

Expatriate Literature and American Culture:

The Influence of Place in Literature

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**Introduction:**

Expatriation has been a subject of debate throughout the entirety of the United States' history. The meaning of "expatriate" continues to change as more and more Americans live abroad. According to the United States government, to be considered an expatriate one must voluntarily renounce one's nationality and allegiance; however, the cultural meaning of the word has a less defined stance, including anyone voluntarily living overseas. The progression of this term is largely influenced by ever-changing American culture. Certain culturally relevant expatriates, such as the members of the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation, composed literary works, now considered to be American classics, while abroad. Both of these generations have greatly influenced the United States' literary realm in addition to shifting American culture. Examining the literature of these two expatriate movements will show how place is represented in their writings and how said place has come to change withstanding American culture.

The Lost Generation is a term created to describe the generation that was uprooted, both physically and mentally, by World War I. The term was popularized by Ernest Hemingway, and though that entire generation was

“lost,” it is often associated with the expatriate writers who congregated outside of the United States. The term “Beat Generation” was coined to address those who were tired and beaten down by the fearful society that followed World War II. The Beats came together as an anti-conformist group and predictably became social outcasts. The influence of the literature from both generations can be seen across the nation, as many works are studied in schools today, not to mention inspiring other art forms, including music, film, and television. The perceived freedom of creativity of the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation resonates with people presently, having a relevant cultural impact. Thus, this research is applicable to a variety of fields, including geography, psychology, and anthropology, as a nation must understand why its citizens are embracing expatriation and the impact that has upon a nation’s culture.

It is also important to recognize that both generations stemmed from world wars. The Lost Generation formed after World War I; it was comprised of those who could not readjust in the post-war United States of America. These writers went abroad to seek what they could not find in the United States: a way to cope. Disillusioned with American society, the Lost Generation took refuge in a variety of places around the world. The Beat

Generation arose after World War II for similar reasons. World War II was an intense, traumatic world event. It was even more brutal than World War I and many more people died. World War II was then followed by Cold War tensions and atomic bomb scares. Expatriates from both generations wrote as a means of understanding the world around them. Their literature reflects not only their personal sentiments, but also the overall feeling of the time. It demonstrates how ordinary people dealt with these post-World War periods. Further, the literature of both generations contradicts a major component of American culture: American ethnocentrism. Many Americans believe the United States to be culturally superior to the rest of the world. However, the time each generation spent overseas demonstrates that one does not need to be in the United States to be successful. Expatriates illustrate how other places and cultures can prove more fruitful than American culture. Many of these “expatriates,” however, did not remain abroad forever. Several from both the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation went overseas, came back to the United States, and wrote some of their most highly praised work (e.g. F. Scott Fitzgerald and *The Great Gatsby*). Despite some being on American soil, the places these writers

experienced outside of the United States translates through their literature into a timeless, essential perspective.

### **Cultural Diffusion and the United States**

Migration is the physical movement of humans, as individuals or as groups, from one place to another. People migrate daily; an opportunity in a new place can outweigh the promise of a current place. Inevitably, migration leads to a social and cultural exchange between differing populations. The cultural phenomenon that occurs via migration has transformed into a concept geographers refer to as cultural migration. The “new generation of migration scholars in geography and anthropology...view migration as a social and cultural process...that transforms space and place,” (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan, 193). As technology advances, migration becomes more accessible, making it easier to make cultural exchanges via cultural diffusion. Cultural diffusion refers to the spreading of elements of culture from one place to a broader area (Domosh, Jordan-Bychkov, Neumann, Price, 8). Though cultural migration is a relatively new geographic theory, the practice is not. Regarding “migration as culturally influenced further facilitates a consideration of

migration having multidimensional causes; some causes are found on a more direct level while causes on a deeper stratum are less identifiable,” (Hedberg and Kepsu, 68). People do not simply cease to practice the cultural traditions to which they are accustomed; people acclimate and create a cultural hybrid, purposefully adopting certain aspects of the new culture of which he or she is now a part. Migrants are considered “part of a traveling culture, who, as such, are always straddling worlds, always negotiating shifting frames of reference, always facing new possibilities and constraints, and always grappling with new subject positions,” (Gidwani, 193).

The influence of globalization, notably within geography and other related social-sciences, “makes it abundantly clear that global modernity has been an uneven and iniquitous phenomenon, marked by simultaneous processes of time-space compressions and expansion at various scales, with the result that some cities, regions, and countries have become increasingly interlinked in terms of material and cultural flows, whereas other have become increasingly dissociated and marginalized,” (Gidwani, 186). Within geography, the concept of cultural diffusion can help demonstrate the influence of American expatriate literature on the United States’ culture. It

can be rendered through a type of diffusion known as independent invention. Independent invention refers to a “cultural innovation that is developed in two or more locations by individuals or groups working independently,” (Domosh, 9). This cultural shift is the result of the needs of the specific population at the time; it is reactionary. Many cultural geographers have started to regard culture as a “product of the whole process of living which crucially includes the process by which subordinate groups contest dominant forms of consciousness. Although there is a dominant culture which represses and manipulates ideas, it is not all powerful. There is room for a variable process of dominance and resistance,” (Cresswell, 250). Through this lens, the post-World War societies of the Lost and Beat generations came to fruition. The individual expatriates left the United States because they were disillusioned, and subsequently formed groups as they traveled to places such as Paris, France and Tangiers, Morocco. The latest developments in cultural geography allow for in depth analyses of various “geography/literature perspective[s]. The result has been some innovative studies of the role of literature in the contestation over the meanings of places and geographical themes,” (Cresswell, 253). The writers of both generations expatriated as a reaction

to post-World War strife within the United States. Traveling abroad gave them the opportunity to generate a new type of culture not easily found in the United States at the time. The writers reflected the new cultural experiences they had been looking for within their literature; as these literary works became available within the United States, other Americans were able to read and assess their own experiences in a post-war society. The United States' expatriate groups are hailed as a culturally influential generation of individuals, i.e. the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation.

### **Expatriation and the United States**

In order to understand the influence of the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation, it must be established that expatriation is not coterminous with migration. According to the United States Government via the Survey of the Law of Expatriation, "expatriation is the voluntary renunciation or abandonment of nationality and allegiance," (Yoo). However, this term is not always seen in black and white. Nancy L. Green's article "Expatriation, Expatriates, and Expats: The American Transformation of a Concept" discusses three common interpretations of the term "expatriation." Expatriation, "the loss of citizenship, is sometimes used as coterminous



with emigration, the physical change of domicile,” (Green, 308). While there is correlation, there is no causation between the two. Expatriation’s meaning depends on a few other variables, such as “who is initiating the act, state or individual, and whether or not it is voluntary,” (Green, 308). The most obvious sign of progress for the term, however, is the change made in the New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, in which it now lists “voluntary leave-taking” as expatriation’s definition before “exiled.” This is one of many examples of how the understanding of expatriation has changed over time.

Expatriation was originally viewed as an inclusive concept, outsiders coming to the United States. Though one of the founding principles of the United States was the right to leave, many still adhered to the policy of everlasting allegiance (Yoo). It was not until 1868 that Congress proclaimed that “the right of expatriation is a natural and inherent right of all people, indispensable to the enjoyment of the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” (Yoo). Still, true change did not come until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Expatriates transformed; they were no longer just those coming to the United States, they were also Americans emigrating (Green, 310). This notion was difficult for the majority of United States’ society to accept. It

was not even until 1967 that the Supreme Court ruled the United States “may not deprive a person ‘born or naturalized in the United States’ of his U.S. citizenship ‘unless he voluntarily relinquishes it,’” (Yoo).

Presently, for the government to recognize a renunciation of citizenship a person must fulfill three criteria. First, “the person must take one of the statutorily enumerated acts of expatriation, such as ‘obtaining naturalization in’ or ‘taking an oath or making an affirmation or other formal declaration of allegiance to a foreign state’ after reaching the age of 18,” (Yoo). Second, the renunciation must be voluntary. Third, the person must relinquish U.S. nationality intentionally. It is also important to recognize that citizenship in regards to expatriation does not remain a simple domestic matter. It involves “international relations in regard to not only the government’s responsibility for its citizens abroad but also the ways in which immigration and emigration necessarily implied treaties to respect one another’s nationals,” (Green, 317). As expatriation has become more accepted, countries have reconsidered “taking away citizenship from those who have wandered abroad” and are “increasingly seeking to maintain ties with their absent nationals,” (Green, 326). As the term “expatriate” has developed culturally, it usually evokes images of the “Lost

Generation,” the American writers living in Paris during the 1920s. These expatriates, however, were ones without expatriation; thus, shifting the understanding of expatriation “as a legal category of citizenship loss and the expatriate as simply a citizen abroad,” (Green, 320).

### **The Lost Generation**

The cultural influence of American expatriates can be measured through their literature. Place, as depicted in the expatriate literature of the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation, is very influential within American culture. These writers brought aspects of international cultures into their writings, introducing customs and alternative ways of thinking to the American public. Most of this global influence came from Europe. Europe was viewed as “the Mecca of culture; in order to live the painter’s life, the writer’s life, the far-flung devotee yearned to go and become, there...it was Europe that beckoned, Europe that counted,” (Gordimer, 92).

The expatriates of the Lost Generation created a cultural, literary community specifically in Paris following the end of World War I. Many of the expatriates expressed disappointment with the “standardization and mediocrity of American Modernity,” (Green, 321); those who had fought in

the war could not readjust to post-war society in the United States. Doctor Leslie Petty, a professor at Rhodes University in Memphis, Tennessee, explained in an interview that expatriates left the United States because:

“They were searching. This is a kind of standard narrative about modernism; there was so much disaffection and disillusion after the First World War...Hemingway in particular, and Stein, all of them, wanted a place where they felt free to create and experiment. And all the values that [the United States] had claimed to be about, honor and patriotism and fairness...just seemed to kind of go out the window after the First World War and it seemed very restricting and puritan and not much else to the expatriate writers, so...they felt alienated from [the United States] and also wanted to have the freedoms they associated with Paris, especially, and France and Europe in general,” (Petty, personal communication).

These sentiments led to the creation of the Lost Generation. Joseph H. McMahon writes in “City for Expatriates” that Paris provided “American writers...a subject matter denied them by their own country; Paris solved the problems of alienation which had forced a generation of American

writers to leave these shores,” (McMahon, 144). Paris was also appealing because:

“It was the hotbed of avant-garde art and music and literature and it was this kind of ground zero for creativity...not only did the expatriates in the Lost Generation contribute to that, but they also were really drawn to that. Paris after the war became shorthand for that kind of energy. When I think about Spain in Hemingway’s writing, [I think about] the very old culture as opposed to the super newness of America that is manifested in the bullfighting, that ancient tradition that he tries to make sense of. There is something really attractive about that ancientness, that oldness, about European culture,” (Petty, personal communication).

While Paris did provide the creative background the expatriate writers had searched for, that was not the sole reason for relocating. John W. Aldridge, author of *After the Lost Generation*, surmises that the expatriate’s idea of exile was much “like the idea of the religion of art, [it] grew out of their need to sustain the emotions which the war had aroused in them, to keep up the incessant movement, the incessant search for

excitement, and to find another faith to replace the one they had lost in the war,” (Aldridge, 12). They wanted to escape their problems, but even more so, they needed “to find a context in which to live tolerably with them, and, where possible, to solve them,” (McMahon, 148). Leaving the United States gave expatriates an insider yet outsider perspective that they needed to see America clearly and give America back to itself through literature from that outside perspective; it was a way for them to shed their immersion in strictly American culture. There was an entire generation of people that felt disillusioned after World War I, but the Lost Generation produced figures that embodied this sentiment and expressed so through their literature, specifically Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and T.S. Eliot.

Ernest Hemingway’s roots reside in Oak Park, Illinois, just outside of Chicago. In 1918, still only a teenager, Hemingway joined the Red Cross and traveled to Italy as an ambulance driver during the First World War. He was wounded during the war, giving Hemingway his first shock of reality, a feeling that stuck with him and helped shape his style of writing: “This attitude, originating in a youthful and romantic pessimism induced by Hemingway’s war experience, has deepened and hardened in him,”

(Adams, 88). Though he was just a boy when he left, Hemingway returned to the United States with the maturity of a man. Home did not provide the comfort it once had; thus, in 1921, Hemingway left for Europe, stopping in Rome but ultimately settling in Paris, a city which, as previously stated, offered a creative freedom attractive to many post-war artisans. For Hemingway, Paris marked the beginning of “the feverish and disillusioned 1920’s” where he entered “with baggage of a different kind than that brought by the intellectuals and the bohemians who were his contemporary writers: he had acquired something of a personal tradition that was less troublesome than an education and more concrete than a mood,” (Daiches, 175-176).

This attitude stemming from his war experience created a budding callousness, as Hemingway was keenly aware of his own suffering and its manifestation within his literature. Hemingway brought aspects of realism to his work, and this realism “depend[ed] upon devices familiar to realism since it first emerged into self-consciousness: the employment of everyday life, illustrated by telling detail; the depiction of un-heroic characters, presented without varnish or apology,” (Lovett, 614). Mr. Vincent Passaro, a professor at Adelphi University located in Garden City, New York,

described Hemingway's style slightly differently in an interview, "...and the river and the water is cold and we came back and it was good, yadda yadda, Mount Kilimanjaro and chasing the lions..." (Passaro, personal communication). Hemingway wrote very bluntly and it resonated with the American people; as "it was not that Hemingway was incapable of abstract thought but that, like Americans generally, he saw little need for it. Facts, and conclusions rapidly drawn from them, were the pragmatic bread-and-butter upon which he and the American people thrived," (Gurko, 372). Despite the fact that he was considered an expatriate of his time, Hemingway managed to connect with the American public through his literature: "Hating and fearing history has always been an American disease...for all of Hemingway's major characters, history is the arena of defeat, and their styles of being and their forms of self-expression are ways of escaping its central horror," (McConnell, 169). His expatriate persona can be seen as "not only as part of the essential literature of the twentieth century but also a model produced by the twentieth century—the violent and bloody assembly line of our time, during which we have invented so much, learned so much without learning how to live together and find that place in ourselves which would make this possible," (Gordimer, 99).



Perhaps the most demonstrative of the grapple with post-war society and expatriation is displayed in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, his first important novel. This novel was appealing to many people because they related, whether in a temporary fashion or not, to the feelings of the characters, which were described "in a manner that had freshness, a new unadorned style of narrative, a new quality of dialogue. The trick of understatement, the playing-down of emotion, the avoidance of anything subjective in the treatment—all gave the impression, which was partly illusion, of a transparent honesty and of a flight from sentimentality which answered a need created by the mood of disillusionment," (Adams, 92). As the story develops, it becomes clear that:

"The inevitable actuality of life develops into a more clearly pessimistic attitude... [Hemingway was] looking at the post-war world with eyes that had accepted the violence and the color of the frontier and the war, he could not but find something lacking. And because his attitude has never been simply pragmatic, because he never accepted existence simply as existence but always sought what had edge and sharpness to emphasize its actuality, Hemingway came to

realize very acutely the bitterness of belonging to the ‘lost generation,’” (Daiches, 178).

Hemingway, however, turned his self-awareness into tangible significance as he “pursued women and adventure, with an eye on his pocketbook. Because it all paid off for him, whatever it is he did he glamorized and made money on,” (Passaro, personal communication). Ultimately, it was Hemingway’s literary voice that spoke to “the disillusionment which took hold of Hemingway’s generation—the generation which Gertrude Stein describe as lost—[was] more consistently and consciously set forth in his work than in that of any of his contemporaries,” (Adams, 89).

Gertrude Stein was a very important and interesting expatriate. Stein, a native to Oakland, California, was referring to her birthplace when she famously stated, “there is no there, there.” She moved to Paris in 1903, “though not compelled for political reasons to displace herself, [she] had the advantage of remaining uncommitted to cliques, parties, and ideological groups...Stein had freed herself from any type of authority and could create her own model. Writing became the justification of her existence. Psychologically, it afforded a means to cover anxiety;

intellectually, it became a quest for knowing rather than knowledge,” (Hubert, 81). She lived in Paris for nearly forty years before coming back to the United States to do a book tour. Stein is an fascinating expatriate because while Hemingway was appreciated by a wide audience, Stein was considered high-brow culture within America, despite being widely read in Europe, notably France. She never wrote anything that “had any presence in the American public until she wrote the biography of Alice B. Toklas. Alice Toklas was her lover, partner; they lived together for many, many years...they came back because that book was a best seller so Gertrude Stein hit the road and was making a lot of appearances and so she ended up back [in the United States],” (Passaro, personal communication). Though she did come back, Stein ultimately found her way back to France.

Throughout Stein’s life, she “wrote from a position of self-styled exile...Stein in Paris created places apart from their cultures to be the scenes of their thinking and writing. But [she was] never alienated from [her] culture. Indeed [her] exile empowered [her] to write in a distinctively personal and original American idiom. [She] felt that [she] could better represent [the American public] and be a part of us by living in places apart,” (Parke, 558). Clearly, through Stein’s literature, she created a

cultural link between the United States and the rest of the world by utilizing her passion for culture as a Europhile, especially a Francophile, while voicing a balanced view of the United States. Stein's writing style was also unique, including use of constant repetition; her "distinctive intelligence combines aesthetic, psychological, and ethical concerns in, at one and the same time, original and typically American and democratic ways," (Parke, 555). Stein's literary success stems greatly from her emphasis upon two major, ironic points:

"Her need for separation, even for a form of exile of dissociation from the norms of her culture; and also her similarity to us all and the pleasure and inspiration that she takes from her membership in this collective...Stein... is part patriot and part expatriate. Throughout her career she made a point of being both a part of and apart from her fellow Americans. And she made this point in order to be able simultaneously to represent and to communicate with us honestly and to maintain her independence," (Parke, 555-556).

Her literary independence was solidified by creating a modern style that reflected structural characteristics inherent in American writing; she found a balance between being the self and being the other.

Ezra Pound, another member of the Lost Generation, became a very influential poet, notably as one of the originators of Imagism, a movement focused on precision of language and musical phrasing while rejecting sentimentality. This movement came to fruition through Pound's international experiences, as "there never was a poet more susceptible to influence, more sensitive to cadences, to the subtle flavors and flying gestures of words; never one who has so absorbed into his system three diverse literatures: of the langue d'Oc, of old China, of Augustan Rome, [than Pound]," (Sinclair, 660). Pound spent time developing his literary craft throughout Europe, including England, France, and, most notably, Italy. Despite spending an extended amount of time in Europe, the most influential culture upon his writing was Chinese poetry: "it has made for clearness, for vividness and precision, for concentration, for the more and more perfect realization of his ideal, the finding of his ultimate self," (Sinclair, 663).

Pound was also disillusioned. Following the end of the World War I, Pound was enraged by the amount of lives lost for what he believed was international capitalism. He separated himself from the United States, a heavily capitalist nation, and searched worldwide for “fulfillment of his deepest poetical needs” which he discovered in places like China, southern France, and northern Italy:

“Another country, another kingdom...here was an ancient, established civilization, preserved in poetry of local realism, touched with sadness, aware of mortality, but never overcome with melancholy. Here was poetry of live, precise detail, mingling a love of nature with a love of man. And best of all, the materials were free for him to recreate within the matrix of his own developed craft...the void was suddenly filled with the riches of an entire civilization, ready to be transmitted by his highly prepared and adaptable muse,” (Martz, 39).

Place and the coinciding local cultures were his muses, and he could encounter a variety at his will, going wherever galvanized his imagination most at the time. Ultimately, Pound found a place for himself in Italy, joining the fascist movement and even sympathizing with Hitler. Pound is a

very interesting example within this American expatriate community because, while other expatriate writers used their expatriatism and literature to develop and integrate global culture into the United States, Pound actively criticized the United States and the president at that time, Franklin D. Roosevelt. He was arrested, though not tried, for treason and maintained his American citizenship despite this.

*The Cantos* is perhaps Pound's most noted work, an epic poem that he wrote from 1915-1962 in which he includes Chinese character symbols as well as integrates various European languages. *The Cantos* consists of one hundred-twenty smaller poems, the content of which is not consistent; rather, it is a collaboration of stories, ideas, musings, and memories. In the most controversial section of *The Cantos*, *The Pisan Cantos*, Pound strings together memories mainly focused upon the time he spent with the other expatriate writers and artists in London and Paris. *The Pisan Cantos* was a controversial piece of literature as it was written after Pound's mental breakdown then awarded the Bollingen Prize for literature; many contested this decision as Pound was considered an American traitor and was also said to be crazy. Despite the controversy *The Pisan Cantos* caused, however, it is Pound's highest regarded work. *The Cantos* as a whole

influenced subsequent generations; Pound's structure and "theory of poetry would supply the outlines for such a map of the aesthetic terrain insofar as poetry and the language of literature generally are concerned," (Schiralli, 57).

F. Scott Fitzgerald is often referred to as the "golden boy" of the nineteen-twenties—of all the writers included in the Lost Generation, Fitzgerald's literature served as the greatest social commentary upon American culture. Fitzgerald's American roots are split between the Midwest and New York; he was born in Saint Paul, Minnesota, he spent his earlier years growing up in Buffalo, New York, though he returned to Minnesota as he developed into a young man. It was Fitzgerald's travels to Europe, and meeting the other expatriate members of the Lost Generation, that began to chronicle the post-war era of the "Jazz Age" which inspired his characters of "the flapper and her boyfriends, the psychiatrist of the unhappy persons who populate his more famous novels as they were affected by the cynical effluvium backwashed by the first World War," (Gurko, 372). World War I caused a dramatic shift in American culture, as the aftermath of disillusion created a great many to separate from their emotions and find "refuge...only in the physical satisfactions, in eating,



drinking, making love, in the pursuit of action for action's sake," (Adams, 89).

Fitzgerald, having the combined experiences of a split upbringing between the Midwest and New York and his time as an adult in Europe, had the ability to examine the idea of the "American Dream" in multiple contexts:

"No writer has caught so well as Fitzgerald the Success dream of modern Western society—we may no longer call it merely 'American'...The popular modern dream of Success...is envisaged in...limitless opportunity instead of a vocation; sudden and fantastic riches instead of acceptance by a class; and, eventually, nemesis in the form of a psychiatrist and Alcoholics Anonymous. Because opportunity is to such a great extent identified with luck there is an extraordinary vagueness about the Success dream. It carries with it scarcely any obligations with regard to morals, manners and education, for it means largely access to unlimited wealth, and the license...to exhibit it vulgarly," (Elkin, 95).

This new version of the dream, which was beginning to be pursued on an international level, creates a desire to be a part of the glittering American

leisure class. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* famously chronicles this longing, contrasting the desire for lavish wealth to the desire for human connection on a non-superficial level. Both desires stem from World War I, but *The Great Gatsby* uses its main character, Jay Gatsby, to demonstrate that riches, something envied by those whom attend his parties, do not replace the human desire for the intangible, for love, comfort, and understanding, things that cannot be purchased. Gatsby uses his wealth to throw lavish parties, surrounding himself with people while managing to remain completely alone.

Fitzgerald sets *The Great Gatsby* following the end of World War I and uses Gatsby as a tool to express his own disillusionment with post-war culture and the effect it had upon American society. The war, which may have deemed an "ideal opportunity for American men to reestablish their masculinity," quickly let reality set in for the soldiers: "instead of becoming heroes, soldiers often found themselves reduced to anonymous bodies in trenches, where life and death seemed the results of dumb luck rather than bravery, skills, or cunning," (Joseph, 65). With this newfound revelation, many Americans hid their grief in various forms of pleasure: material items, physical pleasure, alcohol, parties...anything to allow the mind to

escape reality, if even for a moment. The difference between the (privileged) American public and the Lost Generation is that those within the Lost Generation had the depth to recognize the source of their disillusionment and the ability to put it in perspective and manage their distress creatively through literature.

T.S. Eliot, of all the American expatriates of the Lost Generation, was one of the few who actually acquired international citizenship in a legal format, naturalizing himself in the United Kingdom. He first went there when World War I broke out, deciding to continue his education at Oxford. Before permanently residing in the United Kingdom, however, Eliot spent time traveling and studying within Europe. His New England upbringing and Harvard education inspired Eliot to pursue further knowledge in a variety of art forms, ultimately beginning his European experience in Paris. Eliot traveled to Paris because it “was the most magnificent and extensive repository of great art works of the past, from the ancient Greeks to the nineteenth century, while at the same time serving as the acknowledged hotbed for a host of rapidly developing and shockingly innovative new art movements that were to change the art world forever,” (Hargrove, 89). Eliot became a part of that movement, taking the “opportunity very

seriously to immerse himself in the art and culture of Paris in particular and Europe in general,” (Hargrove, 89).

Eliot’s time abroad influenced him through exposure to a wide array of great works of art, from paintings to novels, of past and present, inspiring a life-long interest in and knowledge of art. In Paris, Eliot was able to enrich his earlier experiences with ancient Greek and Roman art in addition to Florentine painting. Eliot’s discovery of Manet, Monet, and Japanese art and language had a profound impact upon him and his literary work; he was greatly impacted by the availability of great museums, which housed some of the world’s most famous pieces of art. Eliot alludes to this art within his poems, notably the two versions of Da Vinci’s *Madonna of the Rocks* in *The Waste Land*. When *The Waste Land* first emerged into the literary realm, it

“was revolutionary in its technical innovations, its rejection of traditional stanza form, meter, rhyme, and linear structure, and its daring content with its graphic descriptions of sexual relationships, including infidelity, prostitution, and abortion, its portrayal of the modern metropolis and recent technology, and its frank criticism of

excessive materialism...it was 'a formidable piece of anti-establishment writing' in its time," (Hargrove, 105).

Eliot's experiences within Europe allowed him to see the past, present, and future of cultural movements, as he was very involved and influenced by contemporary avant-garde works exhibited in Paris. Eliot was introduced to such new movements as fauvism, futurism, and analytical cubism (Hargrove, 122). This knowledge was important for Eliot to learn because he would continue to be involved in and knowledgeable of the movements of synthetic cubism, dada, vorticism, and surrealism that followed in quick succession. These various movements influenced Eliot's poetry in terms of their principles, themes, and techniques. Further, it is important to note the influence Indian philosophy has upon his work: "he specifically recalls the Buddha's Fire Sermon in the third section of *The Waste Land* and consciously brings the Buddha and St. Augustine together at the very core of the poem; he alludes pointedly to the lotus, a symbol of the ultimate reality in Hindu-Buddhist thought, in *Burnt Norton*; he epitomizes the teachings of Krishna in the third poem of *The Dry Salvages*," (Sri, 31).

Eliot spent the rest of his life in England, never returning to the United States. Despite the full immersion into British culture, Eliot is considered to be fundamentally an American poet: “it’s in his vernacular, it’s in his spiritual point of view...it is attached to a very New England character,” (Passaro, personal communication). However, what ultimately gives Eliot’s poetry and drama “an enduring beauty and a penetrating power is the fact that he has perceived the perennial and most ancient truth of humanity and invoked that which is universal and eternal, beyond man-made boundaries of the East and the West,” (Sri, 47). Eliot integrated aspects of European and Asian culture into his writing, stirring his home country and making him an important member of the Lost Generation.

### **The Beat Generation**

Much of the work produced by the Lost Generation has been considered significant by literary critics and the American public for quite some time, inspiring generations; this inspiration extended beyond creativity. There is “a common strand...through the comments of twentieth century American writers when they explain why they felt compelled to become expatriates... life in the United States...had become intolerable,”

(McMahon, 145). Much like how the Lost Generation was established after World War I, the new counter-culture crowd, the Beats, arose after World War II:

“A new explosion of historical writing in the 1960s and 1970s turned the focus to the 1920s writers, helping to reinvigorate a fascination with the concept of expatriation...the 1920s Americans in Paris and their 1950s cousins became the center of attention of a new generation of historians, themselves critical of American politics or culture and captivated anew by the stories of those who had left the United States in the interwar years or after World War II,” (Green, 321).

The Beat Generation mirrors the Lost Generation in a number of ways. Both are groups of American writers, both object to the American culture of their time, and both groups shared a large sense of wanderlust. The Beat Generation, with all its similar characteristics to the Lost Generation, took on the idea of expatriation for themselves. By this time, the “image [of an expatriate] was often far from flattering...into the 1960s, ‘expatriate’ was still frequently a pejorative term...those who left the United States during

the Vietnam War era as draft evaders or conscientious objectors came in for their share of opprobrium...and the critical implication of the term was summed up by the frequent misspelling: ‘expatriot,’” (Green, 321). The Beat Generation’s work was certainly influenced by the members of the Lost Generation, namely Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, and Ezra Pound. Carl Solomon, a writer amongst the Beats, is even described by James Campbell, author of *This is the Beat Generation*, as being “raised in Brooklyn but...he grew up intellectually in Paris,” (Campbell, 97).

The Beat Generation, however, was not as fixated on one single place as the Lost Generation was with Paris, though Lost Generation members did make numerous excursions elsewhere. The Beats traveled and experienced a number of cultures, bringing that influence back to the United States as well as helping influence these various cultures. As Harvey Pekar notes in his graphic novel, *The Beats, A Graphic History*, “Allen Ginsberg was crowned King of May in Prague, anticipating a peaceful, blue-jeans-clad 1968 uprising against Russian occupation. Across parts of Latin America, Africa, and Asia as well as Europe, the Beat writers probably have had more resonance with poets, novelists, social rebels and hipsters than in the United States,” (Pekar, vii). The Beats spent a fair amount of time in



Mexico, as William S. Burroughs “escaped to Mexico, and [shook-off] of his junk habit, [which] had freed [him] to work on his book,” (Campbell, 102). The Beats transformed Mexico into “a respite,” as Matt Theado calls it in “Beat Generation Literary Criticism,” a “convenient getaway where rooms, wine, and sex could be had cheaply,” (Theado, 759).

The “inner circle” of the Beat Generation originated in New York City; however, more importantly, the Beat Generation came from a particular time and place—post-war North America. American culture had transformed with the events of early to mid-twentieth century: following World War I, the United States underwent a great economic depression, which was soon followed by World War II. The Beat Generation inherited a world in transition (Cresswell, 253). Throughout the nineteen-forties and fifties, much of American culture still focused upon the nuclear family, upholding religion and American family values. The United States became involved in the Cold War, and mass society did not question the role the United States played within the international sphere. This is the context in which the Beat Generation arose: “they were faced with great change, an uprooting of family relationships, community and sense of place in a world where the young were sacrificed for a nation in which they were losing

faith. It was in this context that Beats from Kerouac to Dylan formed a Beat Generation differs from the Lost Generation in this way; the Beat Generation is more of a public, its members “linked by a common attitude and consumption of the same articles; but they need not know each other and are not organized nor act together,” (Haag, 23). This counter-culture was perpetuated and solidified by the literature of Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs.

Jack Kerouac was born in Lowell, Massachusetts to French-Canadian parents, his multicultural heritage predisposing him to a cross-cultural lifestyle, as he related as both a French-Canadian and as an American. As a boy, Kerouac showed promise in the sport of football, landing him a spot on the team at Columbia University. Kerouac’s decision to attend Columbia University is significant, as New York City set the stage for the beginning of his life as a member of the Beats. Kerouac, who ultimately left the university, remained in New York City having united with Allen Ginsberg, Neal Cassady, and William S. Burroughs, among others:

“The beat movement began with the meeting of Kerouac, Burroughs, and Ginsberg in New York in 1944, coursed its way through the San

Francisco poetry renaissance of the 1950s, and spent itself sometime in the early 1960s. It was led by three main figures—a working-class French-Canadian Catholic from Lowell, Massachusetts (Kerouac), a middle-class Russian-American Jew from Paterson, New Jersey (Ginsberg), and an upper-class Anglo-American Protestant from St. Louis (Burroughs)—and included a large supported cast of novelists, poets, and hangers-on. What united these men...was a ‘new consciousness,’” (Prothero, 208).

Kerouac would carry a notebook with him everywhere he went, transcribing all of his ideas and observations, writing letters to friends and family. Though he had been a writer throughout his life, it was not until Kerouac’s transcription of his cross-country experience that he considered it as a career. Kerouac’s most notable work, *On the Road*, chronicles the adventures of Sal (Kerouac) and Dean (Cassady) as they travel across the United States. *On the Road* is semi-autobiographical, as the characters of Sal and Dean are largely based upon Kerouac and Cassady. When *On the Road* appeared in 1957, it “signaled the emergence of a new movement in American literature, soon to be called the Beat Generation...Kerouac’s work

brought a new awareness of an intellectual counter-culture bubbling under the conservative surface of the 1950s America,” (Hopkins, 279).

*On the Road*, “with its open and honest depiction of hetero-, homo-, and bisexual activity, drug abuse, petty crime, and social deviance” began a conversation conservative mainstream United States was not ready to have, (Hopkins, 279). It was not only the content that stirred the literary world, but the style as well. Kerouac wrote *On the Road* on 180-feet of paper in the span of three weeks, allowing him to effectively exercise his stream of conscious style:

“*On the Road* takes jazz music as its central structural metaphor and Kerouac’s writing techniques move the reader across the pages at a fast pace as the central characters race across the land. This style of writing, based on the structure of jazz, plays with the traditional linear development of plots in novels,” (Cresswell, 256).

Kerouac’s stream of conscious style regularly erupts into spontaneous rifts of prose; this made finding a publisher difficult. Many did not appreciate Kerouac’s experimental style nor his sympathetic tone towards those considered outside of mainstream United States. Kerouac’s novel is very

geographic, as he uses the landscape of the United States to process the idea of mobility. *On the Road* reflects upon mobility, using the “frantic directionless mobility of the central figures...[to] represent a form of resistance to the ‘establishment’... On the other hand mobility is clearly a central theme in mainstream North American culture, at least as important to the ‘American Dream’ as small town values and apple pie,” (Cresswell, 249). Being disillusioned with American culture and society, Kerouac took many trips abroad, though mostly to Mexico. Kerouac loved Mexico because he saw Mexicans as “the true people of the Earth, those in touch with the land...He was looking for authenticity, his heroes were close to Earth,” (Plath, personal communication). Mexico offered Kerouac a respite from the consumer culture of the United States. Further, Mexico was a convenient location for Kerouac as he could travel there with relative ease and low cost, and had a place to stay: with his friend William S. Burroughs.

Burroughs had left the United States for Mexico after being arrested for the possible distribution of marijuana; however, once he left, he found that other countries, like Mexico and Morocco, offered different cultural amenities attractive to Burroughs that the United States did not have. Burroughs was attracted to places that had a “liberal climate and cheaper

prices,” (Burroughs interview by Skerls). This “liberal climate” extended to the use of drugs and homosexuality, two components of Burroughs’s life that were explored in his writing: “Given Burroughs’s view that his every novel (and every draft) are but parts of a single, continuous book, one might label his product a rhizome that branches out from and is held together by these repetition-nodes. His re-used sex, disease, and death sequences have frequently been noticed by critics,” (Hume, 112). Further, Burroughs’s writing style reflects upon the culture within the United States at the time. During the late 1940s-through the 1950s, the United States exemplified a culture of consumerism and conformity. These were also the early Cold War years, a time “marked by an unprecedented politicization of culture and by the conscription of private life in the name of national security,” (Harris, 172). This did not sit well with Burroughs (or the Beat Generation as a whole). While society feared “the bomb,” Burroughs created a new form of writing to express his sentiments regarding his place in time; he experimented with “cut ups,” combining words and phrases cut out of books, magazines, and newspapers. This style is especially apparent in *Naked Lunch*. He created collages of sorts, appearing to be nonsense but it made sense; it was “disjointed and strange” and shook up the reader as “it

mirrored the mind of a heroin user,” (Plath, personal communication).

Burroughs traveled in search of liberal climates, but also to satisfy his interest in ancient cultures; he believed the early societies within Morocco and Europe were closer to the Earth, a relationship he wished to mirror (Plath, personal communication). His travels encouraged Burroughs’s experimental writing style.

Burroughs’s geography directly translates into his writing. He has referred to himself on multiple occasions as “a map maker, a cosmonaut of inner space.” Burroughs creates futuristic sites, each of which is heavily influenced by his own experiences in developing regions, such as the Middle East and Latin America. He constructs “maze[s] of narrow streets, blind alleys, catwalks, and strange people, Burroughs’s Tangier reminds one of futuristic colonies from different planets...teeming with exotic crowds. The cacophony of voices, things, costumes of these sleazy dystopian metropolises sometimes seems to originate from the dissolved ego, from the floating timelessness of things induced by hashish... Thus, from Tangier, somehow, seems to start the flow of images that overlap in the futuristic cities of the West,” (Vrbancic, 321). It has been noted by several

critics that Burroughs places his prose geographically either in a desert, a jungle, a city, or the United States:

“Burroughs’s desert, jungle, and city all play off against each other, and one cannot discuss what the desert symbolizes for Burroughs without knowing that he links jungle lushness to female powers that dissolve, rot, or absorb the male...The city is not the metropolis of high culture but embodies the gridded spaces ruled by Control society...The desert’s drought enables freedom to flourish, because lack of water renders high density plant and human population—jungle and city—impossible,” (Hume, 126).

He uses these varied landscapes, influenced by his personal experiences in Mexico City, Tangiers, and Paris, to produce exoticism and present a less stigmatized version of these exotic places to Western society. While a Westerner may imagine the desert as arid and lifeless, Burroughs presents it as a mysterious beauty.

Of all the Beats, it was Allen Ginsberg who embraced a multicultural lifestyle the most. Ginsberg spent extensive amounts of time all over the world: Latin America (Mexico, Bolivia, Peru), Africa (Morocco, Kenya),



Europe (Netherlands, Italy, Spain, France, Greece, Czech Republic) and Asia (India, Vietnam, Japan, Cambodia). In Tangiers, “there was an Arab quarter lying mostly inside the ancient walled city, a French quarter, a Spanish quarter, and even British and American quarters outside the old town. It was a wonderful place for [Ginsberg], who enjoyed investigating exotic cultures and thoroughly exploring everywhere he visited, and he found the Arab section especially intriguing,” (Morgan, 237). India also had a profound effect upon him. Ginsberg, so disillusioned with American culture, went to India in search of connecting with ancient Buddhist culture. Buddha himself was disillusioned, detaching himself from possessions and worldly objects. Ginsburg emulated this lifestyle; he lived “thirty-five years in the East Village, shopped at thrift stores, owned one bowl, made people live more humbly. He seemed to live more authentically and truthfully; people mirrored that,” (Plath, personal communication). Ginsberg’s poetry embraced themes and content that directly opposed the image of 1950s American culture. In an interview with Jacquelin Gens, personal secretary to Ginsberg for eight years, she notes that Ginsberg wrote about sexuality (homosexuality and heterosexuality) and mind-altering drugs, challenging the conservative mass-culture at the time;

“Howl” challenged the cultural perception of the “other.” Ginsberg’s international experiences brought to the United States alternative perspectives and a “greater sense of a global community where [the United States] is not at the center but rather an interdependent part of the larger human community,” (Gens, personal communication). Through his writing, Ginsberg himself influenced various societies, including those living in India and China. India’s economy transformed by Ginsberg “recommending to a future minister of finance at a cocktail party that Americans would love the Indian clothes that they had adopted...[Further,] it is not an accident that Tiananmen Square happened after Allen Ginsberg spent six months in China teaching a course on American literature to many of the key intellectuals at the time,” (Gens, personal communication). “Howl” went on trial in 1957 for the “obscenity” that Ginsberg describes; however, during times of social unrest, the literature of those challenging societal norms will increase tenfold and pioneer the way to social change:

“On October 3, Judge Horn issued a decision and agreed with the defense in saying that ‘Howl’ was not obscene...because the poem had ‘redeeming social value.’ It was a landmark decision and set a

precedent that cleared the way for such banned books as D.H.

Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, and even William S. Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*...It was one of the first rays of hope for the country after the repressive McCarthy era," (Morgan, 250).

Ginsberg, among the rest of the Beat Generation, led the United States to develop a counter-culture movement that is now historically significant.

### **Expatriate Literature**

Place is very influential in the literature written by American expatriates. While it is clear that the various countries the expatriate writers explored changed them as individuals and even as whole generations, the extent of their influence within the United States is less apparent. It is not something that can be quantified; rather, it is observed. Following both World Wars, the United States had major cultural shifts towards consumerism; commodities and material items became the central focus of the masses. Ranging from clothing to alcohol, post-war American society embraced excess in an attempt to grapple with the horrors the wars had created then left over. Society in the United States made every attempt

to distance the pain the war had caused by focusing on the tangible rather than dealing with the root of their problems.

This behavior can even be seen within the Lost Generation; many drank and indulged in excess as a way to create distance between themselves and the reality of the war. However, what the Lost Generation was able to do that American society could not was take a look at the situation from the outside in. Going abroad enabled these writers to reconnect with post-war reality through their writing. Paris, the mainstay of the Lost Generation, provided these expatriates a format in which they could evaluate their war and post-war experiences and work through them. Consequently, the literature produced enabled the United States to do the same:

“The change in bestsellers may have been...a more general decline in belief in the American dream. A ‘strong program’ of this combination of societal reflection and production-of-culture approaches coincides with recent work in cultural sociology which suggests that during times of social upheaval, ideological production by self-aware cultural innovators will increase,” (Griswold, 460).

With the publication of such works as *The Sun Also Rises* and *This Side of Paradise*, the United States was able to embrace a similar experience to the Lost Generation, relating to the sentiments expressed within their literature and understanding their own feelings about post-war society through the 'outsider yet insider' perspective the Lost Generation provided. The geographic overlays within the literature allowed American culture to embrace itself in a new way that was able to deal with the aftermath of World War I. These "self-aware cultural innovators" brought a modernist outlook to the United States, stepping beyond tradition and the simplicity of realism and favoring discontinuity and avant-garde forms of expression.

Similarly, the Beat Generation's literature provided the United States with opportunities to escape post-World War II shock and Cold War anxiety by exploring (both physically and within their writing) various landscapes, and even mindscapes: the "...study of best-selling American novels over the 30 years following World War II shows that the best sellers' attitude toward life organized around careers in large corporations shifted from one of enthusiastic affirmation to questioning, rejection, and finally nihilism," (Griswold, 460). The Beat Generation marks the shift in American culture from modernism to post-modernism. The influences of

countries like India, Mexico, and Morocco provided the Beats with the means to step away from a culture based largely on consumerism and embrace ideas of spirituality and simplicity, reconnecting with the earth and questioning long withstanding notions of what society may dictate as correct or incorrect:

“Buddhism attracted [the beats] because it seemed to make sense of the central facts of...experience (suffering, impermanence) and to affirm...intuition that life was dreamlike and illusory. Perhaps more importantly, by locating the origin of suffering in desire, the Buddhist sutras seemed to offer a way out,” (Prothero, 217).

The Beats translated the influence of outside places into their writing, having a major impact upon American culture. Following the early stages of the Beat Generation, 1950s United States “saw the beginning of the rejection of a home-centered lifestyle by significant numbers of American men. It was this decade that was marked by the beginnings of a ‘flight from commitment’ as growing numbers of men either stayed single for longer periods of time or left their families, searching for gratification in a hedonistic lifestyle based on the growing number of consumer durables

that were starting to dominate the [United States] market,” (McDowell, 412). Without the exploration of geography outside of the United States, the Beats would not have been nearly as influential of a force. What they took from other countries (such as Buddhism or the idea of consciousness) they brought to the United States through their literature, helping transition the United States into a post-modern society; “their resistance through mobility simultaneously reflects and challenges hegemonic cultural values,” (McDowell, 413). Without the Beats, we would not have The Beatles or Bob Dylan, who helped further what the Beats were all about to an even more massive scale. Transitioning into a post-modern society included significant cultural changes within the United States, including the rise of the feminist and civil rights movements.

The effects of both the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation can be seen in present day as the United States continues to fight the longest war within its history. There has been resurgence in the subject of both the Lost and Beat Generations. This is no surprise; American culture is reverting back to these two groups because the disillusionment felt with American society following World Wars I and II directly mirrors the sentiments felt today by many Americans. The War on Terror has been

going on for over a decade now; it is no wonder that society has become reinvigorated with the idea of American expatriates. The Lost Generation and Beat Generation are presently subjects of various forms of media, including movies, television, music, and literature. Within the last two years, there have been several films released surrounding these expatriates, including *Midnight in Paris*, *Hemingway and Gellhorn*, *On the Road*, *Ginsberg*, and *Howl*. Even the advent of the rap genre of music is a reflection of these expatriate writers (more specifically in the style of the Beats); rap uses a style similar to the cut-ups of Burroughs, using a stream of conscious style and associating words to create something seemingly nonsensical but actually meaningful. As stated previously, there has already been a shift within the geography realm in terms of looking to literature as a way to convey place:

“Recently social scientists have become wary of the ways in which traditional prose assumes and maintains a modernist conception of geometric space and clock time. Geographers have begun to use language to question these modernist assumptions in much the same way Kerouac did in the nineteen-fifties. Geographers have frequently suggested that novelists provide a model for geographical writing



about place. Usually the models are regional novelists who represent a literary engagement with the traditional concerns of place, space and rootedness,” (Cresswell, 257).

The Lost Generation and the Beat Generation are two separate groups connected by a feeling of disillusionment towards American culture; however, they demonstrated and grappled with this disillusionment in dissimilar ways. The Lost Generation detached itself from the United States into Europe (with individual trips to other various world regions), completely removing themselves from United States society, geographically and culturally. The Beat Generation, conversely, delved further into society within the United States (i.e. *On the Road*) before embracing a sense of wanderlust. While both generations became more culturally diverse, they are separated by their differing places in globalization, as we are today. The United States of the 1950/60s was much more aware of the global world than that of the 1920s; in the same manner, we are much more aware of the world than those in the 1950/60s. With advancements in technology, notably the advent of the internet, new “experiences” are right at our fingertips; information is more accessible than ever, allowing an individual to simulate the experience of a new place or culture. What resonates with

people of present day United States, and even globally, is that these two generations travelled abroad and experienced new ideas and culture during a time of much more self-reliance. Achieving the outside perspective allowed them to give the United States back to itself and in doing so there has been a shift in American culture. The Lost Generation and the Beat Generation provide a context in which to understand how “literary culture is the product of historical and geographical circumstances,” (Griswold, 462). Literature is a credible tool in which geography can be understood in a different light; in combining the disciplines of geography and literature, the content can more aptly be put into context. The literature of these expatriates, ultimately, puts history and geography in perfect conjuncture.

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