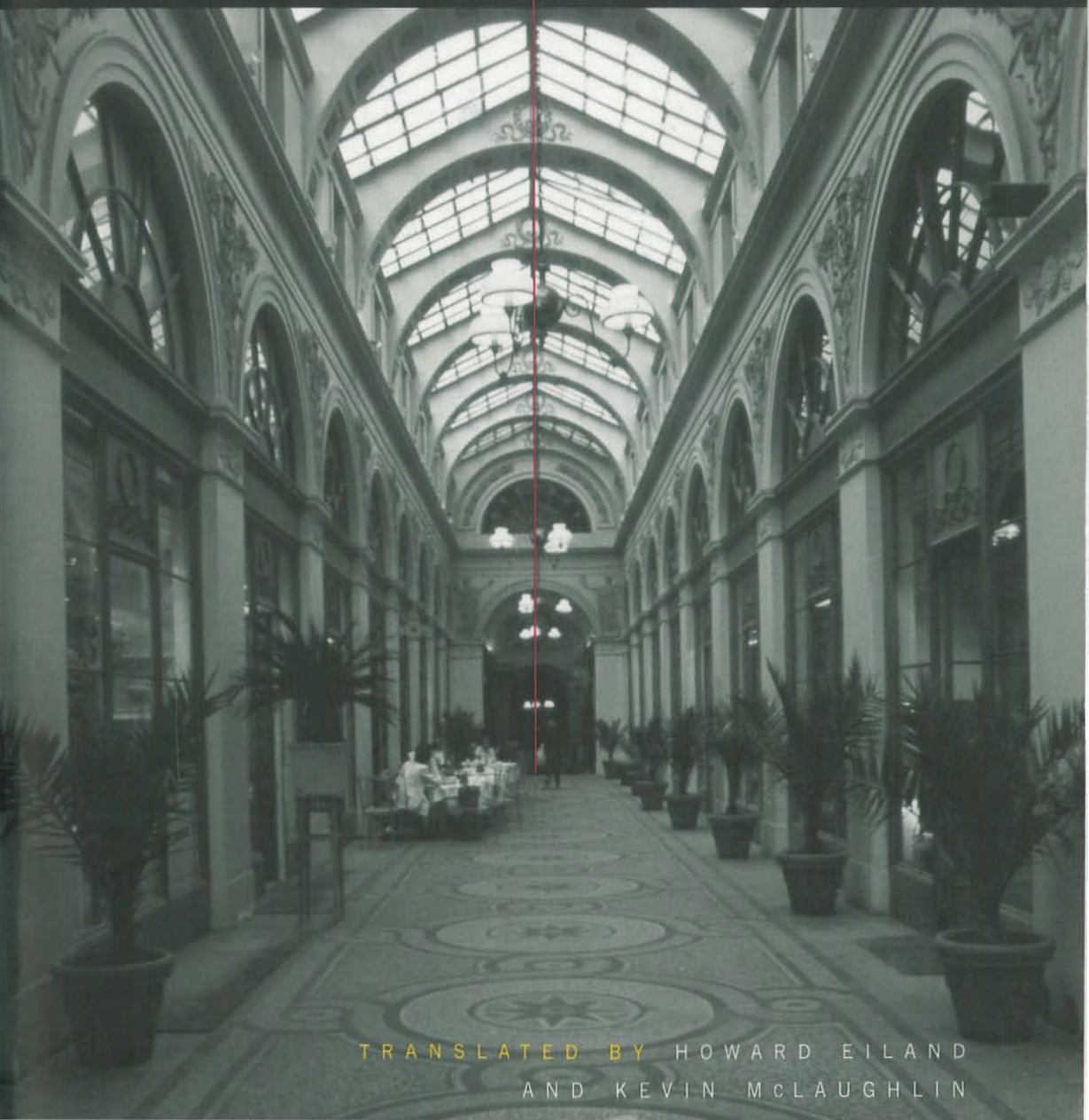


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M

[The Flâneur]

A landscape haunts, intense as opium.

—Mallarmé “Autrefois, en marge d’un Baudelaire,” in *Divagations*›

To read what was never written.

—Hofmannsthal¹

And I travel in order to get to know my geography.

—A madman, in Marcel Réja, *L’Art chez les fous* (Paris, 1907), p. 131

All that can be found anywhere can be found in Paris.

—Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, in Hugo, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1881), novels, vol. 7, p. 30, from the chapter “Ecce Paris, Ecce Homo”²

But the great reminiscences, the historical shudder—these are a trumpery which he (the flâneur) leaves to tourists, who think thereby to gain access to the genius loci with a military password. Our friend may well keep silent. At the approach of his footsteps, the place has roused; speechlessly, mindlessly, its mere intimate nearness gives him hints and instructions. He stands before Notre Dame de Lorette, and his soles remember: here is the spot where in former times the *cheval de renfort*—the spare horse—was harnessed to the omnibus that climbed the Rue des Martyrs toward Montmartre. Often, he would have given all he knows about the domicile of Balzac or of Gavarni, about the site of a surprise attack or even of a barricade, to be able to catch the scent of a threshold or to recognize a paving stone by touch, like any watchdog. [M1,1]

The street conducts the flâneur into a vanished time. For him, every street is precipitous. It leads downward—if not to the mythical Mothers, then into a past that can be all the more spellbinding because it is not his own, not private. Nevertheless, it always remains the time of a childhood. But why that of the life he has lived? In the asphalt over which he passes, his steps awaken a surprising resonance. The gaslight that streams down on the paving stones throws an equivocal light on this double ground. [M1,2]

An intoxication comes over the man who walks long and aimlessly through the streets. With each step, the walk takes on greater momentum; ever weaker grow the temptations of shops, of bistros, of smiling women, ever more irresistible the magnetism of the next streetcorner, of a distant mass of foliage, of a street name. Then comes hunger. Our man wants nothing to do with the myriad possibilities offered to sate his appetite. Like an ascetic animal, he flits through unknown districts—until, utterly exhausted, he stumbles into his room, which receives him coldly and wears a strange air. [M1,3]

Paris created the type of the flâneur. What is remarkable is that it wasn't Rome. And the reason? Does not dreaming itself take the high road in Rome? And isn't that city too full of temples, enclosed squares, national shrines, to be able to enter *tout entière*—with every cobblestone, every shop sign, every step, and every gateway—into the passerby's dream? The national character of the Italians may also have much to do with this. For it is not the foreigners but they themselves, the Parisians, who have made Paris the promised land of the flâneur—the “landscape built of sheer life,” as Hofmannsthal once put it. Landscape—that, in fact, is what Paris becomes for the flâneur. Or, more precisely: the city splits for him into its dialectical poles. It opens up to him as a landscape, even as it closes around him as a room. [M1,4]

That anamnestic intoxication in which the flâneur goes about the city not only feeds on the sensory data taking shape before his eyes but often possesses itself of abstract knowledge—indeed, of dead facts—as something experienced and lived through. This felt knowledge travels from one person to another, especially by word of mouth. But in the course of the nineteenth century, it was also deposited in an immense literature. Even before Lefeuve, who described Paris “street by street, house by house,” there were numerous works that depicted this storied landscape as backdrop for the dreaming idler. The study of these books constituted a second existence, already wholly predisposed toward dreaming; and what the flâneur learned from them took form and figure during an afternoon walk before the apéritif. Wouldn't he, then, have necessarily felt the steep slope behind the church of Notre Dame de Lorette rise all the more insistently under his soles if he realized: here, at one time, after Paris had gotten its first omnibuses, the *cheval de renfort* was harnessed to the coach to reinforce the two other horses. [M1,5]

One must make an effort to grasp the altogether fascinating moral constitution of the passionate flâneur. The police—who here, as on so many of the subjects we are treating, appear as experts—provide the following indication in the report of a Paris secret agent from October 1798(?): “It is almost impossible to summon and maintain good moral character in a thickly massed population where each individual, unbeknownst to all the others, hides in the crowd, so to speak, and blushes before the eyes of no one.” Cited in Adolf Schmidt, *Pariser Zustände während der Revolution*, vol. 3 (Jena, 1876). The case in which the flâneur com-

pletely distances himself from the type of the philosophical promenader, and takes on the features of the werewolf restlessly roaming a social wilderness, was fixed for the first time and forever afterward by Poe in his story “The Man of the Crowd.” [M1,6]

The appearances of superposition, of overlap, which come with hashish may be grasped through the concept of similitude. When we say that one face is similar to another, we mean that certain features of this second face appear to us in the first, without the latter’s ceasing to be what it has been. Nevertheless, the possibilities of entering into appearance in this way are not subject to any criterion and are therefore boundless. The category of similarity, which for the waking consciousness has only minimal relevance, attains unlimited relevance in the world of hashish. There, we may say, everything is face: each thing has the degree of bodily presence that allows it to be searched—as one searches a face—for such traits as appear. Under these conditions even a sentence (to say nothing of the single word) puts on a face, and this face resembles that of the sentence standing opposed to it. In this way every truth points manifestly to its opposite, and this state of affairs explains the existence of doubt. Truth becomes something living; it lives solely in the rhythm by which statement and counterstatement displace each other in order to think each other.³ [M1a,1]

[...]

We know that, in the course of *flânerie*, far-off times and places interpenetrate the landscape and the present moment. When the authentically intoxicated phase of this condition announces itself, the blood is pounding in the veins of the happy flâneur, his heart ticks like a clock, and inwardly as well as outwardly things go

on as we would imagine them to do in one of those “mechanical pictures” which in the nineteenth century (and of course earlier, too) enjoyed great popularity, and which depicts in the foreground a shepherd playing on a pipe, by his side two children swaying in time to the music, further back a pair of hunters in pursuit of a lion, and very much in the background a train crossing over a trestle bridge. Chapuis and Gélis, *Le Monde des automates* (Paris, 1928), vol. 1, p. 330.⁶ [M2,4]

[...]

The principle of flânerie in Proust: “Then, quite apart from all those literary preoccupations, and without definite attachment to anything, suddenly a roof, a gleam of sunlight reflected from a stone, the smell of a road would make me stop still, to enjoy the special pleasure that each of them gave me, and also because they appeared to be concealing, beneath what my eyes could see, something which they invited me to approach and take from them, but which, despite all my efforts, I never managed to discover.” *Du Côté de chez Swann* (Paris, 1939), vol. 1, p. 256.⁷—This passage shows very clearly how the old Romantic sentiment for landscape dissolves and a new Romantic conception of landscape emerges—of landscape that seems, rather, to be a cityscape, if it is true that the city is the

properly sacred ground of *flânerie*. In this passage, at any rate, it would be presented as such for the first time since Baudelaire (whose work does not yet portray the arcades, though they were so numerous in his day). [M2a,1]

[...]

On the Parisians' technique of *inhabiting* their streets: "Returning by the Rue Saint-Honoré, we met with an eloquent example of that Parisian street industry which can make use of anything. Men were at work repairing the pavement and laying pipeline, and, as a result, in the middle of the street there was an area which was blocked off but which was embanked and covered with stones. On this spot street vendors had immediately installed themselves, and five or six were selling writing implements and notebooks, cutlery, lampshades, garters, embroidered collars, and all sorts of trinkets. Even a dealer in secondhand goods had opened a branch office here and was displaying on the stones his bric-à-brac of old cups, plates, glasses, and so forth, so that business was profiting, instead of suffering, from the brief disturbance. They are simply wizards at making a virtue of necessity." Adolf Stahr, *Nach fünf Jahren* (Oldenburg, 1857), vol. 1, p. 29.⁹

Seventy years later, I had the same experience at the corner of the Boulevard Saint-Germain and the Boulevard Raspail. Parisians make the street an interior.

[M3,1]

“It is wonderful that in Paris itself one can actually wander through countryside.” Karl Gutzkow, *Briefe aus Paris* (Leipzig, 1842), vol. 1, p. 61. The other side of the motif is thus touched on. For if flânerie can transform Paris into one great interior—a house whose rooms are the *quartiers*, no less clearly demarcated by thresholds than are real rooms—then, on the other hand, the city can appear to someone walking through it to be without thresholds: a landscape in the round.

[M3,2]

[...]

Street as domestic interior. Concerning the Passage du Pont-Neuf (between the Rue Guénégaud and the Rue de Seine): ‘the shops resemble closets.’ *Nouveaux Tableaux de Paris, ou Observations sur les mœurs et usages des Parisiens au commencement du XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1828), vol. 1, p. 34.

[M3,4]

The courtyard of the Tuileries: “immense savannah planted with lampposts instead of banana trees.” Paul-Ernest de Rattier, *Paris n'existe pas* (Paris, 1857).

□ Gas □

[M3,5]

Passage Colhert: “The gas lamp illuminating it looks like a coconut palm in the middle of a savannah.” □ Gas □ *Le Livre des cent-et-un* (Paris, 1833), vol. 10, p. 57 (Amédée Kermel, “Les Passages de Paris”).

[M3,6]

[...]

In 1839 it was considered elegant to take a tortoise out walking. This gives us an idea of the tempo of flânerie in the arcades.

[M3,8]

[...]

The menu at Les Trois Frères Provençaux: “Thirty-six pages for food, four pages for drink—but very long pages, in small folio, with closely packed text and numerous annotations in fine print.” The booklet is bound in velvet. Twenty hors d’oeuvres and thirty-three soups. “Forty-six beef dishes, among which are seven different beefsteaks and eight filets.” “Thirty-four preparations of game, forty-seven dishes of vegetables, and seventy-one varieties of compote.” Julius Rodenberg, *Paris bei Sonnenschein und Lampenlicht* (Leipzig, 1867), pp. 43–44.

Flânerie through the bill of fare.

[M3a,1]

[...]

Streets are the dwelling place of the collective. The collective is an eternally unquiet, eternally agitated being that—in the space between the building fronts—experiences, learns, understands, and invents as much as individuals do within the privacy of their own four walls. For this collective, glossy enameled shop signs are a wall decoration as good as, if not better than, an oil painting in the drawing room of a bourgeois; walls with their “Post No Bills” are its writing desk, newspaper stands its libraries, mailboxes its bronze busts, benches its bedroom furniture, and the café terrace is the balcony from which it looks down on its household. The section of railing where road workers hang their jackets is the vestibule, and the gateway which leads from the row of courtyards out into the open is the long corridor that daunts the bourgeois, being for the courtyards the entry to the chambers of the city. Among these latter, the arcade was the drawing room. More than anywhere else, the street reveals itself in the arcade as the furnished and familiar interior of the masses.

[M3a,4]

[...]

]

“Hugo, in *Les Misérables*, has provided an amazing description of the Faubourg Saint-Marceau: ‘It was no longer a place of solitude, for there were people passing; it was not the country, for there were houses and streets; it was not a city, for the streets had ruts in them, like the highways, and grass grew along their borders; it was not a village, for the houses were too lofty. What was it then? It was an inhabited place where there was nobody, it was a desert place where there was somebody; it was a boulevard of the great city, a street of Paris—wilder at night than a forest, and gloomier by day than a graveyard.’”¹⁰ <Lucien> Dubech and <Pierre> d’Espezel, *Histoire de Paris* (Paris, 1926), p. 366. [M3a,6]

[...]

The peculiar irresolution of the flâneur. Just as waiting seems to be the proper state of the impassive thinker, doubt appears to be that of the flâneur. An elegy by Schiller contains the phrase: “the hesitant wing of the butterfly.”¹² This points to that association of wingedness with the feeling of indecision which is so characteristic of hashish intoxication. [M4a,1]

E. T. A. Hoffmann as type of the flâneur; “Des Veters Eckfenster” (My Cousin’s Corner Window) is a testament to this. And thus Hoffmann’s great success in France, where there has been a special understanding for this type. In the bio-graphical notes to the five-volume edition of his later writings (Brodhag?)¹³ we read: “Hoffmann was never really a friend of the great outdoors. What mattered to him more than anything else was the human being—communication with, observations about, the simple sight of, human beings. Whenever he went for a walk in summer, which in good weather happened every day toward evening,

then . . . there was scarcely a tavern or pastry shop where he would not look in to see whether anyone—and, if so, who—might be there.” [M4a,2]

[...]

Dickens. “In his letters . . . he complains repeatedly when traveling, even in the mountains of Switzerland, . . . about the lack of street noise, which was indispen-sable to him for his writing. ‘I can’t express how much I want these [streets],’ he wrote in 1846 from Lausanne, where he was working on one of his greatest novels, *Dombey and Son*. ‘It seems as if they supplied something to my brain, which it cannot hear, when busy, to lose. For a week or a fortnight I can write prodigiously in a retired place . . . and a day in London sets me up again and starts me. But the toil and labor of writing, day after day, without that magic lantern, is *im-*

mense. . . *My figures seem disposed to stagnate without crowds about them. . . . In Genoa . . . I had two miles of streets at least, lighted at night, to walk about in; and a great theater to repair to, every night.*”¹⁴ <Franz Mehring,> “Charles Dickens,” *Die neue Zeit*, 30, no. 1 (Stuttgart, 1912), pp. 621–622. [M4a,4]

[...]

[...]

)

“A town, such as London, where a man may wander for hours together without reaching the beginning of the end, without meeting the slightest hint which could lead to the inference that there is open country within reach, is a strange thing. This colossal centralization, this heaping together of two and a half millions of human beings at one point, has multiplied the power of this two and a half millions a hundredfold; has raised London to the commercial capital of the world, created the giant docks and assembled the thousand vessels that continually cover the Thames. . . . But the sacrifices which all this has cost become apparent later. After roaming the streets of the capital a day or two, . . . one realizes for the first time that these Londoners have been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature to bring to pass all the marvels of civilization. . . . The very turmoil of the streets has something repulsive about it—something against which human nature rebels. The hundreds of thousands of all classes and ranks crowding past each other—aren’t they all human beings with the same qualities and powers, and with the same interest in being happy? And aren’t they obliged, in the end, to seek happiness in the same way, by the same means? And still they crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another, and their only agreement is the tacit one—that each keep to his own side of the

pavement, so as not to delay the opposing streams of the crowd—while no man thinks to honor another with so much as a glance. The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest becomes the more repellent and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together within a limited space. And however much one may be aware that this isolation of the individual, this narrow self-seeking, is the fundamental principle of our society everywhere, it is nowhere so shamelessly barefaced, so self-conscious, as just here in the crowding of the great city.” Friedrich Engels, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1848), pp. 36–37 (“Die grossen Städte”).¹⁵ [M5a,1]

[...]

The following observation typifies the concerns of the age: “When one is sailing on a river or lake, one’s body is without active movement. . . . The skin experiences no contraction, and its pores remain wide open and capable of absorbing all the emanations and vapors of the surrounding environment. The blood . . . remains . . . concentrated in the cavities of the chest and abdomen, and reaches the extremities with difficulty.” J.-F. Dancel, *De l’Influence des voyages sur l’homme et sur ses maladies: Ouvrage spécialement destiné aux gens du monde* (Paris, 1846), p. 92 (“Des Promenades en bateau sur les lacs et les rivières”). [M6,4]

Remarkable distinction between flâneur and rubberneck (*badaud*): “Let us not, however, confuse the flâneur with the rubberneck: there is a subtle difference. . . . The average flâneur . . . is always in full possession of his individuality, while that of the rubberneck disappears, absorbed by the external world, . . . which moves him to the point of intoxication and ecstasy. Under the influence of the spectacle, the rubberneck becomes an impersonal being. He is no longer a man—he is the public; he is the crowd. At a distance from nature, his naive soul aglow, ever inclined to reverie, . . . the true rubberneck deserves the admiration of all upright and sincere hearts.” Victor Fournel, *Ce qu’on voit dans les rues de Paris* (Paris, 1858), p. 263 (“L’Odyssée d’un flâneur dans les rues de Paris”). [M6,5]

[...]

On the colportage phenomenon of space: “‘The sense of mystery,’ wrote Odilon Redon, who had learned the secret from da Vinci, ‘comes from remaining always in the equivocal, with double and triple perspectives, or inklings of perspective (images within images)—forms that take shape and come into being according to the state of mind of the spectator. All things more suggestive just because they do appear.’” Cited in Raymond Escholier, “Artiste,” *Arts et métiers graphiques*, No. 47 (June 1, 1935), p. 7. [M6a,1]

[...]

The city is the realization of that ancient dream of humanity, the labyrinth. It is this reality to which the flâneur, without knowing it, devotes himself. Without

knowing it; yet nothing is more foolish than the conventional thesis which rationalizes his behavior, and which forms the uncontested basis of that voluminous literature that traces the figure and demeanor of the flâneur—the thesis, namely, that the flâneur has made a study of the physiognomic appearance of people in order to discover their nationality and social station, character and destiny, from a perusal of their gait, build, and play of features. The interest in concealing the true motives of the flâneur must have been pressing indeed to have occasioned such a shabby thesis. [M6a,4]

In Maxime Du Camp's poem "Le Voyageur," the flâneur wears the costume of the traveler:

"I am afraid to stop—it's the engine of my life;

 Love galls me so; I do not want to love."
 "Move on then, on with your bitter travels!
 The sad road awaits you: meet your fate."

Maxime Du Camp, *Les Chants modernes* (Paris, 1855), p. 104.

[M7,1]

[..]

Diderot's "How beautiful the street!" is a favorite phrase of the chroniclers of flânerie. [M7,7]

Regarding the legend of the flâneur: "With the aid of a word I overhear in passing, I reconstruct an entire conversation, an entire existence. The inflection of a voice suffices for me to attach the name of a deadly sin to the man whom I have just jostled and whose profile I glimpsed." Victor Fournel, *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris* (Paris, 1858), p. 270. [M7,8]

[...]

In his pamphlet *Le Siècle maudit* (Paris, 1843), which takes a stand against the corruption of contemporary society, Alexis Dumesnil makes use of a fiction of Juvenal's: the crowd on the boulevard suddenly stops still, and a record of each individual's thoughts and objectives at that particular moment is compiled (pp. 103–104). [M8,2]

[...]

On Victor Hugo: “The morning, for him, was consecrated to sedentary labors, the afternoon to labors of wandering. He adored the upper levels of omnibuses—those ‘traveling balconies,’ as he called them—from which he could study at his leisure the various aspects of the gigantic city. He claimed that the deafening brouhaha of Paris produced in him the same effect as the sea.” Edouard Drumont, *Figures de bronze ou statues de neige* (Paris <1900> , p. 25 (‘ Victor Hugo’). [M8a,3]

[...]

“O night! O refreshing darkness! . . . in the stony labyrinths of the metropolis, scintillation of stars, bright bursts of city lights, you are the fireworks of the goddess Liberty!” Charles Baudelaire, *Le Spleen de Paris*, ed. Hilsum (Paris), p. 203 (“Le Crépuscule du soir”).²¹ [M8a,5]

[...]

(This preface appeared—presumably as a review of the first edition—in *Le Moniteur universel* of January 21, 1854. It would appear to be wholly or in part identical to Gautier's "Mosaïque de ruines," in *Paris et les Parisiens au XIX^e siècle* [Paris, 1856].) [M9,3]

"The most heterogeneous temporal elements thus coexist in the city. If we step from an eighteenth-century house into one from the sixteenth century, we tumble down the slope of time. Right next door stands a Gothic church, and we sink to the depths. A few steps farther, we are in a street from out of the early years of Bismarck's rule . . . , and once again climbing the mountain of time. Whoever sets foot in a city feels caught up as in a web of dreams, where the most remote past is linked to the events of today. One house allies with another, no matter what period they come from, and a street is horn. And then insofar as this street, which may go back to the age of Goethe, runs into another, which may date from the Wilhelmine years, the district emerges. . . . The climactic points of the city are its squares: here, from every direction, converge not only numerous streets but all the streams of their history. No sooner have they flowed in than they are contained; the edges of the square serve as quays, so that already the outward form of the square provides information about the history that was played upon it. . . . Things which find no expression in political events, or find only minimal expression, unfold in the cities: they are a superfine instrument, responsive as an Aeolian harp—despite their specific gravity—to the livinghistoric vibrations of the air." Ferdinand Lion, *Geschichte biologisch gesehen* (Zürich and Leipzig <1935>), pp. 125–126, 128 ("Notiz über Städte"). [M9,4]

Delvau believes he can recognize the social strata of Parisian society in *flânerie* as easily as a geologist recognizes geological strata. [M9a,1]

[...]

"A man who goes for a walk ought not to have to concern himself with any hazards he may run into or with the regulations of a city. If an amusing idea enters his head, if a curious shopfront comes into view, it is natural that he would want to cross the street without confronting dangers such as our grandparents could not have imagined. But he cannot do this today without taking a hundred precautions, without checking the horizon, without asking the advice of the police department, without mixing with a dazed and breathless herd, for whom the way is marked out in advance by hits of shining metal. If he tries to collect the whimsical thoughts that may have come to mind, very possibly occasioned by sights on the street, he is deafened by car horns, stupefied by loud talkers . . . , and demoralized by the scraps of conversation, of political meetings, of jazz, which escape slyly from the windows. In former times, moreover, his brothers, the rubbernecks, who ambled along so easily down the sidewalks and stopped a moment everywhere, lent to the stream of humanity a gentleness and a tranquillity which it has lost. Now it is a

torrent where you are rolled, buffeted, cast up, and swept to one side and the other.” Edmond Jaloux, “Le Dernier Flâneur,” *Le Temps* (May 22, 1936).

[M9a,3]

“To leave without being forced in any way, and to follow your inspiration as if the mere fact of turning right or turning left already constituted an essentially poetic act.” Edmond Jaloux, “Le Dernier Flâneur,” *Le Temps* (May 22, 1936).

[M9a,4]

“Dickens . . . could not remain in Lausanne because, in order to write his novels, he needed the immense labyrinth of London streets where he could prowl about continuously. . . . Thomas De Quincey . . . , as Baudelaire tells us, was ‘a sort of peripatetic, a street philosopher pondering his way endlessly through the vortex of the great city.’”²² Edmond Jaloux, “Le Dernier Flâneur,” *Le Temps* (May 22, 1936).

[M9a,5]

“Taylor’s obsession, and that of his collaborators and successors, is the ‘war on flânerie.’” Georges Friedmann, *La Crise du progrès* (Paris <1936>), p. 76.

[M10,1]

[...]

“What men call love is very small, very restricted, and very weak compared with this ineffable orgy, this holy prostitution of the soul which gives itself entirely, poetry and charity, to the unforeseen that reveals itself, to the unknown that happens along.” Charles Baudelaire, *Le Spleen de Paris*, ed. R. Simon, p. 16 (“Les Foules”).²⁵ [M10a,1]

“Which of us, in his moments of ambition, has not dreamed of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical, without rhythm and without rhyme, supple enough and rugged enough to adapt itself to the lyrical impulses of the soul, the undulations of reverie, the jibes of conscience? / It was, above all, out of my exploration of huge cities, out of the medley of their innumerable interrelations, that this haunting ideal was born.” Charles Baudelaire, *Le Spleen de Paris*, ed. R. Simon, pp. 1–2 (“A Arsène Houssaye”).²⁶ [M10a,2]

“There is nothing more profound, more mysterious, more pregnant, more insidious, more dazzling than a window lighted by a single candle.” Charles Baudelaire, *Le Spleen de Paris*, ed. R. Simon (Paris), p. 62 (“Les Fenêtres”).²⁷ [M10a,3]

“The artist seeks eternal truth and knows nothing of the eternity in his midst. He admires the column of the Babylonian temple and scorns the smokestack on the factory. Yet what is the difference in their lines? When the era of coal-powered industry is over, people will admire the vestiges of the last smokestacks, as today we admire the remains of temple columns. . . . The steam vapor so detested by writers allows them to divert their admiration. . . . Instead of waiting to visit the Bay of Bengal to find objects to exclaim over, they might have a little curiosity about the objects they see in daily life. A porter at the Gare de l’Est is no less picturesque than a coolie in Colombo. . . . To walk out your front door as if you’ve just arrived from a foreign country; to discover the world in which you already live; to begin the day as if you’ve just gotten off the boat from Singapore and have never seen your own doormat or the people on the landing . . . —it is this that reveals the humanity before you, unknown until now.” Pierre Hamp, “La Littérature, image de la société” (*Encyclopédie française*, vol. 16, *Arts et littératures dans la société contemporaine*, 1, p. 64). [M10a,4]

Chesterton fastens on a specimen of English argot to characterize Dickens in his relation to the street: “He has the key to the street” is said of someone to whom the

door is closed. “Dickens himself had, in the most sacred and serious sense of the term, the key to the street. . . . His earth was the stones of the street; his stars were the lamps of the street; his hero was the man in the street. He could open the inmost door of his house—the door that leads into that secret passage which is lined with houses and roofed with stars.” G. K. Chesterton, *Dickens*, series entitled *Vies des hommes illustres*, vol. 9, translated from the English by Laurent and Martin-Dupont (Paris, 1927), p. 30.²⁸ [M11,1]

Dickens as a child: “Whenever he had done drudging, he had no other resource but drifting, and he drifted over half London. He was a dreamy child, thinking mostly of his own dreary prospects. . . . He did not go in for ‘observation,’ a priggish habit; he did not look at Charing Cross to improve his mind or count the lamp-posts in Holborn to practice his arithmetic. But unconsciously he made all these places the scenes of the monstrous drama in his miserable little soul. He walked in darkness under the lamps of Holborn, and was crucified at Charing Cross. So for him ever afterwards these places had the beauty that only belongs to battlefields.” G. K. Chesterton, *Dickens*, series entitled *Vie des hommes illustres*, vol. 9, translated from the English by Laurent and Martin-Dupont (Paris, 1927), pp. 30–31.²⁹ [M11,2]

On the psychology of the flâneur: “The undying scenes we can all see if we shut our eyes are not the scenes that we have stared at under the direction of guide-books; the scenes we see are the scenes at which we did not look at all—the scenes in which we walked when we were thinking about something else—about a sin, or a love affair, or some childish sorrow. We can see the background now because we did not see it then. So Dickens did not stamp these places on his mind; he stamped his mind on these places.” G. K. Chesterton, *Dickens*, series entitled *Vie des hommes illustres*, vol. 9, translated from the English by Laurent and Martin-Dupont (Paris, 1927), p. 31.³⁰ [M11,3]

Dickens: “In May of 1846 he ran over to Switzerland and tried to write *Dombey and Son* at Lausanne. . . . He could not get on. He attributed this especially to his love of London and his loss of it, ‘the absence of streets and numbers of figures. . . . My figures seem disposed to stagnate without crowds about them.’” G. K. Chesterton, *Dickens*, translated from the English by Laurent and Martin-Dupont (Paris, 1927), p. 125.³¹ [M11a,1]

“In . . . *Le Voyage de MM. Dunanan père et fils*, two provincials are deceived into thinking that Paris is not Paris but Venice, which they had set out to visit. . . . Paris as an intoxication of all the senses, as a place of delirium.” S. Kracauer, *Jacques Offenbach und das Paris seiner Zeit* (Amsterdam, 1937), p. 283.³² [M11a,2]

[...]

“It seems reasonable to say that there exists . . . a phantasmagorical representation of Paris (and, more generally, of the big city) with such power over the imagination that the question of its accuracy would never be posed in practice—a representation created entirely by the book, yet so widespread as to make up . . . part of the collective mental atmosphere.’ Roger Caillois, “Paris, mythe moderne,” *Nouvelle Revue française*, 25, no. 284 (May 1, 1937), p. 684. [M12,1]

“The Faubourg Saint-Jacques is one of the most primitive suburbs of Paris. Why is that? Is it because it is surrounded by four hospitals as a citadel is surrounded by four bastions, and these hospitals keep the tourists away from the neighborhood? Is it because, leading to no major artery and terminating in no center, . . . the place is rarely visited by coaches? Thus, as soon as one appears in the distance, the lucky urchin who spies it first cups his hands around his mouth and gives a signal to all the inhabitants of the faubourg, just as, on the seashore, the one who first spots a sail on the horizon gives a signal to the others.” A. Dumas, *Les Moli-cans de Paris*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1859), p. 102 (ch. 25: “Où il est question des sauvages du Faubourg Saint-Jacques”). The chapter describes nothing but the arrival of a piano before a house in the district. No one suspects that the object is a musical instrument, but all are enraptured by the sight of ‘a huge piece of mahogany’ (p. 103). For mahogany furniture was as yet hardly known in this *quartier*.

[M12,2]

[...]

‘ For the perfect flâneur, . . . it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow. . . . To be away from home, yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, yet to remain hidden from the world—such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial [!!] natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. The spectator is a *prince* who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. . . . The lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electric energy. We might also liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness, which, with each one of its movements, represents the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life.’ Baudelaire, *L’Art romantique* (Paris), pp. 64–65 (“Le Peintre de la vie moderne”).⁴² [M14a,1]

[...]

‘

Maxim of the flâneur: “In our standardized and uniform world, it is right here, deep below the surface, that we must go. Estrangement and surprise, the most thrilling exoticism, are all close by.” Daniel Halévy, *Pays parisiens* (Paris <1932> ,

p. 153.

[M14a,4]

In Jules Romains’ *Crime de Quinette* (*Les Hommes de bonne volonté*, book 2), one finds something like the negative of the solitude which is generally companion to the flâneur. It is, perhaps, that friendship is strong enough to break through such solitude—this is what is convincing about Romains’ thesis. “According to my idea, it’s always rather in that way that you make friends with anybody. You are present together at a moment in the life of the world, perhaps in the presence of a fleeting secret of the world—an apparition which nobody has ever seen before and perhaps nobody will ever see again. It may even be something very little. Take two men going for a walk, for example, like us. Suddenly, thanks to a break in the clouds, a ray of light comes and strikes the top of a wall; and the top of the wall becomes, for the moment, something in some way quite extraordinary. One of the two men touches the other on the shoulder. The other raises his head and sees it too, understands it too. Then the thing up there vanishes. But they will know *in aeternum* that it once existed.” Jules Romains, *Les Hommes de bonne volonté*, book 2, *Crime de Quinette* (Paris, 1932), pp. 175–176.⁴⁵ [M15,1]

[...]

On the detective novel:

The man who hasn't signed anything, who left no picture,
Who was not there, who said nothing:
How can they catch him?
Erase the traces.

Brecht, *Versuche* <4–7 (Berlin, 1930)>, p. 116 (*Lesebuch für Städtebewohner*, no. 1).⁵³ [M16,2]

The masses in Baudelaire. They stretch before the flâneur as a veil: they are the newest drug for the solitary.—Second, they efface all traces of the individual: they are the newest asylum for the reprobate and the proscrip. —Finally, within the labyrinth of the city, the masses are the newest and most inscrutable labyrinth. Through them, previously unknown chthonic traits are imprinted on the image of the city. [M16,3]

[...]

Trace and aura. The trace is appearance of a nearness, however far removed the thing that left it behind may be. The aura is appearance of a distance, however close the thing that calls it forth. In the trace, we gain possession of the thing; in the aura, it takes possession of us. [M16a,4]

[...]

“The jostling crowdedness and the motley disorder of metropolitan communication would . . . be unbearable without . . . psychological distance. Since contempo-

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rary urban culture . . . forces us to be physically close to an enormous number of people, . . . people would sink completely into despair if the objectification of social relationships did not bring with it an inner boundary and reserve. The pecuniary character of relationships, either openly or concealed in a thousand forms, places [a] . . . functional distance between people that is an inner protection . . . against the overcrowded proximity.” Georg Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes* (Leipzig, 1900), p. 514.⁵⁶ [M17,2]

[...]

Empathy with the commodity is fundamentally empathy with exchange value itself. The flâneur is the virtuoso of this empathy. He takes the concept of market-ability itself for a stroll. Just as his final ambit is the department store, his last incarnation is the sandwich-man.[M17a,2]

[...]

Regarding the intoxication of empathy felt by the flâneur, a great passage from Flaubert may be adduced. It could well date from the period of the composition of *Madame Bovary*: “Today, for instance, as man and woman, both lover and mistress, I rode in a forest on an autumn afternoon under the yellow leaves, and I was also the horses, the leaves, the wind, the words my people uttered, even the red sun that made them almost close their love-drowned eyes.”⁵⁸ Cited in Henri Grappin, “Le Mysticisme poétique <et l’imagination> de Gustave Flaubert,” *Revue de Paris* (December 15, 1912), p. 856. [M17a,4]

On the intoxication of empathy felt by the flâneur (and by Baudelaire as well), this passage from Flaubert: “I see myself at different moments of history, very clearly. . . . I was boatman on the Nile, *leno* [procurer] in Rome at the time of the Punic wars, then Greek rhetorician in Suburra, where I was devoured by bed-bugs. I died, during the Crusades, from eating too many grapes on the beach in Syria. I was pirate and monk, mountebank and coachman—perhaps Emperor of the East, who knows?”⁵⁹ Grappin, “Le Mysticisme poétique <et l’imagination> de Gustave Flaubert,” *Revue de Paris* (December 15, 1912), p. 624. [M17a,5]

[...]

Illuminating for the conception of the crowd: in “Des Veters Eckfenster” (My Cousin’s Corner Window), the visitor still thinks that the cousin watches the activity in the marketplace only because he enjoys the play of colors. And in the long run, he thinks, this will surely become tiring. Similarly, and at around the same time, Gogol writes, in “The Lost Letter,” of the annual fair in Konotop: “There were such crowds moving up and down the streets that it made one giddy to watch them.” *Russische Gespenster-Geschichten* (Munich (1921)), p. 69.⁶¹

[M18a,1]

[...]

Beginning of Rousseau's Second Promenade: "Having therefore decided to describe my habitual state of mind in this, the strangest situation which any mortal will ever know, I could think of no simpler or surer way of carrying out my plan than to keep a faithful record of my solitary walks and the reveries that occupy them, when I give free rein to my thoughts and let my ideas follow their natural course, unrestricted and unconfined. These hours of solitude and meditation are the only ones in the day when I am completely myself and my own master, with nothing to distract or hinder me, the only ones when I can truly say that I am what nature meant me to be." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*; preceded by *Dix Jours à Ermenonville*, by Jacques de Lacretelle (Paris, 1926), p. 15.⁶⁷—The passage presents the integral link between contemplation and idleness. What is decisive is that Rousseau already—in his idleness—is enjoying himself, but has not yet accomplished the turning outward. [M20,1]

"London Bridge." "A little while ago I was walking across London Bridge and I paused to contemplate what is for me an endless pleasure—the sight of a rich, thick, complex waterway whose nacreous sheets and oily patches, clouded with white smoke-puffs, are loaded with a confusion of ships. . . . I leaned upon my elbows. . . . Delight of vision held me with a ravenous thirst, involved in the play of a light of inexhaustible richness. But endlessly pacing and flowing at my back I was aware of another river, a river of the blind eternally in pursuit of [its] immediate material object. This seemed to me no crowd of individual beings, each with his own history, his private god, his treasures and his scars, his interior monologue and his fate; rather I made of it—unconsciously, in the depths of my body, in the shaded places of my eyes—a *flux of identical particles*, equally sucked in by the same nameless void, their deaf headlong current pattering monotonously over the bridge. Never have I so felt solitude, mingled with pride and anguish." Paul Valéry, *Choses vues* (Paris, 1930), pp. 122–124.⁶⁸ [M20,2]

Basic to flânerie, among other things, is the idea that the fruits of idleness are more precious than the fruits of labor. The flâneur, as is well known, makes "studies." On this subject, the nineteenth-century Larousse has the following to say: "His eyes open, his ear ready, searching for something entirely different from what the crowd gathers to see. A word dropped by chance will reveal to him one of those character traits that cannot be invented and that must be drawn directly from life; those physiognomies so naively attentive will furnish the painter with the expression he was dreaming of; a noise, insignificant to every other ear, will strike that of the musician and give him the cue for a harmonic combination; even for the thinker, the philosopher lost in his reverie, this external agitation is profitable: it stirs up his ideas as the storm stirs the waves of the sea. . . . Most men of genius were great flâneurs—but industrious, productive flâneurs. . . . Often it is when the artist and the poet seem least occupied with their work that they are most profoundly absorbed in it. In the first years of this century, a man was seen walking each and every day—regardless of the weather, be it sunshine or snow—around the ramparts of the city of Vienna. This man was Beethoven,

who, in the midst of his wanderings, would work out his magnificent symphonies in his head before putting them down on paper. For him, the world no longer existed; in vain would people greet him respectfully as he passed. He saw nothing; his mind was elsewhere.” Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire universel* (Paris <1872>), vol. 8, p. 436 (article entitled, “Flâneur”). [M20a,1]

[...]

Description of the crowd in Proust: ‘ All these people who paced up and down the seawall promenade, tacking as violently as if it had been the deck of a ship (for they could not lift a leg without at the same time waving their arms, turning their heads and eyes, settling their shoulders, compensating by a balancing movement on one side for the movement they had just made on the other, and puffing out their faces), and who, pretending not to see so as to let it be thought that they were not interested, but covertly watching, for fear of running against the people who were walking beside or coming towards them, did, in fact, butt into them, became entangled with them, because each was mutually the object of the same secret attention veiled beneath the same apparent disdain; their love—and consequently their fear—of the crowd being one of the most powerful motives in all men, whether they seek to please other people or to astonish them, or to show them that they despise them.’ Marcel Proust, *A l’Ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (Paris),

vol. 3, p. 36.⁷⁰

[M21,1]

[...]

The most characteristic building projects of the nineteenth century—railroad stations, exhibition halls, department stores (according to Giedion)—all have matters of collective importance as their object. The flâneur feels drawn to these “despised, everyday” structures, as Giedion calls them. In these constructions, the appearance of great masses on the stage of history was already foreseen. They form the eccentric frame within which the last privateers so readily displayed themselves. (See K1a,5.) [M21a,2]