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DIANNE CHISHOLM

Paris, *Mon Amour*, My Catastrophe, or, Flaneries Through Benjaminian Space

Anyway — returning to divan. And lifting heavy volume of B's *Paris, Capitale du XIX^e*. From turquoise roxy-painted bedside table. Subtitle *Le livre des passages. Passagenwerk* in German. Not yet available in English. Therefore weighing the more delightfully on the wrists. Not a real history. Rather — vast collection of 19th century quotes and anecdotes. Initially seeming like a huge pile of detritus. But — on looking closer. More like montage. Possibly assembled using old surrealist trick. Of free association. Opening at contents' list. "A" — *Passages* — glass-roofed arcades, malls. Hawking 19th century's new imperial luxury. Juxtaposed on "B" — *Mode* — Each new season. Ironizing time. Next to "C" — *Antique Paris, catacombes, démolitions* — Paris's underpinnings. Pointing to "D" — *L'ennui* — Eternal return. Present tense of dandy. Hovering over "E" — *Hausmannization, combats des barricades* — Hausmann's wide boulevards. Versus the people. Progress's double coin. Segueing into "J" — Poet *Baudelaire*. First modern. Peer of "K" — *Flâneur* — whose initial post-revolutionary languor not ultimately resisting rising capitalist market. "X/Y" — *Marx-realism*. Next to Photography... Social Movements. Dolls. Automatons. A person could wander here for months.

Gail Scott, *My Paris* (18).¹

Gail Scott's *My Paris* is a radical experiment in metropolitan realism and an exemplary production of queer urban space. Moreover, foregrounding the architectonics of its own construction, the novel is an illuminating demonstration of "New Narrative."² A

1 All further references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text.

2 "New Narrative" refers to a genre, or movement, of experimental writing that explores and exhibits techniques of "narrativity" in the act (narrative present) of storytelling. The representational function of narrative is supplemented and interrupted by theory-based interrogation of the political economy of writing. Compounding fiction, politics and autobiography, new Narrative plots a construction of the "self" by a language-sensitive narrating subject. The subject — invariably "queer" — is a vehicle of awareness of the big-city dweller's exposure to/ seduction by urban commodity life. The "self" that is created in response to this life is a precarious object of desire and exchange. The core group of New

new, pseudo-autobiographical make-shift form of storytelling. New Narrative combines fiction and citation in an arresting *mimesis* of today's global city. The "Paris" of *My Paris* appears in concrete, minute and panoramic detail from the day-to-day perspective of a visiting writer who anxiously watches herself watching/walking the city in search of a subject for a novel. A fictive fiction-writer, Scott's narrator admires Paris's literary history. An Anglo-Montrealer, she brings with her a calamity of paradoxical emotions with roots in subaltern paranoia, imperialist guilt, feminist anger, hedonistic desire, racial confusion, socialist melancholia, and lesbian frustration. The diary she keeps is, in part, an image of auto-ethnographic projection. It is also, unwittingly, a critical historiography of the Western capital of postmodern capitalism. What distinguishes Scott's fiction is her detour through Walter Benjamin's unfinished *magnus opus*, *Das Passagen-Werk*, the "theory-fiction" that constitutes his last and most ambitious attempt to image the epochal rise and fall of utopian capitalism. Scott's mimicry of Parisian phantasmagoria is mediated and subverted by her narrator's immersion in Benjamin's montage. A parodic, intertextual, passage, *My Paris* revisits Benjamin's *Paris* before "arriving" at the city of *now*.

Scott's use of Benjamin is explicit. The text her narrator drifts into and is absorbed by is precisely identified as the French translation of *Das Passagen-Werk*. The narrator testifies as to how she comes upon this tome, left behind by the previous occupant of the writer's studio that she now inhabits. Impressed by its "weightiness," she scans its contents, immediately challenged to comprehend its representational device. The gesture of lifting the volume and browsing through its pages quickly becomes a habit, a morning ritual in her preparation for braving the traffic-choked, mesmerizing store-fronted streets outside her window. The more she reads, the more her perception of Paris is altered, the more visible become the material contradictions that underlie the collective illusion of Europe's still-most-dreamed-of-city. Her chronicle of walks is punctuated by crises of vision. Before the spectacle of Parisian cultivation, her nervous self-consciousness momentarily, and repeatedly, gives way to shocking recognition of devastated humanity, the price of capitalist "advancement" that the dream can no longer assimilate.

Narrative writers hail from the "gay mecca" of San Francisco, including Robert Glück, Bruce Boon, Camille Roy, Dodie Bellamy, Kevin Killian, Steve Abbott, Mike Annasan, and Sam D'Allesandro. The movement was much influenced by Dennis Cooper and the late Kathy Acker and, since the early 1980s, has attracted writers from Los Angeles, New York and Montréal, many of whom align their writing practice with feminism and/or sexual activism. For a history of the movement see Robert Glück, "Long Note on New Narrative": <http://www.sfsu.edu/~newlit/narrativity/issue_one/gluck.html>. For a polemical description of the genre see Gregory Bredbeck, "The New Queer Narrative: Intervention and Critique," *Textual Practice* 9.3 (Winter 1995): 477-502.

Though it handles "the heavy volume of B's *Paris*" with deceptive levity, *My Paris* sets the scene for activating one of modernism's most incisive strategies: the dialectical optics of Benjamin's image-space or "montage... using old surrealist trick. Of free association.... [juxtaposition]." We would be mistaken to think of Scott's citation of *The Arcades Project* as postmodernist lampooning of modernist avant-garde invention. Instead, we might think of it as the enactment of a belated comprehension of what Benjamin/modernism attempted and never completed. As Hal Foster has recently hypothesized, "rather than *cancel the project of the historical avant-garde, might the neo-avant-garde comprehend it for the first time?*"³ Scott's narrator does not recover *The Arcades Project*, ironically, only to make her departure; *The Arcades Project* returns from the future, with unexpected timeliness, to guide her daily excursions into the capital of the late twentieth century.

Yet if *My Paris* "comprehends" Benjamin's *Paris* (the historical avant-garde) "for the first time," in an effort to re-present the real, historical Paris, then how do we understand the discovery by the former that the latter is "Not a real history" but a "surrealist trick," an "assemblage" of "juxtaposed" archival "quotes and citations"? The concern that Scott shares with Benjamin is the problem of representing modern history without reproducing the spell-binding effect of capitalist *phantasmagoria* wherein "real" history is obscured. The problem is one of continuing emergency for the critical avant-garde. Benjamin recognized in Baudelaire a first attempt to use poetry as a technology of perception with which to grasp metropolitan contemporaneity, otherwise superficially experienced as a bombardment of shock. Does Scott recognize in Benjamin, if not an updating and adapting of Baudelaire, then a new use of surrealism to apprehend the antitheses of modernity and/or mirage of historicity that obscures our sense of reality today?

What is the task of the critic when the writing in question incorporates and performs the theory we might bring to its interpretation? In reading *My Paris*, her most obvious task is to determine how Scott's text uses Benjamin's theory/technique to "see" contemporary urban reality. The more subtle task entails querying and exploring the nature of the change which Scott's ("narrative") articulation of theory brings about: what other theory, thinking, critical/cognitive structures does *My Paris* assemble in its ability to comprehend Benjamin retrospectively? The larger, philosophical, task entails inquiry into how *My Paris* affects and enhances our heavily mediated, radically

3 Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 15. "The avant-garde work is never historically effective or fully significant in its initial moments. It cannot be because it is traumatic — a hole in the symbolic order of its time that is not prepared for it, that cannot receive it, at least not immediately, at least not without structural change... (29). *Rather than break with the fundamental practices and discourses of modernity, the signal practices and discourse of postmodernity have advanced in a nachträglich relation to them*" (32).

atrophied perception of history. With these tasks in mind, the subsequent sections of this essay will review Benjamin's montage-historiography before analyzing the novel's comprehension and enactment of its theory/method. My reading of *My Paris* is thus selective, foregrounding figures and structures produced by the Scott/Benjamin relay, including the *flâneur*/*e*, the "dialectics of watching," and the allegory of the angel of history.

"Not a Real History"

The Arcades Project and related texts — the Baudelaire essays, the 1935 and revised 1939 exposés ("Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century"), the "Theses Toward a Philosophy of History" — aim their avant-garde critique of capital specifically at the historicist-progressivist-account of the post-revolutionary era. In Convolut K, "Theory of Progress, Theory of Knowledge," Benjamin sketches out a method of "literary montage," of juxtaposing archival citations of contradictory testimony, without saying anything, just exhibiting, so that the myth of bourgeois progress is seen at once for what it really is: a mass of fragmented and colliding objects and intentions blended into fictions of cultural triumph. The montage method is variably deployed in the three essays composing "Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" (1938) and in "Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939), a revision of "The Flâneur," the second of the three essays. *The Arcades Project* could be interpreted as one massive montage, with a deep, axiomatic structure of imaging ideological antitheses across a panorama of metropolitan phenomena. But Benjamin's montage implies history-telling of a kind, even if the aim is to destroy capitalism's *grand-récit*.

The negative thesis of Benjamin's covert chronicle of history is the thinking that motivates the destructive impulse of his critical practice. It is useful to paraphrase this thesis to explain the analytical aim of his montage, though the practice of dialectical imaging resists simple explication. History, the story goes, began with the French Revolution. Rousing the collaboration of proletarian forces, insurgent bourgeoisie inaugurated a new social order based on change and idealized as "progress." Reason, industry and solidarity were to pave the way to commonwealth. With new-found faith in industrial capitalism, the immovable edifices of divine rule were displaced by rapidly erected cornerstones of the bustling metropolis. Liberty, fraternity, and justice were drawn into the blueprints of "phalansteries" by the engineers of utopian socialism. But city building and capital growth became an end in itself; proletariat revolution was waylaid and suppressed. New urban architectures and media technologies distracted, consumed and seduced the city's working inhabitants, converting "the people" into "crowds," amassing congregations under glass-domed arenas of commodity fairs. The luxury arcade became the city's centrepiece, a miniature globe wherein all the treasures

of the empire — newly manufactured merchandise from adjoining factories, exotic artifacts from the colonies — were exhibited for mass consumption. Englobed in the space of the commodity, history itself becomes an exhibit and entertainment for public consumption.

If social transformation is blocked by the captivation of radical impulses in the phantasmagoric space of capitalism, then critical theory must invent a method of representation to "explode" this space and liberate revolutionary (cognitive) energies. Benjamin's montage of nineteenth-century Paris captures "dialectics at a standstill," striking the reader with a direct perception of antithetical forces mobilized by the bourgeois production of space. Montage replaces mythic history — the fairy tale of progress — with a concrete object, the arcade, that resembles the city in miniature and embodies the Ur-form of capitalist modernity. In montage, the object appears as an image: a primary dream image of the city's dreaming collectivity. A form of dream analysis, montage re-presents the dream, not by performing a secondary revision so that it figures as an artifact in the bourgeois narrative of progress, but by deconstructing the image into unassimilable fragments that resist the synthesis of explanatory reason/wishful thinking.

Benjamin's montage of nineteenth-century Paris, of the arcades, destroys the idea of the city as a social unit. Images (citations — blueprints, plans, sketches) of Fourier's phalansterie, comprising factory, residence and arcade for housing worker colonies, collide with images of proliferating consumption, of after work crowds circulating spellbound through passages of storefront displays. Images of republican fraternity dash with those of poor citizenry prohibited from entering the arcades' open doorway. Images of technological sophistication — engineering in iron and glass — contest those of labyrinthine corridors, uncannily echoing mythic prehistory. Images of promenading high society crash against those of mass prostitution.

In Benjamin's day, the arcade had long since been replaced and reproduced on a grand scale by buildings of the Second Empire and *belle époque*. These included the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, the "dream house" where Benjamin constructed his *Arcades Project*, and the 1937 World Exposition, the industrial spectacle which captivated and dispersed the last of the revolutionary forces of the Popular Front.⁴ Today, all Paris is one, manifold arcade, featuring new "dream houses" like the *Forum des Halles boutiques* and *Centre Pompidou*, fantasy parks and science parks like *Disneyland-Paris* and *Parc de la Villette*, poshly renovated ethnic and/or working-class neighbourhoods like *le Marais*, *Belleville* and *Menilmontant*, all of which is crowned by *la Tour Eiffel*, iconic remnant of the World Exposition of 1889.

4 See Philippe Ivernel, "Paris, Capital of the Popular Front or the Posthumous Life of the 19th Century."

My Paris is a series of stops in a daily passage through the city over the course of six months. The city is the object of the narrator's strolling perceptions. More precisely, it is a collection of objects that she encounters, or spaces that she enters, as she sets about seeing. Objects of perception, they are transformed into images, which the narrator, fascinated, details in a diary. Since she trains herself to see the city in *dialectical images* modelled on Benjamin's *Paris*, *My Paris* records flaneries in Benjaminian space. A diary of passages, it chronicles encounters with the spectacle of history, historic Paris, while resisting the narrative of progress. A narrative that traces a perpetual breakdown of narrative, *My Paris* follows the official story of post-revolutionary history to where it collapses in ruined spectacles of imperialist/fascist capitalism before the flâneur's expectant gaze. The novel's guerilla tactic of dialectical imaging is deployed in the narrative act of watching and writing. But in deconstructing capitalism's grand récit, it sabotages the diarist's own narrative intention.

The Return of the Flâneur

The flâneur is the protagonist of *My Paris*. She is the author's primary narrative strategy, a fictional device upon which the narrator herself reflects. The heroines of Scott's other novels are also flâneurs.⁵ But the flâneur of *My Paris* is the only heroine to transform Benjamin's "Flâneur" into a narrative praxis.⁶ Moreover, the flâneur's classical masculinity is altered by Scott's transgenerating and transsexualizing, exploring and advancing Benjamin's analysis of the "erotology" of Baudelaire's flâneur. The flâneur/e of *My Paris* is a complex construction and adaptation of Benjaminian motifs.

Flâneur of the Interior. In the opening scenes of *My Paris*, the narrator ponders her status as a visitor to the city, suspecting that she is "maybe already less of a traveller than a flâneur" (14). Thinking herself a flâneur gives her the sense of an occupation without committing her to a job. As a foreign visitor to Paris, she grants her alien status a literary character. But this act of identification is a pose that recalls the flâneur's fictional nature. Literary historians question whether the flâneur actually existed or was an invention of the physiognomists and later, the novelists.⁷ Scholars agree, however,

that the flâneur was a figure of bourgeois disaffection, a type of social drop-out who strolls the streets of the industrial capital against the accelerating flow of commercial traffic. He performs a comedy of tactical gestures that is aimed against capitalist earnestness, strolling through the arcades at a lobster's pace. Moreover, "in the flâneur, the joy of watching is triumphant."⁸ Acting the critical observer who refuses to harness consciousness to business or pleasure to work, the flâneur is the city's most devoted reader. A reader of flâneur literature (Balzac, Baudelaire), the narrator of *My Paris* enters the streets as the latest version of that tradition.

The latest version of that tradition is, as Scott's narrator exclaims, a "flâneur (of [the] interior!)" (14). Critics argue that it was precisely the interiorization of the flâneur that brought about his downfall.⁹ If in the arcades of the Restoration, the flâneur strolls at a lobster's pace with eccentric *bonhomie* (Ferguson 26), on the boulevards of the Second Empire he dodges the traffic with grimacing heroics. The arcades constituted a haven for the flâneur, since there he could gaze with distracted ease while cultivating a pose of disinterested attention. As the ethic of industriousness advances, the flâneur loses his battle to stay aloof and afloat on the busy, commercial streets, diverting his strolls indoors like Huysmans's "aristocratic ex-dandy [Des Esseintes, who] withdraws from the city entirely ('so that the waves of Paris will no longer reach him'...) to devote himself to the systematic exploration of sensory and intellectual experience" (Ferguson 37). Or like Proust, who, unable to cope with the city's noise and pollution, retreats to his cork-lined bedroom to conjure ambling reminiscences.¹⁰ The withdrawal of the flâneur from direct city contact allegedly marks the defeat of the public artist.¹¹ Scott's

literary imagination of Paris as a metropolis.... The principal habitat of the flâneur is the novels of Honoré de Balzac, Eugène Sue, and Alexandre Dumas, and the flâneur is their surrogate in the street life of the fashionable quarters of Paris." See Rob Shields, "Fancy Footwork: Walter Benjamin's Notes on Flânerie" 62-63.

8 Benjamin, "Modernism" from "Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," in *Charles Baudelaire* 69.

9 "With time, flânerie loses its city location. The flâneur's defining mobility — he is, after all, an indefatigable walker — becomes immobility. And in an even more drastic dislocation, flânerie moves indoors.... With the shift to the interior the flâneur is on his way from a public to a private personage" (Ferguson 32).

10 "The privatization of flânerie, the withdrawal into the interior and into the self, finds perhaps its greatest expression, but also its caricature, with Proust. The famous cork-lined room insulates him from the city that nevertheless supplies so much material for his work" (Ferguson 38).

11 The flâneur is defeated in other ways: he is absorbed into the commerce of the boulevard as "sandwich-board man." See Susan Buck-Morss, "The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: the Politics of Loitering." Or he gives in to social pressure to become an industrious and successful artist: "Balzac already makes clear in *La Cousine Bette* (1846) that the laziness and idleness inherent in flânerie constitute a permanent danger for the aspiring artist" (Ferguson 35).

5 Including the heroines of *Heroine* (1987) and *Main Brides* (1993).

6 Except where otherwise indicated, my thinking on the flâneur derives from Walter Benjamin, "The Flâneur," middle section of "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* and from Konrad "K" — "The Flâneur" from *Paris, Capitale du XIXe Siècle* [Das Passagen-Werk], whose notes supply the basis for the essay.

7 The flâneur first appears in the writing of physiognomists as early as 1806. See Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, "The Flâneur On and Off the Streets of Paris," 26. "The notion of flânerie is essentially a literary gloss: it is uneasily tied to any sociological reality. It is a marriage of several elements including the practices associated with specific sites — the arcades and galleries, 'les passages' of Paris — and the

narrator is tempted to follow suit, implying the exhaustion of a tradition. "But exhausted," she writes in her diary's short hand:

So late again when slipping off cushion. Clearly not flâneur. In later 19th-century sense of industriously strolling.... Whereas I preferring to lie back in interior of peluche. (15)

Like Proust, she suffers from urban fatigue and seeks a cushioned retreat. Her desire to withdraw into her writer's studio is intensified in proportion to the intensified assault of late twentieth-century traffic on urban ecology. But there is no asylum. Despite her efforts to create sanctuary (flooding the studio with music from Maghreb on French radio, or the aroma of freshly brewed espresso, dreaming that her window onto busy Boulevard Raspail overlooks a village meadow, returning to bed or sprawling on the divan with a romance by Balzac in mind), the studio is invaded by the morning's rush-hour traffic, by her concierge's brash intrusions, by drastic "repairs" to her studio walls. Unlike Proust, she cannot occupy luxury space without fearing she is undeserving. Though providing a cover for her insecurities, her *flâneur's* masquerade is doubly pretentious: the prerogative of another era and another class. Closer at heart to the working than the leisure class, she *flâns* the interior with ambivalence.

Her motive for posing as a *flâneur* is not entirely known to herself. Having just arrived from "chez nous" (Montréal) to take up tenure as a writer, she is not yet sure of her literary project. She has trouble projecting a self-image onto Paris's intellectual and artistic milieu. As a *flâneur*, she is relieved of having to assume an ambition beyond watching the city, an (artistic) occupation in its own right. As a *flâneur of the interior*, she wanders into the city's cafés, pavilions and passages, drinking in the sensual ambience, floating over the barrage of traffic while remaining drunkenly aloof of social expectations.

Author-Flâneur-Narrator.

Who authors *My Paris*? The *flâneur*, the narrator and the author all have a hand in the writing of the diary, but there is no foundation of authority. The narrator assumes the pose of *flâneur* before taking up the role of narrator. The strange temporality of this gesture reflects the *flâneur's* evolution in nineteenth-century literature. The *flâneur* appears in urban physiognomies as a "city type" before appearing as a character in *flâneur* fiction. Classical forms of this fiction are Balzac's early novels where the *flâneur's* impeccable observations and masterful detachment figure as primary agents in

uncovering the plots of secret societies in post-revolutionary Paris.¹² Writerly self-consciousness (which is missing in Balzac), as well as her pose as *flâneur*, distances the narrator of *My Paris* from the author preventing the novel from becoming a farcical anachronism of nineteenth-century fashion.

It is well into her "diary" that Scott's narrator considers using a "narrator" to make her "chronicle" of *flâneries* "more progressive" by finding the device to mask her prejudices:

Me lying here thinking how to write. More progressive chronicle. Maybe author *déjà vu* by narrator. Instead of reverse. Permitting latter to float beyond limitations. Biases. Of former. (50)

The narrator who entertains the idea of using a narrator is already a *flâneur* who keeps (narrates) a diary. In stopping to think about how she might narrate her *flâneries*, she alerts the reader to the illusion of direct observation that preceded this point of the narrative. In looking at her "chronicle" as a *writer's* diary, she submits her *flâneries* to questions of "how to write." Previous attention was focussed on finding an idea for a novel, the launching of which her retreat in Paris is intended to facilitate. After drifting for several weeks, she reveals a plan for a "book on murdered women wanderers" (21) which she sends to prospective publishers. Her *flâneries* help pass the time while she waits for word of acceptance. When she is met with rejection, her *flâneries* suggest themselves as suitable material for a novel.

The projected book on murdered women wanderers haunts the narrative as a projection — specifically that of a frustrated drive to publicize, in novel form, the violent, untold, history of the repression of women *flâneurs* ("wanderers"). The rejected book spurs the animus that drives and orients the narrator's *flâneries* towards shocking insights. In place of a plot-driven narrative, the diary chronicles a series of shocks, whose drive to expression derives from the narrator's feminist unconscious.

The writing of *My Paris* engages the feminist unconscious and/of the Benjamin reader. Wandering through the pages of *Paris, Capitale du XIX^e Siècle*, Scott's *flâneur-artist* explores the form of Benjamin's constellation. Her explorations are random, though

12 See, e.g., *History of the Thirteen* and in particular *Ferragus*: "Only a few devotees, people who never walk along in heedless inattention, sip and savour their Paris and are so familiar with its physiognomy that they know its every wart, every spot or blotch on its face. For all others, Paris is still the same monstrous miracle, an astounding assemblage of movements, machines and ideas, the city of a thousand different romances, the world's thinking-box.... Then, there are the true lovers of Paris: they raise their eyes at this or that street corner and know they will see a clock-face; they tell a friend whose snuffbox is empty to go to a tobacco shop on the left, next door to a pastry-cook's; a man with a pretty wife. For these men, these poets, travelling through Paris is a time-consuming luxury...." (33).

she displays theoretical, as well as technical, interest in his "history-montage method" (27). As her reading intensifies, her writing and seeing acquire greater complexity, miming his dialectical image. Her miming is unconscious to the degree that she is unconscious of miming *la Parisienne*, the model of fashion and perfect embodiment of commodity capitalism whose seductive "aura" the dialectical image aims to dispel. The clash between dialectical image and Parisian imaginary adds a critical, textual dimension to the psychological clash between feminine desire and feminist resentment, threatening to destroy the narrator's fragile self-image that the pose of *flâneur* serves to mask.

Flâneur's Diary.

The *flâneur's* art is a fleeting one, an art of the moment, which is the art of the modern.¹³ The *flâneur* sketches the city of his *flâneries*.¹⁴ Scott's *flâneur* watches Paris in freeze-framed scenes that she splices together like a cinematographer. Her diary is a direct citation of her visual montage. The aim of making her chronicle "more progressive" expresses the narrator's wish to overcome the author's reactive tendencies ("limitations," "biases"), which are both personal and political in nature. Assuming the guise of narrator, the diarist gives the pose of *flâneur* an explicitly artistic character, displacing the author as artist. The effect of this displacement is to relieve the narrator of prejudices and anxieties, leaving her free to wander. The *flâneur*-narrator is delivered from the tyranny of authorial "hang-ups," which do not disappear but comically surface in her physiognomies of the city.

The diary's narrator is not one with her pose as *flâneur* and thus unlike the classical *flâneur* who is self-possessed in his social disaffection. He strolls the city as a monad, whose insularity and detachment is afforded by class privilege: a radical expression of bourgeois individualism. Conversely, Scott's *flâneur* is neither self-possessed nor other-identified. Her pose as *flâneur* does not make her Parisian, though she eyes Paris with a longing to belong. She queries the being-at-oneness with national identity that the

13 As Baudelaire explains, pointing to Constantin Guys's pen and watercolour paintings and Daumier's political caricatures. See Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*.

14 "What kind of a text does the *flâneur* produce? For certain works, like the guidebooks and short sketches, the *flâneur's* very text mirrors the shifting relationship to the city. The author's random walks in *Le Flâneur* [Anon 1806] provide the model for the book, composed in the spirit of *flânerie* 'without plan, without order, without method.' Later versions suggest that *flânerie* comprises only the preliminary stages of creative production, the period during which the *flâneur* amasses the knowledge that the writer will turn to literary account.... Like the Lévi-Straussian *bricolage*, *flânerie* produces new and unexpected connections in a serious kind of play" (Ferguson 30).

French exude, observing how the French language is centred on "On" — the "I" of interpellated Republicanism.

My Paris is a diary of a city that is *not mine* narrated by "one" who is *not me*, yet who is other — oriented as "one" who comes from elsewhere as a minority (anglo-Quebec) subject whose mother tongue is the language of the national majority. Artfully delivered of the author's hang ups with identity, the narrator is free to invent a syntax and grammar of alterity and see things, not as they "really" are, but as symptoms of language. Looking back on what she has written, she questions her own naïveté concerning the facticity of direct reporting: "thinking I telling a lot of lies in this diary" (40). As a writer, she recognizes that her *flâneries* entail an expressive form of "watching" that, while it articulates the "truth" of her linguistic and political unconscious, has nothing in common with empirical observation. For instance, she discovers flagrant errors in her chronology that, at first, she interprets as "lying" but then perceives as symptomatic of her "revolutionary" sympathies:

Also lying by writing day 40. Because sometimes no entries for ages. Or several in a sitting.

Could name them after the calendar of the French Revolution. 9 *Fructidor*, harvest. 12

Brumaire, autumn mists. 18 *Thermidor*, resistance/intransigence. (51)

On second glance, the diary reveals her unconscious mimicry of the revolutionary calendar in a metaphor of "resistance/intransigence" (*Thermidor*), whose numbering of entries is liberated from traditional chronology (and the bourgeois march of progress). A "harvest" (*Fructidor*) of observation, the Paris of *My Paris* emerges from the "mists" (*Brumaire*) of dream. The numbering of entries also seems at times to follow the system of numbering of Paris addresses: "41," "41bis"; "50," "50bis." "Bis" signals the corresponding address on the other side of the passage; figuratively, it indicates a counterpoint to the previous entry, a re-turn or re-mark, that criss-crosses capital's "one-way street."

Flâneur's Syntax.

The writerly *flâneur* of *My Paris* observes street life at linguistic street level, "watching 'verbs'" and citing what she watches in mimetic syntax:

I in a dream state. Ordering more espresso. Before getting up and strolling. Toward asymmetrical steeples. Of lovely Saint-Sulpice. Pausing. Watching "verbs." Pigeons. Nuns. Water blowing from four bishops' fountain. (36)

Syntax mimes the *flâneur*'s pace: slow, dreamy drifting, strolling and pausing, with and against the pace of the city. The *enjambment* of sentences reflects her ambiguous progress. Arriving full stop in midstream of a strolling perception, each sentence refers back to the previous one as well as forward to the next. Stops break the flow. Objects of predication are not structured around a subject but are linked across sentences by association. A metonymic tracking mimes the mobile seeing of things-becoming-images. The perceiving subject of these images is neither transcendental ego nor synthetic Idea. The *flâneur*'s "I" (eye) is subject to a free association of city-objects that are "no longer nouns but movement" (125).

Scott's jerky prose could imply *flâneur* kinesiology, adapted to the stopping and starting of city traffic.¹⁵ The *enjambment* of sentences counters this automatism with thoughtful reflection. As a *montage* of signs, "watching" prompts seeing beyond the realistic frame that meets the eye:

Watching — it occurring to me. Movement over square. Less real-time mirror. Than cinema of gestures. Pointing beyond frame. E.g. empty chair opposite. Possibly implying how "one" aching for her. Simultaneously expanding grammatically. To take in time's "progress." At margins of perception: guy on terrace. Now kissing girl. Passionately. Tiny vans. Parking on narrow sidewalks. Economy of bustle. Keeping Paris going.... (34)

Juxtaposing verbs (gestures) with the semiotics of dream, "one" perceives the hidden (libidinal) "economy" in the order of things.

"Watching...movement," Scott's *flâneur* is prompted to think of Gertrude Stein, whose English syntax imitates the French. At the same time, she glimpses "Stein miming" the "economy of bustle":

Keeping Paris going. Axed on verb. The French-language way. Which way Stein miming. Walking poodle Basket up windy Raspail. Trumpeting that by emphasizing predicates. She inventing the 20th. (35)

15 Benjamin relates Baudelaire's "staccato" prose to the *flâneur*-poet's battle with the boulevard's crowds. Citing the dedication to *Spleen de Paris*, he notes Baudelaire's "intention" to give expression to the experience of "giant cities" in mimetic syntax: "Baudelaire wrote: 'Who among us has not dreamt, in moments of ambition, of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm and without rhyme, supple and staccato enough to adapt the lyrical stirrings of the soul, the undulations of dreams, and the sudden leaps of consciousness. This obsessive ideal is above all a child of the experience of giant cities, of the intersecting of their myriad relations'" (Benjamin, "Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Charles Baudelaire* 119).

The reflexive syntax of these perceptions implies that Stein, while miming "the French language way" goes with the flow of progressive enterprise (boulevard Raspail being a main thoroughfare of commercial traffic), and that her patent predication is a trumpeted invention of high capitalism.

An avant-garde predecessor, Stein appears in *My Paris* as a ghost of modernism past. She haunts diary passages but typically *en passant*. Mocking Stein's "trumpeting" in the *flâneur*'s physiognomic fashion, Scott caricatures Stein's attitude to Paris during the rise of American capitalism. Her speculations on "how to write" (50) allude not to Stein's guide to radical composition¹⁶ but to *Paris France*,¹⁷ whose narrative is predominantly descriptive and interpretative.¹⁸ Dwelling on this caricature, she begins:

thinking of Stein's predilection for predicates. Which predicates — in multiplying — soaking up surroundings. Until mysteriously inflating subject (narrator). Into huge transparent shadow. (36)

Against Stein's "predilection for predicates," Scott's narrator displays a predilection for present participles that, miming strolling perception, disperse the subject among objects of spontaneous association. Less like the pontificating and patronizing narrator of *Paris France* than the *flâneur* of Benjamin's "Marseilles," Scott's narrator appears "stoned"¹⁹ on a metonymic drift, subverting categorical (hierarchical) divisions between (enunciating) subject and (enuniated) object with strategic porosity.²⁰

16 Gertrude Stein, *How to Write*, 1935.

17 Scott's allusion to Stein's claim of having invented the twentieth-century refers to statements such as: "Paris was the place that suited those of us that were to create the twentieth-century art and literature, naturally enough." See Gertrude Stein, *Paris France*, 12.

18 An example of Stein's excessive predication can be seen in the following passage from *Paris France*: "France might play with the ideal of the destruction of the family at the beginning and end of everything but it could never really convince any Frenchman and so France was a background for the beginning of the twentieth century, it had had its one real effort to believe that the family and the things the family holds in its hands and walks on and eats and drinks and which belong to that family, they had their try-out of trying not to believe in this in the beginning of the nineteenth-century in the first French revolution, but it really was not interesting. Wars yes and excitement yes, but really not interesting. There is no logic to it, no civilisation to it and no fashion" (106-07). A progressive compilation of conjunctive clauses reinforces the reactionary build-up of ideas.

19 "Why shouldn't flâneur be stoned?" (42).

20 Following the Surrealists, Benjamin experimented with different modes of *flânerie*, including drug-induced states of heightened receptivity. See "Hashish in Marseilles" (*Reflections*). In "Naples" (*Reflections*) he mimes perceptually the "porosity" of city landscape and social architecture as he strolls the labyrinthine streets. Scott mimes Benjamin's mimesis, adapting his porosity to her narrative technique, reflecting, in the words of her *flâneur* that "being narrator requiring being 'someone.' Yet also porous (unbounded). I.e. neither excluding. Nor caricaturally 'absorbing.' Stepping up street..."

As "one" who does not identify with republicanism of any form, Scott's narrator writes from a position that is well placed to critique Stein's entrepreneurial and imperious subject:

Whose genius. Being American. Interested in gathering what ordinary (common). In all of "us." While loving Paris as refuge. (135)

The pose of *flâneur* is a device of objectivity that allows her to narrate her wanderings and find meaning without confusing it with "me-ning" (59). Observing that American "expatriate" modernism articulates and advances American capitalism at the base, syntactical, level of social exchange, Scott's narrator intervenes with a syntax of her own. The syntax of *My Paris* contests Stein's practice of constructing a categorical (American) subject that subsumes (colonizes) the object of perception (Paris, France) in expansive predication (ideological interpretation).²¹

With syntactical economy, Scott's narrator expresses the author's (Canadian/Quebecoise) sense of helpless subjection to the shifting instabilities of political economy. American modernists occupied Paris in the 1920s and early 1930s until the stock market crash in 1935, enjoying a favourable foreign exchange that afforded their exploits in bohemian Paris and encouraged their tendency to patronize the French — who were still recovering from the Great War. Where the narrator of *Paris France* expresses the egotism of American post-war expansionism, the self-abetting narrator of *My Paris* expresses a negative exchange and radical depreciation of experimental art. Scott's narrator parodies Stein's writing (of) Paris in the *American way* and dreams of "eclipsing I of certain early 20th travelling republicans" (49).

The *Flâneur/e*

The city is the classical *flâneur*'s first and final love. Disdaining the company of women, he goes sightseeing in the arcades to indulge alone in the intoxicating display of goods and crowds. Likewise, Paris fascinates Scott's *flâneur* who recognizes "more and more I loving it" (40), finding herself increasingly "loving walking here," even where "here" is rue de Rennes (125), impossibly congested with consumer traffic. But Scott's *flâneur*

(147).

21 Consider this sentence from *Paris France*: "So it begins to be reasonable that the twentieth century whose mechanics, whose crimes, whose standardisation began in America, needed the background of Paris, the place where tradition was so firm that they [the French] could look modern without being different, and where their acceptance of reality is so great that they could let any one have the emotion of unreality."

cruises as she strolls, projecting her desire onto seemingly passers-by and fellow women travellers (invoked by their initials "S," "C," "P," "T"). Seeking a women-loving city as much as a prospective lesbian lover, she cultivates detachment *and* satisfies desire, not with gay abandon, but with *paradoxical* perversity.

Benjamin makes no mention of female *flâneurs*. Scholars refer to their historical *impossibility*, explaining that as fashion's primary target, women could not cultivate the detachment necessary to resist market seduction. The aloofness of the *flâneur* depends precisely on his distance from fashionable women even as he collaborated in their specularization. The *flâneur*'s downfall comes with a loss of distance and his giving way to consumer temptations. In Zola's *Au Bonheur des femmes*, the *flâneur* transmogrifies into a swarm of frenzied women shoppers, the collective subject of *les grands magasins*.²² The *flâneur*'s feminization can also be seen in Baudelaire, where the poet likens himself to the prostitute — that exemplary human commodity. The prostitute strolls the streets, ostensibly to sell her wares, but in fact to look for a buyer. Though the word "*flâneuse*" exists, it does not refer to the *flâneur*'s feminine counterpart. It signifies a type of *chaise longue*, introduced to commerce and discourse in the late nineteenth-century.²³ Scott's *flâneur* is situated in close proximity to the *flâneuse* ("divan") where she spends much of her time dreaming and reading in her luxury studio. Her *flâneries* of the interior recall those of Proust, feminized *flâneur par excellence*. Scott's *flâneur/e* is the latest stage in this genealogy of transexuality.

Settled on her *flâneuse*, Scott's protagonist, at first, compares herself with a heroine in Balzac (11). Her self-likening to "the girl with the golden eyes" is anachronistically romantic, implying that she identifies with the phantasy object of avaricious passion that possesses Paris during the Restoration. On reading Benjamin, she shifts her identification with early nineteenth century Paris to the Paris of surrealism, whose

22 "*Au Bonheur des dames* recounts an epic battle of modern merchandising, which culminates in the decisive victory of the colossal department store and the death of small-scale retail establishments in the neighbourhood. In contrast to the arcades, where the *flâneur* could enjoy the show without involvement on his part, consumption is the only motivation for anyone's presence in the department store. Where the *flâneur* could once discreetly negotiate the ins and outs of the city, the department store presents an extravagant display that seals *flânerie* with an almost hermetically sealed universe, a hothouse from which no one escapes unaltered. There is no standing apart from the exhibition for the customers whom Zola presents an increasingly frenzied, increasingly liable to seduction by the ever changing displays of merchandise. From the 'fever of spending' of the bourgeoisie to shoplifting by the aristocracy, Zola hammers away at the renunciation of responsibility of these women who live to satisfy the desire that are roused by the capitalist seducer.... The *flâneur* gives himself [who is now a 'herself'] over entirely to the phantasmagoria of the market' from which there is now no escape" (Ferguson 36-37).

23 "The *flâneuse* is noted in Emile Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, vol. 3, Paris, Pauvert, 1963, p. 1631" (Ferguson 40n6).

heroine is a *flâneur* of sorts. Modernism's most celebrated figure of female *flânerie* is Breton's Nadja. But Nadja is a poor shadow of the classical *flâneur*. More of a vagabond than a bohemian, she lacks Breton's instinct for self-preservation, suffers from paranoid delusions, makes a ragged living off the streets and concludes her wanderings in an asylum. By contrast, Scott's *flâneur/e* wanders Paris of the late twentieth century with a rare degree of detachment.

The *flâneur/e* acquires her detachment daily and strategically. Passing as a *Parisienne* so as to be unnoticeable is one strategy, which she deploys precariously, balancing her appearing sufficiently feminine against not succumbing to the seductions of the mannequin. She must not delight *too much* in seeing herself become beautiful in the mirror of shop windows, resisting the gaze of commodity capital occasionally reflected in men's appreciative glances. The limit of her mimesis derives less from conscious resistance than from an unruly incompetence in dressing and a frustrated desire that keeps her looking elsewhere.

Another strategy of detachment is the getting drunk on pleasure. Scott's *flâneur* floats around Paris in a dream-state induced by various sensual intoxicants. She deploys a battery of mild hallucinogens — mostly exquisite foods (espresso, lamb, cheese, wine) — losing herself in spaces flooded with savories and aromas, tones and images. Drifting across the city, she maintains her *ivresse* by absorbing the ambience of its gardens, squares, cafés, golden domes in the sunset, the Seine fairy-lit at night by passing *bateaux mouches*. She ritually begins her day by filling her studio with the smell of freshly brewed coffee and music from French radio, slipping back into bed or onto the divan with Benjamin's *Paris*, which sets her wandering before departing for the streets.

This strategy of dreaming was unknown to the classical *flâneur*, who found the distractions of the arcade enough to keep him afloat. Baudelaire's city dream is shattered by confrontations with city crowds. His oscillating figures of "spleen" and "idéal" reflect the city-dweller's ambivalence toward Paris of the Second Empire, which saw the rise of Haussmann's city and razing of the old town. If the boulevard proved difficult to *flâner*, it was even more challenging to barricade. After the Commune's defeat, *flânerie* returns with a vengeance in the form of *somnambulance*, a primary device of revolutionary surrealism.

Breton deploys this device on his drift with Nadja. She is the *flâneur's* inducement to dream. Under the spell of esoteric love, Breton experiences Paris in an altered state of consciousness. It is not sexual communion he pursues but a perverse *rencontre* with the city. As Benjamin observed, the woman herself does not matter. Nadja is the deranged medium through which he comes in contact with the city's restless unconscious. She arouses Breton's awareness of forgotten battle fronts that the revolutionary dead still faintly haunt. From Place Maubert to porte Saint-Denis to her

room in the vicinity of *l'Hôtel de Ville*, he encounters the repressed past with an uncanny sense of personal and political emergency.²⁴

Like Breton, Scott's *flâneur/e* strolls the streets expecting encounters with "the marvellous" (13, 15, 39, 54, 83).²⁵ Drifting "somnambulently" (25) in an "ambience onéiric" (82), she loses herself to the city, opening her senses to its myriad intersections — interior and exterior, subterranean and street level, monumental and quotidian — whose boundaries she traverses with fluid fascination. But repeatedly she confronts the Paris she is not expecting:

having imagined things less glossy. More comfily dilapidated. As in *Hôtel Splinx* where *Nadja* used to live. Or old shops. Teeming with "marvellous" detritus. (13)

Having destroyed the old market (*les Halles*) and banished the flea-market to the suburbs, today's Paris deflects surrealist intentions with the polish of urban renewal.

Moreover, as a woman, the *flâneur/e* is more haunted by the city than the city is haunted by her. Breton's *flâneur* exploits a woman's love to see beyond the banality of the present to the mystery of the everyday.²⁶ For Scott's *flâneur/e*, the everyday reality of women is the mystery of the repressed which awaits millennial enlightenment. For her, Nadja is not a muse but a victim of history. Guided instead by her "book of murdered women wanderers," she drifts toward encounters with rebellious heroines. In the Rodin Museum she senses the ghost of Camille Claudel; in the Hugo Museum, the ghost of Adele Hugo. Their remembrance is resurrected from the slightest remnants, "marvellous" detritus of women's historical ruin.

The *flâneur/e* follows surrealism's drift with a lesbian/feminist orientation. At *l'Hôtel des Grands Hommes* where Breton resided during his *rencontre* with Nadja, she

24 See Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism," in *Reflections*. Also Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution*. Cohen discusses Breton's *rencontre* in detail (see "The Ghosts of Paris"), claiming that Benjamin adapts *Nadja's* surrealist historiography to the montage of *The Arcades Project* (see "Benjamin Reading the *Rencontre*").

25 As Cohen explains, "the marvellous" functions in a form of social praxis that Breton describes as *désenchantement*: "Breton stresses the need for individual, tactical disruptions of reigning social orders in what he calls 'unchaining' ... a perpetual unchaining... the relatively long but marvelous series of steps which man is allowed to make unchained'.... In the first *Manifesto* Breton comments on the marvelous that it 'partakes in some obscure way of a sort general revelation only the fragments of which come down to us: they are the romantic ruins, the modern mannequin....'" (107).

26 "Any serious exploration of the occult, surrealistic, phantasmagoric gifts and phenomena presupposes a dialectical intertext to which a romantic turn of mind is impervious. For historic or fanatical stress on the mysterious side of the mysterious takes us no further; we penetrate the mystery only to the degree that we recognize it in the everyday world, but virtue of a dialectical optic that perceives the everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as everyday" (Benjamin, "Surrealism," 189-90).

encounters women demonstrating against Olympe de Gouges's exclusion from the *Panthéon*. The statues of female royals which line the Luxembourg Gardens incites her to think about those everyday heroines whose achievements remain forever unrecognized. In the old working-class neighbourhood near *Hôtel du Nord* (historically important for its "film noir fame"), she finally encounters the one memorial to women's popular struggle: the statue of a "grisette working woman"²⁷ (103), looming vaguely through city mist.

Paradoxically, the dream that allows the *flâneur/e* to stay aloof of city congestion and pollution is the medium through which she perceives the real. Dream reveals what capitalist power-brokers conceal behind the glossiness of urbanization. Part of the mystery of the everyday is the efficiency with which the *other* city is made invisible. This is the city inhabited by the *other of bourgeois history* — the proletariat and the poor — as well as the other of colonization, euphemistically referred to as "people from 'the South'" (12). Hoping for encounters with "the marvellous" she runs into the "detritus of human suffering: *clochards* in the metro (36), a young starving beggar (37), prostitutes turning quick tricks in alleys near porte Saint-Denis (39), a person with AIDS taking shit in park bushes (94), a raging, homeless drunk on train (144), a suicide on tracks (144). Encounters with *un-marvellous* detritus affect the *flâneur/e*'s romantic predisposition, awakening her to the reality of capitalism's dream city. Seen from the shattered vistas of *surrealism*'s dream, the city's *human* ruins strike her reader with unrelieved horror.

Like Baudelaire, whose lyric is peopled by ragpickers and prostitutes, Scott's *flâneur* crowds her narrative with figures of down-and-out humanity. Identifying *with the abject*, she protests the *abjection* of the city's many displaced peoples: the poor, the homeless, the sick, the exiled, the refugees, the prostitutes, the bag lady, the immigrant, the queers. As a foreigner, she is disposed to identify with the city's "aliens." As a foreigner whose visa papers are not quite in order, she shares the terror of the illegal immigrant. As a foreigner who is also an outsider "*chez nous*," an anglo living in Québec, which is still struggling for sovereign recognition, she sympathizes with the other as a politically redeeming gesture. As a woman and a lesbian, she is the city's *sexual* other, hailing any passer-by she thinks is one of her own — "Waving gaily.... Gail-y" (119) — with a gesture of subversive interpellation.

Terror accompanies the slightest perception of women's vulnerability. It is expressed in figures no less harrowing than the evil that animates *Les Fleurs du mal*. One

diary entry, for example, assembles a montage of associated images consisting of "a group of adolescent males" set next to "two leather-clad junkies disappearing down cement stairs of *pissoir*" against a "girl with blue bow sitting on chair...already a perfect lady" followed by the "junkies closing in on round lady washroom attendant" (23). Though she composes her montage "in ambience of impressionist painting," the *flâneur/e* senses that it is "juxtaposed on something darker" (23). That "something darker" is associated in the next entry with the

Whole underground that was other city. Of 19th-century unconscious. Ghosts seeing it as grid. Vertically from six- or seven-storey rooftops. Down through caves à vin. Métro tunnels. Catacombs. Dark large lake. Under fabulous masked Second Empire Opéra. Where Leroux's opera phantom hid. (25)

The *flâneur/e* traverses the other city of then and now. The underground is the figurative site of the city's *collective* unconscious. The nineteenth century *bourgeois* unconscious is troubled by the return of the repressed revolutionary dead who are buried along with the knowledge of their betrayal by the architects and patrons of the bourgeois capital. The terror of proletarian uprising is displaced onto an uncanny obsession with the "underground" — catacombs, sewers, ghosts: *phantasmagoria* of the Paris of the Second Empire.²⁸ The twentieth century *feminist* unconscious associates the terror of the "underground" not with the revolutionary dead but with the physical violence of men — "junkies closing in on the round lady washroom attendant" in a subterranean *pissoir*. An ever present terror, it affects her perception of history even as history presents her its uncanny horrors. The juxtaposing of images on "something darker" continues throughout the narrative, climaxing in a pitch of emotional contradiction. Seduced by Paris, the fantasy of Paris, the *flâneur* dreams of staying. She senses the surfacing of fear with anaesthetizing horror at the moment of feeling most drunkenly in love:

Yes Paris a drug. A woman. And I waking this a.m. Thinking there must be some way. Of staying. Now my love's silhouette of rooftops eclipsing. Into night. Cold heinous breath. Blowing on privates. Through grille underneath. (125)

27 In the eighteenth century a *grisette* referred to a working-class woman who wore cheap grey dresses; by the early nineteenth century it had come to mean a working-class woman who struggled to make ends meet by lifting her skirts at the end of a work day. Benjamin alludes to her throughout the Arcades Project as a working-class hero.

28 See Walter Benjamin, "C-Le Paris antiquisant, catacombes, démolitions, déclin de Paris," in *Paris, Capitale du XIX^e Siècle*.

Flâneur-Allegorist.

Like Benjamin's Baudelaire, Scott's *flâneur* is an allegorist of sorts. Though allegory does not dominate *My Paris* as it dominates *Spleen de Paris*, Scott's narrative drift is barricaded by allegorical devices. The fragmentation of narrative syntax, the juxtaposition of fragmentary images, the fragmentation of dream into bits of the real, the montage of freeze-framed gestures, the collection of city images into monadic assemblages — all of these techniques of watching are those that destroy the illusion of wholeness that capitalism, in cahoots with fascism, superimposes on the ruins of progress.²⁹

Allegory is the most powerful form of artistic resistance to bourgeois phantasmagoria, hence its unfashionability in the era of high capitalism. As an allegorist, Baudelaire stands alone among poets of the mid-nineteenth century when the symbolism of Romanticism is in vogue. The first poet to make the city his lyrical subject, he sabotages Parnassian pastorate and Swedenborgian transcendentalism with urban allegory. Reminiscent of seventeenth-century baroque allegory, Baudelairean allegory disputes faith in Salvation by reducing Christian icons to worldly emblems of a profane humanity. Without scholarly learning or activist commitment, Baudelaire proceeds instinctively out of wounded love for the old city, applying his trade with makeshift skill. Re-presenting the allegory of commodity, which rips things out of context and assigns them arbitrary value, Baudelaire endeavored "to make the aura which is peculiar to the commodity appear."³⁰

Benjamin attributes Baudelaire's political ambivalence to his position in society, which is placeless and shifting along with bohemia. The poet tramps the boulevard, dodging creditors and fencing with the crowds, forcing himself against the mainstream in a state of traumatic paranoia, hampered by uncertain class affiliation and wavering loyalties to anarchism and republicanism.³¹ He *exposes* himself to the city, nurturing a spleen that strengthens his resistance to what he cannot name or mourn. In place of

29 For an illuminating discussion of Benjamin's reading of fascism's use of capitalism's culture industry see Lutz P. Koepnick, "Fascist Aesthetics Revisited." Koepnick argues that Benjamin's unfinished *Arcades Project* is where we find an "intriguing framework in order to theorize the nexus of domination and commodity consumption, power and leisure, homogenization and fragmentation" (54).

30 "The devaluation of the world of objects in allegory is outdone within the world of objects itself by the commodity.... The refashioning of allegory in the commodity economy must be presented. It was Baudelaire's endeavour.... Baudelaire's allegory bears, in contradistinction to the Baroque, traces of a wrath which was at such a pitch as to break into this world and to leave its harmonious structure in ruins" (Walter Benjamin, "Central Park," 34, 42).

31 Reflecting the age of Louis Napoléon, himself an unlikely amalgam of political (bohemian, utopian socialist, republican, monarchist, imperialist) leanings.

a city of heaven, he sees a fallen, man-made city, populated by relics and corpses, profane beings of commodity reality, things of no intrinsic value, empty of meaning, spectres of use and Eros.

As much a mimic of Benjamin's Baudelaire as Benjamin's Breton, the *flâneur* orients her strolling perception with allegorical intention. The Paris she is "expecting" eludes her with the polish of urban renewal. Her narrative traces a "trajectory" (83) that rises hopefully with "thinking marvellous *surely* to be had" (83) and falls disappointingly with the sight of urban detritus. The ruinous part is allegory. What is allegorized as dream-shattering is the civilized barbarism of bourgeois dream-making.

For example: Listening to Maghrebi music wafting over the airwaves of French radio, she dreams a Paris dream of Morocco. For a moment, the invasive roar of traffic is deflected and she escapes to an Arab Cockaigne: "The new France. Conjuring up mint on the margins. Rosewater. Orange. Sweet nutcakes of the medinas..." (11). But at the sight — a recurrent sight — of police harassing "people from 'the South'" (11) for their immigration papers, the dream disintegrates. The ruined dream allegorizes the legacy of colonialism, exposing French apartheid behind the harmonious veil of commodity.³²

In another instance, she encounters a vision of panoramic Paris, conjured by the sunset "Through partly cloudy sky. On glass-and-iron roof. Of magnificent Grand Palais. Built for 1900 World Exhibition. At curve of river" (33). Turning up Rennes, one of the most commercialized streets of Paris,³³ she confronts the sight of a "half-naked torso. Of young man sitting. Bent forward. Near Prix Unique. Displaying back scored with large deep scars. Likely burns" (33). City dream turns into tragic speculation, allegorizing the human cost of capitalist ambition and exposing the "backside" of entrepreneurial exhibitionism.

Punctuated by allegorical refrains, Scott's narrative underlines Benjamin's idea of catastrophe: "That things 'just keep going' as before is the catastrophe."³⁴ Ellipses between diary entries are enjambed with the refrain "raining [or snowing] in Bosnia,"³⁵ updating the state of (the) war with the regularity of a weather report. "Spleen is the

32 Adnan directs her Baudelairean spleen precisely at this allegory of commodity colonialism.

33 Or as Richard Cobb puts it, "the most desolate, inhuman street in Paris." See Cobb, "The Assassination of Paris."

34 "Que les choses continuent comme avant: voilà la catastrophe" (Benjamin, "N.-Réflexions théoriques sur la connaissance, théorie du progrès," [N9a, 1], *Paris, Capitale du XIXe Siècle*, 491. Also cited in "Central Park," 50).

35 See endings of entries #12, #19, #24, #27, #31, #38, #45, #57, #62, #78, #88, #113, #115, and #119.

feeling corresponding to catastrophe in permanence.³⁶ Tragic newspaper stories are splenetically reiterated, protesting the market's injunction to writers that "to charm requiring anecdotes" (23). On her daily drift through *Le Monde*, the *flâneur* encounters *uncharming* anecdotes mostly involving immigrants: "young Algerian professor is expelled" (30), "European indifference toward current horror in Bosnia. [Traced] Back to centuries-old hatred Christian hate of Muslims" (34), an African drowns in the Seine after attempting to escape police inquiry (49), "Kenyan athlete. Lacking visa like me. Jumping into Seine. To save elderly Frenchman. In act of suiciding. One month later Kenyan receiving two letters from préfecture. One citing bravery. The other inviting him. To leave country" (75), a Muslim youth is stabbed to death by his peers, whose violence is attributed to the uninhabitable conditions of the housing project in which they are forced to live (93), "Famous Zairois rumba singer. Refused political asylum. Though wife dead mysteriously. Daughter 14 raped. Back in Zaire" (105).

Her most dramatic allegory of catastrophe is literally the writing on the wall. Drifting into the heart of *le Marais*, the historic Jewish neighbourhood, now occupied by specialty shops targeted for tourism,³⁷ she encounters a memorial to the holocaust:

Walking. Walking. Repassing façade with two ring-nosed heads on it. Carved message under: DE CETTE ÉCOLE, 165 ENFANTS FURENT DÉPORTÉS EN ALLEMAGNE PENDANT LA DEUXIÈME GUERRE MONDIALE, ET EXTERMINÉS DANS LES CAMPS NAZIS. (67). Poem painted across neighbouring delicatessen window. *You can sow my ashes/ On the four corners of imbecility/ No one will silence me. We devouring plates of liver paste. Marinated vegetables. Delicious bread. Cold white wine.... I starting raving....* (67)

The poem reiterates the memorial with an imperative not to be silenced. Enveloped in the phantasmagoria of the renovated neighbourhood, she responds to that imperative in an outburst of hysteria. Her hysteria signals a conflict of interest between enjoying present pleasure and addressing ongoing disaster — and further, a conflict of identity with victims of fascism and the "women 'separatists'" (67) with whom she wines and dines.

36 Benjamin, "Central Park," 34.

37 "A few kosher butchers and one kosher restaurant in the rue des Rosiers are the sole reminders of what had been until quite recently the oldest Jewish settlement in the city.... From being an area of small manufacturers and independent artisans, the quarter has been transformed into a balanced mixture of museum and luxury middle-class residence. It is nearly all there to be seen and appreciated. But it is well to remember that the transformation was made at enormous human cost. The Marais, as an area of social mixture and of varied occupations, is now dead" (Cobb).

The diary's most elaborate allegorical refrain is *ready-made*. It is presented to the *flâneur* as a found-object [*trouville*] in the display window of a men's wear shop on boulevard Raspail. Arranged in theatrical poses that are frequently rearranged, the shop's mannequins hail the passer-by in stirring *tableaux vivants*. Dressed in black and choreographed to imply the scene of a crime, their gestures reflect her fears of male conspiracy:

Something strange going on there! [Mannequins in unbelievably well-made suits. Handstitched lapels. Switching constantly. From window to window. Now one mannequin arm in knife-sharp cuff. Gesturing magnanimously to other. In neighbouring display window. As if some kind of code. Or narrative. Generated by understanding. Men having between them. (34)]

This theatre of mannequins displays the allegory of commodity. Commodities are things whose meaning fluctuates with the value placed on them by the consumer market. To Benjamin, they are signs full of phantasmagoric wonder, promising everything but symbolizing nothing, except the fallenness of a world that has lost sight of history and devalues both nature and culture. Allegorical vision is needed to see the allegory that is veiled in phantasmagoria — the erotic aura of consumer phantasy. The charisma of these mannequins dresses in masculine sadism, appealing to the heterosexual status quo. A later arrangement replaces the "magnanimous" coding of *Brüder-bonding* with ominous hints of *Lustmord*:

Looking closer at display window across street. Seeing standing suit no longer wearing conspicuously striped square garb. Of elegant escroc, thief. But ordinary brown suit. Slightly fitted. Respectable. Except 2 red paper hands. Emerging from each sleeve. As if bloody from strangling. (79)

The mannequins sell men's wear by spectacularizing male violence while a war is going on next door. The *flâneur* notes other contradictions. Images of homelessness are exploited,³⁸ as are images of labour³⁹ in this collage of advertisement. Even poverty is selling. The last entry in her diary details an apocalyptic scene:

38 "Across the street mannequins not in ruses. As appearing from distance. But in black wide-lapelled suits. White shirts. Still sitting civilized. In anticipation of coming fêtes. One leg crossed. Foot on pile of dirty discarded magazines. Put out. For garbage. Homeless theme once more" (136).

39 "Getting up. Dressing. Simultaneously discerning through slanting rain. Pale finely woven suit. In chic boutique opposite. Now replaced by dark brown corduroy shirt. Indicating fake empathy with labour" (90).

In right display window — male hand rising. From pile of bunched up-coloured papers. Perfect sleeve or perfect coat. Holding tiny clock. While headless standing man in window to left. In dark pants. Shirred purple velvet vest. Pointing towards diminutive timepiece. In hand. Of window on right. (152)

In the *flâneur*'s re-presentation of the mannequins' charade we read a futurist allegory of triumphant right-wing conspiracy: the beheaded (guillotined) corpse is all that remains of the left's body politic.

The triumph of fashion over the needs of humanity can be read allegorically in the advent of the mannequin. The mannequin displaces the individual human body as a standardized physique. The moment that the body, initially the female body, is made to fit the mannequin's dress, marks the ascendance of the inorganic over the organic.⁴⁰ We are shown this in the *tableaux* of the men's wear shop, where mannequins are figured as agents of murder. That the mannequins are dressed as men indicates that the male body is now a viable target of consumer display. In this war unto death, the *flâneur* unconsciously sides with the organic. At one point, a live rabbit is thrown into the installation as a prop. The terrified animal defecates over the display space, leaving little turds that the *flâneur* compares to her own — "his shit small and tight. Like mine" — noting that shit in Paris is "black from the soot," the city's toxic wastes (67).

The Dialectics of "Watching"

Using Benjamin's *Paris* as prosthesis, the *flâneur* of *My Paris* trains herself to see. Her training is less disciplined than impulsive:

B adding:
Que les choses continuent comme avant: voilà la catastrophe.
 I taping it to TV screen. (68-69)

By removing the tape to watch the screen beneath, she risks subverting her own tactic. At once concentrated and distracted, her presence of mind before the television reflects the threshold receptivity that Benjamin thought most conducive to mass culture.⁴¹ For her, concentration is a play of distraction that she naively enacts with

comic self-consciousness. As if to demonstrate Benjamin's thinking, she notes precisely the passage concerning receptivity *while still half-awake*:

On radio soft elegant woman's voice saying *France-Musique*. Then piano. Violin. Slipping back to dream. B saying threshold between dreaming and waking: ideal site for projecting past (dream). Into present (real). And reverse. Producing. Through shock of encounter. Spark of illumination. Which dialectic movement. Actually deep kernel. Of montage history. (59)

The spleen of *My Paris* is heightened by paradox. Paradox is the product of dialectical seeing. It is not the *flâneur* who sees dialectically but the reader who finds her at the crossroads of shocking contradictions. For instance, in one entry the *flâneur* is:

Sitting in café at Sévres-Babylone. I.e. at corner of Exquisite China and Pursuit of Sensuous Pleasure. Homeless guy selling *Macadam, Pavement*. By métro. Thinking time to start wandering. (25)

At the corner of two streets (whose names underline the allegory of commodity), she sees a homeless man selling *Macadam* by the *métro*. What she does not see is what the juxtaposition of images implies. Sentence enjambment signals the reader to regard these images in relation to each other instead of fitting them into a sequence of accumulating meaning. The images relate antithetically. The nature of their contradiction is historical and political, which we might paraphrase thus: The homeless guy is an emblem of homelessness whose legacy begins with the modernization of Paris. The modernization of Paris is signalled precisely by the thing he hawks to live — *Macadam* — the material used to pave the city's first boulevards.⁴² Driven through the slums, the boulevards displaced the poor onto the street. Absorbed by the boutiques that lined these boulevards, the bourgeoisie abandoned revolution. Whereas the poor are forced to attend to basic survival. To survive, they sell what they can, stationing themselves at the city's most trafficked corners. But they are defeated by the *métro*, a modern mode of transport that does not run on paving stones.

Ironically, the *flâneur* never sees the paradoxicality of her own observations. But in her distraction, she notes the intersection of antitheses that constitutes Benjamin's montage. Prompted into wandering by a thinking that remains semi-conscious, she leaves it to her reader to interpret the dialectics of seeing. Every entry in her diary uses

40 See Benjamin, "B" — *Mode*, in *Paris, Capitale du XIXe Siècle*.

41 Walter Benjamin, "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, 239-41. "Reception in a state of distraction, which is increasingly noticeable in all fields of art and is symptomatic of profound changes in perception, finds in the film its true means of exercise. The film with its shock effect meets this mode of reception halfway. The film makes the cult value recede into the background not only by putting the public into the position of critic, but also by the fact that

at the movies this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one" (240-41).

42 See Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, 158-59.

Benjamin's montage. Some entries thematize the use of montage overtly⁴³ but more often montage is translated into gestures of seeing as an aspect of *flânerie*. Benjamin abandoned *flâneur* when he went into exile. The method he develops in *The Arcades Project* is not watching but reading or a method of sighting citation. The Paris he observes is cited in a montage of images which he draws from city archives. Scott's method of watching/writing the city is no less mediated. Her *flâneur* sees the city through the optic of Benjamin's dialectics, as well as the multimedia of television, film, radio, and newspapers, which makes direct experience impossible. But what she cites in her *flâneur's* diary, she absorbs on site — not in the archives but in the streets of Paris today.

The remainder of this section will focus on those entries that, to my mind, best demonstrate the critical acuity with which *My Paris* puts Benjamin's *Paris* into practice. The key to reading Scott is the key to reading Benjamin, which requires attention to the art of juxtaposing images. The *juxtaposition of images* displaces the *chronology of events*, which is foundational to historicism. Construction of the dialectical image entails collecting and assembling archival debris *blasted* from official history.⁴⁴ How images are juxtaposed is suggested by the (imminent) object of history to the suggestible city subject whose crises of experience make her more sensitive to contradiction than reassured by continuity. Historical perceptiveness involves a fascination with the past that subverts a habituation to the present. Contradiction is the spark of illumination that reveals the site of historical repression, awakening a political *presence of mind*.

The *flâneur* first encounters the historic city at a "medieval music concert" in the "old thermal baths at *hôtel de Cluny*" (18). A "monument of medieval civil architecture," (*Guide Bleu: Paris* 537) the *hôtel des abbés de Cluny* envelops her senses in phantasmagoria, embellished by the "singing[of] high songs from early in millenium" (18). The melancholy of the ages makes itself felt, "surfacing" from the baths' "vaulted" depths and "echoing" in song "bouncing off thick sand-brick walls" (19). The music stays with her until next day, when she enters the event in her diary. Through the aura of antiquity, she sees the muses of modernity. Her memory of strolling down rue de Grenelle *en route* to the concert now foregrounds the boutiques against the medieval chorus in a queer constellation "of mannequins singing praises to the highest peons of the mode. Kenzo. Yves St. Laurent. And I forget who." (18). The façade of fashion momentarily loses its power of seduction that keeps consciousness spell-bound in the present. In the clash of epochal images, fashion appears as cosmic placebo to the Eternal Return: "ironic antidote to perpetual melancholy" (19).

43 See entries #8, #18, #44, and #70.

44 Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, 263.

"Musée Carnavalet."

My Paris presents three city sites where history is the spectacle. They are: the *Musée Carnavalet*, the "*Âme au corps*" exhibition of nineteenth century art and science held in the *Grand Palais*, and the wax museum, *Musée Grévin*, permanently housed in *Passage Jouffroy*. The history represented in these spaces is a late modern production of space: a material projection of current bourgeois phantasy onto architectures of the interior. In these spaces, historical consciousness is made *on site*, captivated and manipulated. In Benjamin's day, only the *Passages* and panoramas produced history this way. *My Paris* turns a Benjaminian eye on the phantasmagoria of contemporary renovation.

The *Musée Carnavalet* occupies former aristocratic residences, *l'hôtel Carnavalet* (the favorite residence of Madame de Sévigné) and *l'hôtel Le Pelletier de Saint-Fargeau* (once home to Louis Michel Le Pelletier de Saint-Fargeau).⁴⁵ Appropriated and redesigned by the city, these *hôtels* now contain the entire history of Paris. *L'hôtel Carnavalet* guides visitors through passages from the city's prehistoric origins to the end of the seventeenth century. *L'hôtel Le Pelletier de Saint-Fargeau* covers the Revolution to the present day. "*Le plus parisien des musées de Paris*," the *Musée Carnavalet* is a star attraction. *Guide Bleu* points to the museum's "*ensembles décoratifs*" ("*lambbris, plafonds peints, mobiliers, provenant de divers édifices*"), which capture the evolution of Parisian life "*dépuis la Renaissance*" with an aura of authenticity: "*un musée d'ambiance*" (*Guide Bleu: Paris*, 753).

The *flâneur* narrates her stroll through the museum in an entry that also functions as a letter. Addressed to "Z," a young friend from *chez nous*, it begins with an image of Madame Sévigné sitting in what was once the courtyard of *l'hôtel Carnavalet*, writing letters to her daughter and "mocking fellow nobles" (52) with feminist complicity. Her address to Z (alluding perhaps to the next generation — *generation Z* — of self-determining women), re-frames the ideological frame of the museum. Her stroll follows museum chronology ("*La Révolution et le premier Empire, salles 101 à 113*," "*Paris dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle, salles 115 à 126*," "*Paris du second Empire à nos jours, salles 127-145*") but subverts its use of space. Rushing through *grandes salles* devoted to cultural treasures, she lingers in passages containing revolutionary artifacts. The time she gives to Revolution displaces the space that official history gives to the Empire, Restoration, and bourgeois consolidation.

The *flâneur's* image of the museum displays the display wherein history is doubly contained — first by the palatial apartments, second by bourgeois closets and containers with which the original residences are redecorated — reflecting the end of revolutionary history "when populace taking comfort in cosy interiors" (52).

45 A member of the Convention who was assassinated in 1793 after voting for the King's death.

Revolutionary memorabilia are encased with decorative care. Behind "glass doors of Second Empire cabinets" there are:

Shelves flagging objects projecting images of bloody exuberance. Sèvres saucer with man waving Marie-Antoinette's head. Man on plate gleefully collecting blood in basin. Gushing out from guillotined neck. (52)

Only those artifacts that can be fitted into the furniture of the interior are selected to represent the Revolution. Covered with the "etui" of bourgeois cosiness, their revolutionary value diminishes, while their exhibition value appreciates.⁴⁶ Revolution's domestication can be seen in the conversion of bloody actuality into cartooned crockery made palatable for bourgeois cuisine. "Citizen Le Sueur's watercoloured cut-outs of citizens and citoyennes" lampoon revolutionary visages in reassuring physiognomies of *bonhomie*:

patriotic women's club snug in bonnets. Marat on shoulders of supporters. Revolutionary army: sans culottes: apprentice butchers. Hunters. Citizens with placards: Vivre Libre Ou Mourir. (52)

Overlooking the gangs of armed terrorists that arose among Jacobin women's clubs, the museum is seen collaborating with pre- and post-revolutionary patriarchal repression.

"Succeeding rooms" display "succeeding revolutionary waves" (52). Located in a "long narrow alcove" and "exposed offhandedly" are the artifacts of the Commune: "a few objects including plate for printing L'Internationale. Plus painting of a pair of nice fat Paris rats. Communards eating during siege" (52). Dismayed by such abjection, she notes "a group of socialist ladies from Provence. Clucking embarrassed. Sympathetic" (52-53).

Moving through these passages, the *flâneur* encounters "more gold leafed drawing rooms. Wherein decades of struggle ending — under Bonaparte" (53). The museum continues into the twentieth century with rooms full of masterpieces of Parisian art. But *history ends* with the Second Empire after the defeat of the Commune. The Commune is the last mobilization of revolution. It marks the proletariat's lost hope for a "bourgeois-worker brotherhood" (52). Bypassing the Commune, the museum stresses imperial continuity ("under Bonaparte"), which goes hand in hand with bourgeois history "also ending on Proust's bedroom. On Haussmann's boulevard" (53). "Proust's bedroom" is a synecdoche of the next phase of bourgeois expansion,

46 Benjamin, "T — L'intérieur, la trace," in *Paris, Capitale du XIXe Siècle*.

the *belle époque*, which, in reaction to the failure of the Commune, reproduces the Second Empire on a grander scale. That "Proust's bedroom" is juxtaposed on "Haussmann's boulevard" implies the withdrawal of the *flâneur*-writer from the city's commercial highways.

How does the dialectical image work? In place of a *tour* through the *Musée*, we are presented with a montage of images. Images appear in pairs: 1) "Second Empire cabinets" / "flagging objects...of bloody exuberance"; 2) "Citizen Le Sueur's watercoloured cut-outs of citizens and citoyennes" / "social realism"; 3) "defeat or Thermidor" / "cosy interiors"; 4) "better barricades" / "bourgeois-worker phantasmagoria"; 5) "Bonaparte" / "gold-leafed drawing rooms"; 6) "Proust's bedroom" / "Haussmann's boulevard." The *juxtaposing* of images deconstructs the idea of historical continuity and foregrounds the illusion-making devices of political reaction. It also exposes the illusion of progress ("better barricades"), focusing on the defeat of the Revolution by "bourgeois phantasmagoria." The *pairing* of images forges a conjunction of disparate objects that illuminates the dialectical logic of historical materialism: in each pairing we see the *aesthetic recuperation of revolutionary history re-enacted* in the museum's containment of Revolutionary artifacts ("Sèvres saucer with man waving Marie Antoinette's head") in bourgeois showcases ("Second Empire cabinets").

Scott's montage of *Musée Carnavalet* compares with Benjamin's 1935 *exposé*, "Paris, Capital of the 19th Century," which is composed of six pairings of juxtaposed images ("Fourier or the Arcades," "Daguerre or the Dioramas," "Grandville or the World Exhibition," "Louis Philippe or the Interior," "Baudelaire or the Streets of Paris," "Haussmann or the Barricades"). Benjamin focuses on the collective phantasmagoria of arcades, panoramas, world exhibitions, bourgeois interior, boulevards, and associated "stars" (the famed architects of this epoch) through which revolutionary forces are seen to arise.⁴⁷ He breaks up the traditional chronicle of progress into a montage of phases of city development, re-presented as expanding architectures of capitalist dream-space. He orders these phases to imply a passage of history that proceeds dialectically and "ends" with an image of the barricades raised against the boulevards.⁴⁸ In contrast, Scott's montage ends with Proust's bedroom on boulevard Haussmann. At this point her narrator asks whether Proust's style of writing would have been altered had the Commune won. Looking back at the luxurious comfort in

47 For an excellent discussion of Benjamin's strategic refunctioning of nineteenth century phantasmagoria in this *exposé*, see Cohen's chapter, "Le Diable à Paris: Benjamin's Phantasmagoria," in *Profane Illumination*.

48 For an illustrative analysis of the dialectical strategies of Benjamin's *exposé*, see Anne, Margaret, and Patrice Higonnet, "Façades: Walter Benjamin's Paris."

which he composed, she answers ambiguously "why not," implying that bourgeois-worker solidarity was already lost to "cosiness" before the Commune's defeat.

Not to be framed by this phantasmagoria, the *flâneur* continues to wander, "leaving museum by rue des Francs-Bourgeois," which, she notes was "named for hostel of bourgeois in early 17th c — still too poor to tax" (53). She steps into *le Marais* — the heart of tourism — where she has a memory of herself as a girl, a tourist, hitchhiking through the Alps with a bourgeois "couple," who invite her for a drink. She remembers acting out over sherry, opening her legs so that the man sees the blood stain from her "overflowing period." Perplexed by the spontaneity of this memory, she punctuates the scene with a question "why?" (the only question in the diary to be awarded punctuation), signalling both unconscious sympathy with the "period" of revolution overflowing with blood on streets that have fallen into bourgeois possession and feminist solidarity with the woman of the "couple" who is terrorized by her husband's reckless driving.

"L'Âme au corps' — Grand Palais."

Diary entry "100" retraces the *flâneur's* stroll through the "*Âme au corps, Body and Soul exhibit*" (127) of nineteenth-century art and science. The exhibit is housed in the *Grand Palais*, which is itself an item of exhibition, built for the 1900 World Fair. The theme of the exhibit is the artistic imagination of nineteenth-century technology and enlightenment, which has been captioned for the amusement of late twentieth-century spectators. As she sees it, the exhibit reinvoles precisely the phantasmagoria it gestures to dispel with curatorial hindsight. Her narrative displays the display of history and the ideological (re)production of space where learning is intended to take place. First, she reflects on the "Palais façade":

ACADEMIC. Arts and sciences marching over. In mythological tropes. Basin with sylphs. Angels. Pineapples. Horses. Prancing towards pont Alexandre-III's ornate cast-iron lamps. Pillories with golden-winged steeds. Golden alley. Rolling towards Napoléon's gold-leaved tomb. Behind Invalides. (126-27)

A monument to modernity, the building is decorated in *art nouveau*, which, paradoxically, is a recasting of antiquity. Modern arts and sciences are represented in figures of prehistory: enlightenment is manifested in mythology. From the *flâneur's* perspective, modernity points backwards to *l'ancien régime* (Monarchy) and classical history (Empire) — antiquated forms of political history that were to become the future of modern revolution.

Inside, she feels unprecedented exposure to projections of the past "like none other ever having" (127). The space she enters is "uncanny" (127), reflecting the borderline psyche of nineteenth-century mind. She imagines herself "wandering...in Dr. Freud's atelier. Where 'one' confronting past (unconscious)" (127). She foregrounds Benjamin's observation that capitalist enlightenment is a form of collective dreaming. The (unconscious) desires and fears of the ascendent bourgeoisie dominate this dreaming and are projected onto inventions and discoveries with apparent objectivity. Science collaborates with art to produce a dream technology. Her representation of these nineteenth-century productions deploys montage to reveal the exhibition's "unconscious optics."⁴⁹ Species of nineteenth-century zoology appear as "androids" in taxonomic chimeras that combine animal and human features. Instruments of early nineteenth-century medicine appear as instruments of torture. In every image of advanced technology she perceives a counter-image of barbarity, noting the racism in the "progressive" methods of human science:

Toward site where early photo technology. Joining early psychoanalysis. In murals of countless tiny mug shots. "Representing" criminal "types." Interpolated in "oriental" fold of eye. Sloping forehead. Pointy teeth. Signalling untoward animal instincts. (127)

What she reflects distractedly is that the dialectic of enlightenment is structured by the logic of the uncanny. Early photography becomes the instrument of early psychoanalysis, whereby external signs (the contorted body) are read as internal symptoms (the hysterical psyche). Early psychoanalysis lends its technology to criminology that produces racist physiognomies which equate criminality with oriental "animality."

In every scientific advancement we see the return of the repressed, an unconscious projection of the fear of the "other" onto subjects — the working class, women, immigrants — that the bourgeois republic (unconsciously) desires to subdue and exploit. The *flâneur's* constellation of images captures "dialectics at a standstill," citing (sighting) the reactionary and exploratory simultaneously:

Nineteenth [century] passion for technology. Frequently leading to premature (reactionary) synthesis. But also to Redon's unfathomable watery painted figures. Sliding out of gaze. Or to Courbet's sleep investigations. Two fabulous naked women slumbering. In each other's arms. (127)

49 Benjamin argues that avant-garde camera-work is as capable of "introduc[ing] us to unconscious optics as [is] psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses." Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* 263).

For Scott, as for Benjamin, the negativity of dialectical history is not totally nihilistic (as it is for Adorno and Horkheimer). Reactionary synthesis is countered by revolutionary possibility. New artistic technology discovers new human frontiers: the gaze of the unconscious and the "sleeping" lesbian unconscious. Conversely, enlightenment thinking undergoes negative transformation. "Waking post-Commune" (127), the nineteenth-century subject sees the world through traumatized reason, whose symptomatic products are scientific scepticism ("doubting reliability of species. Which doubt fostering 'modern' psychiatric ward"), tempered by capitalist rationality. We see the former in a caricature of Freudian analysis:

Wherein master himself pacing. Narrating someone else's dream. Being someone else's: even more impossible to pin down. Resultant shock. To 19th-century mind. Ultimately spawning surrealism. (127)

We see the latter in the arrangement of the exhibition itself:

The whole sublimated. Analyzed. Summed up in little captions. Offering for consumption: 19th century subject. (127)

Montage displays the uncanniness of nineteenth-century inventions which continues to fascinate the twentieth-century curator. It also displays how the twentieth-century mind rationalizes its fascination using commodity's allegorical form ("little captions") to analyze, summarize, and present for consumption. The exhibition is intended *not* to awaken the dreaming collectivity but to entertain the individual spectator. The result is "a kind of grizzled feast having been laid out for 'one's' unique consumption. Orchestrated by aura-conjuring hand of curator" (128).⁵⁰

The exhibition works on the *flâneur* like a charm. She races to Champs-Élysées "feeling certain marvellous to be had" (128). What she encounters are "rows and rows of cops blocking boulevard. Probably another demonstration" (128). The reality of political reaction blocks the wish of revolutionary surrealism. In her *faux pas* we see that repression is the *modus operandi* of the bourgeois state and that demonstration is the return of the repressed, eternally and ineffectually re-enacted.⁵¹

The entry ends where it began, on a note of anxiety which in writing she hoped to "avoid" (126). Instead of avoiding she finds herself arriving at the distressful scene

of yesterday's memory. Writing unblocks memory and exposes the object of horror. Her source of uncanny feeling is not the exhibition's display of nineteenth-century animism. It is the everyday reality of bourgeois oppression. She recalls leaving the demonstration:

Home on bus. Knees pressed against those of bourgeoisie. On narrow facing seats. Clearly disapproving. Of straggly North American hair. Very short lashes. (128)

What her story reveals is the gaze under which she senses herself become the object of orientalism. In the eyes of the Other, she sees herself as a projection of the political unconscious, which, like the exhibit of nineteenth century criminology, demonizes Asian physiognomies with an aura of savagery. By framing herself as the phantasy image of bourgeois abjection, she displays — not the horror of herself — but of the domination of civilization through barbaric interpellation.

"Musée Grévin — Passage Jouffroy."

Another nineteenth-century dream house, the wax museum transforms the art and science of physiognomy into devices of historical spectacle. *Musée Grévin* exemplifies this transformation, demonstrating the decadence of *belle époque* phantasmagoria. An illusion of historical reality, the wax museum lacks the spell-binding power of the uncanny because the technology of reproduction is so blatant. Physiognomy is applied to the faces of the past in spooky caricature. The trick is to resurrect the dead of collective memory while lightening the burden of history.

Musée Grévin is located in *Passage Jouffroy*, one of the few remaining unaltered arcades. Housed within the Ur-form of capitalist dream houses, the *Musée* multiplies the effect of interiorization. The arcade reproduces the city in miniature with its gas-lit streets and shop-lined promenades. In turn, the wax museum reproduces the arcade to set the stage for recasting world history. Museum corridors guide visitors past dioramas of history's most memorable scenes — frozen in time but animated by the passage of spectatorship. The series of dioramas extends the technology of the panorama that was first used by city visionaries to bring the expanding parameters of modern Paris entirely into view. Surveying the commonwealth of urbanization, the view was utopian while being instrumental in cultivating bourgeois imperialism. The wax museum marks a further development in the use of optical illusion to globalize capitalist vision.

The *flâneur* encounters the *Musée* near the end of her wanderings. Her stroll through its haunts recaptures previous strolls through the Paris Passages (where she absorbs nineteenth-century ambience [138-39]), *Musée Carnavalet* (where she witnesses

50 Benjamin suggests that, in capitalism, the surgeon cannot be distinguished from the magician ("Work of Art" 233-34).

51 The citing of endless demonstrations is another allegorical refrain of the Eternal Return. See entries #103, #106, and #111.

Paris history on display), and the *Âme au corps* exhibition (where she witnesses the nineteenth-century mind on display). Having been sensitized to the productions of bourgeois phantasmagoria, she is less absorbed than amused:

Grévin a scream. Distorting mirrored labyrinth. Presenting history backwards. Modern retreating toward medieval. Starting off with Fonda. In *Barbarella* space suit. Surprised multiple orgasm expression of 60's film. On physiognomy. Michael Jackson moonwalking. Backwards. Towards Communards. Napoléons. Jacobins. Several Louis. And queens.... Head of some noble on pole. Being waved by victorious sans-culotte at incestuous lesbian Marie-Antoinette's window. She falling naturellement in faint. (140)

The museum moves backward in time but history is framed in the space of contemporaneity. The *flâneur's* narrative of this passage displaces an impression of continuity with the disjunction of montage. In montage, the image of Fonda is ironically juxtaposed against the image of Marie-Antoinette. If Barbarella's "liberated" physiognomy caricatures the climax of *modernity*, the Queen's "shocked" physiognomy caricatures the *ancien régime*, revolutionized by terror. In the *désh* of images we see the spectacular repression of *lesbian* sexuality, implying that the age of (sexual) revolution is as "backwards" as ever.

Less focused on the drama than the "pallor of the sculpting material," she regards the spectacle allegorically as *the commodity of history*:

Giving almost cartoon effect. For contemporary viewer. Who further aware. Head of one hero often replaced by another. On reclud body. According to vicissitudes of public opinion. (140)

Behind the masquerade of progress, she sees the mechanics of illusion that operate capitalism's eternal reproduction of the same. The museum displays its own construction, she observes, noting:

Labyrinth ending in Palais des Mirages. Small room. Belle-époque. Columns of entwined snakes. Masks. Lights going out. Darkness slowly filling with lit-up butterflies. And stars. Stiffly rising. Descending. On faintly visible wires. "Beautiful." But technology so dated. Being chiefly conceived. Like old panoramas. For spectators. Watching from immovable center. (140)

The spectacle fails to fascinate the *flâneur* who watches from a displaced centre. As "one" whose desires are nowhere represented, except by the scandalously lesbian Queen who is beheaded and betrayed by agents of revolution, she is alerted to

misrepresentation and falsifying devices. As phantasmagoria, the *Palais des mirages* is an inferior production.⁵² She is less affected by it than by the phantasmagoria she discovers in *Hôtel Chopin* opposite the *Musée*. Enjoying a revival among gay patrons, the *Hôtel* recaptures the seductive aura of the arcades.

We glimpsing dark pink lobby. Campy lampshades. Men coming downstairs. We entering café with real wicker chairs. Opposite Grévin. With handsome male waiters. Little red kerchiefs knotted round necks. To drink fine porto. Out of lovely porto glasses. Beige palm trees in relief. Climbing up the wall. R taking in male fauna. I the porto. Sinking by osmosis into roof of mouth. (140-41)

From *Musée Grévin* to *Hôtel Chopin*, the *flâneur's* stroll through nineteenth-century arcade moves from decadence to renovation. Yet the progress of this passage is unclear. *Hôtel Chopin* is ambiguously imaged as the site of perverse emancipation where patron-worker exchange is intoxicated by the sexual charisma of the marketplace. "Male fauna" is cast among exotic flora. She is not entirely seduced but her gay friend is infatuated. Through her eyes we see *gai Paris* undergo its latest transfiguration. But is it (gay) revolution or the eternal return of the same?

Angela Novus: Angela Lesbia

Entitled "*Le Sexe de l'art*" and dated "199_," the coda to *My Paris* breaks from the diary which it throws into relief. It marks a return *from* "chez nous" (Montréal) and to familiar themes and passages. Looking back to those months in Paris, it also looks ahead to an untold future, poised on the brink of the millennium. Paris is still a primary passion of the *flâneur* who picks up where she left off, re-engaged. Her engagement with the city is affected by the presence of a lover who accompanies her from Canada. "Love" marks the text figuratively and syntactically. Where there were only periods there are now, periodically, "orgasms," crossed out as slips of speech. The *flâneur's* love-lisp expresses a difference of perception at the *base* level of communication as well as the *superstructural* level of ideas.

52 Compared to the invention of Étienne-Gaspard Robertson, on whose pre-cinematic "phantasmagoria" Benjamin models his concept and method of historiographical montage. See Cohen, *Profane Illumination* 232-35.

The *flâneur* abandons herself to wandering, that now figures as "drifting," punctuated by dashes that recall the arrows of Situationist maps of Paris.⁵³ Drifting encounters situations which are flooded with capitalist phantasmagoria. Only now the aura of encounter is inflected with *lesbian* eroticism. The most captivating situations are ready-made exhibitions where "the marvellous" does appear. On a drift through Beaubourg, for example, she encounters "*Le Sexe de l'art*," a retrospective of avant-garde pornography.⁵⁴

Drifting. Past display window. Rue Saint-Honoré. Lit by Max Ernst reel. Announcing *Le Sexe de l'art*. At Beaubourg. Two pretty women. Jerky film. "Arousing" each other. Furtive embarrassed fingers. Entering folds. While giggling into camera. Then forcing dildo in — Next window. Urinoir. Caption. *The air of Paris* — Next. Catalogue. Opened. At painted opened legs. Lovely furry snatch. Called *L'Origine du monde* — (155)

Bypassing Ernst's failed cinematic experiment, she arrives at Courbet's "lovely furry snatch." Though attracted to surrealism, her gaze is arrested by the latter's uninhibited realism. Allegorized as the pervasive aroma of the ubiquitous urinoir ("*air of Paris*"), the masculine aura of the city is momentarily pierced by a glimpse of the rarely exhibited cunt — source of the uncanny — which Courbet presents openly, un-mystified by phallic fantasy.

She drifts on dream, a potent mix of city "mist" and love haze. Inspired by the infusion of lesbianism, she is not so distracted as to concede to romanticism. Love transforms the "banal" space of a rented room (156) but does not hide the city's "filth" (157). Repeatedly and disruptively, her gaze is alerted by urban detritus. Against the sense of her lover's loveliness, its abject presence is felt more acutely. Seen from the window of her bedroom, a "filthy diaper" in the courtyard signals her obsessively, inciting a perception of the real. An undercurrent of un-marvellous associations troubles the prose:

"filthy diaper" ... "dilapidated pissoir" ... "prostitute" ... "get your thing out of here" ... "sound of garbage being collected. By Caucasians with degrees. Bumping men from 'south' ... "sound of child coughing — Voice saying... C'est normal — Splash of washing streets. So Paris looking clean — Where filth going — Ça m'ennerve, unnerves me. Another voice complaining — (156-57)

53 Arrows signal direction, intensity and duration of the drift [*dérive*]. See Figure 1.32 (Guy Debord's *Naked City: illustration de l'hypothèse des plaques tournantes en psychogéographie*) in Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City* 60.

54 *Le Sexe de l'art* was exhibited at the Centre Pompidou from November 1995 to February 1996.

Every drift runs aground on detritus, and dream-narrative disintegrates in the wake of allegory. The physiognomy of failed revolution is drawn daily from Paris streets. In one encounter, we read this failure in the figure of a foreign militant in search of a national labor movement:

Moustached man. Still waiting. Cheap attaché case. By doors of union headquarters. Excuse me. In accent of immigrant. Have you seen the union bosses. Have you seen the militants. (157-58)

Post-revolutionary Paris is caricatured as urbanism's accelerated automatism and pollution-producing traffic. In place of revolution we see cars revolving around the Bastille monument. In turn, "socialism" is caricatured as the reactionary (paternalistic) face of social reproduction:

Cars racing. Round revolutionary monument. Where 100,000 socialists Strewing roses. In memoriam of president. Simultaneously smirking he having two families. Gorgeous veiled mistress. And daughter. Appearing at funeral. Femme légitime, legitimate wife also très chic. I.e. accepting — Caricature of rightist politician. Saying to spouse. Me too I want two wives at funeral. Spouse replying you make me laugh. With your socialist ideas — (158-59)

Failed revolution implies failed *sexual* revolution. Gay Paris is viewed allegorically as capitalist catastrophe. Oriented toward the city's gay zones, drift encounters disappointment. The "Women's Bar" on Chabanaïs proves too expensive and too bourgeois to accommodate visitors looking for lesbian bohemia (155-56). On rue de la Gaité, the *flâneur* discovers "Le Nouveau Monocle," a women's night-club which advertizes 24-hour entertainment. Inside, she finds herself "waiting" for the "fastest strip in history," performed by an embarrassed blonde from the straight club next door (160). "Le Nouveau Monocle" is a pathetic depreciation of the original "Monocle," frequented by gay women artists and writers of the twenties — Djuna "Barnes & Co." (160).

Sublimated in images of cultural optimism, sex is the intoxicant of capitalist mystique. Drifting through Montparnasse, the *flâneur* overhears a "virile-looking greyhaired philosopher-type" seducing a "slender acolyte" with proclamations: "Speed is where it's at.... Acceleration... Velocity. I who drive a sports model. Noticing how new construction materials. Making of buildings moving screens..." (157). Virility is equated with velocity, the speed of expenditure that only the wealthy can enjoy. Accelerated construction implies expropriation and re-territorialization: "The 21st Era of nomads: the poor — The rich. Staying put" (157). Passages later, the image of

philosophized virility⁵⁵ shatters against the dismembered body of commodity: "Billboard with 20 little squares. Tight-jeaned prick. In each. Packed in. In as many different ways" (159).

Along avenues of *haute couture*, the metaphysical strikes the *flâneur* at street level. "Crossing Sèvres-Babylone" with its "ghosts of ceaseless winter demonstrations," she encounters once again the exclusive "men's shop" (157). "What to [her] astonishment," "men's suits" have been replaced by a "woman's dress" (157). The style is classical: a black, lacy, calf-length dress that "One" can wear forever. Making one Parisian" (157). Amidst ceaseless unrest, fashion's revolution restores the order of the day. Against real transformation, it ensures eternal reproduction of the same — with devastating effects on women. For beyond trend-setting mannequins, living women are seen, their "anorexic silhouettes" foregrounded in self-destructive mime (158).

The coda does not end on the refrain of catastrophe. It breaks into a montage where images of ruin are juxtaposed against images of utopia. In the last passage of the novel we see the *flâneur* on the tarmac of Charles DeGaulle airport "looking" back on Paris and ahead to the future (161). Poised between the two is a figure of women "saving culture":

That dogcatcher truck. Pulling up behind... Woman stepping out. Saying I come from war. And here is confusion. Handing out pamphlet. Saying les Bosniennes, Bosnian women. Saving culture. In chaos. With 100 small attentions. Presenting themselves impeccably. Best food. In worst situations — Pink lips ahead. Pointed boots forward. Towards boarding gate — I turning. Once. Looking — (161)

Through city mist comes a shocking reminder of the Bosnian war. But shock is received in a spirit of love. The agent of forward-looking vision is "Pink lips." "Pink lips" appears on the horizon like a star, illuminating the scene with a confirming sign that the future is women.

"Pink lips" appears in every passage of the coda but as nothing more than a gesture. "She" is a synecdoche of the lesbian body, which, like all bodies caught in the *flâneur*'s field of "watching 'verbs,'" is a moving body. An unassimilable fragment of (lesbian) sexual difference, "Pink lips" defies commodity fetishism, which is the charismatic appeal of "the girl with the golden eyes." Nor can she be likened to the dispensable Nadja, the esoteric love to whom Breton's *flâneur* is less close than the marvellous things with which she is associated. For Scott's *flâneure*, "she" is "she beside me" (155) who, in loving proximity, arouses associations that constitute a lesbian

semiotics. If, as Benjamin observes, the "sexual shock" to which capitalism's masses are subjected is the violent effect of separating sex from Eros,⁵⁶ then their re-union is our redemption. We see this re-union in the associations which "Pink lips" inspires: "she" is the cue to look beyond the pornographic reel advertizing "*Le Sexe de l'art*" (155) to the real "loveliness" of *L'Origine du monde*.

A synecdoche of communication/community between women, "Pink lips" is the *flâneur*'s closest interlocutor. When accompanying her on flaneries, "Pink lips" speaks her desire, proposing alternatives to "femmes légitimes" (155), ridiculing "Natalie Barnie" (158) Paris's only out lesbian, and protesting the marginality "of girls like us" (159). Laughing at the cowboy drag of Parisian gays (158), she mocks their simulation with real cowboy knowledge (155). Like the amazons of *le Cirque d'Hiver* (159), her androgyny challenges the gender status quo that Paris so artfully perfects.

On the metonymic level of unconscious drift, "Pink lips" is associated with "orgasms," which, "popping up" throughout the coda, affect the *flâneur*'s vision. Thinking of "orgasms," she sees "angels" sculpted into the city's baroque façade — "mid walls. Near Louvre's small eyes" (155). These imaginary, or visionary, angels intimate an allusion to Benjamin's angel, or the seraphic motifs in Baudelaire that Benjamin interprets as figures of neo-baroque modernism. It is tempting to read this complex figure as a perverse and provocative adaptation of Benjamin's most positive thesis concerning the future of history.

Benjamin's angel is an allegory of modernity whose direct referent is Klee's *Angelus Novus*. As Benjamin sees it, Klee's angel looks "toward the past" where he sees catastrophe "piling wreckage upon wreckage."⁵⁷ The angel "would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed." But he is caught in a storm "blowing from Paradise" that "irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward.... The storm is what we call progress." Benjamin, moreover, imagines this *Janus-faced* angel of history to be *androgynous*, owing to his sources in the Jewish kabbalist tradition in which God is feminized, bisexualized,⁵⁸ and in Baudelaire for whom prostitutes and lesbians — androgynes — are angels. Benjamin reappraises the poet's idealization of outcast women in materialist terms. The whore of *Fleurs du mal* is angelic because she displays the "holy prostitution of the...commodity-soul"⁵⁹ and affords the alienated man-of-the-

56 Benjamin, "Some Motifs in Baudelaire" 125.

57 Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" 257.

58 Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity* 111.

59 Benjamin, "The *Flâneur*" 56.

55 A caricature of Paul Virilio, contemporary French architect and philosopher, author of *L'insécurité du territoire* (1976), *Speed and Politics* (1977), and other works.

crowd a way of "communing with the masses."⁶⁰ The lesbian — "the woman who bespeaks hardness and mannishness"⁶¹ — is angelic because she is sexually pure at the same time that she is socially damned. It is not only in Baudelaire that we find this angelic lesbian. As a principle motif of *Jugendstil*:

The Lesbian woman carries spiritualization (*Vergeistigung*) into even the womb. There she plants the lily-banner of 'pure' love, which knows neither pregnancy nor family.⁶²

For Baudelaire, the lesbian is as *heroic* as she is angelic. "*The lesbian is the heroine of modernism*," Benjamin reiterates, which "explains why Baudelaire for a long time had the title *Les Lesbiennes* in mind."⁶³ Benjamin imputes her heroism to her resisting the "impotence" of the ruling class, which, having "ceased to concern itself with the future of the productive forces unleashed by themselves," domesticates social fantasy with "the idea of a pension" and the "wish to have children."⁶⁴ Her androgyny combines (female/lesbian) resistance and (male/bourgeois) impotence in images of subversive perversity.⁶⁵ Recognizing that these tropes of lesbianism should not be mistaken for signs of Baudelaire's commitment to women's liberation, Benjamin attributes his sources to utopian socialism, in particular to the advocacy of Claire Démar:

In the widely ramified literature of the time which deals with the future of women, Démar's manifesto [*Ma loi d'avenir*] is unique in its power and passion.... Here the image of the heroic woman which Baudelaire absorbed may be seen in its original version. Its lesbian variant was not the work of the writers but that of the Saint-Simonian circle.⁶⁶

In tracing these sources, Benjamin documents a forgotten — lesbian feminist — dimension of revolutionary history. He connects the Saint-Simonians with "the Vésuviennes" whose movement "supplied the February Revolution with a corps of

60 "Prostitution opens up the possibility of a mythical communion with the masses. Prostitution at the same time appears to contain the possibility of surviving in a world in which the objects of our most intimate use have increasingly become mass-produced. In the prostitution of the metropolis the woman herself becomes an article that is mass-produced" (Benjamin, "Central Park" 40).

61 Benjamin, "The *Flâneur*" 90.

62 Benjamin, "Central Park" 43; *Paris, Capitale du XIXe Siècle* 574.

63 Benjamin, "The *Flâneur*" 90, emphasis mine.

64 Benjamin, "Central Park" 37.

65 "Male impotence emanates equally [Baudelaire's] involvement in the angelic image of women" (Benjamin, "Central Park" 36).

66 Benjamin, "The *Flâneur*" 91.

women." Though "such a change of the feminine habitus," he writes, "brought out tendencies which were capable of engaging Baudelaire's imagination," the latter brings only "a purely sexual accent to this development."⁶⁷ But for Benjamin, the future of women, women's culture, presents a social transformation with redemptive implications.⁶⁸

The final scene of *My Paris* assembles these various motifs of angelic, heroic, allegoric, utopic lesbianism. "Pink lips" waves the banner of lesbian Eros and feminist rebellion. Taking an affirmative stand, she gestures "ahead. Smiling." Her boots pointing forward, she solicits the gaze of the *flâneur* who looks back at Paris and the woman from war-torn Bosnia. In this constellation of gestures we *foresee* women "saving culture" as they arise from the ruins of the past. Though portended by a fiction, our vision is profoundly realistic. The corps of "Bosniennes" is a historic actuality. Like the Vésuviennes, they embody a "change in feminine habitus" that could, were it to prevail, save the world.

A radical enactment of Benjamin's critical historiography, *My Paris* is, at the same time, a radical departure from high modernism, emblemized by T.S. Eliot's mystifying, misogynous *Waste Land*. Eliot's coda to the poem reassembles the tropes of ambiguity that trouble the preceding verses, leaving the reader to resolve the crisis of interpretation. What she finds there is either the nothingness of eternal return (the meaningless — female — cycle of birth, death, and procreation cited in Ecclesiastes and recited through the ages of decaying civilization) or spiritual rebirth, a hermetic coupling of gnostic love with the messiah's second coming. Paris is one of *The Waste Land*'s falling cities. The Paris of *My Paris* is already fallen. It is the capital of capitalist phantasmagoria where revolutionary history is repeatedly deceived and betrayed. Scott's coda reiterates the eternal return — of fashion, the fashion revolution, to which women, in particular, fall victim. Scott's reader is presented, not with fragments of Culture to be collected against her ruins, but with ongoing catastrophe from whose wreckage emerges Angela Lesbia, heralding the future of women.

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67 Benjamin, "The *Flâneur*" 94.

68 "Female culture is ultimately universal culture, which makes it possible to confront difference within the self and the other. In this respect, we should bear in mind Benjamin's words: 'All rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them. Hence, empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers. Historical materialists know what that means. Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate'" (Buci-Glucksmann 88).

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