

Sex and the Series: Paris, New York, and Post-National Romance

Dana Heller

*I love Paris every moment,
Every moment of the year
I love
Paris, why oh why do I love Paris?
Because my love is here.*

—Cole Porter, *I Love Paris*

This essay will examine and contrast two recent popular situation comedies, NBC's *Friends* and HBO's *Sex and the City*, as narratives that participate in the long-standing utilization of Paris as trope, or as an instrumental figure within the perennially deformed and reformed landscape of the American national imaginary. My argument is that Paris re-emerges in post-9/11 popular culture as a complex, multi-accentual figure within the imagined *mise-en-scene* of the world Americans desire. The reasons for this are to a large degree historical: in literature, cinema, television, popular music, and other forms of U.S. cultural production, from the late nineteenth century through the twentieth century and into the twenty first, Paris has remained that city where one ventures, literally and/or imaginatively, to dismember history, or to perform a disarticulation of the national subject that suggests possibilities for the interrogation of national myths and for

the articulation of possible new forms of national unity and allegiance. These forms frequently find expression in the romantic transformation of a national citizen-subject into a citizen-subject of the world, a critique of the imperialist aspirations of the nation-state that antithetically masks those same aspirations under the sign of the disillusioned American cosmopolitan abroad.

While this traditional casting of the French capitol has resulted, on one hand, in narratives of ambivalent love and attachment between Americans and the idea of Paris, more often, and perhaps more importantly for the purposes of this essay, it has resulted in Americans' ambivalent attachment to a particular idea of "love," or to a concept of romantic love derived, on one hand, from courtly Eurocentric cultural attitudes, and on the other hand, from an early American conception of monogamous, contractual love that likens the domestic ideal of heterosexual coupling to the realization of the national ideal, the formation of a "more perfect union."¹ Of course, to be a white, middle-class American in the industrialized late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries was, at least in principle, to guard oneself against extravagant notions of romantic love, to view sensuality with cautious distrust, and sexual passion—in particular the sexual passions of women, African Americans, immigrants, and the poor—with disavowal, fear, and loathing. The free-thinking city of Paris was believed to provide the antidote to such cultural sterility and so it became in American modernist iconography, the European capitol where artists, writers, socialites, and intellectuals typically went to learn about good living and to lose the guilty relationship to one's body (both the individual *and* social body) and emotions that America's utilitarian, bourgeois ethic of temperance and material acquisition engendered.

My purpose is to further extend the critical discussion of the role that Paris has played—and continues to play—in shaping national myths in concert with social markers of identity such as sexuality, gender, and race. Additionally, I want to consider the city's function in negotiating the terrain of the postnational, particularly in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Following Donald Pease, my understanding of postnational narrative assumes that it serves the double, and at times contradictory function of resisting and accommodating global capital, of negotiating the in-between spaces of state interest and populist sentiment, and of reproducing the "collective illusion that the state is an imaginative correlate of an individual's desires, the world s/he wants, rather than the world the state has already imposed."² Indeed, it was from the enlightenment fantasy of complete disengagement from one's own state apparatus that the romantic masterplot of the American expatriate in Paris was derived—a romance that bestowed upon the individual expatriate the illusion of "otherness" necessary to animate the people's collective desire for the nation. And while a great deal has been written about the actual or literal experiences of American expatriate artists and writers in Paris, surprisingly little has been said about the recurring image of Paris in popular fictional narratives that organize relations

between sameness and difference, effecting and destabilizing structures of national feeling and belonging while registering discursive switch points in the evolving myths of American nation-ness.³

In other words, Paris provides “a moveable feast” in more ways than one. It provides a key imaginative figure through which we may examine historical changes and nuances in the affirmation of American exceptionalism as a spiritual unification of individual and collective longings, and as a resolution of the alienating, fracturing effects of globalization’s violent wresting of national subjects away from “the imagined communities in which they had previously ‘experienced’ their imagined wholeness.”⁴ As a fantasy space of inducement *and* resistance to becoming the kind of postnational-national subject that the state prescribes, post-9/11 narratives of Parisian expatriation, unlike earlier models, tend to reject Paris as a transformative source of knowledge. However, like their twentieth-century predecessors, these narratives tend to emphasize internal or psychological expatriation as both a property of the American social contract and a mark of the American character, a crisis expressed through narratives of illicit love and sexuality, awakening to history, and ambivalent rehabilitation to the national script.

Appropriately, the neurotic purity and false innocence that marks the American character would become the perennial handicap of Parisian expatriate writing. By journeying to Paris, as Louis Lambert Strether does in Henry James’ *The Ambassadors*, the American opens himself to the possibility of attaining knowledge of his subjugation to a symbolic economy that narrativizes national subjects in the form of their imaginative dominion over Europeans and persons elsewhere. By stepping into the lifeworlds of “other” national communities, the expatriate confronts the incoherence of the national narrative and experiences his psychic governance by the nation-state. Thus Strether abandons his ambassadorial mission to rescue his high-principled financial patron’s son, Chadwick, from the erotic tutelage of Madame de Vionnet, only when he accepts that it is he, no less than his charge, who is being “kept.” A man whose morality is a product of the late nineteenth-century capitalism that dominated American consciousness and rhetoric, Strether begins to apprehend the mutually reliant economies of ownership, desire, and accountability, the naïve striving for financial independence that had blinded him to the messy entanglements of history.⁵

James Baldwin, who fifty years later pays homage to James in his writings on the expatriate theme, appeared wholly to relate to this idea, writing in 1950: “This depthless alienation from oneself and one’s people is, in sum, the American experience.”⁶ Baldwin’s expatriate life in Paris gave him, as he put it, “the sanction, if one can accept it, to become oneself.”⁷ Moreover, it gave him the prudence to recognize that not everybody is prepared to accept the sanction, for example David, who in *Giovanni’s Room* admits, “I think that if I had any intimation that the self I was going to find would turn out to be only the same

self from which I had spent so much time in flight, I would have stayed at home.”⁸ Conflicted by his homosexual desires, David receives a *calm rebuke from his lover*, the Italian peasant, Giovanni: “You want to leave Giovanni because he makes you stink. You want to despise Giovanni because he is not afraid of the stink of love. You want to kill him in the name of all your lying little moralities.”⁹

Typically, in Baldwin’s fiction, “the medium for reflection on the problem of cultural confrontation is the sexual relationship.”¹⁰ However, through Giovanni’s condemnation, Baldwin signals beyond the conflict of old world vs. new world, suggesting that these false claims to innocence are not simply David’s cultural idiosyncrasies but the collective myths that deny history and sustain the inequities of a cold-war economy that makes it possible for David to travel freely about Europe in the first place. Writing as a repressed, white man torn between a fiancé and a male lover, Baldwin further suggests that David’s “lying little moralities” have underwritten national identity, or the class, sexual, racial, and gender markers and myths that politically determine who counts as a legitimate national subject. These were the markers and myths that writers like Baldwin, who was both African-American and gay, sought to break away from by sojourning to Paris.

Earlier, in 1946, Baldwin’s mentor, Richard Wright, arrived in Paris from New York, after completing his first novel *Native Son*. Years later, he would look back on this move as his liberation, claiming that in Paris he felt as if he’d finally unburdened himself of a corpse that he’d been carrying around on his back all his life.¹¹ Wright’s sense of having shouldered a lifeless burden, like Baldwin’s toxic sense of racial and sexual estrangement, parallels W.E.B. Du Bois’ sense of “double-consciousness,” the concept which he introduces in *The Souls of Black Folk*. Here, Du Bois argues that America offers no “true self consciousness to blacks, but only allows them to see themselves through the eyes of the white world.”¹² This resulting double-consciousness entraps blacks within the peculiar predicament “of always looking at oneself through the eyes of the other, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.”¹³ The alienation Du Bois describes is principally metaphysical, as opposed to the material, embodied alienation that Baldwin would address in echoing this concept, which undeniably has taken on special meaning and resonance for African-American artists and writers whose disillusionment with the United States led them to seek a life outside its borders. But Du Bois’ evocation of an oppressive two-ness, an inability to visualize oneself outside the social fictions of the self, helps locate a dilemma that had long been and in many ways still remains the paradigmatic dilemma of the American subject internally expatriated. Moreover, it speaks to a nation divided for centuries over the question of how best to represent the inconsistencies of its inheritance, with the well-ordered romance of historical amnesia, or with disruptive narratives of “parricidal criticism,” (to borrow Russ Castronovo’s phrase), narratives founded on internal division, dissonance, and contradiction.¹⁴

And like most stories of rebellion against one's fathers, expatriate narratives of Americans in Paris tend to be stories of filial disillusionment and patriarchal prohibition, stories that disrupt the coherence of familialized national myth with eruptions of oedipal crisis. At the same time, American popular culture has at times enlisted the expatriate theme in the service of shoring up nationalist ideology, such as may be witnessed in Vincente Minelli's 1951 musical *An American in Paris*,¹⁵ (Figure 1) a film that revels in a post-war political fantasy expressed chiefly through the idealized amalgamation of Gene Kelly's signature bold, robust ballet style and the feminine frailty of the young Leslie Caron, who, during the film's shooting, was still recuperating from emotional and physical distress suffered during the war, a condition that required her to work according to a reduced schedule. The film's plot is organized around what at first seems an impossible romance: Jerry Mulligan, a former G.I., decides to remain in Paris after the war to study painting. While struggling for recognition,

WHAT A JOY TO SEE MGM'S TECHNICOLOR MUSICAL!

An American in Paris

to the Music of
GEORGE GERSHWIN

Starring
GENE KELLY

and
Introducing **LESLIE CARON**

with **OSCAR LEVANT**
GEORGES GUETARY
NINA FOCH

ADVENTURES OF AN
EGAL IN THE CITY OF
ROMANCE AND SEDUCTION
BALL ROOMS, NIGHT
DANCING, EYES FLASHING,
KISSING'S MOST
SPECTACULAR MUSICAL!



Story and Screen Play by **ALAN JAY LERNER** - Lyrics by **IRA GERSHWIN** - Directed by **VINCENTE MINNELLI** - Produced by **ARTHUR FREED** - A MGM PICTURE

Figure 1: MGM publicity poster for "An American in Paris."

Jerry is “discovered” by an influential heiress who, it turns out, is more interested in Jerry’s talents in the bedroom than in the studio. Meanwhile, Jerry falls in love with a young Parisian orphan, Lise Bouvier, who is engaged to a French cabaret singer twice her age. The story of Lise’s rescue from the worldly yet withering empire of impotence by the brash yet virile empire of youth remains one of Hollywood’s more spectacular post-war efforts to evoke a unity of European cultural achievement and American ascendancy over Europe, with the former serving as decorative backdrop for the glory of the latter. In fact, for the climactic ballet scene, 30 painters worked for six weeks non-stop to design unique set styles for each of the sequences, all reflecting various French impressionist painters: Raoul Dufy, Edouard Manet, Maurice Utrillo, Henri Rousseau, Vincent Van Gogh, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. (Figure 2)

The opening ballet sequence in particular, which features Kelly at the Place de la Concorde, is a kaleidoscopic projection of historical discourses of desire (figured as alluring French vixens), militarism (the advancing French army), imperialism, and colonialism (in the form of a lone African in exotic native dress who interrupts Kelly’s exuberant romp across the plaza with a fleeting, ominous glare) onto the monumental simulacra of Paris Disneyfied. Kelly’s wide-eyed wonderment functions as an assertion of American innocence. His



Figure 2: “Ballet,” Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron.

displacement within the scene, his status as alien observer, suggests a disavowal of U.S. cold-war ambitions. His graceful dodging and athletic side-stepping of the human traffic that evokes the “old world” marks him as effectively immune to the historical currents swirling about him. Placed in the context of the Kelly-Caron romance narrative, it would appear that the post-war American love of Paris, as nationalized motion and (e)motion, derives out of a roving and raffish resistance to the burdens of historical consciousness, a love that seeks in its object above all to be recognized as incorruptible. And it is thus a love compelled to perform and spectacularize its authenticity through narrative fantasies of the loss and recuperation of one’s natural, self-governing romantic impulse, an impulse that tends to secure an image of the American nation-as-family, or in the case of *An American in Paris* as savior and guardian of orphaned female sexuality.

I thought about Minelli’s film and the kinds of political fantasies it reinvents and inspires, as I gathered with friends in February 2004 to bid farewell to the HBO comedy *Sex and the City*. The series, which ended a successful six-year run, centers on the intimate lives and friendships of four thirty-something women as they troll swank Manhattan hotspots and designer clothing shops in search of men, pleasure, and Manola Blahniks, supporting one another through the joys and challenges of being female and single in a city obsessed with itself, a city where the number one topic among its residents is the sublime provocation and privilege of living in the city. (Figure 3) That provincialism aside, *Sex and the City* has acquired a large and devoted international fan base, although nowhere is the show more wantonly revered than in New York, where *Sex and the City* bus tours regularly make the rounds of no less than 35 locations, allowing fans to shop where the *Sex* girls shop, drink cosmos where they drink cosmos, and even exercise at the gym where they do Pilates. *Sex and the City* is widely regarded as something of a cult phenomenon among pay-TV subscribers who followed the series devotedly through its first run, and moreover, as a television milestone for its unapologetic frankness with respect to matters of heterosexual sex and female sexuality. However, this blunt sexual realism is more than adequately offset by an excessively romantic portrayal of the city of New York, the “fifth lady” as the show’s producers and stars refer to their location.¹⁶ More than an anthropomorphized fifth character, and more than an idealized national center of culture and style, where female desires associated with consumption and sexuality float freely, New York City constitutes an ultimate object of desire in itself, one which demands to be looked at. Indeed, above all, *Sex and the City* is an ecstatic ode to the magical, visual allure of Manhattan, with its mythic skyline and symmetrical, tree-lined cityscapes bathed seemingly year-round in giddy summer light.

That skyline changed, of course, in a sudden and dramatic way on September 11, 2001, a change that prompted *Sex and the City* producers to quietly focus less on sex and even more on the city. In the post-9/11 season, which was



Figure 3: The cast of “Sex and the City” (from left to right, Kristin Davis, Cynthia Nixon, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Kim Cattrall).

broadcast in 2002, the lighting became decidedly more autumnal, as the city that gave the show its identity began to constrict the characters’ reflections on love and coupling with a new sense of moral gravitas. In the series’ fifth season opener, Carrie Bradshaw, columnist, author, and the show’s narrator, once again loses her on-again, off-again boyfriend, Big, and philosophically decides that in lieu of a boyfriend she is dating the city of New York, and “it’s getting serious.”¹⁷ Michael Patrick King, the show’s executive producer, explains the logic behind this decision: “If you have a bad day in New York, you have a bad day,” King says. “If you have a bad day in your relationship, you say you want to get out of it. Nobody thinks of leaving the city because of a bad day. We started to realize that we’re more understanding of our city than our lovers.”¹⁸

Otherwise, and apart from some opaque references to “manthrax” and a smattering of Stars and Stripes, *Sex and the City* never made any direct reference to one particularly “bad day” in New York, September 11. Nor was any direct reference made to the domestic and international policy transformations that would follow in that day’s wake, changes that placed the United States at ideological odds with most of the world, and especially with France, Russia, and Germany, whose veto-wielding authority within the United Nations posed a palpable threat to the new Bush doctrine of unilateralism and its intended virgin exercise in the oil rich middle east. Two wars later, having exploited international

good will and strengthened Islamic fundamentalist resolve worldwide, the Bush administration remained seemingly deaf and blind to the world, just as the rest of the world in *Sex and the City* remained an absent presence, never intruding upon the insular Manhattan-worshipping plotline or influencing the development of character in any direct manner. However, the whimsical irreverence that had previously defined the island of Manhattan was largely purged, cleansed away, as it could no longer be viewed as an island apart from the rest of America, but rather demanded to be embraced as our “ground zero,” the site of our national narcissistic wound. Whereas once New York had been perceived as a city alien to most Americans, now it was the great reflecting pool, the city in which everyone sought an image of national courage and resolve. *Sex and the City* responded to history much as the country did, by transforming New York into a symbol of unity and patriotism linked to consumption and sexuality (as was clearly demonstrated in the episode entitled, “Anchor’s Away,” in which the four female leads attend a Fleet Week party in hope of having sex with sailors.) At the same time, the show’s four female principles became imbued with reconstructed innocence, moral density, and a new misty-eyed reverence before the prospects of settling into the healing rituals of reproductive heterosexual monogamy and family. Not to put too fine a point on this, writers included a sub-plot wherein the most amorous of four women, Samantha, develops breast cancer, thus setting the stage for her moral chastisement as well as for her recovery and recognition of the life-giving value of stable monogamy.

One minor recurring character was permitted a moment of reflection on the antiseptic turn resulting from the show’s post 9/11 mood swing, a reflection for which she pays the ultimate price. Lexi Featherington is a coke-snorting, chain-smoking party girl who, at forty years of age, still hasn’t found Mr. Right, and wouldn’t really care if it weren’t for all the self-righteous, non-smoking, bores that now dominate New York’s once fabulous social scene. In a prophetic moment, Lexi lets loose at a party where the host has forced her to smoke in front of an open floor-to-ceiling window during a blizzard: “When did everyone stop smoking?” she yells. “When did everyone pair off? This used to be the most exciting city in the world. Now it’s all smoking in front of open fucking windows. What happened to FUN! New York is over. O. V. E. R. I’m so bored I could die.”¹⁹ And with that, the heel of Lexi’s designer shoe snaps and she tumbles through the open window, falling eighteen stories to her death. The New York party is officially over. And although her exit could hardly be called graceful, Lexi’s last words cut through the hypocrisy of a hyper-fearful middle class that views single women as pathetic, regards cigarettes, fatty foods, and recreational drugs as instantly life-threatening, and confronts all other varieties of “otherness” that threaten to penetrate or contaminate our individual bodies—or the national body, as metaphorical extension—with calls for government regulation and tighter homeland security. Lexi’s death is a nasty rejoinder to the thoughtful inconsequentiality that had once made *Sex and the City* so appealing, and rather “un-American” in its portrayal of women completely at home in their

sexuality and generally accepting of penetration by “others” of all sorts. At Lexi’s funeral Carrie announces that she has firmly decided to leave New York and move to Paris with her latest romantic interest, the internationally renowned Russian artist, Aleksandr Petrovsky (played by Mikhail Barishnykov). “Because you’re afraid of going through a window?” Miranda asks skeptically. No, Carrie answers, because she wants to open a new one.²⁰

By coincidence, another popular television series, the blockbuster NBC sitcom *Friends*, decided to send one of its central characters to Paris as part of its much-anticipated season finale in May 2004. (Figure 4) After losing her job with Ralph Lauren, Rachel Green (played by Jennifer Aniston) is offered an important position with Louis Vuitton. The one drawback is that the job will require her to leave New York and relocate to the French capitol. Not surprisingly, Rachel’s news is met with some resistance from her friends, Monica, Phoebe, Joey, and Chandler, as well as from her off-again-on-again romantic interest (and father of her infant daughter), Ross Geller. Despite their objections, Rachel accepts the offer and begins planning her departure. As the series draws closer to the finale, however, Ross is thrown into turmoil, as he understands the depth of his feeling for Rachel and determines at the last minute to ask her to decline the offer in Paris and remain with him—and their friends—in New York.

According to David Crane, co-creator and executive producer of *Friends*, the correspondence of Rachel Green’s dilemma to Carrie Bradshaw’s occurred by accident rather than by design: “We didn’t know *Sex and the City* was going there,” he claims. “We needed a fashion capital where Rachel could live happily. When *Sex and the City* did it, it wasn’t our best day.”²¹ Nevertheless, the final episode of *Friends*, watched by an estimated 51.1 million viewers, was organized around the long-awaited question of whether or not Ross and Rachel would finally wind up together, a question hinging on whether or not Ross would make it to the airport in time to confess his love for Rachel, and whether she, in turn would choose him over “the city of lights” and close the “new window” to her expatriate education before even departing Newark Airport.

As leading mass cultural icons of style, consumerism, and success, Sarah Jessica Parker and Jennifer Aniston are contributors to a long-standing representational practice of twentieth-century visual culture wherein the unmarried New York woman—as typified by Louise Brooks and Clara Bow during the “Jazz Age”—functions as a highly locomotive signifier of social and economic mobility within the modern urban space of romantic encounter.²² As their fashion-smart, cosmopolitan alter egos, it makes sense that Carrie Bradshaw and Rachel Green would find the prospect of life in Paris enticing to say the least. At the same time, however, these television heroines and the narratives in which they figured so prominently were created, distributed, and received in concert with the cultural neoconservatism that moved to the forefront of late twentieth-century debates about American women’s proper relation to the domestic values that the nation ostensibly holds dear. According to Diane Negra, these debates have increased “pressures to define women’s lives in terms of



F·R·I·E·N·D·S


2-Hour Finale 8/7pm Thursday, May 6th  NBC

Figure 4: Cast promo for the series finale of “Friends” (from left to right, Courteney Cox Arquette, Matt LeBlanc, Lisa Kudrow, Matthew Perry, Jennifer Aniston, David Schwimmer).

marriage and domesticity,” pressures that have only intensified following the national crisis of 9/11, the political aftershocks of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Lawrence vs. Texas*, which effectively decriminalized consensual sodomy, and the bitter cultural divisiveness that on occasion characterized the 2004 presidential election as a choice between Laura Bush’s homespun deference and sure-fire cookie recipes and Teresa Heinz Kerry’s worldly sophistication and multilingual outspokenness.²³ Even without these mitigating factors, series writers for *Sex and the City* and *Friends* would have needed to weigh Carrie and Rachel’s expatriate ambitions against their emotional attachments to friends, their lingering affections for men who seem unavailable, and their connection to the rich and vibrant life of Manhattan. So, in a moment marked as much by the pieties of postfeminist patriotism as by growing national concern about the direction of post-9/11 American foreign policy and the declining image of the United States throughout the world, what parting assurances were communicated and what historical and/or cultural allusions animated in the series’ decisions to send their female leads to Paris instead of, say, London or Milan? What could Paris possibly offer them that no other international capitol could?

In response to similar inquiries, Henry James made it quite clear that Paris had no particular significance in his understanding of the American mind in

general. Nor did James grant Paris any special relevance in his development of Strether's consciousness in particular. Indeed, Strether's "revolution" according to James, could have taken place anywhere, in any city. As he puts it, "the revolution performed by Strether under the influence of the most interesting of great cities was to have nothing to do with any *bêtise* of the imputably 'tempted' state; he was to be thrown forward, rather, thrown quite with violence, upon his lifelong trick of intense reflexion."²⁴ If anything, Paris was amenable to a psychological proclivity toward "intense reflexion" by virtue of its winding streets and the changing shades of light and dark that could be likened to alterations of consciousness and appreciated by those willing to acknowledge the depth of their alienation from an American social organization and national imaginary structured according to a Manichean separation of light and dark persons and principles.

In the case of *Sex and the City*, Carrie Bradshaw's move to Paris is engineered by Alek, (Figure 5) who has a major show opening there and believes that "Paris is the greatest city in the world."²⁵ Carrie is torn by the proposition, on one hand unable to imagine life without her friends, her job, her life in New York, and her unrequited love for Big (whose actual name is withheld, a device insinuating Carrie's inability to really know him), and on the other side by her attraction to the romantic fantasy that Alek has constructed for her, and the fantasy of Paris as international style center. But early on there is evidence that Alek and Carrie are dangerously mismatched, evidence presented through a Manichean staging of their personal properties and opposing tastes. Alek is dark. Carrie is light. Alek is Paris. Carrie is New York. Alek is a heedless romantic who composes love songs on the piano, and reads Brodsky aloud on rainy afternoons. Carrie's idea of music is the door chime at Prada, and her idea of poetry is the November issue of *Vogue*. In an effort to curb his extravagant impulses, Carrie reminds Alek that she is, lest he forget it, the author of a weekly newspaper column "based on the assumption that romance is either dead or just . . . phony."²⁶

"You think I'm phony?" he asks. No, Carrie says, *she* feels like a phony because Alek's grand romantic gestures make her squirm with discomfort. The following evening, Carrie and Alek attend the opera at the Met. For the occasion, he has surprised her with an especially "poetic" Oscar De la Renta gown that was featured in *Vogue*. As they rush to make the curtain, a string quartet begins to play. Alek stops, reaches for Carrie's hand, and asks "Dance with me?" Carrie smiles at him as the voice-over informs viewers: "It was THE most romantic gesture," after which Carrie swoons and collapses onto the cold pavement. The music stops as a crowd of people gather around them. "Are you all right?" Alek asks, shaking her gently. "No," says Carrie, regaining consciousness. "I am an American. I need you to take it down a notch."²⁷

In the case of *Friends*, Rachel Green's move to Paris is inspired by her joblessness and by the opportunity to launch a career in one of the world's fashion capitols. Rachel assures Ross that her new company will fly him out to



Figure 5: Carrie Bradshaw and Aleksander Petrovsky (played by Mikhail Baryshnikov).

visit whenever he wishes. At first, Ross bravely offers his support, especially when Rachel admits that this job is important to her and asks her friends to “try to get on board.”²⁸ But privately Ross admits, “How can I be okay with this?” Unable to accept the thought of “not being able to see her everyday,” Ross secretly brokers a deal with Rachel’s ex-boss to have her reinstated in her old position with a raise. When Rachel perplexedly tells him that she’s just been rehired, Ross senses her hesitation and asks, “You’re excited, right?”

“Yeah,” says Rachel, “you know, was I looking forward to going to Paris? Sure. You know, was I excited about working in the *fashion capital* of the world? Ooh, absolutely. . . . Oh . . . ! Yeah, but you know, this is . . . it’s fine.”²⁹ Hearing the disappointment in her voice, Ross tells her that she should go to Paris, as clearly this is what she really wants. Rachel thanks him; however, in the following episode at her going-away party, Ross is hurt when Rachel says a personal goodbye to each one of their friends, except him. Angrily, Ross exclaims that her forgetfulness reveals how little she cares about him. Later that evening, Rachel confronts him and confesses that her forgetfulness was by design. “It is too damn hard, Ross,” she tells him. “I can’t even begin to explain to you how much I’m gonna miss you. When I think about not seeing you every day, it makes me not want to go. . . . Okay, so if you think that I didn’t say goodbye to you because you don’t mean as much to me as everybody else, you’re wrong. It’s because you mean more to me.”³⁰ With that, Ross draws her forward into a

passionate kiss and they spend what will presumably be one final night together—a very personal goodbye. (Figure 6)

Rachel's public act of forgetfulness and Carrie's public loss of consciousness are fitting metaphors for the disavowal of "the changing shades of light and dark," or for resistance to the psychological pressures to conform to the collective performance of national unity and to the state's insistence on a simplified "us vs. them" narrative with which to make sense of the new national order that arose after the World Trade Center attacks. Like Rip Van Winkle's 20-year nap, Carrie's swoon becomes the fundamental American physiological response to the ideological stress that is sub-textualized in Alek's invitation to resume Vincente Minelli's dance of empires, past and present, with New York's Lincoln Center here providing the impressionistic backdrop for the unnatural romance of political antagonists. Her collapse expresses a short-circuiting of impulses, a conflict which simultaneously reaches for the hand of the other while performing the compulsory loss of memory—not of the past, but of the present moment—that was the traumatic basis of post 9/11 national consensus building. This performance circumvents the alienating dilemma of having to see oneself through the eyes of a world outside—a world that acknowledges evil, and yet still dances. And ultimately, Carrie does dance with Alek, although it only after she has changed the set and positioned Alek under the harsh fluorescent lights of a



Figure 6: Rachel says goodbye to Ross.

McDonald's. Here, his lofty notions of romance are dismembered by the brute materiality of global capital. His haughty gestures of seduction are reduced to irony by Carrie's breathy invitation, "have a fry . . . they're French," which indirectly references Republican lawmakers' infamous attribution of the name "freedom fries" to the potatoes served in the cafeteria of the House of Representatives, an insipid nationalist rebuke to the French in the midst of the debates over Iraq, and at the same time revels in the state's managerial romancing of postnational global markets.³¹

Finally, as a symptom of our postnational-national identity crisis, it is important that Carrie's fall, like Rachel's forgetting of Ross, be performed as a public spectacle that mobilizes collective response. This principle gains momentum with Carrie's arrival in Paris, as she visits the museums alone, forgiving Alek one missed appointment after another as he tends to his own interests, his work, and his obligations. Everyone Carrie encounters is sophisticated to the point of torpor. Carrie discovers Paris and loses herself in a maze of social and linguistic misrecognition. When Carrie enters a bookstore and happens upon a French translation of her book, she is stymied to discover that she cannot make sense of her own words. An employee who recognizes Carrie from the cover of her book offers to throw her a party, which Carrie ultimately misses because of Alek's pre-opening anxieties and his childish insistence that she remain by his side (until he, swept off by his adoring fans, forgets about her). But even the prospects of socializing with her newly-discovered "fan base," however small, and exchanging notes on "ze sex" is no replacement for the intimacies, support, and shared meanings—the language that grounds her identity as both a producer and a product of native narrative—that she has left behind.

Carrie's moment of lexical misrecognition is one of several scenes that stress her isolation, her loss of identity, and her paralyzing inability to participate in the life of Paris. In *Me Talk Pretty One Day*, essayist and humorist David Sedaris describes his expatriation to Paris in terms of grammatical dissonance and his abject displacement from the French-speaking structure of day-to-day exchanges and rituals. He struggles to master the French language, subjecting himself to a sadistic French instructor and forging bonds with other alien speakers. At the same time, Sedaris relishes the sense of helplessness that an expatriate existence inspires and fantasizes about one day overcoming it, like a hero on a soap opera. His transformation from tourist to expatriate American in Paris is described in terms of his determined withdrawal into the space of fantasy, an internalized American lifeworld. Sedaris imaginatively sustains this world by daily going to see American movies at Parisian theaters and by listening to English books on tape with a walkman while wandering through the crowded public spaces of the city, avoiding interaction as much as possible. Interestingly, Sedaris in no way equates this condition with homesickness. In fact, his retreat into fantasy produces the exact opposite sensation, a feeling of oneness with the

cultural rhetoric of American suffering and determination, expressed in “epic daydreams” in which the victim becomes a hero and thereby proves his worthiness. “Paris, it seems, is where I’ve come to dream about America,” he admits, acknowledging the extent to which expatriation produces within him a romantic reinsertion into the national narrative that is at the same time a reimagining of that narrative.³²

Unlike the “self” whom Sedaris fashions in his essays, Carrie Bradshaw decides after only one week in Paris that her language skills should be sufficient enough to withstand a day of shopping, her customary New York pastime. It’s raining, so with umbrella in tow Carrie heads for Dior. Upon entering the shop, the water from her umbrella forms a puddle on the floor, upon which Carrie slips after loudly announcing “Bonjour!” Again she falls on her face, skidding across the floor as the contents of her purse scatter. The Parisian shoppers smirk and whisper in hushed, scandalized tones as Carrie climbs to her knees and gathers her belongings. She assures everyone that she’s all right, although no one has asked. Only after she returns home, while explaining to Alek that she maxed out one of her credit cards to compensate for her disgrace, does she realize that she has lost her favorite necklace, a simple gold chain with her name in lettering—inexpensive, but rich in sentimental value—that she purchased with her friends at a New York street fair.³³

Thus, Carrie’s loss of self is firmly established. Adrift, alone, and now nameless, Carrie confronts the expatriate existential abyss in a short sequence of sight gags, set against a plaintive piano and accordion piece, which follows upon another of Alek’s abrupt cancellations. Standing outside a café where the two have come for coffee, Alek gets a call from the gallery and tells Carrie that he must attend to matters there. Lighting a cigarette, Carrie asks disappointedly if things will always be this way, and he assures her that once his show opens they will have more time. Carrie acquiesces and sets off on her own to do “French things.” As he enters his limo, Alek calls back to her approvingly, “I like the smoking . . . it’s very sexy.” “It’s killing me,” Carrie answers, flatly, to which Alek frowns and disappears into the car. Viewers next see Carrie sitting alone in the café, smoking while at the same time stuffing herself with French pastries, some of which she feeds to a dog sitting beside her, wearing an expression of sad longing; next, we see Carrie strolling along a cobblestone street, as a young couple approaches, with an angelic little girl carried atop the man’s shoulders. Carrie appears touched at the sight of them, and extends a sweet “bonjour” as they pass. The little girl turns and smacks Carrie on top of the head. Carrie turns and is further astonished to see the child rudely stick out her tongue. Shaken, Carrie forges on and instantly steps into a pile of dog feces. Finally, we see Carrie sitting on a bench by the Seine, munching on a baguette and looking dejected. A tour boat passes by in the distance, and Carrie sees a young man, a tourist, filming her from the deck with his video camera. He waves, hoping to catch her attention and she weakly returns his wave, barely able to contain her

ironic detachment from the tourist's sincere delight at having recorded what he assumes to be a truly Parisian scene.³⁴

In this short sequence, as the once transformative possibilities of expatriate alienation dissolve into the compulsive consumerist gestures of cultural tourism and crude abjection, so too Carrie dissolves into the Parisian landscape and is collapsed into both sight seen and sight-seer. The simple act of having her image recorded by a tourist, and of acknowledging that her image has been recorded, provokes a moment of fleeting, anonymous interpellation that positions Carrie as the subject of double-consciousness, at once alienated from her past (symbolized in the lost necklace, bought on the cheap) and re-imagined from the outside as that which has already become the memory of someone else's visit to Paris. Carrie's own experience and capacity for "intense reflexion" is blocked by the memory of a subject whose traumatic dislocation from the narrative that constitutes it reproduces itself at every moment while remaining always outside the visual frame, beyond the recovery of recordable memory. And when Miranda learns of Carrie's predicament as a result of a brief phone conversation the series finale disavows any kinship to James' *The Ambassadors* and proclaims its allegiance to early American captivity narratives, as Carrie's New York friends enlist Big (who had unsuccessfully tried to dissuade Carrie from running off with a "Russky") in the service of bringing "our girl back home."³⁵ From here, *Sex and the City* follows the pattern of national recovery narrative, tracing Carrie's rescue and her attainment of the very goal that she had all along been seeking: Big's declaration of heterosexual fidelity, the promise of committed romantic partnership, and restoration of the reunited, newly-chastened female community to the national center of romance, thus ensuring the perpetuity of a masterplot in which Carrie's image (like the one she regularly confronts on a passing bus in the series' opening sequence) is "symbolically re-intergrated within the cityscape."³⁶

As an offshoot of national war fantasy, "An American Girl in Paris (Part Deux)" mirrors the popular genre of Indian captivity in ways that declare its affinities with American myth's propensity for the liberation of innocent captives and for the demonization of non-national others. In the classic captivity narrative, according to Richard Slotkin, "a single individual, usually a woman," is taken captive by a Native-American tribe and "stands passively under the strokes of evil, awaiting rescue by the grace of God."³⁷ In the case of *Sex and the City*, the deity takes the form of the ubiquitous "Big." After six years of non-committal wavering, Big arrives in Paris to declare his love for Carrie (Figure 7), a mission that leads to Carrie's disclosure that Alek, in the course of an argument, accidentally struck her in the face. Big rushes off to defend Carrie's honor, but she stops him. "I don't need you to do this," she tells Big. "I took care of this myself. I don't need you to rescue me."³⁸ However, her admonishment falls flat in view of the fact that by declaring his love, Big (whose alias hints of the superhuman) already has performed his missionary, totalizing function. As in



Figure 7: “Big” (played by Chris Noth) reunites with Carrie in Paris and proclaims his love.

the Puritan model, the captive female body represents “a people threatened from outside”³⁹ The temporary bondage of the captive to the “other” stages the temptation of the fallen soul that seeks redemption through Christ’s love, or in this case redemption through romantic love, as Carrie desperately explains to Alek when breaking up with him, “I am someone who is looking for love...ridiculous, inconvenient, consuming, can’t-live-without-each-other love, and I don’t think that love is here.”⁴⁰ In this way, Carrie becomes a secular symbol, “representing America’s virtuous identity to itself.”⁴¹

And at last Carrie’s salvation through a signifier of resuscitated phallic masculinity, and with the additional efforts of the magistrates at home, is achieved. “I miss New York,” Carrie tells Big. “Take me home.”⁴² These words complete the cycle of victimization and heroism, temptation and redemption, so characteristic of captivity texts, which continue to provide templates for popular American literature and film. Melani McAlister notes this continuity in the made-for-television movie, *Saving Jessica Lynch*, which dramatizes with much patriotic

fanfare the heroic (and allegedly staged) rescue of female army Private Lynch, from the hospital where she was held captive after being taken prisoner by the Iraqi army during a routine supply mission.⁴³ In each of these contexts, the gender and racial politics of captivity narrative draw the line demarcating indigenous Indians from European settlers, Iraqi Muslims from U.S. Christian soldiers, and finally the post 9/11 French-Russian cosmopolitan from “our girl,” all instances in which the nation’s true men are called upon to be the protectors of women, while the taking of women is viewed as a call for retaliation against the dangerous advances of anyone or anyplace that challenges or questions the defense of homeland security, here or abroad.⁴⁴

In the final episode of *Friends*, Rachel’s expatriate adventure never gets off the ground, literally. After admitting that he does not want to live without Rachel, Ross and Phoebe race to the airport in Phoebe’s taxi, only to discover that they have come to the wrong airport. (Figure 8) In an act of desperation, Phoebe calls Rachel on her cell phone and tells her to immediately deplane because of her premonition that something is wrong with the “Philange.” Rachel insists that everything will be fine, but passengers overhearing the conversation fly into a panic and demand to be evacuated. By the time order is restored, Ross and Phoebe have arrived at the correct airport and at Rachel’s departure gate, however Rachel is flustered by Ross’s proclamation of love and insists, regretfully, that she has no choice but to board the plane and proceed with her plans. When Ross returns home, he finds a message on his answering machine from Rachel, who is back on the plane and feeling “awful.” “What am I doing?” she wonders aloud. “I love you! Oh, I’ve gotta see you. I’ve gotta get off this plane.”⁴⁵ The answering machine cuts her off in the middle of an argument with the stewardess that leaves Ross, and viewers, in suspense. But the suspense is only momentary, as Rachel enters Ross’s apartment and announces, “I got off the plane.”⁴⁶ The series concludes with Rachel’s abandonment of the idea of Paris, her choice of family over career, and the successful realization of the marital and familial goals of all the principal female characters.

Indeed, just as the series finale of *Friends* finds all the once-single female characters happily partnered, so too *Sex and the City* concludes with the female leads well on the path to, if not already ensconced in, domestic situations. Miranda and Charlotte are married with children (in the series finale, Charlotte and Harry adopt a baby from China; Miranda and Steve take in his aging mother after she suffers a stroke). Samantha’s philosophical rejection of sexual monogamy is tempered, if not openly compromised by her tearful confession to Smith that “no man has ever meant as much to me.”⁴⁷ And Carrie’s fate with Big, whose name is revealed as “John,” seems sealed, as she attains at last the knowledge—and possession—of the man who has for so long gotten away.

The question posed by these developments is how the city of Paris is mobilized to affect closure in the instances of two long-running popular television shows whose much-anticipated finales were narrated in the mass media as



Figure 8: Phoebe and Ross at the airport, in search of Rachel.

culturally transformative moments, and as collective acts of “letting go.” In the case of both shows, “closure” was defined in terms of coupling the principal female characters with their respective Mr. Rights. This gesture lends credence to Diane Negra’s argument that *Sex and the City*, like many popular television comedies that preceded it, perpetuates “the pathologization of single women” along with the assumption that women’s true happiness in a time of cultural neoconservatism must be located within the familiar patterns of marriage and domesticity.”⁴⁸ According to Negra, this is enacted through the discourse of “retreatism,” which she defines as “a postfeminist coercion for women to give up their place in the workforce in favor of a demonstration of their family values.”⁴⁹ The female *Friends* demonstrate this not only through their compulsory coupling but also by becoming mothers, a destiny that all three fulfill rather prolifically. Phoebe offers herself as birth mother for her brother and his wife, giving birth to triplets. Rachel accidentally becomes pregnant by Ross and, after rejecting the idea of abortion, gives birth to their daughter. Monica and Chandler, unable to have children of their own, more than fulfill their desire to become adoptive parents when their birth mother unexpectedly delivers twins. (Figure 9) Narratives of marital as well as maternal achievement are central to the presupposed successful evolution and resolution of these characters’ plotlines. And these narratives extended to media coverage of the lives and post-series aspirations of the actors’ who starred in these roles, especially as the series drew nearer to its conclusion. Media coverage of Courtney Cox’s pregnancy and intense speculation about Jennifer Aniston’s plans for starting a family with



Figure 9: Chandler and Monica, parents at last, with adopted twins.

Brad Pitt defined the discursive parameters within which *Friends* fans were encouraged to bring closure to this chapter in television history and, at the same time retain an emotional connection to the female celebrities whose lives would now presumably enact the fantasies of familial validation that they performed on the set.

The female leads of *Sex and the City*, with their classically WASPish names, sensational apartments, and peculiar lack of connections to parents or siblings (with the exception of Miranda, whose mother's death reveals that she at least has a sister) perpetuate a Gatsbyesque fantasy of New York City as a harbor of white urbanity, style, wealth, and limitless opportunities for self-recreation. Unlike the characters of *Friends*, Carrie Bradshaw, Charlotte York, Samantha Jones, and Miranda Hobbes appear to have been brought together by their mutual refusal of history, their total liberation from attachments other than their social and emotional ties to serial sex partners and to one another. The governing myths of the series maintains that viewers do not need to know where these women came from or how they wound up in New York. Consequently, as critics have tended to note, the main characters of *Sex and the City* are drawn with a shallow, cardboard quality.

For the characters of *Friends*, Manhattan is similarly an island of limitless possibility, affordable apartments, and promise. However, they are represented

as having complex pasts, families, and ethnicity, contexts that present opportunities for a deeper understanding of character. The Gellers, Monica and Ross's parents, are Jewish; Chandler Bing's father is a transsexual. Joey Tribbiani hails from a large, loud Italian-American family, a cartoon stereotype of working class immigrant Americans. Rachel Green's parents are divorced (her mother, played in guest spots by former star of the 60s sitcom *That Girl*, Marlo Thomas, serves as an apt reference to the television history of the single-girl's romance with Manhattan), and Rachel herself runs away from her first marriage, living mainly off her father's wealth; Phoebe Buffay, who was raised by her grandmother following her mother's suicide, is of French ancestry, a fact that provides occasional comic fodder throughout the series.

For example, in the episode entitled, "The One with Phoebe's Cookies," Phoebe reluctantly agrees to give her grandmother's secret chocolate chip cookie recipe to Monica as an engagement gift, to insure that she will make only the best cookies for her "future children."⁵⁰ However, Phoebe subsequently discovers that the recipe has been destroyed in a fire. After failing to improvise the cookie recipe, she suggests that they telephone her relatives in France, recalling that her grandmother had originally gotten it from a neighbor by the name of Nesele Toulouse. "*Nestle Tollhouse?!*" Monica cries out, in a moment of recognition that mocks the pretentiousness of French cultural and culinary supremacy and restores a widely exported symbol of female domesticity and maternal nurture to the everyday vocabulary of American consumerism. Phoebe's response only further affirms U.S. myths of French arrogance and implacability: "Oh, you Americans always butcher the French language," she says defensively.⁵¹

Such ironic moments, placed within the larger narrative frame of a popular television series that runs for consecutive seasons, circulate multiple meanings across the culture, resonating differently with a variety of audiences whose investments in character, situation, narrative, and national identity can neither be presumed nor contained within any single delimited text. Like the series finales of *Sex and the City* and *Friends*, such instances of audience address are neither reducible to cartoon stereotypes nor to television culture's hype *du jour*. Rather they operate as "discourse events," media matters that participate in the turbulent climate of on-going cultural and political debate over the values we ascribe to the nation and its subjects in a pop culture-saturated, post-national ideoscape. Paris's iconic role as leader in the global style and culture markets, its literary legacy as a site of moral relaxation, and its historical figuration as an ungrateful benefactor of American military intervention have largely defined the myths of Parisian expatriation that American national and post-national narrative have long affirmed and interrogated. As mediated myths of nation, televisual expatriate narratives similarly represent a mode of collective reckoning with national dissonance and disillusionment, a latent quest-romance in which the allure of the "other" retains a central role in the eventual reaffirmation of dominant American values. At the same time, the expatriate's estrangement from

the nation—her dislocation from the national script—reveals the fractured “alien within,” the disavowed racialized and sexualized presence that has haunted U.S. national narrative in the very instance of its ambivalent articulation, a process that Homi Bhabha identifies as central to “narrating the nation.”⁵²

Thus, it is not surprising that the season finales of *Friends* and *Sex and the City* underscore the feminine as the site of cultural indecisiveness and abjection; Carrie Bradshaw’s charismatic impetuosity and Rachel Greene’s impulsive ambitiousness suggest a lack of stability—a dangerous tendency to wander—that can only be resolved by the intervention of the nation’s men, who are themselves mobilized by collective consensus. The iconic appeal of Paris is clearly linked with the feminine powers embodied by these characters. At the same time, Paris retains an ideological link to certain “feminized” qualities—insecurity and irresolution, among them—that Carrie and Rachel express and that post-9/11 political and cultural discourse has demonized and rendered foreign. And to that extent, I would argue that the expatriate themes rehearsed in both these final episodes cannot be read apart from the broader discursive reaffirmation of faith in American masculinity, and by extension in the nation itself, that has followed in the wake of 9/11. In other words, the ceremonial invocations of closure—of saying farewell to the familiar televisual rituals that these series had come to constitute for network audiences and cable subscribers at home and around the world—built not only upon the principal female characters’ choice of New York City as homefront whose loss and recovery is effected in the union of individual erotic desire with the state’s desire for a familialized future, but on the principal male characters’ romantic reinstatement as determined and decisive figures through which viewers are encouraged to sustain confidence in the coherence and continuity of the national narrative, with heterosexual masculinity as its best line of defense.

In both series finales this continuity is effected not only through the last-minute, redemptive heroism of Ross and Big but also through Rachel and Carrie’s triumph over the doubts that they harbor toward these men and their misgivings about the prospects of reuniting with them. Their vacillation between Paris and true love forces them to reckon with the responsibilities of choice, as an exercise of women’s freedom that mirrors the exercise of consumer choice in a complex global market. Their movements away from and back to their points of origin fashion the values that their characters will finally impart, values wherein monogamous heterosexual rehabilitation ceases to be a principle of personal desire and speaks to more extended national and transnational longings, anxieties, and possibilities of exchange. Rachel’s moment of reckoning—of redemption—occurs at the moment of take-off, or within the framework of collective paranoia that references post-9/11 fears of air travel abroad. Carrie’s deliverance in “An American Girl in Paris: Part Deux” is structured as a hostage fantasy. However, both resolutions define expatriation as return passage through an individual fantasy of self-realization back toward a state fantasy of unified consensus that

naturally corresponds with the gendered subject's deepest internal desires. We may postulate this dynamic as the meaning of post-national patriotism, a borderless romance with the other that restores us ever more fully to a state of authentic self-possession. And it is this double crossing—a reinstatement of the patriot at the site of the "ex"—that Carrie Bradshaw's parting words invite us to hold onto and incorporate into our own unilaterally-styled post-series sense of where we stand in the world: "There are relationships that open you up to something new and exotic. . . . Those that bring up lots of questions . . . those that bring you somewhere unexpected. . . . And those that bring you back. But the most exciting, challenging, and significant relationship of all is the one you have with yourself. And if you find someone to love the you you love, well, that's just fabulous."⁵³

Notes

1. Here I am echoing Nancy Cott's historical analysis of the roots of American marriage as posited in *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

2. Donald Pease, "National Narratives, Postnational Narration," *Modern Fiction Studies* 43.1 (1997): 1.

3. Some examples are Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986); Humphrey Carpenter, *Geniuses Together: American Writers in Paris in the 1920s* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1987); Adam Gopnik, *Paris to the Moon* (New York: Random House, 2000); Barry Miles, *The Beat Hotel: Ginsberg, Burroughs, and Corso in Paris* (New York: Grove Press, 2000); Donald Pizer, *American Expatriate Writing and the Paris Moment: Modernism and Place* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996); Michael Reynolds, *Hemingway: The Paris Years* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Christopher Sawyer-Laucanno, *The Continual Pilgrimage: American Writers in Paris, 1944-1960* (New York: Grove Press, 1992); Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996).

4. Donald Pease, "National Narratives, Postnational Narration," 8.

5. See Siobhan Peiffer, "Commerce and Freedom in *The Ambassadors*," *The Henry James Review* 23.2 (2002).

6. James Baldwin, *The Price of the Ticket. Collected Nonfiction: 1948-1985* (New York: St. Martin's, 1985): 39, quoted in Robert Tomlinson, "'Payin' one's dues': Expatriation as Personal Experience and Paradigm in the Works of James Baldwin." *African American Review* 33 (Spring 1999), 136.

7. Baldwin, *The Price of the Ticket*, 313, quoted in Tomlinson, "'Payin' one's dues,'" 136.

8. James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 31.

9. *Ibid.*, 187

10. Tomlinson, "'Payin' one's dues,'" 144.

11. James Campbell, *Exiled in Paris: Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Samuel Beckett, and Others on the Left Bank* (New York, Scribner, 1995), 11.

12. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Online. Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia. Retrieved August 23, 2004. <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DubSoul.html>

13. *Ibid.*

14. Russ Castronovo, *Fathering the Nation: American Genealogies of Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley, U of California P, 1995), 31.

15. *An American in Paris*. dir. Vincente Minelli, perf. Gene Kelly, Leslie Caron, Oscar Levant, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1951.

16. When accepting her 2002 Golden Globe Award for "Best Performance by an Actress in a Comedy," Sarah Jessica Parker offered thanks "to the city of New York, who is indeed the fifth lady." Also cited by Deborah Jermyn in "In love with Sarah Jessica Parker: celebrating female fandom and friendship in Sex and the City." In *Reading Sex and the City*. Eds. Kim Akass and Janet McCabe (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 200.

17. *Sex and the City*. "Anchor's Away," 5.1. By Michael Patrick King, dir. Charles McDougal, HBO, 21 July 2002

18. David Bauder, "How does a show about the frivolous side of New York respond to

changed mood?" *The Augusta Chronicle Online*. September 11, 2002. http://augustachronicle.com/stories/091102/sep_LA0498-1.shtml. Accessed: August 23, 2004.

19. *Sex and the City*. "Splat!," 6:18. By Jenny Bicks and Cindy Chupack, dir. Julian Farino, HBO, 8 Feb. 2004.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Tom Jicha, "However Thursday's Friends finale goes, expect everything to turn out OK." *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*. May 6, 2004, at *Baltimore Sun.Com*. <http://www.baltimoresun.com/entertainment/tv/bal-friends-sofla0506,1,2619435.story?coll=bal-tv-utility>. Accessed: August 25, 2004.

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24. *Ibid.*

25. *Sex and the City*. "Splat!," 6:18.

26. *Sex and the City*. "The Ick Factor," 6:14. By Julie Rottenberg and Elisa Zuritsky, dir. Wendy Stanzler, HBO, 11 Jan. 2004.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Friends*. "The One Where Estelle Dies." Episode 233. By Marta Kauffman and David Crane, dir. Gary Halvorson, NBC, WAVY, Norfolk, VA. 22 April 2004.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Friends*. "The One With Rachel's Going Away Party." Episode 234. By Andrew Reich and Ted Cohen, dir. Gary Halvorson, NBC, WAVY, Norfolk, VA. 29 April 2004.

31. *Sex and the City*. "The Ick Factor," 6:14.

32. David Sedaris. "The Late Show." *Me Talk Pretty One Day* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 263.

33. *Sex and the City*. "An American Girl in Paris (Part Une)," 6:19. By Michael Patrick King, dir. Tim Van Patten, HBO, 15 Feb. 2004.

34. *Sex and the City*. "An American Girl in Paris (Part Deux)," 6:20. By Michael Patrick King, dir. Tim Van Patten, HBO, 22 Feb. 2004.

35. *Sex and the City*. "An American Girl in Paris (Part Une)," 6:19.

36. Diane Negra, "Quality Postfeminism?" *Sex and the Single Girl* on HBO."

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38. *Sex and the City*. "An American Girl in Paris (Part Deux)," 6:20.

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41. Melani McAlister, "Saving Private Lynch: A Classic American Tale."

42. *Sex and the City*. "An American Girl in Paris (Part Deux)," 6:20.

43. Melani McAlister, "Saving Private Lynch: A Classic American Tale."

44. *Saving Jessica Lynch*. By John Fasono, dir. Peter Markle, perf. Laura Regan, Nicholas Guilak and Greg Lynch, Sr., NBC Productions, First Aired: Sunday, Nov. 9, 2003.

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46. *Ibid.*

47. *Sex and the City*, "An American Girl in Paris (Part Deux)," 6:20.

48. Diane Negra, "Quality Postfeminism?" *Sex and the Single Girl* on HBO."

49. Diane Negra, "Quality Postfeminism?" *Sex and the Single Girl* on HBO."

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51. *Ibid.*

52. Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation," in *Nation and Narration* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 297

53. *Sex and the City*, "An American Girl in Paris (Part Deux)," 6:20.