redemption and little hope of Zelda's recovery. Unable to hold onto the firmaments upon which Fitzgerald had anchored himself existentially (namely Paris—the symbolic bank of glorified memories upon which he could model his future), he allowed his literary counterpart, Dick, to

suffer a metaphorical death by fading into obscurity by the end of the novel. Here lies the true tragedy and lesson of the novel. Because of the non-linear mode of storytelling, *Tender is the Night* is a novel that "refuses in many ways to end" (McGowan 217). Like the song of the bird, like the passing of hungry generations, the suffering that exists in the world of *Tender is the Night* is fated to continue, so long as there exist, people who are unable to overcome their attachments to the past, to artificial social constructs and to illusory, impermanent constructions of the self.

Chapter 3: *Good Morning, Midnight*: the Negative Character Arc and the Symbolic Failure of Paris

Sasha Jansen is the severely depressed English protagonist of Jean Rhys's 1939 novel *Good Morning, Midnight* who attempts to drink herself to death in London before a friend intervenes–offering to fund a trip for Sasha to go to Paris for a fresh start. The novel is a fragmented first-person, stream-of-consciousness account of Sasha's return to Paris set against the complicated past she spent there with her ex-husband Enno before their marital split which exacerbated her decline into depression and alcohol to escape her feelings of isolation and estrangement from the world around her. The Paris of Jean Rhys's novel is one of paradox. For Sasha, Paris is the city in which she passed her days naïvely hoping for renewal in the haze of impulsive, young love. It is also the city in which she experienced the abandonment by her husband, Enno, the loss of her child, and the destruction of those youthful illusions. Sasha struggles to reconcile the reality of her past and present with the glorified fantasy of her past and her illusions of renewal, and Rhys ends the novel on Sasha's final refusal to acknowledge the reality of her situation. Sasha's descent into illusion and self-destruction at the end of the narrative demonstrates the symbolic failure of Paris as an anchoring firmament. For Sasha, the memories of the past are not enough to sustain her life in the present.

Unlike other writers of the Lost Generation who wrote works of fiction set in Paris, Jean Rhys's depiction of Paris, and the memories her protagonist attaches to the city, are more nuanced and traumatic than they are glorified. Paris, before Sasha's initial stay in the city, was a firmament that represented for her the naïve, unfounded hope that her situation could improve without action or change on her part. Reminiscing on a short vacation in Amsterdam as part of her post-nuptial wanderings with her husband Enno and his self-assuredness that things would be

alright once they got to Paris, Sasha recalls her husband's words: "'I want very much to go back to Paris,' Enno would say. 'It has no reason, no sense. But all the same I want to go back there… No sense, no reason. Just this nostalgia…" (Rhys 117). For Enno, who had lived in Paris since the age of eighteen, Paris embodies the sense of joyful, careless youth he so wished to evoke in a world that has "no reason, no sense" post the destruction of World War I. Much in the same ways one might struggle to place and verbalize a justification for living when prompted, Enno cannot verbalize why he wants to return to Paris, he only repeats: "'Once we get to Paris, it'll be alright'" (Rhys 120) as a mantra, as if it were a chant he remembered by rote and could evoke whenever he needed reassurance. Sasha appropriates both Enno's hope for salvation in Paris and his "Paris mantra." She repeatedly intersperses it throughout the narrative. But her repetitions are perverted and fragmented, like a record player which skips or runs too slow. Remembering that same night in the Amsterdam hotel room, Sasha reflects (keeping with the present tense in which the entire novel is written) that "everything [is] tender and melancholy–as life is sometimes, just for one moment… And when we get to Paris; *when – we – get – to – Paris*" (Rhys 117).

When reading that line one can almost imagine a record having been too damaged by wear to play right. The first clause preceding the semi-colon is one dictated in confidence. The second, italicized, and separated not only by em dashes but by physical space, represents the gap between the illusion of renewal in Paris, and the harsh reality that Paris is nothing more than another city where their marital and financial problems will follow them. The space between the words evokes a sense of slowness which reads as existential fatigue. Evoking the mantra as the present-tense narrator of the novel, the slowness and fatigue expressed in the physical space between the words shows that Paris not only was a threat to her sanity and peace in the past, but is one that, because of her attachment to the past and her reflections on her regression, brings her

still even more pain. The slowness and fatigue represent the failure of Paris to serve as a firmament upon which Sasha and Enno could have anchored their hopes for a better future.

For the Sasha readers follow from the beginning of the non-linear novel, Paris is self-indulgent illusion personified. It is a version of Paris that does not justify living in a chaotic and indifferent world but one that ends her conscious life and allows her to slip into complete and utter degradation. It's the Paris where she witnessed the degradation of her marriage. It's the Paris where her infant son died. For Sasha, "locality is tainted with emotion, and emotion is engendered by memory. Locality is never neutral or innocent, all "new" rooms are already infested with what has been." Paris becomes a "timeless and placeless space of the past" (Selboe 335). Because of the power the city holds, because of its ability to hurt her, she personifies, vilifies, and tries to control it by making a conscious effort to avoid spaces that are especially relevant to her time there.

One of the clearest signs that Rhys's novel represents the failure of Paris to serve as an anchoring firmament to Sasha, and by extension, to Rhys, is the non-linear temporality of the novel. Sasha's first-person invasive recollections of her initial stay in Paris weave in and out of the present-day account of the disillusioned Sasha coming to Paris as a last attempt to recompose her life. Because of the stream–of–consciousness, non-linear temporality of the novel, it is hard for the reader to distinguish a progression of past events. The effect is that the past and present in Rhys's novel meld as if they are indistinguishable–unable to be untangled by Sasha's fragile psyche. Not only does this aspect of the novel encourage the reader to recall the inherent interconnectedness of space-time where one cannot perceive time (here the past) without also perceiving the space (Paris) in which that time (the past) existed, but to Sasha, the interconnected-ness of space-time also damns her to relive the trauma and humiliation she

suffered at the hands of her ex-husband in the city. The ambiguity in the timeline further alienates Sasha as she struggles to anchor herself in the present and finds herself slipping into painful reminiscences of the past. Commenting on Rhys's use of non-traditional temporality to portray the effects of trauma in her novels, scholar Maren Linnet notes that "Rhys represents the defining phenomena of trauma, all of which can be viewed as types of fragmentation: disassociation (fragmentation of the psyche), traumatic 'memory' (fragmented, often incoherent images or intuitions), and a discomfiting sense of timelessness (fragmentation of one's own experience of continuity)" (Linnet 440). Because of the temporal separation she suffers due to her trauma she exists in a temporality that is completely separate from the present; this intensifies the divide between Sasha and her compatriots, exacerbating her loneliness. The temporality through which she experiences the world is not rooted in the past either. This has the effect of intensifying her sense of alienation: a split within herself as her own personal identity as a distinct entity existing through time is then put into question.

The non-linearity of the novel clarifies why revision of the past seems possible to Sasha, especially when the unreliability of memory underlines the fact that the past is nothing more than a subjective construction, affected by the individual who experienced and later recalls the memory. The last scene of the novel, when Sasha lies on her bed naked, imagining that she is somehow able to reverse time to bring René back to her room, is one such moment. Rhys illustrates the revisionist nature of memory and Sasha's–almost–involuntary desire to change the past. This isn't the only scene revealing Sasha's revisionist tendency, however. When she reflects upon the loss of her son and her seemingly un-marked body, readers must question if this lack of scarring truly exists outside of Sasha's mind. Perhaps it represents some self-deceptive tendency, a desire for Sasha to revise her past and the trauma that comes with it. Of her post-

partum body, she reflects that the lady assisting at the birth assures her that the bandages she has wrapped around her body will leave her with no crease or marker of having given birth and that the woman is right because "there is not one line, not one wrinkle, not one crease" (Rhys 61). Her dead son mirrors that flawlessness. Sasha reflects upon the body of her dead son with a detachment that can be inferred to be a manifestation of intense grief. She reflects that like herself, her son bears no flaw. He is "without one line, without one wrinkle, without one crease…" (Rhys 61). What readers see here is a perverted sense of filial inheritance. Instead of inheriting his mother's eyes or mannerisms, her son inherits an unnatural faultlessness. It is because he was taken so early from this world that his body remained a true tabula rasa. His mother's flawlessness represents, in turn, her symbolic death and the necessity to begin anew. The loss of a child is a loss that defies the natural laws of birth, procreation, and death. It is a loss that, in many ways, is incomprehensible to those who have had the good fortune not to have experienced it. For Sasha, the baby's death is a fact that she cannot conceal: "the baby's death is given as a past event; we have no indication that Sasha has seen him in the hospital before this scene. This suggests a missed, and incomprehensible event. But more symbolically, with her unmarked, uncreased body, Sasha has no physical evidence that the birth ever happened" (Linnet 451). The incomprehensibility of the trauma Sasha endures after the loss of her son makes the uncreased-ness of her body seem like a cruel and ironic jab at the loss of her identity as a mother, but it also suggests the unlikelihood of this flawlessness and therefore, the unreliability of our narrator. Human birth is inherently a significant event that requires a metamorphosis of the body, mind, and self in order to foster the existence of new life. To posit that one could undergo such drastic change and remain unscathed is unrealistic at best and is likely revisionist. It is very likely that to cope with the loss of her child, Sasha imagined herself physically unscathed so that

she could more easily entertain the idea that she was never pregnant at all–that she had never endured such intense pain and loss in the first place.

A prominent motif in the novel is the arrival of the day which dissolves illusion. One can draw similarities between *Good Morning, Midnight* and *Tender is the Night* in their chiaroscurist dichotomy of truth and illusion where night, and darkness, allows for the maintenance of illusion whereas the coming day, and the light it brings, dispels the illusion of safety, renewal, and hope. For Sasha, the light isn't a bringer of hope, but rather represents an awakening to the dim reality she faces in her current life. Furthermore, any light she sees is only a reminder that in her life, hope and joy are fleeting. Reflecting on the impermanence, Sasha remarks that "they never last, the golden days" when she had been able to "feel gay on half a bottle of wine…it can be sad, the sun in the afternoon, can't it?" (Rhys 144). Needing alcohol to dull the senses and maintain the illusory happiness of "golden days" past, Sasha inadvertently puts the hope of recovery out of reach. At this point in her life, at this advanced stage in her degradation, she acknowledges that the recovery she once thought was possible is out of reach. In this same bout of reflection and reminiscence, Sasha repeats the phrase "the night is coming," which suggests Sasha acknowledges that this second stay in Paris represents a metaphorical end for her. Additionally, the coming of the night is in line with the imagined personification of her hotel room which soothes her with the white lie that things are still "quite like the old times" (Rhys 145), even when she knows they are not and never can be.

And yet, Sasha harbors the unjustified hope that "there is always tomorrow" (Rhys 145), as if to say there is always a chance of renewal, of recovery from the deep-seated traumas of the past. In the last section of the novel, Sasha reflects upon the idea of tomorrow as she converses over dinner with the male prostitute Rene, who tries to convince her to sleep with him. She

understands that doing so in a city where she is known would ruin her reputation and when she reflects on the possibility of sleeping with René, she says that "there is a gap in [her] head, a blank–as if [she] were falling through emptiness. Tomorrow never comes" (Rhys 159). Tomorrow represents the start of new possibilities, and it is impossible to stall the start of another day. In Sasha's confidence that "tomorrow never comes," she accepts that the hope of renewal is nothing more than another illusion she entertained to bear living another day chained to a seemingly inescapable decline into alcoholism and depression. Furthermore, Sasha's certitude that something as inevitable as time could stop hints at her future moral stagnation and the perpetual limbo she finds herself in at the end of the novel. She comes to understand that, for someone like herself who is overly attached to a subjective recollection of the past, she never will be fully able to move on, to access the renewal and hope free only to those who accept that it is only the present which truly exists. In weakly accepting that tomorrow will not come, Sasha fails to fully embrace her freedom and therefore responsibility in shaping and improving her future through her current actions.

The theme of stagnation was first introduced as a major theme in Part I of the novel. In a conversation with the Russian ex-soldier Delmar, Sasha reflects on how she finds Montparnasse to be very changed from the first time she lived in Paris. When Delmar agrees that she must indeed find everything changed, Sasha goes back on her previous statement, saying that she doesn't "believe things change much really; you only think they do. It seems to me that things repeat themselves over and over again" (Rhys 66). The idea of repetition and the possibility of a cyclical temporality is terrifying in the case of a generation that survived the atrocities of war, disease, and personal loss. For Sasha to relinquish control to the forces of cyclical temporality is for her to accept that she will continually be hurt from the same traumas that she is trying to

avoid remembering in Paris. Furthermore, there is a sense of futility in the acceptance of a temporal return to events past as one has no reason to improve one's own situation if all progress is to be lost in a regression to the past. This lack of forward movement in the novel foreshadows Sasha's inevitable decline by the end of the novel, the completion of her negative character arc, and the failure of Paris to serve as an existential firmament for Sasha.

Many readers have called *Good Morning, Midnight* one of the most depressive novels of the twentieth century. In many ways, the theme of moral stagnation juxtaposed against the continuous physical movement develops the sense that nothing truly changes. For those coming of age in a time of the destruction and social dissolution of war, this repetition amounts to a fatalist acceptance that senseless suffering is all mankind is destined for: as if past, present, and future were nothing more than an indistinguishable mass of events. The novel is depressing because Sasha slips into the comfort of alcohol. Despite being troubled by her present circumstances, she has neither the will nor the emotional capacity to improve her circumstances: to move forward in time as she does in space.

Reflecting on the relationship between time and space after having been asked by René what she is truly afraid of, Sasha thinks: "You are walking along a road peacefully. You trip. You fall into blackness. That's the past – or perhaps the future. And you know that there is no past, no future, there is only this blackness, changing faintly, slowly, but always the same" (Rhys 172). Though she is unable to verbalize this fear to René, she fears the invariability of time and the idea that though she has moved forward in physical space escaping from Paris to London and then returning to Paris, the weight of her memories will forever be intertwined with her perception of Paris. Sasha is stuck in time, because she cannot separate herself either from the causal chain of events initiating her trauma nor from the physical stimuli which trigger her

involuntary memories. She fails to grow and evolve over the course of the novel. She experiences no moral growth. She survives but does not live. And though she expresses a desire to "get out of this dream"– to escape the existential limbo between the day (representative of the reality of her situation), and the night (representative of the obscurity allowing illusion to exist)– Sasha ultimately survives by denying the truth. She instead embraces the night and the illusion of happiness through the act of forgetting. She embraces the illusion that she can recover the past. This naïve, misguided belief that in the novelty and adventure René represents, she could have "in [her] arms on this dark landing–love, youth, spring, happiness, everything [she] had thought [she] lost" foreshadows her eventual disassociation from her dismal reality once she survives René's attempted rape (Rhys 177). Through the violence of this act, the repetition of her psychological and physical trauma reminds us that she can never escape the past.

The novel ends with Sasha numbing herself from the physical and emotional pain of the attempted rape by getting drunk on the whiskey she had planned to share with René. The fact that the novel ends with an inebriated narration proves that "the return to Paris has turned out to be a last voyage and a farewell. The ending makes it clear that Sasha has come back for the last time, and been forced to accept the dark morality of her environment: no hope or change is possible for the damned and drowning" (Selboe 341). Any hope she once had of renewal, any hope she had of revising her negative memories and associations with Paris, are now gone. She stumbles drunkenly through the city and detachedly hears the voice of the Russian and the hum of other voices: she is now floating, detached in the city. The only thing that seems to anchor her to any specific place in Paris is the "noise of a train saying: 'Paris, Paris, Paris, Paris…'" and the disjointed remark that "Madame Vénus is angry and Phœbus Apollo is walking away from [her]," even though she knows and acknowledges the fact that "all this is hallucination,

imagination. Venus is dead; Apollo is dead; even Jesus is dead" (Rhys 187). The personified train calls out the name Paris as if haunting, or beckoning Sasha to remain in the city. But the train doesn't exist. Sasha herself acknowledges the sound as an illusion. By extension, any sound the illusory train utters is also illusion. Here the association of Paris with illusion, hallucination, and a detachment from reality is solidified. With the death of Jesus, the son promised to return to carry his followers to salvation, Sasha indirectly expresses that there is no longer hope of her deliverance. Sasha is left to find any reason she can to continue her existence and she chooses illusion.

Imagining she can turn back time and will René back into her room she covers her eyes and tries to imagine the steps he would take to meet her. With this willful, literally manifested illusion she acknowledges that "this is the effort, the enormous effort, under which the human brain cracks. But not before the thing is done, not before the mountain moves" (Rhys 188). For Sasha, as for Zapffe, the burden of thinking beings is the perpetual need to limit the scope of consciousness, to change the natural patterns of cognition in order to justify living. For Sasha, this comes with manifesting a "reality" that is other than what she experiences. Mentally completing the illusion, she achieves the impossible. She moves the mountain. Except she cannot move the mountain and knows, inherently, that the manifestation of a reality other than that she experiences is nothing more than illusion, though she clings to it anyway. It is Sasha's final descent into fantasy where she believes she can "communicate with René and make him turn back; the scene is painful, raw: it shows not a resistant or subversive Sasha but a Sasha who has broken down under the pressures of René's brutality as she experiences the repetition of trauma" (Linnet 443). Sasha willfully blinds herself to the truth: laying on her bed naked, anticipating the return of René she uses her arm to cover her eyes so as not to see who it is who really enters her

room (Rhys 189). The true tragedy is this: the illusion fails, she recognizes the man who walks into her room as she lies vulnerable on her bed, she distracts herself from the disappointment of finding out it isn't René by fixating on the trivial detail of the color of the man's robes. The man is her neighbor. Knowing this she relinquishes the illusion, uncovers her eyes, and still pulls him to her as if needing any human contact to dull the pangs of solitude, sadness, and trauma from which she has suffered.

Chapter 4: Paris, the War, and the After-War in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*

The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, rather than being a first-person account of the life of Alice B. Toklas, narrating the "autobiography" in the first-person voice of her life partner, Toklas, Stein blurs the lines of authorial integrity as she details Toklas's life before Paris, upon her arrival to Paris, meeting Stein in Paris, Stein's life before Paris, the years leading up to the war, the war, and the period of eleven years after the war. All seven sections are linked by Toklas's and Stein's experiences in Paris.

Like Fitzgerald in her perception of the city, both: "describe the city as time goes by, reinterpreting their memories, their old reflections, thus showing that Paris has many different faces. When representing past moments, both of them are pointing out how time can affect our perceptions of a given space/place" (Sárdi 20). Any attempts to fix and arrest the past are null because even the act of recollection is subject to the finicky nature of the mind's attempt to capture the ever-fluid experience of external stimuli. Because one's perception of an event is affected by his or her current mental state, and because the recollection of the past is always affected by the current mental state of the person recalling the memory, changes to the reflections of a constant, such as Paris, convey more about the psyche of a character than what is explicitly expressed to readers. Following her changing descriptions of Paris which oscillate throughout the novel, readers can trace the evolution of Stein's emotions and the existential conditions of those in proximity to her as they navigate a physically and emotionally changed city by the end of the war.

In the section: "Gertrude Stein Before She Came to Paris," Stein reflects upon the state of Paris the day after she and Toklas returned from England, having been stalled by the outbreak of the war. The narrator, Toklas, recounts that Stein had said "it is strange, Paris is so different but

so familiar." Toklas shares this ambiguous sentiment reflecting only that "it is just like my memory of Paris when I was three years old" Toklas confirms that she "remember[s] so well" (Stein 72). Rather than asserting that Paris is just how it was when she was three, Toklas instead compares the contemporary city she and Stein experience with the *memory* Toklas is sure she remembers faithfully. Not only does Toklas acknowledge that there is no objective past which can serve as a referent to the present moment, but she, or rather Stein, reflects upon the human desire to search for the familiar in situations that cause an overwhelming sense of estrangement from the existence one previously knew and enjoyed. In Stein's desire to find the familiar, readers are reminded of the ways that "the relationship between nostalgia and continuity suggests that nostalgia-prone people are more likely to reflect on their past and its relation to their present identity. Such reflection may provide consolation that comes from an appreciation of the transience of time and circumstance, and it may bring to mind adaptive coping options learned during a favorable past" (Batcho 356). Here, Stein and Toklas's familiarity with Paris allows them to form an attachment to the city. This attachment helps them navigate the outbreak of the war and the restlessness that ensued.

Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas are in England on vacation whilst Gertrude meets with her editor. It is during their stay in the English countryside with the Whiteheads when the war breaks out: "the Germans were getting nearer and nearer Paris and the last day Gertrude Stein could not leave her room, she sat and mourned. She loved Paris, she thought neither of manuscripts nor of pictures, she thought only of Paris and she was desolate" (Stein 149). Stein exhibits a nearly maternal attachment to the city she calls her home. Thinking not of the products of her labor i.e., her manuscripts, she instead sublimates her concern toward Paris, a city which, theoretically, is resilient in comparison to her manuscripts. Her concern for the city seems

incomprehensible. The grief she feels at the hypothetical loss of Paris prompts the readers to understand that Paris, to Stein, is not simply a physical city, but rather a symbol upon which she has anchored her existence. When Toklas later informs Stein that the German forces are retreating from Paris, Stein is indignant, believing Toklas to have told her something that was untrue for the sake of relieving her worry. It is not until her partner asserts to Stein that what she says is true that the couple is able to experience an emotional catharsis: weeping together (Stein 149). The episode marks the thematic struggle between truth and untruth in the novel: of what Stein called the "problem of the external and the internal" (Stein 119). The problem of the external and the internal is the dichotomy of the real and unreal in which the authentic, internal truth can only be accessed through the investigations of an individual's actions rather than what they assert to be true. It is by analyzing Stein and Toklas's reflections on Paris that we can access the internal truth.

Furthermore, when Stein and Toklas finally return to France, they return to a Paris which is "beautiful and unviolated" (Stein 155). The idea of violation recalls more than a physical ransacking of a city by enemy forces. It connotes an assault on a person. It connotes a theft of agency. Paris to Stein and Toklas is as much a living symbol of hope, stillness, and renewal as the Marianne is the personified symbol of the republican values of liberty, equality and, fraternity in post-revolutionary France.

Leaving Paris for a trip to Palma de Mallorca, Spain to, "forget the war a little," and distance themselves from the Zeppelin attacks on the city, Stein and Toklas are unable to escape the anxiety of wartime (Stein 161). When the city of Verdun is overtaken by German forces, Toklas notes how they "were all desperately unhappy" (Stein 166). The unhappiness Toklas feels is caused by the feeling that "the war had gotten out of [her] hands" (Stein 166). Like Stein's fear

of the violation of Paris during the advancement of German forces, the lack of agency for Toklas causes anguish and despair. It causes an anxiety and misery that comes with knowing of an impending attack and subsequent suffering but having no defensive arsenal. It is only when the Germans halt their attack on Verdun that Stein and Toklas feel a desire to return home to Paris. Once returning to France, they "decided to get into the war" and become involved with the wartime efforts, becoming drivers for the American Fund for French Wounded (AFFW) to shuttle supplies between hospitals in France (Stein 169). What's significant about the beginning of their involvement in the war efforts is their changing disposition as reflected in their changing description of Paris. They returned to a Paris which was "no longer gloomy…no longer empty." Furthermore, it was "a changed Paris. Everything was changed, and everyone was cheerful" (Stein 169). So stark is the difference between this Paris and the city where Stein had consoled the petrified Toklas during the worst of the Zeppelin attacks. The evolution of the city marks, not an external change, but rather a change in the internal states of Stein and Toklas which allowed them to see Paris as new and cheerful. It is because they have reclaimed agency in their involvement with the AFFW and reconnected with the hope that their actions could contribute to the improvement of their circumstances and the circumstances of others that Paris's vitality as a beacon of hope is restored.

However, the optimism used to describe Paris does not last the entirety of *The Autobiography*. After the armistice, after having "led a very busy life" traversing France doing work for the AFFW, Stein and Toklas return, again, to Paris (Stein 185). But the city they return to is changed. The narrator makes no attempt to detail the ways in which the city itself has changed. She repeats only that "[they] were restless" and that "it was a confused world" (Stein 190). Though the war did not end with the armistice, the armistice signaled the beginning of the

end of the war, and by consequence, the beginning of true reflection and healing. Following the cessation of violence with the armistice, Toklas reflects on how she and those around her were "interested in knowing all about the peace" (Stein 190). When the couple hosts Jessie Whitehead, a representative of the peace commission, as well as Stein's cousins in their 27 Rue de Fleurus home, Toklas reflects that despite the official "peace" of the armistice, "everybody was dissatisfied and every one was restless. It was a restless and disturbed world" (Stein 190). The description is another instance of the repetition so prevalent in the autobiography that evokes an almost post-traumatic fixation on the disillusionment following the end of the war. Though it should have been a time marked by "peace," the armistice is only a veneer of stillness covering the interior chaos, disorder, and existential fatigue experienced by a population physically and emotionally violated by war.

The motif of fatigue is carried on into the last section of the novel chronicling the end of the war. As previously established, Paris is changed. With that change comes the unraveling of the social network of friends Stein and Toklas once enjoyed entertaining in their home. Beginning the series of unravelings, Toklas notes that though Picasso had Stein had always enjoyed a tender friendship, "Stein and Picasso were not seeing each other." Furthermore, "Guillaume Apollinaire was dead," Braque and Picasso were no longer on amicable terms, Juan Gris "was ill and discouraged," and Gris was the only friend of Kahnwelier who had not abandoned him (Stein 194). After the war, things fall apart, friends separate, and the social fabric unravels. The fact that the end of so many friendships follow each other in a single page, reinforces Toklas's reflection that so many things can happen in the span of a year (Stein 193). With the extreme violence and socio-political degradation that follows a world war, the natural

falling outs that occur within one's lifetime are sped up. In fact, life is sped up. And one is forever haunted, because of the exposure to death, by the extreme fragility of life.

The rest of the novel is a slow unknotting of the tensions which culminated in the outbreak of the war. Stein and Toklas slowly discover a new normal. What gives order and purpose to Stein's life is her writing: "during these early restless years after the war Gertrude Stein worked a great deal" though the rate of her literary production had, as she notes, decreased (Stein 206). The winter Stein and Toklas spent in Saint-Rémy, which was the first time the couple had "just stayed still since Palma de Mallorca," was the end of "the restlessness of the war and the afterwar" (Stein 208). Significantly, it is this period of Stein's writing in which she makes "her first attempts to state her problems of expression and her attempts to answer them. It was her first effort to realize clearly just what her writing meant and why it was as it was" (Stein 209). In this reflection by Toklas, we see references to the auto-portrait genre working in reverse. In Stein's case, it is not a desire to understand the self which causes the self-investigation through writing. It is instead the recognition of writing as a product of the release and sublimation of the subconscious anxieties, desires, and disappointments that she desires to retroactively investigate the interior of the self through her writing. What we see here is the manifestation of Zapffe's fourth repressional mechanism at work: that of sublimation where the socially undesirable feelings of pain, trauma, or restlessness, are translated into the productive channels of writing. The mechanism is positive for the ways it allows the author to selectively limit the scope of consciousness through the artistic act of attempting to fix and depict a specific experience or moment in time.

Incorporating more narrative structure than Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* by dividing the autobiography into seven sections grouped temporally in relation to Stein and

Toklas's initial encounter in Paris, the stream-of-consciousness narration and incessant intrusions by a narrator temporally ahead of the times she is recalling remind the reader that the autobiography is a product of a split consciousness: one that attempts to authentically chronicle the past but is only able to do so insofar as the past appears to the perceiver once time has elapsed and emotional distance is created. In this distance we see *The Autobiography's* "disparity between actuality and its representation, but it does so without irony, without lamenting the insufficiency of either reality or of literary fictions" (Breslin 911). In many ways, Stein's autobiography is an assertion that those who have not experienced, firsthand, the devastation and existential displacement resulting from war will never truly understand the disorientation and loss of identity. Those who have never experienced an overturning of their worldview will never understand the need to find stillness and impose meaning and order in any way possible. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* is whimsical and playful, but more than that, it is a work of literature that chronicles the human capacity to continue to live, to love, and to find purpose in a world that is indifferent to our little existences.

Chapter 5: Why Paris? A History of the Creation of a Myth and Proliferation of Inherited Literary Nostalgia

The nostalgia and longing for a bygone era associated with the glorification of Paris, though prevalent in the interwar period and promulgated by certain writers of the Lost Generation, pre-dates the years after the Great War and begins, quite fittingly with La Belle Époque.

The Belle Époque itself was named retroactively but is generally considered the period from the second half of the XIX century until the outbreak of World War I. According to French historian Dominique Kalifa, « l'imaginaire Belle Époque fait presque exclusivement corps avec la capitale, dont il célèbre les splendeurs et les fastes ». The retroactive title of the « beautiful era » was almost exclusively and essentially associated with Paris and the "siècle du rêve et des réalités"–the century of dreams and realities. It was a period characterized by the hopes of renovation by the grandiose plans of both Napoléon III and Baron Haussmann to transform the city of Paris in the second half of the 19th century (Kalifa 63). Furthermore, the Belle Époque was an era associated with the proliferation of art, culture, and technological advancements. It was a period characterized "as a joyful and harmonious moment in French history, as a time that one can only recollect with the same tenderness as one recollects his or her youth full of hope, discoveries, and happiness" (Starostina 28). Though exalted as a time of beauty, social, and technological advancement, this period in French history was far from flawless. In order to entertain the idea of a golden age in French history one had "to turn a blind eye to the problems that, in the immediate aftermath of the Dreyfus Affair and various colonial crises, France faced" (Starostina 29). Problems such as social inequity, prejudice, and injustice which were present

during the time of the Belle Époque would persist in France through the time of the world wars and into the present day.

In her article "Nostalgia and the Myth of the Belle Époque in Franco-Russian Literature," Natalia Starostina makes the argument that "Russian nostalgia for a pre-1917 period paved the way for the rise of the myth of the Belle Époque." Furthermore, the proliferation of nostalgic memory by the population of Russian émigrés who moved to Paris after the Russian Revolution engaged in "exaggeration and mythmaking" in order to "create a romantic narrative of history" which not only helped them to cope with their view of and longing for the past but "helped defined their vision of the present and the future" (Starostina 27). In the creation of the Belle Époque, we see the use of nostalgia, not as a maladaptive coping strategy. Rather nostalgia in La Belle Époque "reminds the individual what has been overcome and provides hope in the idea that "what was possible once can be possible again" (Batcho 365). For those living through times of extreme social and political upheaval, an anchoring or an attachment to the past allows the individual to contextualize his or her identity as a product of a chain of antecedent events with the result being that the individual is reminded of the inherent impermanence of hard times, and the inevitable restoration of good times.

This reliance on nostalgia is a phenomenon present in the writings of the Lost Generation, particularly in their works produced during the interwar period. In the primary works cited, I have analyzed the connection between each author's attachment to Paris as symbolic of their need to existentially anchor themselves to a construction of the past which is filled with glorified and idealized memories so that they might better navigate the confusing and chaotic post-war present. This symbolization of Paris, its elevation to the realm of myth, is representative of Zapffe's repressional mechanism of anchoring. The act of writing their experiences in Paris,

of attempting to investigate the self through their art, is the manifestation of Zapffe's repressional mechanism of sublimation by which socially discouraged emotions such as fear and sadness are transmuted into an artistic medium that allows the artist to distance themselves emotionally from the discomfort of those socially discouraged feelings, whilst being able to search for community and belonging by engaging in discourse with others. It is through the writings of different members of the Lost Generation, and their depictions of Paris, that modern readers are able to inherit a literary nostalgia for a city we may never have stepped foot in.

During the period of the war when Paris was being assaulted by aerial attacks, false target sites such as "faux Paris" were constructed as decoys in order to decrease the loss of civilian life. Despite these diversion tactics, the end of the war would see nearly 600 dead in the combined attacks on Paris (Panchasi 44). We see the continuation of the pervasive nostalgia and glorification of Paris as a response to the scope of the violence and loss of life; "in France, the physical violence and material damage of the years between 1914 and 1918 radically altered perceptions and discussions of urban space in general and the French capital in particular… While Paris survived the war relatively intact, the legacy of the towns and villages left in ruins by the war continued to shape ideas about the capital in the years ahead. Paris could serve as a living monument to the war dead, a tribute to the nation's suffering, and a testament to its past and present glory" (Panchasi 47). Paris is, once again, the site of renovation. The goals to transform and revitalize Paris are carried on from the legacy of Haussmann. This time, Paris would be a city of possibilities. It would stand for resilience, and the will to overcome. Furthermore, the renovation of Paris, the center of the French Republic "could symbolize the future of the entire nation. Just as soldier's body rehabilitated could stand for the recovery of France as a whole, each French village, town, and city could also represent metonymically the

projects of national healing and restoration in the aftermath of the conflict" (Panchasi 50). The theme of renewal and regeneration in Paris which originated with the end of the war has carried on into novels by Lost Generation authors such as *A Moveable Feast,* and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Their addition to the historical preoccupation with Paris was this: if a city that has been the center of revolutions, empires, and republics can survive the devastation of war and emerge as a beacon of art, literature, and music, what exists that cannot be recovered?

American author Adam Gopnik asserts that there is no city as "neatly mythological" as Paris to the American in Paris (Gopnik 13). Certainly, considering the countless bodies of literature, film, and music that chronicle the magic of Paris in the American heart, this statement holds true. Reflecting on his own time in Paris, Professor of Humanities at York University, Richard Teleky said that "no one can know all of Paris, write about all of Paris, or see or love or claim to understand all of Paris. We can only glimpse a vast, ever-changing subject, at the angle one's life has allowed." He quotes the 1942 film *Casablanca* and reinforces the idea that more than anything, Paris is a subjective social construction meant to give meaning to life when it otherwise seems difficult or insupportable (Teleky 218). Alexander Maksik, Truman Capote fellow and author of *You Deserve Nothing,* a novel investigating the inheritance of literary nostalgia associated with writing in Paris, said that "among other things what living in Paris has given [him]" is a "hyperawareness of the distance between nostalgia and reality; the disillusionment and sadness of discovering that the cities we imagine don't exist. No, Paris now is not what Paris was" (Johnson and Maksik 13). In the countless first-hand accounts of Americans in Paris, it's undeniable that "Paris itself is a symbol. The word is so freighted, that the minute you type the letters, you're triggering all kinds of literary and emotional associations" (Johnson and Maksik 15). Paris has remained a beacon of hope for Americans for generations

and “the idea keeps its hold on us for a simple reason. For two centuries, Paris has been attached for Americans to an idea of happiness–happiness large, one of new art made and new writing written and independence attained” (Gopnik 13).

Conclusion

Gopnik makes the argument that a historical study on the American conception and fascination with Paris, is in part, "the history of an illusion… and the line between illusion and reality is even finer in Paris than it is elsewhere. Paris is our happy place because, against the logic of history and horror, we have insisted that it be so" (Gopnik 14). We needed Paris to act as a symbol for the things we no longer thought were possible in the face of social and political upheaval. Using Zapffe's repressional mechanism of anchoring we made the myth of Paris. We needed it to be a pure, eternal, moveable feast, so that in any situation we would be faced with, we knew we always had the coping mechanism of nostalgia to fall back onto–we knew we'd always have Paris to represent a bank of good memories from which we could draw upon to justify the continuation of our existence in a world that was, and is, indifferent to our suffering. In the words of Adam Gopnik: "We need *someplace* to go and pretend to be happy in, damn it. There is no hierarchy of happiness; if the history of Americans in Paris teaches us anything, it is that there is no one right way to find it…" (Gopnik 30). If there is no one right way to find happiness, let there never be any end to Paris.

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