

PROJECT PAPERS

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WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT PARIS

They often begin by saying, "Paris! How I wish I were there!"
Someone said, "Paris is where good Americans go when they die."
"Pit pat, pit pit patter" say the raindrops
Falling on Paris in Apollinaire's poem "La Pluie."
"I was so happy in Paris," I said. "It was like
Loving somebody. The first three times I left there, I cried."
"I don't like Paris," say some. And others, "Paris is getting nice again."
"If you don't meet anyone but concierges and waiters,
How can you like any place?" Another says, "The French do not have friends,
They have relatives." A Frenchman says, "Le français n'est pas intelligent,
Il est rapide." "Paris is ruined," say certain, all the time.
"Paris was wonderful between the wars." "Old Paris is no more."
Said Baudelaire. The form of a city
Changes more quickly, alas! than a mortal's heart!"
"Paris! Like the dial of a clock!" cried one. And another,
"Give me the bottle of whiskey and I'll go with you to Paris!"
It is said: "Paris in the spring!"

One day the girls were clustered on the street corner
And the boys were moving toward them with their eyes
The automobiles sped past and let this happen.

It is not like the primitive joys
Of Africa to be be-spattered by perfumes
And breast culture in the midst of a tramway crossing
Of gulfs, gulches, and wild cliffs of every imaginable costume.

"Come into the telephone kiosk with me,"
Said the French mother to the blue-shorts-clad boy.
"I am your son," he gallantly whispered,
"And I shall do as you say." Later the mother's breasts popped open
To her lover, on the Avenue Marc Chalfont. The boy played with an owl.
Three years later he entered the Lycée Fromentin

From which we see him carrying a yellow notebook now
On his way home to the rue Descaligues, where his little family,
Still together, despite his mother's fooling
Around, has a second-floor apartment full of charm—.
Its old but attractive furniture welcomes the boy
Who flings himself into an ancient armchair's arms.

No longer does one walk up the lambic street
To fire the bathwater there, an elegant freak,
For the bathtub industry has conquered this city of dreams.

Lovers found ways to clown around elsewhere.
Earlier, the combination of obligatory openness
With old-fashionedness, gave thrills of an erotic hide-and-seek
With comfortableness no longer to be found, even considered.

My Paris was not your Paris
And your Paris was not mine
We both sat down on the quick white Valentine
Of the torsoed curb that makes December Alpine.

The sun shines. Paris must be earning a living.
I take myself out with my walk. Then my walk leaves me
And I realize that the sun is shining on me.

The cool men of Paris move back and forth
From woman to woman, table to table, word to word
The warmer men are confused
But feel superior to the cool ones who feel
Superior to them. A wind blows
The shutters open, till there is a certain degree of shine.

"Ah, you are a poet!" said the waiter
At Da Rotonde, "and I,
I have the name of a poet Francis Jammes!"
"How did this come about?" I said
When he came back, with his napkin
Like a white flag. "My father just
Gave it to me." "He liked Jammes's
Poetry?" "No, I don't
Think he'd read it. Neither have I...
It's true, I have a name that is quite well-known!"

In Paris I was never mute.

"I was once a cab driver in Beirut,"
Someone said to me. And, "I am a member of the Institute."

The social life, you say, is too limited in Paris.
Also, "Paris is a small town, unlike New York,"
"You can no longer find any courtesy in Paris." "People have again become courteous
in Paris."

"Only an American and a sentimental fool would write this way about Paris—
Places don't really mean anything any more." Paris, it is
A beautiful woman!" "Paris, it is a giant's hip bone."

"Paris is the center of a maze
Whose entrance is in Rome." "I should never have told you about Paris.
Now you will come here and ruin it for me."

"I wish that I had grown up in Paris." "You know nothing of Paris."

"Henry James met Turgenev in Paris."

"The best thing in life is to be young and in Paris."

"I have never been so lonely as I've been in Paris."

"Dogs are allowed in restaurants in Paris." "Paris is ruined." "On Christmas Eve in Paris
Everyone stays up until dawn." "You can have chocolate in the morning instead of
coffee. I never want to leave."

"Paris is the largest Arab city in the world."