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The Paris Paradox:  
Colorblindness and Colonialism  
in African American Expatriate Fiction

In fiction by Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and William Gardner Smith, the literary trope of the romance between black American men and white European women symbolizes African Americans' newly held freedom in Paris after World War II, but it obscures France's own color line. Many African American expatriates considered the city a refuge from the daily frustrations of second-class citizenship at home and Joseph McCarthy's witch hunt of the black radical Left. The Parisian interracial romance, which juxtaposes the subjugation of black men in the United States with their liberation in Paris, constructs a utopian horizon that emphasizes the equality of black and white men and frames American lynching as an anomaly; Paris is a space where freedom is supposedly achieved and manhood recovered. Even in the rare pessimistic visions of the French capital and interracial romance that permeate Wright's 1959 "Island of Hallucination," the author insists on Paris being a place with "no race prejudice" (190).

And yet, African American exiles knew no one in Paris was colorblind. One only need remember the sight of a semi-nude Josephine Baker in banana skirt gyrating her hips in *la danse sauvage*, or Baldwin's exasperation when asked if he played the trumpet, or Chester Himes and Richard Gibson's fear of getting caught in anti-Algerian police raids.<sup>1</sup> Even in the domain of interracial romance, it was rarely French women who were involved with black American men. Rather, these romances involved Swedish, Norwegian, and American women (see Miles Davis quoted in Campbell 1995, 105–6). But while these expatriates experienced and witnessed Paris's contradictions, their postwar tales often used the city as a political tool to critique Jim Crow

America. Their fashioning of a colorblind Paris, however, seldom survived the Algerian conflict that reverberated through the French capital.

In this essay, I map out a six-year literary transformation of expatriate Paris from 1957 to 1963 that overlaps with the Algerian war for independence from France (1954–1962). In this journey that transits from Parisian utopianism to postcolonial criticism, from Richard Wright and James Baldwin’s love songs to racially liberal Paris to William Gardner Smith’s shrewd attack on French colonialism, the trope of interracial romance undergirds both the construction and the questioning of a colorblind Paris. I argue that as these writers included North African characters and decolonization issues in their fiction, they struggled to reconcile the coexistence of a colorblind and a colonial Paris.<sup>2</sup> It is vital to note that what these authors could tell us about Paris was curtailed by the law of April 3, 1955, declaring a state of emergency in French Algeria and establishing large-scale censorship throughout the nation (Stora 2001, 40). Guests of France who witnessed anti-Algerian violence in Paris found themselves silenced by threats of repatriation.

Over the past thirty years, scholars have examined the significance of Paris for African American expatriate writers in the twentieth century. Mae Henderson was the first to fully examine themes of exile in the fiction of Wright, Himes, Baldwin, and Smith. Other studies expanded this scope to identify the role of France in black American fiction since the mid-nineteenth century (Fabre [1991] 1993a) and the emergence of a black colony in Paris after the Great War (Stovall 1996). This varied and wide-ranging scholarship known as *Paris noir* converges in its characterization of black expatriation to the French capital as a “success story” (Stovall 1996, xv). Since the mid-1990s, however, an increasing number of scholars (including Stovall 2004) have interrogated the idea of *Paris noir* as emancipatory. They have pointed out the ubiquity of US state surveillance abroad for left-leaning black American figures such as Wright and Baldwin during the Cold War (Campbell 1995) and demonstrated how this espionage turned Paris and Parisian cafés into sites of betrayal and denunciation (Maxwell 2011).

Overwhelmingly, the critiques of a colorblind Paris noir have centered on African American writers’ relationship to Francophone colonial subjects and have described these as fraught with unease, conflict, or worse, complicity with French colonialism. Brent Edwards (2003, 5)

designates 1920s and 1930s Paris as a space of “uneasy encounters of peoples of African descent with each other” and some of their writing collaborations as “a failure to translate even a basic grammar of blackness.” For Bennetta Jules-Rosette (1998), this unease transforms into a bitter conflict over colonialism, a polarizing matter during the First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists at the Sorbonne in 1956. At the center of this conflict is the role that African American celebrities such as Josephine Baker and Richard Wright play as mouthpieces of French colorblindness and therefore as accomplices in making French colonialism invisible. Scholars have described the relations between France and these personalities as “convenient francophilia” (Gondola 2004), a “mutually beneficial relationship” (Francis 2005), a seeming complicity “with the [French] nation-state at its most racist moment” (Keaton 2009), and “a moral myopia with regard to the French attitudes” toward their colonial subjects (Biggsby 1988).

However, these important critiques have not yet considered how the very writers we have dubbed spokesmen for a racially liberal Paris have also condemned the city and uncovered a colonial Paris. For all the scholarship on Paris noir as a liberation narrative, there have been strikingly few critical examinations of the city in black American expatriate fiction. In this essay, I demonstrate how Wright, Baldwin, and Smith first fashioned a myth of Parisian colorblindness through the trope of the interracial romance, and then subsequently challenged or tempered this myth in post-1960s fiction that coincided with the increased police repression of Algerians in the capital, including the 1961 French police massacre of peaceful demonstrators. In fictionalizing this colonial Paris, Baldwin and Smith draw on masculine identities, and especially homosocial bonding, as a medium to articulate their positions. Offering competing figurations of the city in their narratives, Baldwin and Smith distinguished colorblind and colonial spaces through the languages of romance and brotherhood. The two-faced city is located in the periphery of expatriate fiction, in Wright’s lesser-known novel *The Long Dream* (1958) and its 1959 sequel, “Island of Hallucination,” an unpublished roman à clef and his only long work of fiction set in Paris; in James Baldwin’s short story “This Morning, This Evening, So Soon” (1960) rather than his celebrated Paris novel, *Giovanni’s Room* (1956); and in the understudied author William Gardner Smith’s last novel *The Stone Face* (1963). Examining the significance of lovers and brothers in these works highlights telling differences in how each author grappled

with French colonialism, and how they echoed and reversed each other's writings to position themselves vis-à-vis the so-called City of Light. Together, their narratives demonstrate how Algerian Paris surreptitiously came to displace France and Europe as a model of liberation for African American writers. This moment of black American engagement with colonial subjects challenges ideas of conflict and complicity by bringing into focus an Algerian Paris that illuminates identification and recognition between African American expatriates and North Africans galvanized by masculine aspirations and brotherly bonds.

I contend that Wright, Baldwin, and Smith adopted interracial sexuality and homosocial bonding as preeminent modalities for thinking about different kinds of affiliations in Paris. Both tropes of romance and brotherhood navigate a Parisian landscape through a transnational masculine imaginary. The rhetoric of black and white lovers promotes racial equality through the path of integration that assumes equality between black and white men, while the rhetoric of brothers indicates the alternative path of revolution that requires awareness of racial domination and commitment to defeat it. Located on the Left Bank of the Seine River delimited by cosmopolitan cafés and lodging, colorblind Paris is a site of acceptance where African American men gain access to the privileges of patriarchy and become "men like other men." With interracial intimacy, these authors typified black American integration (and masculinity) in Paris and a new racial order that broke away from black and white masculine rivalry. On the other hand, north of the city, colonial Paris reminds protagonists of ghettos in Harlem and South Philadelphia, a periphery that keeps Algerian men segregated, monitored, and subject to police violence. This colonial space works as a site of recognition rallying African Americans and colonial subjects as "brothers" whose manhood and rights have been denied. Brotherhood thus stands for a politics of solidarity among emasculated subalterns that helped these authors envision a new alliance rooted in cross-racial masculine solidarity. While one reading of Paris invests in universalism, the other challenges it, and I explore how the tension between these two readings informs the fiction of Paris noir.

Colorblind Paris noir is represented through the language of interracial romance, a romance that surprisingly tells us very little about male-female relationships, but rather crystallizes the struggle between white and black men. I use the terms *interracial romance*, *interracial intimacy*, and *interracial sex* to describe a vast range of sexual contacts

mainly between black American men and white European women that include marriage, brief and prolonged cohabitation, and dating, as well as pimping and prostitution. These terms also reference substantively different fictional treatments of sexual intimacy. Scenes of interracial contact are mainly construed as heteronormative, but both Baldwin and Smith imagine these also among men. In evoking white men's rape of black men, they associate political disenfranchisement with emasculation. A medium for political speculation and expression, these men-with-men and men-with-women interracial encounters usefully throw light on the psychosexual dimensions of racial hostility, on men's paradoxical longing for masculine power and yet for protection against its excess. At the same time, these encounters establish black heterosexual masculinity as an integral part of the liberationist project, a means to measure the progress toward racial equality and an instrument to achieve it. The interracial romance overshadows experiences of black women and queer subjects by considering black men as the most vulnerable subjects in the US racist regime, obscuring the considerable patriarchal power they wield. Even Baldwin, who elsewhere eloquently troubles narrow understandings of masculinity, confides that in his narratives set in Paris, addressing both the question of race and homosexuality "would have been quite beyond [his] powers" (Baldwin 1984). Again and again, his narratives revealingly cast Paris as either a foil to American race relations or to its sexual puritanism. In what is arguably the fullest articulation of African American expatriation to France, Smith's novel interrogates dominant literary treatments of the French capital by shifting the focus from colorblind Paris to Algerian Paris, from Paris as a paragon of racial democracy to the Algerian insurgence as a model of liberation and masculine empowerment, from the trope of black-white intimacy that pits France against the United States to the trope of black-brown brotherhood that sets French colonialism and American Jim Crow side by side. Together, their stories question the existence of a liberatory Paris noir.

### From Mississippi to Paris

Wright's postwar personal correspondence, public pronouncements, and segments of his novel *The Long Dream* extend the mythical image of Paris and France as colorblind utopia that iconic figures such as Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington had fashioned. After a

1946 visit, Wright observed that “there is such an absence of race hate that it seems a little unreal. Above all, Paris strikes me as being a truly gentle city, with gentle manners” (quoted in Fabre 1993a, 177). His personification of the city strategically draws on and condemns his own American experience, sullied by racial hatred and brutality. At times, Wright’s distinctions between France and his native country were deemed too damning to appear in the US press. Ben Burns, the white executive editor of *Ebony* magazine, rejected his 1950 article “I Chose Exile,” in which he famously claimed, “I’ve found more freedom in one square block of Paris than there is in the entire United States” (quoted in Fabre 2007, 146). But in “Island,” Wright, like Smith, indicts Parisian life as hedonist and materialistic, turning African American expatriates into bums, con men, pimps, or informers. Yet, whether viewed through the rose-colored glasses of *The Long Dream* or the deep cynicism of its sequel, Wright’s Paris helps black American men reestablish their sense of manhood through the prospect of interracial intimacy. Considering “Island” and *The Long Dream* together uncovers Wright’s shifting view of Paris and growing disillusionment with its persisting Cold War politics. Considering these two novels against the context of French censorship during the Algerian war discloses yet other forms of coercion that affected expatriates’ freedom of speech and that scratched away at the veneer of a utopian Paris noir.

Mentions of Paris in Wright’s 1958 bildungsroman *The Long Dream* are brief but significant. Set in the 1950s, the novel chronicles the loss of innocence of Rex “Fishbelly” Tucker, a middle-class black adolescent, ending with his departure from small-town Clintonville, Mississippi, for Paris. As evoked in the title of the last section, “The Waking Dream,” Fishbelly realizes that a life of freedom and equality for black Americans can only be dreamed of within US borders. While in Wright’s autobiography, *Black Boy*, freedom is sought in a flight from South to North, in *The Long Dream*, freedom is now associated with Paris, a place “to be at last somewhere at home . . . free from fear and pressure” (Wright [1958] 2000, 383). The adolescent’s itinerary from Mississippi to Paris, from *The Long Dream* to “The Waking Dream,” illustrates the irony that safety and a greater freedom can be gained by giving up the privileges attached to US citizenship for the status of “guest” in France.

Set in the United States or Paris, black-white romance in 1950s African American fiction emerged against a backdrop of state executions

and lynching in the South, including “the Martinsville Seven” in Virginia (1949 to 1951), and Willie McGee (1951) and Emmett Till in Mississippi (1955). Black boys and men were killed for allegedly raping or simply flirting with white women. In *The Long Dream*, Wright ties interracial sex to the castration of black men in the US South and shows the mutilated black male body as a site where institutional racism becomes legible. As a racial practice, lynching at once denies claims to masculinity through the castrated phallus, and citizenship through the killing of black boys and men without the right to due process. Twelve-year-old Fishbelly is a witness to these literal and figurative dismemberments after his twenty-four-year-old friend and hero Chris Sims is lynched by a white mob for his affair with a white woman. As he examines “the dirty, bloody, tattered human form” in his father’s funeral home, Fishbelly discovers instead of Chris’s genitalia “a dark, coagulated blot in a gaping hole between the thighs” (Wright 2000, 74–77). The mob’s barbaric act that robs Chris’s body of its male function at once asserts and negates black virility, first interpreting it as a threat and then eliminating it. As Paul Gilroy (1993, 174) remarks, this “violence articulates blackness to a distinct mode of lived masculinity.” Using Chris’s death as a lesson, Fishbelly’s father, Tyree, explains that the sphere of interracial romance works as a legal facade for the subjugation of black Americans and a mechanism for managing black bodies, rationalizing violence and murder. He orders his son to “NEVER LOOK AT A WHITE WOMAN! YOU HEAR? . . . She means death!” (64). Tyree’s view is confirmed when the corrupt chief of police frames Fishbelly for raping a white woman. After two years in prison and a trial in which the purported victim never materializes, Fishbelly flees a lawless town and region to join his friends Zeke and Tony in Paris.

The landscape of intimacy that structures Fishbelly’s coming of age provides fertile ground to compare Mississippi and Paris. In “gay Paree,” black men can consort with white women; for the same action in Clintonville they are lynched or imprisoned (Wright 2000, 359). Zeke, a US soldier stationed in Orléans, corresponds with Fishbelly and observes that in Paris, “these blond chicks will go to bed with a guy who’s black as the ace of spades and laugh and call it Black Market” (360). Through the lens of interracial sex, Zeke indicates that Paris is a city where even the darkest subjects from Africa, though fetishized and commodified as “black market” objects, are physically safe and socially integrated, in contrast with Mississippi, where their



exclusion is policed by both law and mob violence (360). For Zeke, the banality of Parisian interracial intimacy is something to write home about because it typifies the greater freedom and power enjoyed by black men on the other side of the Atlantic. In idealizing Paris, Wright condemned the American racial nightmare, but he also erased France's own brutality toward its colonial subjects by presenting Franco-African contact as consensual desire.

But in Wright's "Island," Fishbelly's story is continued and his long dream of Paris is broken. Readers reunite with Fishbelly on a Paris-bound airliner, right where they had left him at the end of *The Long Dream*. "Island" dismisses the romantic idea of the city Fishbelly had gleaned in the letters of his Army friends and expounds on his inability to secure trusted friendships and employment within legal avenues, or to liberate himself from US racial thinking. Wright's Paris this time offers no positive alternative for human relationships across the color line, and worse yet, no racial solidarity. As William Maxwell (2011, 33) perceptively observes, "every set piece of [the blacks-in-Paris] romance is shaken, from the progressive de-Americanization of the journey to the frank sympathy of the Parisian public, from the emotional rescue of flesh-first interracialism to the fail-safe embrace of black Americans by the anticolonial left." "Island" consists of "tales of defeat" and nightmares involving Fishbelly and other African American expatriates (235). However, in the journey from Mississippi to Paris, the false brother replaces the white woman as the personification of danger or death. In this context, the interracial romance is revealed to be a sinister form of sexuality that serves the politics of power and competition among men. The willowy blondes and the young black Harlemites are mirages, behind which lurk prostitutes, spies, or con men. As Fishbelly's initial hopes of equality typified by interracial liaisons are quashed, he seeks a new kind of liberation expressed in sexual domination.

The opening interracial romance sets the tone of disillusionment with Paris and Parisians that permeates the rest of "Island." Using the interracial romance as a promise of black and white brotherhood, two sophisticated Parisian crooks extort from Fishbelly a third of his savings before the plane even lands in Paris. Jacques attempts to gain the young man's trust by railing against America's racist "barbarians" and describes Paris mostly in terms of sexual promise (22). Keenly aware of Jim Crow dynamics, he panders: "At Paris you will conquer all the women. . . . The women will make you the king of the boulevards"



(Wright 2000, 23). Fishbelly would learn French “in the bed from a girl,” he claims (19). Jacques’s friendship is soon revealed to be a sham, part of a confidence game, whereby he pretends to help his American friend to seduce an “electrically” beautiful white girl, who is in fact his wife and hustling partner (103). Fishbelly “had, of course, heard of the confidence game, but he had never heard of its being used against black men with sex as the bait, with racial balm as the lure, with sympathy as the come-on” (46). Although the scoundrels targeted Fishbelly as a naive and wealthy tourist regardless of his race, the swindle debunks the myth of Parisians’ sympathy for black Americans.

Sex is again the bait in the next interracial encounter, confirming Fishbelly’s inkling that seduction and deception work hand in hand in this city. But this time the deception reveals the absence of racial rather than interracial fraternity. In Pigalle, a segment of Paris reputed for prostitution, Fishbelly meets Charles Oxford Brown, alias “Mechanical,” a Detroit-born thirty-four-year-old African American journalist who dispatches him to Anita, an English-speaking prostitute expert at screening newcomers and reporting back their political affiliations. If Tyree had warned his son that white women mean death for black men in *The Long Dream*, now another father figure, African American lawyer Ned Harrison, takes him under his wing and warns him against false brothers. Ned apprises that Paris “is the center of the Cold War,” and if he does not “KEEP AWAY FROM” spies like Mechanical he will get “ground up like mincemeat!” (Wright 2000, 110, 111, 216). Although the novel includes a student demonstration crushed by the police, fights, and threats of death or deportation, Paris for all that is not dangerous. Rather, it is a space of unbelonging, where treachery prevents friendship and the only things the city has to offer are for sale: “cunt, cognac, and communism” (235, 227). We are far from Fishbelly’s original hopes for a “Wonderful Romance” (380).

In the Paris of “Island,” interracial sex remains a signifier of domination, but offers the African American interloper a chance to turn the tables. Twice drawn out and duped by the promise of interracial intimacy, a hardened Fishbelly seeks revenge on both Jim Crow America and a deceitful Paris by sexually exploiting women. He seduces white girls from France’s richest family to “pay these French men back” and sells prostitutes to sex-starved white American GIs, placing himself at the top of the patriarchal ladder (Wright 2000, 372). Descriptions of the “meat business” call up images of the flesh-trafficker at auction

blocks as Fishbelly parades naked white women in front of Dixie men, “noting their physical features” (198, 116). While it is clear that Wright condemns this brand of masculinity as exploitative and self-serving, other scenes reinforce masculine aggression against those who transgress gender norms, including Mechanical, the “nigger homo informer,” and Anita, the prostitute who looks like “a castrated man” (262, 57). These transgressing figures in “Island” help paint Paris as “baffling” or “bewildering” (51, 49).

But while the negative perception of the city in Smith’s *The Stone Face* challenges the myth of a colorblind Paris, in Wright’s “Island” it does not. *The Long Dream* and “Island” strategically operate around national binaries that pit a racist America against a racially liberal Paris. A short passage of his latter novel channels Ned Harrison who claims that “you can’t deprive people of their rights under French law” (Wright 2000, 276). But this myth of equality in Paris did not exist for colonial subjects.<sup>3</sup> Despite Wright’s disillusionment with Paris in this novel, Rebecca Ruquist (2004, 288, 290) is right to note that the author still paints France as a country where “indifference to race” enables African American expatriates to “lose their blackness.” Paris certainly remains the site where Fishbelly fulfills his principal pursuit of “invisibility” even as he realizes that the city is full of “false faces” (105). Tyler Stovall (2000, 200) views Wright’s Paris as “a last flowering of the naïve faith in French tolerance,” distinct from later African American visitors’ depictions of the city. Even so, it is crucial to understand that Wright, unlike these visitors, could not express himself freely.

French hospitality rules and censorship during the Algerian war played a considerable role in silencing guests’ engagement with anti-Algerian violence in the capital. Expatriates navigated a treacherous line between supporting the end of racial oppression worldwide and placating France by focusing their energies on the US Civil Rights and British decolonization movements, rather than the Algerian war, whose ripple effects they witnessed on their doorsteps. Wright, the dean of Negro writers abroad, deliberately omits the presence of Algerians in his depiction of the city and conveniently set the action of “Island” in 1951, three years before the start of the Algerian revolution. Responding to Ben Burns’s remark on his silence regarding France’s own racial problem, Wright confided to him that “you can say or write just about anything you want over here, but don’t get started on France’s colonies. Whoop, the police will be on your neck and out you

go in forty-eight hours. There's no explanation—just out you go!" (Rowley 2008, 473; Keaton 2009, 105). Wright was already anxious about the US State Department's control over his passport applications and renewals, fearing possible confiscations. And with the Algerian war, he knew he could either keep silent about French colonialism or pack his suitcase and land before the House Un-American Activities Committee (Campbell 1995, 96).

Throwing light on Wright's anxiety of deportation, a messy 1957 scandal known as the Gibson Affair illustrates black American expatriates' eagerness to condemn French colonialism and their inevitable reluctance to do so publicly. Black American cartoonist Ollie Harrington recalls "an Algerian [at the café Tournon], who . . . was always trying to get Dick [Richard Wright] or myself to write articles in favor of the Algerian revolution. I don't know what kind of idiots he thought we were . . . . And we obviously always refused to do that. . . . We were sympathetic to the Algerians, but we couldn't mention it" (quoted in Rowley 2008, 488). Despite his caution, Harrington had a close call in October 1957 after letters critiquing the Algerian war and signed in his name were sent to the editors of *Life* magazine and the London *Observer* without his knowledge. He discovered that fellow expatriate Richard Gibson, with the alleged support of William Gardner Smith, had forged the correspondence putting him at risk for deportation (Fabre 1993a, 249). Although many black US expatriates left America for greener pastures, they found that in France too their freedom of speech was regulated.

While Algerians are absent from "Island," we can detect Wright's dissatisfaction with the slow progress of decolonization too often hijacked by troubling ideologies. For instance, British colonial subjects, such as Nigerian Saturday and Trinidadian Lister Bookman, are foot soldiers in the international communist witch hunt, indifferent to the decolonization question (Wright 2000, 295). On the other hand, Ali, a French colonial subject from Morocco, trumpets the independence of his country in a monologue that blends anti-Semitism, misogyny, and extreme violence. "Island" also dismisses the support against colonial rule from communist activists eager to launch a new *mission civilisatrice* in Africa. This pessimistic vision speaks to Wright's staunch belief that greater commitment, organized action, and autonomy by colonized subjects were needed if African nations were to become independent.

Although there is no trace of Algeria in “Island,” Wright, who strove to move to London, chose to set the final installment of the Fishbelly trilogy in Algeria. In two letters sent to his editor Paul Reynolds at Doubleday in March 1959, he locates his main character’s “moral, social and political awakening” in Algeria and later black Africa where “millions of men are liberating themselves” (Fabre 1993b, 485, 486). After his African stay, Fishbelly would come back transformed to the United States, paralleling in sorts the journey made by Simeon Brown in *The Stone Face*. In both scenarios, the Algerian space (in Algiers and in Paris) transforms African American characters into morally responsible men of action. Unlike Fishbelly’s resolve to stay in Paris at the end of “Island,” the blueprint of his final novel imagines a commitment to return to black America, just like the main protagonists of Baldwin’s “This Morning” and Smith’s *The Stone Face* voluntarily do, signaling in the end a discontent with exile and with a city tarnished by anti-Algerian violence.

#### **The Paris Paradox: Black American Emancipation, Colonial Subjugation**

A critique of Wright’s colorblind Paris came from his fellow expatriate and former friend James Baldwin, whose anxiety about his influence drove him to position himself outside of Wright’s long shadow.<sup>4</sup> In his article titled “Alas, Poor Richard,” published in March 1961, four months after his death, Baldwin (1985, 285) claims that Africans and Algerians in Paris distrusted and resented Wright for caring “more about his safety and comfort than . . . about the black condition.” Yet Wright’s silence about Paris’s Algerians was the norm rather than an exception in the black colony. Baldwin and Smith often expressed their views on the Franco-Algerian conflict mainly after it ended and censorship dissolved and, on the rare occasions when they condemned French colonialism during the war, they did so quietly. For example, the Arab protagonist in “This Morning” is from independent Tunisia rather than colonized Algeria. What differentiated Wright from his confreres was his influence as a prominent anticolonial advocate who could have made a difference by taking a stance, though at great cost to himself and his family. In “Alas, Poor Richard,” Baldwin (1985, 285) asserts that “if one-tenth of the suffering which obtained (and obtains) among Africans and Algerians in Paris had been occurring in Chicago, one could not

help feeling that Richard would have raised the roof. . . . But . . . Richard did not know much about the present dimensions and complexity of the Negro problem here, and, profoundly, did not want to know.”

Although he also came to Paris in 1948 to escape racism, Baldwin distinguished himself from Wright and claimed that he did not harbor any romantic ideas of the city (“No Name in the Street,” Baldwin 1985, 469). Corroborating this view, his 1950 essay “Encounter on the Seine” condemns French fetishism of blackness and pitying attitudes that “all Negroes arrive from America, trumpet-laden and twinkle-toed, bearing scars so unutterably painful that the glories of the French Republic may not suffice to heal them” (Baldwin 1985, 37). Landing in Paris at age twenty-four with only forty dollars in his pocket, Baldwin lived for a while in Paris’s most destitute quarters among Algerian workers. In November 1949, he was arrested for receiving stolen hotel sheets, an incident which unexpectedly resulted in five weeks of prison and bureaucratic hell that persuaded a despairing Baldwin that Paris was just as wretched as home (“Equal in Paris,” Baldwin 1985, 126).

Baldwin’s fictional Paris, however, is more “a waking dream” than an “island of hallucination,” for it frees his protagonists, even if briefly, from rigid social expectations regarding cross-racial or same-sex desire. Interestingly, when Paris serves as a foil to a racist America, Baldwin offers a heterosexual narrative that highlights the equality of black and white men through the symbolic interracial romance. However, in *Giovanni’s Room* (1956) and *Another Country* (1962), narratives that posit Paris as a site of sexual liberation for American homosexual and bisexual characters, these men and their lovers are white, even if the impoverished younger beaus are sometimes metaphorized as “black” (Giovanni and Yves). Together, these narratives illustrate Baldwin’s instrumental use of Paris to critique America’s racial and sexual barriers.

In “This Morning, This Evening, So Soon,” a short story published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in September 1960, Baldwin uses black-white intimacy to juxtapose a racist America and colorblind Paris, just like Wright’s Fishbelly novels. By featuring threatening or violent agents of the US state (customs officers and policemen), “This Morning” uncovers how the state coercively produces and polices interracial contact. The bulk of the narrative weighs the narrator’s emancipation and recovered sense of manhood in Paris against racial traumas experienced in the United States. Yet, unlike Wright’s fiction, “This Morning”

introduces a North African character whose presence disrupts the binary of French liberation and US oppression by hinting at the existence of a different Paris for French colonized subjects. The short story registers a careful opposition to the Algerian war, conveying the narrator's sympathy for not only Algerian workers and peddlers "scattered—or corralled—the Lord knows where," but also for a French young male acquaintance who came back from Algeria half blind (Baldwin 1995, 134). The two story lines raise some significant questions: How can colorblind Paris and colonial Paris coexist? How does the Algerian subtext mesh with the kinds of meanings that the interracial romance brought forth about equality and masculinity?

Evoking his own integrationist hopes, Baldwin's depiction of a Parisian mixed family deviates from Wright's depiction of a sexual "black market" or Smith's portrayal of white fetishistic longings for black bodies. The story is set two days before the Alabama-born narrator, a singer and actor who remains unnamed, is to leave Paris where he has lived for the past twelve years, met his Swedish wife Harriet, and achieved celebrity status. Deeply ambivalent about this homecoming, he fears that American race dynamics will instill in his son the same kind of "pity" and "contempt" he felt toward his own father and turn his wife into "the lowest of untouchables" for marrying a black man (Baldwin 1995, 149, 158). The narrative borrows its title, "This Morning, This Evening, So Soon," from the chorus of the traditional folk song, "Tell Old Bill," about the lynching of a man who would not "leave them downtown gals alone."<sup>5</sup> This title keeps lynching as a looming threat for the narrator. His memories of a previous trip confirm white Southerners' hostility toward black Americans returning from Europe with "foreign ideas" that do not mesh with Jim Crow proscriptions (173). However, in the course of his last night in Paris as he interacts with Jean-Luc Vidal, the French director who made him famous; a group of African American students touring Europe; and Boona, a Tunisian acquaintance, the narrator grows more resolved to leave a city marred by colonial tensions.

Baldwin's short story, like Wright's *Fishbelly* novels, mainly approaches the interracial romance in its national specificity so as to illuminate states' role in shaping and reproducing social relations, in extending or withholding equal recognition to its citizens. The narrator reflects how unlikely his marriage to Harriet would have been had he not moved to Paris more than a decade ago: "If Harriet had been born in America, it would have taken her a long time, perhaps forever,

to look on me as *a man like other men*; if I had met her in America, I would never have been able to look on her as a woman like all other women. . . . We would never have been able to love each other. And Paul would never have been born" (Baldwin 1995, 149–50; my emphasis). The French and American locations determine his family's possibility of existence as each state fashions affect, sanctions, or outlaws unions. In a flashback the narrator remembers how, on a previous brief journey back home to attend his mother's funeral, he realized that Harriet's cablegram message in his pocket—"Be good, be quick, I'm waiting"—was now the equivalent of "some atomic secret, in *code* . . . they'd kill me if they ever found out what it meant" (163, 175). Evidence of interracial affection, the note displaces the narrator's grief for the loss of his mother with fear for his own life.

"This Morning" translates the exclusion of black American citizens through experiences of emasculation. In retelling a traumatic incident that happened to his sister Louisa in small-town Alabama, the narrator evokes what it means for him to be a black man in America. Driving out on a date with other couples, Louisa's party is stopped by white policemen who think they see a white woman in the company of black men. Against the car's bright headlights, the officers strip and probe the fairest woman, pretending they are submitting her to a racial test, while the young black men watch, unable to stop the attack. In recounting this harrowing story of black female degradation, the narrator excludes Louisa's girlfriend as a victim and focuses instead on the psychological effects of this act on the black men, as if they were the *real* target of white sexual violence and this woman a mere substitute. The narrator appropriates her public humiliation to register black male impotence: "You know, I know what that boy felt, I've felt it. They want you to feel that you are not a man, maybe that's the only way they can feel like men . . . . That's what it's like in America, for me, anyway" (Baldwin 1995, 175). This rerouted attack against black men evokes a sexual invasion by white men, who replace them as love partners and, as a result, experience a renewed sense of virility. Here and in another more explicit scene in Smith's novel discussed later, whiteness signifies a brutal monopoly on masculinity expressed through heterosexual and homosexual desire.

Both colorblind Paris and the nightmarish United States are partly defined through the quality of masculine interrelationships. From the death threat haunting a mourning narrator's consciousness to the



impotence of Louisa's friends, these scenes of black-white intimacy embed the image of an aggrieved black masculinity and weave a larger picture of a disenfranchised population. Critic Marlon Ross (2004, 2) elucidates the intersection between race, gender, and sexuality in his contention that "Jim Crow is as much a regime of sexual classification as it is a form of racial imposition . . . with race functioning as . . . a contested gender line of demarcation bifurcating the category 'man' into superior versus inferior males and, on the other hand, gender as a racially contested line of demarcation dividing the category of 'race' into manly versus unmanly groups of men." While denied black manhood conveys American racial logics and African American subjects' struggle for equality and self-respect, it also frames that struggle in traditional patriarchal terms. By considering only the black male body as the most vulnerable site of violence denied protection by the law, this short story models how black patriarchy circulates through ellipses. The sordid sexual assault of Louisa's friend does not lead to any attempt to connect experiences of racist oppression across gender lines and, in fact, emasculation overshadows claims of black female victimhood. What Jim Crow America prevents, but Paris enables, is black men's ability to choose their lover or wife, to protect their family as well as have their relationships protected by the law. On a Paris bridge with Harriet, the narrator claims, "For the first time in my life I felt that no force jeopardized my right, my power, to possess and to protect a woman" (Baldwin 1995, 158). Paris seems to offer a vision redolent of liberation through virile rebirth and conquest. Importantly, the myth of manly rebirth in Paris also obscures the considerable power black men held domestically.

The interracial romance not only fashions a colorblind Paris noir, it also channels the difference in French perceptions of North African and black American men. Paris is a city where "not even the dirty, rat-faced girls who live, apparently, in cafés are willing to go with an Arab" (Baldwin 1995, 184). The absence of Franco-Arab romance discloses colonial subjects' poor social status and exclusion.

Whereas colonialism rules out Franco-Arab romance in "This Morning," the politics of liberation in Africa and the United States gesture toward the possible alliance not only of two protagonists (Boona, a North African former prize fighter, and Ada, a young African American female tourist), but also of two synchronous struggles for freedom. Whereas the black American and white European couple establish France as a model democracy, the Boona-Ada coupling provides a new

configuration of heterosexual interracial intimacy rooted in identification and solidarity among racial minorities. In meeting Ada and her friend Ruth, Boona sees potential for romance precisely because “the girls are not French and not white” (Baldwin 1995, 184). Unmindful of the French racist imaginary that tacitly excludes Arab men from the realm of romance, the two black American tourists would not disqualify him as a potential suitor. Boona is quickly won over by Ada’s wish to go to Africa and her questions about decolonization, and soon the pair spend the evening talking and dancing, ignoring the rest of the party around them. This budding suit is reminiscent of W. E. B. DuBois’s novelistic attempt to represent transnational subaltern solidarity with an interracial romance between a black American man and an Indian princess brought together by their desire to organize “all the Darker Races in the World” (DuBois [1928] 2007, 300). But in “This Morning,” the reality of the colonized’s indigence interrupts the black and brown courtship, redraws national affiliations, and complicates transracial solidarity. Boona’s alleged theft of Ada’s money not only cuts the romance short and ends the night on the town; it leads the narrator to conclude that colonial subjects have been “beaten . . . too hard” for interracial friendship or romance to flourish (Baldwin 1995, 189). Unlike the African American narrator who has been able to escape his fate by leaving the United States for a new location with different racial dynamics, Boona and the larger North African community fail to escape theirs. “Most of them had no money. They lived three or four together in rooms with a single skylight, a single hard cot, or in buildings that seemed abandoned, with cardboards in the windows, with erratic plumbing in a wet, cobblestoned yard, in dark, dead-end alleys, and on the outer, chilling heights of Paris” (156). Yet the narrator also nuances this social determinism in confessing that he does not know anything about Boona’s life or Boona himself (187).

“This Morning” establishes the African American protagonist’s feeling of brotherhood with North African subjects only to expound on his disconnect with them by emphasizing their different relation to Paris. The narrator explains,

I once thought of the North Africans as my *brothers* and that is why I went to their cafés. . . .

. . . Their rage, the only note in all their music which I could not fail to recognize, to which I responded, yet had the effect of setting us more than ever at a division. They were perfectly prepared to drive all

Frenchmen into the sea, and to level the city of Paris. But I could not hate the French, because they left me alone. . . . I love Paris, I will always love it, it is the city, which saved my life. It saved my life by allowing me to find out who I am" (Baldwin 1995, 157; my emphasis).

The narrator's brotherly association with North Africans stems from a recognition of shared racial exclusion. He had seen both the French flag and his own "used to dignify the vilest purposes," but in Paris he cannot feel toward the French the same way colonial subjects do (140). His ambivalence toward North Africans brings into relief African American expatriates' multilayered and complex allegiances, their appreciation of living with dignity in France, and, at the same time, their awareness that the colonized are denied such a life. This ambivalence tempers the pan-Africanist and internationalist aspirations that melded anticolonialism and the Civil Rights movement into the same global struggle for democracy. It highlights the kinds of *décalage* or dissonances that Brent Edwards (2003, 13–15) notes as constitutive of the African diaspora.

In addressing the paradox of black American liberation and colonial subjugation in Paris, Baldwin troubles the idea of a colorblind city and illuminates a colonial and racial distinction within the category of *French* (Algerians were nominally French citizens) that was absent in Wright's Parisian account. He also demonstrates that the experiences of denied manhood and second-class citizenship serve as sites of recognition that bring together expatriates and colonial migrants, even as their different experiences of Paris push them apart. In the end, "This Morning" circumvents transnational alliances and returns to a nationalist project invoked in the narrator's admiration for a group of politicized African American students that facilitates his reentry to the United States. This story nonetheless provides a younger generation of African American writers that includes Smith with the key metaphors of romance and brotherhood to discuss Paris noir.

### **Algerian Paris: Brotherhood and the Price of Recognition**

Nothing distinguishes Smith more starkly from his fellow expatriates than the correlation he makes between African decolonization and the Civil Rights movement. Published one year after the Algerian war ended, when censorship no longer held a stranglehold on expatriates'

freedom of speech, *The Stone Face* employs Algerian Paris and the Algerian decolonization battle as a model for the African American struggle for equal rights. Seven years before the publication of *The Stone Face*, Wright had railed bitterly against Francophone anticolonial writers such as Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor for flattening African American experiences under the rubric of colonialism. Although a major goal of the 1956 First Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Paris was to illuminate commonalities across different African diasporic cultures, Malagasy poet and playwright Jacques Rabemananjara admitted “there were conflicts, even very bitter conflicts, because what preoccupied us at that time was our colonization. And the Americans did not understand that, because they said they were *not* colonized” (quoted in Jules-Rosette 1998, 47). In his coverage of the conference for *Encounter* magazine, Baldwin expressed his own doubt about the relevance of debates on a “mysterious continent” for black America (quoted in Jules-Rosette 1998, 53). By 1960, nonetheless, these feelings of alienation gave way to new understandings of racial domination as a global phenomenon.<sup>6</sup> Writing the novel in the wake of the 1961 police massacre of Algerian demonstrators in Paris, Smith was preoccupied with the state’s violence against its own citizens, whether they were demanding national independence or the right to go to the same schools and universities. Drawing an analogy between these two struggles that risks erasing their complexity, Smith nonetheless anticipates the power of the Algerian revolution for an entire generation of African American writers and critics to come, including Harold Cruse, J. H. O’Dell, David Llorens, Hoyt W. Fuller, and Jake Lamar.<sup>7</sup>

Within the black colony, the Philadelphia native was best suited to write about Algerians in Paris. Smith’s fluency in French distinguished him from his peers and won him a job as a desk editor for the prestigious Agence France-Presse in 1954, the year the Algerian war started. The work consisted in translating French stories into English, many of which addressed the unfolding bloody Algerian crisis. *The Stone Face* showcases Smith’s exhaustive grasp of the conflict, including an intricate knowledge of police surveillance and repression in the Arab enclaves of Paris. Mixing fiction and reportage, the novel is partly a historical document: it chronicles the 1961 massacre and borrows from the testimony of Djamila Boupacha about her rape and torture at the hands of French parachutists (see de Beauvoir and Halimi 1962). Throughout, Smith reads the Algerian war mainly in relation to civil rights.<sup>8</sup>

*The Stone Face*, Smith's last novel, charts the political awakening in Paris of thirty-year-old black American journalist and painter Simeon Brown and unfolds against a dense backdrop of Algerian anticolonial resistance and US civil rights activism. When Simeon crosses the Atlantic in spring 1960, he becomes a "white man," freed of the American racial dynamic and its threat of harm (Smith [1963] 1964, 48). Referring to the embodiment of this threat, the title *The Stone Face* is precisely what Simeon has seen repeatedly expressed in the faces of his white aggressors in Philadelphia, a hatred he attempts to re-create from memory in a painting. His friendship with Algerians in the French capital not only rekindles these memories of racist violence in his birthplace, it also reveals to Simeon the French double standard toward racialized subjects, pricking his conscience and informing his decision to return home. The politics of race in France intersect with interracial relationships as Simeon has to choose between the hedonistic lifestyle of his fellow expatriates and the anticolonial struggle fought by the Algerians. These competing choices are embodied by a lopsided interracial romance with Maria, an ambitious Polish exile and Holocaust survivor, and a passionate friendship with Ahmed, a self-sacrificing Algerian student. In bringing together Paris's exile milieu and its colonial underbelly, Smith denounces expatriates' escape from racism and indifference toward Algerian suffering, calling for a global commitment and solidarity among victims of racial oppression.

For Smith, Algerian Paris is a linchpin for rethinking African Americans' vision of France and Europe in view of African anticolonial battles. Like Baldwin, Smith frames Algerian Paris in a decidedly masculine language of brotherhood. Yet unlike Baldwin's and Wright's works, *The Stone Face* constructs a model of black masculinity by redrawing the relationship between Paris and mixed couples. Whether they include or ignore colonial subjects, Baldwin and Wright portray Paris as a city that nurtures black American men's artistic or professional potential. Instead of signifying racial equality and masculine empowerment, the interracial romance in *The Stone Face* becomes an illusory integration that must be sacrificed for these goals to be realized. Smith replaces romance with brotherhood by introducing Algerian protagonists and their experiences of the city, in turn instituting Algerian manhood as a model of communal commitment and sacrifice for African Americans.

Becoming a “brother” is different from becoming “a man like other men.” The ubiquity of black-white romance in Paris symbolized a universal manhood that suggested a (gendered) shared humanity. In contrast, “brotherhood,” as Smith defines it, demands that with the consciousness of racist oppression across borders comes the moral responsibility of the witness. Brotherhood synthesizes seemingly different feelings: the hurt of institutionalized exclusion, sympathy and solidarity with those who share similar circumstances and interests, and pride in affirming a manhood that has been subdued. As such, brotherhood signals a transnational pledge of loyalty; it represents a successful homosociality based on mutual recognition that counterbalances failed relations between black and white men in America. As the principal measure of freedom and the rallying point for the subalterns, manhood is both a means and an end.

If Wright and Baldwin present black men’s supposed unmanliness as a product of Jim Crow that epitomizes victimhood and raises consciousness about racial oppression, Smith uses unmanliness to zoom in on what he views as the roots of the American race problem: the failure of black-white homosociality. In an early scene of the novel, Simeon reminisces on his police arrest in a white neighborhood in Philadelphia. Suspected of being on the prowl for white women, he is brought to the back room of a police station, stripped naked, and tied down to the floor. Two white male officers armed with “lengths of rubber hose” beat him as their colleagues watch them having their “fun” (Smith 1964, 36). One of the officers responds to Simeon’s “stifled cry” by “talking softly, soothingly, in whispered joy” (37). The officer’s declaration to Simeon, “we are married from now on, you and me,” blurs the line between a lover’s promise to remain united and an abuser’s threat of more violence to come (37). This marriage metaphor pits man against man in a zero-sum game of status and privilege. The policeman’s homoerotic sadism that codes Simeon as feminine not only replaces the trope of the black male rapist; it speaks to white men’s failure to recognize black masculinity. Simeon reacts to his emasculation by purchasing a gun to kill the officer, a phallic symbol that reasserts his virile attributes, a means and a sign of power that can counteract a “perverse” homosociality.

If the law and its personification emasculate black men, the narrative suggests that only by transgressing the law can they assert their

manhood, at great risk. For journalist Benson, another “refugee” from black America, the interracial romance typifies the relationship between white rule and black manhood (Smith 1964, 11). Benson explains that he feels guilty after intercourse with a white woman and would never consider marrying her, but marriage to a black woman “would be like accepting segregation. . . . [He] would be staying ‘in [his] place. Well dammit, no! . . . It’s only when [he] break[s] the rules that a Negro man calls himself a man” (152). Through interracial sex, Benson challenges America’s established order, subverting antimiscegenation laws that legislate his right to choose his lover or wife and deny his equality with white men. As such, the white woman offers a metaphorical site for a displaced struggle between white and black men over the production and extension of patriarchal power. But if this kind of illegal intercourse can disrupt racial hierarchies in the United States, what does it accomplish in Paris, where this romance is neither illicit nor uncommon?

For Baldwin’s narrator, interracial intimacy in Paris signals that he has become “a man like other men.” Smith is not so optimistic. White European women read Simeon and other black expatriates as different from white men, invoking racist ideas of insatiable sexuality. Even the romance between Simeon and Maria, while it transcends the pursuit of exoticism, imposes limitations on his behavior and action. Holocaust survivor Maria and Simeon both came to Paris to escape a past marked by racial violence, and their romance is founded on mutual recognition. But Maria’s love for Simeon is contingent on his renunciation of politics and, in time, he surrenders. As Simeon’s interest in decolonization and civil rights activism erodes his romance with Maria, it strengthens his friendship with Ahmed and uncovers an Algerian Paris. Thus, for Smith, manhood and brotherhood are not couched in universalist terms, but in the shared racial particularity of the African American and Algerian experiences. *The Stone Face* is a heart-to-heart with Baldwin; it borrows from his short story a scene of a night out at a club with a North African friend and the skirt-chasing film director Jean-Luc Vidal, as well as the motifs of blindness and nightmares. Surprisingly, the scholarship does not address this intertextuality, even when critics write about these two texts together.<sup>9</sup> Both authors describe Algerian Paris as a site of recognition between African Americans and North Africans, a site similar to black America with its dynamics of racial segregation and public stigma. Yet while Baldwin’s narrator’s contact



with North Africans does not explicitly alter his view of Paris and what it signifies for his interracial family, Simeon's friendship with Algerians quickly interrupts his first impression of a colorblind Paris and poses a challenge to his romance with Maria.

Smith's novel rewrites the club scene so as to reverse Baldwin's description of black and brown disassociation. In both texts, two separate and unequal worlds of Paris come into contact: cosmopolitans and Arab migrant workers. In Baldwin's narrative, Boona's alleged act of theft bespeaks the different social status of African Americans and Arabs in Paris and crystallizes the impossibility of a meaningful bond between himself and the narrator. In Smith's club scene, the humiliation of the protagonist's Arab friends—Ahmed, Hossein, and Ben Youssef—does not stem from their own actions, but from the “stares, whispers and laughs” of French club patrons (Smith 1964, 93). Simeon becomes conscious that his friendship with the Algerian “pariahs” risks him his acceptance by the French (93). He notes that “for a frightening second, [he] had rejected *identification* with them! . . . Sitting here with the Algerians he was a nigger again to the eyes that stared” (93–94). Whereas Baldwin's protagonist is thankful to French society for leaving him alone and thereby feels at odds with Algerians' ire, Smith reads disidentification with these subjects as a form of complicity with French racism. Both authors associate solidarity with Algerians with rejection by the French, but Smith focuses on the risk rather than the dilemma of identification and ultimately urges fellow expatriates to take it on, to turn their Parisian refuge into yet another racial battlefield.

Between Baldwin's cosmopolitan Paris and Smith's Algerian Paris, the rhetoric of aggrieved masculinity yields to articulations of an aggressive manhood. Wright, Baldwin, and Smith all refer to the violence of decolonization, but only the latter depicts it as ultimately necessary and justified. Whereas a humiliated Boona exits Baldwin's narrative, Ben Youssef insists on his rightful presence and orders the woman who had insulted him to dance with him. This defiant proposal of Franco-Algerian intimacy disputes the status difference between French and Algerian men the woman had emphasized in her snide remark that, “really, they let just *anybody* in the Château these days, it seems” (Smith 1964, 96). The *raison d'être* of Ben Youssef's demand is to manufacture Algerian masculinity, otherwise Algerian Paris has no room for the prospect of interracial romance. Unlike Baldwin's Boona, who is always looking for a girl, Simeon notes that though “you could

not walk down a street on the Left Bank without running across mixed couples . . . he had never seen an Algerian with a Frenchwoman” (78). *The Stone Face* interprets the absence of Franco-Algerian couples as Algerians’ refusal to be distracted from the principal pursuit of independence. Ahmed explains that the interracial romance is “an opium dream” that misleads African American expatriates into believing that they have achieved freedom (161).

Other encounters between Algerians and Simeon also intimate that brotherhood requires more than the simple recognition of Paris’s own color line; it necessitates crossing it. During one of his first days in Paris, Hossein, an Algerian worker and National Liberation Front (FLN) activist, hails Simeon as a “white man,” invites him to have coffee, and confronts him about his newly found freedom. Hossein explains that he too became “white” by crossing the Atlantic. Recounting the new status his nationality afforded him in America, he describes how he rejected that cachet: “I saw how they treated people like you there, black people. . . . And guess what—in the States, they considered me and people like me white! But I wasn’t fooled, I went to the black neighborhoods anyway” (Smith 1964, 49). By crossing his host society’s color line when he was in America, Hossein gave up the advantage that a new place with different racial dynamics bestowed on him. Having sacrificed his whiteness in America out of solidarity with black men, Hossein asks that Simeon do the same in Paris. As Michael Rothberg (2009, 250) notes, Hossein’s interpellation of Simeon as a “white man” is a moment that “implicates” African Americans in French colonial politics as “complicit beneficiaries.” What Hossein demands from Simeon is moral responsibility and solidarity with other victims of racial injustice. In Baldwin’s short story, Boona’s own identification with the African American narrator whom he calls “my brother” requires no reciprocity. In contrast as Simeon grows closer to the Algerians, he is “tested” during the club scene and, in time, his solidarity with the “pariahs” gains him the trust Hossein had denied him at first (93).

Bolstered by his friendship with the Algerians, Simeon’s widened perspective on Paris leads him to redefine what and who is a “brother,” a fraternal bond the French state attempts to stifle. Smith underscores the pressure the French state exercised on expatriates to stay out of colonial affairs. As long as they do not trespass on colonial politics, Paris integrates black Americans, grants them social mobility, and provides them the prospect of inclusive romance. However, when the police find Simeon in Hossein’s bedroom, they accuse him of working for the

FLN and warn him that he “could be expelled from the country at the slightest suspicion” (Smith 1964, 83). The officer advises Simeon to leave the Algerian enclave and return to the “nice cafés over there on the Left Bank” (83). As Simeon ventures outside the urban and political boundaries described by the officer, his guest status is jeopardized and he is eventually treated like an Algerian: arrested and beaten by the police (82, 174). This police repression is precisely what black expatriates have sought to escape. For Simeon, the subjugation of Algerians in Paris speaks of the global scale of racial domination, for in France, too, you find “the ghetto, the cops, the contempt—the same thing” (91).

While Wright and Baldwin deal principally with a cosmopolitan Paris, Smith turns to Algerian Paris as a site of masculine and moral transformation. Simeon’s own transformation in the last section of the novel, “The Brother,” corresponds not only with Ahmed and other Algerian men’s modeling individual sacrifice for advancing the cause of a community, but also with the inclusion of young women and girls. In an early segment of the text, Simeon recalls “the chase,” a purported game in which black girls from his neighborhood would steal the boys’ ball and run toward the city’s wastelands, where the boys would finally catch and rape them (Smith 1964, 17–20). Paradoxically, when the narrative again mentions black and brown women (and girls), it is to suggest that these subjects need protection from Simeon, unlike his white lover. The Paris *Herald Times* picture of a black American schoolgirl threatened by “howling mobs” somewhere in Dixie is a blight on Simeon’s peaceful Parisian life with Maria. The courage and determination he reads in the girl’s face and posture makes him feel “disgusted with himself” (Smith 1964, 124). Portrayals of Algerian women, particularly the gruesome torture and rape of young Latifa by French parachutists, serve a similar function—they activate men’s indignation against racist violence. When Simeon witnesses a French policeman attacking an Algerian woman holding a baby during the October 17, 1961, march, he can no longer remain an observer and strikes the officer, “sw[inging] his fist into that hated face, with all of his strength” (174). Bookending the novel, children and women of color are subordinated into “propaganda tools of patriarchy” in a dynamic wherein men are either brutes or saviors (Enloe 1991, 89). With Algerian Paris, Smith promotes transnational solidarity in the struggle for equal rights but delimits the role of men and women within it.

That Wright, Baldwin, and Smith all deployed the interracial romance to fashion their vision of Paris speaks not only to the dialogic

nature of their expatriate fiction, but also to a shared imperative to transform US race dynamics. As the quintessential metaphor for the inclusion of black Americans in France, the interracial romance intertwined concerns about the equal recognition of citizens and masculine sovereign subjects. It becomes the vehicle through which Wright expresses his disillusionment with Paris and Parisians in "Island." Mobilized as part of social protest, cross-racial desire organized questions of recognition and epitomized the nation through the heterosexual couple while reaffirming the patriarchal order and obscuring cross-gender consciousness and solidarity. Baldwin fashioned Paris as the privileged site of black-white intimacy, endowing the city with notions of racial equality and recovered manhood and indicting America's discrimination against its black citizens. Even when it includes its Algerian minority, Paris is seemingly a means to imagine alternative social arrangement at home, a vantage point from which to interrogate and transform US race politics. Yet the colonial subplot unearths unusual zones of contact and other possibilities of affiliations for black American expatriates. After the end of the Algerian war, these take front stage in *The Stone Face* as Algerian protagonists cease to be a flickering presence in the background. Smith challenged the analogy of interracial romance as a trope of equal recognition and placed it in tension with an alternative route to reclaiming masculine dignity. *The Stone Face* underscores the significance of male friendship with Algerians that transforms Simeon from a fugitive of American racial politics to a determined international "freedom fighter" and replaces the interracial romance as conceived by his predecessors. Smith championed a global consciousness about racial domination that mapped out new sites of state repression and gave full expression to the preeminence of cross-racial brotherhood.

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### Notes

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- 1 For Baldwin's full remark, see Campbell (1995, 103). Richard Gibson (2005) describes his experience in Paris during the Algerian war in

“Richard Wright’s ‘Island of Hallucination’ and the ‘Gibson Affair.’” In his autobiography, *My Life of Absurdity*, Himes ([1976] 1990, 185) states that he “didn’t want to be on the street so late at night” in Paris during the Algerian war.

- 2 African American women writers Gwendolyn Bennett and Jessie Redmon Fauset also spent time in Paris and in their fiction debunked the myth of France and its capital as utopic or colorblind. Fauset’s *Comedy: American Style* (1934) and Bennett’s short stories “Wedding Day” (1926) and “Tokens” (1927) are not part of this analysis because I delimit my inquiry to representations of a Paris paradox. The texts that represent this paradox were written post-1947, when the Algerian demographic in Paris soared as a result of a new law on the status of Algeria that permitted natives to travel to the metropole without a passport. Male authors wrote about this Janus-faced Paris and hence the peculiar focus on men and masculinity in these narratives.
- 3 In post-World War II Algerian novels by Mohammed Dib (1952), Mouloud Feraoun ([1953] 2012), and Mouloud Mammeri (1958), Algerian men become disillusioned with the promise of French democracy after migrating to Paris. Pushed into exile to settle debts or to extricate their family from abject poverty, they come to the motherland full of hope only to be confined to the overcrowded slums of Gennevilliers and Nanterre or the decrepit basements, dorms, and hotel rooms of La Goutte d’Or where they contract diseases, experience hunger, and endure racist hostility. Their stay in Paris accelerates their political awareness about their colonial exclusion and prompts their return home.
- 4 Baldwin confided that Wright was “a road block in my road. . . . He had been an idol; and idols are created to be destroyed” (“Alas, Poor Richard,” Baldwin 1985, 277).
- 5 I am grateful to Alex Pettit for bringing this to my attention.
- 6 Thomas Borstelmann (2001, 269) notes that in 1960, editors of the *Crisis* would assert that “problems of race prejudice and discrimination are worldwide. And so is the rebellion against these twin evils.”
- 7 See Cruse and Lloren (2007), O’Dell (1967), Fuller (1971), and Lamar (2006).
- 8 Smith does not engage with other aspects of the Algerian war such as the discourse on assimilation or the use of violence dealt with in the Franco-phone writings of Kateb Yacine, Mohamed Dib, Frantz Fanon, or Mouloud Feraoun, or with the French anticolonial discourse of Henri Alleg or Jean-Paul Sartre.
- 9 I am referring here specifically to Tyler Stovall’s excellent article “The Fire This Time: Black American Expatriates and the Algerian War” (Stovall 2000) and Ewa Barbara Luczak’s perceptive book chapter “From Enchantment to Criticism of Colonial France: James Baldwin’s ‘This Morning, This Evening, So Soon’ and William Gardner Smith’s *The Stone Face*” in Luczak 2010 (27–70).

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