

References in **Midnight in Paris**

- Gertrude Stein was a writer, and an arbiter of literary taste—in the movie, Hemingway sends Gil's novel to Stein, the only person he trusts to judge it—but, perhaps more importantly, she collected art. Her brother, Leo, helped build a collection that included Picasso, Cezanne, Renoir, and Matisse: In 1968, the *New York Times* called Stein's salon "the first Museum of Modern Art." During *Midnight in Paris*, Matisse appears in Stein's salon to sell several paintings for a few hundred francs each. Gil offers, smartly, to buy several.
- When Hemingway and Gil first meet, Hemingway asks what Gil thinks of Mark Twain. Gil pauses and then says, "I think you could make the case that Huck Finn is the root of all modern American literature." If this sounds familiar, it's because Hemingway wrote exactly that in *The Green Hills of Africa*, a memoir published in 1935.
- Gil walks into a party where Cole Porter's "Let's Do It" is in the air. Of course, he soon sees Porter himself at the piano. It's a song full of double entendres—"Birds and bees do it"—vague enough to hold up over time: Joan Jett, Diana Ross, and Alanis Morissette have all recorded the song. After moving to France, from Indiana, in 1917, Porter wrote the tune for a Broadway musical in 1928. The show name? *Paris*.
- We meet only one of Pablo Picasso's mistresses in *Midnight in Paris*, and a fictional one at that: "Adriana" had already caught the eye of Modigliani and Braque, and has her eye on Hemingway. But the painter had love interests. There was the Russian ballerina, whom he married in 1918, the seventeen-year old mistress nine years later, and the painter and photographer Dora Maar in the '30s and '40s. Picasso soon moved on to an art student forty years his junior, and then, for good measure, another who broadened the chasm to 44. Finally, there was Jacqueline Roque, the woman who got Picasso to finally settle down. They remained together to the end.
- Early in the film we're introduced to tension between Hemingway, Zelda Fitzgerald, and Scott Fitzgerald. Zelda thought Ernest hated her. Ernest thought Zelda was bad for Scott; he thought she distracted and emasculated him. Scott was torn between pleasing the woman he loved and the man he admired. The tension was real. In *A Movable Feast*, Hemingway wrote brutally about an incident in which Zelda convinced Scott that his manhood was, for want of a better word, lacking. Hemingway was forced to reassure Scott in a restroom, somewhere in the French countryside, that it, in fact, was not.
- Zelda is the first literary figure to greet Gil—he expresses wonder when she calls out to her husband Scott—and the most lively. In the film, the Fitzgeralds, who were known for their parties, host an elaborate one at an amusement park. Later, when Gil finds Zelda ready to throw herself into the Seine—it's unclear if she ever tried this, but she did once overdose on sleeping pills—he tries to explain how much Scott loves her. This was true, much to the chagrin of Hemingway, who, as suggested above, thought Scott's infatuation with Zelda was impeding his literary productivity.
- *Midnight in Paris* demands that its viewers accept Gil's time travel without question. Our exemplar within the film for this kind of unquestioned suspension

of disbelief is the artist Man Ray. An American Jew born Emmanuel Radintzky, Ray was a painter and a photographer, a versatile artist who called Paris home for most his adult life. In the film, Ray speaks in matter-of-fact tones. Seated in a cafe with Salvador Dali and Luis Bunuel, he sees nothing strange about Gil's situation. "Of course you don't," Gil says, "you're a surrealist."

- The Polidor, a restaurant in the intellectual coven of the Sixth Arrondissement, opened for business in 1845 but earned its full name, Cremerie-Restaurant Polidor, when it began serving cream desserts in the early twentieth century. By then, Valery, Kerouac, and Joyce were regulars, and, in the film, Gil meets Hemingway there—he was another frequent visitor—who offers a bit of writerly advice: "No subject is terrible if the story is true and if the prose is clean and honest." An endorsement of "grace under pressure" isn't far behind.
- The Charleston goes something like this: toes-in, heels-out, pivot one foot and kick the other, then reverse it. There are a dozens of offshoots from there, and, in the movie, Gil dances one with Djuana Barnes. Barnes was an American writer who spent the '20s in Paris, after visiting on a magazine assignment to write about the expatriate writers and artists on the Left Bank. Of James Joyce she wrote, plainly, that "he is at present, one of the more significant figures in literature."
- The final time Gil gets into the mysterious Peugeot, he's greeted by a man with a stern British accent. His name is Tom Eliot—better known as the poet T.S. Eliot. Gil, as usual, is incredulous. "Prufrock is my mantra!" he says, referring to Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." Fittingly, Eliot's other principle masterpiece, the longer, more difficult "The Waste Land," ends with the Sanskrit words "Shantih, shantih, shantih," which are recited at the beginning and end of peace mantras.
- Gil first meets Buñuel, the Spanish filmmaker, in the café with Dali and Man Ray—a party of surrealists—then again at a cocktail party, where Gil suggests the plot of a new movie. A group of people are at a dinner party and slowly realize that, for some inexplicable reason, they cannot bring themselves to leave. "Why don't they just walk out the door?" Buñuel asks several times, before walking away confused. A few decades later, Buñuel made *The Exterminating Angel*, in which a confined group of dinner party guests go increasingly mad.
- Belmonte was a Spanish bullfighter, perhaps the greatest of all time. He was also a friend of Hemingway, who introduces Belmonte to Gil, and a character in both *The Sun Also Rises* and *Death in the Afternoon*, where Hemingway wrote that Belmonte could "wind a bull around him like a belt." In a further bit of synergy, Belmonte, like Hemingway, committed suicide at gunpoint.
- In the moments before Inez and Gil finally break up, she tells him to stop living in the past. Gil, of course, quotes William Faulkner as telling him that "the past is not dead, it's not even past." Faulkner, while not quite a Lost Generation writer in the vein of Fitzgerald and his arch-rival Hemingway, visited Paris in 1925 after completing his first novel. The quote Gil uses is a slightly edited version of a line from *Requiem for a Nun*—and an allusion to the malleable nature of time (the fact that one never really knows when one is) that typifies Faulkner's work.
- On the *rue Royale*, Maxim's was the social and culinary heart of Paris at the end of the 19th century—*la belle époque*. Eugene Cornuche, the restaurant's second

owner, turned it into the Art Nouveau masterpiece that Gil and Adriana visit and that attracted luminaries like Marcel Proust and Ernest Feydeau. “It was an accumulation of velvet, lace, ribbons, diamonds and what all else I couldn’t describe,” Jean Cocteau, who throws a party in *Midnight*, said of the women at Maxim’s. “To undress one of these women is like an outing that necessitates three weeks advance notice.”

- The late 1800s were a time of economic prosperity in Europe—it was the Gilded Age in America—along with intellectual revival. In painting, it marked the arrival of the impressionists, and, soon, the post-impressionists: Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin, all of whom greet Gil and Adriana at Maxim’s. There, they lament that the true golden age had been the Renaissance, centuries earlier. It’s no surprise. Degas spent his younger days copying Italian Renaissance paintings in the Louvre.
- Immediately after Gil finds himself at his first 1920s Paris party, he meets Zelda and then Scott Fitzgerald. After a few moments of dazed conversation about writing, America, and the metaphysical possibility of Cole Porter actually playing the piano, Zelda declares that she is bored. “Let’s do Bricktop’s,” she declares, and a short, boozie car-ride later, the group finds themselves in a small, multi-ethnic night club filled with gorgeous dancers. The nightclub is Chez Bricktop, the Paris base of dancer and entertainer Ada “Bricktop” Smith. Smith was a talented vaudevillian and a savvy entrepreneur—Porter often hired her to entertain at his parties and upon seeing her dance the first time declared, “What legs! What legs!”
- Early in the film, Gil tries to dodge an outing with the obnoxious Paul and Carol by citing lunch reservations at Brasserie Lipp, a restaurant where an old professor of his once saw James Joyce eating “sauerkraut and frankfurters.” This detail actually has no significance. Joyce did live in Paris, but there’s no indication other than his Irish-ness that he might like sauerkraut and frankfurters. As Gil tells his fiancée Inez, this is not a story, it’s “just a detail.”
- At the Polidor, Hemingway introduces Gil to Dali, played to new heights of eccentricity by Adrien Brody. Dali tells Gil that he reminds him of a rhinoceros. Gil wasn’t the first. Dali was fascinated by rhinos, and several of his paintings featured subjects composed entirely of rhino horns. They grow in a logarithmic spiral, which, to Dali, signified the beauty of mathematics.
- The lazy jazz tune bouncing throughout the movie is “Si Tu Vois Ma Mere,” by Sidney Bechet. One of the first major jazz soloists, the clarinetist and saxophonist was born in New Orleans but landed in Paris in the mid-20s on a European tour with, among others, a young Josephine Baker (she’s seen dancing in *Midnight*). His time in Paris ended ignominiously: Bechet was jailed, then deported, when a passer-by was wounded during a duel that Bechet was a party to. The apparent cause? Another musician told Bechet he was playing the wrong chord.
- When Gil first walks into Gertrude Stein’s salon, Stein and Picasso are in the middle of a heated debate about one of his new paintings. She sees only Picasso’s sexual longings in the work. He claims to have represented the subtle beauty of his model—Adriana. The painting, which features a distorted, curvy figure on a beach, is a real one: “La Baigneuse” (The Bather), which he painted in 1928.