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2. Transnationalism and Modern American Women Writers
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Public Places, Intimate Spaces. The Modern *Flâneuse* in Rhys, Barnes, and Loos

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Abstracts

English Français

While the clever, detached, and entitled *flâneur* freely made his way about town, women historically were limited in their urban mobility, which made them invisible as critics of urban modernity. The *flâneuse* was an unimaginable notion.

By hypothesizing an embodied *flâneuse*, this study will examine modern novels whose characters engage in *flânerie* in ways that may be at once similar and distinctive regarding the tradition. Three authors who present compelling figures of the *flâneuse* are the British author Jean Rhys, and American authors Djuna Barnes, and Anita Loos. The protagonists in these select texts obviously do not embody the “traditional” *flâneur* figure; however, their participation expands the timbre of *flânerie* by examining the urban and social populous from an alternative point of view.

Tandis que le « véritable » flâneur, subtil et insouciant, se frayait librement un chemin dans la ville, les femmes étaient historiquement assignées à des espaces plus circonscrits, ce qui les rendait, de fait, invisibles en tant que critiques de la modernité urbaine. Cet article postule que le personnage de la *flâneuse* est un moyen efficace de réévaluer certains romans modernes dans leur relation à la tradition littéraire. En s'attachant à trois figures de flâneuses « excentriques » imaginées par Jean Rhys, Djuna Barnes et Anita Loos, on verra comment ces auteurs s'emparent de la notion de *flânerie* pour l'enrichir de nouvelles nuances et donner à lire le phénomène urbain et social d'un autre point de vue.

Index terms

Mots-clés : flâneuse, flâneur, moderne, modernité, urbain, femmes, littérature féminine

Keywords : flâneuse, flâneur, modern, modernity, urban, women, women's literature

Full text

- 1 In her study of the nineteenth century, “The Invisible *Flâneuse*” (1985), Janet Wolff argues that the *flâneuse* is an impossible idea (Wolff 47), noting the myriad ways women historically have had limited availability to the public square, which made them invisible in the critique of urban modernity. This, while the clever, detached *flâneur* of Walter Benjamin’s composition (*via* Charles Baudelaire), observed people and the city through the freedom born of class, leisure, and anonymity (40). Griselda Pollock agrees with Wolff in her book *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (1988): “there is no female equivalent of the quintessential masculine figure, the *flâneur*; there is not and could not be a female *flâneuse*” (Pollock 71).
- 2 But, just as the literary Modernist period reworked nineteenth-century imaginings of urban public spaces when the idea of the *flâneur* was at its peak, likewise, the study of modernity and its associated *flânerie* was transformed as well. From the 1990s onward, critics like Elizabeth Wilson (1992), Mica Nava (1997), Deborah L. Parsons (2000), and others disputed some of Wolff’s conclusions arguing that indeed ideologically women belonged outside the public sphere, but in reality they were inside it along with everyone else (Nava 38-41; Wilson 80-82; Parsons 4-5). As it turns out, comparable to the idea of the “gothic” or the “bildungsroman,” by the 1990s the *flâneur* began to function as both a noun and an adjective, as it were: a character existing in a contained time and place (nineteenth-century Paris and London), as well as a cluster of characteristics and customs that endure into the present. Indeed, Keith Tester in 1994 suggests the *flâneur* figure functions as a “recurring motif in the literature, sociology and art of urban [...] existence” (Tester 1), and Parsons in 2000 argues for a wider acknowledgment of “post-Benjaminian” *flânerie* and *flâneur*, thrust outside of his time-strict demarcation (Parsons 41)¹.
- 3 Contemporary criticism, such as Martina Lauster’s article “Walter Benjamin’s Myth of the Flâneur” (2007), assumes that Benjamin’s *flâneur* is more a construct of his own imagination than of an actual nineteenth-century type (Lauster 139). To the critic, one can “dismiss the whole genre” of literature about the *flâneur* “as a middle-class attempt to make a threatening urban environment controllable” (Lauster 149). Although I agree with Lauster about the historical figure of the *flâneur*, in literary studies the *flâneur* as a noun and his associated *modus operandi*, continue to resonate in powerful ways. Therefore, disregarding the noun or its adjectival characteristics out of hand is not the solution. The ways in which we examine the city, its people, and modern life continue to offer valuable approaches to the anxiety of modernity, even without the precise, idealized vessel by which this *flânerie* is accomplished. Therefore, an expanded type with a more diverse range of characteristics can have continued usefulness.
- 4 One expanded type should be the *flâneuse*, for she does, in fact, exist. However, if one seeks to ascertain how a *flâneuse* might function, one might, at the outset, look to women’s literature and women protagonists; especially helpful is literature in which the city is foreign to—or holds a sense of significance for—a character. With the intention of furthering the project of the *flâneuse*, this article will examine modern novels whose characters engage in *flânerie* in ways that may be at once similar to and distinctive from the Benjaminian tradition. Three authors who present compelling figures of the *flâneuse* are the expatriate British and American authors Jean Rhys and Djuna Barnes, and American author Anita Loos. The protagonists in these select texts obviously do not embody the “traditional” *flâneur* figure,² although they do take part in *flânerie* in both conventional and unconventional ways. Their participation expands the timbre of *flânerie* by examining the urban and social populace from an alternative point of view. Often the object of the male gaze, but sometimes the subject, often the detached observer, but sometimes the immersed onlooker, often the emotionally aloof, sometimes the sensually intermingled, the *flâneuse* in each text observes and interprets the urban and the social in ways thoughtful, provocative, and unique. Like the artist *flâneur* of Baudelairian fame³, Loos’ protagonist has recently taken up paper and pen as apparatuses to record everyday life, while Rhys’ and Barnes’ characters do not

physically record their examinations of the city, but mentally explicate their scrutiny as strikingly as Baudelaire's pen ever did.

The Benjaminian *flâneur(s)*

- 5 To move beyond Benjamin's *flâneur*, we must revisit Benjamin. I will take as given Parson's suggestion above that Benjamin's vision of the *flâneur* is dual and contradictory (Parson 34). Like Adrian Rifkin's observation in *Street Noises* (1993): Benjamin's "arduous process of demystifying Paris has turned into a part of its mystery" (Rifkin 7), Benjamin's delineation of the *flâneur* has had a related effect. His initial vision to demystify the Baudelairean concept diverges into a vision of his own, which essentially adds to the concept's "convoluted[ness]" (Parsons 3). The early version and the later one, Parsons argues, are spatially and temporally diverse. The first, in his essay "*The Flâneur*," is a "man of the crowd" (Parsons 34), immersed in the movement of and connected empathetically with the masses; he is also "wandering, subversive," and "marginal[ly] ambiguo[us]" (Parsons 36), *i.e.* not financially prosperous; while the later version, in his essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," is what she coins "the man at the window": an observer, detached both spatially and temporally from the multitudes he views (34), who is also conspicuously "detach[ed], self-assert[ed], and bourgeois" (36)⁴.
- 6 According to Parsons, these fundamental disparities between the former and the latter, place the *flâneur* in a fragmented and marginal position rather than the unified central "authoritative urban observer" position that scholars have historically embraced as the convention (36). This suggests the Benjaminian boundaries of the *flâneur* traditionally accepted by critics as the only imaginable parameters for so many years (and with which feminist critics have scuffled for so long), need not be the final authority on the streets. These contradictions concede a sense of murkiness in the *flâneur's* composition, thereby destabilizing the concept and permitting expanded dialogue surrounding its meaning. Add to these contradictions, the proclamation from Martina Lauster that Benjamin's idea of the *flâneur* as a real individual is simply a "modernist myth," and we have a starting point for this study (Lauster 139).
- 7 The foundations of this article will be built on an amalgamation of early and late characteristics of the Benjaminian *flâneur*, as well as additional attributes and behaviors from characters in the primary texts. The article will also hold the following assumptions: that the "ambiguities" of the *flâneur* concept is a "site for the contestation of male authority rather than the epitome of it" (Parsons 6); that women characters can also be expert observers—or *flâneuses*—of urban modernity; and that one must focus on women's fiction to better manifest that expertise. These views will act as responses to critics, such as Wolff, who have lamented that women were not just ignored as earnest urban observers, but were "rendered impossible" (Wolff 47), and will support critics such as Parsons, who has declared that the *flâneuse* does exist and must be acknowledged (Parsons 6). Furthermore, the variety of the *flâneuse* from Rhys to Barnes to Loos, as well as the different modes by which she incorporates *flânerie*, should exhibit just how rich an expanded modern tradition can become through the involvement of women. The distinctive forms of *flânerie* undertaken in the high modernist works by Rhys and Barnes, and the humorous middlebrow novella by Loos depict the different voices of modernism that have always existed, but have not always been given their due⁵. Just as the study of literary modernism has proven to be a study of modernisms, multivocal, multifaceted, and transnational, acknowledging that the *flâneuse's* urban introspection is as valuable as the *flâneur's* enlarges our comprehension and makes more reliable our vision of modernity in general.

The reluctant *flâneuse*

- 8 The protagonists from Jean Rhys' novels *Good Morning Midnight* (1936) and *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1930), engage in a type of *flânerie* that is perhaps indicative of

the difference between the *flâneuse* and the *flâneur*. While the *flâneur's* act of social observation is entirely voluntary and deliberate, the *flâneuse* in these texts can evoke a sense of involuntary and reluctant participation. This suggests that the *flâneuse's* keen sense of communal examination may be more an act of survival than one of leisure. This type of *flânerie* moves away from its later Benjaminian tradition as the detached bird's eye view of the city and closer to his early tradition, or what Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson describes in 2012 as “sensual,” *flânerie* that “cannot resist the offerings to the senses” (“Sensualization” 211)⁶. However, in Ferguson's theorization, the sensual *flâneur* although closer in proximity to the city than his conventional counterpart, in that he moves from “outsider to insider” as a critic (212), his work—“mak[ing] sense of the city [...] “through familiar sights and sounds,” “smells, tastes, and feel” (212)—continues to be an intentional and desired occupation. The reluctant *flâneuse*, on the other hand, is a city insider who deciphers the urban space through necessity. She is a woman, a foreigner, and poor, which requires a double deference to society's preference for the male, the homogenous, and the affluent. Reluctant *flânerie* is the practice of an insider who wishes she were an outsider, a sensual participant who would be happier as an aloof bystander.

9 Jean Rhys' protagonists Sasha, aka Sophia, in *Good Morning, Midnight* and Julia in *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* are not surprising protagonists in the tradition of *flânerie*; after all, they have plenty to say about the city and their places in it. Sasha is an English woman who has returned to Paris for a fortnight for unknown reasons, perhaps to come to terms with her dark past, to transform herself, to enact a miracle (*Good Morning* 14), or to die. Like Julia, it is interesting that Sasha's conclusive grappling with life is deliberately set on the stage of the Parisian street, the original streets of the *flâneur*. In the tradition of the *flâneur*, she has shrewd social commentary, of the city and of the people. At one point she suggests “[...] the smell of night in Paris” is unique and euphoric (60); Paris is personified as “my beautiful” and “my darling,” but then takes a harsher turn when she notes “[...] [o]h what a bitch you can be!” (15), suggesting the city attempted to kill her those years ago (“but you didn't kill me after all, did you?” (15). In another scene, Sasha juxtaposes the experience of walking at night on the street with and without money: if one is poor, the “dark houses” hang “over you like monsters” (28). They “step forward [...] to frown and crush” (28). There are “no hospitable doors, no lit windows, just frowning darkness. Frowning and leering and sneering” (28). “Tall cubes of darkness, with two lighted eyes at the top to sneer” (28). “If you have money and friends,” however, houses “stand back respectfully”; they are “friendly”; “the door opens and somebody meets you, smiling” (28). Rhys' gritty descriptions here, vivid imagery and metaphor, paint a poetically grim picture of a city that welcomes the wealthy and imperils the poor.

10 Julia, likewise, notes the dangers of the city. She states early on that “[i]t was always places she thought of, not people” (*After* 9); therefore, it is the city she surveys and which draws her imagination. Julia's relationship with the city—both Paris and London—alters between moods. The “lights of the cafés,” she says of Paris, “were hard and cold, like ice” (16). Women “sat staring mournfully, like [...] prisoner[s]” in their hotel windows (129). London, likewise “was a cold and terrifying place to return to” (55-56). She thinks London “tells you all the time, ‘Get money, get money get money, or be forever damned,’ while Paris “tells you to forget, forget, let yourself go” (65). Both societies share a twentieth-century, transnational, capitalist spirit that offers reveries of anxiety and shame to the lower classes for their inability to afford a life of leisure. Still there are moments when Julia sees the beauty of the city, but often it is a mournful beauty, a hazardous beauty. In London she hears a voice in the urban wilderness, down the street. It “quavered into a melancholy tune. The voice dragged and broke—failed. Then suddenly there would be a startlingly powerful bellow, like an animal in pain” (61). The voice is described as “complaining and mindless” (61), like the machinery of modernity itself. Back in Paris, as she strolls along the Seine, she “watched the shadows of the branches trembling in the water. In mid-stream there was a pool of silver light where the shadows danced and beckoned” (132). The shadows “danced, but without joy. They danced, they twisted, they thrust out long, curved, snake-like arms and beckoned” (132). Julia's scrutiny of the city contains an underlying foreboding. Urban inhabitants

live an anguished existence in a city incessantly whispering its own desires, and the only hope for respite—the only inviting presence—is the beckoning of shadows under the surface of the Seine.

- 11 However, it is not merely observations about the city, obviously, that makes one a *flâneuse*; but insightful commentary about people and their places in modern society that sets her off. As noted by Helga Druxes in *Resisting Bodies* (1996), “[t]he *flâneur* comes to symbolize mobility and critical consciousness of social institutions and one’s interactions with them” (Druxes 20). As a case in point, after having relayed a particularly devastating work experience with a previous boss (Mr. Blank) to the reader, Sasha goes on to give this rebellious manifesto on modern economics:

Well, let’s argue this out, Mr. Blank. You, who represent Society, have the right to pay me four hundred francs a month. That’s my market value, for I am an inefficient member of Society, slow in the uptake, uncertain, slightly damaged in the fray, there’s no denying it. So you have the right to pay me four hundred francs a month, to lodge me in a small, dark room, to clothe me shabbily, to harass me with worry and monotony and unsatisfied longings till you get me to the point when I blush at a look, cry at a word. We can’t all be happy, we can’t all be rich, we can’t all be lucky—and it would be so much less fun if we were. Isn’t it so, Mr. Blank? There must be the dark background to show up the bright colours. Some must cry so that the others may be able to laugh the more heartily. Sacrifices are necessary. [...] Let’s say that you have this mystical right to cut my legs off. But the right to ridicule me afterwards because I am a cripple—no, that I think you haven’t got. And that’s the right you hold most dearly, isn’t it? You must be able to despise the people you exploit. (*Good Morning* 25-26)

- 12 The above commentary could be an illustration of Marx’s *Capital*. Indeed, it is a critique of transnational capitalism found on both sides of the English Channel. Her metaphors for wealth and poverty, the brilliant and the dull, the light and dark, give a thoughtful account of the exploited, modern, urban worker, especially women left to their own meager means to make a living. At one point, Sasha’s insight into poverty paints a stark picture of how the modern economic system works against the individual. In a quasi-Shakespearean insight she observes that destitution can give one a despairing “[c]lose-up of human nature” (*Good Morning* 75), where one seems like one is in a “dream, when all the faces are masks and only the trees are alive and you can almost see the strings that are pulling the puppets” (75).

- 13 Julia Martin has similar analytical gems of social analysis for the reader, especially having to do with class hierarchy, and patriarchy, before and after her relationship with Mr. Mackenzie. Upon meeting Mr. Mackenzie, she explains her social station: “You see, a time comes in your life when, if you have any money, you can go one way. But if you have nothing at all—absolutely nothing at all—and nowhere to get anything, then you go another” (*After* 20). After her relationship with Mr. Mackenzie, after being bullied by his lawyer Maître Legros, and her endowment finally discontinued, Julia notes how inadequate her defenses are against these men and their class:

When she thought of the combination of Mr. Mackenzie and Maître Legros, all sense of reality deserted her and it seemed to her that there were no limits at all to their joint powers of defeating and hurting her. Together the two perfectly represented organized society, in which she had no place and against which she had not a dog’s chance. (*After* 17)

- 14 Julia’s *flânerie* powerfully describes the precarious plight of the middle-class woman drifting toward the lower class, and even into poverty. This narrative is especially fitting for women in the 1930s, like Julia, who had few middle-class job opportunities and were forced to make a go of it themselves for whatever reason. Julia, for example, is a divorcée, and expresses clearly the perilous position of women unvouched for by male financial support or marital protection. In describing her upstairs neighbor—whom she fears she may become—she explains why she continues to make an effort to maintain her looks in public, where lower class women are surveilled intimately:

To stop making up would have been a confession of age and weariness. It would have meant that Mr. Mackenzie had finished her. It would have been the first step on the road that ended in looking like that woman on the floor above—a woman

always dressed in black, who had a white face and black nails and dyed hair which she no longer dyed, and which had grown out for two inches into a hideous pepper-and-salt grey. (*After* 11)

15 She notes that the woman is appropriately self-loathing in public, as required by society; she has a “humble, cringing manner,” which comes from her having “discovered that, having neither money nor virtue, she had better be humble if she knew what was good for her” (11). Here, Julia is a scathing *flâneuse* in her portrayal of collective moral judgment toward women, especially poor, *knowing* women over the age of thirty. As noted by Mary Lou Emery in her book *Jean Rhys: At World's End* (1990), between the wars saw a “backlash” toward the “increased independence” and “public visibility gained in the first decades of the twentieth century,” (Emery 142) so much so that “women in public were again associated with the fallen woman” (Parsons 125).

16 Like the later traditional *flâneur* Sasha finds happiness in indifference to the masses and their indifference to her, but suggests the difficulty of staying in that state for the *flâneuse*:

People talk about the happy life, but what's the happy life when you don't care any longer if you live or die. You only get there after a long time and many misfortunes. And do you think you are left there? Never. As soon as you have reached this heaven of indifference, you are pulled out of it. From your heaven you have to go back to hell. When you are dead to the world, the world often rescues you, if only to make a figure of fun out of you. (*Good Morning* 75-6)

17 Unlike the later *flâneur*, whose philosophical conclusions are made at a distance from his subjects on the pavement—he is *of* the crowd rather than *in* it (Tester 2)—the pavement and its strangers are not just the backdrop for Sasha's first-person struggle for individual survival, but intermingled *in* that very struggle.

18 As specified earlier, the later Benjaminian *flâneur* is a privileged bystander, an independent individual whom, in the bustle of everyday modernity, is left to himself, which facilitates his impersonal surveillance of specimens. Although Sasha is every bit as indifferent to the masses as a rule, her precarious class position situates her as a vulnerable part of it. Furthermore, as a woman, her public privacy—her anonymity or obscurity in the crowd—is encroached upon in numerous ways atypical for men⁷. Richard Sennett, in *The Fall of Public Man* (1974) notes that “The lonely crowd,” was a realm of privatized freedom, and the male was more likely to escape in it,” as women were more likely to be physically scrutinized for traces of class (217). Because of this scrutiny, Rhys' characters indirectly illustrate the problems *flânerie* poses for women in public spaces. The principal reason is that the *flâneuse* is not afforded the *invisibility* required for a prolonged experience of public privacy. If one recalls the opening argument of Janet Wolff—that women are invisible in society—one might find how ironic the role of the twentieth-century *flâneuse* has become.

19 Examples of this invasion of public privacy are many in the novel, a sign of the modern, but very particularly an invasion for women. In her 1986 article, Susan Buck-Morss states that the *flâneur*, by his very act of *flânerie* was attempting to “reprivatize social space [...]” (Morss103). Indeed this is the case for Sasha, who wants “one thing and one thing only—to be left alone. No more pawings, no more prying—*leave me alone*,” the text reads (*Good Morning* 37). Sasha craves invisibility in the crowd, but as a female pedestrian—and a poor migrant⁸—she is frequently spoken to by strangers. There are at least eight different occasions in which she is approached by strangers for one reason or another: she is asked for money (42); she is asked why she is so sad (39); she is asked to talk or have a drink (54, 60, 60, 72); she is approached by a leering neighbor (13, 30); she is yelled at by a hostile clerk (125). What's more, when she is in the smaller intimacy of a restaurant or café, there are another five occasions in which she becomes the topic of strangers' conversations. Apparently infamous in some unknown way—perhaps an uncomfortable reminder of middle class insecurity, or simply marked as an alcoholic—Sasha observes how her presence angers other English travelers⁹, and how French restaurant/café proprietors and staff often become inexplicably antagonistic.

20 Julia is likewise accosted by strangers. In one scene, she is followed at night as she walks along what is most likely the *Boulevard du Palais*. She notices “that a man was walking just behind her. He kept step with her; he cleared his throat; he was getting ready to speak” (*After* 135). The man soon “[draws] level with her” and they continue “side by side,” until she finally confronts him under a lamppost (135). In a similar incident, she is approached by a man just off the *Place St. Michel* who “mutter[s] proposals in a low slithery voice” (45). On a train she is approached by a man with the pretense of small talk, asking directions, offering his business card (102). All incidents are those in which strange men feel entitled to violate a woman’s space and privacy. Unlike the *flâneur*, then, the *flâneuse*, as noted by critics before, is too visible in the crowd. Although Helga Druxes argues that “[t]he female *flâneur* [...] wishes to remain less aloof from the crowd’s daily concerns—they are hers too” (Druxes 20), Rhys’ characters argue otherwise, as does Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, who suggests that women are unjustly “consumed” optically, “along with the rest of the sights that the city affords” (“*Flâneur*” 27).

21 The *flâneuse*’s public experiences in *Good Morning*, *Midnight* and *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* are much more intimate than the *flâneur*’s, but no less important experiences and observations about urban life. As noted earlier, the woman in the city is not let alone; therefore, unlike the *flâneur*’s apparent meandering, the *flâneuse*’s movements on the street take on avoidance tactics and become more direct: how to get from point A to point B with the least amount of human contact. Her deviation from the throngs on the street are most often to the more intimate clusters in the less conspicuous restaurant or café. This movement demonstrates her desire for invisibility while recognizing she cannot go unnoticed. Her decisions to remain in public venues, despite the often unwelcoming disdain of the city, express her desire, like many cosmopolitans, for bustling, modern, urban life at the expense of her own comfort.

The investigative *flâneuse*

22 Nora Flood and Robin Vote from Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood* also exhibit various styles of *flânerie* unavailable to Sasha and Julia, discussed above, for they are expatriates with access to wealth, which permits them experiences of *flânerie* outside that which we have discussed to this point. Robin Vote may be the true *flâneuse* of the text since her wandering seems an organic necessity, but it is Nora’s that will be explored more completely here. For it is Nora’s association with Robin that generates her occupation, to stride along the pavement.

23 Edgar Allan Poe’s unknown man in “The Man of the Crowd” is the early *flâneur* of the Benjaminian model (“*Flâneur*” 48)¹⁰. He suggests that Poe’s *flâneur* is “above all, someone who does not feel comfortable in his own company. That is why he seeks out the crowd” (48). We can see this in Robin Vote when she and Nora settle together in Paris in the fall of 1923 (Barnes 53). The narrator states that “[t]wo spirits were working in her, love and anonymity” (55). These two things, one intimate, one public, exhibit the internal warring factions that set Robin walking the city night and day, more often than not” (56) during their life together. The love she has for Nora urges her to remain inside their home with her lover, but the street is the “inside” for the *flâneur*, as perceived by Benjamin in his study of the *feuilleton* and physiologies: the “boulevard” is turned “into an *intérieur*. The street becomes a dwelling for the *flâneur*; he is as much at home among the façades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls” (“*Flâneur*” 37)¹¹. For Robin, the *flâneuse*’s experience of public privacy and its associated anonymity triumphs over an intimate experience at home.

24 Before diving into this analysis more deeply, the reader must first know at least the parameters of Poe’s story and Benjamin’s reading of it: There are two characters in the text. A first-person narrator and an unknown man in the crowd. At the outset, the narrator has recently recovered from a sickness and is sitting by a large window of a coffee house in London to read his newspaper, observe his fellow patrons, and gaze out of window onto the crowded street (Poe 507). Presently the narrator finds himself

fascinated by an old man in the crowd whose expression emits so many varying, even contradictory, emotional states, that he cannot categorize them. His inability to understand what he sees mystifies and engages the narrator's full attention. It suggests a depth of soul, a history that must be plumbed; therefore he intends to continue his observation. He takes up his overcoat and follows the man into the streets (511).

25 If we can assume Robin as the *flâneuse* akin to Benjamin's early model, the Poe-esque "(wo)man of the crowd," Nora would be of the late model, the "(wo)man at the window," which aligns itself more closely with Baudelaire's interpretation of the narrator as the *flâneur* in Poe's text¹². The narrator "stares through the window-panes of a coffee-house," not with indifference, but with "penetrating eyes" ("*Flâneur*" 49), and his narrative guides the reader's attention toward the mysterious unknown man via his own very detailed account of urban, material surroundings, including the crowd. To know the unknown man for the later *flâneur* is to know the environment in which he feels such excitement. This is similar to the chapter "Night Watch" in *Nightwood*, where we gather Nora's *flânerie* is catalyzed through Robin's relationship with the city and its people. Since Rhys' texts have shown *flâneuses* who make meaning not just of modernity, but of a more personal bond between the individual and the urban, widening the activities of *flânerie* must allow for this intimate connection.

26 Like the *flâneuses* from Rhys who grudgingly expose the personal/social within the urban, Nora is reluctant. However, once Nora takes to the streets, she is quite unlike the previous characters. She has wealth and leisure, things that translate transnationally in Western society to enable one a certain amount of public privacy; therefore, Nora can focus on her own ambitions: she is purposeful as she pursues her one objective amidst the crowd, Robin. She moves from an early to a late Benjaminian *flâneur*. Both a bit obsessed like the unknown man of Poe, and scientifically methodical, like the detached observer. As noted by Aimée in her article "Rethinking the *Flâneur: Flânerie* and the Senses," disengagement is one of the key ingredients of proper *flânerie* (Boutin 128). But, disengagement, this idea of emotional detachment, would be a misnomer in describing Flood fully. For she is supremely detached by nature, as noted by the narrator: "The world and its history were to Nora like a ship in a bottle; she herself was outside and unidentified [...]" (*Nightwood* 53). But, "[t]hen she [meets] Robin" (53), and is brought careening into an enormously emotional existence.

27 Nora and Robin's relationship displays a liaison in which the city plays a vital part¹³. Nora is haunted by—and, in turn haunts—the city, intriguingly, because the city emanates from her lover. Robin, a primordial being equated with the earth (34), is correspondingly equated with the streets. When Nora and Robin turn up in Paris, Nora makes a home for them in the *Rue du Cherche-Midi*. But, soon enough Nora is "alone most of the night and part of the day," as Vote resumes her city wandering (*Nightwood* 56)¹⁴. For a time, Nora accompanies Robin in her night ramblings (59), but feeling a deficiency of presence when she is with Robin, Nora opts to either stay at home when Robin is out, or engage in her own wandering.

28 Like Poe's narrator who follows a "decrepit old man" from one end of the city and back (Poe 511), Nora tracks Robin. Baudelaire claims that "curiosity" is the "mainspring" of the narrator's "genius" (*Nightwood* 7); therefore, Nora's genius would be of a similar nature. She is "bewitched" by the need to know, this "irresistible passion" (7) that might explain the mystery of Robin. She begins her urban observation by way of Robin, and counterintuitively, at home. The outside—the city, the people—encroach upon Nora's homely privacy. Believing she and Robin "apart from the world" when "alone and happy," it is with dismay that Nora senses "there entered with Robin a company unaware" (*Nightwood* 57). Robin has given admittance to some "company" that appears in "some movement" or "peculiar turn of phrase not habitual to her," or which rings "clear in the songs" she sings "songs of the people, debased and haunting" (57). These movements and phrases are a "betrayal" to Nora, the songs "foreign," and all expose an urban life that excludes her (57), thus activating Nora's *flânerie*, her attempt to make sense of Robin *through* the city.

29 Her surveillance continues in variety, as she attempts to understand Robin's place in the city and its inhabitants. She accompanies Robin to the cafés, observing her moving "from table to table, from drink to drink, from person to person" (59). Soon, as noted

earlier, she finds this method too exclusionary, as Robin is overmuch engrossed as a city wanderer and *café habituée* to attend to another; hence, she changes course, hoping to gain hints of this urban encroachment through interpretation of sound and visual fantasy. At home, she “tabulate[s] by the sounds of Robin dressing in the next room the exact progress of her toilet,” which relates to “the knowledge that this [is] in preparation for departure” (58). When Robin has left and Nora is alone, she envisions the threat of the city to Robin with “appalling apprehension” (56); she pictures “Robin alone, crossing streets, in danger” (56). Sometimes her mind is so “transfixed” that her fear “seem[s] enormous and polarized, all catastrophes ran toward” Robin (56). Because of these perpetual fears for Robin alone in the urban center, it is no wonder that Nora takes to the streets again, this time alone.

30 Shifting research methods once again, Nora now searches for Robin stealthily, circuitously. “[A]voiding the quarter where she knew her to be,” Nora instead commences to look:

“at every couple as they passed, into every carriage and car, up to the lighted windows of the houses, trying to discover not Robin any longer, but traces of Robin, influences in her life (and those which were yet to be betrayed), Nora watched every moving figure for some gesture that might turn up in the movements made by Robin. (*Nightwood* 66)

31 As described by Matthew O’Connor when he sees her in the city walking by herself: “Out looking for what she’s afraid to find—Robin” (61). On the contrary, Nora intends to use her time on the street searching not *for* Robin, but *about* Robin. Like Poe’s narrator who follows the old man’s municipal wandering to discover if he indeed possesses any of the fascinating traits suspected by the narrator:

[...] the ideas of vast mental power, of caution, of penuriousness, of avarice, of coolness, of malice, of blood-thirstiness, of triumph, of merriment, of excessive terror, of intense—of supreme despair. (*Nightwood* 511)

32 Nora investigates Robin through her urban influences. She looks for the places that can be seen on Robin, the people whose influences have an effect on her, that “company” or public element that invades their private life; she seeks “traces of Robin” (*Nightwood* 61). This form of conscious delving into the personal via the metropolis is a type of *flânerie* indicative of the modernist period, for the angst of modernity’s effect on the individual has been an ever-present symptom of its progress.

33 In the end the city, for Nora, is a metaphor for both intelligence-gathering and loss. Nora walks the city in search of information about Robin, but the city is the reason Robin wanders away from home in the first place. Trying to make meaningful the city and the crowd may be a traditional occupation of the *flâneur*, but engaging in that analysis as well as delving into the individual’s place within the city and the crowd, while also surveying inter-relational dealings between people within the backdrop of the urban seems quite typical attributes of the *flâneuse*.

The interior *flâneuse*

34 Unlike the previous examples, Anita Loos’ 1925 novel *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* handles *flânerie* in an incredibly unique way, tongue firmly in cheek. The novel is a (travel) journal written by the American flapper character Lorelei Lee. The character journeys across the Atlantic with her best friend Dorothy Shaw—at a male benefactor’s expense—to “broaden out and improve [her] writing” (17); hence she is technically writing in the tradition of Baudelaire, the artist *flâneur* noted earlier. They stop in London, the sacred strolling city of Paris, Munich, and various other cities before returning to New York. In her travels, Lorelei’s *flâneuse* possesses an authoritative gaze, *via* the money and protection of gentlemen, who evaluates and interprets the city, even so far as re-plotting the course of urban tourism. Furthermore, her visibility is paradoxical: although her image is more discernible in a crowd due to conscious self-fashioning as a flapper and gold-digger, she nevertheless remains a distant and

unknowable figure. And finally, her profound social analysis is evidence of her understanding of the public as well as the individual.

- 35 While the artist *flâneur* hails triumphs of modernity through various artistic records, Loos' tourist *flâneuse* either re-writes these records or invents her own. Indeed, Lorelei Lee is actually stepping into the central, authoritative gaze of the traditional *flâneur*. She is not the weak object for the male subject's gaze, for she benefits from the arrogance of transience—she does not reside in these cities. She is a tourist who, unlike Sasha and Julia, does not have to read the urban accurately by necessity, but enjoys transient snapshots of an imagined urban experience self-fashioned and safeguarded by the capital of affluent men. She engages in a subjective gaze that renders meaning in modernity. In some cases, she actually remaps the city in keeping with her own value system. For example, at *La Place Vendôme* in Paris, Lorelei suggests a variation on the usual weight placed on historic landmarks:

And when a girl walks around and reads all of the signs with all of the famous historical names it really makes you hold your breath. Because when Dorothy and I went on a walk, we only walked a few blocks but in only a few blocks we read all of the famous historical names, like Coty and Cartier and I knew we were seeing something educational at last and our whole trip was not a failure. [...] So when we stood at the corner of a place called the Place Vandome, if you turn your back on a monument they have in the middle and look up, you can see none other than Coty's sign. (*Blondes* 52)

- 36 Turning her back on an historical symbol, Lorelei *literally* relocates prestige from an architectural military symbol from the Napoleonic period to shops signifying high French fashion, perfume and jewelry respectively.
- 37 Likewise, in the chapter “London is Really Nothing,” Lorelei moves to another iconic capital only to explain how a particular restaurant is more educational than a venerable edifice dating back to 1066:

In London they make a very, very great fuss over nothing at all. I mean London is really nothing at all. For instants [sic], they make a great fuss over a tower that really is not even as tall as the Hickox building in Little Rock Arkansas and it would only make a chimney on one of our towers in New York. So Sir Francis Beekman wanted us to get out and look at the tower because he said that quite a famous Queen had her head cut off there one morning and Dorothy said ‘What a fool she was to get up that morning’ and that is really the only sensible thing that Dorothy has said in London. So we did not bother to get out.

So we did not go to any more sights because they really have delicious champagne cocktails at a very very smart new restaurant called the Café de Paris that you could not get in New York for neither love or money and I told Piggie that when you are traveling you really ought to take advantadges [sic] of what you can not do at home. (*Blondes* 40)

- 38 To reiterate, Lorelei alters the implicitly understood tourist map of the city by transposing a monument's magnitude beneath some other thing. In this case, a perhaps once-in-a-lifetime encounter with an iconic British political and military landmark is placed beneath the fleeting experience of sipping a sparkling, high-end, alcoholic beverage. Sightseeing in the crowd on the street is disparaged while sightseeing in the crowd at a restaurant is applauded. In short, Lorelei's *flânerie* in the crowd outside is a continuous trajectory to return inside, away from the “man of the crowd” and toward the “man at the window.” Yet, knowing her interests, we can assume that once inside, she'll deliberately turn her back to the window. She is her own *flâneuse*, unlike anything Benjamin ever dreamed.
- 39 One thing lamented in early twentieth-century America was what became of young, urban women when the “flapper” was *en vogue*. The flapper, describes Chani Marchiselli, is actually perhaps more advanced in *flânerie* than her predecessor. As described in this article, the flapper is:

streetwise [and] able to navigate the city, its commerce and its population of strangers—leering gentlemen—perhaps better than the perpetually distant *flâneur*. Unlike the masculine wanderer of European modernity, the flapper

knows the city, knows where she is going, sets her stride to its pace, to the pace of its commerce. (Marchiselli *n.p.*)

40 Like this fast-paced sketch, Lorelei is a street-smart *flâneuse* but her movement in modern society as a flapper is more targeted, simply because she is determined to be involved in much of the pleasurable entertainment and excitement of the city. Add to this her identity as a gold-digger¹⁵—someone who holds money and valuable gifts above social relations—and we have a protagonist who has more direct interests than the *flâneur* in more privileged spaces. Public spaces indeed—hotels, cafés, restaurants, clubs—but with a more distinguished and *wealthy* public.

41 Less an ambler than a goal-oriented appraiser—of men, of jewelry; of men who can offer jewelry—Lorelei is not interested in whiling away time; rather, she is interested in interpreting her immediate milieu. Although in many cases, “gender limits [a woman’s] entitlement to look” in public (Marchiselli *n.p.*), Lorelei’s authoritative gaze, like the *flâneur*, is relentlessly attentive. Hers, however, is not directed at sightseeing or leisure. Rather, her attention is focused, laser-like, on gathering urban delights... jewelry, to be exact, and to be even more precise, diamonds. Her successful appraisals of people are prerequisites for a lucrative urban experience. This is why she is so appalled by her early experience in Munich.

I mean Mr. Spoffard and I spent one whole day going through all of the museums in Munchen, but I am really not even going to think about it. Because when something terrible happens to me, I always try to be a Christian science and I simply do not even think about it, but I deny that it ever happened [...]. (*Blondes* 86)

42 For Loos’ *flâneuse*, as with Rhys’, the crowd is not always just a crowd, the crowd often separates into the individual, as women are approached because of their gender for any reason whatsoever. Unlike Sasha or Julia, however, Lorelei mostly welcomes this encroachment, as her work—her appraisals—require both visual observation and spoken interaction with her specimens. As one can see, her various incidents of field research, or more generally speaking, botanizing at The Ritz¹⁶, coalesces into nuanced and droll transcriptions in her journal.

43 Lorelei’s role is an intersection of flapper and *flâneuse*, which means, compared to Rhys’ and Barnes’ protagonists Lorelei is exponentially more noticeable. She is not just visible because she is a woman, she works hard to be visible because her public strategy is not just to interpret her urban environment, but to draw attention to herself. There are often moments in the text where she and her sidekick Dorothy Shaw meet in public restrooms or hotel rooms to spruce up appearances or dress in fresh apparel. If they are not busy on some scheme, they are in a state of bedecking themselves for some scheme. Therefore, clothing, hats, makeup, perfumes, accessories, *etc.*, although not discussed extensively themselves in the text, are alluded to and assumed meticulous on every level. Nonetheless, this visibility works counter intuitively, enabling the flapper to maintain her authority, which is a different kind of *flâneuse* from those already studied.

44 As noted by Marchiselli, the flapper’s skirts “obscure more than they reveal,” which suggests that her “public visibility renders the feminine object as distant and curiously bisected” (Marchiselli *n.p.*). Add to this the general flapper’s “unnerving and new kind of self-possession,” her “swagger,” and her “meandering” that smacks of an “entitled mobility” much like “masculine *flânerie*”, and one witnesses a character who “undermines the acts of *flânerie*” upon herself, remaining opaque as an *object* (Marchiselli *n.p.*). As a subject, however, she demonstrates her license for belonging in the urban, as well as continuing her own personal observations and appraisals. This suggests that Lorelei as a *flâneuse* is *in* the crowd but not necessarily *of* the crowd, just as the later Benjaminian model.

45 Finally, like the traditional *flâneur* whose job is to interpret modern culture, Lorelei displays her deep understanding of the social customs of various urban centers. In London she observes:

So it seems the gentlemen in London have quite a quaint custom of not giving a girl many presents. I mean the English girls really seem to be satisfied with a gold

cigaret [sic] holder or else what they call a “bangle” which means a bracelet in English which is only gold and does not have any stones in it which American girls would really give to their maid. (*Blondes* 40)

46 In Paris, she records:

So the French veecount is going to call up in the morning but I am not going to see him again. Because French gentlemen are really quite deceeving. I mean they take you to quite cute places and they make you feel quite good about yourself and you really seem to have a delightful time but when you get home and come to think it all over, all you have got is a fan that only cost 20 francs and a doll that they gave you away for nothing in a restaurant. I mean a girl has to look out in Paris, or she would have such a good time in Paris that she would not get anywhere. (*Blondes* 55)

47 And ultimately, comparing her own countrymen (literally) to the others, she concludes: “So I really think that American gentlemen are the best after all, because kissing your hand may make you feel very very good but a diamond and safire [sic] bracelet lasts forever” (55). To put it simply, Lorelei explains basic marketing variations in a transnational context: English men offer articles of very little value to women in exchange for their time; French men are more deceptive: they divert women’s attention with pleasurable ambiance, delightful recreation, and intimate signs of affection (hand kissing) in order to disguise their exchange of slight trinkets; American men, on the other hand, generously exchange timeless jewels for a woman’s time, and Lorelei profusely approves of the swap.

48 In her reporting on the urban landscape, Lorelei has shown an authoritative gaze in which her appraisals refigure municipal locales. She has shown herself to be visible in the crowd, as all women are, yet still as distant as the late Benjaminian *flâneur*. And finally, her comprehension of urban economics is masterful. Although intimately connected to city venues, not streets, she remains a humorous and sharp commentator on the city. Lorelei’s grasp of urban people, urban places, and the commerce of metropolises—where capital is located and where and how it flows—is knowledge unknown to all city dwellers but the most meticulous employers of *flânerie*.

Conclusion

49 This article set out to widen the concept of the *flâneuse* by not just moving away from the Benjaminian “urban observer as leisured *flâneur*” type (Parsons 6), but by widening its borders for a more spacious concept. When his strictly crafted—albeit confusing—ideas of *flânerie* are allowed to coalesce and subsequently afforded a reduced amount of significance, different forms of urban observation emerge in the foreground. Although it was necessary to use Benjamin and Baudelaire in this study—to show similarities and distinctions—no one model was used as a standard by which to gauge whether the *flâneuse* was a successful or proper adherer of *flânerie*. Furthermore, what seems to have arisen from this study of the *flâneuse* is that she is not one particular type. *Flâneuses* have varying motivations for their urban analyses, which is why no two in this study are alike. Generally, however, they do introduce a strong strain of the personal into their relations with the city.

50 The *flâneuse* observes urban life regardless of her more visible status and more disrupted experience. Through her characters, Rhys offers the expert and sometimes bleak accounts of the reluctant *flâneuse*, an urban wanderer who longs to be both in the crowd and away from it. Sasha and Julia express distinctly how visibility of women in a crowd violates a woman’s public privacy, something with which the *flâneur* has never had to contend. This visibility, then, turns one who understands the city and feels otherwise comfortable in the anonymity of the crowd, into a reluctant *flâneuse*. Barnes offers the yearning account of the *flâneuse* sleuth who hopes to understand her lover through the streets and its gathering places. Nora represents the investigative *flâneuse*, somewhat akin to the privileged, late *flâneur* of Benjamin—the “(wo)man at the window”—who indirectly shadows her target in the streets and the crowds in order to

find the essence of another. Finally, Lorelei Lee in Loos' text, shuns the streets for public gathering spaces of a more lavish type: exclusive hotels, restaurants, and clubs. Lorelei is a tourist flapper who relies on her transience and distinctiveness in the multitude to observe more closely the wealthy crowds. She is the interior *flâneuse* and her botanizing is on the carpet. Unlike the others of this study, Lorelei employs her visibility and authoritative gaze to meet the needs of her everyday life; however, like the others, she understands the machinations of the modern city and societal class strata. Her understanding of commerce, intersocial relationships and exchange, as well as human nature in particular are well documented in her artist's journal.

51 Although Sasha, Julia, Nora, and Lorelei as characters are not particularly similar, their astute perceptions of modernity, of people, of the city demonstrate that the *flâneuse* exists. She exists, yes, but obviously with some deviation from the Benjaminian tradition(s). Because of her gender and class especially, the *flâneuse* has reduced privacy in which to research and examine her milieu. This means her visibility can be a hindrance, as it is for Sasha and Julia, or a help, as it is for Lorelei. However, her insights into the city, into social relationships within the city, into personal relationships to the city, as well as the moving parts of the city, are sound and shrewd. It certainly seems we are long past assuming the borders of *flânerie* are closed to women.

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Notes

1 Cultural critic Walter Benjamin is well known for his theorization of the early nineteenth-century *flâneur* by means of the work of author Charles Baudelaire. As Keith Tester notes in his introduction to the anthology *The Flâneur* (1994), "Thanks in no small part to Walter Benjamin's reading of Baudelaire, the *flâneur* is invariably seen as a bygone figure," as "living and dying on the streets of Paris alone, so that any generalization of the figure and the activity would be historically questionable at best" (Tester 13).

2 The term "traditional" or "conventional" *flâneur* in this article will refer to the later Benjaminian model most imagined by contemporary readers, the "man at the window," which will be discussed in the next section.

3 In "The Painter of Modern Life," Baudelaire generally describes the artist *flâneur* as one who delights in understanding and recording the pace and composition of modernity, of the urban or the crowd (Baudelaire 5-12).

4 Upon reading section III of "The Painter of Modern Life" by Baudelaire, which is a sketch of the *flâneur*, one may gain insight into why Benjamin convolutes his own formation of the type. Baudelaire's *flâneur* is an amalgamation of "the artist," the "man of the world," the "man of the crowd," and the "child," and the definitions of each are vast, contradictory, and hopelessly intermingled.

5 Calls for broadening our study of literary modernism to include other voices have been made for decades. In 2007, Ann Ardis suggested we "restor[e] the full complexity of [modernism's] emergence" (Ardis 426). She suggests revising our ideas of "difficulty," as well as looking more closely at other "signature tactics" of modernism such as "irony, wit, and black humor" (426-7). In this way, we can remember that "a multiplicity of cultural agendas for the arts were still available at the turn of the twentieth century, not all of which positioned artists and intellectuals comfortably in allegiance with difficulty, highbrow culture, and the academy" (427). Thus, "original interlocutors" who have hitherto been ignored (426), such as Anita Loos, I suggest, can inform and enrich the conversation surrounding modernism. See also Susan Hegeman (1995) and Daniel Tracy (2010) for specific discussions regarding Loos' *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* middlebrow status.

6 So as not to create confusion, it must be noted that Ferguson's "sensual *flânerie*" exists alongside what we know as conventional *flânerie*. Ferguson uses Zola's *Le Ventre de Paris* (1873) as the epitome of the sensual *flâneur* ("Sensualization" 211).

7 For an interesting overview of the ways in which women's privacy in the public is encroached upon, see Elfriede Dreyer's and Estelle McDowall's article "Imagining the *Flâneur* as a Woman."

8 I use “migrant” here as opposed to “expatriate,” which will be used regarding Barnes’ Nora and Robin, because of the obvious wealth differences between the two. The term expatriate connotes a sense of privilege, an agency of mobility by virtue of wealth, while the term migrant does not.

9 According to Carl F. Stychin, “migrants (especially when members of a racial or ethnic minority) are subject to intense surveillance from the state, as well as from within migrant communities, particularly when they are women [...]” (Stychin 606). It should be noted that Rhys’ characters are often noted for their racial undertones. See Elaine Savory’s 1998 article, and the articles in “Part II: Postcolonial Rhys” and “Part III: Affective Rhys” in *Jean Rhys: Twenty-First-Century Approaches* (Johnson and Moran 2015).

10 Walter Benjamin’s essays “The *Flâneur*” and “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” explore this text by way of Baudelaire’s interpretation of it in “The Painter of Modern Life.” In the first essay, as noted earlier, Benjamin’s interpretation is a model for his early *flâneur*: “the man of the crowd.” But, in the second essay Benjamin rejects his previous interpretation, and crafts a different model which becomes his later *flâneur*: “the man at the window.” It seems relevant to state that Benjamin misreads Baudelaire’s interpretation and “wrongly identifies” the unknown man as the *flâneur* in his first essay (Lauster 145). This misreading at the outset could be responsible for or a symptom of the convoluted concept that ultimately appears in his collective works.

11 To be as clear as possible, this definition of the *flâneur*’s coziness to the street derives from Benjamin’s analysis of the physiologies— “pocket-size books which juxtaposed descriptions of Parisian life with street scenes, portraits and mawkish caricatures [...] uniquely popular in early 19th century Paris” (Zevin n.p.)—*feuilleton*—the non-political section of a French newspaper concerned with gossip, trends, and fashion—and Baudelaire’s “The Painter of Modern Life.” Clearly the writers of these genres, and Baudelaire himself, promote the belief that the *flâneur* is in his element on the streets. Benjamin even believes this in his essay “The *Flâneur*.” However, he argues against them, and himself, in his subsequent essay “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire.” In what Parsons calls his “later” version of the *flâneur*, Benjamin argues that the unknown man in Poe retains none of the necessary bourgeois characteristics, and that he is too “manic” in behavior (“Motifs” 326); he also states definitively that once the arcades decline in fashion, the *flâneur* also declines; therefore, the *flâneur* would absolutely *not* feel comfortable on the streets proper (326). One can deduce how Benjamin’s interweaving of Baudelairian analysis with contemporary writers of urban style, as well as a number of other writers like Poe, Engels, Hugo, Valéry, Balzac, Dumas, *etc.*, in both “The *Flâneur*,” and “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” can muddy his attempts to define conclusively an appropriate *flâneur*.

12 Again, I must iterate that in neither of his essays does Benjamin suggest the narrator-protagonist as the *flâneur*, although Baudelaire clearly does. It is interesting, then, that Benjamin’s later *flâneur* does resemble him.

13 Compared to Rhys, Parsons suggests that Barnes “portrays the woman in the squalid city wasteland as a victim, less helpless than Rhys’s protagonists but still degraded in the urban landscape” (Parsons 178). Although this may be true of Robin, it is not true of Nora. Nora is bothered by how the city and its inhabitants envelope Robin. At one point she attempts to “take someone’s hands off her,” expressing to Matthew that “[t]hey always put hands on her when she was drunk” (*Nightwood* 143). But Nora has none of these physical experiences with the city herself. As noted earlier, she is a wealthy expatriate. Her agony is loving the metaphorical urban landscape of Robin.

14 In a previous relationship with Baron Felix Volkbein, Robin had taken to wandering far and wide, night and day, after finding herself pregnant. The wandering continues even after she has given birth.

15 The gold-digger is a well-known identity placed upon Lorelei Lee. It assumes her interest in social relations with the opposite sex are based on expenditures, especially gifts acquired. For more on Lorelei Lee’s keen use of the gold-digger label, see Wagner 2017.

16 Benjamin calls the *flâneur*’s activity “botanizing on the asphalt” (“*Flâneur*” 36). One delightful observation about *Blondes* is that Lorelei Lee and Dorothy Shaw spend much time at The Ritz in New York (Loos 3, 5, 6) and abroad (on the luxury liner bound for Europe, Dorothy and Lorelei are found quite frequently in The Ritz dining and lounge area. Also in both London and Paris, the two women stay at The Ritz). The palace hotel is seen as the ideal hunting ground for wealthy men who might bestow valuable gifts.

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