Urban Walking

The Flâneur as an Icon of Metropolitan Culture in Literature and Film

Edited by

Oliver Bock

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany

Isabel Vila-Cabanes

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany

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Table of contents

Table of Figures

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Introduction

Oliver Bock and Isabel Vila-Cabanes

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany

At the onset of modernity, the rise of urbanisation began to captivate the artistic mind to an extent unheard of before, prompting a need for new ways to capture the aesthetics of an emerging urban existence. It is in this context that the figure of the flâneur flourished, not just as a recognisable social type, but also as a literary phenomenon. The early flâneur – or the meditative observer of urban life – granted the artist a dynamic approach to render an ever-changing urban panorama. As the city continued to develop, so did the figure of the flâneur undergo various transformations, adjusting to specific literary models and diverse urban settings. Contrary to initial conceptions of the flâneur drawn up by scholars from Walter Benjamin to Dana Brand, the type is not exclusively tied to a particular place and epoch, nor has the relevance of the figure dwindled with the further intensification of metropolitan culture. Thus, Benjamin's claims that the flâneur belongs to nineteenth-century Paris as well as Brand's statement (certainly influenced by Benjamin) that the flâneur's popularity, established during the first half of the nineteenth century, would wane as the century progresses and give way to new forms of urban representation, prove to be inaccurate.[1] Instead, the flâneur continues to thrive, now on a global scale, as a topic in artistic production and also as a paradigm for the interpretation of urban existence.

Certainly, the history and pre-history of the flâneur have enjoyed the steady and extensive attention of critics during the last decades. Early research on the origins and development of the figure has mainly examined French, British and North American cultures. While many of the contributions to this collection focus on variants of the flâneur situated at the fringes of established scholarship, we would also like to acknowledge a selection of seminal works on the practice of flânerie that have furthered and enabled contemporary

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[1] Dana Brand, *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 45–6.

analyses of the type in broader contexts. The works listed at the end of this introduction may be of interest to those readers who seek a deeper understanding of the tradition of flânerie from literary, artistic, social or historical perspectives.

Since today the notion of the flâneur seems to have emancipated itself from canonical representations of the type and the practice, such as those of Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, in order to give way to more abstract uses of the concept, the present collection offers an interdisciplinary array of essays in which the flâneur is of interest from two main perspectives. On the one hand, flânerie appears as a subject or an element of urban culture. Following more classical approaches to the figure, the urban stroller may be presented as a literary or social character, as a producer of texts or flânerie may emerge as a theme in literature. On the other hand, there is the flâneur as a basis for the analysis of the urban condition. In recent years the flâneur has dissociated itself from traditional sources to become a critical literary concept. Flânerie is increasingly construed in contemporary research as a literary and cultural approach to the city, turning the flâneur into a key figure to rewrite and redefine urban culture.

This collection assembles expanded versions of papers delivered at an international conference on the flâneur as an icon of metropolitan culture in literature and film that took place at the University of Jena in March 2018. Drawing on the critical premises of flânerie as a quintessential phenomenon of urban life, pervading almost all areas of intellectual, social, and artistic production, and of the flâneur as an ever-evolving figure, the conference sought a re-evaluation of the flâneur's dual role as an agent and a subject within metropolitan environments beyond Walter Benjamin's constrictions concerning gender, suitable settings, historical periods and social roles. This book places the flâneur in different cultural and spatial frameworks in order to show the adaptive capacity of the type to diverse epochs, localities, artistic movements, and media. Flânerie is seen and understood as a medium of urban representation in the imagination of artists all over the world.

The articles collected in this volume fall into five different categories. The first group bears on the poetics of walking, shedding new light on relevant theoretical aspects of flânerie. Eva Ries's "Precarious Flânerie – Towards the Formation of an Ethical Subject" shows a renewed engagement with Benjamin's conceptualisation of flânerie and her reworking of the notion into a literary critical concept which moves towards post-modern Butlerian theory. Ries illustrates the process of subject formation through a discussion of flânerie in Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) and Siri Hustvedt's *The Blindfold* (1992). Similarly, Lea Herrmann's chapter expands on the notion of the Benjaminian flâneur as a form of *revenance* in the semi-fictional autobiographies of Peter

Kurzeck, *Das schwarze Buch* (1982) and *Übers Eis* (1997), both set in Frankfurt. The paper evinces the continuing relevance and productivity of flânerie as an approach towards the contemporary city and as a concept that informs, directs, and guides the writer in the search for appropriate artistic expression.

The second group of essays pertains to the heyday of the flâneur in major European capitals, showing emblematic portrayals of the social and literary urban type in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Thus, Knut Brynhildsvoll traces the flâneur within Scandinavia's classic modernity at the turn of the century, providing a view of bohemians and outsiders of the Scandinavian cultural and artistic panorama. The other two essays of this category focus on urban strollers in the British capital. Isabel Vila-Cabanes's "Remapping Late Nineteenth-Century London: Arthur Machen's Dyson Mysteries and the 'Art of London'" explores the stroller's uncanny experience of the Gothic city. The *fin-de-siècle* fictional and non-fictional works of Arthur Machen draw attention to two central tropes of nineteenth-century flânerie, namely the flâneur as a socio-historical and literary phenomenon, and the connection between the detective and the flâneur. The category of gender and the controversial notion of the female flâneur in early twentieth-century London is re-examined in Cristina Carluccio's essay "Urban Abstraction in Literary Modernism: Virginia Woolf's Street-Haunting Adventures". Carluccio draws from modernism, psychology, and flânerie for the purpose of describing Woolf's particular ideas about female writing in an urban setting as well as the use of new literary techniques to paint the modernist metropolis.

Depictions of the flâneur in post-modern literature are at the centre of Ina Schabert's and Daniel Chukwuemeka's papers. Schabert's "The Self and the City in Philippe Delerm's Novel *Quelque chose en lui de Bartleby* (2009)" deals with self-fashioning and the idea of the flâneur "brought to life" by the protagonist himself, who is a blogger. Delerm's introspective rendition of Paris subsumes a fundamental dialectic of flânerie: the systematic tension between a blasé attitude and an urgency to record his own intellectual and creative impressions of metropolitan existence. Chukwuemeka's essay is likewise concerned with the theme of identity, centring on cultural memory and flânerie as a means to recover it. The peripatetic protagonist of Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011) is presented as an Afropolitan flâneur, an African cosmopolitan, who has a particular sensitivity for city sounds, which in turn help him to recover memories and facilitate self-consciousness. Chukwuemeka demonstrates that flânerie is presented in Cole's novel as the means to negotiate identity not just as a social type but also on a deep, individual, psychological level.

The fourth category establishes the flâneur figure as a world-wide literary phenomenon. The contributions by Cecile Sandten, Farida Youssef, and Ana Paula Cardozo de Souza reveal the relevance and adaptability of flânerie for locales outside metropolitan Western modernity. Cardozo de Souza's "Uncovering the Nocturnal Street: João do Rio and the *crônica* in Brazil" examines flânerie as a force of generic innovation in Brazilian journalism and as an expression of Brazil's emerging modernist culture. Cardozo de Souza finds in the *crônicas* of João do Rio the culmination of the Western notion of the flâneur transformed and fashioned to the streets of Rio de Janeiro. The flâneur's fundamental potential of engaging with a city is the main topic of Farida Youssef's contribution about Mu Shiying's rendering of 1930s Shanghai. Owing to Shiying's particular technique of impressionism, Youssef is able to investigate the psychoanalytic implications of flânerie as an urban practice and as a method of writing. The last examination of the flâneur in a non-Western context appears in Cecile Sandten's "Challenging and Reconfiguring Flânerie in Fictions of Contemporary Indian Metropolises". Sandten describes the relevance of flânerie in postcolonial settings and its continuing productivity within the framework of postmodern writing. The peripatetic protagonists of Khushwant Singh's *Delhi: A Novel* (1990), Amit Chaudhuri's *A New World* (2000), and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) are shown to be postcolonial flâneurs whose counter-narratives of the urban milieu often highlight the strollers' sense of displacement.

Intermedial aspects of flânerie are represented in this volume by two contributions dealing with film studies. In "Roaming the Streets: US NeoAvant-Garde Cinema and Urban Transformation" Berit Hummel discusses how flânerie inspired conceptions and depictions of urban space on the screen. Hummel explains how familiar terms such as discontinuity or the vignette find their filmic counterparts in Ron Rice's *The Flower Thief* (1960) and Vernon Zimmerman's *Lemon Hearts* (1960). Finally, Viorella Manolache proposes Zygmunt Bauman's understanding of flânerie within the postmodern human condition as a viable framework for approaching *Passengers* (2016), a post-terranean film set on a spaceship. The paper discusses postmodern ethics through the solitary Baumanian flâneur whom the film locates in a constricted and deterministic setting. In the paper, the film's setting of constricted and mostly deterministic space is pitted against an ethical dilemma that grows out of Bauman's flâneur.

Finally, some words regarding the illustration on the book's cover. The design is based on Paul Gavarni's emblematic print that accompanied Auguste de Lacroix's essay "Le Flâneur" (1841), digitally altered to set the gazing figure in motion, strolling around the present-day world. The illustration holds significant relevance for the type's pictorial tradition, which

can be traced back to the 1830s.[2] Gavarni's original image ironically presents the nineteenth-century flâneur as a carefree, middle-class gentleman whose attire complies with the established bourgeois social canon while simultaneously parodying it;[3] revealing essential aspects of this paradoxical urban observer, such as anonymity and leisure. Since discussions of flânerie within visual culture are restricted to motion pictures in this volume, we would like to point out a publication whose wealth of visual material cannot be rivalled by a collection of essays such as the one at hand. The magisterial exhibition catalogue *Der Flaneur: vom Impressionismus bis zur Gegenwart / from Impressionism to the Present* of 2018 comprehensively shows and examines the iconography of the flâneur and the appropriation of the flâneur's specific gaze for the purpose of approaching and depicting the modern city in the visual arts from Gavarni's quasi-documentary print up to modern and postmodern developments.

The editors hope that the fresh interdisciplinary approach to flânerie taken by the contributions in this volume will enrich the debate on the emblematic metropolitan figure as well as encourage further research on and innovative revisions of such a protean topic in manifold cultural environments. This collection and the conference that preceded it is in debt to many esteemed colleagues and to the research organisation which funded the conference, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. First, we would like to thank the conference participants, whose engaging papers and subsequent discussion were fundamental in the success of the event. We are also grateful to the contributors for their effort, commitment, and patience with the editors. Special thanks are due to Professor Wolfgang G. Müller for his invaluable help in organising the event and preparing this volume, and to Christian Wehmeier for his remarkable insights on film and flânerie. Last but not least, we are grateful to the student conference team, Annemarie Krause and Florian Heinrich, who volunteered their time for literature's sake and made everyone feel welcome.

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[2] See Maïté Metz, "Kleine Geschichte des Pariser Flaneurs / A Brief History of the Flâneur in Paris," in *Der Flaneur: vom Impressionismus bis zur Gegenwart / from Impressionism to the Present*, ed. Volker Adolphs and Stephan Berg (Bonn: Kunstmuseum; Köln: Wienand, 2018), 116.

[3] Mary Gluck, *Popular Bohemia: Modernism and Urban Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 72.

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Chapter 1

Precarious Flânerie – Towards the Formation of an Ethical Subject

by Eva Katharina Ries

Universität Augsburg, Germany

Abstract: Taking Walter Benjamin's writings on the flâneur as a starting point I argue that contemporary flânerie texts turn to questions of precariousness and sovereignty and therefore propose ways towards the formation of an ethical subject as suggested by the works of Judith Butler reacting to the events of 9/11. Although this specific focus on ethical questions via a discussion of sovereignty and precariousness is a rather recent development in literary flânerie texts, the connection between the interdependence of sovereignty and precariousness and flânerie can already be found in Benjamin's comments on the flâneur in *The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire* and *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*. The novels that I analyse, Ian McEwan's *Saturday* and Siri Hustvedt's *The Blindfold*, draw precisely on this connection. They showcase different ways in which the notion of the precarious, that is inherent to the city, invades the self-conception of the flâneur and opens up possibilities of transformation for the flâneur as well as the strolling reader.

Keywords: Precariousness, Judith Butler, Ethics, Intertextuality, Walter Benjamin, Sovereignty, Ethical Subject, Siri Hustvedt, *The Blindfold*, Ian McEwan, *Saturday*

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In 1937, Walter Benjamin introduced his reflections on the phenomenon of the flâneur in his writings on *The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire*

with the following words: "[H]e goes to the marketplace as a flâneur—ostensibly to look around, but in truth to find a buyer."[1] The analogy between flâneur and commodity was to become one of the basic theses of Benjamin's essay on Baudelaire[2] and was, moreover—since Benjamin refers here to the flâneur as a writer—related to the analogy between writer and commodity. What is striking in this statement is that it refrains from specifying which of the two attributes actually pertains to the character of the flâneur. It, therefore, makes the flâneur seem to be the sovereign observer of the market and subject to the market at the same time consistent with Benjamin's practice of constructing what he called 'dialectical images'.[3]

It is precisely this tension between sovereignty and subjection of the flâneur which can be linked to a shifting focus in some contemporary flânerie texts; from an emphasis on the representation of the city and its inhabitants to the negotiation of ethical problems. Those texts question the flâneur's sovereignty that he or she displays in the depiction of the city. They suggest that the uncontrollable movements of the city and its inhabitants confront the strolling subject with his or her dependency on others; therefore becoming instrumental in the formation of ethical subjects. In the following, I want to show how two recent city texts, Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) and Siri Hustvedt's *The Blindfold* (1992), can be linked to a contemporary theory of the formation of ethical subjects as post-sovereign subjects, as exemplified in the work of Judith Butler. Also, that flânerie becomes the central practice in this

[1] Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, trans. Harry Zohn et al. (Cambridge: Belknap, 2006), 66. Unfortunately, the translation does not grasp the full meaning of the German original, in which Benjamin states that the flâneur goes to the marketplace "*wie er meint*, um ihn anzusehen, und in Wahrheit doch schon, um einen Käufer zu finden" (Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2013), 32). Thus, while the translation suggests that the flâneur deceives others when pretending to look around, the German original implies that he deceives himself.

[2] For a similar understanding of Benjamin's essay on Baudelaire and the section on the flâneur in particular see Christine Schmider and Michael Werner, "Das Baudelaire-Buch," in *Benjamin Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. Burkhardt Lindner (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2011), 573 and Harald Neumeyer, *Der Flaneur: Konzeptionen der Moderne* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999), 23.

[3] On Benjamin's practice of creating 'dialectical images' see Susan Buck-Morss, "The Flâneur, the Sandwichman, and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering," *New German Critique* 39 (1986): 100.

process of subject formation.[4] Moreover, I argue that an analysis of flânerie in contemporary city texts has to take Benjamin's theses on the flâneur into account as reference texts that influenced the ways in which contemporary literature takes up the motif of the flâneur.

Precarious Definitions

"Definitions are at best difficult and, at worst, a contradiction of what the flaneur means. In himself, the flaneur is, in fact, a very obscure thing,"[5] states Keith Tester in the introduction to his compilation on flânerie. He thus sums up an overall problem in the research on flânerie,[6] namely that flânerie itself is difficult to define due to the heterogeneous history of the type as a socio-historical phenomenon, but even more so as a literary motif. When looking at manifestations of flânerie in contemporary city texts, the situation gets even worse. This is not only due to the transformations that the motif has undergone since the appearance of the first flânerie texts,[7] but also due to the cultural significance of the appropriation of the type by Walter Benjamin, who saw the flâneur as symptomatic of the writer's incorporation into capitalism. While Benjamin's writings on the flâneur can thus hardly be ignored as reference texts for contemporary flânerie texts, it is impossible to say what precisely constitutes a flâneur for Benjamin due to the often contradictory observations that he claims to make on flânerie.[8] In the following, I would like to argue that while there is no fixed definition of flânerie to be drawn from Benjamin's writings, in *The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire* and its

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[4] I am very much indebted to Wolfgang G. Müller for many fruitful discussions of flânerie in general and *Saturday* in particular, which helped me to refine and improve my argumentation.

[5] Keith Tester, "Introduction," in *The Flaneur*, ed. Keith Tester (New York: Routledge, 1994), 7.

[6] See Neumeyer, *Der Flaneur*, 17.

[7] For an overview of different functionalizations of the practice of flânerie in French and German literature over a considerable time span see e.g. Matthias Keidel, *Die Wiederkehr der Flaneure: Literarische Flanerie und flanierendes Denken zwischen Wahrnehmung und Reflexion* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 12–46. For a discussion of contemporary flânerie texts in French literature see Stephanie Gomolla, *Distanz und Nähe: Der Flaneur in der französischen Literatur zwischen Moderne und Postmoderne* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 200), for a discussion of the return of flânerie in contemporary German novels see Keidel, *Die Wiederkehr der Flaneure*.

[8] For an extensive discussion of the impossibility of using Benjamin for definitions of flânerie see Neumeyer, *Der Flaneur*, 14–7 and 380–7; Isabel Vila-Cabanes, *Re-Imagining the Streets of Paris: The French Flaneur in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2016), 5–15.

revised version *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,* he nevertheless depicts a continuum that is only defined *ex negativo* by other types that form the borders of it without constituting cases of flânerie. The flâneur himself thus becomes a border that is taken under scrutiny by Benjamin. What is striking is that in Benjamin's descriptions of flânerie, the practice is in different ways linked to an illusory idea of sovereignty that only veils an actual subjection of the flâneur. While the idea of a dialectics of sovereignty and subjection is common to many concepts of flânerie, the argument that this sovereignty is always already an illusion is exclusive to Benjamin. It can thus be seen as a forerunner to the specific constellation of sovereignty and subjection in the texts I analyse.

Benjamin's description of the flâneur as a transitory character is linked to his tripartite division between Berlin, Paris, and London in his chapter on the flâneur in *The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire*. Those three metropolises are representative of different stages of industrialisation as well as of the incorporation of the individual into the crowd.[9] While Berlin makes it possible for the individual to get an overview of the market and to "look around" from an elevated as well as distanced position, the citizen of London already forms part of the crowd and only enters the café as a consumer—according to Benjamin, although, this is in no way an accurate description of the actions of the nameless narrator of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Man of the Crowd", to which Benjamin refers in this passage[10]— to "leave it again, attracted by the magnet of the mass which constantly has him in its range".[11] The difference between the two of them lies in their "observation posts"[12]. While Berlin's man of leisure, whom Benjamin uses as an example, observes the crowd from a window of his own house—Benjamin even compares this window to a loge in the theatre[13] and positions the man of leisure thus topographically 'above' the crowd—, the London citizen only stays for a short while in the coffee house, from where he watches the crowd, until he almost immediately returns to the street. Berlin's man of leisure thus seems still to be in a sovereign state from which he observes the market, while the 'Man of the Crowd' cannot stay apart from the crowd and is therefore subjected to its constant attraction. In both cases, the characters described are attracted to

[9] See Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 79–80 and 84–5; Schmider and Werner, "Das Baudelaire-Buch," 572.
[10] See Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 80.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] See ibid.

the crowd and cannot look away from it; both are thus subjected to the attraction of the crowd.[14]

In his revised version of *The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire,* titled *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,* Benjamin adds a temporal dimension to his differentiation between the three cities, in which London is the most industrialized one, Berlin the most "provincial"[15] and Paris in between the two other cities.[16] This transitory state of Paris then forms the basis for the character of the flâneur, who is also in a state between those of the two other characters.[17] Benjamin describes this in the following way:

> In comparison, Baudelaire's Paris preserved some features that dated back to the old days. Arcades where the flâneur would not be exposed to the sight of carriages, which did not recognize pedestrians as rivals, were enjoying undiminished popularity. There was the pedestrian who would let himself be jostled by the crowd, but there was also the flâneur, who demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forgo the life of a gentleman of leisure. Let the many attend to their daily affairs; the man of leisure can indulge in the perambulations of the flâneur only if as such he is already out of place. He is as much out of place in an atmosphere of complete leisure as in the feverish turmoil of the city.[18]

Paris thus forms a space in between the stages of the two other cities and the flâneur is a transitory character who moves inside the crowd, but does not belong to it.[19] The arcades function here as a synecdoche to the transitory space of the city of Paris and are situated in-between the interior space of the man of leisure and the street of the London citizen; they are "the classical form of the *intérieur* [, in which] the street presents itself to the flâneur"[20]. In analogy to the division between the three cities, Benjamin arranges their three human representatives: "London has its man of the crowd. His counterpart, as

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[14] See also ibid., 189, where Benjamin mentions that the man of leisure in E.T.A. Hoffmann's story that Benjamin uses as an example of depictions of the city crowd in Berlin "has lost the use of his legs", so that due to his sickness he cannot join the crowd on the street. The superiority displayed in the 'art of seeing' is thus also supposed to replace the state of subjection to his sickness.

[15] Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 183.

[16] Ibid., 188–9.

[17] See Schmider and Werner, "Baudelaire-Buch," 573.

[18] Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 188.

[19] See Schmider and Werner, "Baudelaire-Buch," 573.

[20] Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 85.

it were, is Nante, the boy who loiters on the street corner, a popular figure in Berlin before the March Revolution of 1848. The Parisian flâneur might be said to stand midway between them."[21]

This tripartition also shows, to some extent, why there are so many contradictory attributes in Benjamin's descriptions of the flâneur. Since the character only functions as an intermediary state between 'Man of the Crowd' and immobile onlooker, he combines attributes pertaining to both extremes in himself without being reducible to one of them.[22] Thus, the Benjaminian flâneur can be 'calm' and 'manic' at the same time, when he moves slowly, yet the crowd attracts him to become a part of it—as opposed to Berlin's man of leisure. In this case, a slowness that congeals into standing still forms—as is the case with Berlin's man of leisure—the limitation to one side of a Benjaminian description of flânerie. This aspect of flânerie resurfaces, for example, in Benjamin's often-cited observation that "[a]round 1840 it was briefly fashionable to take turtles for a walk in the arcades."[23] The driven, externally controlled, and rushed movement of the 'Man of the Crowd' forms the other extreme of Benjamin's description. That Benjamin rejects the 'Man of the Crowd' as a flâneur in his revised version of *The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire* makes sense if the 'Man of the Crowd', and thus forms the borderline of an individual that has been completely incorporated into the crowd. Nevertheless, it remains unclear when precisely the Benjaminian flâneur turns into the 'Man of the Crowd'.

Yet, a resurfacing characteristic of Benjamin's different modes of flânerie is the illusory quality of the supposed sovereignty of the flâneur. What Benjamin sees as the beginnings of flânerie is already explicitly linked to a performance of sovereignty. The sentence leading up to the chapter on the flâneur in *The*

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[21] Ibid., 188–9. Interestingly enough, Benjamin here switches from using E.T.A. Hoffmann's protagonist as representative of Berlin and replaces him with Nante, who does not observe the crowd from a window in an elevated position but is already standing on the street and watches the crowd from his position at a street corner there. Nevertheless, Benjamin adds that his way of observing the crowd can be compared to that of the man of leisure observing the crowd from above: "His attitude toward the crowd is, rather, one of superiority, inspired as it is by his observation post at the window of an apartment building. From this vantage point he scrutinizes the throng; it is market day, and all the passers-by feel in their element. His opera glasses enable him to pick out individual genre scenes. Employing the glasses is thoroughly in keeping with the inner disposition of their user. He confesses he would like to initiate his visitor in the 'principles of the art of seeing.'" (Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 189)

[22] See Schmider and Werner, "Baudelaire-Buch," 573.

[23] Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 84.

Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire is followed by the observation that "[o]nce a writer had entered the marketplace, he looked around as if in a panorama. A special literary genre has captured the writer's first attempts to orient himself. This is the genre of panoramic literature."[24] What Benjamin calls "panoramic literature" refers to the physiologies, sketches that aimed at portraying the several types of people to be found in the city in an anecdotal as well as ironic manner.[25] Benjamin now links this genre to the idea that people can be classified according to various types and thus be instantly 'known' thus granting the observer a position of sovereignty:

> They [the physiologies; E.R.] assured people that everyone could—unencumbered by any factual knowledge—make out the profession, character, background, and lifestyle of passers-by. The physiologies present this ability as a gift which a good fairy lays in the cradle of the big-city dweller. […] Delvau, Baudelaire's friend and the most interesting among the minor masters of the feuilleton, claimed that he could divide the Parisian public according to its various strata as easily as a geologist distinguishes the layers in rocks.[26]

If the physiologies stand at the beginning of flânerie, then the performance of sovereignty acted out in them is linked to the flâneur as a writer of physiologies. Yet, this sovereignty remains illusory since the physiologies

> were just the thing to brush […] disquieting notions [about the potentially criminal nature of other citizens] aside as insignificant. They constituted, so to speak, the blinkers of the 'narrow-minded city animal' that Marx wrote about.[27]

The physiologies thus only served the aim of giving the city-dwellers as optimistic an image of each other as possible, thereby excluding more authentic representations of the city. The sovereign gesture of an analysis of the crowd remains an illusion.

Benjamin then moves on to predominantly literary depictions of flânerie and links those again to a performance of sovereignty. Although, this performance is now not so much based on the idea of the deception of the

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[24] Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 66.
[25] See Vila-Cabanes, *Re-Imagining*, 36.
[26] Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 70–1.
[27] Ibid., 69.

reader—namely that the sovereign analysis of the crowd is only an illusion, intended to gloss over the more sinister truths of individuals in the nineteenth-century crowd—but on the idea that the sovereignty of the flâneur is already put into question by the presence of crime in the city, and now has to be reinstated by the flâneur-as-detective. Flânerie is now offered as a technique that can be used as a means for the work of the detective as Benjamin claims in the following statement: "In times of terror, when everyone is something of a conspirator, everybody will be in the position of having to play detective. Flânerie gives the individual the best prospects of doing so."[28] The flâneur-as-detective still performs sovereignty in the way that he is the one able to find the criminal even inside the anonymity of a crowd, yet "the detective story, regardless of its sober calculations, also participates in the phantasmagoria of Parisian life. It does not yet glorify the criminal, though it does glorify his adversaries and, above all, the hunting grounds where they pursue him."[29] The sovereignty of the detective is thus the result of a glorification of the type, which becomes all the more problematic when Benjamin links the detective story to his analysis of "The Man of the Crowd", which, according to him, is "something like an X-ray of a detective story."[30]

In his description of Poe's short story, he already hints at the subjection of the flâneur in what he calls a department store—in fact, the unnamed narrator, as well as the man he follows, end up temporarily in a market and thus a place that offers in no way the vertical transformation of architecture that Benjamin suggests in his analysis. This department store signifies, according to Benjamin, the end of flânerie since it forms a decayed example of the *intérieur* that had once been the arcades for the flâneur. In this way, Poe's short story already "prefigures [the] end"[31] of flânerie. The flâneur now "roam[s] through the labyrinth of commodities as he had once roamed through the labyrinth of the city."[32] Following this analysis, Benjamin likens the flâneur himself to a commodity which is intoxicated by the crowd of buyers that surrounds him. The vocabulary used by Benjamin now emphasizes the subjection of the flâneur to the crowd. The flâneur has become addicted to this crowd, which forms the veil through which he perceives the city.[33]

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[28] Ibid., 72.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., 79.
[31] Ibid., 85.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 90.

PAGES MISSING

FROM THIS FREE SAMPLE

Index

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

P

Q

R

S

T

W

Z