

Reviving the *Flâneur*

New identities for the modern urban stroller in
James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*
and Jean Rhys's *Good Morning Midnight*

Kevin Steinman



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Kevin Steinman

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

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Abstract

This thesis explores the modern urban spaces depicted in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* and Jean Rhys's *Good Morning Midnight*. It focuses especially on the city's mediation through the *flâneur*, a wandering, observant city figure who for the first time in these late modernist texts can be found outside the previous definition of white, Christian, straight male. The close reading of these texts allows views of Dublin, Berlin and Paris as semi-colonial space-time presences each faring differently from the approaching end of colonialism. My argument is that by investing the figure of the *flâneur* with non-native, non-imperial power to observe, these late modernist authors re-map their novels' cities as multi-vocal spaces, eschewing the binary code of insider/outsider which had reigned since at least the inception of modernity.

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Abbreviations

Quotations from the following works are cited in the text through these abbreviations:

- CK* Isherwood, Christopher. *Christopher and His Kind*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux. 1976.
- CW* Joyce, James. *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*. Ed. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann. London: Faber, 1959. Print.
- GB* Isherwood, Christopher. *Goodbye to Berlin*. London: Vintage, 1999.
- GMM* Rhys, Jean. *Good Morning Midnight*. London: Penguin, 2000.
- GS* Benjamin, Walter. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-89.
- U* Joyce, James. *Ulysses: Student's Edition*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986.

Introduction

This study investigates the ways in which *Ulysses* (1922), *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), and *Good Morning Midnight* (1939) re-present the cities of Dublin, Berlin, and Paris, respectively, in their novelistic worlds. These literary urban re-presentations, I will be arguing, demand a mobile, estranged perspective readily offered by the modern figure of the *flâneur*, revised and updated for late-modern use. The city, both symbol for and site of so many of the concentrated technological advancements which catalyzed the social, political and artistic changes of the age, enables and emboldens James Joyce, Christopher Isherwood and Jean Rhys to transpose the previously Christian, heterosexual and male *flâneur* into a new range of more marginal identities. These new identities of Jewish-Irish, homosexual and female, respectively, inscribe a metropolitan walker who is not only liminal, but at the same time more representative of modern cities' diverse populations. My argument is that, by problematizing the received *flâneur* figure, which had been posited and popularized by early modern authors from Joseph Addison to Edgar Allen Poe and Charles Baudelaire, the late modernist authors in this study achieve a new, non-hegemonic, street-level view on urban spaces which complements and catalyzes their new and subversive narrative approaches.

At the center of this study lies the intersection of two ideas crucial to the study of English literature in the twentieth century: modernism and the metropolis. To locate the space where these two notions meet, let us first briefly sketch out the two terms. The city, dubbed "modernism's primary subject" by Desmond Harding, is at the same time a "historical-cultural palimpsest" (Harding 13). James Donald's definition elaborates:

'The city' does not just refer to a set of buildings in a particular place. To put it polemically, there is no such *thing* as a city. Rather, *the city* designates the space produced by the interaction of historically and geographically specific institutions, social relations of production and

reproduction, practices of government, forms and media of communication and so forth.... *The city*, then, is above all a representation.... I would argue that the city constitutes an *imagined environment* (Donald 422, emphasis original).

Donald's view of urban space as "representation" and "imagined environment" describing the locus of various discourses and embodiments of power, combined with Desmond's notion of "historical-cultural palimpsest," provides a useful starting place for a definition of the city within this study on modern urban literature. Yet, in keeping with the multiplicity of narrative approaches used by modern fiction authors, it also leaves ample room for variation in putting these notions into artistic practice. We will return to this idea after a briefly reviewing modernism.

Modernism refers broadly to the philosophical movement(s) thought to have begun in the mid-nineteenth century (or perhaps earlier), and lasting until approximately the late nineteen-thirties. It is variously defined according to which innovations in philosophy or the arts critics observe as responding to (or accelerating – perhaps both?) a flagging confidence in the heavily reason-based Enlightenment. The "failure" of reason within modernism, in turn, will be seen to have something to do with the increased speed of life in modern cities, and the human mind's mounting struggle to keep up with frenetic pace of technological change which produced the trans-oceanic telegraph, trans-continental train travel, telephony, the automobile and the airplane, all in little more than two generations' time. The Impressionist aesthetic movement, for example, has been described as "capturing and giving form to the sense of illegibility of the city," with its characteristic blurred lines reinforcing the notion that the city was no longer " 'readable' " nor an integral whole (Cordua 84). Similarly, expressionism and cubism in representational art, and stylistic innovations in literature like imagism in poetry or stream-of-consciousness narration in novels and short stories have been seen as responding indirectly to various major developments within the structure of modern industrial thought, e.g. Charles

Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867), Sigmund Freud's *fin de siècle* focus on the subconscious mind, Neils Bohr's 1913 atomic theory and the First World War. As such, the modernist era certainly satisfies Lukács' definition of "great historical periods," as it was a time marked by "transition, contradictory unity of crisis and renewal, of destruction and rebirth" (Lukács 106-7). Here we read an echo of the extraordinarily modern notion of "creative destruction" which is so crucial to Marx's critique of bourgeois capitalism. Frisby, among others, has invoked this paradox in his reading of the modern Haussmannian reordering of Parisian streets (*Cityscapes* 119) – a momentous urban re-visioning to which we will return below.

Charles Baudelaire's definition of modernity found in "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863) is often cited as representative by scholars of the period: "By 'modernity' I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable" (13). Gluck posits Baudelaire's pronouncement as "undoubtedly" modernity's "earliest, and still paradigmatic definition" (2), a claim challenged by Arnfinn Bø-Rygg, who insists Chateaubriand was first to use the term in 1848, "hinting at a new world, and heightened self-consciousness" (Cordua 84).

Irrespective of anteriority, the concept of modernism¹ deserves narrower attention if we are to glean meaning from it with respect to the artists who worked under its aegis: whereas aesthetic modernism on the one hand saw the failed Paris revolution of 1848 and the subsequent period of commercialization and "philistinism" as repugnant; bourgeois modernism, on the other hand, viewed economic and material progress in the latter half of the nineteenth century as tantamount. Nicholls posits that *aesthetic* modernists' claims to

¹ Cordua notes the first known usage of the term "Modernism" is attributed to Jonathan Swift in a letter to Alexander Pope dated 23 July 1737 (103).

² Although most often associated with Baudelaire, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson notes that the first mention of *flânerie* occurs in an anonymous 32-page Parisian pamphlet published 1806 entitled *Les Flâneur au salon ou M. Bon-Homme: examen joyeux des tableaux, mêlé de vaudevilles* (Ferguson 26).

³ Critical work could not begin in earnest in the United States until 1933, as *Ulysses* had been banned until then stemming from a complaint against the morality of the "Nausicaa" episode, published in serial form in *The Little Review* (Chicago) in July-August, 1920. The ban, based on section 211 of the

“create the *authentically new* can be traced back to this early sense of a ‘false’ modernity, whose surface momentum conceals its inner sameness, its unceasing reproduction of the safe limits of the bourgeois world” (Nicholls 7, emphasis mine). The artist’s consciousness of this “falsifying” effect of materialism on modern art will be revisited throughout this study.

In my efforts to uncover any and all potentially useful tools for writing on the modern metropolis in literature, the figure of the *flâneur* has arisen repeatedly as a disaffected metropolitan wanderer, observing both nineteenth- and twentieth-century city scenes at a casual remove. “An overlooked and yet pivotal figure of modernity, the *flâneur* both defines and is defined by his perception of the outside world” (Gleber 67). His “devotion to the sketch of manners, the depiction of bourgeois life and the parade of fashions” (Baudelaire, “Painter” 4) makes him a “prototype of the modern novelist who focused on the everyday, as opposed to the elevated facets of life” (Gluck 3).²

Furthermore, the fact that this wandering figure may be found in novels not just by one or two, but by *many* of the most prominent modernist authors, from Virginia Woolf to Joseph Conrad, to the three authors named in the title of this study, indicates the potential usefulness offered by the *flâneur* figure in interpreting the city’s role in modern novels: “Conrad and Joyce present the city experience through the eyes of the *flâneur*, a strolling spectator who functions as a filter through which the incessant flow of impressions is catalysed and described” (Szczeszak 270). Demonstrating the wide influence of this figure, this thread of *flânerie* running through international modernism can be found prefiguring the three works of this study in the Christiania of Knut Hamsun’s *Hunger*:

It was nine o’clock. The air was filled with voices and the rumble of carriages, an immense morning chorus that mingled with the footsteps of pedestrians and the cracks of coachmen’s whips. This noisy traffic everywhere put me in a brighter

² Although most often associated with Baudelaire, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson notes that the first mention of *flânerie* occurs in an anonymous 32-page Parisian pamphlet published 1806 entitled *Les Flâneur au salon ou M. Bon-Homme: examen joyeux des tableaux, mêlé de vaudevilles* (Ferguson 26).

mood immediately, and I started feeling more and more contented. Nothing was further from my mind than just taking a walk in the fresh morning air.... A strange, delicate mood, a feeling of nonchalance had taken possession of me. I began to observe the people I met or passed, read the posters on the walls, caught a glance cast my way from a passing streetcar, and laid myself open to every trivial occurrence – all the fortuitous things that crossed my path and disappeared (Hamsun 6).

Here the spirit of *flânerie* infects Hamsun's protagonist, even despite his initial resistance to that most typical action for the *flâneur* – city walking. Through this study, I will be putting this figure's usefulness to the test, observing other interesting exceptions to "typical" Baudelairean *flânerie*, in an attempt to help read, through Joyce's, Isherwood's and Rhys's texts, three European cities of Modernist literature.

Walter Benjamin, a "cultural collector of dialectical images" (Hanssen 2), has been described by Hanssen as a "peripatetic philosopher... a critic on the go" (1). The fact that he lived the life of a wandering observer of European cities while writing his literary criticism and philosophy of art makes his work particularly fit to anchor this study of the *flâneur* figure in late-modern literature. Benjamin, whose "program... of philosophy" is described by his editor and translator Tiedemann as "the anti-idealist construction of the intelligible world" (Buck-Morss, *Dialectics* 175), turns to Baudelaire in his efforts to establish the philosophical "pre-history" of the modernist urban aesthetic. As Frisby notes, for Baudelaire, "the metropolis was the site on which the spectacles of modernity were played out" (*Cityscapes* 4). Thus, what Benjamin finds in Baudelaire's depiction of the *flâneur* is a figure capable of both traversing and interpreting new developments within Europe's metropolitan spaces.

Written during the nineteen twenties and thirties – the time roughly concurrent with Isherwood's and Rhys's compositions of their novels, and just after Joyce's – Walter Benjamin's criticism on the *flâneur* still remains central to the figure's understanding within literature today. In his formulation, the metropolitan idler attempted to overcome the "shock experience of modernity" via transformative observation of the city. He

achieved this observation by means of a “micrological... *new way of seeing*” (Hanssen 3, emphasis mine). This seeming transplantation of the romantic imaginary into the modern cityscape completed a movement from the rural to the urban that began (or at least continued) with Wordsworth’s denunciation of the “anti-rational industrial Victorian city of Vice” (Schorske, summarized in Harding 6). As noted by Davison, “like so many Modernists, Joyce was on some level a Romantic” (186). By giving new attention to the curiously romantic vision of the modern city wanderer, both Benjamin and the *flâneur* captured aspects of urban experience within literature which, before, had been either too fleeting to be represented or non-existent.

To the extent that Baudelaire’s influence may be felt as foundational in discussing modernism, Paris can also be seen, in an intriguingly complementary way, to be *the* modernist European city *par excellence*. It is, as Frisby notes, the “capital of the nineteenth century” (*Cityscapes* 31). In this sense, Paris exerts its metropolitan influence on Dublin and Berlin, as *already being* what those cities aren’t even capable of striving for: namely a palimpsest of international history steeped in revolutionary spirit and artistic and philosophical excellence (Harding 16). This collective urban anxiety may be read in Joyce’s journey to Paris as a young man, followed shortly thereafter by his subsequent return to the continent, abandoning his decidedly less-than-metropolitan Dublin to seek after authorial fame (Bowker 95-154).

Similarly, Weimar Republic Berlin’s claims to be the “new” city of modernity seem designed to establish Berlin, called “ ‘Chicago on the Spree’ ” for its rapid growth at the turn of the century, as a *Weltstadt* (Frisby, *Cityscapes* 17, 167):

I say now that it is a flash of prophetic vision, and no cheap publicity slogan, that has made the Berliners call their city *Die Weltstadt*. She is the coming metropolis of Europe. Unless some disaster overtakes her, she cannot but achieve that destiny. Not only is she young in spirit, she is young in body. Compared with London or Paris, she was made yesterday. She has no long unbroken history to tie her down to the traditions of another age. She is the only city in Europe that is moving with

the times, and she is gathering new knowledge, new art, new ideas to herself with the divine greed of genius (Chancellor 103).

Berlin's direct challenge to the continental European hermaneutics of Parisian dominance can be observed as early as its World Exhibition of 1896, calculated to exceed the pageantry presented by Paris' Exhibition in 1889 (Frisby, *Cityscapes* 167). Chancellor's "prophetic vision" above carries within it a foreshadowing ("unless some disaster overtakes her") of the return of nationalist, fascist Germany which drove Isherwood, among other marginalized exiles, from Berlin in 1933 – a rise which would also plunge Europe and the world into another world war.

Like questions of which cities may or may not lay claim to the title of modern European metropolis, Gleber outlines the received limits governing *flânerie*, noting that detached urban literary observation has been "the privilege of a bourgeois, educated, white, and affluent middle class; it has, above all, remained a privilege of male society" (Gleber 70). Brooker echoes this sentiment, naming the *flâneur* "a stroller, a gentleman of leisure with a scrupulous eye for fashion who moved from cafe to boulevard, arcade and opera" ("The Wandering *Flâneur*" 117). It is also worth noting that the literary city has a history of female identification: in Georg Simmel's exclusively binary formulation, male eyes gaze at her urban beauty (Petro 41). Meanwhile, Gillian Rose's *The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* posits female urban observers' resistance to male impulses to totalize the city, in favor of an acknowledgment of feminine non-omniscience (Parsons 7).

Thus the received rigid, ethnicized, gendered and classed modern circumscription of the identity of the literary urban walker proves crucial to this study, for it is exactly such hard and fast limits which Joyce, Isherwood and Rhys target in staking out hegemony-challenging liminal positions for their protagonists. These new viewpoints on the modern city may be accessed only after one reaches "beyond discursive constructions of cultural essence and colonial stereotypes" (Cheng 162). By synthesizing Cheng's and Gleber's

approaches, and adding a focus on sexual orientation (for Isherwood) to those ethnic and gendered lenses, the result covers the approaches I will use in this study.

In a similar vein, I will be arguing that a semi-colonial presence makes itself known in at least two of these texts. In Dublin's case its "exceptional situation" allows for the "overlap and coexistence of these two incommensurable realities which are those of the lord and of the bondsman altogether, those of the metropolis and of the colony simultaneously" (Jameson 60) during the years in which Ireland's struggle for independence was contested. Meanwhile Rhys's Paris buzzes with the memory presence of Caribbean island colonies and their destitute metropolitan cast offs. Like the colonialist dividing line between London's bonafide metropolitan status and Dublin's belated entry as a modern urban space – which of course can be seen as having been delayed by the British Empire for centuries siphoning off of Irish resources (Cheng 2) – the collective authorial questioning of just who is allowed to wander freely in the streets of late-modern European cities operates as an expression of these three modern artists' desire to "make it new." By challenging residual colonial attitudes in the artistic traditions handed down to them, Joyce, Isherwood and Rhys "explored alternatives to the discursive and hegemonic constructions of a dominant culture" (Cheng 7).

With regard to that tradition, Huyssens states: "Modernism was by and large the attempt to turn the traditional European postulate of high culture against tradition itself and to create a radically new high culture that opened up utopian horizons of social and political change" (qtd. in Brooker and Thacker 11). Thus, problematic though received tradition was to modernist authors, still it stood as a monument which demanded studious attention before it could be completely dismantled: Christopher Isherwood, for instance, "was already well acquainted with Baudelaire's urban imaginary, since he had translated his *Journaux Intimes* in 1930" (Wondrich 142). Of interest here is that the timing of that

English language publication places Isherwood's translation of Baudelaire during the time in which he lived in Berlin, forging a connection between the French poet's highly developed urban sensibilities and the young British author's own susceptibility to the "religious intoxication of the great cities" (Baudelaire, *Intimate Journals* 3). Joyce, ever one to forge his own artistic path, still exhibited interest in continental artistic developments in the form of the new stylistic device in Dujardin's *Les Lauriers sont Coupés*: interior monologue, also known as stream-of-consciousness. It was this new method which Joyce ingeniously used to communicate Leopold Bloom's revolutionarily synapse-fast visions of Dublin.

Dujardin's book was purchased at a train station kiosk in Paris (Bowker 104) at a time which, like most of his young life, was beset by the same sort of economic insecurity which would plague Jean Rhys's Parisian sojourns. As for Jean Rhys, her relationship to the French modernist tradition was complicated by the fact that it was her mentor/lover Ford Maddox Ford who introduced her to "Flaubert, Maupassant, ... Conrad" (Savory, *Jean Rhys* 41). Her education in continental modernism also included translating Francis Carco's, and her then-husband, Jean Lenglet's novels from French into English. The dissolution of her relationships with both Ford and Lenglet seems to have left Rhys slightly less conflicted with respect to the qualities of international modernist writing than by of the question of her identity as a Caribbean, English, or French author. Indeed, as Savory has it, writing itself has been called the country Rhys knew best (*Jean Rhys* 12). Certainly all three authors in this study shared a personal, biographical relationship to the central modernist theme of exile and metropolitan estrangement, although with sufficiently different causes. In investigating these authors and their works, I have found that this difference of circumstance only serves to deepen the multivocality of modernist fiction which results from their urban exiles.

In revisiting these differing circumstances which frame Joyce's, Isherwood's and Rhys's conditions of exile I will be invoking several methods of literary criticism, including the post-colonialism of Cheng, Said and Jameson; the queer theory of Sedgwick and Foucault, and the feminism of Woolf, Parsons and Gleber. Beyond these critical frameworks, I will also be leaning on the cartographic analyses of Hegglund and Harley to help shape and guide some of this study's central questions, such as: how and in what ways can the city be represented in and read from its narrative form? And what challenges must be acknowledged in the choice of such a writing/reading strategy?

On those difficulties presented by a reliance on mapping strategies for literary narration, De Certeau offers: "It is true that the operations of walking can be traced on city maps in such a way as to transcribe their paths... and their trajectories.... But these thick or thin curves only refer, like words, to the *absence* of what has *passed by*. Surveys of routes miss what was: the act itself of passing by" (97, emphasis mine). De Certeau posits that such cartographic insistence on the legibility of past urban movement is so problematic that it "constitutes procedures for forgetting" (97). We will return to this idea in the chapter on Rhys, who had much to forget in her Parisian perambulations.

But there are other problems, epistemological in nature, which arise when what the *flâneur* sees is given the privileged rank of "knowledge."

The complex dialectical mode of seeing figured in the *flâneur* and enacted in the narrative practice of realism is inherently unstable, and the epistemological assumptions of that practice are open to question. The privileged role ascribed to the detached individual vision of the novelist as narrator rests on the premise that seeing is equivalent to knowing (Rignall 115).

This notion that the frail subjectivity of human vision does not necessarily equate to certain, ontological knowledge had of course been broached in David Hume's *Enquiry of Human Understanding* (1748), under his terminology of *consequent* skepticism (XII 116-9, emphasis original).

Seen in the context of modern literary analysis, this epistemological problem still leaves us with certain blind spots, or “illegible” urban spaces:

The ordinary practitioners of the city live “down below,” below the thresholds at which [panoramic] visibility begins. They walk – an elementary form of this [panoramic] experience of the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban “text” they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other’s arms. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, eluding legibility. It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness. The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other (De Certeau 93).

Although De Certeau may be said to follow Benjamin’s anti-idealist example in his focus on the everyday (very much consonant with Joyce’s narrative approach and theme), what we are left with in his formulation above is a fully destabilized view of urban reality, fit for the post-modern time in which he was writing – or perhaps for the blind piano tuner in *Ulysses* – but not for protagonist Leopold Bloom. Though the aesthetic crises of modernism tend not to go quite this far, a crucial element of De Certeau’s urban worldview remains in all three of the works of this study, namely that of the “other”.

In *Ulysses*, *Goodbye to Berlin* and *Good Morning Midnight* there exists a strong creative relationship between the author of the text and the production of the literary city: “The urban writer is not only a figure within the city; he/she is also the producer of a city, one that is related to but distinct from the city of asphalt, brick, and stone, one that results from the interconnection of body, mind, and space, one that reveals the interplay of self/city identity” (Parsons 1). Parsons also notes Wolff and Pollack’s conflation of “*Flâneur* as social figure, and *flâneur* as metaphor for the artist” (39). Thus, Dublin is “produced” via Leopold Bloom’s perambulations, just as Berlin is “developed” by the ambulatory photographic method of Christopher Isherwood. Jean Rhys, too, walks her way

around problematic memory associations of previous, sadder days in Paris – filling in the outline of a past she claims she’d rather avoid.

In all of these instances, I will be arguing that the marginality of each author’s semi-biographical narrator weaves a thread of post-colonial discourse into these texts, already rich with significance. Along the way, I will investigate Harvey’s claim that Balzac’s “new kind of objectivity... inevitably helped produce the very situation it described” (83). This intensely generative force of willful creation gives us a sense of the stakes of such modernist artistry. Given that all three authors use the trope of *flânerie*, a “formulaic language of the modernist city space [which] seems to emerge from their individualized versions of reality” (Rummel 73).

Benjamin calls Baudelaire a “privileged reader of a special body of photographic work: time itself is portrayed as a photographer capturing the ‘essence of things’ on a photographic plate.” He “attributes to Baudelaire not the [technological] ability to develop such a negative, but rather a nearly spiritual “presentiment of its real picture” – that is, a “vision of it in its negative state” (Benjamin, *The Writer* 5). This near god-like ability to transcend technology and “read” undeveloped film is, in a sense, what all of these authors are doing with their works: sifting through memory in the form of diaries and maps to construct compelling texts of alienation framed by past city wanderings.

Before I embark on the main chapters of this study it remains to say that, where T. S. Eliot saw Joyce’s use of Homeric epic structure as a means of distancing himself from the raw materials of his text (Killeen), Isherwood’s use of camera “technology” may be seen to achieve the same effect. Although the latter bears particular resonance with respect to Benjamin’s idea of the authorial ability to glean a “presentiment” of the city’s “real picture” merely by reading it, all of the authors in this study at one time or another

demonstrate through blistering irony, withering sarcasm and epic mockery that sublime, reserved control of their materials, indicating a mastery of the urban literary *oeuvre*.

By adapting their artistic approaches to the whiplash rhythms of modern city life at the same time as subverting the waning modernist power scheme of colonialism, Joyce, Isherwood and Rhys give us Dublin, Berlin and Paris in novel form. That the eyes through which we read these cities belong to peripatetic outsiders comes with a new demand on, and a new possibility for readers. In a major reorganization of the ways in which the modern city is written and read, readers are asked (and allowed) to identify with members of metropolitan subaltern social groups who had been variously silenced, now newly and humbly announcing their presence in the late-modern urban milieu.

Who among us has not dreamt, in moments of ambition, of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm and rhyme, supple and staccato enough to adapt to the lyrical stirrings of the soul, the undulations of dreams, and sudden leaps of consciousness. This obsessive idea is above all a child of giant cities, of the intersecting of their myriad relations.

—Baudelaire, dedication of *Le Spleen de Paris*

1 Irish-Jewish *Flânerie*: James Joyce's *Ulysses*

Through his studies of Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin reaffirmed the *flâneur* as a figure of prime interest within mid-nineteenth century modernist fiction. Among recent analyses of the *flâneur* in late modernism, Anke Gleber's feminist review of theorists such as Benjamin, Hessel and Baudelaire points out the figure's historic maleness, thus finally opening it up to women as well. While I agree with Gleber that by limiting the term "*flâneur*" to males we falsely deny the literary city-walking exploits of women, I contend we may extend her claim even farther to include other groups also marginalized during the modernist period. This chapter treats the inscription of the *flâneur* figure in the urban wanderings of Leopold Bloom, whose outsider status as pacifist Irish Jew is confirmed by Joyce's portrayal of Dublin's vocal nativist, Catholic contingent. Bloom's ground-breaking *fin de siècle* perambulations through the Irish capital offer a "cracked lookingglass" (*U* 1.146) reflection of the city's painful transition from pre-industrial to bourgeois consumerist cosmopolitanism and independence, via the inner workings of modernism's other new urban space: a human mind.

Ulysses, it may be argued, is as famously central to modernist literature as it is to the genre of the novel itself. T. S. Eliot declaimed: "this book [is] the most important expression which the present age has found; it is a book to which we all are indebted, and from which none can escape" (175). Since its publication, *Ulysses* has served as both

encyclopedia and catalyst for innovation in modern and post-modern narrative strategies. Indeed, Eliot claimed that its multivocality “exposed the futility of all styles” (Ellmann 528), a pronouncement which may conversely be said to fulfill Bakhtin’s description of the novel as a genre as “a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized” (Lloyd 107). While it is beyond the scope of this paper to review the reception of this text in full, a summary, if in miniature, is in order.

The publication of *Ulysses* by Sylvia Beach’s Shakespeare and Company in 1922 offered fertile ground for a myriad of critical readings, evoking a multitude of responses. These ranged from the exclusively text-centric approach of the New Critics, who dominated literature departments in the United States during *Ulysses*’ first two generations of critical reception;³ to the more historically situated Homeric correspondences noted by Stuart Gilbert;⁴ to the geographical considerations produced by Hart and Knuth, and furthered by Seidel; to Kristeva’s feminist, psychoanalytic, post-structuralism; to Derrida’s eventual claim that the “unreadable” in Joyce demands a later, more learned audience (Nash 9). Pinning down thematic issues such as Joyce’s position on Irish national self-determination during the time in which he wrote *Ulysses* has likewise not been a simple matter. He has been seen, among other things, as apolitical, strongly nationalistic, strongly anti-nationalistic, European, Irish. Perhaps more than any other modernist work, the text’s bold conflation of symbolic, ultra-realistic *and* mock-epic modes of writing lends itself to nearly unlimited kinds of critical approaches yielding unending kinds of readings. As a result of *Ulysses*’ receptivity to multiple modes of criticism, to say nothing of its literary

³ Critical work could not begin in earnest in the United States until 1933, as *Ulysses* had been banned until then stemming from a complaint against the morality of the “Nausicaa” episode, published in serial form in *The Little Review* (Chicago) in July-August, 1920. The ban, based on section 211 of the United States criminal code (Parkes 283) was removed by judge John M. Woolsey on Dec. 6, 1933, followed a week later by the reversal of prohibition (Ellmann 666-7). Interestingly, the ban led indirectly to Sylvia Beach’s Shakespeare and Company first publishing the work (Ellmann 502-4).

⁴ *James Joyce’s Ulysses*. London: Faber, 1930.

sublimity, one may be overwhelmed (as I certainly was), by the amount of criticism available. The work is among the most commented upon in all of English literature.

Countervailing the lofty air which accompanies *Ulysses*'s canonic literary status is the profoundly earthbound nature of the character in whose consciousness the narrative spends the most time. Leopold Bloom's wanderings through the streets of Dublin offer views of the modern experience previously hidden from readers of even the most realistic urban texts. With Bloom we enter the toilet for his morning bowel movement, observe him gratifying himself voyeuristically on the beach and browsing soft-core pornographic literature at a second-hand bookstore. We also observe more family-friendly, quotidian daily rounds as he attends a church service and a funeral, shops for food, works, eats breakfast and supper, etc. I would argue the opening of these new, taboo areas within literature lends credibility to Karen Lawrence's claim that Joyce operates as both "canonical authority and disruptive iconoclast" (4).

Although these all-too-human quarters of urban life had been broached by Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope during the Enlightenment, Victorian era literature seems to have undergone a prim domestification in which such challenges to societal taboos became for a time even less acceptable than they had been.⁵ Interestingly for the purposes of this study, the increased vigilance against the Victorian depiction of taboo in social life and art coincides in Woolf's analysis with the inception of the British Empire (Woolf, *Orlando* 148).

Pre-Enlightenment, Joyce's closest literary ancestor with respect to these breaking of societal taboos may be Rabelais. Bakhtin, who deemed Rabelais "the greatest writer to complete the cycle of the people's carnival laughter and bring it into the world of literature" (12), observes that his use of parody and "grotesque realism regularly reduces

⁵ This conservative turn is critiqued brilliantly by Virginia Woolf in *Orlando* as a creeping dampness; a "disease" despised by Woolf as the "most insidious of all enemies" (146).

'higher' issues to the 'material bodily lower stratum.' ” Rabelais accomplishes this by placing “an emphasis on feasting and elimination, sexuality and death, which helps establish the characteristic time and space complex, or chronotope, of carnival” (Kershner 16). Bakhtin also stresses the regenerative nature of defecation and urination. In the case of Bloom, who has failed to produce a male heir, this could be seen as (patriarchally) symbolically significant, not merely scatological. Both “blessing and humiliating at the same time,” these images “debase, destroy, regenerate, and renew simultaneously” (Bakhtin 145-51) – a list that reminds me of Declan Kiberd’s claim that “[f]or Joyce the body was at once dignified and comic, sacred and soiled” (Kiberd 88). Of particular interest here is Bakhtin’s observation that the “regenerating and renewing element” of these images had been lost in “Europe’s literary consciousness” (152). If that is the case, then it might seem that Joyce is not inventing appreciation for the bodily within literature, but rather inciting its comeback.

Another common trope Bakhtin finds in Rabelais is his use of the language of the marketplace. His notion of its “unofficial[ness, its]... extraterritoriality in a world of official order and official ideology” (154) may prove especially useful as I investigate Bloom’s many ruminations on power and advertising during his walk through Dublin. In a most interesting parenthesis, Bakhtin never wrote on Joyce.⁶ Still, *Ulysses*’ own distinctive chronotope, very much of a piece with Bakhtin’s formulations, can be said to restore Renaissance Rabelaisian carnival, infusing in it Joyce’s own brand of carnal modernity.

My own interest in the *flâneur* figure has developed out of a broad desire to better understand the essential connection between European cities and modernist fiction. It is a chicken-and-egg question, surely: does the city produce modernism, or does modernism

⁶ Kershner notes the curious and regrettable absence from Bakhtin’s writings of any mention of Joyce’s work. She cites Clark and Holquist who “believe the omission... politically motivated.” She rounds off this thought with the opinion that Clark and Holquist miss the larger point that Bakhtin was disheartened with modern literature, and read mostly classical fiction (Kershner 17).

produce the city? Writing on Joyce's Dublin in *Ulysses*, Hampson answers: "movements of the characters through urban spaces produce the capital city" (61). Of course the opposite is also true: several critics have noted the influence of the modern city on the era's literature: "[a]t times, the detached gaze of the conventional realist observer proves to be essential for portraying the modern urban milieu, its ills and wonders" (Szczeszak 269). Thus what emerges from the chicken-and-egg question is a parallel to Simmel's reciprocal relationship of "cause and consequence" ("*Wechselwirkung*"), one he used to describe the relationship between the modern city and art exhibitions (Frisby, *Cityscapes* 103), but which I feel can just as well apply in the case of the modern city and the works of fiction that deal with and emanate from them.

Contemporary critics such as Brooker, Frisby, Szczeszak, Shields and Alter have pointed out the concurrent developments of modern urban fiction and the rise of the liminal city wanderer, observing his urban environs: "*Flânerie*... is a spatial practice of specific sites: the interior and exterior public spaces of the city. These include parks, sidewalks, squares, and shopping arcades or malls" (Shields 65). This practice, according to Shields, "retrieves the individual from the mass by elevating idiosyncracies and mannerisms as well as individuality and singular perspective of an individual's observations and point of view" (65). Of course not every critic has been equally pleased with this aesthetic development: Lukács' position that "Joyce-like shoreless torrent[s] of associations" are as poor at creating "living human beings... as Upton Sinclair's coldly calculated all-good and all-bad stereotypes" (105) alerts the student of literature that a crucial aesthetic is being contested here. Reserving judgment on that question momentarily, it may definitively be said that the *flâneur* "magnifies what is already waiting to be discovered" in the city (Tester 7), and is therefore a worthy object of this study. By focusing on the echoes of Baudelaire's *flâneur* in Joyce's canonical cornerstone

of High Modernist prose, I will draw on recent extra-textual trends in criticism, led by Cheng, Jameson, Moretti and others. These critics (and I) read *Ulysses* within a social, ethnographic framework that highlights within the text Bloom's freedom to walk within and gaze at modern Dublin.

Responding to Alter's assessment of the death of the *flâneur* already in Flaubert (11), and sensitive to recent claims of the overuse of the figure in criticism (Cianci, Patey and Sullam xiv), this chapter proposes that Joyce not only makes use of but breathes new vitality into the *flâneur* figure in *Ulysses*. By giving over so much of the narrative to the consciousness of Leopold Bloom, Joyce opens the figure to the possibility of being inhabited for the first time by a man identified, if not as "*Halachically Jewish*," then at least bearing "a multitude of European cultural markers of "Jewishness" (Davison 1).⁷ In fact, Davison argues that "Bloom's struggle as a Jew is the axis around which the realist novel of *Ulysses* revolves" (187).

As his ethnic background is only obliquely referred to by others in typically sly, Joycean fashion, Bloom's Jewish inner voice bears some of the weight of this identification. Joyce has inverted certain words in Bloom's internal monologue, giving his voice a characteristic Jewish expression of English: "I could mention Meagher's just to remind him. Still if he works that paragraph. Two and nine. Bad opinion of me he'll have" (*U* 13.1046-48); "Where do they get the money?... General thirst. Good puzzle would be cross Dublin without passing a pub. Save it they can't" (*U* 4.126-33).

There is at least one word order in each of the above citations that falls outside what linguists term "standard English." In the first example the object clause's first position in the final sentence reads as "non-standard." A more "standard" reading of that

⁷ As Harold Bloom also points out, Leopold Bloom is not technically Jewish, as his mother is Catholic. That Leopold Bloom falls outside the strict Talmudic matrilineal definition of Judaism, yet is consistently identified by Dubliners as Jewish is for Harold Bloom a major oversight, and evidence of the dominance of patriarchic/Christian perspective which permeates Dublin at that time (*Anatomy* 66-7).

sentence would be: “He’ll have a bad opinion of me.” In the second example, the verb and subject clauses have changed place, so that instead of “they can’t save it” we read, “save it they can’t.” Both examples may be seen to express Bloom’s subconscious, tenebrous linguistic memory of the greater syntactical flexibility of Yiddish, which, in contrast to English’s strict subject-verb-object syntax, allows for sentences to begin with verbs and direct objects.⁸ Most intriguingly, both of these examples, as well as other Jewish-inflected word or phrase “inversions” spoken by Bloom throughout the text, crop up in the presence of what Davison terms the expression of essentialized ethnicizations. For example: the “‘Jewish trait’ ” of money lending or the frugality and “non-Irishness” of Bloom’s abstinence from alcohol (201). That such “non-standard” English phrases accompany internalized ethnic/religious stereotypes is surely not merely coincidental, given Joyce’s thoroughgoing, obsessive compositional nature.

I argue that these ethnic essentializations function to demonstrate Bloom’s “non-Jewish Jewishness” (Davison 201). By switching “standard” English word order when thinking of things which trigger “dominant group” racial/ethnic stereotyping (Cheng 53), Bloom demonstrates that he has internalized certain of those European attitudes at the same time as he unconsciously reveals his ethnic heritage through latent syntactical inversions. Furthermore, Bloom’s Jewish-tinted English is consciously inserted into the text as a part of Joyce’s meticulous character study, differentiating his voice from *Ulysses*’ other narrators: Stephen, Molly, and the barfly in “Cyclops.” This “vocalic”⁹ differentiation is yet another clue of Joyce’s “concern with marginal groups and the transformation of complex individuals into self-hating, alienated Others” (Davison 187).

⁸ Shoebottom, Paul. “The Differences between English and Hebrew.” *Frankfurt International School*. Web. 6 May 2014.

⁹ I have placed scare quotes around *vocalic* because often in the text characters’ thoughts are presented to the reader as silently through internal monologue. Still, these unvoiced thoughts bear clear markings of Joyce’s characters’ highly evolved speech patterns.

At stake in a 1904 Dublin populated predominantly by a Catholic citizenry are a number of questions regarding the status of “the Jew” in the Irish capital city, following its first reckonings with Jewish emigration in the wake of late 1800s Eastern-European pogroms. These Jewish immigrants invite a myriad of ascriptive identifications which confirm Cheng’s reading of Said’s *Orientalism*. This text notes the late 19th century “binary typology of advanced and backward (or subject) races, cultures, and societies” (Said 206, qtd. in Cheng 18). This typology, in turn, has been used historically in a “self-sustaining cycle” (Cheng 18), wherein race and empire were conflated in a because “[p]opular beliefs in white superiority were probably conditioned by the success of Britain and other European countries in extending their influence over so much of the world” (Banton 77).

Parsons notes the broad power of signification located within the figure of “the Jew”: “[t]heorized, like the *flâneur*, into a critical metaphor, he becomes a figure outside history, whose conceptual boundaries can be stretched to encompass various types of exilic discourse” (86). “The Jew” provides an “actual and metaphoric embodiment of cosmopolitanism” within Europe, making the dislocation of modernity especially readable through their historic wandering (Parsons 85). Davison challenges Parsons’ claim of the Victorian extra-historical nature of “the Jew” (Davison 192) by positing that “Bloom’s conflicts reveal how European discourse about ‘the Jew’ subverted the mythic, ahistorical humanism at the center of humanist Modernism” (186). For, as Jameson reminds us, “the inner forms and structure” of modernism bear the marks of imperialism (44) such as those expressed by Haines, whose diagnosis of Britain’s “national problem... just now” is how to avoid “my country fall[ing] into the hands of the German Jews” (*U* 1.666-8). Reminding us that ghettos were originally built in medieval Europe to sequester and house Jews, Morton Levitt posits that, “European Jews [...] retained the potential for alienation and

suffering which would so attract the modernists to them” (93-4). Simmel also sees the symbolic power of wandering for describing evolving relationships such as those between Jews and the Irish:

If wandering, considered as a state of detachment from every given point in space, is the conceptual opposite of attachment to any point, then the sociological form of ‘the stranger’ presents the synthesis, as it were, of both these properties ... another indication that spatial relations are not only determining conditions of relationships among people, but are also symbolic of those relationships (Simmel, “The Stranger” 402).

The arrival of Jewish immigrants in Ireland not only more generally symbolizes the modern age’s own wandering quality of dispossession, but, critically, announces that the age of modernity itself has arrived *in Dublin*. Joyce’s oft-noted ambivalent opinion of “Ireland – an afterthought of Europe”¹⁰ and “the everlasting afterthought of the serious world” (*CW* 178) gives voice to his own frustration with the non-cosmopolitanism of his native land. In contrast to Berlin and Paris, Dublin was still a relatively small city in 1904.¹¹ Yet the impact of new patterns of immigration on the Irish capital may be seen in context not only of its recent history of mass emigration, largely to the United States, but also of its long history of immigration to the island from Europe.

For in fact, despite nativist claims to the contrary, Ireland was a heterogeneous place already before the mid-1800s: “Joyce’s Dublin is apprehended as the product of successive waves of migration” (Hampson 61). In his speech, “Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages,” delivered (in Italian) in Trieste in 1907, Joyce describes the Irish ethnic identity as a blending of “the old Celtic stock and the Scandinavian, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman races,” thus complicating nativist Irish claims that there was any longer (or perhaps that there ever had been) pure “Irishness” to which it was possible to return (*CW* 161). As

¹⁰ Nearly the same text appears in Joyce’s MS notes for page 53 of *Stephen Hero* (Cheng 66-7).

¹¹ 1904 Dublin was 1/20th the population of London (300,000 vs. 6,000,000; incidentally, Paris in that same year had 3.5M inhabitants, Berlin: 2M), and thus it cannot be rightly categorized as a large city. Alter mentions its “vestigial feeling of village-like community in this Irish urban space.” Yet its enormous rate of growth, coupled with the rise in advertising, connection via telegraph to New York, and arrival of immigrants make it “feel [...] like a big, modern city” (Alter 123).

Nolan points out in his reading of Lloyd's "Adulteration and the Nation," the "medley of heterogeneous styles" Joyce utilizes in *Cyclops* may be read as his stylistic answer to "Irish Nationalism's demand for a uniform civic purity" (80).

Cheng judges the claim of "any threads of racial purity within the motley fabric of Irish society [...] absurdity" (187). I agree with this, and with Alter's assessment: Joyce knows that "a culture – and a city is the capital of a culture – is a vast palimpsest in which one language is written, or indeed scribbled on top of another." Citing Bakhtin, Alter notes that, "Joyce's Dublin, like other modern cities elsewhere, is a city papered over with texts" (134). That Leopold Bloom is "both Jew and Irishman at once" (Gibson 43) is a fitting embodiment of Joyce's palimpsestic reading of his country's ethnic mix, and perhaps also a nudge toward the humanistic cosmopolitanism Joyce wished for his country's future (Levitt 94). Or, as Valente puts it, "the Hungarian-Irish baptized Jew [is] the very image of Ireland's unacknowledged ethnocultural hybridity" (76).

Valente's nuanced account of Joyce's "post-exilic cultural transnationalism" (73) hinges on understanding Roman Catholicism's complicit role in Ireland's colonization by Great Britain. Joyce references the twelfth century papal bull which granted Ireland to England in footnotes to his "Ireland, Island..." speech (*CW* 162). This followed Dermot MacMurrough's requests for the English to come to the island, resulting in "three quarters of [Ireland being] under English control" as early as 1250.¹² Colonial complicity such as this would seem to necessarily problematize any unreflective Irish-nationalist allegiance with the Roman Catholic Church. But was such a stance of objective, critical reflection on the deep connections between religious and colonial power generally available in Joyce's Ireland? I contend such a position could (perhaps only) be held by someone like Leopold

¹² MacMurrough is a controversial historical figure, and, as such, may be viewed as an exceptional traitor by Roman Catholic nationalists, rather than exemplary: "MacMurrough was been remembered only as a villain, the man singly responsible for Ireland's subjection by Britain" (Ranelagh 40). It is important to keep in mind that this illustration is Joyce's own.

Bloom, who, while attending a Catholic church service, is capable of observing – from outside the tradition – that the Latin is a “good touch”: it “stupefies them first” (*U* 5.350-1). This “first” invites questions of what follows. Is Bloom imagining a numbing of senses before surgery; perhaps a lobotomy? His comparison of the sacrament to a lollipop: “I bet it makes them feel happy...” (*U* 5.359-68) approaches sacrilege from a “native” Catholic point of view. But from an outsider’s perspective, such thinking could be called objective rationalization, and may even be seen as a not necessarily unsympathetic gesture. Through Bloom’s secular Jewishness Joyce bestows a measured, religious objectivity upon his character; from the corner seat in a pew (*U* 5.355) Leopold Bloom is free to observe the Roman Catholic Church with uninitiated eyes.

Andrew Gibson, in his thoroughgoing account of anti-Semitism in the Ireland of *Ulysses*, insists on situating such conflict within the specific history of turn-of-the-century Dublin. He notes various ways in which empirical British tolerance of Jewish emigrants was lorded over the colonially subject Irish, as a sign of the latter’s lack of cosmopolitan civility. This dualism of civilized/uncivilized, empire/colony, is exposed as reductive both in Cheng’s *Joyce, Race and Empire* and in Said’s *Orientalism*, which notes the late nineteenth century “binary typology of advanced and backward (or subject) races, cultures, and societies” (206). As noted above, Cheng’s critical response to this modern trope of binaries is to subvert such either/or structures by offering hegemony-subverting alternatives “to the silenced voices on the margins of dominant and centralized authorities” (Cheng 7). This disruption of authority, I argue, is one strong feature of the *flâneur* figure in modern literature. I believe it is also the main reason Joyce chose a man who identifies, and whom others would identify, as Jewish for his twenty-hour urban walkabout.¹³

¹³ In answer to Harold Bloom’s claim that Leopold Bloom is not technically Jewish, Levitt first cites David Ben-Gurion’s claim that anyone self identifying as a Jew must be Jewish, because he wouldn’t make that claim “unless he had to.” Levitt’s obverse of this corollary: “You’re a Jew if someone else says you are” (91).

“Native” Irish city contemporaries of Jewish immigrants, who were often skilled artisans, imputed to the latter an innate ability to adapt to the working conditions of urban modernity. This inscription, interestingly enough, “represented [...] the mirror image of the sturdy countryman; a figure who had adapted so well to the demands of urban life that he was inevitably the victor when competing with London-born” for jobs (Feldman and Jones 59). Thus Jews may here be seen as paradoxically both natively urban, and at the same time naturally sympathetic to country folk, two things that the text demonstrates were foreign to “native” Dubliners at that time. Stephen Dedalus, for example, can be said to struggle with both, as evidenced by his “scornful silence” in the presence of the milk woman (*U* 1.418), and his choice to spend a free hour by the water’s edge rather than elsewhere, say, the city center (*U* 3.61-505).

Stephen, though less hateful towards Jewish people than Deasy (*U* 2.346-2.449), Haines (*U* 1.666-8) or the Citizen (*U* 12.1552; 12.1666-7; 12.1796-8), demonstrates that he himself has not escaped his Dublin upbringing free of prejudicial thoughts toward them. This fact is brought to light by his recitation of an anti-Semitic song – “a strange legend” which Joyce has chosen to present complete with graphic representation of the staves of music notation – over cocoa with Bloom in the Blooms’ kitchen late at night (*U* 17.795-878). Bloom’s silence in response, and dour contemplation of the “ritual murder” contained in the song are noteworthy. Just as in “Hades,” when Mr. Power and Mr. Dedalus speak judgmentally about the “sin” of suicide, unaware of Virag Bloom’s (Leopold’s father’s) tragic end (*U* 6.335-41), Leopold Bloom’s status as (son of) “secret infidel” remains hidden here from Stephen.

Or does it? Joyce dangles the intricate complexity of the social nature of Bloom’s Jewish identity before the reader in the moments leading up to Stephen’s unfortunate song choice:

What, reduced to their simplest reciprocal form, were Bloom's thoughts about Stephen's thoughts about Bloom and about Stephen's thoughts about Bloom's thoughts about Stephen?

He thought that he thought that he was a Jew whereas he knew that he knew that he knew that he was not (*U* 17.527-31).

This playful and cunningly opaque passage seems to indicate that whereas Bloom thought Stephen thought he was a Jew, Stephen was absolutely certain that Bloom knew that Stephen was not. What goes unasked and unanswered by Joyce in this passage is whether or not Stephen is in fact conscious of Bloom's Jewishness. Therefore we are unable to conclude definitively whether the song can be most logically read as unconsciously or intentionally hurtful to the host. Although it might reasonably be argued that Stephen's introverted self-concern at times dims his awareness of others, it is strictly speaking not impossible that he possesses knowledge of Bloom's Jewishness, thus making room for a sympathetic reading of this moment. Cheng appeals to this theoretical possibility by pointing out that "[i]n *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce would turn these derogatory comparisons on their head, making Jewishness, Orientalness, and otherness redeeming concepts and comparisons..." He "accent[s] the flattering aspects of such comparisons [and suggests] a solidarity of the marginalized and othered" (Cheng 27).

In addition to the wandering Jew's synecdochic representation of urban modernity's general displacement, the figure may also be seen both by Irish nationalists as a metaphor for their own journey to independence (*U* 12.1241), and by exiled artists such as Joyce, Shaw, Wilde and O'Casey as a symbol for their homelessness after leaving Ireland to practice their art (Ranelagh 177). Of these artists-in-exile Karl and Magalaner felt that "More than any other writer of this century, James Joyce has come to be a symbol of the artist-exile in contemporary society" (205). That the nationalists' narrow views on appropriate artistic representations of Irishness were one of the reasons for these artistic

exiles, points out just one of the many paradoxes and problems with fixing Jewish symbolism within the Irish national context in one place.

The paradoxical outsider/insider relationship set in motion by this new Jewish migration becomes even more complex once we situate it within the British Empire's tenuous grip on the Irish capital city during that time.¹⁴ The (perhaps) final conceptual hurdle in this intricate tangle of ethnic identity/identification is cleared when we acknowledge that even an Irish nativist may, from a post-colonial standpoint, be seen as hegemonic outsider to the colonial metropolis of London and the Crown. These complex, often contradictory, multi-layered representations are only some of the problems we must attempt to untangle as we investigate Leopold Bloom's mobile observations through Dublin's daylight and darkness.

1.1 The Wandering Stranger of Dublin: Bloom as Outsider

Morton Levitt calls Joyce's use of Bloom "the first such significant use of [...] the Jewish metaphor in Modernist fiction" (92). This claim indicates that Joyce had fulfilled the modernist mantra to "make it new" by, among other things, broadening the definition of literary hero to include a member of Europe's most discriminated against, downtrodden people. One of *Ulysses*' strongest references to the tragic history of Jewish oppression occurs, tellingly enough, when Leopold is absent. During the *ad hoc* meeting-of-the-minds at the *Weekly Freeman*, Professor MacHugh remembers John F. Taylor's speech as an example of Ireland's finest oration:

Why will you Jews not accept our culture, our religion and our language? You are a tribe of nomad herdsmen; we are a mighty people. You have no cities nor no wealth: our cities are hives of humanity and our galleys, trireme and quadrim, laden with all manner merchandise furrow the waters of the known globe. You

¹⁴ Wyndham's 1903 Land Act resulted in a dramatic change setting the stage for revolution: it "weaken[ed] the economic and political base of the landlord class while consolidating an agrarian-based conservative society with Catholic values centering on the family, land inheritance and the Church" (Ranelagh 170).

*have but emerged from primitive conditions: we have a literature, a priesthood, an
agelong history and a polity (U 7.845-50).*

For all the men in the room, which at this point includes Stephen, Egyptians lording their culture over Jews is understood as a moving analogue to Great Britain's cosmopolitan, hierarchical, cultural colonialism of pre-industrial Ireland. This dualistic intellectual schema was a byproduct of and parallel agent of the British Empire's military might: "Britain had devised a mythology of knowledge that played a global role in consolidating the British Empire as a secure symbiosis of knowledge and power" (Richards qtd. in Hegglund 170). What is important to note is that this binary analogy is made moments after Bloom, the text's only Jewish representative, receives the sarcastic "*Pardon, monsieur*" (U 7.417) from Lenehan after he bumps into him, then is mocked *in absentia* by Lenehan for his peculiar walk. O'Molloy and Lenehan share a smile at the boys who ape Bloom's gait after departing that very room where Jews are later lauded (U 7.440-51). These ungenerous feelings toward "the Jew" in their midst indicate that they are merely co-opting the Jewish narrative, however historically apt it may be, to describe feelings of inferiority as a result of their own colonized position, rather than truly sympathizing with the suffering of the Jews. Here lies the crux of Bloom's position as a liminal figure within the text. Though he is trusted with menial business deals, at their conclusion his reward is nothing more than a rude reply. To Bloom's communication of his partially successful errand with Keyes, editor Myles Crawford responds dismissively, "He can kiss my royal Irish arse!" (U 7.991).

That this marginal status is required for Bloom to be classified as a *flâneur* is highlighted by Frisby who insists on the "*marginality of the flâneur's location within the city and within his class*" (*Cityscapes* 33, emphasis original). Bloom's position as outsider is sketched out in the conversation between Nosey Flynn and Davy Byrne. Again, Bloom is absent (in the restroom) as Nosey fills Davey in on Bloom's abstinence from

drunkenness – which places him squarely outside Joyce’s portrayal of that which is “typically Irish” – and his canny avoidance of signing his name to contracts, reminiscent, as above, of Davison’s “Jewish traits”. These observations are capped off by Nosey’s skeptical speculation (perhaps incorrectly, Joyce never confirms this one way or the other) that Bloom is a member of the Freemasons who has some secret source of income (*U* 145-6). While Flynn concedes that “He has his good points,” these external observations of Bloom, so helpful in establishing his liminal position within Dublin society, are framed within the context of “giv[ing] the Devil his due” (*U* 8.984), rather than plainly praising the man for his generosity, kindness, and accepting nature.¹⁵

John Henry Menton’s dismissive snub of Bloom’s tactful, courteous tip that his hat had a dent in it also exemplifies the latter’s status as outsider (*U* 6.1010-1033). Although the basis for this treatment is unknown to Bloom, the reader learns the grounds for Menton’s cold behavior: he is a former suitor of Molly Bloom. Throughout the unfolding narrative, we come to learn of a great number of former lovers of Molly who all would have presumably similar grounds to snub Bloom, if given the chance.

Molly is a source of Bloom’s marginalization in more than just this indirect way. Since their sexual relations ceased following the death of their second child, Rudy, ten years ago, he has been an outsider with respect to his marriage. Throughout *Ulysses*’ daylong narrative he avoids being home so as not to interrupt his wife’s tryst with Blazes Boylan. That he is far from blasé, but rather obsessed with the impending act, is a fact testified to by the several times he either thinks of (*U* 8.695; 8.1063), or anxiously attempts to avoid seeing Blazes Boylan (*U* 8.1168). He has even left his house key at home, because he did not want to disturb the slumbering Molly by returning upstairs to get them (*U* 46).

¹⁵ Bloom is among the first to donate (generously) to Paddy Dignam’s family after his death, and throughout the text he humbly defers to individuals who are rude to him without speaking rudely in return, to pick only two examples from the many in the text.

Bush notes that Bloom's "equanimity" (*U* 17.2177-94) following his being presented evidence of Boylan's affair with Molly must be read in context of his status as "an immigrant in a colonized diaspora" (Bush 138). I take this to mean that a half-Jew in Ireland becomes accustomed to the limitations of his sphere of power. The cuckolded husband has a long tradition in English literature, with John from Chaucer's *The Miller's Tale* offering an early, if not the very first, example. Given the canonical high visibility of this first outwitted husband, Bloom's kiss on Molly's bottom upon his arrival back home is particularly resonant. He is both Alisoun and John combined, doubly frustrated and humiliated, yet bound by loyalty to his wife.

Tying these public and domestic threads of alienation together, Szczeszak observes:

The central wandering figure in *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom, is estranged from Dubliners because of his Jewish origin and gentle nature. He is alienated from other Jews because he does not obey the rituals and traditions of his creed. Finally, he is like a stranger to his wife after ten years without sexual intercourse.... Thus he is homeless and secluded in two ways: he does not belong to the Irish Catholic society, nor does he feel comfortable in his house. He rejects the private, and, at the same time, he is excluded from the public (289).

In short, after sending Milly to work as a photography assistant (*U* 54), Leopold Bloom, "competent, keyless citizen" (*U* 17.1019), stands alienated in one way or another from everything in Joyce's text. Gibson formulates a double alienation from not only British colonial rule, but also from the Irish Catholic community surrounding him, making Bloom an "extremely effective weapon against colonial discursive and ideological formulations" (Gibson 13). That is to say, his distance provides him a perspective which others do not necessarily have, allowing him discursive room to comment upon and critique the city in which he lives.

Here, amid such abject alienation, we find an unlikely source of urban power which Joyce has tapped in to. In a country occupied by a declining empire, where agitation is mounting toward Ireland's independence, in a society struggling to respond to a new emigrant group of which he is not technically a part, and yet cannot but be identified,

Leopold Bloom, who confuses both his Italian opera and Hebraic tradition in equal measure, is set loose to wander through a city at the threshold of modernity without his house keys – afraid to return home before dark, lest he confront his wife’s adulterer. Yet in the wake of all this paralyzing modern dislocation, Leopold Bloom even-temperedly guides the reader through Joyce’s home city, offering a distanced, universally anti-colonial perspective only such a thoroughly disconnected man could. In fact, he has arguably led more individuals through the streets of Dublin than any flesh and blood tour guide ever has. He is modernism’s Irish-Jewish *flâneur*.

1.2 Leopold Bloom’s Mensch-*flânerie*: A Non-Colonial Re-Mapping of Dublin in *Ulysses*

Where does a man so radically dispossessed go in a semi-colonial, modern city? First thing after breakfast, the answer is naturally: to the toilet. In an episode seemingly calculated to shock,¹⁶ Bloom takes a daily newspaper for a morning ritual many readers might find familiar (*U* 56-7). Hampson’s statement that “Dublin is produced [...] not panoptically, but through the movements of its characters through its spaces” (64) invites us to put down the map of Dublin we might be clutching in hopes of plotting *Ulysses* in “reality,” and rather build a new visual image in our head as we follow Bloom’s travels. This first stop in the outhouse (after fetching breakfast at Dlugacz’s) alerts the reader that our itinerary will not be a luxurious, Grand tour of Dublin’s finer sights, but rather a very Rabalaisian, down-to-earth exploration. Furthermore, Bloom’s perception of Dublin may be described as “micrological” (Hanssen 5), focused as it is on what Benjamin describes as a “new sense of reality” obsessed with “chronicle, document, detail” (*GS* 3:194). This “new sense of

¹⁶ Virginia Woolf at first found herself stuck on the “indecenty” of such scenes, before admitting the quality of Joyce’s work: “[A]n attempt to get thinking into literature—hence the jumble” (Heffernan). Ezra Pound, too, voiced his disapproval of the toilet episode by taking “his blue pencil to the offending episode,” cutting it from publication in *The Little Review* (Bowker 244).

reality” comports with “[t]he increasing overstimulation of man,” which is seen as “the hallmark of modernity” (Haller 115). Such modern hyperstimulation, combined with a compulsion to document and detail, feature prominently in Joyce’s exploration of Dublin via Bloom’s consciousness.

But what kind of map will result from Bloom’s journey? And whose map will it be when finished? These and other interesting questions are taken up by Heggund in his excellent piece on cartography within *Ulysses*. First, he emphasizes the implied “impression of detached objectivity” maps falsely give. Quoting Harley, a historian of cartography, he underlines the fact that “[t]he steps in making a map - selection, omission, simplification, classification, the creation of hierarchies, and ‘symbolization’ – are all inherently rhetorical” (Heggund 167-8). Thus we encounter, in the epistemological space granted to maps by their readers, certain claims to truth which deserve to be questioned and investigated.

Driving home one potential consequence of this point, Heggund insists that the Ordnance Survey map, the result of a project undertaken by the British Empire from 1826-52, may be usefully “understood as an aesthetic object that prompts a critical consciousness of spatiality rather than as a static document in a closed economy of dominating imperial eyes and compliant colonial landscapes” (167). The Ordnance Survey is described categorically by Duffy as a, “ferocious colonial project of Anglicization” (38). Escaping these various strictures, and in spite of its dependence on the exactitude of cartography, *Ulysses* ultimately rejects the static logic of the map in favor of a more dynamic, open-ended view of space (Heggund 166). These claims will be important to keep in mind as we follow Bloom’s perambulations, because the literary cartographic image which forms in his wake will, in my view, generate a new kind of map,

free from imperial impulse, and therefore also free from any negative consequences which may result from it.

Another way of answering the question, “What kind of map does *Ulysses* produce?” comes from Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*. Citing this work’s distinction between mapping and tracing – the former being creatively active, the latter merely “propagating redundancies” – Hegglund insists that “[e]ach reading of a map is a walk upon the stage, a unique narrative that changes with each imagined or actual itinerary” (175-7). This interpretation of mapping as dramatic creation serves as a fitting framework for Bloom’s journey, as evidenced by Joyce’s choice to bring us into the toilet with Bloom, rather than just the well-worn modernist realist paths of James or Dreiser which lead us from kitchen to street, theater, workplace, restaurant. Rummel observes the narrative strategy of *flânerie* as a “doubly-peripatetic move” involving the reader following after the *flâneur*. She cites Poe’s narrator in “The Man in the Crowd” who, after fruitlessly following the man in the crowd for a whole day, discovers meaninglessness behind the “endless repetition of a doomed existence”: he becomes, “an Ahasver, a wandering Jew” (Rummel 63-8). Or, as Szczeszak puts it, “Leopold Bloom’s wandering through the city signifies an eternal roaming, homelessness, and a never-ending search for identity” (290). Readers of *Ulysses* bear witness to a similar revelation as they follow along with Bloom’s foreordained avoidance of Molly’s liaison with Blazes Boylan.

Finally, we become aware through the incredible number of thoughts and sights processed during Bloom’s modern city wanderings that “[n]egotiating a city means coping with a superabundance of messages and symbols” (Kalliney 749). Therefore, as we shall see, a focused mental acumen is incumbent on Bloom (and the reader) in order to process and sort these overwhelming sensual and symbolic stimuli. So to those critics who have

opined that *Ulysses* is not “about” much, I would offer that they may have missed Joyce’s clever strategy of inviting the reader to debut as city map-maker. The journey’s the rub.

Next on Bloom’s itinerary, after the toilet, is a roundabout walk to a non-local post office, where there awaits a letter from a flirtatious correspondent addressed to his pen name, “Henry Flower.” This letter from Martha Clifford is the latest in a series of covert love letters. According to Simmel, secrets may be maintained by the “anonymity of metropolitan existence” (Frisby, *Cityscapes* 127). But this secrecy is not a given in 1904 Dublin, still growing at that time into its metropolitan bonafides. This is why, according to Hart and Knuth, Joyce has Bloom wander out of his neighborhood and into another one in order to pick up the letter from Martha (25), and why Bloom gives Martha his botanical alias. Both elements of subterfuge conspire to ensure that the post office clerk won’t recognize his true identity, nor will the people he passes on these “non-native” streets. In fact, readers learn Molly has already sniffed out the hidden correspondence (*U* 18.45-60). This deceptive wandering – which Hart and Knuth argue forms the cartographic/lexical shape of a question mark (25) – completed by tearing up the envelope underneath the railway bridge (*U* 5.300-2), prefigures anti-heroes of noir crime fiction. Bloom’s reluctance to consummate the innocent flirting acts as an ironic twist, and Molly’s “I wish somebody would write me a loveletter” (*U* 18.134-5) serves to deepen the pathos of their present marital situation.

In what may be construed as a prefiguring of the type of transgressive meandering Bloom performs in picking up Martha’s letter, Balzac’s “Ferragus” exhibits a cartography “intensely spatial and moral,” whereby subjects from one neighborhood put their lives in peril by venturing out into neighborhoods of different classes (Harvey 79). Harvey also links Park’s essay “On Social Control” with Balzac here, recording Park as saying: “social relations are inscribed in the spaces of the city in such a way as to make the spatial pattern

both a reflection of but also an active moment in the reproduction of the moral order” (79). Bloom’s innocent flirtation gives the lie to the most dangerous of these moral figurations, while still offering titillating possibilities of danger; though, in this case, of a largely comic nature.

In Benevolo’s detailed account of Baron Haussmann’s straightening of Paris’s tangled streets into broad boulevards, a years long project begun in 1850, he notes the strategic value of wide avenues for Napoleon Bonaparte’s Second Empire. Knotty, pre-industrial streets were much easier for revolutionaries to erect barricades upon, as outlined in the procession of revolutions decided in Paris in 1789, 1794, 1799, 1830, and 1848 (Benevolo 169-79).¹⁷ In Bloom’s meandering, evasive morning walk to the non-local post office we can read a comic re-figuration of that Parisian revolutionary spirit that prefers crooked streets to straight routes. Of course in pre-industrial Dublin, one does not need to reverse time to find crooked pathways with which to throw off the moral police. One needs simply to cross the Liffey.

Patrice Petro’s “Women as Spectator and Spectacle” highlights Bloom’s voyeuristic looking which, in the city, can at times be frustratingly obstructed – as in the case of the woman in front of the Grosvenor Hotel. Bloom’s internal voice narrates: “Watch! Watch! Silk flash rich stockings white. Watch! A Heavy tramcar honking its gong slewed between. Lost it. Curse your noisy pugnose. Feels locked out of it. Paradise and the peri. Always happening like that. The very moment” (*U* 5.130-3). In contrast to this common urban occurrence of physical objects’ untimely interposition frustrating sensory fulfillment, out by the ocean at the city’s edge, he is treated to a full view of Gerty MacDowell’s femininity, in which he fully indulges, one may even say, overindulges (*U* 284-313).

¹⁷ These urban “renovations” displaced 15,000 individuals, and “transformed a medieval city into a modern city” (Short 33).

Here on the urban periphery, Simmel notes the special set of rules which governs the interaction of social groups. Sandymount Strand qualifies as an urban “empty space” which offers a place for mediation and “expression of sociological interaction” (Frisby, *Georg Simmel* 131). This possibility of mediation might have something to do with the clearer lines of sight, and can also be attributed to the place’s location along the urban margins. Outside the bustling rush of human and vehicular traffic, these “empty” spaces offer respite from the city’s overabundance of visual stimuli, allowing Bloom both a physically unobstructed and temporally unlimited view of Gerty, culminating in a brief nap (*U* 284-301). Here on the ocean’s edge Joyce finds the farthest remove still within Dublin from the “shock of legibility” (Pensky 115) that Benjamin ascribes to the modern urban existence.

Simmel’s anti-totalizing approach to the process of retrieving plankton-sized data from the ocean of urban experience is reminiscent of Bloom’s meticulous observational methodology during his day-long quest. “From the outset, the world of things in no way confronts the mind, as it might appear, as a sum total of problems whose solution it has to gradually master. Rather, we must first extract them as problems from out of the indifference, the absence of inner connection and the uniform nature with which things first of all present themselves to us” (Simmel, “Massenverbrechen” qtd. in Frisby, *Cityscapes* 100). Bloom’s observation of soldiers going in for lunch, following the ones who have just eaten, offers one practical example of Simmel’s idea:

Cityful passing away, other cityful coming, passing away too: other coming on, passing on. Houses, lines of houses, streets, miles of pavements, piledup bricks, stones. Changing hands. This owner, that. Landlord never dies they say. Other steps into his shoes when he gets his notice to quit. They buy the place up with gold and still they have all the gold. Swindle in it somewhere. Piled up in cities, worn away age after age. Pyramids in sand. Build on bread and onions. Slaves Chinese wall. Babylon. Big stones left. Round towers. Rest rubble, sprawling suburbs, jerrybuilt” (*U* 8.484-91).

Critical as this passage is in its historiographical presentation of the concentration of power through land ownership, it still falls well short of the revolutionary fervor feared by Napoleon III which inspired his Haussmannian urban renovations. Nor can this observation be said to be explicitly directed at the British crown. Still, it seems more generally an attempt at reconstructing the modern life Bloom observes around him, which ends up seeming not so very different from the ignominious anti-individuality of medieval serfdom which modernity reputedly saved us from (Simmel, "Money" 17). And mild though it may be, that reconstruction contains an astute, abstracted critique of medieval-style, hereditary, concentrated, colonial power.

"Poor" Paddy Dignam's death provides Joyce an opportunity to explore Anglo-Irish rituals surrounding the burial of the human body from Bloom's marginalized Irish-Jewish perspective in "Hades." His cab journey to the graveyard with Jack Powers, Simon Dedalus and Martin Cunningham is a significantly winding one through the streets of Dublin, producing a snakelike introduction to the novel's environs. The casual observation Bloom makes with regard to the practice of burial, namely the unnecessary amount of room horizontally oriented graves take up is interesting (*U* 6.764-5). It seems to this reader that the thought occurs to Bloom as merely an idle business idea, meant to maximize profits of the undertaker he has been considering. But soon this thought leads to a more critical examination of Dublin's penchant for memorializing the dead with

saddened angels, crosses, broken pillars, family vaults, stone homes praying with upcast eyes, old Ireland's hearts and hands. More sensible to spend the money on some charity for the living. Pray for the repose of the soul of. Does anybody really? Plant him and have done with him. Like down a coalshoot. Then lump them together to save time (*U* 6.928-33).

This severe, over-pragmatic judgment on the sentimentality "wasted" on memorializing could be read as cold or unfeeling toward the memory of the dead, if not for the actual, acute social needs of the living of Dublin at the turn of the twentieth century. Given the

degradations of pawning furniture (*U* 8.28-40), begging their father for money (*U* 10.668-85), and begging for food (*U* 10.270-80) which junior, female members of the Dedalus family must later endure, Bloom's observations here seem not unmerited. Again, I would argue that such critical observations of "native" rituals seem much more likely to be made by someone standing at the edges of Dublin society, as Bloom does, than by someone fully ensconced in that society, such as his fellow carriage riders. It may reasonably be argued, given their jocularity during the ride to the cemetery and reactions afterwards, that they take such costly memorialization as a meaningful, if not entirely healthy religious ritual.

Symbols of colonial power in Dublin are brought to the reader through the eyes of Leopold Bloom during his city perambulations, including the military poster at the post office where he collects Martha Clifford's letter. His judgments, though negative, show a certain reserve. This particular image of "royal Dublin fusiliers. Redcoats" is judged by Bloom to be "too showy." At first this critique seems bound up in his own insecure masculinity: "That must be why the women go after them" (*U* 5.68-9). Still, Bloom has not missed the political implications of publicly posted colonial symbology in a semi-colonial Dublin. "Maud Gonne's letter about taking them off O'Connell street at night: disgrace to our Irish capital. Griffith's paper is on the same tack now: an army rotten with venereal disease: overseas or halfseasover empire. Half baked they look: hypnotised like. Eyes front. Mark time" (*U* 5.70-3). Such mild, yet politically aware observations seem balanced when we consider the Citizen's tirades in "Cyclops."

A very different sort of example of the British colonial presence in Dublin is observed in the half-finished statue of Irish revolutionary leader Wolfe Tone. As Thornton points out, Tone's popularity as a freedom fighter for Ireland made him a great hero with separationists, who wanted to honor Tone's noble acceptance of execution after capture during a revolutionary attempt. Plans for a memorial statue were begun in 1898, one

hundred years after his death, but only the foundation was laid (226-7). Thus in “Wandering Rocks,” “Five tallwhitehatted shadwichmen between Monypeny’s corner and the slab where Wolfe Tone’s statue was not, eeled themselves turning H.E.L.Y’S and plodded back as they had come” (*U* 10.377-9). Hegglund notes the alternative potential (cartographic) history of Dublin implicit in this: “The statue is constructed and dismantled in the space of a sentence, and for the merest moment we see a Dublin in which the martyred Tone is given a proper memorial....” This demonstrates the way in which “[n]arrative has the unique power to evoke alternative histories and transformed spaces” (181). It is important to note that this observation is *not* made by Bloom, but by the third person narrator in “Wandering Rocks,” one of the few times the third person narrative is not occupying one of the text’s many characters. This may well be the closest thing to Joyce’s voice in the text.

“Wandering Rocks,” it can be argued, may also be described as the chapter where Stephen and Bloom take a back seat, and the city itself comes most clearly into focus. This chapter, more than any other in *Ulysses* is cited as “abandon[ing] narrative in favor of geography” (Hegglund 166). Nineteen mini-sections, each centering on a different character, weave a complex fabric of time and space, framed by the journeys of the two “masters” Stephen professes to Haines that he serves in “Telemachus”: Father Conmee, representing “The holy Roman catholic and apostolic church”; and the Viceregent Earl of Dudley, representing “The imperial British state” (*U* 1.643-4). The result is “not a linear narrative but a manifold text of intersecting journeys and discontinuous spaces and places” (Hampson 62). So it is only appropriate that one of the more intriguing images of this chapter is Tone’s half-finished statue, unseen by any of the main characters, because “according to Lukács in *Realism in Our Time*, the rich semiotic universe of the modern

city was emptied of its significance, its objective meanings liquidated by Joyce's modernist techniques" (DiBattista 23).

Simmel, discussing the power contained in the scale of representation within architecture, writes: "feelings have a threshold in consciousness" which may be overcome and thus be expressed by the form of a building. Aesthetic effectiveness in this schema may be defined by form's ability to exceed in scale the threshold necessary to achieve "feeling." Here we may begin to imagine the literary map of Dublin Joyce is building with *Ulysses*, in large enough scale as to have eclipsed that threshold of consciousness which Simmel names ("Die Aesthetische Quantität" 192-3). In this way I would argue that "Wandering Rocks" succeeds in bringing about a new way of reading the city, trading on Joyce's pioneering artistic use of near life-sized scale in his "mapmaking".

In "Aeolus" Bloom's workday at the *Freeman* unfolds, beginning with yet another strong symbol of colonial power – Nelson's Pillar. For 157 years this tower offered the best panoramic views of Dublin to visitors and locals alike; for ten pence one could climb the stairs for an unprecedented view of the Irish capital.¹⁸ The trolleyman's cry, "Blackrock, Kingstown and Dalkey, Clonskea, Rathgar, and Terenure, Palmerston Park and upper Rathmines, Sandymount Green, Rathmines, Rinsend and Sandymount Tower, Harold's Cross" (*U* 7.2-4) gives us Joyce's "verbal route map" at the beginning of "Aeolus": unmediated, mimetic. It seems to me that Alter is correct in stating that these tram cars "catch Joyce's imagination as an image of the incessant motion of the city as well of its interconnectedness" (124).

Once inside the offices of the *Weekly Freeman and National Press* and the *Freeman's Journal and National Press*, Bloom encounters loci of power more centrally based than posters of Redcoats or statues of Nelson. From these offices emerge the

¹⁸ When a 1966 bomb exploded destroying the pillar, damaging cars but injuring no one, it left an empty base. This mirrored the Wolf Tone empty foundation for six ironic days until it, too, was destroyed ("Nelson's Pillar." *Wikipedia*. Web. 3 Feb 2014).

centralized information paid for, in part, by the advertisements Bloom's sales work secures. As Mr. Braden, the owner of the press, sweeps by, Bloom registers "the liveried porter raise his lettered cap as a stately figure entered... It passed staelily up the staircase, steered by an umbrella, a solemn beardframed face. The broadcloth back ascended each step: back. All his brains are in the nape of his neck, Simon Dedalus says. Welts of flesh behind on him. Fat folds of neck, fat, neck, fat, neck" (*U* 7.45-58). Though it is telling that this economic powerhouse becomes disembodied into an "it," Bloom defers again to others' opinions before supplying his own. By confining his commentary to Braden's corpulent physical impression, Bloom continues to demonstrate his will to stand well inside the extremes of judgment offered by others, while leaving it up to the reader to extrapolate what he actually thinks of the man.

Moving into the foreman's office, Bloom encounters Nannetti, a man of "iron nerves" (*U* 7.128), whose seat on the city council makes it possible that he may one day be called mayor. This, in spite of his Italian heritage, speaks to the possibility for non-"native" Dubliners to rise to prominence. Bloom deprecates, as is his wont:

Slipping his words deftly into the pauses of the clanking he drew swiftly on the scarred woodwork.

HOUSE OF KEY(E)S

- Like that, see. Two crossed keys here. A circle. Then here the name. Alexander Keyes, tea, wine and spirit merchant. So on.

Better not teach him his own business.

- You know yourself, concillor, just what he wants. Then round the top in leaded: the house of keys. You see? Do you think that's a good idea? (*U* 7.129-46).

Bloom's self-conscious humility in the presence of Nannetti is framed by the urgent, pulsing, relentless mechanical "Sllt... Sllt" (*U* 7.174-5) of the printing press.

Hegglund insists, "one of the most important lessons of recent critiques of cartography is the recognition of the social inequity concealed by the seductive abstraction of mapping." But he also argues that maps must be recognized as more flexible than that reading implies: "still they encode relations of cultural exchange rather than simply the

top-down exercise of power” (188). Throughout “Aeolus” the reader is presented with a network of newspaper men and hangers-on who demonstrate with their conversations one aspect of this notion of cultural exchange – brushing up on their rhetoric while not accomplishing much of anything. In this context “Aeolus” brings to mind the United States metropolis Chicago. Its popular identification as the windy city comes not, as is popularly presumed, from having the United States’ highest velocity winds, but because of the blustery, verbose nature of its historical political operatives (many of whom were Irish immigrants). In light of the ineffective bravado which surrounds him, Leopold Bloom continues to impress the reader with his ability to get a job done while prostrating himself before colleagues of higher rank who range from dismissive to abusive.

I want to argue that this combination of Bloom’s work ethic and his humility may be seen as an embodiment of Heggland’s principle of cultural exchange, in so far as Bloom’s travels themselves can be read as a form of mapping. If, as Heggland claims, *Ulysses* “hover[s] between” the “distant, abstract, ahistorical” cartographic mode of reading, and “individual moments” relying on “partial views and situated knowledges” (166), then Bloom’s diffidence can be read as a consistent invitation to a provisional, non-paradigmatic reading of the map of Dublin which results from his movements.

The question must be asked in this study: can Stephen’s own wandering role in *Ulysses* be termed *flânerie*? Certainly there is evidence linking his own existential homelessness as intellectual artist to Leopold Bloom’s everyman outsider. Yet whereas Bloom’s interior monologues are “outer-directed,” thus allowing true observation of the city around him, Stephen’s are inner-focused (Kiberd 82). This would seemingly preclude any serious question of whether Stephen’s movements constitute *flânerie* in a classic Baudelarian sense, while leaving open the question of whether Joyce has perhaps modified the figure for use in his *Telemachiad* by a brooding modern intellectual.

1.3 Advertising as the “Key” to the Map/Text of the Cultural Landscape of Modernism

Throughout Bloom’s wandering – and not only when he’s on the job – advertising is often on his mind. While some readers may perceive in this concern for advertising techniques a certain anti-intellectuality, or read into it a simple knuckling under to bourgeois capitalism, Bloom’s analyses, read in light of Benjamin’s theory of advertising, in fact emerge as astute, nuanced observations of new historiographical trends within modern capitalism. Benjamin lauds “leaflets, brochures, newspaper articles and placards” because “the ready language of these forms shows itself capable of immediate effectiveness” (Buck-Morss, *Dialectics* 17). Furthermore, these observations align with the vantage point of the *flâneur*; after all, both the always-researching advertising man and strolling city observer collect their quarry as they traverse the city streets.

Max Pensky’s “Advertising and Dialectical Images” concludes by discussing Benjamin’s recollection of Bullrich Salt, a “natural health” product which advertised “extravagant” health benefits verging into the spiritual (128). According to Pensky the Bullrich advertising campaign in Berlin during the years 1929-33 was “innovative ground for experiments in urban advertising.” Its use of translucent signs backlit with electric lights, and enlarged, paper-mache heads on street walkers bearing advertising copy aided sales of this “advertising powerhouse” in a measurable way (129-30).

In light of Pensky’s research, Bloom’s own ideas for new methods of advertising, which went unheeded at Healy’s, seem ahead of their time. His suggestion that Healy hire “two smart girls” to sit inside a “transparent showcart... writing letters, copybooks, envelopes, blottingpaper. I bet that would have caught on” (*U* 8.130-42) proves visionary in light of Bullrich Salt’s advertisement methods in the much more metropolitan Berlin a generation later. But Leopold Bloom has not let conservative discouragement from

Dublin's Wisdom Healy stop him from exploring new avenues for promoting more advanced ways of marketing the sale of goods. During his pre-lunch walk, for instance, he finds at river's edge a new space for advertising:

His eyes [...] saw a rowboat rock at anchor on the treacly swells lazily its plastered board:

*Kino's
11/-
Trousers*

Good idea that. Wonder if he pays rent to the corporation. How can you own water really? It's always flowing in a stream, never the same, which is the stream of life we trace. Because life is a stream. All kinds of places are good for ads (*U* 8.88-96).

Of particular note here is the subtle turn his inner narrative takes in "Because life is a stream." This sentence transforms Bloom's more passive observations into a creative, provisory new advertising "copy," voicing his trade insight into the register of advertising's own pithy linguistic mode. This merging of marketing with aesthetic modes of poetic symbol construction hints at Benjamin's "dialectic image." For Benjamin the dialectical image is both "the quintessence of method" and " 'the' historical object itself" (Pensky 114). Thus, here, the phrase "Because life is a stream" functions both as the (imagined) advertisement itself, and the methodology for achieving organic representation of the idea of advertising on a river.

Benjamin's idea provides an additional layer of interest, for, parallel to the way in which the city can be seen to be both setting and subject for modernist fiction, so too can the advertising image conjured at a whim by the gifted marketer Bloom function as the "quintessence of [his] method" of creating such images. The mark on Bloom's memory made by this advertisement is apparently deep enough that it surfaces again throughout the day. That his professional interest in marketing concepts seeps into his off-the-job consciousness seems fitting, as advertising is the *lingua franca* of capitalism, and a governing force in modern life.

Leopold Bloom's *flânerie* through the streets of Dublin, and the pages of *Ulysses*, creates a new kind of space for modern urban literature encapsulating both the Irish capital city's busy core, and its less frenetic margins. His humble carriage and deferential pacifism stand him in good stead, given the potential danger lurking in the Citizen's drunken revelry. The composite image of Dublin that results from Bloom's meandering daylong walk pulls no punches with regard to the complex issues at stake in pre-revolutionary, semi-colonial Ireland. That these issues are filtered through his consciousness to the page means that it is only right that they bear the marks of his characteristic geniality, which always stops short of damning that which he knows to be unjust.

The map of Dublin that may be said to result bears the marks of Bloom's philosophy of "love... the opposite of hatred" (*U* 12.1485) to an equal extent as that to which Joyce's masterpiece bears the marks of his own inimitably multi-vocal style. Joyce's controls character and style as compositional elements throughout, breaking new ground with his Irish-Jewish *flâneur*. In doing so he updates the mainstay figure of modernism popularized by Baudelaire while at the same time enabling Ireland to transcend the hegemonic, limiting binaries of colony/Empire, nationalist/royalist, if only in the literary realm.

“Berlin... appears to be no more than a mechanism; a phenomenon of addition; a mechanically assembled volume, a bare quantum.”

- Wilhelm Hausenstein (1932)

“A metropolis? On Potsdamer Platz, my dears, you can hear the chickens clucking.”

- Kurt Tucholsky (1928)

2 The Homosexual *Flâneur* in Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*

After *Ulysses* extended the possibilities for the *flâneur* figure's identification in the nineteen-twenties, that inclusive, broadening process would stride into ever newer territories in the following decade. With the publication of *Goodbye to Berlin* in 1939, another modern locus of identity opened to English literature's observant urban stroller, namely that of the homosexual male. Set during the collapse of democratic Berlin from 1929-1933, *Goodbye to Berlin*'s semi-autobiographical narrative bears legible marks of its author's same-sex desire, albeit conspicuously guarded. Compared to the no-holds-barred perspective the reader is offered into the process of the mind of Leopold Bloom, Isherwood's narrator offers very little in the way of overt commentary on his urban observations; instead the reader is called upon to sift through realistically rendered conversations and urban descriptions, in a sense filling the gaps of personality left by the relatively shadowy figure who brings the story to life. The cause of this distance from the reader will be shown to have much to do with the author's homosexuality, an identification far more controversial during his Berlin years than it is today. Christopher Isherwood's non-normative sexual orientation, although obliquely situated and evasively discreet, can still be seen to contrast sharply with the presumed straight male *flâneur* figure in Benjamin's studies of Baudelaire, and in nearly all other critics who made use of the figure until the late nineteen-twenties.

In exploring the veiled (homo)sexual identity of Isherwood's (self-)consciously distant narrator, I will use elements of queer literary theory to help situate my claim within the larger context of approaches to lesbian and gay writing. Kath Weston, in her article "Get Thee to a Big City," states: "coming out and developing a gay identity has often gone hand in hand with becoming a sophisticated urban dweller at ease with urban life" (Binnie 172). Despite moving to "the city of 'coming out' " (Kemp 179), the sophisticated pose designed to demonstrate comfort with urban life expressed by Isherwood's narrator emphatically does *not* accompany a coming out in *Goodbye to Berlin*. Yet this is no reason to ignore the sexuality of the narrator. In fact, I would argue that the conspicuous and heavily constructed silence on the question of Isherwood's narrator's implied sexual orientation speaks loudly to the difficulties associated with open homosexual perambulation in the modern city – even in a relatively accepting one, such as Berlin.

One of the intriguing aspects of this novel is circumscribed by the very fact of Isherwood's personal sojourn to Berlin, a city where homosexual expression was known to be more tolerated than in London and certainly more so than in rural England, the home of his youth.¹⁹ By including evidence for this claim, among which his biographies, autobiographies, letters and travel writing from the period can be seen to play a part, I will demonstrate that Isherwood's nomadism between major European cities may be read, not unlike Joyce's flight from Dublin to Trieste, as a "spiritual quest" (Vanita 104); a movement away from stifling attitudes and toward more accepting ones. In his case, however, the attitudes which Isherwood found constraining in England located themselves in sexual rather than in artistic or national politics. Here I aim to further develop the idea of the modern city as both "cause and consequence" of modernism, adding to the myriad of

¹⁹ For material on the late nineteenth century "homosexual crisis" and "decadence" in London, see pages 95-116 in Matt Cook's *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 2003.

artistic influences which may be found there the growing acceptance of “alternate” sexual identities within their anonymous and highly concentrated urban milieu. As Roberta Wondrich puts it, in *Goodbye to Berlin* we read the “city as the elected location for the construction of a personal, sexual and ideological identity” (132).

Ruth Vanita points out that Isherwood’s travels “were part of a larger, still continuing, historical pattern of gay people leaving home for sojourns in places where they feel freer precisely because they are foreigners there” (104). Therefore, the notion of the urban stroller’s foreignness, so important in establishing Leopold Bloom’s credentials as objective Dublin observer, can also be found here in the case of Isherwood’s Berlin. But in contrast to the strong resemblance observed between *Ulysses*’ and *Goodbye to Berlin*’s use of the *flâneur*-as-outsider, the difference in the quantity of criticism written on the two works is significant, and therefore worth mentioning.

The recent renewal of critical interest in Isherwood is well deserved in accordance with his estimable literary talent. Although such a renewal may also be partly ascribed to the growing interest in queer literary theory over the last generation, it remains the case that one of the stronger voices available in Isherwood criticism today is still Isherwood himself. His two (semi-)autobiographies, *Lions and Shadows* (1938), and *Christopher and His Kind* (1976) issue key ideas which even today can aid readers in framing interpretations of his novels. Foremost among these is the almost mythologizing notion (from the latter) that “[t]o Christopher, Berlin meant Boys” (*CK* 2).

Here, almost competing with the confessional content of the sentence, we observe the arguably *postmodern* authorial trick of third-person displacement within the autobiographical mode. By naming himself in the third person, Isherwood distances his author persona from his “real,” biographical self, resulting in an approach now termed “autobiografiction” (Saunders 6-7), which he used liberally throughout his

autobiographical writings. By situating biographical “historical reality” in this self-consciously literary way, Isherwood opens a space for critical distance, presumably, to pose at some limited form of objectivity. What emerges is a jovial retrospective tone, merrily in control of exactly which biographical facts are divulged. Biographer Page considers Isherwood’s notable “Berlin meant Boys” statement an attempt to “falsify the record” by oversimplification (Page 35). This sly autobiographical strategy is one the author so artfully adapts as narrative method in *Goodbye to Berlin* and his other Berlin novels, a strategy which may be described as a Foucauldian “subjectivization;” or, an active “government of the self by oneself in its articulation with relations with others” (“Subjectivity and Truth” qtd. in Carr 3). One important problem I will be investigating in this chapter is the difficulty presented to readers by the “subjectivized” elusiveness of Isherwood’s narrator, which I find strongly tied to his aim of discreetly obscuring his sexuality from us.²⁰

Vanita posits Oscar Wilde’s death at the beginning of the twentieth century as an archetype of the kind of suffering endured by homosexuals who stayed within the boundaries of their home places (105). This archetype is revived rather unexpectedly and uncomfortably for Christopher in “The Landauers,” when Herr Landauer grills him on the question of whether “English law [was] justified in punishing Oscar Wilde, or was it not justified? Please tell me what you think?” Isherwood’s “Well...” and “ears burning red” (*GB* 184) demonstrate his reticence in opining publicly on this matter. If we seek a reason for his circumspection, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick paints the “pseudo-opposition of homosexual ‘versus’ heterosexual” orthodoxy underpinning the “homosexual panic” of modern England as “cripplingly knotted into the guts of British men” already by the mid nineteenth-century (508-9). Sedgwick also notes Bray’s observation of the “ ‘pogrom’ -like

²⁰ Isherwood’s seeming uneasiness with blatantly disclosing his homosexuality through literature can be seen to resolve itself in *A Single Man*, (1964) which centers around a semi-autobiographical, openly homosexual university professor.

structure” of the legal persecutions of “molly houses,” post-Restoration sites for homosexual subculture (509). Given that Jews – represented here by the Landauers – and the queer community share common histories of systemic persecution, Isherwood may in fact risk little by answering Herr Landauer’s question freely. Ultimately, despite the momentary discomfort of his evasive silence, Christopher must know that he is safe at the dinner table of the liberal, educated Landauers; at worst, he is mostly likely only being teased.

Although of course Wilde died in exile and his judgment and imprisonment was meted out in his “second home” of England – not his native Ireland – I take Vanita to mean that Wilde stood as a figure of late Victorian homosexual suffering *in general*, and not as an absolute, *concrete* example of the home/penalty and away/freedom schema for which she argues. At any rate, from her famous and cautionary illustration we may conclude that the stakes of sexual identity in late modernist Europe were still not only very high, but, especially in the British literary realm – and evidently also beyond – legendary.

Describing the destination of Berlin as a “crucial place of transit for the British culture of modernism,” Sara Sullam notes the city’s facilitation of “translation and exchange” (146). This nomadic identification is borne out in visits by authors connected to Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth Press in the late nineteen-twenties. Vita Sackville-West’s own sojourn to Berlin in 1928-9 resulted in an acknowledgement of the disparity between “censorship in Britain” and “the licentious atmosphere in Berlin” (Sullam 146): “Personally, I should like to renounce my nationality, as a gesture; but I don’t want to become a German, even though I did go to a revue last night in which two ravishing young women sang a frankly lesbian song” (Sackville-West 280). Kemp quotes her rather less equivocally: “Oh that filthy, filthy place. How I loathe it” (190).

Further contextualizing Sackville-West's ambivalence about her experiences in Berlin, it may help to recall that as recently as the late-nineteenth century Berlin remained a rather unlikely travel destination for the British bourgeoisie. The city was then one of the unhealthiest in the world with "indigestible cuisine" causing bad sleep (Vizetelly 122). It also was a metropolis of the "second degree in all aspects of urban life," other than around Friedrichstrasse and Königstrasse (Schulz-Forberg 283). Though this reputation would begin to change around the turn of the century, Berlin still struggled against former perceptions of it as a backwater frontier town, to say nothing of its status as the capital of England's recent enemy in the Great World War. Over the course of the 1920s alone, Berlin became first the "city of the future," then had this reputation deflated by the recession in the middle of that decade, only to regain its future-oriented label at the end of the decade (Schulz-Forberg 340). Described by Boyd White and Frisby's meticulous study of the city's history as an "anonymous vastness," the city itself contained "a sense of beginning afresh, cut off from historical patterns and expectations" (368-9). Isherwood, who arrived in the city in 1929, must have experienced this newness as auspicious, if not inspiring. That same year Chancellor wrote: "If ever there was a city of youth, it is Berlin" (12).

Southern German critics of Berlin's herky-jerky, belated style of urban sprawl contended that it paled in every way before Paris and other, more "organic" continental cities. "Paris... is a flower of nature; it is a landscape, a fairy-tale picture, where tropical vegetation is hidden in the boulevards.... Brussels blossoms, Antwerp grows rampant. Berlin is constructed; it has fabricated itself rather than been born" (Hausenstein 31). I read in this passage an apt parallel to Isherwood's narrator's own corresponding, Foucauldian, "subjectivized" quality. This resonance of these two forms of willful "artificiality" makes Berlin a fitting framework for Isherwood's late-modern text.

Of the El Dorado in Lutherstrasse, Schulz-Forberg writes: “Even though [Chancellor] did not mention the word ‘homosexuality,’ it was clear to the reader what he was alluding to when he claimed: ‘This cabaret is being included more as a warning to unwary tourists that anything else’ ” (Schulz-Forberg 355). Considering the legal and moral difficulties involved in the “publishing of overtly homosexual” writing (Wade 14), it may be understood that to the exact same extent that sexual liberty was viewed as a strong attraction to Berlin for visitors such as Sackville-West, W. H. Auden and Isherwood, it might also be seen as a moral danger for conservative, straight tourists. Paul Achard, a visiting Frenchman, writes: “Dead-serious people visit the Eldorado too, and come out torn to bits by these young people. Morality has no business here. Homosexuality, just like beer, horseradish and delicatessens, is one of the country’s specialties”²¹ (Schulz-Forberg 356). Thus the task Isherwood set himself with *Goodbye to Berlin* was a delicate balancing act: to take readers into the places of ill-repute for which the city was famous, he had to withhold the notorious place names. This sets up what could be called a modernist “queer dialectic,” where what is not said avoids the alienation of a potentially straight readership, while making recognizable to members of the homosexual community important places within that community which are available, if one is able to recognize the signs. A similar “coding mechanisms” strategy of “hiding/telling” was adopted by Gertrude Stein and Djuna Barnes in their attempts to chronicle female (homo)sexual expression in Paris during the same time period, as noted by Amy Wells-Lynn (82).

I very much agree with Sullam’s claim that Isherwood’s literary depiction of Berlin was “born and created in transit” (147). Given this, it is worth noting that the consciousness he displays of the city’s own self-image is more grounded in cross-cultural awareness than the touristic missives sent back by the likes of Sackville-West. Whereas

²¹ “Homoseksualitet er, i likhet med øl, pepperrot og Delikatessen, en av landets spesialiteter.” Translated from the French by Gøril Eldøen; translation from Norwegian to English mine.

she and others who deigned to visit blanched at the fear of “Germanification” that might result from staying, Isherwood’s own sojourn in Berlin lasted almost 4 years, long enough for him to learn the language well enough to communicate passably, though perhaps falling shy of native proficiency.

With the savvy of a local he registers the city’s own self-awareness in *Christopher and His Kind*: “Wasn’t Berlin’s famous ‘decadence’ largely a commercial ‘line’ which the Berliners had instinctively developed in their competition with Paris? Paris had long since cornered the straight girl market, so what was left for Berlin to offer its visitors but a masquerade of perversions?” (CK 29). If the jaunty tone of this passage perhaps overstates his case, Isherwood’s epistolary description in October 1932 of his in-process *Goodbye to Berlin* to E. M. Forster as an “indecent bumptuous stupid sort of novel which I fear you won’t like”²² (Zeikowitz 18) betrays a much less confident concern. This letter is just one of many exchanged by the two authors collected in Zeikowitz’s *Letters between Forster and Isherwood on Homosexuality and Literature*. Given the mutual respect shown in Isherwood and Forster’s epistolary rapport, the fact that Isherwood was so concerned about his British mentor’s response to his gritty re-visioning of Berlin demonstrates the high stakes involved in such a boundary-pushing artistic project.

Wondrich calls Berlin “a true centre of cultural and artistic innovation and vitality, and, at the same time, also a decadent, economically depressed and aesthetically drab place, which, nonetheless provided inspiration and existential fodder to the maturing artist” (131). Writing of Isherwood’s interest in Berlin as a destination she adds:

The main motivation that prompted the promising young writer to experience the ‘abroad’ of the agonizing Weimar Republic in Berlin from 1929 to 1933 was in fact not so much the fascination for a mythical city of European culture, as its lure as an erotic pole of attraction, notorious for its sexual freedom (131).

²² Forster’s *Maurice*, which dealt openly with the theme of homosexuality, was published posthumously according to its author’s wishes in 1971, although it was completed in 1914 (Wade 14).

Put another way, “[t]he openly-practiced homosexuality of Berlin seemed brave and honest to the inhibited shameful ‘Younger Generation’ of British students” (Blayac 59). Stephen Spender validates this theme in a 1930 letter to Isherwood’s publisher Lehmann: “There youth had started to live again, free of the shackles of the past, a life without inhibitions, inspired by hope, natural humanity and brotherhood in the springs of being.” Romantic missives such as this formed “the gospel of naivety, of the Holy Land of Weimar Germany, handed down from Auden to Isherwood, from Isherwood to Spender, from Spender to Lehmann” (Blayac 59). In keeping with the bohemian idealism espoused by this chain of British visitor/immigrants to Germany, Schulz-Forberg offers one possible, utopian result: that “[a] culture of sane paganism would spread a healthy amorality... opposing the generally perceived hypocrisy of morals within Western modern society” (345).

That Christopher Isherwood’s eponymous protagonist/narrator is referred to by various names – “Herr Ishyvoo” (3), “Chris” (26), “Christoph” (103), “Christopher” (108), “Herr Christoph” (124), “Mr Isherwood” (183) – offers textual evidence of the “subjectivized” evasiveness of the novel’s narrative presence. In starkest opposition to the overwhelming extent to which Leopold Bloom’s thoughts are made available to the reader in *Ulysses*, *Goodbye to Berlin* leaves one with only the vaguest sense of exactly what thoughts are going through its narrator’s head.

The narrator consequently hovers on the edges of the dramas he has witnessed like a character in limbo. Whenever he seems about to enter the action as a participant, Isherwood closes the scene or extricates his fictive counterpart from self-exposure, as if it was he (which for the main part it was) and not a narrator within his control who was about to reveal himself in his true colors.... Invited by the author to identify with “Christopher Isherwood,” yet constantly thwarted by his passivity and reticence, the reader tends to project on to the narrator feelings outside the control of his creator. Moreover, far from drawing no attention to himself, the narrator’s enigmatic withdrawal from any commitment positively *invited the reader to concentrate* on “Christopher Isherwood’s” *hidden responses* and attitudes to the bizarre life he is witnessing (Finney 144-5, emphasis mine).

Parker also comments on this problem, noting Isherwood's artistic narrative "policy of non-involvement." Isherwood's "public role as a writer" combines with his distanced narration "to provide an accurate record of a city and a society perched on the edge of an abyss" (Parker 198). From this passage one gets the sense that the artist is consciously avoiding getting too close, so that he does not get drawn into that urban abyss. Wondrich takes this notion farther, classifying Isherwood's distant narrative stance as "voyeurism and disturbing non-commitment" (134). Whether one reads Isherwood's distance as historiographically necessary or potentially morally problematic may rest on the recognition that there are more than merely aesthetic choices at work here.

In *Identity and Community in the Gay World*, Carol Warren notes that, as a result of stigmatization from normative, "straight" society, homosexuals form a secret world that "fosters a clear-cut identity as well as a close knit community." This secrecy, in turn, becomes "the centrally important facet of the self" (Warren 5). That such secrecy which helps establish "stable identities" is attended by a latent danger of discovery of hidden ritual was noted by Simmel. Disclosure of secret rituals runs the risk of threatening "the very existence of the [secret] society" which "makes itself into a counter-image of the official world" (*Sociology* 358-60)²³. Furthermore, Warren highlights the complexity faced by members of the homosexual community when engaging in "relationships with the straight world": these relationships "involve the management of stigma and the concealment of the essential self even under conditions of friendly or familial intimacy" (Warren 70).

Parsons' advocacy for the "more consciously adventurous" nature of female *flânerie* (40), true though it is when set against the realm of straight male *flânerie*, fails to take into account the potentially dangerous city walking of a homosexual man. This figure

²³ Simmel, who, according to Frisby was "the first sociologist of modernity" (*Fragments* 39), describes modernity as "the experiencing and interpretation of the world in terms of the reactions of our inner life and indeed as an inner world" (*Philosophische Kultur* 196).

always stands one random encounter from being “discovered” by the wrong person, and physically punished for his open identity.²⁴ Such potential danger only increases in autocratic states such as the Nazi regime that arose in Berlin in the 1930s. The brutal attack in *Goodbye to Berlin* by three S.A. men on “a youth of seventeen or eighteen, dressed in civilian clothes” is described in an eerily “detached” and “unsensational” manner (Parker 247); nor is it accompanied by any rationale for such violence as would result in an “eye poked half out, blood pour[ing] from the wound” (*GB* 243-4). Parker’s account leads one to presume that the injured man was suspected of Communism (247), but such treatment of homosexuals by the S.A. *circa* 1933, it must be remembered, was not unimaginable.

I would argue that this ever-present danger of discovery is one of the main reasons we find our half-observed narrator content to wink and hint at his own sexual orientation by frequenting “dives” (233), “ ‘informal’ bar[s]” (31) and including “peep shows” beyond Potsdamer Platz (230) in his telling. Of course these places are not, strictly speaking, off-limits to members of the straight community. But there are other signs, both less and more obvious, which tell us the truth – even from the first page. The alert reader may ask, for instance: what moves the narrator to go to the window, when he hears the “lascivious and private and sad” amorous whistling of the men on the street “to make quite sure that it is not – as I know that it could not possibly be – for me.” (*GB* 1-2)? Perhaps the narrator’s uncertainty is disclosed to lodge a hint of doubt in the reader’s mind, even on the most subconscious level, as to his (presumed) straight sexual orientation?

If the answer to that question seems a rather straightforward, “Of course it is,” this next one should generate much more room for consideration: in what way(s) does such a teasing, obfuscating narrator impact the text? For one, he operates as a synecdochic stand-in for the city itself as unknowable. I would argue that Henry James’ depiction of the

²⁴ During Hitler’s “Night of the Long Knives” purge of “rogue” S.A. operatives on 30 June 1934, two male S.A. soldiers were executed for having been found in bed together (Carr 130).

modern metropolis of New York as an “object of mystery” (Brooker, *New York* 44) applies also in this case. “Berlin is not, in fact, the intelligible reality that can be read and interpreted through a documentary memoir or reportage, but rather a far more elusive, deformed and equivocal entity requiring constant decoding and interpretation” (Wondrich 135). As Wondrich notes, this inscrutability applies to *Goodbye to Berlin*’s settings and characters in equal measure.

Given that interpretation figures prominently into the text’s composition from Isherwood’s diaries of time in Berlin, it is not surprising to find evidence of a selective narrative approach already in a 1930 letter from Isherwood responding to Stephen Spender’s writing. The elder Isherwood insists that good writing involves standing

aloof from one’s characters, looking at them and their actions from the outside and seeing things in the round, with objectivity. The writer needs to allow his raw material to mature before he uses it, and he must ensure that it is used to some purpose, *not merely as a record*. Facts and observations need to be *shaped and ordered* to turn them into art (Parker 194-5, emphasis mine).

This passage may be read as programmatic of *Goodbye to Berlin*’s selective narrative approach. Too, I find much in this aesthetic stance that aligns with Benjamin’s (and Baudelaire’s) figure of the *flâneur*: his critical distance is maintained as he insists always on objectivity. Isherwood’s rational ordering is, of course, in direct proportion the speed and number of impressions the modern city produces: “The conditions of modern enjoyment ... allow [for] the most diverse things to pass through our sense in the smallest amount of time and space (Simmel, “Über Kunstausstellungen” 476).

Simmel, whose personal metropolis remained Berlin, “despite the fact that he visited many others” (Frisby, *Cityscapes* 16), famously formulated that the overwhelming concentration of metropolitan sensory input produces “two of the greatest maladies of modern artistic appreciation: the blasé attitude and superficiality.” The former is “both cause and consequence of that need for the most diverse and contradictory impressions”

(“Über Kunstaustellungen” 476). *Ulysses* gives us one example of the results of overwhelming, modern urban sensory input on the brain. But in Berlin, this danger only increases: “in the bodily realm, too, the over-excitement of the nerves leads, on the one hand, to hyperaesthesia, the unhealthily accentuated impact of every impression, and, on the other, to anaesthesia, the equally unhealthy reduced receptivity” (Simmel, “Über Kunstaustellungen” 477). These statements, which form the modern cornerstones of Simmel’s urban sociology, may also be cited as further grounds for Isherwood’s shuffling narrator to remove himself discreetly from the reader’s intimate knowledge. This in turn leaves open the very real possibility that some readers may miss any hint of non-normative sexuality in him whatsoever. But the clues left for us in his text point to the fact that “Christopher” is modernism’s, if not English literature’s, first homosexual *flâneur*.

2.1 Captured on Film: The Photograph as Tool of *Flânerie*

Isherwood’s “I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking” (*GB* 1) has been read by many as no less than an artistic statement of purpose and keystone of modernism. It is also read as “a synecdochic key to the ostensibly impersonal and objective tone of the entire narrative” (Wondrich 134), one which aligns with Benjamin’s philosophy of the image as a “technology for organizing experience” (Caygill 81). While I happen to agree with both of these sentiments, I would also like to add that the camera serves as a fitting instrument for chronicling the *flâneur*’s travels through the modern city. Always available to freeze disparate urban images, the camera functions as a supremely useful tool for mobile observation of people or objects at a controlled physical remove.

As several critics have pointed out, the question of whether Isherwood meant to refer to a still or moving camera can be debated, with Short opting for moving: “The *flâneur* produces a filmic city” (37). Certainly Isherwood was interested in film – he went on to write scripts for movies in both London and Los Angeles, and in *Goodbye to Berlin* he visits the cinema with Sally and Natalia on separate occasions (*GB* 52, 175). I feel, however, that this question may be an overly technical one, if not entirely moot. Fundamentally, what Isherwood seems to be working at is a new kind of documentary objectivity to capture the staggering overabundance of metropolitan sensory input, one which will require “all this... to be developed, carefully printed, fixed” (*GB* 1).²⁵

I will allow Shuttleworth to stand in for the chorus of critics who challenge Isherwood’s supposed claim on photographic narrative objectivity: “What we are offered instead is a situated objectivity (“from my window”), a small piece of the truth. More than anything the author seeks, by receiving data like a camera, to be free of interpretation... [but] the narrator must fail to fulfill his wish... Selection is itself an act of interpretation” (156-7). This critique, in turn, was undercut already in 1972 by Isherwood. Ever playful and evasive, he insists that such criticism misses the point:

This business about being a camera is very misleading.... What I really meant by saying “I am a camera” was *not* I am a camera all the time, and that I’m like a camera. It was: I’m in the strangest mood at this moment... I just sit and register impressions through a window – visual data – without any reaction to it, like a camera.... The idea that I was a person divorced from what was going on around me is quite false” (Isherwood and Wennersten 19, emphasis original).

²⁵ It is instructive to recall that this rational ordering of increased urban sensory input is not entirely new in the twentieth century – even though the technology which symbolizes its processing may be: Goethe, strolling through Rome in November, 1787, can be said to prefigure Isherwood as he exhorts himself in *Italian Journey* to “seize the things one by one as they come; they will sort themselves out later” (Sennett 274). Sennett goes on to point out that Goethe’s *Wanderjahre*, seen by Enlightenment society to be beneficial “for the sake of physical stimulation and mental clarification,” may be differentiated from the foreign movements of Joyce, Isherwood and Rhys in that Goethe’s resulting observations “of the Italian crowds in which he moves” are seldom given with the same particularity as those in which he describes himself – just like Stephen in *Ulysses*. This inward-looking focus demonstrates, for Sennett, the “limits of the Enlightened mentality” (275).

Here Isherwood has pinpointed what Benjamin calls photography's paradoxical "auratic" aspect (Caygill 94). Because the fixed, closed borders of a photograph deny access to the passage of time, the photographic image becomes pregnant with "contingency" (GS 11.1). Echoing the touristic dissatisfaction with monumental Berlin displayed by Vita Sackville-West, Döblin insists that the city comprised of living Berliners "either cannot be photographed or is not worth photographing. Berlin, in other words, is largely invisible" (8). This bold statement may be read as an aesthetic challenge to the young Isherwood. In any case, it seems a challenge he was willing to accept. The question of whether or not Isherwood was aware of Döblin's pronouncements is another matter, although it is not entirely unlikely that something like this sentiment could have seeped into the young author's consciousness during his time he investigated the city as a destination.

With regard to the image captured on film, McClintock's tropes of panoptic and anachronistic time perspectives²⁶ inhere, especially considering the "privileged invisibility" (Schulz-Forberg 81) presumed by Isherwood's photographic trope. As regards the first of McClintock's two formulations, it can be argued that history becomes spectacle in *Goodbye to Berlin*, satisfying her notion of panoptic time. The few glimpses of German political upheaval Isherwood provides the reader include a good deal more spectacle than substance. This includes the funeral for Herman Müller, during which Isherwood feels "we had nothing to do with the Germans down there, marching, nor with the dead man, or with the words on the banners" (59-60); the closure of the Darmstädter und National bank, which upsets Fr. Schroeder and sends concerned Germans out into the street to stare forlornly at the closed bank, but only elicits from Isherwood the purchase of a new pair of pants as a sardonic "gesture of confidence by England" (70); the Leipzigerstrasse Nazi protest against the Jews, which, despite pre-figuring Kristallnacht was "not... very

²⁶ Schulz-Forberg notes that Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995) deals with these formulations on pages 40-42.

remarkable” owing to the fact that “there were no deaths” (170); and the Nazi demonstration of 22 January on the Bülowplatz (245-6). This last incident receives the most in-depth treatment of the four concretely political “scenes,” a point I will return to below. For now, it should suffice to mention that even this 1933 Nazi rally, fraught with the danger of “an armoured car... [which] started to turn its machine gun slowly in our direction” is reportedly “too much like a naughty schoolboy’s game to be taken seriously” (246). Correspondingly, the concerned German women’s reproach to the boy playing with the hoop outside of the closed Darmstädter seems entirely out of proportion to his obvious obliviousness (*GB* 70).

As for McClintock’s second suggested perspective, that of anachronistic time, Isherwood also indeed presents Berlin as a stage of history, “constructed in set tableau, frozen in time” (Schulz-Forberg 81-2):

The lamps were alight already, as I turned under the archway and entered the long, dark street, patched here and there with dirty snow. Weak yellow gleams shone out from the cellar shops. At a hand cart under a gas-flare, a cripple was selling vegetables and fruit. A crowd of youths, with raw, sullen faces, stood watching two boys fighting in a doorway: a girl’s voice screamed excitedly as one of them tripped and fell. Crossing the muddy courtyard, inhaling the moist, familiar rottenness of the tenement buildings, I thought: Did I really ever live here? (*GB* 158).

The children’s ghostly motion in this passage heightens the frozenness of this memory. One hears the scream as a distant echo Isherwood paints into life. The grace of economy and non-judgment in this passage answer Gay’s assessment of Berlin: “Between 1929 and 1933, the years of disastrously rising unemployment, government by decree, decay of middle-class parties, and resumption of violence, culture became less the critic than the mirror of events” (120).

Should any critical doubts remain that photography and *flânerie* may successfully be combined in Isherwood’s aesthetic representation of the city, travel writing will be called upon to assuage them. “Often, travel writers would pretend to gaze on the scene of

the city as if not being a part of it, as if being somehow invisible and secretly watching the foreign society without their knowledge, and thus able to describe and explain, and able to let the reader participate by looking through the narrator's eyes. Thus, the writer could freeze the tumult of the metropolis if s/he wanted to" (Schulz-Forberg 79-80). Here we find photography (freezing the metropolis) and *flânerie* (watching from a distance) melded in one gaze – that of the tourist.

If, as we have seen, Isherwood was not keen on reproducing the pat tour-guide reports of Berlin as sexual paradise, that does not necessarily mean that he was immune to the charms of travel writing's style, nor to the notion of foreign urban exploration *in general*. In fact, I would argue that he demonstrates a consciousness of both in his Berlin novels. In doing so Isherwood brings a new modern literary perspective to bear upon them by reporting more of the actual lives of *real people* within the metropolis. Sullam insists that "Isherwood sets out to explore districts where no foreign writer had ever trodden before, conveying an entirely novel image of the city." But he eschews those glossier elements of travel writing's touristic perspective, and substitutes for the expected museums, shops and galleries of the city "its wounds, the grim face of its run-down areas and the scars of the economic crisis" (Sullam 153).

Isherwood's autobiography demonstrates, in his typically "subjectivized" third person, a self-conscious identification as a "polar explorer" of exotic Berlin. The "pictures" generated from his prose will be handy to show to friends and family later: "He was the only English man living in the area. Christopher's vanity was tickled. He liked to imagine himself as one of those mysterious wanderers who penetrate the depths of a foreign land, disguise themselves in the dress and the customs of its natives, and die in unknown graves, envied by their stay-at-home compatriots" (CK 54). If the colonial attitudes expressed in this passage are perhaps delivered with tongue planted firmly in

cheek, one knows for certain that even the “privileged invisibility” offered by a camera cannot protect one against tuberculosis. The true danger inherent in Isherwood’s real life urban explorations is reflected by the fact that the “native” living conditions in “The Nowaks” were shocking to his mother: she felt “anxious” about the “unhealthy” conditions (Parker 200).

By sharing three rooms with six people, including the consumptive mother of his lover, Otto (Parker 199), Isherwood ran the very real risk of contracting tuberculosis, a deadly communicable disease whose risk factors include exactly the kind of unsanitary close quarters found in working-class Hallesches Tor during the 1930s. The Wolffs’ apartment (Isherwood changed their name for the purposes of his book, as well as Walter’s to Otto), though condemned, had no viable replacement available. So the family was forced to place a bucket under the leaky ceiling, while putting up with the fact that the kitchen sink was the apartment’s only wash place, and that the stairwell had only one restroom, shared with three other families (*GB* 123-47).

Yet “slumming” among such unsanitary conditions, as Isherwood himself described the situation, “seemed a thrilling adventure” and an entry point to “*echt* working class experience” (Parker 199). Isherwood’s “foreign” bourgeois status is reinforced when Herr Nowak’s address of “Christoph” is deemed inappropriate by Frau Nowak: “Christoph indeed! He’s Herr Christoph to you! Can’t you tell a gentleman when you see one?” (*GB* 132). Yet Isherwood reassures Herr Nowak: “I’d much rather you called me Christoph.”²⁷ How are we to square the difference between Isherwood’s solidly bourgeois upbringing

²⁷ The text implies that Herr Nowak may be unaware that Isherwood and “Otto” are having a sexual relationship (*GB* 133). I am curious whether Herr Nowak, had he known that the “Englishman” he disparages at the dinner table and Isherwood were one and the same, would have approved of the living arrangement, financially beneficial though it was, let alone insisted on such a personal greeting as “Christoph.” Or perhaps he does know, and that conflict is (one of the reasons) why he is drunk.

and his desire for lower class familiarity in Hallesches Tor? Isn't this just another form of sexual tourism which Isherwood seems elsewhere to reject?

One way of explaining this apparent contradiction may be found in the same-sex practice of "cruising." According to Tilo Beckers, "cruising" may be described as a "pattern of sociability" in which a "form of play ignoring real life status" (60) emerges. Although typically used to define shorter relationships than Isherwood's with Walter, cruising seems apt in describing at least the initial phase of their relationship. Thus, in cleaving to 16 year old, narcissistic Otto, Isherwood's autobiographical/realistic exploration of Berlin's "unknown" urban spaces (Wondrich 132) meshes with a personal practice of "cruising," allowing the author to purge himself, if only for a few weeks, of his (upper middle-) class background. For Carol Warren, even "superficial encounter[s] with [lower class men] in a restroom" can be "more real, in a sense, than the intimacy a secret gay has with family and straight friends, because with the other gay person he drops his mask of straightness and reveals his genuine self" (71). Thus Isherwood's sexual authenticity in "cruising" "Otto" may be seen as strengthened from the perspective of sexual/gender studies, despite the potential validity of a class-based critique questioning the morality of his "slumming," which he himself later termed "sexual colonialism" (Kemp 180). He did, after all, only move there to save money after he became "a bit hard up" (*GB* 215).

Interestingly, Simmel's "aristocratizing effect" (Warren 6), resulting from the persecution of homosexuals by members of the normative sexual community, may also be used to read this scenario. Within this construct, the marginalization of communities such as homosexuals, Jews and African-Americans results in a "martyrdom of the elect, breeding a heightened sense of both superiority and unjust persecution" (Warren 6). Isherwood did in fact see himself as a member of "the Elect," according to Stephen

Spender, who “felt a sense of privilege” that Isherwood “consider[ed] me as one of them” (Parker 193). Isherwood’s brief time in Simeonstrasse, where he must “clamber over the living room furniture” to access his bed, and where he has no place to unpack his clothes, to say nothing of having no personal space nor adequate hygiene (*GB* 129), provides him a basis for authentically, *photographically* depicting Berlin’s poverty without artistic compromise.

Although urbane, wealthy businessman Bernhard Landauer would later reply to Isherwood’s description of his time with the Nowaks by exclaiming, “By Jove, Christopher – what a romantic life you lead!” (*GB* 216), Simmel’s and Becker’s analyses combine to substantiate my own reading of Isherwood’s period of “romantic slumming” in “The Nowaks” as stubbornly resistant to the problems of sexual tourism which Berlin presents to the foreign visitor. Isherwood’s claim that he “couldn’t relax sexually with a member of his own class or nation” (Parker 229) points to a certain discomfort with the bourgeois standards of his English upbringing. But during his time in Berlin, Isherwood’s class-conscious artistic development seems to have lagged somewhat behind his sexual self-knowledge: the author’s comical depiction of his attempt at writing a bourgeois novel “about a family who lived in a large country house on unearned incomes” while surrounded by Grete and Herr Nowak trying to set traps for sparrows (i.e., to eat for dinner) seems to me self-aware self-mockery (*GB* 148-9).

Summing up this line of thought, I turn to Cappetti, whose excellent analysis of modern-era Chicago shows what for her differentiates the novelist’s city from the sociologist’s: the “use of the city and of the slum as the *estranged consciousness* of society” (Cappetti 174, emphasis original). After reading “The Nowaks” it becomes possible to imagine why Otto’s brother, Lothar, has fallen in with the Nazis, despite his mother’s scorn for that organization (*GB* 134). Such historical, socio-economic context

may very well be said to be a positive artistic outcome of Isherwood's "slumming," whatever his initial motivations. By pulling back the curtain on the grinding poverty and unemployment in interwar Berlin, Isherwood peels away yet another layer of the city's onion skin, demonstrating without overt judgment the lives of just some of the many who were forced to live under such impossible circumstances.

Returning more concretely to photography as narrative strategy akin to, or aiding, *flânerie*, I'd like to take up the notion stated above by Shuttleworth: that the presumed objectivity of a camera must be understood to be little more than a popular fallacy from the start. Does one not choose where to aim the camera, and therefore, what to include (and exclude) from view? Urban historian Kevin Lynch posits that human perception and cognition "cannot be analyzed except as an interaction between person and place. Perception is a creative act, not a passive reception" (131). Surely so, as many critics of Isherwood's photographic style have noted.

We can distinguish between two kinds of city images: the one, composed consciously, and the other arising, spontaneously. The former spring from artistic will, resulting in squares, view, groups of houses and perspective effects, which a Baedeker would rank with one star. The latter, on the contrary, arises without a plan. They are not compositions [...] but rather creations of chance, with no apparent reason to them. Whenever stony masses and streets come together, begin the result of different interests, there arises such a city image, which was never the object of any interest. It is as formless as nature and it is like a landscape, in that it arises unconsciously (Kracauer, *Berlin* 50).

Of the two kinds of city images, Simmel (had he read Isherwood) might have presumed that Isherwood's "camera" is commonly understood to supply the second, more spontaneous sort. While I would agree that this seems plausible as an ideal artistic intention, during the editing work in the writing process from diary to novel the possibility of true spontaneity is largely eliminated. Isherwood's results, however, read as a convincing urban document nonetheless. For proof, observe the similarity between Simmel's continuation of the passage above, and the first few lines of *Goodbye to Berlin*:

From my window the city becomes an image as beautiful as a natural event [...] At night, the whole city image is illuminated [...] The lights are spread out through space, they wait, still, or else they waver, as if they hung from a rope, just here - close enough to reach out and touch - glows a blinding orange; helping a big garage to spread its name [...] This landscape is a snapshot of Berlin. It arises unconsciously and expresses unintentionally its contrasts, its harshness, its frankness, its continuities, its splendor (Kracauer, *Berlin* 50).

and,

From my window the deep solemn massive street. Cellar-shops where the lamps burn all day, under the shadow of top-heavy balconied façades, dirty plaster frontages embossed with scroll-work and heraldic devices. The whole district is like this: street leading into street of houses like shabby monumental safes crammed with the tarnished valuables and second-hand furniture of a bankrupt middle class (*GB* 1).

Isherwood's opening passage reads like an homage, or an etude using Simmel's theory of urban explication as its model and guide.

Yet Wondrich notes the lack of dimension and scope in Isherwood's photographic depictions. She reads the "urban imagery of Berlin [as] reduced to a disconnected and fragmented spatiality, an oppressive and crumbling monumentality or a sombre bourgeois solidity, weighed down by the now incongruous past of Wilhelmine Germany, undermined by depression and by material and moral bankruptcy" (140). I find this at least partly true as well, and fitting to the movements of the urban *flâneur* – especially in passages such as this one:

The entrance to the Wassertorstrasse was a big stone archway, a bit of old Berlin, daubed with hammers and sickles and Nazi crosses and plastered with tattered bills which advertised auctions or crimes. It was a deep, shabby cobbled street, littered with sprawling children in tears. Youths in woollen sweaters circled waveringly across it on racing bikes and whooped at girls passing with milk-jugs. The pavement was chalk-marked for the hopping game called Heaven and Earth. At the end of it, like a tall, dangerously sharp, red instrument, stood a church (*GB* 123).

The disintegrating advertisements and oppositional graffiti add to the fragmented, provisory quality of this image. So does the absence of adults from this image whose unhappy children are left alone to construct their own metropolitan universe from the ground up.

In order to more fully investigate the question of perspective in Isherwood's modernist photographic technique, it helps if we attempt to distinguish between memory and photography. According to Kracauer, who was a student of Simmel's:

[P]hotography creates one fixed moment in time whereas memory itself is not beholden to a singular instance. Photography is capable of capturing the physicality of a particular moment, but it removes any depth or emotion that might otherwise be associated with the memory. In essence, photography cannot create a memory, but rather, it can create an artifact. Memory, on the other hand, is not beholden to one particular moment of time, nor is it purposefully created. Memories are impressions upon a person that they can recall due to the significance of the event or moment (Leslie 128).

Read through this perspective, *Goodbye to Berlin* may be seen as a collection of metropolitan artifacts, assembled by the strolling author whose distance from his subject definitively authorizes the use of the term *flâneur*: "If the plight of the postmodern subject is to be inescapably immersed in the mesh of advanced consumer society, the "*flâneur*" can signify an ambulatory perceptual mode, "metaphorically" or "in theory" distanced from it" (Brooker, "The Wandering *Flâneur*" 125). Necessary in addition to that distance is also the element of "artificial" literary creation: "You cut corners, you invent, you simplify," said Isherwood of his writing technique. "You heighten certain lights and deepen certain shadows, as you might in a portrait" (Parker 204). The photographs are first selected from sketches in the author's diary, then retouched and edited prior to publication.

2.2 "Sally Bowles": Co-conspirator in Aesthetic Artifice

Having examined the peculiar remoteness which attends Isherwood's photographic-*flâneur* narrative approach within *Goodbye to Berlin*, let us turn to one of modernist literature's most famous characters: Sally Bowles. The inspiration for the musical drama, *Cabaret*, Isherwood's depiction of real life Jean Ross was a friend introduced to him by

Fritz Wendel.²⁸ Isherwood's fictional representation of Jean as "Sally Bowles" features several fascinating aspects of modern urban life: in Sally, an intense, self-conscious constructedness and "deluded" (Wade 53) artificiality springs to life.

In contrast with her deusional artificiality, which we will assess presently, Sally also possesses a singular ability to accurately perceive Isherwood's difficult financial position. "I knew you were hard up the moment I set eyes on you!" (39). This instinctual insight into the young author's fragile economic situation shows far more awareness than any of the book's other characters possess. Fr. Schroeder, Fr. Nowak and Otto behave toward Christopher as though he is made of money, and therefore an obvious gentleman. This owes much to the exchange rate, which bought for poor British expats to Berlin ten times what the same money would buy in London (Kemp 179). Sally, being an English visitor to Berlin herself, uses intuitive self-recognition of her own class origin to sniff all this out. I feel it can be useful to keep this advanced, street-smart characteristic in mind as we explore her disconnection from reality, as the former presents so interesting a counterpoint to the latter.

"Sally" functions as a personification of the sort of delusion necessary to put one foot in front of the other during the extremely difficult financial situation which attended the interwar years in Berlin. With dreams of stardom that outstrip her talent, she "exists for sensual pleasure which is never recognized as transitory" (Wade 54), and succeeds as a performer precisely because she doesn't "care a curse what people thought of her" (*GB* 31). The "Lady Windemere" setting for her performance symbolizes "the semantic dominant of elusiveness, dissimulation and counterfaction of reality" in both Berlin and the novel (Wondrich 136). From Isherwood's depiction of the decrepit interior meant to

²⁸ Franz von Ullmann in real life (Parker 205).

stand in for Parisian luxuriance, it seems apparent that Berlin is to Montparnasse as Sally is to a real Cabaret dancer (*GB* 37-8).

Despite his decision afterward to “never visit a place of this sort again” (*GB* 32), Isherwood seems comfortable in the falsifying center of this city comprised of “copies of copies” (*GB* 227). “In the Berlin of the novel, where there is everywhere sham, disparity, and deception and nowhere satisfactory personal relations, Christopher is, in fact, perfectly at home” (Wilde 72). By playing at artistic snobbery, Sally and Christopher bond. Of course, when one is a foreigner away from home as both Sally and Chris are, one may be tempted to act out one’s persona in a more dramatic way than would be allowed at home – especially given the apparent dramatic predispositions of both individuals. But Shuttleworth highlights Berlin’s residents’ ability to be swayed by false authenticity: “Christopher is hardly alone in a city populated by appearances: ‘These people could be made to believe in anybody or anything’ (*GB* 231). Nazism gains its power by spreading mass delusion: the delusion arrived at by the imposition of aesthetic structures on experience, and by the individual experience of a fake authenticity” (159).

That Isherwood draws attention to Sally’s prematurely aged hands from smoking brings to mind Simmel’s exploration of ruins, particularly of their “decay and decadence” (Frisby, *Cityscapes* 119). Sally’s accelerated aging in consequence of her hard living, together with her abortion and the “romantic” losses of both Klaus and Clive invite the conclusion that feminine independence in modernity comes at a high physical cost. The cost exacted in that struggle, however, results in no independence whatsoever. Thus, the attempt to break free of the past (female dependence) engenders a renewal of that past (the female has still not found a route to independence outside of inhuman factory work). This situation points again to the notion of Sally as ruin of femininity, because according to

Simmel, ruins also exhibit an “extreme intensification and fulfillment of the present form of the past” (Simmel, “Ruin” 265).

Just as Sally, above, has been shown to be able to see through Isherwood, he too sees through Sally’s own artificiality from the start: “you’ve got into this trick of trying to bounce [others] into approving of you, violently. I know, because I try it myself, sometimes... I wish you wouldn’t try it on me, because it just doesn’t work, and it only makes me feel embarrassed” (GB 41). This is remarkable as one of the narrator’s most direct statements of personal feeling throughout the book. At the conclusion of this conversation, Sally confesses that she lied to Fritz about her mother being French because “I suppose I wanted to impress him” (GB 42). As Parker observes, “[p]art of Isherwood’s and Ross’s mutual attraction was that each of them was playing a role – that of promising young novelist and promising young actress, sexually sophisticated free spirits in wicked Berlin – and each of them needed an audience. In a curious way they believed in each other” (207). To this Izzo adds, “[t]he maturing Isherwood now saw through the masks others wore because he recognized in them the masks that he himself had worn, and still wore” (149). Such intimate, shared knowledge of each other’s tactics for artificially constructing identity deepens the bond between the Christopher and Sally, and, ultimately, is one reason why they can only remain friends for a short, but intense time: each exposes the fraudulent poses of the other.

2.3 New Ground: The *Flâneur*’s Emerging Political Consciousness

As fraught with real danger as it is, Isherwood’s escape from Nazi Berlin is rather the coda to his story than its climax. Honeywell’s notion of twentieth century plots posits their formation “around a movement from appearance to reality,” hinging on “reversals of perspective and reversals of valuation” (154). According to this framework the plot of

Goodbye to Berlin may be described as an arc wherein, like film, Isherwood's impressions of the city develop. Bounded at first by a youthful, self-centered egotism, after his time in Hallesches Tor he grows to view the city through a lens which highlights its political and social problems. At first, the political "background" of Berlin is used to highlight the superficial hedonism of Sally and Christopher, and their hunt for easy money. At the book's conclusion, the rise of Nazism pierces the protection of Isherwood's shield of narrative distance, necessitating a focus on Berlin's politics as such.

Parker's sense of Isherwood as being "more excited than alarmed" (198) by confrontations in the streets between communists and Nazis reminds me of Flaubert's protagonist in *Sentimental Education* who glories in the brutal revolution he witnesses (Alter 11). Such a distanced view of historical uprisings can be interpreted as an aesthetic dead-end because it is morally vacant, as noted by Alter. However, as Isherwood develops his sense of political awareness throughout *Goodbye to Berlin*, his neutrality morphs into partiality, at which point escape becomes necessary (Parker 198). Thus the arc of the novel itself can be said to describe an emerging development of the narrator's political consciousness. If Isherwood's "introduction to Berlin politics" takes the form of the Nazi protest against the Jews on October 30, 1930, it is interesting that he has placed that episode from the first half of his time in Berlin in the second half of the narrative (*GB* 170). This temporal reshuffling speaks to the slow awakening of Isherwood's political consciousness that emerges toward the tail end of his sojourn to Berlin.

Parenthetically, there is a bizarre correlation between the underground nature of homosexual life in Berlin, and the Nazi party's own underground movement between the time of its ban in 1927, and its reemergence just three years later.²⁹ Despite public disapproval of open displays of Nazi affiliation, "[t]he party could offer a sense of

²⁹ This underground affiliation is not to be confused with the broader, and even more fascinating phenomenon termed the "homosexualization of fascism" referred to by Carr (123-33), which is too large a topic to explore here.

belonging and purpose” to unemployed or hopeless Berliners “under the guise of various sporting clubs and other associations.” Despite failing to advance during elections of that period, the party grew from 17,000 in 1926 to over a million in 1930 (Parker 197).

This ominous change registers finally at the novel’s conclusion, after news of Bernard’s death brings the rising ethnic violence home to Isherwood and “newspapers become more and more like copies of a school magazine” full of “nothing... but new rules, new punishments, and lists of people who have been ‘kept in’ ” (*GB* 247). Isherwood’s local haunt shifts, too, from the unnamed “Cosy Café” and other “queer spaces” to the “communist café,” a paranoia-filled dive where he hears plans for the “coming civil war” (236), and “half empty artists’ café by the Memorial Church, where the Jews and the left-wing intellectuals bend their heads together over the marble tables, speaking in low, scared voices” (247). Here he observes the S.A. arrest a Jewish man, powerless to help.

At the novel’s end, “[p]hotography is now seen not as a guarantee of truth but as a mark of artifice, mixing fact with fiction” (Shuttleworth 159). The surreality of Isherwood’s serendipity of having been able to witness this bizarre and terrifying chapter in human history is not to be believed: “No. Even now I can’t altogether believe that any of this has really happened” (*GB* 252). If, as J. Hillis Miller posits, a “novel... is the place of death made visible” (Bloom, *Virginia Woolf* 3), then Isherwood has crafted a novel by making visible the beginning of the death throes of the modern Imperial European city, as represented by Berlin’s destruction in the second World War following the rise of fascism in the 1930s. *Goodbye to Berlin* has also achieved Benjamin’s “document of civilization” status, being as it is also a “record of barbarism” (Benjamin, “Theses” 256). Fortunately, Isherwood escaped before his exile-home was consumed by Nazism, and, after further travels to the USA, was able to continue writing about life in modern cities until it was safe to openly disclose his sexual identity in *A Single Man*. This later groundbreaking artistic

act, set in motion by the evasive hints we pick up from the *flâneur* of *Goodbye to Berlin*, would inspire future generations of homosexual authors to follow suit (Bergman 203).

“The city [of Paris] is a book, a space that one explores like a book, that speaks to the unconscious.”
- Bertrand Westphal

“Paris is a book of dreams, an album of our unconscious, a catalog of horrors.”
- Italo Calvino

“ ‘Everybody,’ Théodore says, ‘comes back to Paris. Always.’ ”
- Jean Rhys, *Good Morning Midnight*

3 Female *Flânerie* in Jean Rhys’s *Good Morning Midnight*

The final chapter in this study on the widening identification of the *flâneur* figure in late modernist literature introduces Sasha Jansen, who saucily stakes her claim to the role in Jean Rhys’s *Good Morning Midnight* (1939). Rhys, “one of the greatest novelists of alienation” (Gardiner 233), imbues her semi-autobiographical narrator with a first-person license to behold nineteen-thirties Paris, a wicked sense of self-irony, and a memory-dodging flirtation with self-annihilation. Although her most obvious difference from Leopold Bloom and Christopher Isherwood is that she is a *she*, Jansen’s femininity does not immunize her from the common pitfalls of modernity; instead it frames these in a gendered light.

Jansen’s bitterly comical gallows humor is tested both by memories of her difficult past and by those (not always male) members of Parisian society who resist or resent the independent movements of an unmarried woman of advancing years who has “arranged my little life” (*GMM* 9) into a daily routine of eating, drinking and walking alone. Rhys portrays the voices of those who judge her as saying: “Qu’est-ce qu’elle fout ici, la vielle? What the devil (translating it politely) is she doing here, that old woman? What is she doing here, the stranger, the alien, the old one?... I quite agree too. I have seen that in people’s eyes all my life” (*GMM* 46). Jansen’s plaintive and problematic, “By myself, where can I go?” (*GMM* 60), is seemingly answered by her bold assertion, “Nobody else

knows me but the street knows me” (*GMM* 89). This latter salvo carries a revolutionary significance in the literary realm. For, in Paris in the first decades of the nineteenth century, “[t]he world of the *flâneur* was a masculine one” (Wolff 131).

Gardiner points out how the very title of Rhys’s work demonstrates her theme of “apparent oppositions collaps[ing] when brought into close juxtaposition” (234). By counterposing “dark and light, past and present, despair and hope, inside and outside, nature and art, life and death, male and female” only to “clap our ears with these imploding polarities” (Gardiner 234), Rhys illustrates the artificiality governing Jansen’s remove from the world of power – a world inhabited and governed by men. In a feat of modern artistry she also manages to do all this while counter-balancing the intense sadness and vicious humor of her provocative protagonist. I intend to investigate these rather *post-modern* ideas using feminist literary theory, as well as Benjamin’s framework for understanding modern urban spaces in my exploration of Rhys’s modified use of the *flâneur* figure in *Good Morning Midnight*.

I choose to qualify Sasha Jansen’s *flânerie* as *modified* not because of her status as a woman, but rather because her consciously, highly planned wanderings run counter to the aimless pedestrianism observed by Baudelaire and others in the figure of the *flâneur*:

Not too much drinking, avoidance of certain cafes, of certain streets, of certain spots, and everything will go off beautifully. The thing is to have a programme, not to leave anything to chance – no gaps. No trailing around aimlessly with cheap gramophone records going off in your head, no ‘Here this happened, here that happened’. Above all, no crying in public, no crying at all if you can help it (*GMM* 14).

Jansen’s over-planned “programme,” organized down to minutest detail in order to avoid triggering painful memories of her Paris past by “trailing around aimlessly,” seems far more comprehensive than Bloom’s out-of-the-way route to the post office on Westland

Row to retrieve Martha's letter.³⁰ It is a static "geometry of movement which leads nowhere" (Staley 85).

But Jansen's are also a series of movements worlds removed from the even more hemmed-in city perambulations when she lived there some unknown number of years ago: "I can see myself coming out of the Métro station at the Rond-Point every morning at half-past eight, walking along the Avenue Marigny, turning to the left and then to the right, putting my coat and hat into the cloak-room, going along a passage and starting in with: 'Good morning, madame. Has madame a vendeuse?' " (*GMM* 15-6). These highly orchestrated, overly constrained movements of the modern metropolitan woman worker make use of the street as merely "a space of transition en route to functional purposes" (Von Ankum 71). Yet even after "graduating" to her own unemployed, independent brand of *flânerie* where the limitations are avoidances consciously chosen, Jansen still does manage to fail to follow her "programme" after a few drinks with Delmar and his friend: "There are two cafes opposite each other in this street near my hotel – the one where the proprietor is hostile, the one where the proprietor is neutral. I must be a bit drunk, because I lead them into the wrong one... Not that it matters, as I am not alone" (*GMM* 40).

Though *Good Morning Midnight* is viewed now as a "first person masterpiece" by Gardiner (233), among others, Rhys languished in obscurity both as author and individual during the years before feminism established itself as a viable theoretical framework for reading literature. In a real life twist of fate suitable for Rhys's own mordant sense of humor, the author was famously taken for dead before a revival of interest in her writing found her still very much alive, if removed from the London literary society of nineteen-sixties England. In the years since her "rediscovery," which attended the publication of her most widely read work, *Wide Saragasso Sea* (1966), Rhys's texts have come to serve as a

³⁰ Though Hart and Knuth give evidence for this out-of-the-way path (25), the claim that Bloom consciously planned his morning's meandering route must ultimately remain an act of interpretive speculation.

fascinating and rich ground for feminist literary theory to demonstrate its usefulness as an interpretive tool. Narratives such as *Good Morning Midnight* allow for the unearthing and examining of literature's patriarchal and phallogocentric legacy which, previous to the introduction of feminist critical theory, went largely unquestioned in academia. Rhys, like Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson and others who demonstrate an awareness of the perils of female authorship, enriches the world of literary meaning by insisting that those voices which had for so long been relegated beyond the margins of acceptability (to say nothing of the Canon) should also be heard, and celebrated.

One also sees early evidence of "gynocritics" (Schweickart 487) in *Good Morning Midnight*. The important difference between gynocritics and feminist theory is that the former focuses on woman as writer of texts rather than woman as simply reader of them – not that leisurely, literary reading in itself didn't provide its own challenges only a century ago. The application of urban gynocritics becomes an especially important element of this study, for if we are interested in the problem of Sasha Jansen's contested freedom to explore Paris as *flâneur* in a literary text, then it follows that we must also concern ourselves with questions regarding woman's role *as writer* in modernity. For, by rewriting late-modern Paris as available for female *flânerie*, Rhys refused to simply recreate "ideologies of gendered space" (Wolff 119), but instead insisted on writing into her novel a new way of seeing both femininity and the late-modern city.

Bold though it is, Rhys's performance of gender is also complicated, as noted by Savory: though Jansen at times seems disposed to portraying an anti-domestic femininity (as expressed by, among other things, her penchant for eating out instead of cooking), she still fancies dressing up, gets her hair colored and uses makeup, three things which may be read as not particularly challenging to traditional western European gender ideals. Neither does spending nearly two hours (and three pages) picking out a hat, and "celebrating" that

process as “an extraordinary ritual” call to mind any polemics of the English language’s more radical feminist writers (*GMM* 57-60). Still, I find the bond created between Jansen and the hat saleswoman a remarkably vulnerable and touching moment within a text otherwise notably absent of such scenes: “I have made up my mind to trust this girl, and I must trust her... I have a great desire to ask her to come and dine with me, but I daren’t do it... She sees me out, still smiling. A strange client, l’*étrangère*” (*GMM* 59). I will point out that Jansen’s successful hat buying trip began with one of Jansen’s few “aimless” wanderings “along a lot of back streets” (*GMM* 57) – thus qualifying it as *flânerie*, “proper” – before concluding this thought by observing that Rhys has managed to infuse a tender, near-miss human connection with Jansen’s permeating sense of estrangement, heightening the pathos of what might have been (the beginning of a friendship; perhaps more?). Savory is certainly right to stress the richness such complex gender performance brings to Rhys’s writing (*Cambridge Introduction* 20).

For Benjamin in his study of Baudelaire, the woman in the urban crowd is limited to either identifying as a prostitute or a *passante*, and is regarded merely as an object of the *flâneur*’s gaze. She is not presumed to have a perspective of her own (Parsons 37). As Gleber notes, “within the domains of literature, culture, and public life, this unbounded, unrestricted pursuit of perception has [heretofore] been mainly ascribed to *men*” (Gleber 67, emphasis original). Furthermore,

The female *flâneur*’s desire for her own exploration of the world ends where it encounters its limits in male pedestrians and fantasies, assaulting, annoying, disturbing, and perpetually evaluating her in the street. Woman’s socially prescribed status as an image formulates an epistemological position defined by powers that overshadow her potential as an observer (Gleber 81).

These assertions leave a gaping, gendered hole in Benjamin’s male-centric critical approach to modernist texts such as Rhys’s, a problem made more interesting when one considers that both *Good Morning Midnight* and Benjamin’s late critical writings were produced roughly concurrently. But instead of simply drawing, as Griselda Pollock does,

“a map to include those [interior] spaces which are absent” from the Baudelairean urban cartography (79), Rhys thrusts Jansen out into public city spaces, demanding equal rights to perambulate freely with men in late modernity. This revolutionary action is of course met with resistance: “[t]he presence of women in the modern city – on the streets, in industry, in the arts, and in the cinema – obviously distracted the attention of male intellectuals, who aimed to efface or to at least contain the power of the female gaze” (Petro 58). We observe that the question of woman’s contested status in the city is not merely an incidental symptom of modernity, but is rather anchored as a prime element of Rhys’s fiction. For if, as Pollock asserts, painting is “*a site for the inscription of sexual difference*” (81 emphasis original), then surely writing the city of Paris via autobiographical *flânerie* is as well.

The act of *flânerie* is “best achieved through strolling, which in [some] situations is a politically charged activity.” In his account on *flânerie* entitled “The Suspicious Person,” Frisby cites Simmel’s notion that the “detached stranger’s view ‘contains dangerous possibilities,’ ” as well as Hessel’s reference to the “suspicious role of the spectator” (Frisby, *Cityscapes* 36-7). In this light Jansen can be readily seen to qualify as doubly suspicious to male paradigms of the Parisian metropolis: first as an independent woman walking and observing freely in the late-modern city, and secondarily as an English expatriate in the French capital with a criminal husband (in Part Three, and in memories elsewhere).

But not all women artists were as bold as Rhys in challenging these societal suspicions, nor could all who came before her trade on the cultural capital of the early twentieth century’s “New Woman” to spur such a brash venturing outward: Wolff’s fascinating chapter “The Artist and the *Flâneur*” focuses on the Welsh artist Gwen John, whose paintings during her exile in Paris less than one generation before Rhys’s

demonstrates the artist's "desire for a more interior life." Such an inward-focused desire resulted from her hatred of "being out on the streets of Paris"; a hatred – though intimately tied to her own personal tastes – which also illustrates how under the nineteenth century "ideology of separate spheres," women were "limited in the social arena" (Wolff 117-30). Similarly, Pollock observes the artist Berthe Morisot's alienation resulting from "restricted... involvement [with] the city" of Paris (Parsons 39). Wolff also cites Russian artist Marie Bashkirtseff, whose desire "to be able to go out alone! To come and go; to sit down on a bench in the Garden of the Tuileries, or, better still, of the Luxembourg..." went frustratingly unfulfilled during her time in Paris in the late 1800s (Wolff 126).

Sasha Jansen fulfills Bashkirtseff's nineteenth century wish of sitting on a bench in the Luxembourg Gardens, though at first only because her legs are tired from walking: "What, defeated already? Surely not..." (*GMM* 45). After announcing her fatigue, a logical physiological problem of *flânerie*, she is compelled by an attendant to purchase a ticket, making her presence in the public park officially legitimate: "Now everything is legal. If anyone says: 'Qu'est-ce qu'elle fout ici?' I can show the ticket. This is legal. ... I feel safe, clutching it. I can stay here as long as I like, putting two and two together, quite calmly, with nobody to interfere with me" (*GMM* 46). Interestingly, Delmar, the same man who interrupts her second sitting/observing/thinking trip to the Garden is also in the party of two men who approach her on the street to ask her why she looks so sad (*GMM* 39). This catcalling-style of cruising which presumes that, for men's sake, a woman is supposed to look happy while walking on the street is the present day target behavior a public photographic art project in the United States. Tatyana Fazlalizadeh's larger than life-sized posters featuring captions reading "Stop Telling Women to Smile" accompany a self portrait, or pictures of other women looking confident and serious (Lee), in an effort to

stem such sexist cruising.³¹ That such a project is still deemed necessary in contemporary American city life instructs us how far we *haven't* come since late-modern Paris in ensuring that city are streets safe for independent women.

Rhys left drama school in London because her Caribbean-accented English “was not acceptable for serious theater in England” (Savory, *Cambridge Introduction* 4). Later, after unsuccessful efforts to establish a career as a showgirl, she endured relational upheaval remarkably similar to that which Christopher Isherwood memorialized in Sally Bowles: fruitless attempts to attach herself to monied men resulted in cruder variants of sexual commodification, followed by the death of her baby at five weeks (*GMM* 52). Later, fleeing London’s bad memories, Paris offered Rhys a chance for a new start with the man she characterizes in *Good Morning Midnight* as Enno. But if she hoped to exchange the marginalization caused by her Caribbean accent in London for a less personalizing exile as an Englishwoman in Paris, she seems in any case to have held on to traces of the former, at least in her writing.

Savory finds evidence of Rhys’s “[l]inguistic multi-valency” – a characteristic of Caribbean writing – “subtly present in Rhys’s texts” (*Cambridge Introduction* 11). For evidence of Rhys’s complex racial identity, I would point to Jansen’s fascination with the story told to her by “*le peintre*” Serge about the woman in his stairwell in Notting Hill, London who “wasn’t a white woman. She was half-negro – a mulatto” (*GMM* 79). The fact that this is one of the longest uninterrupted narrative passages in the novel hints at the interest this story holds for Jansen. The text subtly indicates, as mentioned by GoGwilt, a subtextual connection between the story told by the Russian artist about the Martinique woman and Jensen herself (71-2). This connection is abstract, like the very works of modernist art which populate and frame this scene, and evokes itself in memories, musical

³¹ In Atlanta, only a few hours after setting up her posters, one was already defaced with the words “Force It” and a smile scrawled in spray paint over the artists’s face.

echoes of island life which come – chronologically out of place – just before Serge unfolds his terrible story of alienation and drunken oblivion (*GMM* 77). The Martinique woman’s reclusion following her rejection by racist English society, viewed as “quite natural” by her “Angliche monsieur” (*GMM* 80), may well remind Jansen of her own descent into solitude in London (*GMM* 36-7). This first period of urban isolation is repeated in Paris after Enno abandons her for the final time: “As soon as I had the slightest chance of place to hide in, I crept into it and I hid” (*GMM* 120). So it is interesting, given how personally she may be able to relate to the Martinique woman’s tragic story that Jansen’s response to it is so concise: “It’s a very sad story. I’m sure you were kind to her” (*GMM* 80). Are we to interpret from this curt response that she has shut off her own human empathy after so long living in world cities like London and Paris? Or is she hiding what she feels in hopes of not making a(nother) scene? Such questions, though surely untrivial, are also entirely impossible to answer given the opaqueness of her character in that moment. For her “protective armor is functioning all right” (*GMM* 84).

Rhys sounds a common modernist theme by “placing estrangement at the centre of her work, [but] she does so less from the perspective of the expatriate who pulverizes and refashions metropolitan aesthetic codes than from that of the ethnic, or ethnicized stranger – the subaltern rather than the elite cosmopolitan – who is denied a passport within metropolitan culture” (Britzolakis 457-8). This figuration echoes René’s paperless entry into Jansen’s life, asking for help. “And you think I can help you to get a passport? I? Me? But who do you think I am? This must be one of my good nights” (*GMM* 64). When Jansen’s own nationality is questioned by a hotel clerk, she responds with her typical cheek: “Nationality – that’s what has puzzled him. I ought to have put nationality by marriage” (*GMM* 13).

In this sense it is reasonable to consider single, independent women as qualifying within an extended notion of the ethnicized urban stranger. Both this extended notion and the more literal reading of the estranged, ethnic outsider are on display throughout the text, including Rhys's focus on the international milieu in which Jansen moves within Paris, and her own searching attempts to pin down and comment upon others' sometimes evasive ethnicities: "We stop under a lamppost to guess nationalities... Are they Germans? No. Scandinavians, perhaps? No. The shorter one says they are Russians. When I hear that I at once accept their offer to go and have a drink. Les Russes – that'll wind up the evening nicely" (*GMM* 39).

Later, Jansen finds out "the younger Russian, the melancholy one" is more precisely from Ukraine, although he is "a naturalized Frenchman and he has done his military service in France. He says his name is Nicolas Delmar, which doesn't sound very Russian to me" (*GMM* 54). Jansen's bemused lack of faith in others' professed national or ethnic identities expresses itself once again in early conversation with René, whose English accent she is unable to place (*GMM* 60): " 'I'll tell you one thing I don't believe. I don't believe you're French-Canadian.' 'Then what do you think I am?' 'Spanish? Spanish-American?' He blinks and says to himself: 'Elle n'est pas si bête que ça.' Well that might mean anything" (*GMM* 63). One further example demonstrates a rare consonance of Jansen's ideas of ethnic identity and an individual's professed ethnicity: Serge "is a Jew of about forty. He has that mocking look of the Jew, the look that can be so hateful, that can be so attractive, that can be so sad" (*GMM* 76).³²

³² Compare Gerty MacDowell's ethnicized impression of the dark stranger on Sandymount Strand (who turns out to be Bloom): "The face that met her gaze there in the twilight, wan and strangely drawn, seemed to her the saddest she had ever seen" (*U* 13.368-70); "His eyes burned into her as though they would search her through and through, read her very soul. Wonderful eyes they were, superbly expressive, but could you trust them? ... She could see at once by his dark eyes and his pale intellectual face that he was a foreigner..." (*U* 13.412-16).

From these examples we are led to understand that Jansen has given plenty of thought throughout her life to questions of whether an individual does or does not affirm the stereotypical characteristics which members of various ethnicities “ought” to express. This interest may be understood to have developed as a result of her mother’s creole ethnic status on Dominica marking Rhys as “other” during her youth. According to Lou Emery, Rhys’s novels “portray an absence rather than a loss of identity” and “the homelessness of one who never had a home” (Parsons 135).

Jansen’s lifelong consciousness of “otherness” makes itself known in the opening pages. The reader’s first glimpse of Rhys’s protagonist involves sharp self-recrimination for falling to tears over drinks with an American friend: “What do I want to cry about? ... On the contrary, it’s when I am quite sane like this, when I have had a couple of extra drinks and am quite sane, that I realize how lucky I am. Saved, rescued, fished-up, half-drowned, out of the deep, dark river, dry clothes, hair shampooed and set. Nobody would know I had ever been in it” (*GMM* 10). Thus the reader is greeted from the first glimpse of the narrator by the guilty conscience of a woman who, even before the story has begun, has already been over the edge and been rescued. Her guilt seems to come not just from needing to have been saved, but also from knowing that there are others who have not felt or will not feel that saving hand grasping at the back of their coat, pulling them from the river: “I’m not talking about the struggle when you are strong and a good swimmer and there are willing and eager friends on the bank willing to pull you out at the first sign of distress. I mean the real thing. You jump in with no willing and eager friends around, and when you sink you sink to the accompaniment of loud laughter” (*GMM* 10).

Though this “real thing” could refer to herself at an earlier, more drastically tragic time in her life, it also seems to ring with a certain class (self-) consciousness in her present. Given the interest I have pointed out in the Martinique woman’s tale, I contend

Sasha Jansen's "real thing" could very well refer not (only) to herself, but to Chatterjee's "fragments of the nation" which includes subaltern groups, such as women, outcasts, and other forms of urban peasants living in Paris at the same time as she did (Nolan 79). This definition is potentially very useful in reading modernism's "othered" figures such as Leopold Bloom, Sasha Jensen, Christopher Isherwood. I have been intrigued to learn during this study that *Good Morning Midnight* may be also be fruitfully read from the perspective of a post-colonial critique, parallel and complementary to my feminist reading. Nolan summarizes Chatterjee, asserting that the "task of the radical postcolonial historian or critic [...] is to brush the history of the nation-state against the grain, and to recover these fragments of tradition and of the people's history, while resisting the temptation merely to incorporate them into grand historiographical metanarratives, be they of the imperialist, nationalist, or Marxist variety" (79).

I would also add "feminist" to this list, because it is clear to me that Rhys has, while focusing on her main character, opened up the narrative to include these fragments of tradition not only of an independent woman struggling to assert her right to public space in modern Paris, but has also included its artistic community, its ethnic minorities and its paperless refugees. "In the colonial Caribbean, she belonged to the elite, but in England she was working class as a chorus girl and an outsider as creole" (Savory, *Cambridge Introduction* 13). The goal of such cultural inclusiveness, as Nolan notes, is to discover a "truly emancipatory politics... [which] supersede[s] the old politics of the nation-state" (Nolan 79). But one cannot assert that Jansen has enmeshed herself in various "othered" communities, emerging some sort of unifying, revolutionary figure; far from it. She ambles along the peripheries of these liminal communities as well, gathering their stories to her and relating them, intertwined with her own.

Novelist and critic Italo Calvino offers a useful insight on the special place Paris holds within literature: “Before being a city of the real world, Paris for me, as for millions of other people in every country, has been a city that I have imagined through books, a city that you appropriate when you read” (167). With this in mind, we may say that Jansen’s response upon visiting the Paris Exhibition, “Cold, empty, beautiful – this is what I imagined, this is what I wanted” (*GMM* 137), bequeaths a new observational strategy into the bag of tricks used by the modern *flâneur*. Here, the image taken in by the eye has already been imagined, an ordering appropriate enough, given that “[t]he exhibition is an instrument of the will” (Paquet 618). The ensuing confirmation of what imagination and the eye have both seen sounds a melancholic note reminiscent in tone and setting to the Baroque allegory studied in Benjamin’s *Trauerspiel*. Noted as typical in response to “a time of social disruption and protracted war,” Baroque allegory, as it turns out, shares at least one other thing with the modernist novel: “The splendor of the newly constructed urban phantasmagoria [in the form of international exhibitions] with its promise of change-as-progress... elicited in [Benjamin] the most prototypically melancholic allegorical response” (Buck-Morss, *Dialectics* 178). Jansen’s positive response to “The Star of Peace,” which René snootily regards as “vulgar,” affirms her approval of the idea that “[t]he key to exhibition style is its *transitory* nature” (Frisby, *Cityscapes* 109, emphasis original). “The building is very fine,” Sasha replies (*GMM* 137).

That Jansen wants to see the “lights shimmering on the water, the leaping fountains, cold and beautiful” (137) late at night when the area is unpopulated, expresses a latent desire to purge her earlier nightmare of the crowded tube in London, a sleeping “vision” which is most certainly allegorical. Asleep, Jansen desires “the way out... ashamed, always wanting to be different,” instead of proceeding along with everyone else toward “The Way to The Exhibition” (*GMM* 12). I read both scenes – awake and dreaming

– as potent critiques of the allegorical metropolitan Exhibition ideology of “change-as-progress,” with the first dream sequence aiding our reading of the later scene, conspicuously absent of overt “meaning.” After Jansen’s and René’s trip to the cold, unpopulated Exhibition, the next anecdote she relates to René also contains a farcical allegory: Hired in Montparnasse to help a rich woman craft “allegory” out of “ ‘a cactus –’ or a white rose or a yellow rose or a red rose, as the case may be. All this at six thirty in the morning... But she was never very explicit about the allegory. ‘Could you make it a Persian garden?’ ‘I don’t see why not.’ ” (*GMM* 139). Jansen’s seemingly random memory plunges this moment of light comedy into remarkable situational absurdity, as it René to confess that he, too, had been “employed” by the very same woman. This results in a conspiratorial suspicion between the two resembling that noted above between Christopher and Sally (*GMM* 141-2).

Jansen’s unflappable pragmatism (and politeness) in the face of the aesthetic equivalence of the Parisian “pampered chow” (*GMM* 140) demonstrates more than just her workplace survival instinct, which is certainly tested in *Good Morning Midnight*. Beyond pure pragmatism, I think, lies an openness to depicting those non-hegemonic elements of Parisian life which can be observed while on the move from café to cinema to restaurant to night-cap bar. The “people-nation” can be found, Chatterjee asserts, in “the margins of the nation” (Nolan 79), making critique of nationalism inseparable from the critique of post-colonial domination” (Lloyd 115). Benjamin wrote of the dandified, disaffected botanist of modernity, out walking his turtle; but Rhys has given us instead an urban anthropologist as female *flâneur* in the character of Sasha Jansen. Performing work not entirely dissimilar to that which Zora Neale Hurston accomplished in the southern United States (though of course with much less formal training than Hurston), Rhys applied what might be called a literary-anthropological approach to capture the rhythm of life of those marginalized by

modern societies. Her efforts, like Hurston's, brought these previously un-written of groups to the attention of English and American literary publics.

Harvey asserts that Balzac goes beyond Moretti's claim of locating "action on an existing map of Paris." Instead, Harvey posits that Balzac "actively constructs a map of the city's terrain and evokes its living qualities. He is his own cartographer. He puts a signature on that map, his own.... [H]e establishes his power within and over the city" and makes it legible by making his own map (Harvey 66). By chronicling the lives of hat sellers, formerly suicidal "Foreign Legion escapee" gigolos, Russian-Jewish artists and an alcoholic single woman laying claim to her own freedom to walk Paris alone, Rhys redraws, then populates her own map of Paris with an all-star cast of liminal metropolitan figures. All cartographic control in this process is conceded to Sasha Jansen, one of English literature's first women *flâneurs*.

3.1 Memory and *Flânerie*

James Joyce famously said of *Ulysses* that he wanted "to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book" (Bowker 232). Whether or not Joyce made good on his wish, Paris, it must be said, cannot be reconstructed from Rhys's *Good Morning Midnight*. Nor does that seem to have been Rhys's intent, conscious or otherwise. On the problem of re-presenting a city from memory in literature, Westphal cites Italo Calvino's Marco Polo, describing Fedora. By the time he tells of that city's having been thus and thus, it has already changed. Therefore one fixes the described city in the telling as a "toy in a glass globe" (Calvino, *Invisible Cities* 32 qtd. in Westphal 140).³³ In this section I would like to

³³ Here Calvino can be said to approach from a different angle Bulson's claim of the "fiction" of Joyce's drawing 1904 Dublin from maps published between 1914-21 (Rabaté 61).

propose that one solution to the problem presented by the *flâneur*'s memory can be arrived at by reordering the problem. Perhaps "[t]he *flâneur* is not wandering aimlessly, but searching, trying hard to remember" (Godfrey 168).

According to Benjamin, an important component of the "theological reading" of texts is the "telescoping of the past through the present" (Buck-Morss, "The *Flâneur*" 33). Rhys performs this telescoping act frequently throughout the narrative, whether Sasha Jansen is remembering London (*GMM* 37, 48-9); the regrettable, embarrassing work episode with Mr. Blank (21-6); the death of her child at five weeks (*GMM* 49-52, 116), or meals at the "Pig and Lilly" with Enno (*GMM* 34). Especially interesting is Frisby's observed "intensification of the past *in* the present" (*Cityscapes* 119, emphasis original), reminding one especially of Jansen in Paris who seems doggedly haunted in *GMM* by her own past – both Parisian and otherwise.

Expanding on this idea related to this theme, Mailhos notes Cicero's

description of the use of a mnemonic system of *places* and *images*. These places, or *loci memoriae* can be buildings (whether real or fictitious), but also cities: memory is structured like a plan, a map or a maze through which one proceeds in search of the images or objects which one placed there in a certain order, and which all contain facts, anecdotes, stories which one wants to remember, and which can thus be revived, unfolded and developed into a narrative, the one after the other (152, emphasis original).

This would seem to be the reverse of Jansen's city walking "programme" whereby she attempts to *avoid* being reminded of the pain in her past by avoiding certain places. There is, of course, a kind of perverse irony in intentionally avoiding walking past places which might awaken old memories: for if one is so obsessed, isn't one in a sense remembering the "bad past" all the time by striving to hold it at bay? Yet Jansen seems to be unable to stop the flow of memory, regardless of whether she actuates her program or not: "Just about here we waited for a couple of hours to see Anatole France's funeral pass... I walk along, remembering this, remembering that, trying to find a cheap place to eat – not so

easy round here. The gramophone record is going strong in my head: ‘Here this happened, here that happened...’ ” (*GMM* 15).

Later, the text provides a male-gendered variant of this situation: Delmar insists he is able to forget his painful present – with the help of *flânerie*. “He has some female relative – sister, mother, aunt, I can’t make out – who is ill, which makes him very sad. ‘But I can forget it,’ he says. ‘Every day I come up to the Quartier Latin, or I walk in the Luxembourg Gardens. I can forget it’ (*GMM* 54). Jansen’s failed attempts to escape her memory while walking through Paris place her in a strange sort of no-place in the middle of Irving Wohlfarth’s intriguing binary: “While the materialist historian *constructs* a particular past according to the dictates of the hour, the historicist painstakingly *reconstructs* some by-gone era out of a tell-tale need to *forget* the present” (19). For Jansen, who ultimately eludes classification according to Wohlfarth’s rubric as either materialist nor historicist, it remains unclear throughout the text which is worse – her tragic past, or her haunted present: “Was it in 1923 or 1924 that we lived round the corner, in the *Rue Victor-Cousin* and Enno bought me that Cossack cap and the imitation Astrakhan coat? It was then that I started calling myself Sasha. I thought it might change my luck if I changed my name. Did it bring me any luck I wonder – calling myself Sasha?” (*GMM* 11).

Simmel’s exploration of the “decay and decadence” of ruin, explored above in context of Sally Bowles, can also be seen to apply here in the case of Sasha Jansen. In drinking to excess, Jansen hatches a morbid plan in London: “It was then that I had the bright idea of drinking myself to death. Thirty-five pounds of the legacy had accumulated, it seemed. That ought to do the trick” (*GMM* 37). Her regimen of “whisky, rum, gin, sherry, vermouth, wine ...” fails to achieve the desired effect of total oblivion: “Nothing. I must be solid as an oak. Except when I cry. I watch my face gradually breaking up –

cheeks puffing out, eyes getting smaller. Never mind... Besides, it isn't my face, this tortured and tormented mask. I can take it off whenever I like and hang it up on a nail" (*GMM* 37). In "The Mask and the Pen," a remarkably fitting, cautionary commentary on the problems of artificiality in authorship, Huston observes: "The problem is when a human face has spent a number of years beneath a mask, deprived of light and oxygen, it changes. Not only does it age, as all faces do, but it tends to get a bit pallid, flaccid, puffy." (60). Rhys's curious, disturbing image prefigures the fabricated "West African" masks in Serge's studio, "straight from the Congo" (*GMM* 76), replete with their own problems of authenticity.

Baudelaire "encodes the private myths of a personal history of desire and defeat within a larger myth of disinheritance and exile that is generated by jolting visions of the changing city. The *flâneur's* personal *plan de Paris* becomes a cognitive map for reading or misreading the poet's reconstructed fictions" (Godfrey 167). This sense of the potentially fictive elusiveness of memory is echoed by Harding, who notes that "[w]hile memory can be regarded as a faculty in the service of a structuring imagination, memory and recollection are, finally, indentured to a selective imagination" (Harding 135). Or, as Sasha Jansen puts it:

Well there you are. It's not that these things happen or even that one survives them, but what makes life strange is that they are forgotten. Even the one moment that you thought was your eternity fades out and is forgotten and dies. This is what makes life so droll – the way you forget, and every day is a new day, and there's hope for everybody, hooray.... (*GMM* 118).

3.2 Interiors and Consumption

Harvey recalls the troubling notes of darkness which emerge in Balzac's relationship with Paris: "suddenly I wake up alone and find myself in the midst of the depths of a dark light" (Poulet 110). This troublesome "light" prefigures Sasha Jansen's

dark nights alone in hotel rooms, contemplating her own mortality (Harvey 68). Hotel rooms function as a sort of synechdochic metropolitan transitional space in *Good Morning Midnight*, representing the unrelenting alienation of Paris as experienced by Jansen. The novel's opening salutation, a passage which repeats with minor variation later, is voiced as though spoken by a hotel room: " 'Quite like old times,' the room says. 'Yes? No?' " (9). "When transitional spaces such as hotel rooms, intended to be "occupied only on a transitory basis" (Drewery 3) instead function as they do in Rhys's text as semi-permanent homes, we find an example of modernism's trope of estrangement *par excellence*, pitched in her typically mordant tone. When they become confidants, estrangement edges over toward something a Freudian analysis might label "psychosis." But her hotel room is more than just a confidant. It is also a symbol of Jansen's total urban experience, both inside and out. "This damned room – it's saturated with the past. . . . It's all the rooms I've ever slept in, all the streets I've ever walked in" (*GMM* 91).

GoGwilt notes the complex, Benjaminian "dialectical relation between rooms and streets" explored in his criticism of Baudelaire (68). This intriguing relationship emerges alongside the development of the Arcades, a phenomenon we will return to shortly; first I would like to investigate the literary significance of rooms in the context of urban modernity. Parsons notes the ways in which the space provided by rooms allows for the possibility of non-hegemonic feminist readings of Woolf's "room of one's own."³⁴ Parsons writes of a space in which "privacy and repose" also lead to "isolation," in the case of Richardson's Miriam Henderson (114) – although Parsons could just as well be writing about Sasha Jansen in her hotel room(s). I contend that the various, non-hegemonic kinds of meaning offered by hotel rooms hinge on the modern act of anonymous, itinerant consumption.

³⁴ The hegemonic reading, or "pure truth to wrap up between the pages of your notebooks and put on your mantelpiece for ever" (Woolf, *Room* 3-4) being, of course, that a space such as a "room of one's own" is required for the aspiring female artist to produce literature, or other works of art.

Considering moving into a new hotel after a scary and foreshadowing early episode with the “commis” which left her “frightened as hell. A nightmare feeling...” (*GMM* 31), Jansen’s first interaction with the new hotel’s receptionist, in which she requests “a light room,” receives a commodified sales pitch response emphasizing the protagonist’s role as potential customer: “ ‘We have Number 219. A beautiful room with a bath. Seventy-five francs a night... It’s a very beautiful room with a bath. Two windows. Very light,’ she says persuasively” (*GMM* 32).

Later, when a disagreeable hotel trade conversation between the porter and the receptionist reveals that the room in question may not be available, it is then reduced (or inflated?) to a marker for the man who has rented it in an elision remarkable in equal measure for its exquisite subtlety and its expression of a seasoned metropolitan blasé attitude: “ ‘Of course you know that Number 219 is occupied.’ ‘Oh no. Number 219 had his bill the day before yesterday,’ the receptionist says. ‘I remember. I gave it to him myself.’ ” (32). That modern hotel workers comfortably and reflexively conflate human individuals with their room numbers indicates the degree to which the commodification of identity and itinerancy, signposts of modernity noted by theorists from Simmel onward, are numbingly present in the metropolitan hotel trade. That Rhys registers this subtle effect so effortlessly is testament to her finely honed craft of distanced, urban observation.

The overdetermined meaning borne by modern hotel rooms adds to the confusion Jansen already feels in attempting to flee the awkward, threatening sexual advances of the “commis.” As a result of the room’s commercialization/anthropomorphization, Jansen feels simultaneously compelled to possess the room, appropriating the terminology of a salesperson despite its being is too expensive – “(God, I can’t afford that)” – and convinced she knows nearly all there is to know about the man from room number 219:

I listen anxiously to this conversation. Suddenly I feel I must have number 219, with bath – number 219, with rose-coloured curtains, carpet and bath. I shall exist on a different plane at once if I can get this room, if only for a couple of nights. It

will be an omen. Who says you can't escape your fate? I'll escape from mine, into room number 219. Just try me, just give me a chance.... Number 219 – well now I know all about him. All the time they are talking I am seeing him – his trousers, his shoes, the way he brushes his hair, the sort of girls he likes. His hand-luggage is light yellow and he has a paunch. But I can't see his face. He wears a mask, number 219... (*GMM* 32-3).

Here, crucially, is a glimpse of both Jansen's plight and Rhys's literary talent in one. The author manages to gloss Virginia Woolf's approach to writing found in "Ms. Brown"³⁵ by filling out the human form of the anthropomorphized "number 219," while at the same time echoing Leopold Bloom's fascination with advertising *and* delineating Jansen's phobia of human contact: "But I can't see his face. He wears a mask, number 219..." Interestingly, it is in the above passage that Jansen comes closest to Balzac's "imperial" lust inspired by the majesty of Paris: "I possess the world effortlessly, and the world hasn't the slightest hold on me" (Harvey 68). So it would seem that the city engenders a sort of bi-polar psychological condition in Balzac, not terribly unlike Jansen's own. This symptom, while similar, would seem to have a different cause in the case of Jansen, as her desire to possess city space is scaled significantly down, and applies not to the whole of Paris, but merely – fleetingly – to a single, *unavailable* hotel room.

The fact that Jansen is certain she has plumbed the "foreigner" 's character for all possible personal identity ("I know all about him"), and yet simultaneously admits that she is denied full access to his face – even in the space she nominally controls, her own imagination – demonstrates a kind of psychological blockage prohibiting intimate knowledge of another human in Jansen's late-modern Paris. In this latter of the two modes of meaning given to the urban hotel room, intimacy between the sexes (at least as Sasha Jansen experiences it) registers as strained to the point of impossibility, whether in

³⁵ Virginia Woolf's "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1923) set a sort of artistic standard for modernist literary focus on character for the purpose of a text or author achieving intimacy with the reader, in opposition to what she saw as an outmoded preoccupation with external setting. This latter approach she associates with passé Edwardian aesthetic ideals, represented in her essay by the figure of her contemporary, the critic Arnold Bennett. This brilliant essay also contains Woolf's famous prognosis that "on or about December 1910 human character changed" (4), a statement which serves as a cornerstone for English literature within the modernist aesthetic philosophy.

relationships between a boarder and a hotel employee, or between two boarders.

Tangentially fascinating is Woolf's seemingly sound, if ever so slightly moralistic judgment that "[o]ur marriages, our friendships depend on" modern readers' ability to judge character (Woolf, "Mr Bennett" 4). Rhys's candid portrayal of her protagonist's stunted interpersonal ability demonstrates consciousness of this symptom of modernity, if not (yet) an awareness of its ramifications. Here Woolf's exhortation to the reader of modern literature to "[t]olerate the spasmodic, the obscure, the fragmentary, the failure" (Woolf 24) functions as an aesthetic justification for such a bold portrayal of human fragility. Sasha Jansen offers the last word, summing up this idea of rooms:

A beautiful room with a bath? A room with a bath? A nice room? A room? ... But never tell the truth about this business of rooms, because it would bust the roof off everything and undermine the whole social system. All rooms are the same. All rooms have our walls, a door, a window or two, a bed, a chair, and perhaps a bidet. A room is a place where you hide from the wolves outside and that's all any room is. Why should I worry about changing my room? (*GMM* 33).

Turning more generally to the intersection of interiors and consumerism, this study will reference Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, which remains a fascinating text sowing the "seeds of the cultural theory of modernity" (Hanssen 1). The mid-nineteenth century Parisian arcades which reemerge from his unfinished study, "lined with luxury shops and open through iron and glass roofs to the stars," are described by Susan Buck-Morss as a "wish image, expressing the bourgeois individual's desire to escape through the symbolic medium of objects from the isolation of his/her subjectivity" (Buck-Morss, "The *Flâneur*" 36). These forerunners of contemporary shopping malls locate a crucial urban hybrid space "between a street and an interior" (Benjamin, *Arcades* 68), recreating the sensation of modern city streets, at the crossroads where commodity and the indoors meet. This intersection illustrates the dialectical relation between streets and rooms mentioned above by GoGwilt. Furthermore, the Arcades present a vital space for *flânerie*: "*Flânerie* could hardly have assumed the importance it did without the arcades" (Benjamin, *Arcades* 68).

Pensky notes the sense of fantasy evoked by advertisements in Parisian *passages* about to be destroyed – advertising products for stores no longer in business (120). Parsons observes the similarity between Baudelaire’s man of leisure and the spectator of Addison and Steele (35). Yet Benjamin claimed, “the habitat of the *flâneur* was being destroyed just as he was becoming a recognizable social type.” Thus, a retreat from the demolished Arcades to a “panoramic” position of some height retains a movement backwards for Parsons, toward the 18th century dandy of Addison and Steele who is authoritative, detached, and static, and away from a subversive, Baudelarian movement through the streets (Parsons 35-6). Parallel to this movement we may observe Rhys’s use of the *flâneur* figure as an aesthetic act not unaffected by nostalgia. The author staves off the figure’s inevitable obsolescence, refiguring it in a new, feminine mode.

Benjamin’s Marxist conflation of fashion and death (Hanssen 102) is explored early on in Rhys’s text in her depiction of the “old Englishwoman and her daughter” who visit the shop where Sasha Jansen works (*GMM* 19-20). The old woman’s proud eyes, though “undaunted,” cannot conceal “something about her mouth and chin collapsing” in response to her daughter’s merciless ridicule at attempting to cover her bald head with something fashionable. Jansen’s sympathetic response reveals that her own critique of fashion is less wholeheartedly Marxist than it is tempered by an understanding of the difficulties of aging as a woman:

Oh, but why not buy her a wig, several decent dresses, as much champagne as she can drink, all the things she likes to eat and oughtn’t to, a gigolo if she wants one? One last flare-up, and she’ll be dead in six months at the outside. That’s all you’re waiting for, isn’t it? But no, you must have the slow death, the bloodless killing that leaves no stain on your conscience.... (*GMM* 20).

In a similar vein, a strict Marxist/Benjaminian reading of Jansen’s memory of the black, four hundred franc dress which she pines for bodes poorly for her – though it could also be said within this construct to “mercifully” fulfill her deathwish. As soon as its season in fashion comes to an end on the mannequin, it can be sold to a worker such as

Jansen, upon whom the fashion will have inevitably faded (i.e. death). Sasha Jansen, whose fixation on the four hundred franc dress which cannot be hers in time to save her from colossal indignity in front of Mr. Blank – “If I had been wearing it I should never have stammered or been stupid” (*GMM* 25) – finally relinquishes the fantasy of commodity. “Now I have stopped crying. Now I shall never have that dress. Today, this day, this hour, this minute I am utterly defeated. I have had enough” (*GMM* 25). In this instance Jansen acknowledges her power to “bust the roof off everything,” but refusing to do so, thus maintaining her static, symbolic position of interiority. Exposed to the constraints both of feminine subjection within society and a class distinction marked by those able to buy four hundred franc dresses, and those unable to, Sasha Jansen expresses the lamentable modern reality that at some moments a woman may choose to concede the battle against forces of outside pressure whose grip of power exceeds one’s will to fight against it.

Perhaps one final thought will suffice here. Historian Carl Shorske notes the shift in temporality which marked a “turn from Marx to Freud,” private memory comes to dominate history, rather than the sociological or public (Schwarz 47). This can be seen to be confirmed by Jansen superimposing her own matrix of painful memory over the vast palimpsestic history of Paris, Benjamin’s “capital of the nineteenth century” (Benjamin, “Paris”) Yet there is an even more powerful analogy to Jansen’s unwilling remembrances found in Pierre Nora’s assessment that in contemporary society “memory is constantly on our lips because it no longer exists” (Schwarz 51). In seeking to disassociate herself from her personal past, Jansen has spoken the late-modern age into full, paradoxical existence: stuck, as it were, in the ever-renewing, past-less present; an endless moment “walking in the night. Back to the hotel. Always the same hotel. Always the same stairs. Always the same room....” (*GMM* 28), in which “tomorrow never comes” (*GMM* 133).

3.3 The Physicality of the Female *Flâneur*

Like James Joyce's boundary-pushing exploration of the scatological in *Ulysses*, Jean Rhys sees fit in *Good Morning Midnight* to pronounce the "lavabo" an acceptable, even fruitful literary space. In Rhys's narrative approach the toilet becomes indispensable as a "fundamental integrating element in the text" (Savory, *Cambridge Introduction* 72):

Lavabos... What about a monograph on lavabos – toilets – ladies? ... A London Lavabo in black and white marble, fifteen women in a queue, each clutching her penny, not one bold spirit daring enough to dash out of her turn past the stern-faced attendant. That's what I call discipline.... The lavabo in Florence and the very pretty, fantastically dressed girl who rushed in, hugged and kissed the old dame tenderly and fed her with cakes out of a paper bag. The dancer-daughter? ... that cosy little Paris lavabo, where the attendant peddled drugs – something to heal a wounded heart (*GMM* 10).

In the passage above, a veritable European grand tour of metropolitan lavabos, Rhys demands that the space of the woman's toilet be *seen*, first and foremost. For, it is only after this important first step is taken that the reader will then be able to see lavabos as in fact crucial to the new kinds of stories the city has to tell – stories which are illuminating in their observations of gendered social behavior, lovely and frightening.

Rhys does not stop at toilets, however, in uncovering new arenas for modern literary exploration. She also exposes to the reader those delicate textiles – otherwise reserved, as in *Ulysses*, for risqué store-front windows or modern pulp fiction – known as ladies underwear. Telling the reader a story to match Paulette's yarn about her drawers falling off, Jansen sets the scene: she has just refused the unwanted sexual advances of a man in Kensington. Following this rebuff, he brusquely escorts her to the bus stop where, "in a dead silence, waiting for the bus... my drawers fall off. I look down at them, step out of them neatly, pick them up, roll them into a little parcel and put them into my handbag. What else is there to do?" (*GMM* 114). Jansen's unfazeable practicality is as charming as Rhys's inclusion of this vignette in her novel is challenging to 1930s High Modernist literary norms. Although both Rhys and Joyce had to overcome similar normative

obstacles in demonstrating the acceptability of such new literary spaces as toilets, Rhys's further attempt to normalize exposed female undergarments, and portray a woman who not only desires sex, but who can also resist it, bests Joyce's anti-prude efforts on any scale of pure difficulty.

The "New Woman," who emerges in *fin de siècle* sociologists' studies and newspaper articles, is a "problematic figure for the threatened male" precisely because of her unavailability as a sexual object, according to Parsons (83-5). Parsons also notes the "embodiment of gendered 'otherness' " which parallels the immigrant Jew's "embodied racial 'otherness' " (Parsons 102), linking Sasha Jansen in another intriguing way to Leopold Bloom. In addition to these estranging modern identifications, her "economic security protects her from punishment as a fallen woman" (85). This last canonical feminist reading of the "New Woman" is turned askew Rhys's late-modernist text, when René mistakenly thinks Sasha is rich enough to give him money for sex. His misreading of her social status, judging by a fur coat long past its season, offers a moment of levity. This light moment cannot quite cover, however, the problem of René being unable to accept Jansen's refusal of his insistence on sex.

Rhys also makes use of both Baudelaire's and Benjamin's personification of the modern city as female, an association noted as well by Petro (41), Von Ankum (163), and others: "Paris is looking very nice tonight.... You are looking very nice tonight, my beautiful, my darling, and oh what a bitch you can be! But you didn't kill me after all, did you? And they couldn't kill me either...." (*GMM* 15). Although exactly who "they" refers to in this passage is open to interpretation, it is clear that Rhys is playing on received notions of the city as female in the first three sentences, a modernist trope echoing Baudelaire's *flânerie* that adds dramatic tension and foreshadowing of the danger of sexual violence lurking later to this early stage of the narrative. By appropriating the masculine

voice – “my beautiful, my darling, and oh what a bitch you can be!” – Rhys continues her playful appropriation and subsequent invalidation of modernist convention in insisting on viewing, indeed, *leering at* the city as an independent woman.

Conflating the human face with the facades of modern buildings, Simmel asserts that a face’s “aesthetic character may be decided by how comprehensive a change in [its] constituent elements must be in order to effect a change in its total impression” (“Aesthetische Bedeutung” 280). According to this rubric, the amount of time Sasha Jansen requires to perform her lavabo makeover may reveal her age, and thus her distance from the carefree days of youthful beauty: “ ‘You are always disappearing into the lavabo, you. *C’est agaçant.*’ ‘What do you expect?’ I say, staring at him. ‘I’m getting old.’ ” (*GMM* 142). Such brutal honesty tracing the relationship between her advancing age and the commensurate, perceived increasing difficulty meeting society’s unfair standards of physical beauty eviscerates the hypocritical double standards of the male gaze, which demands at once the right to ascribe to femininity unending youth and beauty, at the same time as it denies complicity in the problems of self-esteem experienced by women constantly “on view” in the modern metropolis.

Rhys’s clever surprise ending, with the “commis” essentially replacing René in bed, both echoes and surpasses Molly Bloom’s affirmations at the close of *Ulysses*. Sasha Jansen’s “Yes – yes – yes....” (*GMM* 159) tacks an unquestioned final assent of intimate human contact to Rhys’s dark/light tale of metropolitan isolation and alienation. That Jansen’s physical embrace envelops a man she so detests speaks to the degree of her psychological abandonment to the Parisian night’s darkness. It is an embrace so shrouded in darkness that at least one critic has fundamentally misread the scene’s complex drama: Louis James believes that Jansen’s self-reproachful/wishful thinking has recalled René to the room he has just left, creating “a moment of love and meaning” (James 29), when in

fact it is the hated “commis” who opportunistically enters her open door, creating a sexual union much more complex, though no less willed (*GMM* 159).

The risk involved in depicting such willing – and potentially dark – female sexuality virtually guaranteed that *Good Morning Midnight* would not be an immediate commercial success. But the bold decision to portray Jansen’s sexual desire in such a complex and yet unquestionably affirmative way sets Rhys together with Joyce and Isherwood as well ahead of her modern times. Throughout the text Jansen’s *flânerie*, modified to fit her own psychological needs of trying not to remember a painful Parisian past, challenges male dominated definitions of the term supplied by both the modern novel and its criticism. The female *flâneur*’s insistence on moving about a city despite its many constraints sets a tone of willful, assertive defiance toward those literary conventions which Rhys sought to upend and make new.

Conclusion

The *flâneur* figure, as I have shown, is still navigating the streets of Dublin, Berlin and Paris by foot during late-modernism, negotiating the European city to bring it from page to reader. If it has been modified from Baudelaire's autochthonous usage, those changes have only made the *flâneur* more compatible with the ever-accelerating speed of late-modern urban life. But Leopold Bloom's rapid-fire sensory uptake is not the only reason the *flâneur* is still walking the European city after 1920. In response to Benjamin's observed "war on *flânerie*" (*Arcades* 547) which attended the destruction of their new habitat in the Arcades, I have argued that James Joyce, Christopher Isherwood and Jean Rhys found various innovative solutions to the problem of adapting the *flâneur* figure into previously untried roles. Thus, their success at sustaining this literarily useful urban observer through the economic and aesthetic challenges which attended late-modernism also served to welcome members of "othered" social groups into the literary canon.

In chapter one, I have shown how the Irish-Jewish identification of Leopold Bloom allowed him to escape the binary essentialization of colony/colonizer, substituting non-judgmental wisdom for reductive, nationalistic hatred. Bloom's mild tolerance of his marginalization by fellow Dubliners offers a model for late-modern literary (and perhaps present-day real) conflict. Finally, advertising's "key" role in transposing fast-paced urban life into literature initiates a new, decidedly non-High-Art discourse on modern creativity.

In chapter two, I showed Christopher Isherwood's homosexual *flânerie* in Berlin to be the first of its kind. The narrator's conspicuous distance from the reader serves to guard against overreactions to the boldness of his public movements. His use of photography/film as a tool useful to *flânerie* demonstrates the genre crossing typical of modernist art, and at the same time suggests an important challenge to the inferred epistemological validity of photographic information postulated by the technological

confidence of the age. Isherwood's focus on the character of Sally Bowles offers a deeper insight into the problem of authenticity located in the modern urban bohemian identity, while his transition to politically conscious observer of Berlin in the throes of the rise of Fascism challenges the previously held modern notion that the *flâneur* must remain numb to, if not revel in the political upheaval surrounding him.

In chapter three my reading of *Good Morning Midnight* argued that, along with a feminist re-visioning of the gender possibilities of the *flâneur*, Jean Rhys is interested in spotlighting various ethnically liminal members of late-modern Paris. Jansen's struggle to evade hurtful memories presents new challenges to *flânerie*, resulting in a circumscribed set of movements not directly linked to her femininity, although she expresses those more direct, negative effects separately as well. Rhys's exploration of interiors and consumption demonstrates the dehumanization of the itinerant hotel culture which is so prominent in big cities, as well as the modern tendency for individuals to be subsumed under their identity as mass consumers. Finally, Rhys's focus on the physicality of the female *flâneur*, shown by her revealing inclusion of women's restrooms, undergarments, and Sasha Jansen's sexuality, has revolutionary implications. For the first time in English literature, we are presented with a woman who is openly unashamed of either the spontaneous public displaying of her drawers, or of her reawakening sexual will.

Owing to time and space constraints, I was not able to fully explore the fascinating questions of high art *versus* popular literature embedded in these narratives. Joyce's belief "that by recording the minutiae of a single day, he could release those elements of the marvelous latent in ordinary living, so that the familiar might astonish" (Kiberd 11) is well founded. This fascination with the everyday, shown in Bloom's obsession with advertising images and strategies, demonstrates a populist aesthetic counter to the principles of High Modernism, which James Joyce made his own. However, as Declan Kiberd laments in his

introduction to *Ulysses and Us*, Joyce's further dream of transforming high literature into a truly popular endeavor remains yet to be achieved. As a suggestion for further study, I would recommend this area as a rich topic for late-modernist novels. As pointed out by Frisby, the surface-level aimlessness of author as mindlessly wandering *flâneur* conceals the fact that artists, masquerading as *flâneurs*, are actually "in search of a market for his or her images of the city" (*Cityscapes* 12). This question of the marketability of modern texts is not unrelated to the previous one, but also goes unanswered in this study. In addition, Isherwood's self-proclaimed "sexual colonialism" presents a challenge to my reading of his "slumming" as sympathetic. I would encourage those interested in this topic to pursue that notion more fully than I have here. Similarly, the curious connection between fascism and homosexuality noted by Carr in studies by Hugh David strikes me as interesting, and deserving of further attention.

In Simmel's "Tragedy of culture," he observes a "tapering" of the "location where the civilizing intentions of the Enlightenment may retain their impetus..." This results in a world where the intellectual "must be a tragic, homeless wanderer" (Bergey 148-9). To the credit of all three authors, each has managed to bring exquisite humanity and humor to their depictions of late-modern life, rendering Simmel's modern "tragedy" much more of a pleasant, if mixed, bag. To end where this study began for me, I will quote Desmond Harding, for whom "the city *is* both memory and essential ground for modern life.... When we read urban fictions we not only recover a sense of collective urban history, ... we remember (or even foreshadow) our own lives in symbolic ways that enrich our lives in the present" (135, emphasis original). If even one reader of this paper experiences the resonance of that sentiment in response to this study and the texts upon which it is based, then I will consider it to have been a success.

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