

THE VERTICAL *FLÂNEUR*: NARRATORIAL TRADECRAFT IN THE COLONIAL METROPOLIS

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Every city has its winged man.
—Paul Virilio

Who can blame the *flâneur* for being a little footsore these days? During the last twenty years, critics have sent the urban horizontalist on a great variety of intellectual errands: from pacing out the waywardness of commodity capitalism at street-level to providing a pre-history of the society of the spectacle; from enacting censored historical narratives through involuntary spatial memory to embodying the modern condition of “transcendental homelessness”; from bestowing visibility and mobility on previously static and unseen figures to performing a horizontal syntax of everyday “tactics” that elude and even resist surveillance by the vertical power structures of the metropolis.

In this last instance, I am thinking specifically of Michel de Certeau’s essay “Walking in the City”, which does not address the *flâneur* per se but has nonetheless become a cardinal text in subsequent work on *flânerie*. The structural armature of Certeau’s essay is its well-known binarism of vertical versus horizontal, onto which axes a number of further oppositions get projected: skyscraper versus street, the disembodied voyeur and the pedestrian, paradigmatic versus syntagmatic, constative versus performative, a fantasy of total legibility and a less-than-legible text, the panoptic gaze and its partial evasion and subversion by the everyday microgestures of the mass. To be sure, Certeau’s essay has garnered a fair share of criticism for its rather stark, programmatic dichotomies, and for replicating the same God’s eye vantage it claims to revile in the theoretical distance at which it holds the very practices it seeks to celebrate. Yet one could say that the essay’s vertical-horizontal biaxialism is both limiting *and* captivating because it is so familiar, so entrenched in Western thinking about space, perspective, distance, and scale. The vertical, according to this familiar dichotomy, is the axis of totalizing overview, of a certain geometry of detachment and objectification, of seeing without being within the scene. The horizontal, by contrast, is the axis of habitation and incarnation, the plane within which life and narrative unfold haphazardly, and which is less legible for the viewer’s usual immersion in it. In *One-Way Street*, as a way of pondering the difference between copying out

a text and merely reading it, Benjamin offers a spatial and optical parable that invokes a binary geometry very similar to that of Certeau's essay:

The power of the country road is different when one is walking along it from when one is flying over it by airplane. In the same way, the power of a text is different when it is read from when it is copied out. The airplane passenger sees only how the road pushes through the landscape, how it unfolds according to the same laws as the terrain surrounding it. Only he who walks the road on foot learns of the power it commands, and of how, from the very scenery that for the flier is only the unfurled plain, it calls forth distances, belvederes, clearings, prospects at each of its turns like a commander deploying soldiers at a front. Only the copied text thus commands the soul of him who is occupied with it, whereas the mere reader never discovers the new aspects of his inner self that are opened by the text, that road cut through the interior jungle forever closing behind it: because the reader follows the movement of his mind in the free flight of daydreaming, whereas the copier submits it to command.¹

This notion that the country road “commands the soul” of the walker differs, of course, from Certeau's portrait of the urban pedestrian as a performance artist whose appropriations of urban space often flout the intentions of its planners and the interdictions of owners and legislators. But Benjamin's privileging of the horizontal over the vertical, of walking through over looking down, resonates with Certeau's essay, and looks forward to the attention Benjamin will subsequently pay to the *flâneur* as the native of the city street, the botanist on asphalt, the strolling commodity.

And yet for Benjamin, too, the city was crucially a vertical space. *The Arcades Project* explores not just the arcades but their subterranean doubles—the chthonic sewers and catacombs of Paris, the city's vaults, dungeons, quarries, grottoes, cellars, defiles, springs, wells, and metros—whose portals led down to the historical sub-stratum of modernity.² For the *flâneur*, Benjamin writes, “every street is precipitous. It leads downward—if not to the mythical Mothers, then into a past that can be all the more spellbinding because it is not his own, not private”.³ Thus he conceives of the city as both temporally and spatially stratified and excavable in the archive, and quotes Dumas on the *rive gauche* as “a hatchway leading from the surface to the depths”, opening the possibility that “one day the inhabitants of the Left Bank will awaken startled to discover the mysteries below” (*AP* 98). The arcades themselves, as *The Arcades Project* describes them, were partly distinguished

¹ Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 1, 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 447-48.

² An excellent recent study of the vertical (and especially the below-ground) city in late modernity is David L. Pike, *Subterranean Cities: The World Beneath Paris and London, 1800-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

³ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 417. Page numbers of this work will be cited parenthetically in the text .

by the verticality created by their iron-and-glass construction: they were at once gigantic display cases in a museum or jeweler's boutique, streets roofed in glass, unroofed bourgeois interiors, and houses roofed with stars. There are even occasional references to those urban figures who had begun, by the Second Empire, to traverse the skies like gods above the glass roofs of the arcades: the aeronauts in their wicker gondolas, above Paris, the first city of the hot air balloon.⁴

What's more, in some of the self-reflexive sections of *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin affiliates his own philosophical work with the sort of panoramic overview *One-Way Street* seems to eschew:

The historian today has only to erect a slender but sturdy scaffolding—a philosophic structure—in order to draw the most vital aspects of the past into his net. But just as the magnificent vistas of the city provided by the new construction in iron for a long time were reserved exclusively for the workers and engineers, so too the philosopher who wishes here to garner fresh perspectives must be someone immune to vertigo—an independent and, if need be, solitary worker. (*AP* 459)

Filling up the convolutes with verbatim passages from other books, Benjamin the copyist shunned the high-altitude of mere reading for a more intimate ground-level promenade through the textual landscape. But Benjamin the philosopher allies himself with those who built the Tour Eiffel and the Pont Transbordeur and, suspended in metal skeletons, saw the city streaming by below them—that is, with high-altitude workers who were not afraid of heights. In the same section, Benjamin describes *The Arcades Project* as climbing toward just this sort of panoramic overview, one rung at a time—as a serendipitous and vertical *flânerie* through the archive-city, toward a final aerial vista.

How this work was written: rung by rung, according as chance would offer a narrow foothold, and always like someone who scales dangerous heights and never allows himself a moment to look around, for fear of becoming dizzy (but also because he would save for the end the full force of the panorama opening out to him). (*AP* 460)

This is not an account of the soul's ground-level submission to the authority of landscape or text, nor of a God-like surveyor possessed by a "lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more", as Certeau puts it.⁵ Instead, it imagines a perilously contingent ascent by a vulnerable and explicitly embodied observer,

⁴ In the "Photography" section of *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin quotes Alfred Delvau on Nadar, not only the most famous portrait photographer of mid-nineteenth-century Paris but the first person to take a photograph from a balloon: "What I do know is that, on a cyclopean pile on the island of Gozo, a Polish poet, Czeslaw Karski, has engraved in Arabic, but with Latin letters, 'Nadar of the fiery locks passed in the air above this tower,' and that the inhabitants of the island very likely still have not left off worshipping him as an unknown God" (*AP* 681).

⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Randall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 92.

one in whom the fear and the anticipation of a high-altitude overview comingle. In what follows, I look more closely at figurations of verticality in Benjamin and in several key *flâneur* texts, culminating in Joyce's *Ulysses*. I begin by arguing that the opposition of pedestrian versus surveyor, or *flâneur* versus aeronaut, has stabilized itself by suppressing the comingled origins of those figures. This claim leads to a kind of corollary: that the biaxial geometry laid out in Certeau's essay (and elsewhere) obscures the ways in which verticality functioned an axis of anxiety, vulnerability, contingency, and site-specificity in late modernity. Finally, I suggest that the trope of penetrating overflight underwriting both nineteenth-century omniscient narration and certain techniques of urban modernism outfits the figure of the narrator as much with the expansive and infiltrative powers of the commodity as with the scopic powers of God. These narratorial powers, moreover, include encryptive and evasive tactics of the first importance in a surveilled colonial metropolis. Insofar as these tactics involve provisionally adopting and even mimicking the gaze of power in order to appease, divert, and obstruct it, they cannot enjoy the luxury of a blithe horizontalism. Yet, as we will see, this intimate and ambivalent relationship to the gaze of power is central to the critical potential of the *flâneur* as double agent in the oppositional spaces of the city, past and present.

Taking his cue from Baudelaire's 1863 essay "The Painting of Modern Life", Benjamin traces the figure of the *flâneur*, at least in its literary incarnations, back to Poe's 1840 story "The Man of the Crowd". I want here to propose a supplemental or shadow lineage for the *flâneur*, one that begins with the French satirist Alain René Le Sage's 1707 novel *Le Diable Boîteux*, translated variously as *The Limping Devil* and *Asmodeus or The Devil on Two Sticks*.⁶ Le Sage's novel tells the story of Signor Don Cleophas, a young Spaniard who frees the devil Asmodeus from the prison of a wizard's bottle. In gratitude, Asmodeus takes his liberator under his wing, flying him to Madrid's highest spire:

"I intend to show you all that is passing in Madrid; and as this part of the town is as good to begin with as any, you will allow that I could not have chosen a more appropriate situation. I am about, by my supernatural powers, to take away the roofs from the houses of this great city; and notwithstanding the darkness of the night, to reveal to your eyes whatever is doing within them". As he spake, he extended his right arm, the roofs disappeared, and the Student's astonished sight penetrated the interior of the surrounding dwellings as plainly as if the noon-day sun shone over them. It was, says Luis Velez De Guevara, like looking into a pasty from which a set of greedy

⁶ As Le Sage made clear in the preface to the 1726 revision of *Le Diable Boîteux*, his satire is indebted for its frame narrative to Louis Velez De Guevara's *El Diablo Cojuelo* of 1641. The earlier work, however, did not cause nearly the sensation Le Sage's novel did, and the figure of the airborne Asmodeus who can unroof houses is almost invariably linked to Le Sage rather than to De Guevara.

monks had just removed the crust.⁷

The devil then tells the student,

“This confusion of objects, which you regard with an evident pleasure, is certainly very agreeable to look upon; but I must render useful to you what would be otherwise but a frivolous amusement. To unlock for you the secret chambers of the human heart, I will explain in what all these persons that you see are engaged. All shall be open to you; I will discover the hidden motives of their deeds, and reveal to you their unbidden thoughts”. (Le Sage 14)

In the ensuing episodes, Asmodeus augments his powers of flight and architectural transparency—powers that several generations of the book’s illustrators appropriated through a giddy use of the diagonal cutaway view that has more recently found favor with the creators of *The Sims* (see figs. 1-3)—with that of psychological penetration as he and Don Cleophas eavesdrop not just on the craven behavior of the citizens of Madrid but on their very dreams. Eventually Don Cleophas is reinjected into the life of the city when Asmodeus, disguised as the student, saves a noblewoman from a fire and thereby secures the young man her hand in marriage. But until his final descent to the plane of the observed, the observer Cleophas engages in a kind of supercharged *flânerie*: as Baudelaire says of the *flâneur*, he “everywhere rejoices in his incognito”, compiling, in Cleophas’s case, a taxonomy of human vice and folly from which his anonymity safeguards him.⁸ And with the help of Asmodeus, Le Sage’s student enjoys the privilege Baudelaire ascribes to the poet, and Benjamin to the *flâneur*: “the incomparable privilege of being himself and someone else as he sees fit. Like a roving soul in search of a body, he enters another person whenever he wishes. For him alone, all is open; if certain places seem closed to him, it is because in his view they are not worth inspecting”.⁹

If “all is open” to the airborne voyeur of *Le Diable Boîteux*, it is thanks to Asmodeus’s power of turning both architectural and mental interiors inside out. The *flâneur* thrives in Second Empire Paris in part because the city is at that moment turning itself inside out by privileging the liminal spaces of the arcades. Benjamin writes that “if *flânerie* can transform Paris into one great interior—a house whose rooms are the quartiers, no less clearly demarcated by thresholds than are real rooms—then, on the other hand, the city can appear to someone walking through it to be without thresholds: a

⁷ Alain René Le Sage, *Asmodeus or The Devil on Two Sticks*, trans. Joseph Thomas (1707; 1726; trans. New York: G. H. Doran Company, 1925), 13.

⁸ Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life”, in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Books, 1965), 9.

⁹ Walter Benjamin, “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire”, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 4, 1938-1940*, trans. Edmund Jephcott et al., ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 31-32. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *SW4*, followed by page number.

landscape in the round” (AP 422). Don Cleophas experiences a similar conflation of street and room, landscape and *intérieur*, with its attendant restlessness: he moves through unroofed buildings as easily and anonymously as if they were public streets, but he also cannot make his home in any interior, predicated as his life has become upon serial acts of spying on the fly. Like the *flâneur*, Cleophas moves among the urban masses but is not of them; until he is caught up in the romance plot that ejects him from both Asmodeus’s company and the narrative, he can move amid the populace only by virtue of diabolical powers that also prevent his interacting with those on whom he eavesdrops. These powers amplify sight at the expense of touch, and penetration at the expense of participation. Such a tradeoff is inherent in aerial views of the city, and puts a specifically high-altitude spin on a motto Cleophas shares with the *flâneur*: “Look, but don’t touch”. One might think that altitude would utterly divide the airborne viewer from the street-level *flâneur*, but to the extent that a penetrating, panoramic vision that abjures touch finds its apogee in aerial viewing, the *flâneur* always has Asmodean ambitions. Put another way, Le Sage’s airborne Cleophas enjoys a literal version of the figural and theoretical altitudes that separate the *flâneur* from what he sees. The *flâneur*, then, is not the antitype of the aeronaut, but his secret sharer.

Le Diable Boîteux was so popular when it was first published that, according to urban legend, two would-be readers dueled over a bookseller’s last copy of it. But the shelf-life of Le Sage’s character Asmodeus lasted well beyond the period of the book’s publication. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, *Le Diable Boîteux* engendered countless spinoffs not only in France, but in England as well, where a translation of the book first appeared in 1708.¹⁰ Typically, in these Le Sage-inspired texts, Asmodeus fetches up in a present-day metropolis (initially Paris or London, later New York) and acts the part of the supernatural *lazzarone*, squiring the ingenue who frees him around the city while revealing the hypocrisies of its citizens, social

¹⁰ See, for example, *The Devil Upon Two Sticks: or, The Town Until’d* (1708); *The Devil Upon Crutches, In England, or Night Scenes in London*, “by a Gentleman of Oxford” (1755); William Combe’s *The Devil Upon Two Sticks in England* (1790); *Le nouveau diable boîteux, tableau philosophique et moral de Paris* (1799) by “Dr Dicaculus”; Charles Sedley’s *Asmodeus; or, The Devil in London: A Sketch* (1808); Harrison Gray Buchanan’s *Asmodeus, or, Legends of New York: Being a Complete Exposé of the Mysteries, Vices and Doings, As Exhibited by the Fashionable Circles of New York* (1848); the anonymously authored *Revelations of Asmodeus, or, Mysteries of Upper Ten-Dom: Being a Spirit Stirring, a Powerful and Felicitous Exposé of the Desolating Mystery, Blighting Miseries, Atrocious Vices and Paralyzing Tragedies, Perpetrated in the Fashionable Pandemoniums of the Great Empire City* (1849); and *Sharps and Flats, or, The Perils of City Life: Being the Adventures of One Who Lived by His Wits*, by “Asmodeus” (1850). Byron invoked Asmodeus’s power of unroofing from on high in his poem “Granta: A Medley” of 1806.

practices, values, and political institutions. Thus, in Charles Sedley's *Asmodeus; or, The Devil in London: A Sketch* (1808), the devil takes one Tom Hazard, a boy from the working-class neighborhood of Seven Dials, on an aerial tour of quarters of London previously unknown to the boy. Their ports of call read proleptically like headings in a London guidebook: Hyde Park, Bond Street, Covent Garden, Pall Mall, Drury Lane, Green Park, the Abbey, Newgate, the Opera, Charing Cross. Although the tone of Sedley's and most other Asmodeus knockoffs tended to be satirical, their central figure also sponsored a more apparently neutral genre—what Benjamin calls the “panorama literature”, or physiologies, which sustained the *flâneurs* who contributed to it—by constructing an image of the metropolis as knowable, visible, and penetrable, and of its denizens as belonging to legible types. Two of the physiologies Benjamin mentions in “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire” invoked Asmodeus as their mascot: *Le Diable à Paris*, and *Le Livre des cent-et-un*, a periodical that began life during the 1820's under the title *Le Diable Boîteux*, also the name of a *magasin de nouveauté* in the arcades during the period (see *AP* 37, 55). Balzac contributed to the physiologies, and was known to sign articles as “Le Diable à Paris”; and Benjamin quotes Hippolyte Babou's attribution to Balzac of Asmodean power: “When Balzac lifts the roofs or penetrates the walls in order to clear a space for observation [...] you listen at the doors [...] In the interest of sparking your imagination, that is [...] you are playing the role of what our neighbors the English, in their prudishness, call the ‘police detective’!” (*AP* 443). Le Sage's devil enjoyed a multiple currency, then, as sponsor of satire, tourism, and high literary praise.

Babou's praise for Balzac likened the writer to the police detective through the Asmodean powers of unroofing and observation they shared. Benjamin wrote that “the figure of the detective is prefigured in that of the *flâneur*”. At least one piece of late-Victorian detective fiction explicitly brings together all three figures. Arthur Conan Doyle's “A Case of Identity”, an early Sherlock Holmes story published in 1891, begins with an oblique invocation to Asmodeus as a sort of muse or ancestor of the modern detective, whose powers of observation, deduction, disguise, and ubiquity are compensations for his incapacity for penetrating overflight. In a passage Franco Moretti has described as evincing a “totalitarian aspiration towards a *transparent* society”, Holmes tells Watson,

“My dear fellow [...] life is infinitely stranger than anything which the mind of man could invent. We would dare not to conceive the things which are really mere commonplaces of existence. If we could fly out of that window hand in hand, hover over that great city, gently remove the roofs, and peep in at the queer things which are going on, the strange coincidences, the plannings, the cross-purposes, the wonderful chains of events, working through generations, and leading to the most outré results, it would make all

fiction with its conventionalities and foreseen conclusions most stale and unprofitable".¹¹

In the story that follows this opening statement, of course, Holmes does effectively unroof the city, but on foot, annexing the scopic powers of the *flâneur* to the more circumscribed work of freelance crimesolving. But Le Sage's devil did not function for Anglophone writers solely as a patron saint of detective fiction and satire. As Jonathan Arac has shown in *Commissioned Spirits*, Asmodeus was also invoked as a tutelary spirit of realist representation by a number of nineteenth-century English and American writers, among them Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Nathaniel Hawthorne.¹² Where Le Sage's novel and the subsequent Asmodeus spinoffs had used the devil as an agent of unsympathetic exposure, these writers reimagined him as a beneficent seer, installing him as an ancestor of the omniscient narrator or historian. Thus Dickens imagined the framing spirit of his tuppenny weekly magazine *Household Words* as "a certain SHADOW, which may go into any place...a kind of semi-omniscient, omnipresent,

¹¹ Franco Moretti, "Clues", in *Signs Taken For Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Literary Forms*, trans. Susan Fischer, David Forgacs, and David Miller (London: Verso, 1997), 136, original emphasis; Arthur Conan Doyle, "A Case of Identity" (1891); rpt. in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 30.

¹² Jonathan Arac, *Commissioned Spirits: The Shaping of Social Motion in Dickens, Carlyle, Melville, and Hawthorne* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1979), 112. Arac connects such uses of Asmodeus as the mascot of omniscient narration to the rise of new methods of social surveillance by an increasingly centralized and bureaucratic State, particularly in the arena of public health: during a period of rampant airborne infectious diseases, mid-Victorian sanitary surveyors erected crow's nests on the pinnacles of Westminster Abbey and above the cross of St. Paul's Cathedral, from which, purportedly, to gather data about the well-being of the social body. Other critics, including Audrey Jaffe and D. A. Miller, have linked the all-seeing but often anonymous narrator of High Victorian fiction to contemporary police and carceral institutions, in particular to the structure of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, a prison whose central tower concealed wardens from the gaze of the prisoners, who were kept in easily-policed cages along the periphery. Such prison architecture encouraged prisoners to internalize the sense that they were always being watched, and thus to become complicit in their own surveillance, to become, effectively, self-policing. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, Jaffe, Miller et al. see panoptical lines of sight and therefore power being extended toward the citizenry at large, through the growth of centralized metropolitan police forces and systems of plainclothes cops and police informants, and suggest that the novel participated as well in these procedures, educating its readerships to internalize the panoptical gaze of the omniscient narrator and thereby become part of a morally self-policing citizenry. See Audrey Jaffe, *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative, and the Subject of Omniscience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 3; Arac, "Introduction"; D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); and Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979).

intangible creature” who would “issue his warnings from time to time”, looming “as a fanciful thing all over London”; and in his 1848 novel *Dombey and Son* he called upon a “good spirit” with “a more potent and benignant hand than the lame demon in the tale”, who would not only expose viciousness but reveal the suffering of the powerless and the interdependence of metropolitan citizens of all classes (Jaffe 15).

My aim in linking the figure of the *flâneur* and its near-relations, the master detective and the omniscient narrator, to the airborne scopophilia of *Le Diable Boîteux* is not to add yet another urban type—the airborne voyeur, say—to the social taxonomy of the Second Empire physiologies. Rather, I wish to emphasize that the *flâneur* is not only a botanist, as Benjamin puts it, but botanical as well. That is, the *flâneur*’s drive to read the onrushing faces in the crowd into a social taxonomy is accompanied at once by a desire to be exempt from that taxonomy and by a recognition that such exemption is impossible. As he encounters the denizens of the horizontal city, the *flâneur* projects them onto the vertical axis of paradigm, functioning as an agent of the vertical within the horizontal, as paradigm’s spy within syntagm. But the incognito he everywhere cherishes is imperfect, his work as botanist revealing nothing so much as his own status as an incarnation of paradigm, as a hothouse flower nurtured within the rarefied habitat of the glass-roofed arcades. If he seeks to neutralize the liminality of many urban figures through typology and caricature, these same operations constantly recall both his own liminality, as a downwardly mobile and therefore marginal member of the bourgeoisie, and typology’s ability always to recoup liminality by supplementing or refining its categories. In this respect, the *flâneur* as the artist of social distance sees not only others but himself as well with an “eagle eye”, in Baudelaire’s words—as remote figures in an urban landscape he can only render as a panorama, as data-points within the metropolitan grid he views as if from the steepletops. This is one of the ways in which the *flâneur*, as Benjamin argues, lends his self-awareness to the strolling commodity: by seeing not only others but himself always from afar, and recognizing his own contiguity and fungibility with the sea of commodities that surrounds him. Yet in thinking about the *flâneur* as the secret agent of verticality within the horizontal, we should take care not too violently to impose on the figure of the *flâneur* a pair of conceptual axes that partly postdate it, only stabilizing with the structuralist x and y of syntagm and paradigm. It is tempting, for instance, to project Roland Barthes’ structuralist dichotomy between the Eiffel Tower and the horizontal plane of the city it organizes onto earlier notions of urban space. But if Barthes’ privileging of verticality’s scopic and paradigmatic power is indebted to *Le Diable Boîteux*, which he mentions in his essay on the Eiffel Tower, that axis is far less stable in Le Sage’s satire, and in subsequent *flâneur*-texts, than it is in the work of Barthes and other structuralist critics.¹³

¹³ Barthes writes, “Like the devil Asmodeus, by rising above Paris, the visitor to the

Set in a city without skyscrapers, airships, or angels, *Ulysses* contains few explicitly high-altitude reveries. Aside from Stephen's "Parable of the Plums", which recounts two elderly women's vertiginous Pisgah-sight of Dublin's rooftops from the top of Nelson's pillar, the novel boasts perhaps one other straightforwardly Asmodean vista, near the end of the "Nausicaa" episode.¹⁴ In part, this passage is poking fun at the convention of the overview in both pastoral and sentimental fiction, but with a difference: this narrator not only peers down, but, like the *diable boîteux*, probes in.

A last lonely candle wandered up the sky from Mirus bazaar in search of funds for Mercer's hospital and broke, drooping, and shed a cluster of violet but one white stars. They floated, fell; they faded. The shepherd's hour: the hour of folding: hour of tryst. From house to house, giving his everwelcome double knock, went the nine o'clock postman, the glowworm's lamp at his belt gleaming here and there through the laurel hedges. And among the five young trees a hoisted linstock lit the lamp at Leahy's terrace. By screens of lighted windows, by equal gardens a shrill voice went crying, wailing: *Evening Telegraph, stop press edition! Result of the Gold Cup races!* and from the door of Dignam's house a boy ran out and called. Twittering the bat flew here, flew there. Far out over the sands the coming surf crept, grey. Howth settled for slumber, tired of long days, of yumyum rhododendrons (he was old) and felt gladly the night breeze lift, ruffle his fell of ferns. He lay but opened a red eye unsleeping, deep and slowly breathing, slumberous but awake. And far on Kish bank the anchored lightship twinkled, winked at Mr. Bloom. (*U* 13.1166-81)

Here, under the sponsorship of firework and bat, the narrative ascends, as if in a crane or helicopter shot, describing simultaneous events taking place blocks and, in some cases, miles apart. Yet this is not a narrator limited to a remote Daedalus-view of Dublin, but one who can shuttle back and forth between a wide-angle overview of the city and the penetration of an individual consciousness: the phrase "yumyum rhododendrons" refers back to Bloom's recollection, five chapters earlier, of rolling around with Molly on Howth head, even reactivating a bit of his interior diction: "Ravished over her I lay, full lips full open, kissed her mouth. Yum" (*U* 8.906). Such a narrator, one who wields such demonic powers of mobility, observation, penetration, and memory, calls Asmodeus to mind. Equipped both with airborne powers of overview and with the ability to obtain an *inner* view by crossing the blood-

Tower has the illusion of raising the enormous lid which covers the private life of millions of human beings; the city then becomes an intimacy whose functions, i.e., whose connections he deciphers..." Roland Barthes, "The Eiffel Tower", in *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), 12.

¹⁴ I discuss the Parable of the Plums in relation to questions of altitude, scale, interiority, and the body in "Over Assemblage: *Ulysses* and the *Boîte-en-Valise* from Above", *European Joyce Studies 15: Cultural Studies of James Joyce*, ed. R. Brandon Kershner (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003); see, especially, 45-51.

brain barrier, Joyce's narrator seems to perfect the fantasy of omniscient trespass and, arguably, of social control that Lesage could only gesture toward.

This passage's airborne vantage makes it a rarity in *Ulysses*, but its coordination of private diction and simultaneous events links it oddly to the book's most horizontal episode, "Wandering Rocks"; one function of the panoramic moment in "Nausicaa", then, might be to instruct us retroactively in how much the earlier episode relies on the phantom axis of the vertical both in its narrative optics and in its penetration of interiors. A veritable *flâneur's* convention, "Wandering Rocks" was not so much composed as plotted, in the cartographic sense: Joyce wrote it with a map and a stopwatch close to hand, timing the divagations of various groups of pedestrians to ensure their encountering one another at credible locations and moments. As a result, the episode feels as if it were set entirely on Dublin's streets, sidewalks, and bridges; because it ends with the figure of a pedestrian "swallowed by a closing door" (*U* 10.1282), it leaves the impression that representation ends where interiors begin. But roughly a third of the episode's nineteen sections are set indoors—in the Dedalus family's kitchen, and in the interiors of Thornton's fruiterer and florist, Boylan's offices, the Dublin Bakery Company, an unidentified music hall, and the Chapter House at St. Mary's Abbey. If for Benjamin the city can appear to someone walking through it as "without thresholds: a landscape in the round", "Wandering Rocks" seems to be set in just such a city without walls or roofs: its interiors are, like the arcades of Second Empire Paris, partial involutions of the street rather than sealed-off compartments.

As with the roof and wall, so with the skull: the sensory apparatus of the episode's narrator infiltrates the consciousnesses of various Dubliners as easily and frequently as it passes from street to room. The most broadly invasive section of *Ulysses*, "Wandering Rocks" makes its readers privy to the thoughts of Stephen, Bloom, Father Conmee, Miss Dunne, M'Coy, Tom Kernan, Patrick Dignam, and even (for three words' worth, at least) Blazes Boylan. Whereas previous episodes have restricted their use of the interior monologue to Stephen and/or Bloom, this one distributes that technique among many. Because the episode tails a larger number of pedestrians than do its predecessors, its generalized deployment of interior monologue affiliates that technique with *flânerie*: the more *flâneurs* tracked by the narrator, the more minds given voice. This connection would seem to project *flânerie* and interior monologue onto a horizontal plane, even to unite them causally, as if one ensued from the other. But here we need to consider how the structure of the episode bears on its technique. By using interior monologue on a larger number of characters, yet still selectively and in widely varying extents, the episode calls attention to the technique both as a technique and as a kind of semaphore or signaling device. That Boylan is granted only three words ("A young pullet" [*U* 10.327]) of interior monologue seems a judgment about the poverty of his inwardness; and even if we do not reach this conclusion, we are

nonetheless impelled to ask what the selection criteria are for the technique's seemingly capricious application and what that application signifies. The dramatically uneven distribution of the interior monologue in "Wandering Rocks" lifts us, in a sense, out of the horizontal plane where we have become habituated to its use and makes it strange again, makes it again an artifact, sign, or symptom rather than a quasi-transparent medium of scrutiny.

Something akin to this estrangement—along what I have called the phantom axis of the vertical—happens to the *flâneur* in "Wandering Rocks" as well. Insofar as it tracks the itineraries and intersections of a host of citywalkers, the episode offers us *flânerie* neither as a mimetic modality nor as a diegetic activity for which the reader's traversal of the page is a surrogate; instead, *flânerie* is understood as a phenomenon in its own right, one to be mapped, schematized, interrogated. For all that it records its many characters in the act of walking and gawking, "Wandering Rocks" *enacts* something quite different, its radically mobile narrator and massively integrated time-space grid suggesting some combination of ghostly, dematerialized gumshoe and Global Positioning System. The vantage from which it observes and makes meaning is the same vantage from which it was composed: the implicitly aerial viewpoint of the map and tidal chart. This is the lookout, too, from which one could observe the Gilbert schema's geographical correspondences for the episode (with the Liffey as Bosphorus, Commee as the Asiatic bank, the Viceroy as the European, and the citizens as Symplegades).¹⁵ Most importantly, the vertical is the crucial vector of the episode's trigonometry, by which multiple points on the horizontal grid of the city are stabilized in their relation to one another. If "Wandering Rocks" departs from earlier episodes in the multiplication of its foci and, concomitantly, of its interior monologues, then its quintessential element is the threshold: not the starred breaks that separate its sections but the interpolations that join those sections to one another in a relation of stacked horizontality. These interpolations act as transit points or interdimensional doors leading from one diachronically unfolding section to another happening simultaneously with it; in Charles Cave's hypertext version of the episode, they are the links that lead from one screen to another. In traveling through these wormholes, we drop out of flatfooted *flâneur*-space into a textual hyperspace; this delivers us to another *flâneur*-space where we can continue on foot.¹⁶ On the flag flown by this chapter is the vertical connector it casually mentions: the manhole from which, Lenehan tells M'Coy, Tom Rochford rescued a "poor devil stuck down in it, half choked with sewer gas" (*U* 10.499-500). We never get to visit the sewers of Dublin in pursuit of some fugitive Harry Lime, but such a visit would be strangely redundant: thanks to the

¹⁵ Richard Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 186 ff.

¹⁶ Unfortunately, Cave's html version of "Wandering Rocks" seems no longer to be available online.

episode's stratified architecture and the vertical shafts—the interpolations—that join its levels to one another, each diachronic plane in “Wandering Rocks” plays sewer to some street, boulevard to some catacomb.

I have characterized the episode's interpolations as vertical both because they act as portals from one horizontal stratum to another and because they are the most conspicuous evidence of a tabulating consciousness hovering over and correlating the episode's disparate *flâneur*-spaces. Unbound by the laws that govern the pedestrian, that consciousness can move at more than walking-pace, can jump from point to point without having to traverse the intervening space and from moment to moment unconstrained by time's arrow; it is not unlike a laser-reader that can skip back and forth instantaneously among points on a disc. Although this hyperspatial, discontinuous movement would seem to separate the narrator from the *flâneur*, we should recall here the latter figure's descent from Asmodeus, whose powers of penetrating overview are part of the core fantasy crystallized in the strolling radiologist of Second Empire commodity culture. Bearing this lineage in mind, we can refine our distinction between the episode's pedestrian characters and its disembodied narrator. That narrator is less the anti-type to the *flâneur* than a kind of second-order *flâneur*, a meta-*flâneur* who performs a *flânerie* of *flânerie*. We can imagine the relation between these orders of *flânerie* by revisiting Benjamin's claim that the *flâneur* goes “botanizing on the asphalt”. “Wandering Rocks” stages this project by splitting the *flâneur* into the botanical object (the characters) and the botanizing subject (the narrator). But one result of this staging is to make the botanizing subject available, in its turn, as a botanical object. If the episode parades interior monologue as both a technique and a signaling device, it exposes its narrator in like manner. The question that remains, then, is to what end “Wandering Rocks” makes an Asmodean narrator both the optical architecture and the anatomized body in its operating theater—why the episode is, in effect, an Asmodean *physiologie* of the narrator as *diable boîteux*.

We can begin answering this question by looking at an example of the effects produced by the narrator's noisiest, most attention-getting devices, the interpolations or intrusions that act as a kind of foreign matter embedded in a given diegetic stratum as if to interrupt the reader's traversal of that surface. They are also highly idiosyncratic in placement, attitude, and content. In section fourteen, Simon Dedalus, Bob Doran, Ben Dollard, and Father Cowley are discussing Cowley's overdue debt to Reuben J. Dodd, a Jewish moneylender, and Dollard's delight that he has not yet paid “the jewman that made them” for his own ill-fitting trousers (*U* 10.916). The intrusion that follows tracks a young Anglican clergyman we met six sections earlier:

The reverend Hugh C. Love walked from the old chapterhouse of saint Mary's abbey past James and Charles Kennedy's, rectifiers, attended by Geraldines tall and personable, towards the Tholsel beyond the ford of hurdles. (*U* 10.928-30)

The first half of the interpolation would have sufficed to rivet Cowley and company's narrative to Love's progress through the city, but the narrator continues, showing us Love in a reverie about the Fitzgeralds (the magnetic "Geraldines" that attend him), a powerful Anglo-Irish family whose history he is writing. "Tholsel" and the "ford of hurdles"—references, respectively, to an ancient building and bridge in Dublin, both long-demolished by 1904—are equally whimsical inclusions, although it is unclear whether the historical place-names emanate from Love's thoughts or from a narrator parodically disposed toward them. Toward the end of the section, the Love interpolation produces a kind of situational irony appreciated by the reader but denied the characters, who do not appear to register the intrusions: the young Anglican, walking through occupied early-twentieth-century Dublin and thinking only about the storied past of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, seems also to be the landlord—"The reverend Mr Love. He's a minister in the country somewhere" (*U* 10.948-49)—to whom Father Cowley owes rent, and whose distraint Dollard tells him trumps the moneylender's claim.

The Love-Cowley intercuts show us that the narrator's intrusions are not just a formal armature for pinning disparate sections to an integrated space-time matrix; they can also supply historical and political energies to charge that matrix in ways that are decidedly non-neutral. The portrait of Love walking through ancient Dublin accompanied by Ascendancy nobles is one of a number of moments in the episode that point up the inadequacy of imagining space and time as passive, ontologically stable receptacles for human actions and events. Whether it shows us the reverie of a historian walking through a past resuscitated in his mind, or whether it revives earlier incarnations of the city through the traces ("Tholsel", "ford of hurdles") they leave on collective memory, the Love intrusion seems to refute the very hypothesis incarnated in the episode's form—namely, that urban space can be rationalized by the procedures of overview. That the comfortable Anglican Love might be the landlord of the impecunious "spoiled" Catholic priest Cowley makes the Love intrusion amid the story of Cowley's financial distress signify in additional ways: it reminds us of the propertizing of space and how the history of conquest and occupation has structured that making-property; it financially ties the triumphalist history Love is writing to his landlord's income, entraining reverie about the past with legal distraint in the present; and it turns the interpolation—the formal innovation that is supposed to make the episode a draughtsman's paradise—into a vehicle for a political allegory that saturates and warps the graph paper. There is, finally, something pointedly intrusive about the landlord's appearance in the section dominated by his tenant's woes, as if the apparition of Love had been summoned to walk through the episode's interior walls at the very moment when his appearance would most underscore Cowley's distress. What the reader first experiences as a playfully staged "coincidence" on receiving the news that Love is Cowley's landlord can seem, in retrospect, a record of the discomfort, disruption, and coercive force

involved in the cohabitation of different social classes and political, ethnic, and religious groups in the colonial metropolis; it underscores the degree to which the episode at large, for all its gorgeous choreography, is also a chapter of accidents, side-glances, aversions, avoidances, and confrontations.

Not all of the linkages in “Wandering Rocks” are semaphores of intentionality in the manner of the Love intrusion, but the caprice, even perversity, of that intrusion and many others in the episode create the impression of an integrated, embodied, and idiosyncratic narrator—something like the figure of the “Arranger” that has had such longevity in *Ulysses* scholarship.¹⁷ Yet in other ways, the architecture of “Wandering Rocks” undoes this impression of a unified, incarnate personality. Earlier I used the metaphor of trigonometry to describe the episode’s triangulating operations—its way of allowing us to deduce or calculate non-given relations between points or moments from already-given ones. That metaphor stands, but the narratorial viewpoint, far from being the fixed vantage from which other points are deduced, is the episode’s true object of extrapolation. In the case of the Love intrusion, the space-time coordinates of the characters are far less at issue than the nature, motive, and manner of the force that connects them. The street-level is “given”, and from the solid chords that join various points on that plane we are asked to project a perforated ray toward the narrator as hypothetical entity. The vertical is the episode’s phantom axis in this second sense, then: projected sketchily from the horizontal, it is an entity whose location the episode marks as always provisional. The contingent quality of the figure in the episode’s crow’s nest does not permit us to dismiss it, however, as trivial. The Love intrusion, remember, kicks the text out of a Cartesian positivism by suggesting how the experience of space-time is produced by historical reverie, collective memory, and the economic residuum of colonialism. And if we join several of the episode’s recent critics in reading its structure as a political anatomy of the late-colonial metropolis, we find its narratorial entity no less powerful in its political effects for being an extrapolation.

Such a reading argues that “Wandering Rocks” spotlights its own processes of surveillance in order to demonstrate how the novelistic conceit of the omniscient narrator finds its real-world correlate in social and political forms of observation. As Mark Wollaeger and Enda Duffy have both shown, the Dublin described in the episode is nothing short of a colonial espiocracy in which plainclothes police informants (the undertaker Corny Kelleher being the major example) provide information to a constabulary force headquartered in Dublin Castle, the seat of the occupying government; there, clerks such as Martin Cunningham keep files on the political and personal activities of the

¹⁷ The inaugural descriptions of this figure are David Hayman, *Ulysses and the Mechanics of Meaning*, rev. ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 88-104 and Hugh Kenner, *Ulysses* (London: Allen, 1980), 61-71.

likes of Leopold Bloom. The episode's very architecture seems to be produced at the nexus of authority and sightlines: the final section of "Wandering Rocks" shows us nearly every character tracked earlier in the episode watching the viceregal cavalcade pass by. In thus retroactively establishing the cavalcade as its main criterion of scrutiny, the episode shows us a colonial regime that maintains its power through a combination of public spectacle and covert surveillance: under such a regime, turning out to see the parade makes you available to be seen in turn by watchful systems of police informants and constables and clerks—or, alternately, by the novel's own circuits of observation. Such revelations are doubly disquieting, suggesting firstly that the reader's vantage is complicit with that of the colonizing power, and secondly that in turning out to spectate on the action of the book, the novel's readers make themselves available to be seen in their turn by the Asmodeus of the state through the aperture of the novel. (Weirdly enough, this turned out to be literally the case, when US citizens returning home from Europe in the 1920s could be searched by customs officials to see if they were smuggling contraband copies of *Ulysses* home in their luggage; Joyce's book had become a pretext for the inspection of private interiors by government agents.)

Given the episode's structure as an optical gallery of discipline, one might be tempted to read "Wandering Rocks" as a rather schematic replica of Bentham's panopticon on colonial turf, with the episode's exposed characters and phantasmatic narrator mimicking, respectively, the inmates on the prison's periphery and the presence of a central tower that need not be occupied to create the effect of perennial surveillance. Duffy's persuasive reading of the main "Cyclops" narrator as a police informant reporting back to his G-man (the latter being a subject position the reader, as addressee, uncomfortably shares) would support the impression that *Ulysses* misses no opportunity to install its reader in the role of colonial surveyor, constable, warden.¹⁸ But the most subtle readings of *Ulysses*' surveillant geometries, including Duffy's, recognize both the importance of inflecting the Foucaultian paradigm in historically specific ways and the possibility that such inflections can reopen that paradigm's seemingly foreclosed and totalizing anatomy of power. Wollaeger asks "how the policing effect of a novel changes when the police form part of a colonial occupation whose individual members are recruited almost exclusively from the ranks of the occupied". Members of the Royal Irish Constabulary force were effective, he reminds us, because of their close ties to the populace but were for the same reason unpredictable, sometimes refusing to fire on their fellow citizens; in such cases, he observes, "the British subject within an individual policeman [was] at war with the Irish one".¹⁹

¹⁸ Enda Duffy, *The Subaltern Ulysses* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 122-23.

¹⁹ Mark A. Wollaeger, "Reading *Ulysses*: Agency, Ideology, and the Novel", in *Joyce and the Subject of History*, ed. Mark A. Wollaeger, Victor Luftig, and Rober Spoo (Ann

What if “Wandering Rocks”, instead of duplicating the absolute carceral optics of colonial policing institutions, were aligned with the more equivocal gaze of the self-divided native policeman, or with a less equivocal (if still bifurcated) double-agency? Were this the case, we might expect to find gestures of refusal—obstructed views, untailed marks, tactically averted gazes—amid the episode’s seeming compliance with the edict of a late-colonial Total Information Awareness. We might even find that some forms of compliance are camouflaged or encrypted forms of refusal.

I want to suggest that this is precisely the case with *Ulysses*’ tenth episode: that far from offering us an orthodox Foucaultian diorama of the carceral city, it gives us instead a profoundly self-divided perspective on the colonial metropolis, and that if it replicates the optics and circuits of the ruling espiocracy it does so less in the spirit of collaboration than of a performative counter-espionage. “Wandering Rocks” is, after all, followed by “Sirens”, an episode featuring a song (“The Croppy Boy”) that warns its implicitly native listener of the dangers of self-disclosure even in confessional, where a priest turns out to be a British officer in disguise. In his discussion of the song, Duffy points out that its obvious sentimentality and its implication in “the colonist promise of carnival commodity” do not prevent it from instructing its listeners in the ruses of the colonist; the song, he implies, delivers its cautionary message the more effectively because its commodified form seems to swear fealty to the colonial economy its content seeks to undermine (Duffy 85). “Wandering Rocks” evinces a similar kind of double agency. By showing us a number of key nodes in Dublin’s colonial surveillance network—the police tout, the constable, the Dublin castle clerk, and the ambient gossip that supplies those figures—the episode would seem to insist on the snare with which it will catch the city’s criminal and seditious elements, and by means of which it will ensure the docility of the rest. But what information, finally, is caught in the episode’s surveillant reticulations? For all their evident lust to expose, its nineteen sections net a conspicuous absence of law-breaking, treasonous, or anti-colonial activity, utterance, or even potential. Instead, the episode seems to document the fanglessness of a populace comprised of loan-cadgers, debt-evaders, and charity-avoiders. It portrays Dublin’s clerisy in states of self-satisfaction or seediness, its intelligentsia toadying to British visitors or drifting among shopfronts while their burning books warm the soup of their underfed families. The city council, in the meantime, is in an uproar about what the assistant town clerk dismissively calls “their damned Irish language” in the absence of the order-keeping city marshal (*U* 10.1007). This is a dossier of docile bodies, foremost among them that of John Howard Parnell, the missing marshal and brother of the Home Rule champion Charles Stewart Parnell: in one of its most lavish placations, “Wandering Rocks” activates its networks of observation and cross-reference to show us, just after

noting his absence from the council, the great man's "longfaced" brother evading his public duties, "translat[ing] a white bishop quietly" over a chessboard in a bakery (*U* 10.1046-50).

Yet the episode also contains tiny localities that hint at how its overview of a quiescent Dublin works tactically to flatter the gaze of power. Such a tableau permits micro-gestures of opposition to be represented without triggering a crackdown; it hints, too, at more sustained gestures of refusal and opposition kept under- or even unrepresented. Watch Parnell's brother at his chessboard, "grey claw" on forehead, just a moment ago a figure of political ennui, now peering briefly out from under that withered hand: "An instant after, under its screen, his eyes looked quickly, ghostbright, at his foe and fell once more upon a working corner" (*U* 10.1050-53). If we blink, we miss this counter-portrait of the truant as tactician, gazing over the oppositional space of the chessboard almost as if he were the narrator who opened "Wandering Rocks" by translating a clergyman across the city's tactical grid. This is precisely the sort of moment most lost on the foe, politically embodied in the viceregent we encounter in the episode's final section. The bland self-assurance of that section's topic sentence suggests a strangely unvigilant authority, one prepared to be flattered by news of its subjects' willingness to be ruled: "The viceroy was most cordially greeted on his way through the metropolis" (*U* 10.1182-83). In what amounts to a parade of interpellative exchanges, the ensuing paragraph obligingly teems with obeisance, cap-doffing, and salutes, but it also harbors moments in which authority goes "unsaluted" (10.1185) and its subjects "unobserved" (10.1240), whether because of obstructed views, distracted attentions, or mute refusal. Mr. Dudley White is too busy deciding which route and conveyance to take to Phibsborough to watch the spectacle (10.1184-90); John Howard Parnell is still looking intently at his chessboard although it is now in the shadows of those who are watching the cavalcade (10.1226); and it is not Almidano Artifoni's salute but that of his sturdy trousers that closes the episode, and even the trousers' salute is "swallowed by a closing door" (10.1282). John Wyse Nolan's "smil[ing] with unseen coldness" (10.1212) raises the possibility that others who salute do so in a grudging, defensive, or tactical manner. As many commentators have noted, Stephen and Bloom are not mentioned at all among those who see the cavalcade, as if the salutes of the more peripheral characters were diversionary gestures meant to secure the protagonists' escape. And the text's walking cipher is shown executing just such an evasive action: "In Lower Mount street a pedestrian in a brown macintosh, eating dry bread, passed swiftly and unscathed across the viceroy's path" (*U* 10.1271-72). Duffy suggests that the man in the macintosh, as a tribute both to the convention of the trenchcoated secret agent and to the civilian garb Michael Collins wore to avoid the police, "may be the IRA terrorist as gunman or bomb-carrier in *Ulysses*" (Duffy 66). The figure might signify equally as a plainclothes policeman, but his impenetrable incognito in

Ulysses—his resistance to every attempt to locate him within the city’s social, political, and financial matrices—stages the possibility, at least, that the *flâneur* could acquire a spook’s tradecraft, adapt his incognito to the project of passing “unscathed”, or at least imperfectly comprehended, across the path of a watchfully administrated colonial power.

Through the Asmodean maneuvers of its narrator, then, “Wandering Rocks” replicates both the surveillant gaze and the informational networks of Dublin’s ruling colonial elite. Yet by insisting on the caprice, the contingency, and the scopic limitations of its narratorial vantage, the episode avoids a simple relation of intimacy, complicity, or collaboration with those covert forms of colonial enforcement it takes such pains to schematize; for if it gives away some of the habits, movements, allegiances, even thoughts of the Dubliners it tracks, it also maps the networks that make possible such tracking, in the process alerting its reader to the possibility of flying by those networks. As Bloom puts it in “Lestrygonians” while thinking about informants in the secret pay of the Castle, “Never know who you’re talking to” (*U* 8.441). The episode performs discretion too, the paucity of its revelations suggesting the vastness of what it withholds—of what its dossiers’ expendable contents (the “chickenfeed”, in spy-speak, that makes up much of its content) permit it to conceal by creating the impression of a totalizing intelligence product. Finally, this is an episode that understands intelligence *as a product*—as a commodity produced under particular conditions and subject to exchange, market forces, arbitrage, etc. Section two introduces us to the undertaker Corny Kelleher standing among coffins while trafficking in another kind of ware: Constable 57 C pays a visit and the two exchange “news” about a “particular party”—presumably someone on whom the policeman and the informant are keeping tabs. An intrusion pairs their exchange with another transaction: “Corny Kelleher sped a silent jet of hayjuice arching from his mouth while a generous white arm from a window in Eccles street flung forth a coin” (*U* 10.221-25). This is Molly Bloom throwing money to a mendicant one-legged English sailor. The sentence’s synchronic linkage of two events (spitting, flinging) remote from one another in space relies on the surveillant powers the narrator appears to share with the colonial administration; at the same time, however, the intrusion wryly and rather subversively reminds us that surveillance networks are brokered by a cash nexus—in this case, the kickback Kelleher receives for his informant’s work—and that these payments will likely do as little to change the structure of Kelleher’s lot as Molly’s charity does to change the sailor’s.

Earlier I described (*d’après* Duffy) the commodified aspects of “The Croppy Boy” as assisting rather than hindering its admonitory function, providing a cover that enables the song to take its message of non-disclosure abroad into the land. My reading of “Wandering Rocks” finds the episode stealthily refitting the *flâneur* for counter-espionage, equipping him out of his Asmodean inheritance to penetrate, map, placate, and possibly evade the gaze

of the occupying power, even as it understands the provisionality of both kinds of overview. To the extent that the *flâneur* is, in Benjamin, a secret sharer and emulator of the commodity, such a reading would seem to produce the commodity as the cover that permits a double agency. But Benjamin's understanding of the commodity in "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" is more complex than mere cover, and in a way that can help us constellate *flânerie*, intelligence, and the commodity in Joyce. Benjamin takes seriously, as he felt Baudelaire did, what is merely a jest in Marx: the notion of the commodity-soul, which Benjamin writes would be "the most empathetic ever encountered in the realm of souls, for it would be bound to see every individual as a buyer in whose hand and house it wants to nestle" (*SW4* 31). The *flâneur*'s intoxication in the crowd emulates that of "the commodity immersed in a surging stream of customers", and it is the voice of the commodity that Benjamin hears speaking Baudelaire's lines about the poet. Those lines again: "The poet enjoys the incomparable privilege of being himself and someone else as he sees fit. Like a roving soul in search of a body, he enters another person whenever he wishes. For him alone, all is open; if certain places seem closed to him, it is because in his view they are not worth inspecting" (*SW4* 31-32). So imagined, the commodity does not have to be refitted for errands of penetration and inspection in support of—or in resistance to—a colonial surveillance state; the commodity was always already Asmodean.

There is one explicit engagement in Joyce's work with the figure of the *diable boîteux*, and it too finds that figure intimately wired to the ganglion of commodity, spectacle, detection, and body politic. The passage is toward the end of *Finnegans Wake* I.vi ("Questions and Answers"):

The hatboxes which composed Rhomba, lady Trabezond (Marge in her *excelsis*), also comprised the climactogram up which B and C may fondly be imagined ascending and are suggestive of gentlement's spring modes, these modes carrying us back to the superimposed claylayers of eocene and pleastoseen formation and the gradual morphological changes in our body politic which Professor Ebahi-Ahuri of Philadespoinis (III)—whose bluebutterbust I have just given his coupe de grass to—neatly names a *boîte à surprises*. The boxes, if I may break the subject gently, are worth about fourpence pourbox but I am inventing a more patent process, foolproof and pryperfect (I should like to ask that Shedlock Homes person who is out for removing the roofs of our criminal classics by what *deductio ad domunum* he hopes *de tacto* to detect anything unless he happens of himself, *movibile tectu*, to have a slade off) after which they can be reduced to a fragment of their true crust by even the youngest of Margees if she will take plase to be seated and smile if I please. (*FW* 165.21-166.02)

The references to the opening of that criminal classic "A Case of Identity" are unmissable here, with the deformation "Shedlock Homes" underscoring the power of Doyle's detective to penetrate the domestic interiors "*movibile tectu*" (the roof being movable). The more patent process being invented by the

speaker will enable the boxes in question to be reduced to “a fragment of their true crust”—a phrase that recalls how, in the company of Le Sage’s devil, peering at the city’s interiors could be as easy as “looking into a pastry from which a set of greedy monks had just removed the crust”. But if these boxes can be broken down to precious relics—“fragments of the true cross”—we do well to remember the vast proliferation, marketing, and widespread distribution of those fragments during the Middle Ages and the continuities between the relic’s aura and the commodity’s. The elaborately feminized polygons in question (“Rhomba, lady Trabezond”) are, after all, hatboxes: Le Sage’s devil-on-sticks and Doyle’s detective have been conscripted to the geometries of contemporary fashion (“gentlement’s spring modes”), although the eye-catching (“pleasetoseen”) layers of couture are in turn fused with geological (Eocene, “Pleistocene”), archaeological, and political-historical strata (“superimposed claylayers of eocene and pleastoseen formation and the gradual morphological changes in our body politic”). The passage, then, brings together the fossil, the early Christian relic, and modern millinery under the sign of the box. Its intimations of flight and excavation project both the Asmodean and the subterranean, so intimately linked in the nineteenth-century imaginary, onto the street-level domain of the commodity.

It may be difficult for us now to imagine the commodity-soul at all, much less to imagine it as empathetic, and still less to do so as part of a critique of capital. Mass-marketing conventions have co-opted the animist fancy of ensouled objects, routinely showing us products or product-mascots that move, speak, yearn, kvetch, cajole. And Benjamin’s reverie over the commodity’s pervasion of places and people is broken now that sensory, mapping, computing, and data-storage technologies have been braided together to make the commodity, in fact rather than in parable, a pathway of a near-perfect inspection. Consider a few turn-of-the-millennium examples from the developing sub-field of spatial marketing. The Path Tracker is a Local Positioning System that maps a shopping cart’s course through a supermarket, links that map to the appropriate checkout receipt, distributes the purchases along the map, and uses the collated data from thousands of individuals’ shopping trips to build a computer model of the aggregate shopper’s mind; on the basis of that model, the system can be used to make observations and predictions that aim to maximize the profit-making ramifications of the store’s layout.²⁰ The even newer Klever Kart harnesses location-tracking to customer-profile technology (such as AccuData’s “penetration profile”, which “involves analyzing [...] trends in geodemographic, psychographic and purchasing characteristics”) and in-store narrowcasting: after you swipe your rewards card on the Klever Kart’s screen, the screen might inform you as you wheel through the relevant aisle that the Gala apples you bought recently at full price are now

²⁰ See Ephraim Schwartz, “Tracking technology sheds light on shopping habits”, *InfoWorld* 2 April 2002.

on sale or that it's time to pick up another stick of the deodorant you last purchased several months ago. A Klever Kart competitor proposes a cart that will trigger customer-specific audio and visual ads from devices on the shelves one passes.²¹ Although it still generally emerges from an occulted origin, the commodity now has multiple destinations: as an object, it is drawn behind the (largely transparent) veil of the private domestic space where it is used or exhibited; as a node in an integrated system of tracking, tabulation, and narrowcasting, it provides the occasion for generating coordinates—those describing the space-time of its basketing and purchase—that feed back into the system, honing its ability to arrange, with a near-clairvoyant timeliness, the next rendez-vous with the next commodity.

The difference between “Wandering Rocks” and spatial marketing (which would likely have fascinated Joyce) helps us keep in mind what separates the Paris of the *flâneur* from Joyce's Dublin and both of these locales from today's First World networked economies, even as it points up certain continuities among these locales. In Benjamin's analysis of metropolitan Paris under the emergent society of the spectacle, the streets and arcades are flumes of intoxication, putative anonymity, social typology, and only secondarily of detection. By contrast, in Joyce's late-colonial metropolis the surveilled pedestrian spaces are more oppositionally charged ones, the correlates to John Howard Parnell's chessboard insofar as questions of mobility are always explicitly tied to questions of domination. For the constrained, perpetually watched citizen of a colonial metropolis, the commodity's mobility, its opaque origin, and its seemingly paradoxical traits of limitless interchangeability and fetish-singularity are as alluring as the prospect—often remote for such a subject—of possessing the commodity. (As it turns out, the above-named traits of the commodity make up a fairly complete description of *Ulysses'* man in the macintosh, who incarnates the possibility that double agency in the colonial metropolis might involve a mimicry of the commodity form. His counterparts in this radically anonymized state are figures belonging to a type Benjamin classified as “the last incarnation of the *flâneur*”: the H.E.L.Y.S. sandwichmen, their identities utterly—and perhaps usefully—subsumed by their work as walking billboards.) According to standard development narratives, *Ulysses'* late colonial context lags “behind” both the metropole of the *flâneur* and the nodal cities of today's multinational flows. Yet the belated space of the colony is also a proving-ground for new fusions of commerce, visibility, and domination, and this fact permits Joyce's novel to anticipate aspects of our own massively networked consumerism—to recognize, for instance, how the commodity can work as an aperture for unblinking investigation by the state or, as in more recent decades, by private

²¹ See Klever Marketing press release, 8 July 2000; AccuData and Kart Saver press releases via Yahoo Supermarket Industry News 31 October 2001 and 8 August 2000, respectively.

conglomerates in some symbiotic relation to the state. And perhaps even more crucially, *Ulysses* raises the possibility of redeploying such circuits of observation, and perhaps the commodity form itself, to resistant ends.

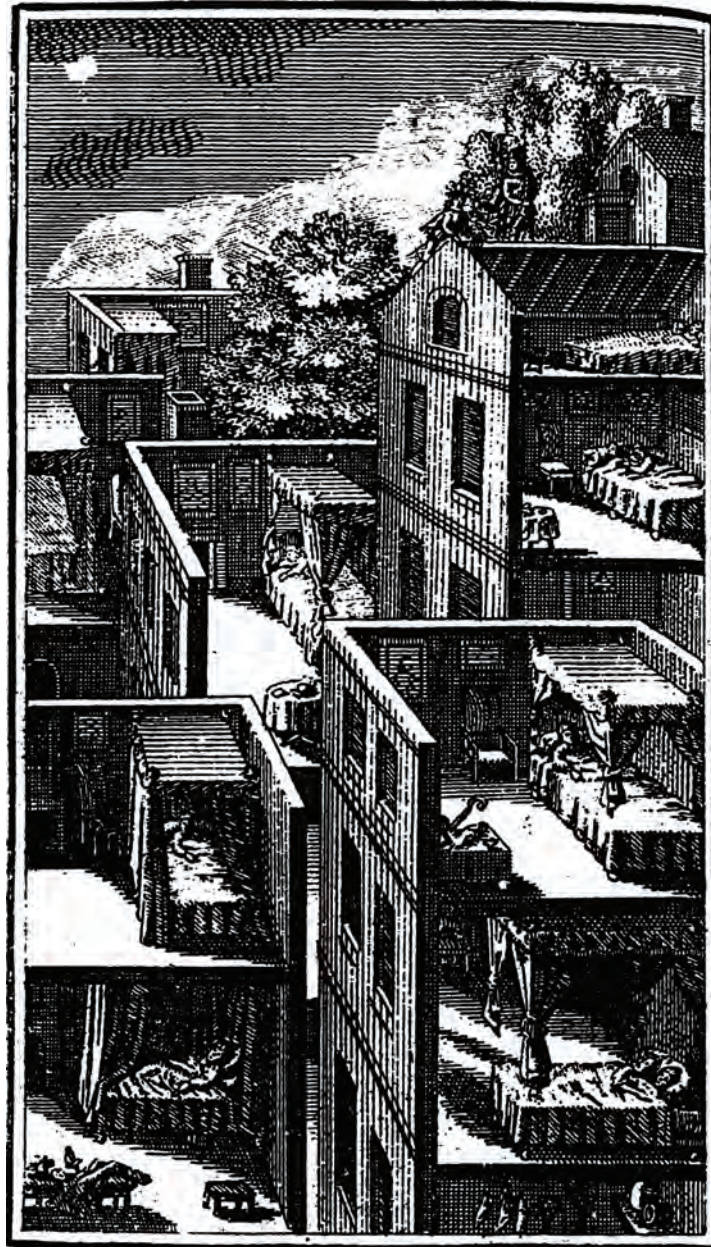
The omniscient narrator is aligned in nineteenth-century realist discourse with a God's eye vantage betokening mastery from above—a mastery of space and of the circulations of plots, bodies, consciousness, information, and commodities within that space. But if Benjamin correctly likens the *flâneur*'s itinerary and gaze to those of the commodity, we might posit the same of the omniscient narrator many critics have found to be cognate with the *flâneur*. Such a figure's conceit of unlimited mobility and access would suggest not so much an organic narrator outfitted with amplified human powers of perception and infiltration, but the quasi-magical phenomenon of a consumerist economy in which mobility and access find their apotheosis in the commodity, which can now, thanks to the wonders of global distribution, go virtually anywhere. The implicitly aerial gaze of the narrator would not be a deified gaze that objectifies its human objects, but its inverse: an imagined gaze by an anthropomorphized object at the whole spectrum of human destinations it might find through the pathways of dissemination and consumption. In Le Sage's Asmodeus, perhaps, we see this figure of the imagined commodity-soul first stirring toward what we might call its eventual vertical market penetration in the nineteenth century: a spirit imprisoned in a bottle on a shelf, then unleashed from that packaging—that bookwrapper, hatbox, crust—by an ingenuous consumer on whom it briefly bestows its magical powers. If the *flâneur* is the strolling commodity, then Asmodeus is the winged commodity; and if the fantasy of penetrating overflight is, as I have suggested, infrastructural to *flânerie*, then the *flâneur*, too, is the commodity mounting to critical distance on diabolical wings.

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ASMODEUS AND CLEOFAS

Figs 1-3: From Alain Rene Le Sage, *The Devil on Two Sticks*, William Strange, trans., Philip Haggren, illus. (London: Navarre Society Limited, 1927).



pl. 235.



pa. 12.