

THE REVIVAL OF THE FLANEUR: ANALYSING
NARRATIVES OF FLANERIE IN W.G. SEBALD'S
AUSTERLITZ AND TEJU COLE'S *OPEN CITY*

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the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Abstract

The concept of the urban explorer, the flâneur, is a nineteenth century phenomenon which has gone through major transformations in the last hundred years. Significantly, the flâneur is being revived and refashioned in many contemporary literatures with a view to explore the diverse elements of modern urban cosmopolitan space. My thesis explores the evolution of the concept of this urban explorer by unpacking the figure of the flâneur in Western literature, and illustrates how this modernist method is expounded by Charles Baudelaire, and later, by Walter Benjamin. The re-occurrence of flânerie in contemporary texts is critically explored in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* and Teju Cole's *Open City*, the primary texts of my thesis. While critics have already established the relation between the flâneur and urban alienation as a modernist trope, the critical association between flânerie and issues of exile, dislocation and migration (voluntary or force) is yet to be established. Therefore, this dissertation aims to critically investigate the re-emergence of the flâneur in these primary texts through the lenses of exile and dislocation, and furthers the discussion by focusing on the representation of marginal spaces and marginalized subjects in the modern (cosmopolitan) nation-space; and, finally, through a critical reading of postcolonial theory it investigates the new wanderers' view of the peripheral spaces, histories and voices of modern nation.

Keywords: exile; flâneur; marginality; historical consciousness, Holocaust; cosmopolitanism; metropolis, postcolonial identity.

Dedication

This thesis is wholeheartedly dedicated to my amazing parents, Baba and Ma. Thank you for supporting me in every possible way throughout my academic journey, and for making me realise my potential and understand my capabilities. I consider myself truly blessed and fortunate to have you two as my source of inspiration and encouragement.

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Introduction: An Overview

With the expansion of urban spaces in the nineteenth century, artists in Paris witnessed the emergence of an emblematic figure whose aim is to discover the city through wandering, looking, studying and investigating the urban space. His loitering through the alleys, boulevards, hidden endangered places of the city enables him to experience the city in a new light. This urban stroller is the *flâneur*, and his art of walking in the city was gradually established as a modernist method of studying the metropolitan space. His projection of the city is not an objective one; his subjective experience of the urbanity and urban spaces echoes in his works. Interestingly, this figure is mainly male, although later, in the works of Virginia Woolf, George Sand, Jean Rhys and many other artists, the concept of *flâneuse* (female *flâneur*) has been brought to discussion. Subsequently, *flânerie* and the loitering subjects became an intrinsic characteristic of modernism. Because of its innate association with a specific era and ‘ism’, the *flâneur*’s scope and space have been somewhat limited to a certain period and a specific cityscape. However, the methods or techniques of *flânerie* are still celebrated and put to practice in different genres. Instead of generalizing this phenomenon as a modernist approach, my thesis investigates its re-occurrence in marginal spaces and examines its relation to exile and displacement. Moreover, this thesis redefines this fascinating figure in contemporary literature by looking at the new possibilities and scopes of the revised understanding of *flânerie*.

The literature of exile, immigrant literature, transnational literature and diasporic literature are undoubtedly the most discussed, and celebrated aspects of contemporary times in literary, critical and artistic circles. While there are multiple ways of analyzing and observing exiled and migrant communities, the use of the modernist technique of *flânerie* in the study of exile has opened new directions in literary analysis. With the renewed interest in the *flâneur*,

these unique literary works are inventing new ways of observing the city, urban life and urban history through the eyes of the exiled subject. However, the association between the flâneur and narratives of exile is yet to be made. This is necessary in order to understand the complexity of this amalgamation. In this thesis, my aim is to understand the connection between exile and the wandering subject, the flâneur, in contemporary literary works. It is important to look at the ways exile and migration (voluntary or forced) have accelerated mobility around the world, and how the flâneur is relocated in this scenario. In addition to this, the thesis examines the outcomes and effects of this innovative narrative technique of flânerie in representing exile and displacement in literature.

To locate the flâneur in the discussion of exile and dislocation in contemporary literature, it is important to focus on the origin of the concept of flânerie. The concept of the flâneur was introduced in Charles Baudelaire's poetry, *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857), where he brings in an urban stroller, observer and reporter of street-life in the modern city of Paris. Inspired by Edgar Allen Poe's short story, "The Man of the Crowd", where a nameless narrator walks the crowded streets of London, Baudelaire introduces this fascinating character of the flâneur. Reflecting on Baudelaire's artist-flâneur, Richard Lehan in his book *The City in Literature* notes, "The observer in his poems identifies with an urban subject, usually someone who steps out of the crowd, and then through a process of association and memory connects this impression with his own experience" (72). With the rise of industrialism and capitalism, the modern cities of Europe went through a process of significant political, social and economical changes. Baudelaire was the first to visualize the adverse effect of the revolutionary changes brought about by the industrial boom and materialist culture, and went on to explore the theme of modern alienation in an urban setting. The acute sense of isolation in the modern cities caused by social stratification

and class struggle engendered new ways of experiencing the urban setting. As an after-effect to this revolutionary change, the altered understanding of the individual and individuality became new topics of discussion in the philosophical and intellectual arena. Urban alienation is the central theme in Baudelaire's poems as the poet also suffers from internal exile while wandering in a disoriented state along the streets of Paris. "The poet thus goes to the crowd to find versions of himself" (Lehan 73). Thus the concept of *flânerie*, an effect of the new expansion of modern cities and the new mode of urban experience in the modern city Paris, was introduced in his works. Dejected and alienated in the chaos of urban life, the poet thus discovered an alternative psychogeography of the city by exploring the hidden pathways and alleys. Chris Jenks, in his book *Aspects of Urban Culture* describes him as an "inquisitive boulevardier always at home with the urban and always urbane at home" (14).

Later, Walter Benjamin, who revived the discussion on Baudelaire's *flâneur*, focused on the role of the *flâneur* as a social historian possessing an analytic force. Benjamin showed how this analytic force enabled the *flâneur* to analyse the exploitation and damaging effects of capitalism and modernity. The distinct traits enabled this phenomenal urban figure to stroll around the cities, and carry out the role of an observer, who desires to get acquainted with the language and rhythm of the urban space. Benjamin defines the *flâneur* as the connoisseur of street life, and an 'urban native' of the modern metropolis of Paris. Benjamin's revival of the concept of the *flâneur* is an effort to address the effects of high modernism, and the extreme fragmentation metropolitan cities experienced during that time. Subsequently, he revitalizes the concept of *flânerie* as a prominent idea, method, and subjectivity through which cities can be studied, investigated, and observed.

The marginality of the flâneur in the city in terms of seeking refuge and solace in the crowd allowed the depiction of an alternative narrative of the city; but in contemporary literature, be it in the postcolonial or postmodern setting, this marginality is redefined as the flâneur can be an outsider on racial, ethnical and national grounds as well. This new dimension in identity politics, one of the most discussed subject matters in contemporary literature, thus effects the role of the flâneur and concept of flânerie as well. These factors also posit the flâneur as the most suitable investigator, chronicler, and depicter of urban life and history in the contemporary literature of exile and migration. My investigation focuses on these new flâneurs who have rediscovered new ways to observe cities, urban histories, traumatic historical episodes and its consequences in later periods. Migrant, émigré flâneurs have more to offer to this literary tradition of the flâneur as they possess insight of both the insider and outsider. It is their outsider status in metropolitan and cosmopolitan cities which gives their observation of history and realities of the urban space a new dimension. Their outsider status is not restricted to the Baudelarian sense of modern alienation, or Benjamin's idea of urban natives; their displacement and disorienting state is marked by war, violence, racism, ethnic cleansing, political banishment and other complex factors exclusively contemporary in nature.

The urban architecture, the colonial history- all fall under the radar of the new exiled wanderer; who is no passive, idle wanderer. There is always a strong force, both conscious and unconscious, which investigates and experiences the city in a new light. The trauma of the haunting past, the atrocities carried out in war are remembered, re-enacted as the flâneur walks by the places, spaces and makes the reader look at known narratives and histories with new lenses. Historical investigation, marginal narrative, postcolonial awareness are some of the significant attributes illustrated in the new narratives of flânerie. This is not an ordinary

travelling, or a thorough investigation, it is an amalgamation of everything; and the flâneur is one of the most powerful and effective methodical approaches to narrate the travails of the journey.

The juxtaposition the flâneur and the narrative of exile is exemplified in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001) and Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011). The two novels have employed different methods while approaching the issue of exile, dislocation and flânerie. Sebald's novel explores the investigation process, individual or subjective enquiry of an exilic protagonist whose journey is marked by the forced separation in his childhood from Jewish parents during WWII, whereas Cole's Nigerian protagonist has taken upon himself a self-imposed exile while struggling to fit into a cosmopolitan city. The two streaming, overlapping narratives of the narrator and protagonist of Sebald's novel portray 'exiles on the move', and establish a distinct connection between the urban stroller in search of his home; and his rootlessness determining his understanding of the European urban architecture and history. On the other hand, the African flâneur of *Open City* completely destabilizes the Eurocentric definition of the flâneur. By documenting the city from the black, or the 'other' perspective, he focuses on the diverse voices of the cosmopolitan city; the marginalized African-American perspective, conflict-ridden voices of Muslims, the unpopular immigrant - all find space in this urban stroller's seemingly unbiased experience of urbanity.

Sebald's protagonist in *Austerlitz* is a victim of forced migration, and his idiosyncratic attributes as a flâneur make it difficult to place him in a discussion of the flâneur. His constant negotiation with different cultures, languages, and geographical spaces, and his historical consciousness are central in the novel. The shadow of Benjamin's concept of the flâneur is very prominent in the Sebaldian flâneur; but under this layer there are multiple layers of an émigré flâneur, who portrays the distinct personality of a solitary, exiled figure in a foreign land. The

émigré wanderer's ways of seeing the city is multidimensional in the sense that it gives the reader a critical understanding of the city from a dislocated position, along with a post-Holocaust reading. He is constantly reminding us of the past, because he has to combat a collective forgetfulness. Sebald and Cole are both looking at the past while walking through the present. Sebald's novel is firmly European, but his project is not to glorify the European past. It digs into its disgraceful, violent and contested past, which is overlooked, erased, and not touched upon; consequently, the flâneur questions the knowledge that is given to and imposed on him.

Teju Cole's *Open City* presents us with a liminal analysis of the insider/outsider in cosmopolitan cities of New York and Brussels. What makes Cole's African flâneur and his wandering in the city an interesting investigative approach is its unapologetic fusion of the Baudelairean façade with an immigrant postcolonial African view. He is not exhausted or burdened with the modern sense of ennui or boredom; his knowledge of marginalized communities, its history and contribution invigorates him to present alternative readings of the seemingly cosmopolitan ambience of the cities. His position as a minority forms the basis of his understanding of flânerie. Thus, his interest in the after effects of the War on Terror, or 9/11 is relatable and original in the sense that he can see beyond the dominant ideologies that undergird the modern nation-space. Therefore, his comprehensive, unbiased and detailed knowledge of New York's history absorbs the readers' interest as the protagonist explores diverse contemporary subject matters while rambling in public spaces of streets, museums, and cafes. He investigates the politics of post-War on Terror, the vulnerable space of Muslim migrants. The seemingly aimless wandering subject locates himself as an interpreter of the cosmopolitan myth of the melting-pot. The narratives of slave trade and African-American history, settler communities- Cole's protagonist brings all of these together. On the surface, he seems to be

afflicted by the cosmopolitan alienation. Cole demystifies the façade of the global megacity with the cultural, subjective histories about place with the aid of a migrant flâneur.

The new loitering subjects, therefore, offer revised forms of flânerie to investigate the cosmopolitan nation's history and nation-space. Demystifying the myths of the modern nation, these unconventional forms of flânerie reconstructs historical awareness and postcolonial understanding of marginalized subjects and their space.

Chapter 1

Notes on the Flâneur, Exile, DissemiNation and Marginal Space

1.1 The Emergence of the Flâneur in the Modern Metropolitan Space

With the expansion of cities, artists began to focus more on the modern urban space, and consequently, “The two major themes of modernism –the artist and the city begin to emerge” (Lehan 77). Malcom Bradbury in “The Cities of Modernism” explores the close association between the modern artist and ‘polyglot’ metropolitan cities. He says, “Modernism is a particularly urban art, that is partly because the modern artist, like his fellow man, has been caught up in the spirit of the modern city” (Bradbury 97). Bradbury further discusses the modern city’s effect on artistic potential, and how it gradually made the artists interested in exploring the extremities of technological, commercial and industrial expansion of the metropolis. Richard Lehan, in the chapter “The Inward Turn” (in his book *The City in Literature*), emphasizes two kinds of urban realities that emerged in that period. First, the city is seen as constituted by the artist and secondly, the city as constituted by the crowd (Lehan 71). Earlier intensive studies on the crowd/ mass obscured the artist’s vision of the city. Subsequently, “modernism intensified the awareness that the individual and crowd were separate entities with separate modes of being” (Lehan 71), and thus emerged the need to see the city from a subjective view. Also, the increased focus on the modern city demanded a critical observer, who would discover the new mechanisms of urban space, and modernization of society, culture and people. Consequently, in this era of widespread mass mobilization, fuelled with the rapid expansion of industrialization and capitalism, nineteenth century Western literature witnesses the birth of a new literary figure: the flâneur; subsequently, regarded as an embodiment of modernity.

Fragmentation, alienation and disintegration marked the new literary era of modernism. The birth of the flâneur is, thus, an effect of the conditions of modernity. However, the concept of the flâneur has gone through significant transformations from the middle decades of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century. Many writers, poets and artists have made direct and indirect contributions to the literature of the flâneur. Balzac, Dumas, Poe and others portrayed urban solitary figures strolling around modern metropolitan cities, and investigating the modern urban space. However, it is the French lyric poet, Charles Baudelaire, who establishes the flâneur in modern literature as a phenomenal figure.

Charles Baudelaire responds to the rapid crowding of the city by making city as his main subject. Baudelaire sees “new poetic possibilities” in the huge modern metropolis (Lehan 75), and his works study the city and the crowd “from a subjectivity within the crowd” (Lehan 73). In the second edition (1861) of *The Flowers of Evil* (*Les Fleurs du mal*); Baudelaire’s famous collection of poetry; the poet introduces an urban subject/ artist who makes use of the city-space of Paris. His later collection of poems, *The Spleen of Paris* (*Le Spleen de Paris*, 1864) also explores the loitering subjects in urban space. Richard Lehan, while elaborating on Baudelaire’s poetry and his subjective analysis of the city, says that Baudelaire’s “artistic subjectivity is grounded in the crowd, that the poet’s imagination is fuelled by cityscapes” (Lehan 73). In “The Painter of Modern Life”, Baudelaire artistically elaborates the flâneur’s characteristics and ways of seeing and expressing the urban space and crowd of the modern metropolis of Paris.

The crowd is his element, as the air is the birds, and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it becomes an immense joy to set up house in the heart of multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at

the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world- such are few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate and impartial natures which the tongue can clumsily define. The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. (Baudelaire 9)

Baudelaire attributes the flâneur with omniscience and anonymity while remaining a ‘face in the crowd’. In spite of being a part of it, he refuses to become a part of the cosmopolitan crowd; he remains ‘a man apart’, observing the city with curiosity and passion. The public places and spaces of the metropolitan city attract the flâneur’s eyes, and he sees what others fail to see. In his prose poem, “Crowds”, from *The Spleen of Paris* (*Le Spleen de Paris*, 1864), Baudelaire’s flâneur-artist and his views of the city and his passion for roaming is beautifully illustrated. Describing the crowd practice as an art, the artist here asserts that this artistic venture is attributed with “the love of masks, the hate of home and the passion for roaming”, and “The solitary and thoughtful stroller finds a singular intoxication in this universal communion” (Baudelaire). On the other hand, in “The Swan” (*Le Cygne*), *Les Fleurs du mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*), Baudelaire’s flâneur bears a melancholic tone, and mourns the loss of the old city of Paris, untouched by the ruins of progress. It is interesting to see how the artist-flâneur’s relation with the modern metropolitan space of Paris is marked by both admiration and scorn.

In the ‘Introduction’ of *The Flâneur*, sociologist Keith Tester presents an interesting discussion on the dialectic of *being* and *doing* in the narrative of flânerie in Baudelaire’s writing. Keith Tester here highlights Baudelaire’s poet’s emphasis on the control of ‘the sovereignty of self-hood’ while wandering through the modern city. The flâneur is conscious of his displaced being, and this consciousness drives him to carry out the practice of flânerie (doing). “It is this sense of *being of* rather than *being in* which makes the poet different from all the others in the crowd” (Tester 3). Tester furthers his discussion saying that the flâneur, having the knowledge of

the public domain, is “driven out of the private and into the public in search of his own meaning” (Tester 2). The relation between urban space and urban-self is intrinsically connected in Baudelaire’s poetry. It aims to establish a platform where modern space and self interact with each other. This platform is also a result of the modern man’s anxiety, and his quest for ‘self’/ ‘being’ which enables him to focus on urban space, and establish a unique connection between self and space. Baudelaire’s emergence in modern literature is undoubtedly a step towards establishing a new form of belonging in the city-space.

Drawing the modern cosmopolitan city as a space bifurcated by central/periphery dialectic, we need to place the fashionable, capitalist bourgeois society in the centre of the city, meaning in the new fashionable urban territory, whereas the people who are outside this group and below this class are placed in the periphery. Interestingly, Baudelaire’s poems capture the periphery as part of the modernist outlook. In “The Inward Turn”, Lehan emphasizes that Baudelaire consciously looked for such diversity in the crowd. In other words, Baudelaire’s poet can be regarded as a voice coming from the periphery, though this periphery is local, and limited in context. In the poem, “The Eyes of the Poor”, Baudelaire explores the emerging inter-class conflict in the metropolis by delineating a contrast between the contempt of his lover for the poor people standing outside the glittering glass of the new cafe, and the contemplating eyes of those people ‘in rags’. The artist thus shows “how difficult it is to understand each other”, and “how much thought is incommunicable”. This discussion on centre- periphery dialectic is relevant even in the contemporary literature where *flânerie* is being revived. The marginality of Baudelaire’s *flâneur* within the urban interior can be categorized in two different ways. His marginality is to be determined within his city and within his class; meaning, the *flâneur* is doubly marginalized as he belongs to the lower urban class, which is peripheral in comparison to

the bourgeois class. Secondly, in spite of being in the crowd, he is alone, and a man apart; therefore, he is in a marginalized position even in the crowd. Benjamin considers Baudelaire's flâneur as an uprooted urban stroller, who is neither at home in his class nor in his birthplace; if he feels at home somewhere, it is only in the crowd, even though he stays apart, and struggles to be 'a man of the crowd' as opposed to being 'a man in the crowd'. This marginality creates a distance, which the flâneur consciously retains throughout his peregrinations.

The definition of exile, according to Baudelaire, is significantly distinct in his portrayal of the wanderer poet. He introduces an artist-flâneur, who in spite of being a native, suffers from internal exile. "In Baudelaire's terms, exile undoubtedly denotes the process of separation of one's roots, the natural and familiar environment. This uprooting, however, does not have to be external, both physically and geographically; rather, the displacement can be wholly internal" (Vaso 5). The changing society and its deformations make him homeless even at home. This internal exile is, on the other hand, a boon to Baudelaire's flâneur. Exilic condition felt acutely in his native place enables him to search for solace in the crowd. The study of modern conditions and its deteriorating effect on individuals, culture and tradition can be found in his poems. He remains anonymous in the crowd, and his anonymity paves the way for subjective investigation of the nineteenth century urban city. Walter Benjamin, in his essays on Baudelaire, *The Writer of Modern Life*, regards Baudelaire as the first modern poet. According to Benjamin, the poet successfully captures and analyzes the roots of modern society through the portrayal of the flâneur and his peregrinations in the city. Benjamin considers the poet's analysis as a foretelling of the coming decade, thus highlighting its effectiveness even in the twenty-first century. In order to find the space for the internally exiled self of the poet, Baudelaire places him in the crowd. Freedom achieved through the negotiation of poet's self with the modern space explicates

exile's control over space, narrative and artist. Baudelaire's attempt to internalize the exilic self is also a choice that the poet consciously performs.

1.2 Benjamin's Flâneur: An Analytic Figure

In the twentieth century, Walter Benjamin, German philosopher and cultural critic, revives the study of the flâneur. Benjamin particularly studies the modern urban space, and through his critical analyses on Baudelaire's flâneur and the study of the metropolis, he revitalizes the literary tradition of the flâneur; and consequently, the method of flânerie is introduced in the study of urban space, social history as well as in urban literature. Benjamin's study of the flâneur establishes flânerie as a methodological approach to study modernity and the conditions of modernity. The figure of the flâneur, according to Benjamin, is regarded as an analytic force. Benjamin suggests that Baudelaire's poetry and its analytical approach to study modern man and his peregrinations around the city represents the inner quest of the modern self. Baudelaire views the flâneur as a literary persona, but Benjamin's interpretation/ study of the flâneur is more critical, and reaches beyond the field of literature. In terms of its sociological implementation, Walter Benjamin regards this process of flânerie as a methodological approach through which a social historian can study the modern city. Benjamin regards Baudelaire's poetry as an accurate analysis of the modern society, as well as a close reading of the conditions of modernism. "Benjamin's acute vision accurately defines Baudelaire who already in the nineteenth century diagnoses most of the diseases that will plague modern man from the poet's age to twenty first century" (Vaso, 2).

Mike Savage, in his essay, "Walter Benjamin's Urban Thought: A Critical Analysis" points out that Benjamin's interest in the study of the flâneur is not based on its popularity as a

social archetype specific to the nineteenth century modern urban context; Benjamin regards the flâneur as a critical and theoretical approach, or more specifically, a research method to study the effects of modernism and the metropolitan city.

His prime focus is on the flâneur, the street wanderer who is able to subvert conventional meanings and values and thereby offers a critique of the impersonal notion of the 'mass'. Benjamin's interest in the flâneur, furthermore, is not primarily concerned with delineating it as an actual social type which existed in specific urban historical settings, but as a theoretical, critical, counter to the idea of mass. (Savage 38)

This method, as Benjamin applies in his study, is to observe and investigate the signs and metaphors of modernity. Mike Savage further shows that Benjamin's study of the urban space is an important medium where the past and present are juxtaposed, thus constructing an alternative historical and social narrative to subvert the dominant linear historical narrative. "Benjamin's strategy was therefore to displace, by questioning the boundaries between past and present, the notion of linear historical time which was sustained by narrative form" (Savage 40). Baudelaire's portrayal of an alternative psychogeography of modern cosmopolitan cities enabled Benjamin to propose a new way of approaching the loitering subjects. "Via the act of strolling the flâneur did not just observe urban life; but was according to Benjamin, engaged in an 'archaeological' process of unearthing the myths and 'collective dreams' of modernity" (Milburn 5). His study also unearths an important characteristic of the analytic force of the flâneur: the power to sustain and morph according to time and space. Benjamin shows the feasibility of the method of flânerie in forming meaningful connections to one's external environment (space, time and history).

Benjamin's works such as his essay, "The Paris of the Second Empire" (1938) and the incomplete posthumous work, *The Arcades Project* (1988), have contributed significantly in reviving the study of the flâneur. His research on the techniques of flânerie delineates the

dynamics of this modern avant-garde artist-flâneur's peregrinations in the metropolitan space. The German critic tries to capture the class tensions, alienation, urbanization, capitalism, conditions of commodifications, and the after-effects of modernism in the metropolitan space of Paris through the loitering subject of Baudelaire's prose and poetry. It is important to note that Benjamin's study of the modern flâneur has also contributed to the study of high modernism in the twentieth century. In the essay "Fancy Footwork", Rob Shields regards Benjamin's flâneur as an urban connoisseur, who has the pedestrian knowledge of the streets and the urban environment.

The flâneur is like a detective seeking clues who reads people's characters not only from the physiognomy of their faces but via a social physiognomy of the streets. The image and activity of flânerie is tied to the emergence of the popular genre of detective novel and also to the literary practice and social justification of the labour time of journalists who, like the flâneur, put their observations both 'for sale' on the market and wish to pursue flânerie for their own purposes (Benjamin {M 16. 4} 1989: 463-4). (Shields 63)

Rob Shields here agrees with Benjamin's statement that the flâneur is a prefigure to that of a detective. He stresses on the production of the narrative of flânerie, which is put 'for sale on the market', meaning the narrative that literary tradition of the flâneur produces is also for literary consumption. Moreover, Benjamin formulates his study of the flâneur as an apt method of appropriating and understanding urban space. Shields describes Benjamin's flâneur as a 'crowd practice', which is mostly 'other directed'; flânerie is, therefore, an 'act of doing' in Michel Decerteu's terms. Here, the crowd can be regarded as both fellow walkers and audience. The flâneur is seeing and being seen, as a result, he also becomes a part of the urban spectacles. However, his anonymity in the crowd is retained with cautiousness, and his crowd behaviour is not something that everyone can carry out, it requires spatial practice and experience.

As Shields rightly points out in his discussion on ‘Walter Benjamin’s note on flânerie’ that Benjamin has not focused much on the non-European subjects, Mohicans, whom the flâneur considers fascinating objects from his investigative writerly perspective. The Strangers are as dislocated as the flâneur is in his native space. *“The Stranger is thus a foreigner who becomes like a native, whereas the flâneur is the inverse, a native who becomes like a foreigner”* (Italicized in origin, Shields 68). Shields makes this interesting remark on sociologist Simmel’s analogy of the Stranger and Benjamin’s interpretation of the flâneur. He points out how the Stranger and the flâneur complement each other as both of the figures are of the “modern metropolis and specifically of the arcades” (Shields 68). Because of the mass mobilization across Europe, Paris also witnessed foreigners settling in the metropolitan space. The insiders and outsiders in the metropolis are equally dislocated in the modern nation space. The Stranger who settles in the metropolis and lives as an insider is, nevertheless, an outsider because of his national and cultural difference. What is important to highlight here is how these figures problematize the gap between the foreign and the local in the modern metropolitan space. Shields observes that they violate “the division of near and far and forcing us to rearrange our cognitive understanding of the spatial distribution of social relations” (68).

1.3 Exile and Displacement:

In an era of mass migration and refugee crisis, the flâneur can also be a migrant, refugee or an exile. As a result, the perspective of an exiled artist/ subject needs to be studied in order to investigate the relation between the flâneur and the issue of exile. This section, therefore, focuses on Edward Said’s “Reflections on Exile”, and formulates an understanding of an exiled subject/ artist.

And just beyond the frontier between “us and the “outsiders” is the perilous territory of not-belonging: this is to where in a primitive time peoples were banished, and where in the modern era immense aggregates of humanity loiter as refugees and displaced persons. (Said 140)

“The territory of not belonging” as highlighted by Edward Said, is one of the contemporary subjects in modern literature. Said defines exile as “the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home” (137). In his essay “Reflections on Exile”, Said investigates the way exile has been established as a motif in the literature of the modern era. While emphasizing on the prominence of exile in modern literature, he also highlights that the modern era is perceived as ‘spiritually orphaned and alienated, the age of anxiety and estrangement’ (137). His critical study of the literature by and about exiles constructs a unique field of study where refugee, émigré, immigrant’s narrative constitute a specific style in writing. The subject matters that come along with it are essentially connected to the mass mobilization in the Western world. Said argues that ‘dislocated subject’ can offer new ways of thinking, as “seeing “the entire world as a foreign land makes possible originality of vision” (148).

Many artists, writers and poets who experienced an acute sense of homelessness, tried to explore the concept of exile in their respective fields, and thus channelled their anguish and pain in writing/narration. Certainly, writing about exile is difficult as it compels the writers to relive the trauma and agony, but on the other hand, the personal experiences narrated and illustrated in writing contribute to establishing the genre of the literature of exile. This genre projects multiplicity of perspectives on issues related to homelessness, rootlessness and identity politics, and, it puts forward alternative and unconventional understandings of nation, culture, identity, belongingness and home. Interestingly, the marginal, peripheral and in-between spaces of a

nation, get voiced in this genre of literature, and thereby, challenge the dominant narrative of homogeneity and rigid forms of modern nation-space and identity.

In his essay, Said talks about various kinds of exiles, and his definition of exile includes physical exiles, such as, political banishment or uprooting caused by political reasons, wartime catastrophe etc. However, my thesis demonstrates that exile cannot be constrained to only these aforementioned categories; exile can also be internal, psychological, and even voluntary.

Expatriation of European writers in the early twentieth century, economic emigration of Asians and Africans to Europe and America, incarceration of European prisoners in Australia- each of these cases can also be studied in relation to the issue of exile. Interestingly, Said distinguishes between the subjects of exile and refugee. He argues that the term ‘refugee’ bears a political connotation, and is a “creation of the twentieth century-state”, whereas exile bears “a touch of solitude and spirituality” (144). In the case of expatriation and voluntary migration, Said highlights the issue of choice and self-imposition of exile, and notes that their experiences regarding exile do not fall under its rigid propositions. Nevertheless, exile’s definition, experience and narrative vary from person to person, and context to context. It is not limited to migrating to a foreign country; it can be experienced within national boundaries. Exile can also be hereditary; it can be passed from one generation to another in immigrant and migrant communities. In order to study exile and its complex dynamics, it is important to consider all forms of exile; an all-inclusive approach to the concept of exile and narrative of exile can bring substantial changes in contemporary studies of exile.

The status of exile enables an exiled subject to look beyond the established notion of nationhood and home. It is their dislocated position which facilitates him/her to look at history’s biases towards a majority of the nation; thus, directing their efforts to discover the nation space

from the margins. His essay highlights the resistance the exiled subject's narrative can produce against the homogeneity of the modern nation. The issue of nationalism and its association with exile is another essential point in this discussion; one form of belongingness negates the existence of different heterogeneous sections. Said's essay is, therefore, essential for understanding the geo-political and social conflicts caused by a homogenous form of identity and nationhood in the era of cosmopolitanism, or transnationalism. Said's discussion of the issue of homelessness, marginality and alternative forms of seeing modern nation-space can enable contemporary literature to create new forms of literary space.

1.4 Bhabha's DissemiNation: Diversity and Marginal voices

Homi K. Bhabha in his essay, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation", also expresses similar concerns regarding the narrative of the modern nation. From the experience of an émigré settler, he argues that the 'homogenous', 'cohesive' definition of the modern nation fails to portray a true image. Its holistic portrayal will be possible when the marginal, in-between spaces will get voice in the narrative; Bhabha thus emphasizes narratives that echo heterogeneity and the diverse nature of the modern nation. In the first sub-section of the essay, 'The Time of the Nation', his deconstructive approach projects the Nation as a site of difference and dysfunction. Referring to Hobsbawm's terms such as 'nation's margins' and 'the migrant's exile', Bhabha proposes to write the narrative of nation from these aforesaid perspectives. His focus on 'temporality' instead of 'historicity' questions the 'settled' notion of nation, identity and belongingness. In order to elaborate on this issue, he identifies the importance of cultural identifications of marginalized entities, and communities within the nation.

“The space of the modern nation people is never simply horizontal” (Bhabha 202). The ‘liminality and in-between spaces’ of the modern nation, according to Bhabha’s essay, have to be studied in order to understand the problematics of modernism. Plurality and heterogeneity are intrinsic characteristics of modernism, although they have long been ignored in the discourse of the modern Western nation. Bhabha says that nationalism can never be defined through homogeneity, collectivity or unity; he sees the ‘national cohesion’ as a falsification of the nation-narration. “It is precisely in reading between these borderlines of the nation-space that we can see how the concept of the people emerges within a range of discourses as a double narrative movement” (Bhabha 208). His dictum “out of many one” is an approach which can formulate a space where multiple possibilities can emerge through diverse, alternative and marginal narratives. Moreover, his ‘microscopic’, ‘elementary’ views regarding national space and belongingness can bring the multiplicity of ‘the locality of experience’ into the national space. Thus, Bhabha’s proposition suggests highlighting the marginalities and temporalities of experience, which enable the narration of nation to defy the linear, consistent historicity of the modern nation, and instead establish an all-inclusive approach.

Borrowing the Freudian concept of ‘the uncanny’, Bhabha’s essay also highlights the understanding of the liminal, uncertain states which emerge at the margins of modern nations. According to his discussion on nation and narration, Bhabha sees immense potentials and latent possibilities in peripheral and marginal nation spaces. He considers the discourses emerging from the margins as the truth of modernity and modern nation.

If, in our travelling theory, we are alive to the metaphoricity of the peoples of imagined communities-migrant or metropolitan-then we shall find that the space of the modern nation people is never simply horizontal. Their metaphoric movement requires a kind of ‘doubleness’ in writing; a temporality in representation that moves between cultural

formations and social processes without a centered casual logic. And such cultural movements disperse the homogeneous, visual time of the horizontal society. (Bhabha 202)

Under the sub-heading of “The Space of the People”, Bhabha looks at the importance of the ‘performative’ in the narrative of nation; and argues that it emphasizes the splits and divisions within the nation as well as the heterogeneity of its population. As a result, it incorporates liminal spaces which are inhabited by marginal communities and minorities. This is also the source of alternative histories, opposing powers, and sites of cultural difference and heterogeneity. Moreover, Bhabha emphasizes on the minority discourse in the nation-space, saying “Minority discourse sets the act of emergence in the antagonistic *in-between* of image and sign, the accumulative and the adjunct, presence and proxy. It contests genealogies of ‘origin’ that lead to claims for cultural supremacy and historical priority.” (Bhabha 225)

1.5 Third Zone and the Postcolonial Cosmopolitan Flâneur:

Similar to Bhabha’s idea of the heterogeneous narratives of modern-nation, Simon Gikandi, in his essay, “Between Roots and Routes: Cosmopolitanism and the Claims of Locality”, discusses about the need to study the cosmopolitan metropolis from the perspectives of the marginalized subjects, particularly the postcolonial subjects. Gikandi introduces the idea of “what it means to be a postcolonial subject in the metropolitan cultures of the modern west” (Gikandi, 22). This essay discusses the postcolonial flâneur’s space in relation to its position in the modern cosmopolitan space. Interestingly, Gikandi notes a crucial distinction between cosmopolitan elites and refugees. Cosmopolitans exercise their power and privilege to fit into the “global cultural circuit” (Gikandi 23); while refugees remain neglected in dominant official narratives as they bear “signs of a dislocated locality” (Gikandi 23). Gikandi argues that without

the ‘redemptive narrative’ produced at the margins of cosmopolitan modern nation, the discourse of cosmopolitanism remains incomplete (26). Gikandi, by referring to Kwame Anthony Appiah’s work, further argues that there is a sharp distinction between the ‘old migrants/ old diasporas who began in an involuntary exile’ (28) and the celebratory cosmopolitanism, and ‘free-willing cosmopolitan subjects’. Gikandi emphasizes the postcolonial migrant subjects and refugees, saying, “global cultural flows are still dominated by those coerced migrants rather than the free-willing cosmopolitan subjects” (28). He discusses the two central challenges in studying the space of postcolonial subjects in cosmopolitan space. First, he stresses the issue of ‘violence and statelessness as conditions of postcolonial identities’; secondly, he highlights ‘cultural blockage’ refugees face when they enter the cosmopolitan space (28).

Gikandi proposes a ‘third zone’ which will address the localities and temporalities created at the modern nation, and he further claims that a new vocabulary is needed to address their issues. Gikandi emphasizes the representation of the marginalized migrant communities, who are not yet cosmopolitan, but share the same space with the cosmopolitans and postcolonial elites. He notes the importance of understanding difference, localities within cosmopolitan cities, and the issue of exile, migration and statelessness. He repeatedly emphasizes on the representation of those migrant people and refugees, who do not have the cultural and economic asset to move seamlessly across borders. Their struggle to preserve their local identity and ethnicity even in the global cities signifies their resistance to the identity of global citizen.

The discussion of the *flâneur*, alienated self, along with the concepts i.e. exile and marginal voices in nation-space, leads this thesis to look for the connection between these concepts in contemporary literature. In order to locate the Baudelairian *flâneur* in the contemporary narrative of exile, it is important to understand how the artist had perceived exile

in modern space, and how much has this perception changed in the twentieth century. Nineteenth century witnessed the beginning of mass migration, and what began in the nineteenth century has become an essential characteristic of Western countries. The presence of immigrants, exiles, émigrés in Western society, and the multiplicity of perspectives in nation-making demands a fresh scrutiny of the metropolitan space. Therefore, Baudelaire's project of understanding the city-space through the experienced lenses of dislocated loitering subject (*flâneur*) is even more relevant in the twentieth as well as twenty-first century Western society. Reading the faces of the crowd, recording urban images, investigating class conflict, and studying the signs of modernity in the metropolitan space, Baudelaire's poet captures the true essence of modernity in all its complexity. Baudelaire's *flâneur's* reading is still relevant, valid and effective in the sense that it can be used as a method to understand the dynamics of space and exile in present society. Also, how mass migration has problematized the narrative of transnationalism and exile can be studied using the technique of *flânerie*.

The dislocated subject's space in contemporary Europe and America cannot be understood without acknowledging their marginalized, alienated space/ position. As Bhabha's essay has illustrated the importance of incorporating diverse, marginal voices of the nation in order to formulate a holistic approach in mapping the nation-space, the new *flâneurs* can illustrate Bhabha's theoretical proposition. If one of the voices of the margin takes on the role of the new *flâneur*, and applies Benjamin's methodological approach in the investigation of the transnational cosmopolitan metropolitan space, then it will surely bring substantial changes in the literature of the *flâneur* as well as in the narrative of exile and marginality. The following chapters further investigate the new possibilities the new *flâneur* can bring in the narrative of *flânerie* through the critical analysis of exile, migration and marginal space.

Chapter 2

Wanderer in Exile: A Post-Holocaust Reading of Marginal Histories of Europe in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*

How everything is constantly lapsing into oblivion with every extinguished life, how the world is, as it were, draining itself, in that the history of countless places and objects which themselves have no power of memory is never heard, never described or passed on. (Sebald 24)

Austerlitz, W. G. Sebald's final work (2011), approaches the issue of forgotten history, exile and displacement through the lenses of a peregrinator. Sebald's peregrinatory novel particularly studies the buried past of Europe and the organizational and collaborative atrocities waged upon the Jewish population during the Second World War. While facing haunting memories and traumatic episodes in his effort to discover the events of The Holocaust and its intricate connection with his true origin, Sebald's protagonist, Jacques Austerlitz, focuses on both public and private histories, and offers his critical observation and analysis of postwar Europe. Significantly, this wandering protagonist's philosophical musings, critical observations and personal history produce a disorienting effect upon the readers as they explore the barbarous episodes of European civilization legitimized by nationalist propaganda and xenophobic culture. While the narrative breaks the barrier between fact and fiction through a unique amalgamation of documentation, historical archaeology, photography, memoir, travel writing; the partial resurrection of Benjamin's flâneur is distinctly evident in the novel. Flânerie as an analytical lens and a methodological approach is intelligently applied here as the philosophical and intellectual discussions between Austerlitz and the unnamed narrator, and their peregrinations focus on subjects like the history of fortifications, architecture of railway stations, history of barbarity, erasure of history and collective forgetfulness. Interestingly, Sebald's narrator is also a keen

observer and a wanderer roaming around European cities, and the two flâneurs in the novel are seen to meet only by chance while wandering and musing over their shared interest in history. This novel draws heavily on the subjects of exile, displacement and loss of identity. This chapter studies Sebald's use of flânerie drawing on Benjamin's flâneur as a methodological approach in analyzing the urban space. It investigates the issues of exile and displacement, and illustrates the effects they have on Austerlitz's peregrinations. In order to critically evaluate the flâneur's identity, Edward Said's reflections on exile, and Sigmund Freud's discussion on 'The uncanny' is briefly discussed. Furthermore, this chapter sheds light on Austerlitz's awareness of marginal spaces, experiences and histories in the narrative of flânerie. Finally, with a brief discussion of Homi Bhabha's emphasis on liminal and uncertain spaces in the narrative of the modern Western nation, Sebald's critical reading of marginal spaces, histories and the issue of collective forgetfulness is discussed.

2.1 Sebald's Use of Flânerie: (Archaeological Process and Methodological Approach)

In Walter Benjamin's *The Writer of Modern Life* and *The Arcades Project* (1988), flânerie is studied as a methodological approach that studies the conditions of modernity and the modern man. Benjamin sees the figure of flâneur as an analytic force that enables the artist to read and investigate the signs, myths and metaphors of the modern city in order to critically analyze the metropolitan space. Although Sebald's protagonist and the narrator are using the techniques of flânerie, their aim is not to study only the metropolis; rather, their study is directed towards the historical archaeology of European cities, while particularly concentrating on the events of the Holocaust and its insurmountable effect on European history and civilization. However, with his act of peregrinations, Austerlitz walks the path of Benjamin's flâneur. Tracing

the lines of forgotten history, and studying Europe's postwar society, this flâneur offers a critique of postwar Europe. Similar to Benjamin's archaeological process of unearthing the myths and 'collective dreams of modernity', the novel uses the method of historical archaeology to illustrate the cracks in the modern European nation-space. In Mike Savage's essay "Walter Benjamin's Urban Thought", Savage notes that Benjamin's urban writing is a critical device which enables him to disrupt the conventional narratives as well as question conventional values (40). In *Austerlitz*, the narrative disrupts the barrier between past and present, fact and fiction, public history and memoir, and thereby offers an alternative representation of Europe.

James Wood in the Introduction reflects on this disorienting journey highlighting that this 'journey of detection' (Sebald vii) is also taken by the readers as well, since the narrative compels us to see Europe in a new light. Nonetheless, Sebald's method of flânerie is more complex and intense in terms of its discussing the city space. While the unnamed narrator first meets Austerlitz at Antwerp, he emphasizes how Austerlitz is different from the other travelers in his way of approaching the site, and how his knowledge about space and history seems to be a kind of "historical metaphysic" (Sebald 13). Austerlitz's expertise in architectural history of Europe, and his powerful observations and insights astound the narrator. The narrator notes his interest in "the architectural style of the capitalist era" gradually loses its academic purpose (Sebald 33), and Austerlitz embarks on a journey solely motivated by personal interest. Austerlitz's obsession with European space, particularly the railway stations, finally enables him to reach his forgotten past. As a child refugee, Austerlitz reaches England on the Kindertransport in 1939, and subsequently, is adopted by a Welsh couple. Amnesia and repressed fears conceal Sebald's identity as a Jewish refugee for fifty years. Significantly, the history of displacement

and refugee status conditions Austerlitz's way of interacting with the urban space of Europe, and it is marked with a sense of detachment and uncertainty.

In *The New Yorker* article, "Why You Should Read W.G. Sebald", Mark O'Connell highlights that "it was Sebald's conviction that the recent history of his country could not be written about directly, could not be approached head-on, as it were, because the enormity of its horrors paralyzed our ability to think about them morally and rationally. These horrors had to be approached obliquely." O'Connell's statement thus points to Sebald's inability to approach the subject of the Holocaust in a direct manner. This is a probable reason for which Sebald has chosen to incorporate Benjamin's methodological and archaeological use of *flânerie* to delineate modernity's greatest toll on humanity and civilization. Through the lenses of a modern critic-flâneur, Sebald's narrative unsettles the reader with its detailed, critical and excavating gaze upon the terrible past of Germany, and in a broader sense, Europe. At the beginning of the novel, sharing his observations on the history of fortifications in Antwerp, Austerlitz points out that these were 'fundamentally wrong-headed ideas', and these mighty projects only project the insecurities and vulnerabilities of the European rulers who spent enormous amount of time and money in building large fortresses for the purpose of defending the city which resulted in attracting more enemies and causing greater calamity. Austerlitz's observations signify the pointlessness of century-old forts in Europe, thereby setting the tone of a critic-flâneur, offering a criticism of Europe's apparent glorious past.

Mike Savage highlights that 'the urban is important in Benjamin's argument not because it is the prime site of modern experience- but as the site in which possibilities for redemption could best be explored' (38). Interestingly, Austerlitz's peregrination in Paris, London, Antwerp and Prague is not marked with a hope of redemption. To Austerlitz, the modern architecture,

history and space do not only hold the prime importance of modern condition, but also conceal modern Europe's history of violence and barbarity, and this concealed, forgotten past signifies modern Europe's failure in upholding the emancipatory ideas of the enlightenment.

In modern literature and thought, the flâneur and the cosmopolitan are ambiguous figures that embody both the dark side of modernity as well as its hopes, the latter of which include mobility, progress, and rationality and the aspirations implied by transnationality, such as heterogeneous identities and global citizenship. In contrast to this ambiguity, Sebald's novel presents a counter-figure drained of enlightenment's and modernity's emancipatory promise. (Bauer 235)

In the essay, "The Dystopian Entwinement of Histories and Identities in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*", Karin Bauer describes the protagonist as 'an ambiguous blend of modern sensibilities and postmodern hybridity' (233). Bauer, too, emphasizes the partial resurrection of the solitary figure of modernity in *Austerlitz* through the portrayal of the protagonist Austerlitz, and rightly points out that this depiction is not a mere reproduction of alienated subjectivity, 'rather the novel constructs the damaged subject of postwar society' (233). Bauer argues that Sebald's text produces a dystopian vision of the figure of the flâneur and the cosmopolitan good European, and highlights that Sebald's exiled flâneur is devoid of 'the messianic hope of Benjamin'. The discussion goes on to claim that Sebald's flâneur does not hold any modernist emancipatory promise; rather it 'invokes a negative evocation of the modern tradition' (233). He also points out that Sebald's novel questions the enlightenment narratives of history and identity, and diminishes the hopes for redemption and emancipation propagated by the narratives of modern thinkers (235). 'The text's melancholic vision of loss and displacement', finally leads to a portrayal of an inverted Bildungsroman where the comfort of home, the discovery of the self and personal growth, and the final resolution is never truly achieved (235).

The European modern urban space, as depicted in the novel, holds the terrible past of bloodshed, murder, looting and annihilation. His investigations are carried out in Prague, Paris, Germany and London as he looks at their history of collaboration during the Second World War. It is the damaged subject of postwar Europe who looks at the past without any hope for redemption. There are layers of unforgivable atrocities with which he comes into contact, and as a Holocaust survivor Austerlitz fails to come to terms with the truth. As a result, Austerlitz experiences multiple episodes of nervous breakdown and hysterical epilepsy. Austerlitz's inability to accept the historical documentations of the Holocaust as chronicled in the Ghetto Museum, Theresienstadt or Adler's book, shows that the burden of this truth is devastating for the modern European.

2.2 Displacement, Exile and the presence of the “Uncanny”

The hybrid quality of the novel excludes the possibility of reading the text only as a flâneur's narrative. *Austerlitz* can also be categorized as one of the finest examples of the literature of exile. The exiled protagonist, in search of his roots, is provided with a unique sense of space and identity. The Palestinian theorist, Edward W. Said in his essay, “Reflections on Exile”, discusses the exiled subject's ability to see ‘the entire world as a foreign land’, and how it ensures an authentic and unbiased understanding of space, and ‘makes possible originality of vision’ (Said 148). Austerlitz's awareness of exile and displacement remains submerged by amnesia for most of his life, but his peregrinations and critical observations of space reflect the ‘originality of vision’ of an exile. Reflecting on the exiles' broken history and the impossible task of restoring that identity, Edward Said says, “to reassemble an exile's broken history into a new whole-is virtually unbearable, and virtually impossible in today's world.” (Said, 141). It is evident that in Sebald's inverted Bildungsroman reaching a final resolution, and a linear progress

of self is unattainable for Austerlitz. On the other hand, exile endows the artist with an acute sense of ‘solitude and spirituality’ (Said, 144). The solitary wanderer in Sebald’s novel is an exemplification of Said’s exiled artist. However, Said’s essay distinguishes exiles from refugees, mentioning that the word refugee has a political undertone, and exiles possess the choice of living in exile; thus, exiles possess a certain kind of privilege compared to refugee. Austerlitz, on the other hand, is both an exile and a refugee. Through the help of his foster parents, he obtains a secure life, but he is unable to erase the identity of a Jewish refugee. His sense of isolation and displacement as an exiled wanderer is equally evident in his investigations of modern Europe’s nation-space. Although he embodies as one of “the undocumented people suddenly lost without a tellable history” (Said, 139), he takes the task of extracting and documenting histories of the undocumented people of the Holocaust. Austerlitz, therefore, appropriates Said’s idea of the exiled artist in a new manner.

Austerlitz’s experience in Parisian railway stations is marked by “both blissful happiness and profound misfortune” (Sebald 34). His penchant for investigating the railway spaces, and the ‘incomprehensible currents of emotion’ (Sebald 34) point to the dislocated refugee’s experience in dealing with the trauma of forced migration. This ‘solitary figure on the edge of the agitated crowd’ (Sebald 39) who bears the nomadic appearance of a displaced man highlights Sebald’s fundamental association with the issues of exile and displacement. For fifty years, he subconsciously denies any clues, evidences and signs that might trace his forgotten past. His interest in studying monumental public buildings, particularly railway architecture, brings him to the Ladies’ Waiting room at the Liverpool Street Station in the late 1980s; there, in a momentary flashback Austerlitz sees his foster parents and the boy they have come to meet. The Ladies’ Waiting room where he stands transfixed for hours, is about to be demolished, and Sebald’s

protagonist finally reaches a turning point, after which he begins to consciously trace the forgotten lines of his past. In order to understand this flâneur's association with the subject of exile, it is important to analyse the instances in the narrative where Austerlitz comes across uncanny memories, fears and traumas that illuminate the hidden and repressed truths about his past. The uncanny memories and experiences bear a strong argument as to how Austerlitz's flânerie is directed by his displacement.

The subject of the "uncanny" is a province of this kind. It undoubtedly belongs to all that is terrible-to all that arouses dead and creeping horror; it is equally certain, too, that the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with whatever excites dread. (Freud 1)

Sigmund Freud in his essay, "The Uncanny", defines the term uncanny as a state of mind that responds to the hidden, repressed unconscious, and can result in nervousness, neurotic breakdown, and even a feeling of creeping horror. He further discusses the German term *heimlich* as the 'familiar', 'belonging to the home', or 'native'; and illustrates how this 'familiar' can also simultaneously become *unheimlich*, or unhome, slipping into an uncanny space. Freud's analysis examines how the reactivation of childhood memories and unconscious childhood fears can lead to the feeling of the un-homeliness or the uncanny. If the home is the place where one is seemingly content because the secrets are successfully repressed, the un-home is the place where the obscured is brought to surface. The state of the uncanny can thus lead us to the repressed, hidden part of the self, which is accidentally or subconsciously ruptured through some external elements triggering the concealed part, to become visible in behavioural patterns or emotional responses. In Austerlitz's case, his unconscious childhood fears are the memories of forced migration and the agony of leaving 'the familiar' that is his home, community, language and identity.

But then again, it was also true that he was still obeying an impulse which he himself, to this day, did not really understand, but which was somehow linked to his early fascination with the idea of a network such as that of the entire railway system. (Sebald 33)

The repressed memory of being rescued from the Holocaust is disrupted in the railway stations of Paris. His obsession with archaeological studies on railway stations signifies his subconscious yearning for home, and only the railway lines can connect him with his origin. For the most of his life, he keeps investigating the railway architecture, and his repressed self thus channels itself through his obsessive peregrinations. Austerlitz tells the narrator that he is unable to understand ‘the agony of leave taking and the fear of foreign places’ in railway stations and its apparent connection with his archaeological studies (Sebald 14). Austerlitz, is thus unknowingly reaching towards the revelation of the repressed self. Unable to overcome his uncanny feelings regarding new places and people, he remains aloof and detached from the crowd. The figure of Austerlitz epitomizes the inexplicable trauma the Holocaust casts on him. The loss of one’s home, native language, and most importantly, the loss of identity influences this peregrinator’s ways of seeing and expressing the urban space. He tells the narrator that although his investigations have lost the purpose of an academic dissertation, he continues to perform historical archaeological investigation due to an unexplainable impulse. It is evident that Austerlitz is driven with an exile’s detachment from home, and the unbearable traumas of living with a blurring memory of home, identity and roots. His sense of cultural belongingness is never truly achieved, and the novel sheds light on the difficulty of truly knowing the protagonist. James Wood, in the introduction, illustrates on the portrayal of Austerlitz, saying, “A life has been filled in for us, but not a self. He remains as unknowable at the end as he was at the beginning” (Sebald viii).

As Austerlitz's actions are driven by an exile's yearning for home, his exilic condition compels him to believe in the exile's instincts. "We take almost all the decisive steps in our lives as a result of slight inner adjustments of which we are barely conscious" (Sebald 134). As soon as having another visionary experience in a Bloomsbury bookshop, after listening to a radio programme where two women talk about their experience of surviving the Holocaust through the help of the Kindertransport, he instinctively decides to go to Prague to see if he can trace his long forgotten origin. With 'an orphaned frame of mind' (265) the flâneur ventures into an unknown city where with the help of State Archive and his instinctive search for locating his home in an unknown city, he meets Vera, who used to be his nanny. Regaining the long lost mother tongue, Sebald digs deeper into his origin and encounters the uncanny, repressed memories of his earlier self. Wandering around the empty streets of Terezín, and seeing the closed windows and doors, Austerlitz deeply feels the presence of an uncanny darkness that is concealed behind them. Sebald's flâneur suffers from amnesia, a psychological phenomenon common among the victims of the Holocaust, which causes him to forget the events of his displacement. The closed doors and windows thus symbolize his repressed self as well as the horrors of the Holocaust. As a result, this exiled loitering subject is enabled to trace the chasm between his self and his home.

2.3 Marginal Space, Dismembered Histories, History of Violence and Investigation of Europe's Collective Forgetfulness:

Carrying an 'unrelieved despair' (Sebald 126), Austerlitz begins his nocturnal wanderings through London towards the marginal suburban areas. For almost a year, Austerlitz continues his nocturnal wanderings in the remotest areas of London, and while returning back with 'the poor souls who flow from the suburbs towards the center' (Sebald 127), he finds

uncanny familiarity in their faces. He associates this resemblance with the people living in the marginal areas of London with the flâneur's interest in marginal spaces. Similar to marginal histories, he feels a certain kind of solidarity with the marginal people, who, too, do not belong in the modern metropolises of Europe. Karin Bauer, in his essay, "The Dystopian Entwinement of Histories and Identities in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*", also points to Austerlitz's attention to the margins and peripheries. It is evident that he is not drawn towards the grand boulevards, or glittering esplanades, rather he is interested in the unconsidered soulless parts of the cities. His nocturnal wanderings often make him walk towards the suburbs, and remote areas, "outlying parts of metropolis" (Bauer 236). Highlighting Austerlitz's interest in the marginal histories and spaces, Bauer points out that "it may be surmised that Austerlitz's recuperation of the histories of marginalia contributes, nevertheless, to the hope of the hopeless by maintaining the hope that these histories are in some way important" (Bauer 239).

Interestingly, Austerlitz's visit to Terezín in 1992 is directed by his personal interest in the events of the Holocaust, but here, too, Sebald uses the methodological approach of Benjamin's flâneur in the process of performing historical archaeology. Austerlitz finds it extremely difficult to learn the horrible past of Terezín, however, he continues to investigate the space in a very flâneur-like manner. He sees Prague not only as the lost home, but also as a place which bears the burden of mass murder. To learn the 'history of the persecution' which Austerlitz's 'avoidance system' kept him from learning for fifty years, he visits the Ghetto Museum. His visit to the museum leads him to perform a detailed observation of the maps, population policy of the Nationalist Socialists, forced labour system throughout Central Europe, the origins and places of the death of the victims and the systematic methods of annihilation of the entire Jewish population of Europe (Sebald 198-199). Tormented and bewildered with this

revelation, Austerlitz notices that Nazi Germany's massacre of thousands of Jews was performed with their 'obsessive organizational skill' which emphasized their 'mania for order and purity' (Sebald 198). The narrative here reflects on Czech's nationalism that is stained with the murders of thousands of Jews. Mass nationalist propaganda, history of betrayal and hypocrisy marks this modern nation's narrative. However, Austerlitz finds that the burden of guilt cannot be felt by its inhabitants, but only by the city's uncanny silence. "And the people of Terezín didn't come anyway" says the woman at the cash desk of the Ghetto Museum (Sebald 198); and this is the prime evidence of their collective forgetfulness. Sebald's protagonist informs the reader about this fatal flaw of the modern nation, highlighting the absence of guilt and repentance in the people of Terezín. Later, after going through the descriptions of the Terezín ghetto, Austerlitz feels the uncanny presence of those sixty thousand dead Jews, who he believes have never left the place. "It suddenly seemed to me, with the greatest clarity, that they had never been taken away after all, but were still living crammed into those buildings and basements and attics, as if they were incessantly going up and down the stairs" (Sebald 200).

In the Introduction James Wood emphasizes the impossible project of "saving the dead", showing that return of the dead signifies two important aspects. First, the 'mute witnesses' are 'judging us for our failure to save them' (Sebald x) and secondly, 'the victims seem to be looking at us' and 'asking us to do something' (Sebald xii). Accordingly, Austerlitz aims to emphasize the marginal histories of the Holocaust and the difficulty of living with its haunting past (experienced not only by Holocaust survivors but also by the informed subjects of the perpetrator-nations). The protagonist, therefore, offers an unconventional post-Holocaust reading of space and nation. In the essay, "DissemiNation, Time, Narrative and the Margins of Modern Nation", Homi K. Bhabha illustrates the importance of reaching the liminal and in-between

spaces of the modern nation in order to write its narrative. Bhabha emphasizes the heterogeneity of the modern nation, and claims that studying temporal, liminal and peripheral spaces of the modern nation ensures a holistic representation. He says that the ‘counter narratives’ of the modern nation that is produced at the margins “continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries” (Bhabha 213). Highlighting the Freudian concept of “the uncanny”, Bhabha argues that the emergence of uncertain spaces at peripheries of the modern nation challenges and problematizes the horizontal notions regarding nation and national identity. Incorporating the marginalities and temporalities of the modern nation space is critically portrayed through Austerlitz’s historical archaeology and intellectual observations. His aim of ‘saving the dead’, too, highlights his effort to respond to the voices that remain unrecognized in the conventional narrative of the modern nation-space. Recognizing the liminal space of the modern nation is exemplified through the protagonist’s awareness of marginal subjects and their histories. Also, by focusing on marginal histories, Austerlitz is fighting against the historical amnesia which has plagued the modern Europe.

Austerlitz emphasizes both public and private histories to explore the events of the Holocaust in a post-Holocaust reading of Europe, and sheds light on the direct and indirect part that all European countries had in the annihilation of the entire Jewish population. Vera’s account of the years of the Second World War illustrates the terror Nazis spread which was marked with ‘blind lust for conquest and destruction’ (Sebald 167). Vera also points out that the national zeal with which German people were celebrating the ghettoizing of the Jewish population, and the murder of those people for trifling offenses, was a sign of a perverse form of nationalism. Quoting Maximilian, Austerlitz’s father, Vera says that Germans were not “driven into this misfortune, rather, in his view, they had entirely re-created themselves in this perverse

form” (Sebald 167). Following his search for home in Prague and his wandering around Terezín and the Ghetto Museum, Austerlitz visits Germany, and as terrible as it seems, he “could not see a crooked line anywhere, not at the corners of the houses or on the gables, the window frames or the sills, nor was there any other trace of past history” (Sebald 223). He remembers his father’s account of the acclamatory roars that the Nazi party rally in 1936 at Nuremberg Station was interspersed with (Sebald 222). This memory unsettles Austerlitz. He hesitates to look closely at the ‘flood of Germans’ passing him in the crowded streets, and even fifty years later, Germans seem to bear no trace of guilt or historical awareness. During this visit Austerlitz recalls Vera’s account of the Nazi atrocities in the Second World War, and gets panic-stricken and almost paralyzed with terror. He is unable to roam around freely in the German streets. There is a strong revulsion in Austerlitz, and he fails to overcome the feeling of terror. Austerlitz’s reaction to the erased history of Germany demonstrates the absence of historical awareness and an ignorance of the mass murder that German people had been guilty of. As a German author, Sebald consciously addresses this issue, and shows how the nation’s guilt is replaced with historical amnesia and the collective forgetfulness of contemporary Germans.

In an effort to trace his mother’s last movements, Austerlitz, after a series of nervous breakdowns and anxiety attacks, begins studying the books and films based on the Holocaust. Consequently, he finds H.G. Adler’s documentary work on the Theresienstadt ghetto, which illustrates in detail on the subject of “the setting up, development and internal organization’ of the ghetto (Sebald 233). He further learns that Germans spread a rumour in those years of Theresienstadt as a beautiful resort and ‘the most salubrious place’ especially for Jews, and this propaganda thus attracted a large number of Jewish people to spend up to Eight Thousand Reichsmarks to come to live in this place (Sebald 240). Upon arrival, the utter shock and betrayal

made many of them delirious, and often resulted in an almost total loss of the ability to talk and act (Sebald 240). Gradually, Austerlitz's critical study of the Holocaust and the Theresienstadt ghetto leads him to the German propaganda film on the Theresienstadt ghetto, justifying their actions and agenda. In a desperate attempt to get a glimpse of his mother Agata, Austerlitz finds the lost print of the film from the Federal Archives in Berlin. The 'cheerful spectators crowding the arcades', orchestral concerts, people cheerfully doing their work 'apparently in perfect contentment' irritates the protagonist (Sebald 246). The order and precision with which this propaganda film is made signifies the sadistic and inhuman organizational zeal of the Germans. Not only did they murder thousands of innocent people, but they also systematically concealed their acts of perversion and cruelty. The evidence of the Nazi propaganda in the films, and Austerlitz's cogitation on the history of propaganda and betrayal show that although the historical evidence of the Holocaust are documented in the State Archives and by Holocaust survivors, the trauma of the past is yet to be recognized by European nations. His loitering through the Ghetto Museum or his detailed research thus recognizes uncanny spaces and the forgotten history of European violence.

Sebald's protagonist further reflects on the history of collaboration of France in the looting of almost forty thousand apartments where the Jews lived in Paris. The 'Babylonian library' of Paris, The Bibliothèque Nationale now stands in the place of the warehouse where Germans stored all the loot and organized them with their mania for order and precision. After an insightful conversation with a member of the library staff called Henri Lemoine, Austerlitz learns the truth of this library which he, being unaware of this crucial information, frequently used to visit in his early years while living in Paris. Lemoine says, "For the most part the valuables, the bank deposits, the shares and the houses and business premises ruthlessly seized at

the time, remain in the hands of the city and the state to this day” (Sebald 288). This whole episode, in Lemoine’s words, is buried with the most literal sense beneath the foundations of the Bibliothèque Nationale. (Sebald 289) This documentation of the buried past of France’s collaboration with Germany thus emphasizes that all of Europe shares the burden of the mass murder of the Holocaust. In his paper, “Against the Power of Time: The Poetics of Suspension in W. G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz*”, Amir Eshel reflects on Sebald’s view of the “German catastrophe” as a “European” catastrophe. He highlights a section of Sebald’s interview with Uwe Pralle- “I do not see the catastrophe caused by Germans, horrible as it was, as unique...it developed from European history, from the dream, at latest since Napoleon, to turn this ‘unorderly’ continent into something orderly, arranged and powerful” (Eshel 88).

The partial resurrection of the flâneur thus draws on the tropes of marginal space, history of persecution and betrayal with a view to fight against the collective forgetfulness and the buried past of Europe. Compensating the disorienting loss, Austerlitz aims to perform the role of an historical archeologist studying the history of persecution and treachery in Europe during the Second World War, and the irreparable crack it has produced in the narrative of the modern nation. Encountering his deepest unconscious in Liverpool Street Station, Terezin and the Ghetto Museum and documenting a survivor’s tale, Austerlitz struggles to address “the piercing, inquiring gaze of the page boy who had come to demand his dues, who was waiting in the gray light of dawn on the empty field for me to accept the challenge and avert the misfortune lying ahead of him” (Sebald 184). Austerlitz is unable to avert the misfortune of the Holocaust and put together his fragmented identity, but he responds to the ‘piercing gaze’ of the photograph of his four- year- old self by investigating the unrecognized parts of Europe’s shared history of barbarity, thereby engendering a post- Holocaust reading of modern Europe.

Through the lenses of a flâneur-like peregrinator, W.G. Sebald's novel *Austerlitz*, therefore, offers an unconventional approach to the study of the modern nation-space of post-war Europe. The narrative of flânerie, as exemplified in Sebald's novel, demonstrates new ways of reading the modern Europe through the peregrinator's appropriation of space and investigation of history. The next chapter goes on to discuss another form of flânerie, partly postcolonial in essence, in studying the cosmopolitan metropolises of New York and Brussels. Here, too, the reemergence of the figure of the flâneur is marked with exile, dislocation and marginality. Interestingly, the next flâneur's historical consciousness is marked with a postcolonial understanding of space and marginality, and the narrative draws on issues of migration, hybrid communities, and cultural belongingness of marginal communities in global cities. Furthermore, it goes on to analyze how the otherisation of European concept of the flâneur can bring substantial changes in reading cosmopolitan/ global cities.

Chapter 3

Flâneur in Exile: A Postcolonial Reading of Marginal Spaces of Modern Cosmopolitan Metropolises in Teju Cole's *Open City*

Each time I caught sight of geese swooping in formation across the sky, I wondered
how our life below might look from their perspective. (Cole 4)

Blending the desire to speculate on New York's cosmopolitan sphere with the image of migrating birds across the sky- Teju Cole's acclaimed novel *Open City* approaches the idea of the global city with new lenses. A self-exiled, migrant flâneur with a postcolonial understanding of space and marginalized populations, Cole's protagonist, Julius, a Nigerian psychiatry student in New York, marks the presence of the new cosmopolitan flâneur in the twenty-first century. Julius focuses on dismembered histories, stories of conflict and survival of marginalized migrant populations of cosmopolitan society, and makes the reader ponder over the question of how these factors influence the dynamics of the cosmopolitan metropolis. In doing so, he subtly hints at 9/11 and the post War on Terror phase, which has engendered identity crisis in the migrant populations of the Western world. On the one hand, he brings in the Native Americans and African Americans' history of loss and suffering as well as their contribution in the making of today's cosmopolitan New York, while on the other, he explores the emerging socio-political conflict in Belgium, where the rise of racism and Islamophobia indicates the corresponding rise of the popularity of right-wing political parties. Through the act of walking and listening, he encounters conflicting perspectives, different viewpoints regarding life in the metropolis. Undoubtedly, Julius brings out the real essence of cosmopolitan city-space where ethnicity, race, religion and nationality cause significant power-shift in social, political and cultural dynamics.

This chapter examines the idea of *flânerie* in the twenty-first century cosmopolitan setting, and focuses on the issues of exile, migration and postcolonial identity of the new *flâneur* in order to analyze their effect on the narrative of *flânerie*. It also investigates if Julius's notion of *flânerie* can be read as a contrapuntal postcolonial reading of the cosmopolitan metropolises, and how his reading of the cities enables him to emphasize dismembered histories and peripheral subjects. The chapter particularly draws on Homi Bhabha's narrative of the modern nation and Gikandi's third space in the mapping of the cosmopolitan city-space.

3.1 The Art of Walking and Listening:

Chronicling city-experiences in his narrative of *flânerie*, Julius evokes the archetype of the Parisian *flâneur*, who emerged in Baudelaire's powerful and revolutionary poems on the modern city and its crowd. Interestingly, some of the descriptions penned by Cole's narrator directly correspond to the Baudelairian essence. The intensified "feeling of isolation" and "disorienting fatigue" (Cole 6) experienced in a state of walking and recording the city resembles Baudelaire's voice from *The Spleen from Paris*. In the lyrical poem "The Crowd", Baudelaire portrays the act of 'the solitary and thoughtful stroller' who 'loves to lose himself in a crowd' as an artistic venture. The crowd practice that Baudelaire introduces in his works demands that the artist be detached from the crowd, even when he is a part of it. The artist- *flâneur*'s 'hate of home, passion for roaming' characterizes him as a wanderer in exile. This loitering artist-*flâneur* of Baudelaire takes pleasure in learning about the discrepancies, conflicts and the darker sides of the modern city. The vulnerability and poverty, class struggle and inter-class conflicts in modern Paris do not escape Baudelaire's *flâneur*'s careful observation. As a result, Baudelaire's melancholic artist- *flâneur* remarkably sketches modern Paris in its truest form. Similarly, Julius's understanding of the city is based on the reading of conflicting spatial and racial issues

resisting cosmopolitan cultural impositions. Cole's novel penetrates into the under-represented part of cosmopolitan space. As 'a man of the crowd', Baudelaire prefers to be a silent observer. Cole's protagonist adopts Baudelaire's methods, but he breaks away from the method of silent observation as he interacts with the subjects he observes. Although Julius's techniques vary in terms of Baudelaire's way of studying the metropolis and its crowd, both seek to understand changes and variations within the crowd and the city.

Cole's protagonist appropriates Baudelaire's concept of *flânerie* in the context of his own time and space. His idea of *flânerie* is not limited to observing; he also acknowledges the importance of learning the "art of listening" (Cole 9). This ability has endowed the *flâneur* with the power of extracting stories buried under the façade of a liberal cosmopolitan space. In conversation with Professor Saito, for example, Julius ponders over the art of listening, and he comments on "the ability to trace out a story from what was omitted" (Cole 9). Throughout the novel, Julius walks and listens to stories of place, time and people, and his critical reading of spatial relations is retrieved significantly from the 'omitted' section. The stories from the 'omitted' section of New York consist of immigrants' histories of loss and suffering, and their struggle to hold onto their root and space in the cosmopolitan sphere. Julius's method of loitering bears the trace of Baudelairian *flânerie*; however, his distinctiveness in carrying out the task of the *flâneur* signifies his uniqueness and originality. Regarding the walks as therapeutic, Julius seeks solace and freedom in the streets. "A reminder of freedom" (Cole 7), as he defines it while getting accustomed to mapping the streets with his aimless wanderings, Julius's 'aimless progress' gradually loses its 'aimlessness', and instead bears a systematic approach to reach the marginalized spaces of the city. Similar to Baudelaire's *flâneur*, Julius desires to remain anonymous and unaffected during his strolls. However, his sense of being anonymous and

faceless makes him vulnerable, since his racial identity and immigrant status are significant markers which distinguish him as an ‘other’ in a crowd. As a flâneur of colour, he is more aware of his space than Baudelaire’s flâneur. His peregrination through the streets, arcades, subways, cafes, museums in New York and Brussels is not a surface level investigation; it requires substantial knowledge of the cities’ histories, geopolitical understanding as well as the understanding of their heterogeneous population and diversified ethnography.

3.2 Migration and Exile: (Cole and the flâneur)

Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience. (Said 147)

A sense of alienation and exile sprung at an early age, and Julius’s journey of becoming a flâneur begins with his insecurities and dilemmas regarding his identity and mixed origin. “The name Julius linked me to another place and was, with my passport and my skin color, one of the intensifiers of my sense of being different, of being set apart, in Nigeria” (Cole 78). It is the ambiguity of his European- African origin which casts him as an outsider. The foreignness of his name, tension in family relationships, and the increasing feeling of loneliness transform familiar territory into an unknown space. Also, at the end, the unveiling of Moji’s rape points to the subconscious guilt which may also be a reason for his distancing himself from his home. Edward Said, in his essay, “Reflections on Exile”, reflecting on the entrapment of the exiled artist in a familiar territory, says, “The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons” (Said 147). Similarly, Julius’s home is where he feels imprisoned and tormented. The self-exile is thus a mechanism Julius consciously performs in order to evade the psychological burden of the duality and uncertainty of his identity, origin and past. His migration

to America is, therefore, a choice he makes in order to flee from this acute sense of alienation. There, his settling in a cosmopolitan global mega-city further intensifies this feeling of estrangement. However, in this extreme alienation, he begins to spend his leisure time in practicing the art of *flânerie* in cosmopolitan cities with a view to getting access to the margins and borders of the cityscape. James Wood, in a review of *Open City*, terms this condition as ‘productive alienation’ which is intrinsically connected to the spectatorship of *flânerie*. He is neither African, nor European- and this complexity of his identity complicates his state of being other in New York. He refuses to acknowledge any cultural, racial and ethnic association with the African-Americans like the cab driver, or the guard at the museum; but on the other hand, he is drawn towards their African-American experiences and stories. Hartwiger in his essay, “The Postcolonial Flâneur: Open City and the Urban Palimpsest”, too, notes that “His role of detached interlocutor along with a complex genealogy suggests an insider/ outsider dialectic, at once a part of New York’s cosmopolitan society and apart from it.” (Hartwiger 1)

Edward W. Said, while reflecting on the subject of exile, terms the exilic condition as an ‘unhealable rift’ (Said 137). It is the agony that drives the exiled artist to look for ways to communicate with his origin or to create a new space. In this novel, through Julius, Cole consciously struggles to establish his own space in cosmopolitan New York, and his desire is evident in the novel, when Julius says, “I wanted to find the line that connected me to my own part in these stories” (Cole 59). The ‘essential sadness’ of exile thus acts as an incentive to formulate new ways of seeing, experiencing and reading the cosmopolitan space. Moreover, the autobiographical resemblance Julius has with the author is intriguing, and it points out the important aim this novel establishes with the new revised sense of seeing cosmopolitanism. Teju Cole, like Julius, was born in Lagos, Nigeria; and later, settled in America as an immigrant.

(Kassel) The autobiographical resemblance of the author with the narrator signifies two important issues in Cole's works. First, it is evident that the immigrant status of the author has influenced his way of interacting with cosmopolitan urban-space, which is visible through Julius's narrative in *Open City*. Secondly, the experience of exile and displacement has had significant impact on the study of the city-space. The sense of belonging of the marginalized subject, and their struggle to preserve their racial, ethnic, cultural identity alongside the identity of cosmopolitan subject- is critically examined in the protagonist's narrative. It is difficult to categorize Cole's style of writing, and it is even more difficult to place this author in a specific category based on his subject matters. The question is on the other hand, whether he is reclaiming the others' space in literature, or if he is creating a new space where hybridity and pluralism exist while retaining the immanent differences.

What I like is that he's not being an immigrant writer in any conventional, categorizable sense," Philip Gourevitch, a *New Yorker* staff writer and former editor of the Paris Review, told me. "It is not like he's placeless, but he's creating a new space for himself, a space that isn't already inhabited by a lot of other writers- other voices. (Kassel)

This new space is attributed with a critical understanding of displacement, exile and homelessness of the migrant subjects living in cosmopolitan cities. Cole's protagonist is a medium through which these subjects get their voice heard. The Haitian man in a shoeshine shop, Saidu in the detention centre or Farouq in the phone shop in Brussels- each of them find Julius as a reliable listener. The otherwise neglected immigrants in global cities view Julius as one of them; however, he repeatedly denies sharing their space. In spite of Julius's detachment and nonchalance, Julius seeks to extract stories from this convoluted space. In *The New York Times* book review, "Roaming the Streets, Taking Surreal Turns", Michiko Kakutani points out that the narrator collects the stories of those "who have come to escape the sorrows of their own

history or to pursue their versions of the American dream”. ‘Their versions’ of the American dream, as highlighted by this writer, is also central to the discussion of New York as a cosmopolitan metropolis. The stereotypical representation of the American dream and its allure and promise is the primary rationale for the presence of the heterogeneous population, and Cole’s narrator investigates this claim of the cosmopolitan space. He further investigates why the American Dream or European notions of freedom and liberty have not been able to produce coherent cosmopolitan societies, subsequently, he points to the histories, and questions of difference, conflict and dominance.

3.3 Contrapuntal Postcolonial Reading:

Seeing “the entire world as a foreign land” makes possible originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that-to borrow a phrase from music- is *contrapuntal*. (Said 148)

These lines from the essay “Reflections on Exile” highlight the exiled subject’s ability to produce a contrapuntal narrative against a given, traditional one. Said’s words echo in Julius’s endeavour to reach beyond his own horizon, and it is to be noted that his method of *flânerie* is greatly influenced by a critical postcolonial understanding of history, space and identity. Julius is an informed, exiled postcolonial *flâneur* who undertakes a project of excavating stories buried under the façade of the modern nation-state. He registers the city’s activities from the street level; and his narrative sheds lights on difference, incoherence and conflict in the cosmopolitan nation-space. He does not provide the readers with a linear, coherent portrayal of the city, rather he aims to study the fragmented sections of the society which question any linear narrative, history and idea of cosmopolitanism. Julius’s ability to reflect on the complex history of New

York: the history of the transatlantic slave trade, history of the violence of the white settlers, forgotten slave burials in Lower Manhattan, or the role of the City Bank of New York in profiting from slavery and forced labor even after 1820, when slave trade became a capital offense, ascertain his role as a postcolonial critic. The narrative, therefore, puts emphasis on the colonial past of New York City, its atrocities, racial subjugation and the terrible past that New York has buried under its iconic image as a global financial hub. As a postcolonial subject, his inquisitive eyes capture the dynamics of migration and displacement in this cosmopolitan space. Immigrants' queue with 'nervous anticipation' in front of a federal building, or the uniquely African-American experience in Harlem posit as contrast against the view of Time Warner Corporation, or a nearby posh restaurant with a cosmopolitan ambience. The alternative narrative Julius produces challenges the celebratory metanarrative of capitalist cosmopolitanism.

Alexander Greer Hartwiger, in his essay, "The Postcolonial Flâneur: Open City and the Urban Palimpsest", sees Julius as a postcolonial flâneur who enables the reader to view the cosmopolitan space as a convoluted one which cannot be depicted in a cohesive narrative. He discusses how Julius offers a "contrasting street level perspective" (Hartwiger 8) against a 'cohesive', 'unitary' and 'totalitarian' view of New York City. Pointing out Julius's perspective as the polyvocal voice of New York, he says, 'What Julius's history of New York helps readers see is the ambivalent role of New York City as at once a symbol of the promise of prosperity and the symbol of uneven accessibility to it' (Hartwiger 16). The dominant, official narratives of New York often overshadow New York's history as a colonial outpost, the forced migration and the terrible past of bloodshed, death and massacre of African Americans as well as Native Americans. Julius's narrative of flânerie significantly looks at those forgotten events. Julius brilliantly weaves the stories of migrants with this dismembered past in order to see how much

has changed, and how we look at the past, while New York celebrates its role as the most influential global city. Hartwiger, reflecting on New York's 'role as a city within a settler colony' (colonial past), rightly points out that 'immigrants entering the city were seen as a part of the melting-pot process that formed a new nation and not immigrants from the former colonies' (Hartwiger 3). Similarly, Native Americans are still considered as 'other' in this new nation. This double standards applied in the cosmopolitan narrative of New York is unveiled by Cole's postcolonial critique, and challenged by a contrapuntal reading of the new American nation. His conversation with Saidu, the undocumented Liberian immigrant in Queens' detention centre and the Haitian man from the shoeshine shop- shows an important emphasis on the postcolonial subjects observed by the flâneur. Through Julius's narrative, Cole reaches those postcolonial subjects who experienced war, slavery, subjugation and trauma. Subsequently, the flâneur explores the question of acceptance, difference and plurality of migrant populations in cosmopolitan metropolises.

Reflecting on the ruins of The World Trade Centre, the site of 9/11, the postcolonial critic-flâneur looks at the forgotten history of the place. Julius points out how the bustling network of the little streets of 1960, old Washington Market, the Christian Syrian enclave were obliterated to make way for this site, whereas now it has become "a metonym of disaster" (Cole 52). Cole's protagonist illustrates the ever-changing cosmopolitan space, highlighting the erasure of history. "The site was a palimpsest, as was all the city, written, erased and rewritten" (Cole 59). New York's capitalist cosmopolitan space obliterated and erased histories, places and people in order to make space for its capitalist constructions. Similar to Benjamin's idea of flâneur as a modern critic, Cole's narrator focuses on this capitalist encroachment of history and space. Not only does Julius reflect on the site of 9/11, but also demonstrates the after effect of 9/11; where

US immigration policies were hardened, and somewhat limited the migration of refugees like the undocumented Liberian immigrant Saidu, who is told by his lawyer that he might have had a chance before 9/11, but now he is likely to be deported to his own port city. The impact of 9/11 is also evident in Brussels, where the anti-immigrant slogans are gradually gaining support from the political parties and the orthodox whites.

Simultaneously, Julius's postcolonial awareness enables him to reflect on the 'unacknowledged traumas' of New York's population. Julius's patient V., a member of the Delaware tribe, reflects on the erasure of the violent history of America's colonial past, and how it has transformed familiar territory, the home of the Native Americans into a haunting space. V.'s depression is caused by her learning about the white settlers' oppression and violence on Native Americans. V shudders with horror and anxiety saying, "There are almost no Native Americans in New York City, and very few in all of the Northeast. It isn't right that people are not terrified by this because this is a terrifying thing that happened to a vast population. And it's not in the past; it is still with us today" (Cole 27). Cole's narrative questions the forgetting of colonial massacres, and shows how the erased and forgotten history of violence blunts the historical consciousness of the white American people. To forget what happened to the original inhabitants of the land, to deny the history of mass murder of the Native Americans equals to living in a false world. Encountering the buried past of New York thus challenges the triumphant slogan of pluralism, as it points out that its all-inclusive approach is a façade. Similarly, Julius's comments on Ellis Island, showing how it symbolizes only European refugees, while excluding the Blacks. Julius ponders over the question of brotherhood, Kenneth, the African cab- driver tries to establish, and he finds out this: it is because "blacks, "we Blacks", had known rougher ports of entry" (Cole 55). The fundamental differences of the idea of the immigrants in

cosmopolitan New York are racially demarcated. Julius's encounter with these marginalized subjects, thus, offers an alternative view/ contrapuntal reading of belongingness, identity and nationhood.

Furthermore, Julius's narrative draws attention to Brussels' history of 'surrender' and 'negotiation with invading power' during World War II, which spared it from bombardment and destruction which the other parts of Belgium had experienced. Cole's protagonist's contemplative walks in the 'open city' of Brussels, gives another postcolonial analysis of cosmopolitan space. Flexible borders, conservative form of Islam visible in female attire, racial conflict, hate crimes were, in Julius's words, "Europe's reality now" (Cole 98). This 'reality' also has an intrinsic connection with the aftermath of 9/11, which transformed the dynamics of identity politics in the West, and the visibly Muslim identity he notices in Brussels consolidates that. Julius, even as a visitor, senses the aggravating tension coiling inside the people. He notes, "there was a palpable psychological pressure in the city" (Cole 98). But the most crucial aspect of this narrative is his analysis of the political scenario of contemporary Belgium. Increasing population of immigrants, stereotypical image of the 'other', fear of racial backlash, anger sprawling against the immigrants, hate crimes against the nonwhites- all of these factors have problematized the immigrant's position in the nation-space. Also, the immigrants' identity is being questioned, as they are being labeled as 'foreigners'; even for the Blacks, racist remarks like "murdering, thieving, raping Vikings from North Africa" (Cole 99) are used in mainstream sources. Cole's protagonist critically reads how Right wing political parties like Vlaams Belang is gradually gaining momentum in national politics. The city of the heterogeneous populations of French, Flemish, Walloon, Arabs, Africans, Chinese and people of other nations- is now a city that is "in the grip of uncertainties" (Cole 100). This uncertain space created within the

cosmopolitan hub again signifies the incoherence, and production of localities and temporalities within the nation-space.

Interestingly, Julius's narrative here takes a different approach while focusing on the stories of migrant subjects. His encounter with a Moroccan immigrant, Farouq, generates intense and critical intellectual discussions on a variety of contemporary subjects related to exile, freedom of thought, migration, Muslim migrants, otherness, Edward Said, and so on. This segment of the novel is significant as it shows how the educated, informed postcolonial marginalized subject perceives Western cosmopolitan space. Unlike the other immigrants who fled from war, persecution or poverty, Farouq came to Europe to pursue his academic career. Displeased with Morocco's conservative outlook, his migration to Brussels is marked with a hope of attaining Europe's liberal and secular cosmopolitan identity. However, racial discrimination, class conflict and identity politics transform this immigrant student's perspective towards Europe's 'freedom of thought' and its liberal secular ideologies. Disappointed, Farouq reflects on the question of liberty saying, "Europe only looks free" and his dream of getting equal space in Brussels is an 'apparition' (Cole 122). In conversation with Farouq, Cole's protagonist describes him as attributed "with a seething intelligence", yet "was one of the thwarted ones" (Cole 129). Farouq ponders on the European notions of liberty and equality, and claims that they are accessible to the white immigrants, where 'other' migrant subjects have no space. Later, Farouq and Khalil's discussion on the power controlling the portrayal of the African Americans, or Muslims in Europe further explicates that the informed postcolonial subjects are consciously aware of their space. Farouq and Khalil's knowledge of the Palestine question, stereotypical media representation of African Americans, and their voice against the prevailing prejudice against Islam or the Muslim Community in Europe and America-

significantly, portrays them as empowered rather than victimized; because their knowledge of their space in cosmopolitan nation-space enables them to create pockets of resistance against the dominant narratives and imposed representations.

3.4 Gikandi's Third Zone and Writing of Modern-Cosmopolitan Space:

“And how do we tell the stories of those who are not yet quite cosmopolitan even when they inhabit the spaces that have come to be inscribed as global?” (Gikandi 23) In the novel, the flâneur's peregrinations around the cosmopolitan space of New York reflect on this vital question regarding the narratives of the non-cosmopolitan, marginalized individuals and communities. Simon Gikandi, in his essay, “Between Roots and Routes: Cosmopolitanism and the Claims of Locality”, talks about the difficulty in producing a true representation of cosmopolitan space. The localities and temporalities created within the cosmopolitan space are often disregarded in mainstream representation. He focuses on the incompleteness and biases of postcolonial elite narratives, and the celebratory cosmopolitanism which excludes any real picture of the other non-cosmopolitans occupying the space. Refugees from war-torn countries, exiles, immigrants, migrant workers moving to cosmopolitan spaces- all form a complex pattern of diversity and plurality. Their understanding of belongingness, loyalty, and identity vary significantly from celebratory definitions and ideas. Even though cosmopolitanism celebrates plurality and diversity, Gikandi argues that the aforementioned categories hardly get represented in that version. By making a contrast between ‘coerced migrants’ and ‘free-willing cosmopolitans’, he points out “global cultural flows are still dominated by those coerced migrants rather than the free-willing cosmopolitan subjects” (28).

Gikandi claims that a new vocabulary is needed to address this third space, which is occupied by refugees and migrants who struggle in the cosmopolitan space as they have to learn to live outside both the state: those which rejected them and those which accepted or adopted them. Gikandi's understanding of this third zone is portrayed through Julius's numerous encounters with refugees, migrant students/ workers, immigrant communities. He observed their ways of producing their own localities and temporalities in the seemingly cosmopolitan space. The idea of difference and plurality becomes very complex, as they emphasize more on locality, temporality and brotherhood than 'common universal humanity'. Although Gikandi's emphasis on writing from the margins and the need for a new vocabulary can be theoretically overwhelming, but Cole's protagonist is a fictional embodiment of Gikandi's hypothesis. He further describes "what it means to be a postcolonial subject in the metropolitan cultures of the modern west" (Gikandi 22), and points to the conflict between two sections of postcolonial cosmopolitans. Firstly, the cosmopolitan elites who are "comforting reminders that you belong to a global cultural circuit", and secondly, are those refugees, who "are signs of a dislocated locality" (Gikandi 23). Cole's protagonist is located between these two types of postcolonial cosmopolitans, as he enjoys associating with cosmopolitan elites like Dr. Maillotte, while performing the role of an interlocutor in conversation with the dislocated subjects like Saidu, the Haitian shoeshiner, or Farouq, who are equally essential in constituting the cosmopolitan centres like New York City and Brussels. Julius reads the cosmopolitan space from its margins.

I want to argue, then, that a discourse of cosmopolitanism remains incomplete unless we read the redemptive narrative of being global in a contrapuntal relationship with the narrative of statelessness and, by reproduction, of locality, where we least expect it- in the metropolis. (Gikandi 26)

As a postcolonial cosmopolitan, Cole is aware of the localities produced at the margins of the modern cosmopolitan metropolis. Migrant and exiled subjects, as depicted in the novel, produce different kinds of local identities, and struggle to preserve those. The African cab-driver, the guard at the American Folk Art Museum, or the Haitian shoe-shiner- although different in profession and culture, share a form of Africanness. On the other hand, Professor V. believes in another kind of nation-space. Both Harlem and Chinatown aim to produce different forms of locality, identity and culture. Julius's understanding of exiled and migrant subjects highlights an unbiased and inclusive approach. The Haitian man's story of fleeing from persecution and war at home to willingly surrendering himself to slavery in America and his reverence for his Master; Saidu's story of surviving the civil war at home and his perilous journey to America with the hope of finding peace and stability; V.'s thoughts on a 'forgotten chapter of colonial past' of America; and Farouq's complex ideological stance on 'freedom of thought' and Muslim identity- bring to light different viewpoints of the heterogeneous cosmopolitan city. Each of the stories and each of their perspectives differ significantly; and, consequently, the accurate portrayal of heterogeneity of global cities comes into view. Julius's narrative is thus not only writing about cosmopolitan cities, it is also writing about cosmopolitan nations from the margins, and he precisely focuses on "the palpable clash between the desire to secure locality and the claims of universal being and becoming" (Gikandi 26).

As Homi Bhabha suggests in his essay, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of Modern Nation", that studying 'temporality', 'liminality' and 'in-between' spaces of the modern nation can enable the narrative to delineate the modern nation in its holistic form; Julius internalizes such an approach while mapping the city with his seemingly aimless wanderings. In doing so, the flâneur resists the conventional celebratory cosmopolitan narrative

of Western nations. The protagonist locates the territorialized localities and temporalities created within cosmopolitan cities which resist the idea of global or cosmopolitan identity. Seeing multiple possibilities emerging at the peripheries, Bhabha emphasizes the marginal voices, and ‘their localities of experience’. He proposes to formulate ‘cultural construction of nationness’ which will specifically examine the hybridity of cultural difference and identifications of the modern nation. ‘Writing the nation’, therefore, is a task that requires studying the ‘temporal dimension’, and “by questioning that progressive metaphor of modern social cohesion- the many as one” (Bhabha 204). Bhabha’s dictum ‘out of many one’ allows the narrative of modern nation to locate incoherence and difference in the modern nation-space. His discussion on this ‘narrative struggle’ is evident in Julius’s narrative. Cole’s protagonist identifies the importance of cultural identifications of the marginalized sections and communities in New York and Brussels. His reading of cosmopolitan space represents Bhabha’s idea of ‘writing the nation’. Julius recognizes diversity, heterogeneity and hybridity of the cosmopolitan space and his ‘narrative struggle’ highlights the ‘temporality’ created at the peripheries, and therefore, dismantling the settled notion of nation as a coherent, unitary entity.

Gikandi’s argument on the inclusion of ‘redemptive narrative’, too, echoes Bhabha’s idea of the narrative of the modern nation. Cole’s protagonist, whose characteristics destabilize the established notions of the European white male flâneur, intelligently blends Gikandi’s proposition of writing about the third space and Bhabha’s dictum of ‘out of many one’, enabling the narrative to emphasize the heterogeneity of the cosmopolitan space. The self- exiled African flâneur has effectively narrated the stories the undocumented people, émigré and migrant settlers of New York and Brussels in order to produce a contrapuntal narrative of the modern cosmopolitan nation. The polyphonic essence of the cosmopolitan nation-space explores issues

of integration in the cosmopolitan/transnational space, appropriation of nation-space by the migrant, immigrant subjects, and communities while focusing on their history of violence and subjugation, and their position in the apparently liberal cosmopolitan space. As a cosmopolitan postcolonial flâneur-critic, Julius successfully illustrates nation as a site of difference and heterogeneity, and thereby “displacing the historicism that has dominated discussions of the nation as a cultural force” (Bhabha 201).

In conclusion, it is evident that the unique use of flânerie in Teju Cole’s *Open City* is shaped mostly by the postcolonial subjectivity or the ‘other’ identity of the cosmopolitan flâneur, Julius. Subsequently, it enables new ways of analyzing the city space. Instead of conforming to celebratory cosmopolitanism, Julius’s insightful depiction of cosmopolitan cities of New York and Brussels emphasizes the incoherent spaces and repressed narratives of marginalized migrant communities. The postcolonial flâneur-critic in the novel, therefore, brings a new dimension in the literature of flânerie as it demonstrates how the concept of flâneur is evolving and reshaping in the twenty-first century transnational/ global cities.

Conclusion

The use of *flânerie* in contemporary literature, particularly twenty-first century literature, offers new ways of studying exile, migration, displacement and marginal space. With a view to investigating and illustrating the Western nation-space, both Sebald and Cole emphasize the marginal histories and historical consciousness. W.G. Sebald applies the method of *flânerie* in order to shed light on the violent past of Europe, whereas Teju Cole employs Baudelairian peregrinations to illustrate the forgotten episodes of atrocities and colonial past buried under the establishment of cosmopolitan metropolises. The tension between the past and the present is never truly resolved, and both novels highlight the contingency of time and space. It is important to note that their creative use of the methods of *flânerie* has enabled the novels to produce unconventional and authentic analyses of the modern nation-space. Austerlitz and Julius are both from the margins; the former is marginalized on the basis of his ethnicity and religion, while the latter is marginalized because of his ‘other’ identity and race. Their marginality in the Western nation-space, and their interest in the periphery and peripheral voices add new dimension to the role of the *flâneur*. After this comparative study of these two novels, my thesis can assert that the nineteenth century French literary phenomenon of *flânerie* is still relevant, and is timeless in essence. The re-emergence of the *flâneur* in Sebald and Cole’s novels demonstrates the ways *flânerie* can be used in the study of space, marginality and temporality.

Furthermore, this thesis also gestures to the new possibilities and prospects of the narrative of *flânerie*. The figure of the *flâneur* has been time and again transformed, analyzed and put to practice. Previously, female writers such as Virginia Woolf, George Sand, Jean Rhys, Martha Gellhorn and other intellectuals emphasized on women’s urban meanderings, and challenged patriarchal practice and the gendered view of the modern *flâneur*; consequently

established narratives and views of the female flâneur or flâneuse. Also, many artists around the globe have appropriated this concept with regard to their own time and space. Even in Kolkata, Jibananda Das's urban poetry bears strong resemblance to the concept of the urban wanderer of Baudelaire, but then again, Das and other Bengali writers personalized and appropriated this modern western concept in their own way. It is amazing to see how this method and narrative technique is being questioned, redefined, personalized and appropriated in different times and spaces. The concept is goes through new experiments, and as a result, the method of flânerie is gaining momentum even in contemporary literature. For example, Tao Lin's *Taipei*, Iain Sinclair's *Hackney*, *That Rose-Red Empire: A Confidential Report* can be seen as examples of some contemporary novels where the narrative of flânerie or the methods of flânerie have been employed. Undoubtedly, it is exciting to see how contemporary artists are also experimenting and destabilizing the flâneur's conventional definitions, and thus contributing to the evolution of the century-old method of urban analysis.

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