Université de Montréal

Navigating Trauma and the City:

At the Intersection of Trauma Theory and *Flânerie* in Contemporary Canadian Fiction

Par

Aurélie Roy

Département de littératures et de langues du monde, Faculté des arts et des sciences

Thèse présentée en vue de l'obtention du grade de Philosophiæ Doctor (Ph.D.)

en études anglaises

Avril 2023

Université de Montréal

Département de littératures et de langues du monde, Faculté des arts et des sciences

---

Cette thèse intitulée

Navigating Trauma and the City:
At the Intersection of Trauma Theory and *Flânerie* in Contemporary Canadian Fiction

Présentée par
Aurélie Roy

A été évaluée par un jury composé des personnes suivantes

Prof. Heather Meek
Présidente-rapporteuse

Prof. Lianne Moyes
Directrice de recherche

Prof. Jane Malcolm
Membre du jury

Prof. Manina Jones
Examinatrice externe

Résumé

Ce projet inscrit la figure du flâneur dans la littérature contemporaine et examine les liens possibles entre le trauma et la pratique de la flânerie en milieu urbain. Plus spécifiquement, par l'analyse de *The Lonely Hearts Hotel* de Heather O'Neill, *Cockroach* de Rawi Hage, *What We All Long For* de Dionne Brand et *Bottle Rocket Hearts* de Zoe Whittall, cette dissertation démontre que le fait d'être un flâneur peut se révéler être une pratique à la fois traumatisante et thérapeutique. La façon dont les jeunes protagonistes de ces romans occupent les différents espaces de la ville est profondément enracinée dans leurs expériences traumatiques, qu'il s'agisse de traumatismes passés ou de traumatismes liés à la métropole en soi. En effet, la ville peut devenir un lieu propice à la création de communautés et à l'émancipation, permettant ainsi à la personne ayant subi un traumatisme de (re)prendre le contrôle de son propre parcours et de commencer un processus de guérison. En revanche, la ville peut se révéler traumatisante en soi, dans un contexte où l'individu est soit victime, soit témoin d'un événement tragique. Le flâneur, en tant que spectateur attentif de l'urbanité qui l'entoure, peut être confronté à des éléments évoquant des événements passés, ce qui peut ainsi générer de nouveaux traumatismes.

Outre l'analyse du potentiel thérapeutique et traumatique de la ville, cette étude propose une nouvelle interprétation de la figure du flâneur dans la littérature contemporaine et met en lumière son évolution depuis que Charles Baudelaire l'a définie dans son essai de 1863 intitulé « Le Peintre de la vie moderne ». Par ailleurs, ce projet s'appuie sur les réflexions des plus importants auteurs spécialisés dans les théories du trauma pour interpréter ces romans et explorer la manière dont les expériences traumatiques exercent une pression sur la définition même du flâneur. L'analyse de ces quatre récits en tenant compte de la notion de flânerie permet

d’explorer de nouvelles perspectives quant à la manière dont la victime perçoit l’espace, le temps et les autres lors de ses déplacements urbains. La façon dont un individu flâne dans la ville devient un symptôme qui témoigne des effets, des problèmes et des processus associés à la fois au trauma et à la flânerie.

Mots clés : Trauma, flâneur, flânerie, littérature canadienne, contemporaine, Heather O’Neill, Rawi Hage, Dionne Brand, Zoe Whittall, ville

Abstract

This doctoral dissertation places the figure of the *flâneur* in a contemporary context and analyzes the possible intersections between trauma and the performance of *flânerie* within the metropolis. More specifically, through the analysis of Heather O'Neill's *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*, Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*, and Zoe Whittall's *Bottle Rocket Hearts,* this study demonstrates the different ways in which being a *flâneur* can be both a traumatic and therapeutic practice. The protagonists of these novels are young *flâneurs* whose modes of being in the city are deeply rooted in the traumatic experiences that define them, whether this trauma comes from past experiences or from the urban landscape itself. On the one hand, the city has the potential to serve as a space of community and empowerment that allows the person who has experienced trauma to take control of their own path and initiate their journey towards their recovery process. On the other hand, the city can be traumatic in and of itself in a context where the individual is either the victim or the witness of a tragic event. To the *flâneur*'s acute observing eye, the city can also confront them with a past event, the resurfacing of which can be retraumatizing.

In addition to analyzing the therapeutic and traumatic potential of the city, this dissertation also proposes a reexamination of the *flâneur* figure in contemporary literature and highlights the ways it has evolved since its early definition by Charles Baudelaire in his 1863 essay "The Painter of Modern Life." Furthermore, this project draws upon the observations of the most prominent trauma theorists to read the selected novels and to explore the ways in which trauma puts pressure on the very definition of *flânerie*. Reading these four narratives through the lens of *flânerie* allows new perspectives of the victim's view of space, time, and others as they

move through the city. The way a person performs *flânerie* becomes a symptom that speaks to the effects, the problematics, and the processes of both trauma and urban walking.

Keywords: Trauma, *Flâneur*, *Flânerie*, Canadian Literature, Contemporary, Heather O'Neill, Rawi Hage, Dionne Brand, Zoe Whittall, Urban

Table of Contents

For Élliot and Juliette, the most wonderful characters in my story

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Lianne Moyes for taking me on as a student and for providing guidance throughout the entirety of this project. This thesis simply would not be what it is without her steadfast assistance and invaluable expertise. I could not have asked for a more patient, generous, and supportive advisor.

This project is also indebted to the colleagues and professors with whom I have had a chance to work, both at the Université de Montréal and Université Laval. The conversations and perspectives they have offered over the last several years have contributed to my academic growth, and I am thankful for them all.

I also want to express appreciation to my family and friends for their love and support. Specifically, I want to extend my deepest thanks to my parents, Johanne and Lucien, as well as my sister Karel, for being endless sources of encouragement. They have been instrumental in keeping me motivated throughout this project.

I am grateful to the Université de Montréal for the financial assistance that has made this project possible.

But above all, I want to thank my partner and very best friend, Pierre-Luc, for his unwavering support over the last several years. Thank you for always believing in me and for being the best father our kids could hope for.

Introduction

An Epistemology of Walking and Suffering: Studying *Flânerie* alongside Trauma

(Re)Performing Flânerie through Trauma

This doctoral dissertation studies the ways in which the figure of the *flâneur* can intersect with representations of trauma in four contemporary Canadian novels. In particular, it explores the possibility that the city, and the act of performing *flânerie* within this urban setting, might be traumatic, therapeutic, or both, depending on the person's experience of trauma and/or urbanity. In Heather O'Neill's *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*, Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*, and Zoe Whittall's *Bottle Rocket Hearts*, the protagonists are contemporary versions of the *flâneur* whose ways of engaging with the city are influenced by traumatic experiences and, likewise, whose trauma responses are dependent on their ways of performing *flânerie*. Since the *flâneur* took his first walks, so to speak, in nineteenth century Paris, he has commonly been portrayed as someone in tune with and attentive to the bustling city and the people that inhabit it.[1] In his 1863 essay "The Painter of Modern Life," Charles Baudelaire likens the *flâneur* "to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life

[1] Throughout this thesis, I use the neutral pronoun "they" to refer to contemporary versions of the *flâneur* or *flâneuse*. However, when referring to Baudelaire's or Benjamin's *flâneur*, I use the masculine pronoun "he," as these authors specifically argued that the *flâneur* was a man.

and the flickering grace of all the elements of life" (9). As this description suggests, the Baudelarian *flâneur* is not only highly observant of life in the city, but he also allows every detail to change the way he relates to the world. The *flâneur* therefore "has the ability to double himself onto the other" (Vila-Cabanes 8) and to empathize with them. With this in mind, and drawing on the four novels of my corpus, I argue that the *flâneur* can be particularly vulnerable to their experiences of the city, whether those experiences are ultimately traumatic and/or therapeutic.

This research project thus reveals that there is a vulnerability inherent in both the practice of *flânerie* and the experience of trauma. As circumstances would have it, a fair portion of this thesis was written during the COVID-19 pandemic, at the beginning of which occupying urban spaces not only put people at risk but also was strictly forbidden. In the early days of the pandemic, one's presence in the city carried an increased sense of vulnerability as the virus complicated the very possibility of being close to others and of forging social connections. In the spring of 2020, people were forced to remain *indoors*, as the *outdoors*, especially the city, had become a space of precariousness. In this context, the very notion of the crowd, which the Baudelarian *flâneur* actively sought, seemed foreign. Even when people gradually started leaving their homes again, they were compelled to rethink their way of engaging with others and with everyday urban spaces. In the face of this global upheaval, people's presence in and experience of the city were affected in lasting ways, which prompts one to consider trauma's influence on the ways in which we occupy or move through the streets.

The notion of vulnerability in the context of the pandemic took on an entirely different meaning for the individuals who had no access to safe and stable housing. The pandemic thus highlighted the disparities between those who were able to take shelter in the safety of their

homes and those who were homeless or living in adequate dwellings. In that sense, the pandemic accentuated the prevailing inequalities that existed along racial and class lines, which are particularly felt in the metropolis. The corpus of this thesis is composed of four novels that navigate some of these issues of inequality while suggesting the sense of vulnerability that can accompany trauma and *flânerie*. Reading the four novels of this corpus now, it strikes me as more relevant than ever to study the various intersections between trauma and the city, especially considering these longstanding inequalities, which have been brought to the surface in the context of the pandemic. As a white-settler scholar who writes from a position of relative privilege, I wish to open a space of dialogue and difference to discuss these important questions.

The four trauma novels I have selected all point to the relationship that exists between urban living and trauma.[2] In fact, the corpus of this research project is concerned with characters who navigate the streets of Montréal and Toronto while facing different trauma responses.[3] The protagonists are young *flâneurs* whose modes of being in the city are deeply rooted in the traumatic experiences that define them, whether this trauma comes from past experiences or from the urban landscape itself. That is why, though the four novels might appear to have little in common, they all contribute to the conversation on the intersections of *flânerie* and trauma in complementary ways. In *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, the protagonists turn to the city to escape

[2] There are, one can assume, as many definitions of the term "trauma novel" as there are ways to respond to traumatic events. One definition which I find helpful and productive in understanding the ramifications of the trauma response in novels is Michelle Balaev's: "The trauma novel demonstrates how a traumatic event disrupts attachments between self and others by challenging fundamental assumptions about moral laws and social relationships that are themselves connected to specific environments. Novels represent this disruption between the self and others by carefully describing the place of trauma because the physical environment offers the opportunity to examine both the personal and cultural histories imbedded in landscapes that define the character's identity and the meaning of the traumatic experience" (149-150). Though I mention this in passing only in the introduction, this notion will be developed with more details in the first chapter of this thesis.

[3] In this thesis, I use the accents in the spelling of both "Montréal" and "Québec," except when these terms are found in quotations from other authors.

their traumatic upbringing, and while both characters navigate the simultaneous traumatic and healing potential of being *flâneurs*, only one of them manages to develop a sense of agency that leads to a potential recovery. Meanwhile, the other keeps stumbling across different facets of the city that only confronts him with the past and traumatizes him further. In *Cockroach*, the narrator is forced to negotiate life in the margins of the city, while the hostile environment of his new land keeps reminding him of the trauma he experienced growing up in a civil war. *What We All Long For* features four young characters who were brought up in an environment defined by their parents' traumatic diasporic pasts. Though their parents' harrowing experiences of loss and displacement were never their own, the constant reminders of the past haunt the young generation and force them to bear witness to those traumas. As a result, they turn to the city of Toronto, which appears to offer the openness and independence they were denied growing up. Finally, the *flâneuse* in *Bottle Rocket Hearts* both navigates the traumatic violence and homophobia she encounters in the streets and finds in the city a sense of community that fosters the development of her agency and suggests a possible recovery from this trauma. As such, analyzing the four novels together not only conveys the traumatic and healing potential of *flânerie*, but it also illustrates that *flânerie* and trauma can intersect in various and unique ways. Just as multiple paths can get a walker from one place to the next, there are infinite ways of navigating the relationship that unites trauma and *flânerie*.

In addition to analyzing the therapeutic and traumatic potential of the city, this thesis also uses the selected novels to explore the ways in which trauma puts pressure on the very definition of *flânerie*. Though it has interested authors for centuries, the *flâneur* figure remains elusive and is now harder to define than ever, and that is true in a context of upheaval as well. How do the

problematics and intricacies of trauma modify a *flâneur*'s wandering and, indeed, the very reasons behind these movements? The Baudelarian *flâneur* was an idle wanderer in search of the urban details that would help him understand the changes related to modernity; what, if anything, is the contemporary traumatized *flâneur* searching for, and how can we characterize the pace of their wandering? This project draws upon the work of prominent trauma theorists, such as Cathy Caruth, Judith Lewis Herman, and Anne Whitehead, to read the selected novels and to explore the ways in which trauma modifies the protagonists' ways of performing *flânerie*. These four narratives suggest that trauma disrupts, either in a positive or negative way, a person's understanding of space and time, as well as the ways in which they connect to others. In this context, the ways a person performs *flânerie* and relates to their environment become symptoms that speak to the effects, the problematics, and the processes of both trauma and walking in the city.

Writers have always been interested in the positive repercussions of walking on the body and the mind of a person.[4] Henry David Thoreau, for instance, wrote an essay titled "Walking," which was published in 1862 in *The Atlantic* in the month following his death. In this essay, Thoreau writes about the transformative power of walking and emphasizes the ways in which the act of walking can be spiritually and creatively beneficial.[5] Similarly, walking as a restorative

[4] It should be noted that, throughout this thesis, I make a distinction between "walking" and "*flânerie*"; as I suggest in this introduction and argue in the first chapter of this thesis, the act of *flânerie* does not involve the sole process of walking. Not everyone who walks is a *flâneur*. Though the authors I reference in this passage have written about the effects of walking, none of them emphasize the specific intersection between *flânerie* and trauma.
The first chapter of this thesis establishes four traits that I believe to be inherent to both traditional versions of the *flâneur* and contemporary ones: the *flâneur*'s movements through the city, their acute sense of observation, their relationship with the crowd, and their ability to transform their observations into an art form or to extract meaning out of them.

[5] For Thoreau, walking is not a mere means of getting from one place to another, nor should it be considered a way to exercise. Instead, as the following passage demonstrates, he celebrates people who consider walking as an art form that allows the walker to feel at home anywhere: "I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my

power is a recurring theme in William Wordsworth's poetry. In his 1807 poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," for instance, Wordsworth writes how the mere act of wandering aimlessly in nature could bring inspiration and joy. Though some writers have focused on the trauma of occupying spaces or of being denied access to some spaces in the city or otherwise, very little critical attention has been paid to the traumatic potential of walking or of *flânerie*. This thesis proposes a reading of the four selected novels that considers these questions, questions which might not be raised at first glance.

Studying trauma in a context of *flânerie* is helpful in understanding the psychological, social, and literary intricacies of both the aftermath of traumatic experiences and of urban living. To that end, this thesis explores the ways in which *flânerie* frames the experience of traumatic response while investigating how trauma affects the practice of *flânerie*. Trauma is a complex reaction to a disruptive and disturbing event which cannot be readily accessed and understood. As Cathy Caruth argues, "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance— returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4). In other words, trauma resides not in the actual traumatic event, but in the way the victim remains caught in its aftermath, which they navigate in a perpetual state of being adrift. By this very definition, trauma is inescapable as long as it remains unknown and unknowable. Through an analysis of the

---

life who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks, — who had a genius, so to speak, for *sauntering:* which word is beautifully derived 'from idle people who roved about the country, in the Middle Ages, and asked charity, under pretense of going *à la Sainte Terre*,' to the Holy Land, till the children exclaimed, 'There goes a *Sainte-Terrer*,' a Saunterer, a Holy-Lander. They who never go to the Holy Land in their walks, as they pretend, are indeed mere idlers and vagabonds; but they who do go there are saunterers in the good sense, such as I mean. Some, however, would derive the word from *sans terre* without land or a home, which, therefore, in the good sense, will mean, having no particular home, but equally at home everywhere" (Thoreau).

chosen corpus, I will argue that *flânerie* allows the possibility of (re)mapping one's relation to the world and of understanding, through a literal and psychological wandering, the extent of the traumatic event and of its aftermath. It is also my contention that this remapping has the potential to re-establish, at least to some extent, the senses of self and of community that were shattered with the occurrence of the traumatic experience.

The trauma that permeates *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, *Cockroach*, *What We All Long For*, and *Bottle Rocket Hearts* cannot be readily articulated. Though the reader is given some details about the events themselves, the extent of the subsequent trauma remains hard to access. As such, reading the trauma narratives through the lens of *flânerie* allows a different perspective on the victim's understanding of space, time, and community and of their movements through the city. In the face of an event which, as Caruth would argue, hinders the victim's ability of accessing their past and comprehending their present, all normal references about the world are put into question. In this context, it is possible to assess the effects of trauma on an individual's "psychological structures of the self" and on their "systems of attachment and meaning that link individual and community" (Herman 51) through the very ways in which an individual moves about, observes others, interprets certain situations, and interacts with people. Within this framework, the way a person performs *flânerie* becomes a symptom of trauma, and the city itself is revealed to be a site of deep potential for trauma and for healing.

Flânerie as A (Re)traumatizing Process

Bearing in mind the *flâneur*'s proximity to the city or town in which they walk, one can imagine how *flânerie* – witnessing the economic disparities, the violence, and the troubled

remains of past histories that make up the urban landscape – can be traumatic in itself. All of these elements can shatter the victim's sense of self or community, due to the brain's inability to properly encode and process the event (Balaev 151). More importantly perhaps, walking through the city can confront a person with a past trauma that comes back to haunt them. As an acute observer of the city, who absorbs the surrounding details of everyday life, the *flâneur* is at high risk of stumbling across a person, object, or event that could trigger the return of a deeply traumatic event. Caruth infers that the response to the traumatic experience often occurs "in the delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (11). Thus, there is in the city a vast potential for encounters in the form of a flashback or hallucination capable of causing a new "disruption between self and others" (Balaev 150) and of being retraumatizing in itself (Caruth 63). In that sense, walking and observing can be both traumatizing (for someone who has not experienced trauma before) and retraumatizing (for the subject of a past trauma). Hage's narrator in *Cockroach* is a good example of the traumatic potential of *flânerie*, as his position as a *flâneur* who acutely absorbs his surroundings confronts him with the trauma of the marginalized people he encounters, which only intensifies his own traumatic past.

Flânerie as a Potential Form of Healing

Additionally, it is possible to consider the healing properties of *flânerie*, though it should be noted that none of the traumatized characters studied in this thesis consciously walk as a response to trauma. Rather, their urban journey might stem from a *mal-être* experienced in their daily life and a desire to find what might help them in the aftermath of trauma. *Flânerie* might

otherwise be an attempt at locating the beauty of the present and at being part of something bigger and stronger than themselves. Similarly, though the original *flâneur*'s walks were arguably more leisurely, he did set out on the streets as a means to understand the modernity of the changing world, most likely out of a malaise that he felt in this context. As such, though the Baudelarian *flâneur* and the traumatized *flâneur* might not be able to articulate exactly what it is they seek in the metropolis, they both walk to find something that will improve their existence, or at the very least lessen the everyday discomfort they might be feeling.[6]

One of the healing properties of walking lies in the sense of community that the *flâneur* seeks and might find in the city streets. The Baudelarian *flâneur* is "an 'I' with an insatiable appetite for the 'non-I'" who "enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of energy" (Baudelaire 9). It is mainly in the proximity of others that the *flâneur* finds the beauty and strength to uncover the meaning of life he set out to find. Considering the fact that trauma challenges the victim's conceptions of identity and disrupts attachments between self and others (Balaev 149-150), the notion of community that is inherent to the *flâneur* figure becomes meaningful in the study of *flânerie* alongside trauma. In *Trauma and Recovery*, psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman insists on the importance of community in the recovery process:

> Traumatic events destroy the sustaining bonds between individual and community. Those who have survived learn that their sense of self, of worth, of humanity, depends upon a feeling of connection to others … Trauma isolates; the group re-creates a sense of belonging. Trauma shames and stigmatizes; the group bears witness and affirms. Trauma

[6] In this introduction, I use the term *flâneur* a way that is open to multiple identifications and possibilities. I will address the notion of the *flâneuse* in Chapter One as well as in my chapters on O'Neill, Brand, and Whittall.

> degrades the victim; the group exalts her. Trauma dehumanizes the victim; the group restores her humanity. (Herman 214)

Whether this sense of connection is restored through the mere proximity of others or through the sharing of one's testimony with a wider community, the crowd proposes a space of possible meaningful connections that might lead to a recovery from trauma.

Beyond the sense of community that might be found in the city, *flânerie* can also be a way to regain agency in the face of a loss of power. Psychological trauma, Herman argues, "is an affliction of the powerless" (33). The disrupting force of trauma leaves the victim feeling powerless: "Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning" (33). As such, taking control of their own movement through the city and choosing which path they take enables the traumatized *flâneur* to remap their own trajectory in a meaningful way. And the city is often revealed to be an adequate space wherein one can reclaim a sense of personal power. Walking in the city is, according to Michel de Certeau, an act of writing one's own movements in a typically prescriptive space that dictates the exact route the walker should take. In other words, for de Certeau, walking is a way of appropriating the urban spaces by transforming, negotiating, and engaging with the city. Through the metaphor of the speech act, de Certeau articulates the relationship between walking and the city:[7]

[7] Developed by John Searle and J. L. Austin, the speech act theory provides a framework for understanding the ways in which language is used to communicate differently and how the meanings of the actual utterances go beyond their literal interpretation. By making links between walking and speech act theory, de Certeau argues that the act of walking in the city has the potential to have meanings that go beyond the simple process of walking from one place to the next.

> The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered. At the most elementary level, it has a triple 'enunciative' function: it is a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian …; it is a spatial acting-out of the place …; and it implies relations among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic 'contracts' in the form of movements … It thus seems possible to give a preliminary definition of walking as a space of enunciation. (97-98)

As such, walking is a form of enunciation that allows the walker to take control of their own path. In the aftermath of trauma, this act of appropriation is meaningful to the restoration of the victim's sense of personal power. Furthermore, in a context where the victim is constantly (re)traumatized by the resurgences of the past which they encounter in the city, choosing to walk the streets is a performative way of confronting the horrors of the past, which leads to a sense of empowerment. By (re)appropriating these urban spaces, the traumatized *flâneur* becomes in charge of their own trajectory and narrative, which is another key process in the recovery from trauma.

Intersections

To study *flânerie* alongside trauma, one needs to understand the different processes that are inherent to both concepts, and especially the ways in which these processes intersect. Certain elements from the original definitions of the figure suggest possible intersections between the *flâneur* and trauma. An examination of the writings by the most prominent authors on the figure, such as Baudelaire and Benjamin, allows the assertion that "the relation between wandering through the city and upheaval runs deep" (Donn 187). As the first chapter of this thesis will

analyze in detail, the convalescent man of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Man of the Crowd" possesses the perfect mindset for *flânerie* according to Baudelaire: having had a recent encounter with death, he is "pleasurably absorbed in gazing at the crowd" and "rapturously breathing in all the odours and essences of life" (Baudelaire 7). Baudelaire's ideal *flâneur* thus engages with the urban landscape and the crowd as a means to recuperate from a horrible near-death experience.

Furthermore, Walter Benjamin explores the correlation between crisis and walking, insofar as he argues that the changes that went on in Baudelaire's Paris led to the demise of the figure. Moreover, Benjamin's work reveals that seeing the landscape conjures memories of loss that can be traumatic. For instance, in *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, the characters he mentions feel like childhood ghosts from the city of Berlin where he grew up, but which had changed irrevocably. His memories of Berlin are eternally altered by his traumatic escape from the Nazis, and his reminiscences of an idyllic childhood are continually tainted by the occurrence of trauma.

Michel de Certeau similarly evokes loss or a sense of absence in his conception of urban walking, which he develops in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* and which has the concept of the *flâneur* as a precursor. In his chapter "Walking in the City," de Certeau writes that walking "is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place" (103).[8] The concept to which de Certeau refers as a "proper" is a space that the walker can claim as their own; while in search of this space, the *flâneur* (or the walker) remains in a state of

[8] I return to de Certeau in my analysis of Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For* in Chapter Four, where I argue that Tuyen's wandering is partly rooted in the fact that she lacks a home and is in search of a "proper." This notion, in fact, could arguably be applied to all of the traumatized *flâneurs* studied in this thesis.

being adrift. The loss and crisis suggested by these important authors of *flâneur* theory point to a correlation between trauma and *flânerie*, on which I will expand in my discussion of the four selected novels.

Katharina Donn has established correlations between trauma and *flânerie*, particularly in the post-9/11 era. In *A Poetics of Trauma After 9/11: Representing Trauma in a Digitized Present*, she explores topics pertaining to trauma literature and recognizes the potentially traumatic palimpsest nature of the city. Drawing namely on Baudelaire, Benjamin, and de Certeau, she notes that the "condition of being adrift," a condition that applies to both the *flâneur* and the witness or victim of traumatic events, "makes *flânerie* such a promising response to trauma" (Donn 188). Donn uses the intersection between trauma and *flânerie* in her analysis of William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* and contends that the protagonist's double *flânerie* through the physical streets of New York City and through the virtual world provides an adequate take on contemporary *flânerie*. The recurring motif of the World Trade Center attacks in Gibson's novel highlights the post-traumatic setting of the *flâneur*'s wandering, both virtual and physical, and the protagonist thus "embodies the tentative resurrection of creativity and meaning after a traumatic collapse" (188). Donn's assessment of *Pattern Recognition* contributes to her overview of the trauma literature that has been produced in the last two decades, a period characterized by digitalization, and adds to contemporary readings of the *flâneur*, to which I also wish to contribute.

The intersections between trauma and *flânerie* have been the subject of a few other research projects that take into account the positive outcomes of walking without addressing how the dynamics of *flânerie* can be traumatic. For instance, Bonnie Susan Gill's doctoral dissertation

Movements of the Posttraumatic Flâneur in Marker, Resnais, and Varda explores the ways in which the figure of the *flâneur* intersects with trauma in three French films, *Hiroshima mon amour*, *Sans toit ni loi*, and *Chats perchés*. In these films, the *flâneurs* perpetually live with the traumatic aftermath of historical tragedies that have invaded the national consciousness in an undeniable manner. Gill terms these figures "the posttraumatic *flâneur*s," who are descendants of the Baudelarian *flâneur* and who "in observing and thinking deeply about the world in which they move, eventually arrive at a new, more functional place of being" (Gill 2). Similarly, Beatrice Melodia Festa's master's thesis *Walking the Walk: Defining Moments in the Literary Evolution of the New York City Flâneur* examines the links that unite trauma and *flânerie* in novels set in New York City in the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the latter part of the thesis, Festa studies significant novels that address trauma in the post-9/11 era, such as Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* and Teju Cole's *Open City*. These two projects, like most works that explore the relationship between the figure of the *flâneur* and traumatic events, tend to focus on the therapeutic effect of on the traumatized subject but do not comment on *flânerie* as a traumatizing practice. As such, I would argue that there are gaps in the criticism of the intersections between trauma and *flânerie*, and my project aims to address those gaps.

With this in mind, I aim to reveal the ways in which the question of trauma changes the figure of the *flâneur* who has been walking since his beginnings in nineteenth century Paris. As the first chapter of this thesis outlines, one of the main characteristics that defines the *flâneur* figure is their movements through the city. In the context of trauma, the *flâneur*'s endless walks are less casual than that of Baudelaire's urban poet. Though the traumatized stroller might also

walk aimlessly for hours on end, there seems to be a subtle urgency to their steps, which can be attributed to their yearning for a sense of community that could contribute to their healing, much like being in the city helps Poe's protagonist recover from his near-death experience. But whereas his convalescence occurs naturally, the contemporary traumatized *flâneur* seeks it, consciously or not, which explains why *flânerie* appears more pressing in this context. In the case of a *flâneur* who is traumatized by the urban experience itself, the effect of trauma lies in the disruption of the normal pace of the stroller and in the way it shatters any sense of safety in the world. Going through a situation of crisis complicates the very possibility of walking aimlessly in the city. As such, the changes in a *flâneur*'s walking rhythms can speak to the extent of the traumatic response they are experiencing.

Another key characteristic of the *flâneur* figure is their keen sense of observation. Because the *flâneur* observes and absorbs the elements of the landscape through which they walk, they become exceptionally vulnerable to the potentially traumatic sights they come across. Their observations can therefore contribute to their healing from trauma, but they can also challenge the recovery from their traumatic past. As I will argue in my second and third chapters, O'Neill's Pierrot and Hage's narrator both walk in search of a sense of community. However, the two young protagonists are confronted with the impossibility of recovering from trauma as a result of the traumatizing nature of their *flânerie*.

Trauma further complicates the *flâneur*'s paradoxical need to be one with the crowd and to remain hidden from it. Because trauma can "shatter the sense of self that is formed and sustained in relation to others" (Herman 51), *flânerie* might be a response to the severed relationships between the victim and his friends, family, and community. If trauma has deprived

the individual of proximity to others, the *flâneur*'s relationship with the crowd might provide them with the community they need to "restore a sense of a meaningful world" (70). In a context where the trauma victim needs to undergo a testimonial process in order to recover and move on, the crowd thus offers the possibility of bearing witness to the horrors of their past. The traumatized *flâneur* needs the crowd like Poe's character does, but trauma instills in the *flâneur* an urgent need to connect with the community in a way the original *flâneur* never experienced.

Flânerie has historically been associated with a practice of observing and assessing city life. In fact, the Baudelarian *flâneur* would take to the streets of Paris in order to observe the changes of modernity and, more importantly, to uncover their meaning. Though the figure has evolved, as the first chapter of this thesis argues, this sense of observation remains a fundamental attribute of the *flâneur*, even if the modern-day *flâneur* is no longer exclusively concerned with the repercussions of modernity on urban life. In contemporary literature, the figure might instead be used to comment on the development of technology and urbanization or on issues such as pollution and overcrowding. More importantly perhaps, because *flânerie* is no longer exclusive to upper-class adult men, it can now be experienced from the margins. As such, the *flâneur*'s observations can reveal the challenges faced by marginalized groups whose version of the city is wholly different from that of the original *flâneur*.

The characters of the selected corpus all experience the city from a perspective of marginalization, which defines the very way in which they are allowed to observe the city. Whether they are looking through the lens of the underprivileged, like Rose and Pierrot in *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, of the disenfranchised, like the narrator in *Cockroach*, of the displaced, like the protagonists in *What We All Long For*, or of the oppressed, like Eve in *Bottle Rocket Hearts*,

these *flâneurs* and *flâneuses* walk through and observe the spaces that are accessible to them. As members of communities that are excluded from certain urban spaces, their movements and their gaze are thus defined by the spaces they *are* allowed to occupy as well as the people that might populate them. In this context, the urban presence of these *flâneurs* and *flâneuses* might be characterized by their observations of others who share similar experiences and in whom they might find signs of solidarity and community. In some cases, the process of looking allows them to witness expressions of cultural identities that can be both celebrated and suppressed and which can inform the development of their own sense of identity and community.

In that light, this thesis also seeks to question the ways in which the notions of observation and assessment might be reversed in a context where the *flâneur* is a marginalized individual. The Baudelarian *flâneur* had the liberty of moving through the city while remaining incognito; this was an advantage he enjoyed and actively sought, as it gave him the necessary room and time to study his urban surroundings. According to Baudelaire, the *flâneur* is a "privileged observer who enjoys the urban spectacle from an anonymous position and wanders unnoticed about the city" (Vila-Cabanes 7), and it is precisely from this place of privilege that he is allowed to remain incognito: as a man of financial means, he is able to dress in a way that blends in with the surrounding crowd and has enough free time to circulate in a non-assuming way and without engaging in a particular activity, thereby never attracting attention to himself. Can the same be said about the contemporary marginalized *flâneur* or even about the *flâneuse*? This question is of particular interest to the analysis of the selected novels, as they all present characters who are observers of the city, but whose very identity makes them the object of (some) others' gaze in a negative way. Hage's narrator, for example, is regarded as "*un peu trop*

cuit" (Hage 29) and "turns" into a cockroach as a means to become invisible to this racializing gaze, his own version of being incognito in the city. In Whittall's novel, the precarity of Eve's urban movements lies not only in the fact that she is a woman and therefore less safe under the male gaze, but also in her being a lesbian, which puts her at risk. As my corpus suggests, some versions of the *flâneur* figure are not allowed the anonymity that the Baudelarian *flâneur* enjoyed, and the reasons behind this lack of anonymity make them more vulnerable than others in an urban context. These characters' marginalization can actually produce traumatic experiences, as will be discussed in the chapters of this thesis.

Chapter Breakdown

The first chapter of this thesis proposes an overview and a definition of *flânerie* and trauma, the two main concepts that are at the heart of this project. The aim of this chapter is to establish the historical background and key elements inherent to the two fields as they will be used in the analysis of the four selected novels. This in-depth discussion of trauma and *flânerie* will allow for a deeper understanding of the ways in which they have evolved over time and can be applied in a context of literary analysis. First, the chapter defines the origins of the *flâneur*, as the figure was developed by Charles Baudelaire and, later, Walter Benjamin. As part of my assessment of the *flâneur*, I have established four attributes that one can associate to the original versions of the figure as well as to their contemporary counterparts: the *flâneur*'s urban movements, their keen sense of observation, their relationship with the crowd, and their ability to assess the city and translate these observations into a type of artistic expression. These four

characteristics will prove useful in the subsequent chapters, where I will establish the ways in which each character is a modern-day *flâneur* figure.

This first chapter will also allow me to offer a review of the literature concerning trauma theory, starting with Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, which is helpful in establishing the fundamental effects of trauma on a victim and to evaluate how a person's life might be shattered by a particularly destructive and unnatural traumatic stimulus. Additionally, a discussion of Cathy Caruth's work and of her definition of trauma will contribute to establishing the ways in which trauma is conceptualized in this thesis. Chapter One will also establish the ways of studying trauma novels and assessing the manifestations of trauma in the plot or at the formal level. Finally, this survey of trauma theory will address the potential ways of recovering from trauma, an integral component of each literary analysis I propose in the subsequent chapters.

The second chapter examines the different narratives of trauma and survival at play in Heather O'Neill's *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, in which the author maps the urban movements of Rose and Pierrot. The study of this novel also investigates the role the city plays in the characters' (in)ability to grow because of or in spite of traumatic events. I will argue that both orphans engage differently with the city and meet entirely opposite fates, as Rose prospers despite her dark past and Pierrot surrenders after finding sources of trauma in the urban landscape. Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* will be of particular use to explain the damaging effects of traumatic events on Rose and Pierrot's sense of self in relation to the world. Applying trauma theory to my close reading of the novel provides helpful ways of assessing Rose and Pierrot's trauma response, Rose's survival, and Pierrot's passivity and demise. Finally,

this chapter relies on theories pertaining to the importance of the testimony in the recovery process. The work of Judith Herman and Cathy Caruth, for example, proves relevant to study the effect of *flânerie* on Rose's recovery from trauma.

The testimonial process is not as fruitful for the narrator of Rawi Hage's *Cockroach* as it is for Rose, as I will argue in the third chapter of this thesis. In the absence of an adequate "addressable other, an other who can hear the anguish of one's memories and thus affirm and recognize their realness" (Laub 68), the narrator is unable to share the details of his past trauma and thus fails to heal from it. In this chapter, I draw on the insights of trauma theorists like Anne Whitehead, Dori Laub, and Ronald Granofsky to examine the different representations of trauma in the novels and the ways in which they intersect with the narrator's *flânerie*. I also analyze the urban movements of the narrator and argue that his position as a *flâneur* confronts him with issues of racialization in his unwelcoming land while bringing him closer to others who have undergone similar traumas and whose testimonies traumatize him further. Furthermore, I propose that the narrator's *flânerie* is *re*traumatizing, as his urban experience tends to be punctuated with reminders of the war he experienced in his home country, which suggests the inescapable nature of trauma.

Chapter Four adopts a slightly different approach to analyze the intersections of trauma and *flânerie* in Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*, as the main characters were brought up in an environment defined by their parents' traumatic diasporic pasts, from which they suffer. I argue that the younger generation is forced to bear witness to their parents' traumatic narratives of loss and displacement. Because the constant reminders of the past consistently haunt them, they feel trapped within this trauma that was never their own. To analyze these intricate trauma

responses, I use Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory to explore the reasons that motivate the four protagonists, Tuyen and Carla in particular, to become *flâneurs* or *flâneuses* the city in an attempt to escape their parents' traumatic pasts. The role of the testimony in this novel is twofold: on the one hand, the traumatic stories that the older generation shares with their children is traumatic to them. On the other hand, I argue that the process of telling one's posttraumatic memories through art, as Tuyen does, is a form of testimony that allows her to acknowledge the importance of the past. However, as I infer in my analysis, the characters' presence in the urban landscape of Toronto confronts them with the impossibility of escaping past traumas, while also hinting at the impossibility of completely knowing, accepting, and healing from them.

In my fifth and final chapter, I analyze the urban movements of Eve, the young protagonist of Zoe Whittall's *Bottle Rocket Hearts,* which depicts her at times traumatic queer realities during a tumultuous moment in Québec history, the 1995 referendum. As a queer *flâneuse,* Eve, the protagonist of the novel, experiences homophobia in the streets and becomes a victim of attacks, which prevents her from enjoying the anonymity typically associated with the *flâneur* figure. In that sense, I argue that the presence of trauma in the novel reframes the ways in which one can perform *flânerie* by unveiling the violence which certain communities are more at risk of experiencing and for whom the mere act of walking can be dangerous. This chapter also explores the ways in which Eve is able to form her own identity through *flânerie*, despite the political turmoil within the city and the traumatic violence perpetrated against the queer community. Through the use of works by Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, and Judith Herman, I argue that Eve's ability to move on from trauma lies on the testimonial process and in the formation of a strong sense of community.

Chapter One

Defining Trauma and *Flânerie*: Origins, Key Concepts, and the Evolution of the *Flâneur* and Trauma Theory in Literature

The novels of the selected corpus present *flâneurs* who experience trauma as well as subjects of trauma who perform *flânerie*.[9] In that sense, these narratives bring the concepts of *flânerie* and trauma to bear on each other in significant ways and bring them into conversation. To understand the intricacies of this conversation, I offer in this first chapter a definition of these two concepts and an overview of the ways in which they have evolved in literature. This thesis asserts that the *flâneur* figure has undergone a transformation since its first predominantly middle-class scholarly definitions. It is thus worthwhile to examine both the early definitions of the figure and the subsequent developments. Furthermore, the characters' experiences of poverty, racialization, and homophobia, which can all be traumatic in themselves, modify the representations of *flânerie* in the novels, as well as the way these characters navigate the city and the reasons behind these movements.[10] The issues of poverty in O'Neill's and Hage's novels affect the characters' ability to perform *flânerie* as the Baudelarian *flâneur* would, as they do not necessarily have the leisure to move through the city in an aimless way. Similarly, the

[9] In the first instance, *flânerie* might prove to be (re)traumatic for a flâneur, while, in the second instance, *flânerie* is rather a therapeutic process. There are even some cases, as in O'Neill's *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, wherein both are possible.

[10]For more insight into the contest of space, marginalized communities, and counter-narratives, see Beneventi and Rimsted, eds., *Contested Spaces, Counter-narratives, and Culture from Below in Canada and Québec*.

racialization in *Cockroach* and *What We All Long For* bring attention to racial hierarchies and power differentials that exist within the city. The characters' *flânerie* in the context of these issues both point to a shift in the very definition of *flânerie* and to their ability to develop agency through *flânerie*. Contemporary literature makes room for different types of *flâneurs*. The ways the effects of trauma are reflected in the characters, the language, and the text change how we write and read these characters. The intersections between trauma and *flânerie* are complex, yet helpful in understanding the social and psychological ramifications of both concepts. And the first stop, so to speak, on this journey towards understanding these intersections and questions is the presentation of *flânerie* and trauma.

A Brief History and Definition of the *Flâneur*

Over the last centuries, the *flâneur*, an idle wanderer who practises the activity of *flânerie* in the city, has become a recurring figure in literature and sociology. The word "*flâneur*" was borrowed from the French verb "flâner," which means to saunter or lounge ("*flâneur*") and is thought to have originated from the word *flana* ("to wander aimlessly" in Old Norse and "to gad about" in Norwegian). The origins of the *flâneur* appear to be as elusive as the figure itself; just as it is difficult to pinpoint the whereabouts of the always wandering *flâneur*, his exact beginnings remain mysterious to this day.[11] Despite the *flâneur*'s imprecise origin story, his main characteristic, that of being an idle man who walks aimlessly, was clear from the onset. In contemporary literature, the *flâneur* has evolved, but remains forever associated with movement and with a deep knowledge of the city. The *flâneur* "understands the city as few of its inhabitants

[11] As these paragraphs refer to the origins of the *flâneur*, I use the masculine pronouns to refer to the figure.

do, for he has memorised it with his feet" (Elkin 3), and is attuned to the rhythms of the city, from Paris's iron-and-glass *passages* to its every corner and alleyway.[12]

Baudelaire's *Flâneur*

With "The Painter of Modern Life," Charles Baudelaire brings attention to the presence of the *flâneur* in literature and art. This 1863 essay, which Walter Benjamin will later use in his study of Baudelaire and of the figure, addresses Baudelaire's theories on the aesthetics of the time. A focal point of "The Painter of Modern Life" is concerned with Constantin Guys, a newspaper illustrator who is, according to Baudelaire, the perfect *flâneur*, "a man who understands the world and the mysterious and lawful reasons for all its uses" (7). Guys, to whom Baudelaire refers as Monsieur G., is an ideal *flâneur*, as he is not only "a great traveller and cosmopolitan" (6), but also a man with a thirst for knowledge, understanding, and appreciation for all people, places, and objects he encounters. Using his view of the world, he translates his observations into art, allowing others to witness and understand the world as he sees it. To Baudelaire, Monsieur G. is not "precisely an *artist*, but rather a *man of the world*" (6). In these early definitions of the figure, the *flâneur* is thus more than a mere artist: he is a traveller whose

[12] Here, the term "iron-and-glass passages" refers to the nineteenth-century Paris arcades, known as the "passages couverts de Paris." In a 1867 guide to Paris, the arcades (or "passages") are described as such: "Paris contains 183 *passages*, *galleries* or *cours* (a sort of covered street, practicable only for foot-passengers, having on either side, for the most part, beautiful shops, and excellently lighted)" (Joanne 90). These arcades are often associated with the *flâneur* figure, as it was an important urban landmark of the time.

curiosity grants him a deep understanding of the world, which he is able to share with others through art.

In the same essay, Baudelaire also evokes Edgar Allan Poe's 1840 short story "The Man of the Crowd," in which an unnamed narrator moves through the crowded streets of London after having just recovered from an undefined illness. Poe's narrator sits in a coffee-house, "pleasurably absorbed in gazing at the crowd" and "breathing in all the odours and essences of life" (Baudelaire 7). In typical *flâneur* fashion, the narrator uses his acute sense of observation to categorize and understand the people he meets in the crowd. When the face of a man captures his view on account of the "absolute idiosyncrasy of its expression," he feels "a craving desire" to follow him in an attempt to know and understand more of him (Poe 511). Confronted by this unknown and unknowable face, the narrator chases the man through the city. For Baudelaire, the irresistible curiosity that drives Poe's narrator on his pursuit is a necessary attribute of the *flâneur*: "Imagine an artist who was always, spiritually, in the condition of [Poe's] convalescent, and you will have the key to the nature of Monsieur G." (Baudelaire 7). Baudelaire's definition of the *flâneur*, then, is a juxtaposition of the curious narrator from Poe's short story and the artist Monsieur G.

If "The Painter of Modern Life" depicts the *flâneur* as an urban hero, an avid decoder of the city and its people, Baudelaire's poetry tends to portray the figure as "overstrained by the experience of the city" (Shaya 48). In "The Seven Old Men," published in *Les fleurs du mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*), the *flâneur* and poet walks on a "gloomy street" in a city "[w]here specters in broad day accost the passer-by!" In this version of the city, the character observes a "not bent, but broken" man who is "[h]ostile, rather than indifferent to the world" and followed by seven

ghostlike versions of himself. The poet returns home, running away from the streets that differ so strikingly from the ones where Monsieur G. spends his time:

> Exasperated like a drunk who sees double,
> I went home; I locked the door, terrified,
> Chilled to the bone and ill, my mind fevered, confused,
> Hurt by that mysterious and absurd happening! (Baudelaire "Seven")

Similarly, the urban setting of "To a Passerby" is unwelcoming to the persona, as "[t]he street about [him] roar[s] with a deafening sound." He takes in a mysterious woman, whose beauty is overtaken by the coldness he reads in her: "From her eyes, pale sky where tempests germinate/The sweetness that enthralls and the pleasure that kills" (Baudelaire "Passerby"). She flees, and he is left alone with his longing, realizing that he will never encounter her again. The beauty he has found in the streets is only fleeting and unrequited, leaving him with a sense of loneliness. As such, a closer look at Baudelaire's poetry reveals that his *flâneur* remains isolated from the crowd he seeks.

Benjamin's *Flâneur*

Walter Benjamin is often credited with bringing the spotlight of critical theory back on the figure of the *flâneur*, namely with his 1938 essay "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," his unfinished *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, and

his *The Arcades Projects*, which was published posthumously in 1982 in German. In *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, Benjamin defines the *flâneur* as follows:

> The street becomes a dwelling for the *flâneur*; he is as much at home among the facades of houses as a citizen as in his four walls. To him the shiny, enamelled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; news-stands are his libraries and the terraces of cafes are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done. (Benjamin *Charles Baudelaire* 37)

The *flâneur* is a prominent figure of Benjamin's work, as it contributes to his attempts at understanding modernization; as such, the *flâneur* plays a significant role in Benjamin's writing from the 1930s.

In his lengthy but unfinished opus *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin revisits the figure of the *flâneur* by grounding his study of the Paris arcades in Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal*. As Anne Friedberg writes, "[f]or Benjamin, [Baudelaire]'s poems record the ambulatory faze that the *flâneur* directs on Paris, 'the capital of the nineteenth century'" (Friedberg 420). *The Arcades Project* is a comprehensive collection of passages taken from multiple published texts that centre around the themes of the nineteenth-century arcades and a concept he calls "the commodification of things," which he associates with the transition to the modern age. By including and commenting on several fragments from historical and fictional references, Benjamin acts as a *flâneur* himself. Much like the *flâneur*, he uses his inquisitive gaze to gather information from his observation and translates that information into art, in the form of *The*

Arcades Project. Benjamin also assumes the role of a *flâneur*-like figure in his autobiographical text *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*. Although it contains no theoretical attention to the concept of *flânerie* and does not explicitly mention the term "*flâneur*," the book recollects Benjamin's past as a wandering child who acts as a *flâneur* in the streets of Berlin. Through detailed descriptions of the city and of his observations, Benjamin recounts his "*flâneur*istic" experience of the city at the turn of the twentieth century.

Benjamin uses his analysis of Baudelaire's *flâneur* to explain the impacts of modernity on the city, with the *flâneur* acting as "the quintessential modern subject, wandering through urban space in a daze of distraction" (Friedberg 420). To Benjamin, however, the "act of *flânerie* is not simply the art of strolling at the leisurely pace of a pedestrian innocuously absorbing the city sights, but is a politically charged social activity" (MacPherson 14). As he walks through the changing metropolis, the modern *flâneur* is both attracted and repulsed by the capitalist ideology that defines the city in the nineteenth century. Though he observes the crowd with consistent passion, he feels removed from it entirely. Furthermore, Paris went through major architectural changes as a result of Baron Haussmann's renovation of the city between 1850 and 1870, during which several arcades were destroyed and the crowded traditional neighbourhoods were replaced by wide boulevards.[13] These changes, associated with modernity, are thought to have caused the *flâneur*'s undoing, since he could no longer walk through the streets of Paris where he was "born." As this thesis suggests, however, the "Haussmannisation" was not the end of the *flâneur*,

[13] For Benjamin, the arcades were very significant and were the essence of the Parisian *flâneur*: "*flânerie* [in Paris] could hardly have assumed the importance it did without the arcades… It is in this world that the *flâneur* is at home; he provides the arcade…with its chronicler and philosopher" (Benjamin *Selected Writings* 19).

but rather the birth of new instances of *flâneurs*, who are allowed to wander away from the Paris city streets and take a stroll wherever they choose.

A New Definition of the *Flâneur*

This overview of the history of the *flâneur* reveals not only the ways in which the figure has evolved over the years and has adapted to changing epochs, but also its defining characteristics that persist through time. My assessment of the figure has allowed me to identify four characteristics that were true for Baudelaire's *flâneur*, for Benjamin's definition of the figure, and for the novels that I analyze as part of this thesis: the *flâneur*'s association with walking and movement, their relationship with the crowd, their keen sense of observation, and their ability to translate the things and people they observe into art. As the following chapters will illustrate, this definition of the *flâneur* is helpful in understanding the intersections between trauma and *flânerie*. These four traits of the *flâneur* are significant in a context of traumatic experience as they emphasize the *flâneur*'s need (or the need of a subject of trauma) for a sense of community, as well as the ways in which they are attuned to the different elements of the city, which can be both therapeutic and traumatic. Furthermore, the fourth characteristic, which highlights the *flâneur*'s artistic gaze and ability to transform their observations into art becomes even more relevant in the testimonial process. In fact, in *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, *What We All Long For*, and *Bottle Rocket Hearts*, the fact that the protagonists are artists contributes to their ability to share their story through their art, which leads to a possible recovery from trauma. As such, by bringing attention to these four characteristics, I hope, in a way, to answer Lauren

Elkin's request to "redefine the concept [of the *flâneur*] itself" (11), which could potentially make room for other types of *flânerie*.

The first and most characteristic feature is the *flâneur*'s aimless walking through the streets. The *flâneur* typically walks alone, although certain characters studied in this thesis sometimes wander with other *flâneur*s, as I will demonstrate in the next chapters. In both cases, the figure is necessarily associated with movement, regardless of the reasons that motivate this wandering. For the *flâneur* according to Baudelaire, "it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite" (Baudelaire 9). Walking allows the *flâneur* to grow through the observation of the people, the places, and the situations they come across: Keith Tester writes that *flânerie* after Baudelaire is "the activity of the sovereign spectator going about the city in order to find the things which will occupy his gaze and thus complete his otherwise incomplete identity; satisfy his otherwise dissatisfied existence; replace the sense of bereavement with a sense of life" (7). The four novels studied in this thesis complicate these typical definitions of the *flâneur* and compel us to rethink *flânerie* from the perspectives of characters who cannot be considered "sovereign spectators" or who fail to find in the city the elements that allow their identity to become whole. By depicting *flâneurs* who exist in a state of precarity rather than in a situation of independence, these narratives challenge the widely accepted discourses of *flânerie* that have been prevalent since Baudelaire's time. For instance, the narrator's wandering in *Cockroach* is typically driven by his need to survive as he strives to find food or warmth. His status as an outsider and immigrant further places him in a position of vulnerability as he walks through the streets. These alternative perspectives demonstrate that *flânerie* can be experienced outside of the

bounds of the original *flâneur*, which in itself speaks to a potential spirit of resistance in these characters.

The second trait of the *flâneur* is their keen sense of observation as they walk and take in the intricacies of their surroundings. The *flâneur* is not characterized by the mere act of walking, but rather by the thought processes that emerge from observing the buildings and people they encounter in the streets. To Benjamin, this desire to observe is part of what defines the *flâneur*: "In the *flâneur*, the joy of watching is triumphant. It can concentrate on observation; the result is the amateur detective" (*Charles Baudelaire* 9). The *flâneur*, as a "passionate spectator" (Baudelaire "Painter" 9), inevitably absorbs every detail they perceive. Their observations therefore change them irrevocably, which partly explains the relevance of studying *flânerie* alongside trauma: because the *flâneur* is so vulnerable to the sights they might encounter on their endless strolls, walking can be therapeutic, while also having the potential to be highly traumatic. For instance, this is the case of Eve, the protagonist of Whittall's *Bottle Rocket Hearts* who suffers from the traumatic aftermath of her friend being murdered in the city and from the violence she witnesses. In every case, being a *flâneur* means observing the landscape and its people, which leads to a deeper knowledge of the environment in which they roam, but which also transforms them permanently.

The third attribute of the *flâneur* that corresponds to both the original and the contemporary descriptions of the figure is their relationship with the crowd. The passion of Baudelaire's *flâneur* is to "see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world" (Baudelaire 9). The *flâneur* typically seeks the multitudes and wants to be close to them, yet they enjoy being incognito. In fact, Benjamin stresses the *flâneur*'s outsider

status: “The *flâneur* still stands on the threshold – of the metropolis as of the middle class. Neither has him in its power yet. In neither is he at home. He seeks refuge in the crowd” (*Arcades* 10). Adrift on the waves of the changing times, the *flâneur* finds in the crowd their only real and tangible home, which is why they seek the proximity of others. In contemporary literature, this is still the case: the *flâneurs* of the selected corpus are all adrift in their own way and seem to pursue the sense of comfort and community that the crowd offers. Although some of them do find comfort in the groups of people they encounter, others seem unable to shake the isolation that has resulted from the events, often traumatic, that have caused this condition of being adrift. For instance, Pierrot, one of the protagonists of O’Neill’s *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, walks the streets of Montréal in search of comfort, but since his strolls force him to relive his past traumas, his isolation from others grows until his lonely death. In the context of trauma, this kind of isolation further reframes Baudelaire’s notion of the *flâneur* being incognito; the *flâneur*’s complex relationship with the crowd remains as important in contemporary versions of the figure as it was originally, though it can translate into an *in*ability to seek refuge in its multitude.

Not anyone who wanders and observes can be considered a *flâneur*, as *flânerie* also involves the important ability to translate the object of the gaze into some art form that allows a deeper understanding of the culture and social elements they stumble across. As such, the fourth and final characteristic of the *flâneur* that I have identified is their artistry, which allows them to share the details of their socio-cultural environment with others through art. Their position both on the inside and on the periphery of the crowd allows the *flâneur* to assess cultural trends and social behaviours from a close vantage point, thereby combining “a critical eye with the artistry

of the painter or poet" (Tribunella 65). According to Baudelaire, the *flâneur* sees the city as an endless source of art, which allows them to "reap aesthetic meaning and an individual kind of existential security from the spectacle of the teeming crowds – the visible public – of the metropolitan environment" (Tester 2). This feature of the *flâneur* is particularly interesting in light of my desire to study *flânerie* alongside trauma. Because victims of traumatic events tend to lose all "sense of a meaningful world" (Herman 70), finding meaning and beauty by engaging in a form of *flânerie* can lead to a potential recovery from trauma.

Endless Possibilities

Some scholars have suggested that the ability to perform *flânerie* is contingent upon one's artistic and interpretative gaze, and not based on gender, age, social class, etc. As such, the *flâneur* "both interprets and represents new modes of participation in urban culture" (Ferguson 122). Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson thus views the *flâneur* as someone who can experience new ways of belonging and being in the city, which hints at the ever-changing nature of the figure. Such readings of the *flâneur* imply that *flânerie* is no longer exclusive to male adults in urban contexts, but rather leaves room for other types of *flâneurs*, such as the *flâneuse* and the child *flâneur*. In fact, the four novels depict characters who perform *flânerie* even though they do not conform to the original definitions of the figure. For instance, Tuyen and Eve, the protagonists of *What We All Long For* and *Bottle Rocket Hearts*, are both young queer *flâneuses*, with Tuyen being the daughter of Vietnamese refugees, and thus shatter the preconceived notions of the

flâneur as a white heterosexual male adult. The next few pages offer an overview of a few types of *flâneurs* and the ways in which they apply to the characters from the corpus.

Like the evolving world in which they move, the figure of *flâneur* changes over time. Since the advent of mass media in the twentieth century, the *flâneur* is no longer expected to remain strictly within the confines of the streets; rather, as Tester argues, the *flâneur* "has been allowed, or made, to take a number of walks away from the streets and arcades of nineteenth-century Paris" (1). Tester's *The Flâneur,* a collection of critical essays that reveal new ways of interpreting the different characteristics of the figure, point to the adaptability of the *flâneur* over time. Considering the fact that contemporary readings of the *flâneur* suggest their versatility and in light of the four traits that I have identified, I would argue there can be infinite ways of performing *flânerie*. There are two *flâneur*-type figures on which I wish to expand briefly as part of this discussion of the *flâneur*: the child *flâneur* and the *flâneuse*. Because most characters analyzed in this thesis are young and several of them are female, it is important to establish the ways in which the figures of the child *flâneur* and of the *flâneuse* relate to the original versions of the *flâneur* as defined by Baudelaire and Benjamin.

The Child *Flâneur*

The original definitions of the *flâneur* establish the parallels between the child and the *flâneur*, which suggests that *flâneurs* can coherently be children as well. In his description of the figure, Baudelaire stresses the *flâneur*'s curiosity and innocence, which are comparable to a

child's. The child and the *flâneur* share a keen interest in the world that surrounds them, even in the smallest and most trivial details:

> The child sees everything in a state of newness; he is always *drunk*. Nothing more resembles what we call inspiration than the delight with which a child absorbs form and colour … It is by this deep and joyful curiosity that we may explain the fixed and animally ecstatic gaze of a child confronted with something new, whatever it be, whether a face or a landscape, gilding, colours, shimmering stuffs, or the magic of physical beauty assisted by the cosmetic art. (8)

The *flâneur*'s childlike wonder allows them to see past a city's filth and chaos, and to absorb the beauty and possibilities that the setting offers (Tribunella 67). Because of the ability to find value in every detail, just like a child can, Baudelaire's *flâneur* can use any element of the city as a source of inspiration that they can translate into art. Benjamin's writing also suggests a significant relationship between the child and the city. For example, his *Berlin Childhood Around 1900* explores the ways a city can imprint images of itself on the mind of a child, so that its memory stays with him even years after he has left.

This link between childhood and *flânerie* has led certain scholars like Eric L. Tribunella to explore the possibility of the child *flâneur*, thereby questioning the notion that *flâneurs* are necessarily adult. In his article "The Child and the *Flâneur*," Tribunella applies Baudelaire's definition of the figure to children's literature set in New York City, such as Elizabeth Enright's *The Saturdays*, Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy*, and Virginia Hamilton's *The Planet of Junior*

Brown. Tribunella's article not only argues in favour of the child *flâneur*, but also reveals the relevance of having child *flâneurs* in literature:

> The child can be used, then, in the same way as the *flâneur* – to contend with modernity through imagination, through the pleasure of novelty, and through the example set by the most vulnerable who nonetheless survive. Since at least the eighteenth century, the city has been imagined as especially hostile to the child, so if the child can survive and even thrive in the city, despite being weaker and less experienced, then perhaps anyone can. (88)

Since the present thesis proposes the analysis of child *flâneurs*, such as Rose and Pierrot from O'Neill's *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, it is interesting to consider Tribunella's study of young *flâneurs* who survive despite the potentially harsh conditions of the city. This quotation from Tribunella is particularly relevant in light of my desire to study *flânerie* alongside trauma: in fact, my analysis of O'Neill's novel suggests that though the city and *flânerie* might at times be traumatic, the typical features of the child *flâneur* can contribute to their ability to overcome trauma.

The *Flâneuse*

A number of critics have also argued in favour of the *flâneuse*, which did not technically exist until women were allowed to walk the city on their own.[14] For Janet Wolff, the fact that the

[14] The term "flâneuse" has been widely used in criticism. Though some refer to "female *flâneurs*," other critics disapprove of this term considering the patriarchal connotations it holds and the inextricable comparison to the male standards of the *flâneur* (Schers 11). Using the term "*flâneuse*" necessitates a redefinition of the figure of the *flâneur* as a whole and allows women to perform *flânerie* on their own terms.

"central figure of the *flâneur* in the literature of modernity can only be male" (37) reveals the very impossibility of the *flâneuse*. Women were by and large excluded from the public scene through which the *flâneur* would move freely. In Baudelaire's time, women's presence in the city was strictly limited, and the female city strollers were dismissed as being "licentious and immoral, associated most frequently with the figure of the prostitute" (80). In the early nineteenth century, "[p]rostitution was indeed the female version of *flânerie*" (Buck-Morss 119). This perception changed when, according to Anne Friedberg, women were granted freedom in the form of "the privilege of shopping alone" and later of being employed in department stores, which became "central fixtures in capitalist cities in the mid nineteenth century" (421). This was the case, at least, for the women who were wealthy enough to shop or for those who would be allowed a position as a worker in one of these stores. To Benjamin and Baudelaire, women in the public space were not observers like the *flâneur* was, but rather "seller and commodity in one" (Benjamin "Capital" 171), mere objects in the market context. As Friedberg points out, however, the department stores became safe havens for women, a protected space wherein they could develop the empowered gaze of the (relatively privileged) *flâneuse* (421-422).

Lauren Elkin, author of a book titled *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London*, has argued that there have always been *flâneuse*s, though their attitudes might have been different from that of their masculine counterparts:

> To suggest that there couldn't be a female version of the *flâneur* is to limit the ways women have interacted with the city to the ways *men* have interacted with the city … Perhaps the answer is not to attempt to make a woman fit a masculine concept, but to

> redefine the concept itself. If we tunnel back, we find there always was a *flâneuse* passing Baudelaire in the street. (Elkin 11)

As an example, Elkin recalls Virginia Woolf's "*flâneuserie*" (20), which Woolf calls "street haunting" in an essay of the same name. As a street haunter, Woolf steps out of her house, away from familiarity and into the "champagne brightness of the air and the sociability of the streets," which allows her to "shed the self [her] friends know [her] by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers, whose society is so agreeable after the solitude of one's own room." As Elkin points out, it is *flânerie* that inspired Woolf to write *To the Lighthouse*: in a 1930 letter to Ethel Smyth, she wrote that she could only find the inspiration to write her novel when stimulated, which she was whenever she would "plunge into London, between tea and dinner, and walk and walk, reviving [her] fires, in the city, in some wretched slum, where [she would] peep in at the doors of public houses" (Woolf quoted in Doyle).[15] The previous quotations from Woolf establish her as a true *flâneuse* who not only seeks the city streets, its anonymity, and proximity to strangers, but also uses her urban experience as inspiration to produce art. In that sense, one could argue that the figure of the *flâneuse* has existed for centuries, despite the fact that it might have been overshadowed by the male *flâneur*. As this thesis suggests through the analysis of O'Neill's Rose, Brand's Tuyen, and Whittall's Eve, there is room in the city for *flâneuse*s who wish to reclaim the streets. In fact, the novels further contribute to the transformation of the *flâneuse*, as these characters differ from the upper-middle-class women who, like Woolf, enjoyed walking in the city. Instead, these are working-class

[15] This quotation highlights a typical trait of the *flâneur*/*flâneuse*: their desire to cast an attentive gaze upon the world that surrounds them. At the same time, the fact that Woolf is allowed to "peep in the windows of public houses" also raises the question of class and privilege.

women who are born out of poverty, as is the case for Rose, are racialized, like Tuyen, or are stigmatized like Eve, on account of her homosexuality. These women all reclaim the streets in meaningful ways, despite their different levels of marginalization, and thus bring about a critical (re)definition of the *flâneuse* figure.

Understanding Trauma in Literature

Definition of Trauma

Assessing the role of trauma begins with an understanding of trauma itself. I would be remiss not to mention Sigmund Freud, if only in passing, in this overview of trauma theory and its application to literature, considering the influence of his work on subsequent theories. In fact, his essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* proves useful in understanding the psychological effects of traumatic events on a victim. In this work, Freud compares the human mind to "a living organism in its most simplified possible form as an undifferentiated vesicle of a substance that is susceptible to stimulation" (20). As this organism is subjected to several stimuli, the surface of the vesicle hardens until it forms a "rind" (20), a "carapace" that protects the contents within. This protective shield could never be compromised by normal stimulation, which means that the configuration of the organism remains untouched and strong. However, if the rind is unable to hold in the event of an unexpected and particularly destructive stimulus, the inside matter is at risk of being severely damaged. In other words, the protective shield that forms from everyday interaction around the human psyche can be utterly shattered by the occurrence of a traumatic event, which explains why the victim is unable to respond as they normally would. This rather

simple analogy offers a worthwhile approach to understanding the world-shattering impact of trauma on the human mind.

In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Cathy Caruth defines trauma not as one single violent and troubling incident, but as an event with a complexity that lies "in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4). This assessment of trauma recalls Freud's vesicle imagery; when the traumatic stimulus destroys any sense of normalcy, the mind is unequipped to process – to *know*, as Caruth puts it – the very realness of the experience. Similarly, Geoffrey Hartman writes that trauma "results from an experience that *lodges* in a person without having been experienced, that is, without having fully passed into consciousness" (257, emphasis mine). Hartman's use of the word "lodge" is significant, as it conveys the undesirable, unyielding, and parasitic nature of trauma. Because, according to Hartman, the survivor is unable to truly "experience the traumatic experience," they are denied the possibility of understanding the trauma and the magnitude of its effects on their psyche.[16] Trauma involves an event that has occurred too soon, too unexpectedly, and at a time when the mind is unable to grasp the implication of what has happened. As Rima Ghazouani points out in her analysis of Rawi Hage's *De Niro's Game*, the fact that the individual's conscious mind is unable to fully integrate the unthinkable traumatic encounter "highlights the difficulty of directly extracting the traces of trauma" (37) in a narrative. Though the victim is unaware of it, the "traumatic

[16] Balaev also writes about the unknowable and unrepresentable nature of trauma: "Traumatic experience becomes unrepresentable due to the inability of the brain, understood as the carrier of coherent cognitive schemata, to properly encode and process the event. The origin of traumatic response is forever unknown and unintegrated; yet, the ambiguous, literal event is ever-present and intrusive" (151). Balaev's interpretation points to the ambiguity of the trauma response, as the event remains both unintegrated and intrusive. This dichotomy further complicates the possibility of understanding trauma and of healing from it.

experience becomes the driving force behind [their] actions and perceptions of the world" (37), which complicates any attempt at understanding the implications of the traumatic event.

Caruth also draws on Freud in her work on trauma theory and argues that the study of literature is helpful to explain traumatic experiences, considering that "literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing" (Caruth 3). Literature allows the expression of thoughts, emotions, and concepts that are difficult to grasp. Turning to literature to assess the mechanics of trauma is a process by which one can articulate the inarticulable and *know* the *unknowable*. In that sense, storytelling, whether it is oral or written, prompts an attempt at understanding the ambiguous and often indescribable nature of traumatic events. Through literature, writers create a space that fosters the possibility of taking ownership of trauma and of beginning the recovery process.

Caruth notes that the word "trauma" comes from the "Greek *trauma*, or 'wound,' originally referring to an injury inflicted on a body" (3). She also points out that in later usage of the term, mainly in the medical and psychiatric literature, "*trauma* is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (3). This usage of the term, central in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, implies that the wound inflicted on the mind is not a simple event that can be assessed and healed like the bodily wound can. The traumatic experience causes a "breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world" (4), disorienting the victim and preventing them from being fully aware of what has happened until the event reimposes itself through nightmares and repetitive behaviours. As such, the intricacy of trauma is attributable to the fact that the trauma response incorporates not only the wound itself, but also the survivor's inability to assimilate and comprehend the reality of the event.

Trauma in Literary Analysis

The four selected novels of this thesis can all be qualified as "trauma novels," which Michelle Balaev defines as "work[s] of fiction that conve[y] profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels" (150). The trauma novel is characterized by the transformation of the self in the aftermath of a troubling event and illustrates the process by which this event can damage one's perceptions of the world, their connections with others, and their sense of self. Though the traumatic experience can be bound to a collective event such as war or a natural disaster, as is the case in Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*, it can also originate from an intimately personal event that disrupts any sense of attachments between the victim and others. In *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, Rose and Pierrot experience trauma throughout their childhood in the form of verbal and physical violence as well as sexual abuse. In *What We All Long For*, Dionne Brand takes a slightly different approach, as the protagonists' lives are defined by a trauma that is not their own, but which was passed down to them from their parents. Zoe Whittall's *Bottle Rocket Hearts* presents a character who experiences trauma upon witnessing the violence perpetrated against the queer community to which she belongs. These traumatic experiences are all different, and the victims' trauma responses are all articulated in different ways through the form, the language, and the plot of the novels.

In *Trauma Fiction*, Anne Whitehead explores the literary potential of trauma through the readings of trauma novels by Pat Barker, Jackie Kay, Toni Morrison, W. G. Sebald, and others. Drawing on other trauma theorists, Whitehead studies the ways in which these contemporary authors not only evoke the theme of trauma, but also include the structures of trauma in their narratives: "Novelists have frequently found that the impact of trauma can only be adequately

represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterized by repetition and indirection" (Whitehead 3). As such, the first half of Whitehead's book is concerned not only with the impact of trauma theory on the conceptualization of trauma, but also with the ways this comes into play in contemporary fiction.

Whitehead identifies the key stylistic features associated with trauma fiction: intertextuality, repetition, and a fragmented narrative voice. Though these are not, as she mentions, "a generalizable set of rules which determine in advance the approach to any particular text," nor are they features that appear in every work of trauma fiction (84), they are literary techniques that often occur within trauma narratives and that demonstrate how trauma can affect the text on the formal level. Whitehead argues that by disturbing the format of the story in significant ways, these features mirror the devastating effects of trauma on a person: "In testing formal boundaries, trauma fiction seeks to foreground the nature and limitations of the narrative and to convey the damaging and distorting impact of the traumatic event" (Whitehead 82). As such, Whitehead's approach to trauma literature provides useful ways of assessing the extent of trauma, as its repercussions are noticeable not only in the plot of the story but in the very medium through which it is told.

The first key stylistic feature that Whitehead identifies as relevant in the study of trauma fiction is intertextuality, a term used to "designate the various relationships that a given text might have with other texts" (Baldick 184). When an author refers to another text through the use of "citations, references, echoes, cultural languages ... antecedent or contemporary" (Barthes 160), they emphasize the influence of this text on the narrative. In her analysis, Whitehead draws on Peter Middleton and Tom Woods, who write that when a text refers to its intertexts, "traces of

the past emerge in the present as textual echoes, determinations and directions" (84). When applying this concept to trauma theory, Whitehead argues that "[i]ntertextuality can suggest the surfacing consciousness of forgotten or repressed memories" (Whitehead 85). As an example, she quotes from *Jazz*, in which Toni Morrison consciously links the figure of Beloved, from her novel *Beloved*, to Wild as a means to imply that the former character has come back to haunt the succeeding generations (85). As Whitehead points out, Morrison's use of intertextuality between her own novels emphasizes the trauma of slavery and its everlasting effects on the lives of the victims. In this context, intertextuality offers ways to grasp the extent of the suffering that can be brought on by traumatic events and its lasting repercussions.

Whitehead also argues that trauma narratives tend to make use of intertextuality to "evoke a literary precedent which threatens to determine or influence the actions of a character in the present" (85). By referring to a text in which a character finds himself in a predicament similar to that of the trauma narrative, the reader is left to assume that the protagonist is bound to repeat the same actions or to suffer the same downfall as the character from the intertext. In that sense, the character seems no longer in control of his actions and caught in an unavoidable repetition of the past. As an example, Whitehead uses Caryl Phillips's *The Nature of Blood*, in which the protagonist, Othello, repeats the same tragic mistake as Shakespeare's hero. As a result, the use of intertextuality can evoke the paralyzing nature of trauma, since the characters seems unable to escape their fate: "In returning to canonical texts, novelists evoke the Freudian notion of the repetition compulsion, for their characters are subject to the 'plot' of another('s)

story" (85).[17] As such, the way that intertexts can be recurrent in a given narrative is evocative of traumatic memories' propensity to resurface and overpower a character's life. [18]

The second literary device that is, according to Whitehead, key in trauma novels is the use of repetition. Repetition can work on the levels of language, imagery, and plot, and again evokes Freud's notion of repetition compulsion. Like intertextuality, the use of repetition hints at trauma's inescapable nature, as the victim appears bound to relive events that seem to have no end: "Repetition mimics the effects of trauma, for it suggests the insistent return of the event and the disruption of narrative chronology or progression" (86). The events of the trauma novel are thus not always presented in a linear way, which is evocative of the ways in which a victim remains caught within trauma's paralyzing grip. As my fifth chapter will argue, repetition plays different roles in the trauma response of the protagonist in *Bottle Rocket Hearts*, as she not only experiences recurring nightmares that emphasize the incessant return of the trauma, but also uses language in certain situations that tends to be repetitive. In fact, in my analyses, I will identify the role of repetition in all four novels of my selected corpus.

Finally, Whitehead argues that trauma novels tend to make use of a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice, "so that each of the protagonists takes up the story, adding to it his or her individual perspective" (88). Again, Whitehead uses Morrison's *Jazz* as an example, and argues that the use of jazz in the novel reveals that the recovery process is, in a way, an act of

[17] At the heart of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is the concept of repetition compulsion, which causes people to relive, often unconsciously, "unwanted situations and painful emotions" (Freud 15).
[18] Intertextuality is beyond the scope of this dissertation, as my aim is to focus on these four novels and the intersections of *flânerie* and trauma. It would, however, be interesting to study in another work the effect of intertextuality on the representations of trauma in these novels. For instance, studying the intertexts that might exist between Hage's *Cockroach* and Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novella *Notes from Underground* or Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis" could provide new ways of analyzing the narrator's trauma response.

improvisation that involves the contribution of different musicians that tell and retell the story in different ways. The collection of these different contributions might, in some cases, allow a more comprehensive telling of the story that successfully communicates the traumatic details that one single person might be unable to articulate. In my second and fourth chapters, I will argue that *Cockroach* and *What We All Long For* both make use of a fragmented narrative voice to tell the traumatic stories of different characters whose testimonies add to the voice of the protagonist. Furthermore, Whitehead adds that "the multiplicity of testimonial voices suggests that recovery is based on a community of witness" (88). As I will establish later in this chapter and will illustrate in my second, fourth and fifth chapters, the act of sharing one's story can greatly contribute to the recovery process. As such, through the use of a fragmented narrative voice, the trauma author also evokes the importance of the testimonial process in the recovery from trauma.

Ronald Granofsky's *The Trauma Novel: Contemporary Symbolic Depictions of Collective Disaster* also offers ways of assessing trauma in literature that will prove useful to my analyses. Like Caruth and other trauma theorists, Granofsky defines trauma as an event that disrupts the whole reality of the victim because it cannot be comprehended through rational means: "I understand the experience of trauma to be one which defies reason and a sense of order, cripples our ability to maintain a stable sense of reality, challenges our categories of understanding and consequently the model of the world by which we unconsciously operate" (8). Granofsky argues that trauma acts as a "brutal assault on the sense of self" (18), which causes the victim to go on a quest for identity in order to be able to know the extent of the trauma and where they stand in relation to the traumatic event. This quest for identity, also called "the trauma response," has three stages according to Granofsky: regression, fragmentation, and

reunification. During the regression stage, trauma victims tend to return "to a primitive and nonresponsible state of development which will relieve anxiety" (108). In trauma fiction, such a regression can take the form of a return to a childlike behavior or a relapse to an animal state. The state of regression in the face of trauma will be useful, namely in my analysis of O'Neill's Pierrot and Hage's narrator, as the first seems caught in a state of childhood while the second "becomes" a cockroach as a response to trauma.

The fragmentation stage of the trauma response often involves a "polarization of society" (108): every aspect of the world is either "'black' or 'white' with no shades of 'grey'" (108-109). In the aftermath of trauma, this polarity can help the victim preserve a more innocent and simple view of the world, which is easier to live with than reality: that way, "the 'black' can be excluded or destroyed like the wicked stepmother figure in fairy tales" (109).[19] The fragmentation stage might also be reflected in the structure of the trauma novel through the use of dichotomous patterns of events or themes (109), which parallels the character's trauma response. Hage's narrator, as I will argue, is a good example of a character who experiences the stage of fragmentation, as he has a very dichotomous view of the world, according to which society seems essentially split into two: the underground and the world above. This fragmented vision also works on the formal level, as some passages use stylistic devices such as repetition and enumerations as a means to highlight this dichotomy.

[19] Although I find Granofsky's concept of fragmentation useful in the study of the trauma response, I want to distance myself from the problematic vocabulary he uses. The unfortunate "coloration of experience" (110) in these arguments could and should be avoided, and it is my belief that more productive expressions can be used to discuss this "polarization of society" (108). Granofsky's language of colour, I would argue, is a form of unconscious bias, which, as Rinaldo Walcott writes, "is a politics and pedagogy that keeps whiteness intact as the authorizing position of human worth" (398). Resisting this language is a step toward dismantling the structures of privilege and power that have been built around whiteness and of challenging the cultural assumptions that have upheld these structures.

The final stage of the trauma response is reunification, or reconciliation, which Granofsky defines as the victim's newfound ability to "reconcile the traumatic experience with whatever else he or she knows of life" (110). It is during this stage that the victim learns to integrate the traumatic event into their world view and to *know* the trauma they have suffered through. According to Granofsky, this stage might only be implicit in some literary depictions of the trauma response and entirely absent in others, as it is the case with *Cockroach*; in a context where the victim is unable to reconcile the two opposing world views, the victim might be frozen and stuck within the regressive stage of development, with no possibility for healing. A victim who does work through his trauma by finding ways of knowing the extent of the event can "re-enter the process of maturation" (110) and eventually learn to move past it. As the next chapters discuss, some characters from my corpus do find ways of reconciling the traumatic experience with the normal parameters of their existence. This is the case of Rose in *The Lonely Hearts Hotel* and Tuyen in *What We All Long For*, for example, who successfully tell their stories through art and reconcile with their traumatic pasts. Although Granofsky's language is problematic, his description of the three stages that make up the trauma response nonetheless offers helpful methods of analyzing not only the characters' reaction in the face of trauma, but the ways in which the various stages are reflected in the structure of the novels.

In the Aftermath of Trauma

Thus far, this chapter has drawn upon the works of Freud and Caruth to explain the nature of trauma theory as well as upon Whitehead and Granofsky to express the ways in which the trauma response can be and often is represented in literature. In the next pages, I am concerned with theorists who, in addition to offering their own study of trauma, focus on the

aftermath of trauma, and more specifically on the possibility of the recovery process. Because my thesis partly investigates the therapeutic potentiality of *flânerie*, it is important to address the work of authors who have identified the possible steps for recovery from trauma. One of the most prominent works that achieve this is *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, in which literary critic Shoshana Felman and psychoanalyst Dori Laub propose an in-depth analysis of different manifestations of trauma. Grounding their work on both a clinical and a literary perspective, they address the nature of memory and the intricacies of witnessing in a traumatic context, with a focus on the Holocaust. Like Caruth, Felman and Laub argue that part of trauma's complexity lies in the victim's inability to fully comprehend the event, because trauma occurs "outside the parameters of 'normal' reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time" (69). For the authors, the fact that trauma has no real beginning or end can lead the victim to feel trapped inside the memory of the event and continually be traumatized by it. This notion is helpful in my analysis of O'Neill's novel, since Pierrot is caught within the memories of his childhood abuse and is ultimately unable to escape his traumatic past.

In *Testimony*, Felman and Laub argue in favour of the importance of the testimony in the recovery from trauma. The act of telling one's story to a witness, someone Felman and Laub refer to as an "addressable other" (68), allows the victim not only to start grasping the extent of the trauma, but also and more importantly to have another person confirm the realness of the traumatic memories. Only then can the victim begin to accept the reality of the event. In other words, not only does the victim survive to tell their story, but they also need to tell their story in order to survive (78). Considering the importance of the testimonial process in the novels of my

corpus, Felman and Laub's collection is a valuable reference for my project. In the case of O'Neill, Brand, and Whittall, the testimonial process takes the form of an artistic performance, through which the characters tell their stories to one or more addressable other(s) who are willing and ready to hear them. It is significant to mention that Hage's narrator never finds an addressable other that would allow the testimonial process to take place, despite his frequent visits to his court-mandated therapist. As I will argue in Chapter Three, this can be explained both by the narrator's unwillingness to share his story and by the therapist's inability to receive and understand his testimony.

In *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Lewis Herman offers ways of understanding trauma survivors by drawing on decades of clinical work with traumatized people, such as victims of sexual abuse, of domestic violence, or of political terror. In her analyses, Herman places the victim's experience in a political frame, which allows her to demonstrate that the key to understanding trauma lies in our consideration of the social context. More importantly perhaps, her book is "about restoring connections: between the public and private worlds, between the individual and community, between men and women" (Herman 2-3). Although Herman admits that there is a wide "spectrum of traumatic disorders," the recovery process follows a common pathway from one person to the next (3). She identifies three stages that should occur within the recovery process: establishing a sense of safety, reconstructing the trauma story, and restoring the connection between the victim and their community (3).

The testimonial process is at the heart of Herman's work, as it is an essential aspect of recovery, which is in keeping with Felman and Laub. The testimony allows the victim to feel that their cries for help have been heard, without which they are unable to restore a sense of

meaningful connection with the world. During the testimonial process, the survivor shares their story "completely, in depth and in detail" (175). As a result, the "work of reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor's life story" (175). It is only then that the event ceases to be an incomprehensible event, and that the victim can assimilate their trauma and heal from it. This notion of testimony will be further analyzed in each chapter of this thesis, as it can be applied to every novel in my selected corpus and offers interesting ways of assessing the characters' individual trauma response.

Chapter Two

"No such thing as permanence": Traumatic Abuse, *Puer Aeternus,* and the (In)Ability to Grow in Heather O'Neill's *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*

Heather O'Neill's *The Lonely Hearts Hotel* presents two young *flâneurs*, Rose and Pierrot, who attempt to heal from their traumatic past by navigating the streets of Montréal in search of comfort and a sense of connection. Drawing on psychiatrist Judith Herman and trauma theorist Cathy Caruth, this chapter explores the ways in which *The Lonely Hearts Hotel* reveals both the therapeutic and the traumatizing nature of *flânerie* through Rose and Pierrot's different trauma responses. Whereas Rose's movements through the city allow her to grow and to acquire the personal power and bodily control that she has always been denied, Pierrot's role as *flâneur* fails to heal him from his traumatic past and instead traumatizes him further. [20] The study of the testimonial process in trauma theory will allow an intricate understanding of Rose's recovery, as she finds in the city the inspiration and courage necessary to share her story through the presentation of her own show in front of an audience that bears witness to her trauma. Part of the discussion of Rose's testimonial process will acknowledge that being a *flâneur* in the city

[20] I use the term "personal power" to refer to a person's authority over his or her own life, thoughts, and development. Roberta Seelinger Trites uses the term in *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* and argues that "children's literature often affirms the child's sense of Self and his or her personal power" (Trites 3). The term is useful in the assessment of any child character in literary works, because of the inherent vulnerability of children, who, as they grow up, have to "learn to negotiate the levels of power that exist in the myriad social institutions within which they must function, including family; school; the church; the government; social constructions of sexuality, gender, race, class; and cultural mores surrounding death" (3).

contributes to her recovery from trauma. The works of Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, Judith Herman, and Giampaolo Nuvolati allow a discussion of the role of *flânerie* in relation to testimony in O'Neill's novel.

In *Trauma and Recovery*, psychiatrist Herman argues that the foundation of identity development takes place in childhood through a "secure sense of connection with caring people" (52), without which a child is denied the possibility of growing up in a healthy environment. A traumatic event shatters this connection and threatens, among other things, the child's ability to be himself or herself, to develop a capacity for initiative, and to express his or her point of view (52-53). The two protagonists of *The Lonely Hearts Hotel* must grow within and despite a context of constant power abuse, both emotional and sexual. Raised in an orphanage corporal punishment and verbal aggression are employed to maintain order and discipline, Rose and Pierrot are deprived of the secure sense of connection they need to grow into well-functioning adults. They both further suffer from the effects of abusive sexual relationships that rob them of personal power: Sister Eloïse rapes Pierrot from a young age and for several years, and Rose becomes economically and psychologically dependent on her sexual affair with McMahon, a wealthy and oppressive man.

To escape the trauma of their past, Rose and Pierrot begin to occupy the city in a way that is reminiscent of the Baudelarian *flâneur*. In fact, both characters exhibit the characteristics of the *flâneur* figure I outlined in the opening chapter of this thesis. First, like the original *flâneur*, their urban presence is characterized by movement, as they are often found walking through the streets of Montréal and, later, of New York City. Although they initially walk together from the orphanage to the city, Rose and Pierrot are typically solitary walkers as they go aimlessly from

one place to the next. Second, Rose and Pierrot are both keen observers of the city and of its people as they roam through the streets, which is reminiscent of Baudelaire's description of the *flâneur* as a "passionate spectator" (Baudelaire 9) who is changed by his whimsical observations. As this chapter will argue, the observations that O'Neill's young protagonists make as they circulate in the city change them irrevocably: whereas Rose's urban observations help her gain perspective and distance from her past, in the same way *flânerie* heals the protagonist of Poe's "The Man of the Crowd," Pierrot's observations of the troubling features of urbanity traumatize him further. Moreover, Pierrot's passive observations, as I argue in this chapter, are due to his lack of autonomy in the aftermath of trauma, and not to a mere desire to gaze at the city and the crowd. Additionally, the *flânerie* of Rose and Pierrot involves a significant relationship to the crowd. Like the Baudelarian *flâneur*, both protagonists seek the crowd; in fact, their traumatic past adds a certain urgency to their desire to be one with the crowd and to gain the sense of community that they have always been denied. Pierrot's and Rose's wish to find in the people they encounter a community recalls Poe's convalescent narrator, whose proximity to the crowd allowed him to heal from his trauma. As the next pages illustrate, Rose's movements through the city bring her closer to the strangers she encounters, and this community she finds does contribute to her recovery in the end. Pierrot, however, ultimately flees any possibility of a community as he realizes that the proximity to others not only fails to provide comfort, but also traumatizes him further. Finally, their musical and theatrical capabilities make them artists in a way that echoes the Baudelarian *flâneur*; their observations as *flâneurs* are translated into different musical or theatrical performances.

Born at the turn of the twentieth century, Rose and Pierrot then were abandoned in an orphanage that provided no sense of comfort or belonging. Despite the odds against them, the two unwanted infants survived their unlikely births: whereas Pierrot was born blue and without a pulse at the Hotel de la Miséricorde, Rose was left to freeze beneath a tree in Mount Royal Park on a cold Montréal winter among other babies, each having "turned into a stone angel" (O'Neill, *Lonely Hearts* 5). Their tragic and miraculous beginnings were rooted in the urban landscape of Montréal, which is significant in light of its deep impact on their lives. Because the orphanage had deliberately been isolated, Rose and Pierrot's relationship with the city was rather inexistent for the first years of their lives. The orphanage ensured their seclusion from the city through its position on the northern boundary of Montréal. The decision to isolate the institution was grounded on the desire to prevent the children from believing that "they too were a part of city life" (6). Thus placing the orphanage on the outskirts of the city meant keeping the children servile and forcing them to "sufficiently understand their otherness" (6). The institution, devoid of any colour and creativity, was likewise designed to crush the innocent spirit of children like Rose and Pierrot: "It was an enormous place. It was not the type of building that you would want to bother making a pen-and-ink sketch of because you would surely get incredibly bored drawing all those identical square windows" (6). The bleak and colourless exterior of the building aptly represents the traumatic upbringing which the orphans experience.

Rose and Pierrot suffer from the lack of a caretaker's affection and proper guidance, which, as Herman argues, is the foundation of the ability to develop self-esteem (52). She adds that, "the sense of safety in the world, or basic trust is acquired in earliest life in the relationship with the first caretaker. Originating with life itself, this sense of trust sustains a person

throughout the lifecycle. It forms the basis of all systems of relationship and faith" (Herman 51). In the orphanage, violence against the children prevails, and the sisters impose a cruel regime to restrain the wickedness they believe exists is inherent in all orphans. As such, they chastise the children for actions that would typically not be considered punishable, such as humming a light melody or wiping their noses on their sleeves (O'Neill 8). In this environment, the sisters continually beat the innocence out of the children, who are "so in need of love" and have "never been taught words of affection" (9-10). Afraid of being punished for being lost in thought, the young orphans never allow their own minds to wander. This upbringing not only deprives them of any meaningful connection that would foster their psychological and social development, but it also robs them of any possibility of escape through imagination.

Although both Rose and Pierrot suffer from the violence of the orphanage, Pierrot is most intricately affected by the traumatic events that occur within its walls. The scene that depicts the first of many instances of Sister Eloïse raping Pierrot establishes the extent of his trauma. When Sister Eloïse ushers him out of bed in the middle of the night and beckons him into a washtub, Pierrot is already overwhelmed with fear:

> At the sight of the bathtub filled with water, Pierrot began to tremble and shake. Children in Montreal had an absolute terror of the cold. You might assume they had built up a resistance to it, given the long winters, but the opposite was true. The cold had persecuted and tormented them to such an extent that they were more wary and frightened of it than children anywhere else. (22)

In this passage, O'Neill establishes the atmosphere of terror that resides within the walls of the orphanage, while bringing attention to the relationship between the children and the city. Throughout the novel, regular references to the cold recall the circumstances under which the children were abandoned as well as the setting of the Great Depression, which meant that they experienced the harsh Québec winters as traumatic. Interestingly, my analysis of Hage's *Cockroach* and Whittall's *Bottle Rocket Hearts* both take into account the role of the cold in the portrayal of Montréal as a harsh and unwelcoming space. In *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, the focus on the cold setting emphasizes not only the potentially traumatic urban landscape, but also the children's traumatizing upbringing and lack of meaningful connections in early childhood.

This traumatic moment between Pierrot and Sister Eloïse contrasts the cold violence to which the orphans are subjected daily to the warmth of the bath, which Pierrot finds destabilizing, "as if he had been expecting a smack but had received a wondrous, delicious kiss" (O'Neill 22). From that instant, Sister Eloïse uses her authority to distort the line between abuse and pleasure. As she begins to wash the boy vigorously, Pierrot feels frightened, but fails to grasp the significance of the event that is taking place. Her touch becomes sexual, and despite his feeling "terrible, but so good," this moment marks the beginning of a lifetime of guilt: "Although something prevented him from saying yes, he did not say no. In the future, he would always remember that he didn't tell her no" (23). In this passage, O'Neill establishes the guilt Pierrot feels at this moment and which will plague him until his death. Pierrot feeling responsible for the abuse is a typical reaction to rape, according to Herman, as "guilt may be understood as an attempt to draw some useful lesson from disaster and to regain some sense of power and control" (53-54). Generally, "it is the victims, not the perpetrators, who feel guilty" (53). In the face of a

total lack of control, Pierrot blames himself for a life-altering event which his immaturity as well as the "unknowable" nature of trauma prevent him from even understanding.

The traumatic effects of the rape on Pierrot are immediate. When he returns to bed on that first fateful night, rain begins to fall, sounding "like a hundred children running behind him" (O'Neill 24). The simile used in this passage is evocative of a loss of childhood, or perhaps of a desire to cling to childhood in the face of abuse. Pierrot's suffering is urgent and uncontrollable: "He wept into his pillow. He didn't know why he was weeping. The next day he began crying when he looked at his porridge. His big teardrops made the porridge tasty" (24). As the abuses become a recurring affair, the extent of his trauma response goes beyond guilt and confusion, as Pierrot is often "taken with great bouts of sadness" and despair consumes him in his everyday life (25). Rose remains the only positive element of his life that can lift his spirit, and he fiercely hangs on to their loving friendship.

The closer Rose and Pierrot grow, the more their imagination prevails despite the hostility of their environment, and they begin to see the possibilities beyond the orphanage. Rose in particular realizes that life is not limited to the institution, and she encourages Pierrot to consider the opportunities that might present themselves to them in the city:

> Rose pointed across the field in front of the orphanage. You could see the city being built every day. There was a different cityscape every time you looked. There would be new turrets and garrets and roofs and windows and crosses. They were approaching the orphanage, a fleet of warships getting closer and closer to the shore. (27)

In this passage, each new building or element of the city represents the possibilities for escape that Rose points out and that might eventually be theirs for the taking. The war imagery is evocative of a potential resistance to the abuse and further suggests the fact that their impending freedom can be found within the metropolis. Whereas Rose readily considers the city as an escape, Pierrot, who remains passive in childhood and young adulthood, fails to imagine life beyond the limits of the orphanage. Through Rose, however, he too begins to nurture the "possibility of being free" (26); as such, from the first few pages of O'Neill's novel, the nature of Pierrot's relationship with the city is fundamentally defined by Rose and the bond that unites them.

Later, when they do find ways to leave the orphanage and start moving through the city, Rose and Pierrot grow closer, which suggests the importance of their relationship in their respective development as *flâneurs*. They also become performers, as the sisters decide to have the children perform a play around the city at Christmastime. The orphans, all "dressed up like snow angels" (29), an image notably reminiscent of Rose's birth, perform adequately, but the two protagonists' performance stands out: sitting at the piano, Pierrot plays a song that has been known to make Rose dance irrepressibly, instantly enchanting the audience and his friend. Rose, who believes she is hidden behind the curtain, starts dancing to the tune in front of all those in attendance. This magical song grows in importance throughout the novel, as it recurrently brings Rose and Pierrot closer together. Its significance in this scene further lies in the fact their performance catches the attention of rich audience members, who request that the duo perform in their homes. This song therefore represents the possibility of a new beginning for Rose and Pierrot, as it allows them to travel the city together.

Rose and Pierrot's *flânerie* through Montréal thus begins as they walk to and from rich people's parlours throughout the city. Their *flânerie* and their relationship with this urban environment city are inextricably linked to the love they share and, just as importantly, to their individual growth:

> Because they travelled together, they developed intimacy. This was something other orphans didn't have. Intimacy makes you feel unique. Intimacy makes you feel as though you have been singled out, that someone in the world believes you have special qualities that nobody has. (37)

The city thus presents itself as a much-desired haven that protects them from the emotional and physical violence of the orphanage and that fosters their individuality. Even when Rose and Pierrot play together at the orphanage, Rose uses her developing knowledge of the outside world to imagine how her life would be if she travelled around the globe. She, for instance, pictures herself in Paris, passing "crowds of people, all wearing berets and striped shirts, with baguettes under their arms and cigarettes between their lips" (39). Her stereotyped idea of Paris comes from literature, but the importance of her vision lies in the people she wishes she could meet there. Her desired *flânerie* significantly evokes Baudelaire's city, and this quotation thus establishes her need to be part of the crowd just as Baudelaire's *flâneur* does: "The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd" (9). As Rose daydreams about her future *flânerie*, Pierrot cannot even contemplate life in another setting, and instead fantasizes about a life where "he and Rose were rich" and could afford anything. This subtle discrepancy in their ambitions – Rose aspiring for a worldly life and Pierrot directing his hopes and dreams on his relationship with

Rose – is observable in this scene and foreshadows the end of the novel where Rose uses her knowledge of the city to improve her socioeconomic status and Pierrot dies, unable to exist in the real world.

The more time they spend in the city, the more comfortable they become with their roles as *flâneurs*. It soon becomes natural for them to march "down the street like an old couple who had been turned into children by a witch's magic spell" (42), as if they had occupied these urban spaces their whole lives. Like the original *flâneur*, both characters feel entirely at home in the city streets. As they stroll through Montréal, they observe several elements of urbanity and savour their whimsicality with delight. One such element is a billboard advertising a show with performers such as tap dancers from Poland, aerialists from Bulgaria, the White Bat Orchestra from Russia, a Russian flea circus, and other improbable artists (42). Stumbling across this advertisement in the city proves to be a key moment in their lives, as it sparks within Rose the desire to create her own show, *The Snowflake Icicle Extravaganza*. Producing her own show would be a way for Rose to "travel from town to town and be world renowned" (43). Rose further proves that her ambitions involve the possibility of travelling and making great plans. Rose's *flânerie* through Montréal alongside Pierrot thus allows her to come across this billboard, to start planning for her future, and to imagine a life beyond the one they have been given.

As typical *flâneurs*, they consider every detail of the city with great interest: "The city was the most magnificent in the world. It wanted to tell the two orphans its stories" (45). Rose and Pierrot are more than mere walkers: they become attentive observers who are driven by a desire to learn every detail about the city, which, as Benjamin writes, is part of what defines him. Significantly, within the same paragraph, O'Neill adds that "Rose and Pierrot's feelings for each

other during this time gr[ow] deeper and deeper" (45). As such, their *flânerie* through the city not only provides them with the possibilities they had dreamed about back at the orphanage, but it also fortifies the bond that they share. Their *flânerie* thus allows them to find a sense of community in each other, a trait that is reminiscent of the *flâneur*'s need to be part of the crowd. When discussing the ideal *flâneur*, Baudelaire writes that the convalescence of Poe's narrator depends on his proximity to others, which allows him to "breath[e] in all the odours and essences of life" (7). Similarly, as children seeking comfort in the aftermath of trauma, Rose and Pierrot find in each other an energy akin to the one Poe's convalescent man finds in the crowd. In both cases, *flânerie* is the key element that brings about the very possibility of community.

"He seemed to perform sadness": Sexual Abuse, Everlasting Trauma, and Pierrot's Stunted Emotional Development

After two years of occasional *flânerie*, Rose and Pierrot leave the orphanage and become part of urban life separately, without knowing where the other is. Because they are apart, their relationship with the city gradually deteriorates. At first, they both do well in their new homes, and appear content with their situations. Pierrot enjoys staying with Irving, an old man who adopts the young boy in return for companionship. As is typical of the *flâneur* figure, who blends in with his surroundings perfectly and "remains anonymous, devoid of personality, unremarkable in the crowd" (Ferguson 28), Pierrot rapidly becomes one with his new neighbourhood: "As he walked down the street in Westmount, if you did not know who he was, you would think he was

a rich boy for sure. You would assume he had grown up on that street" (O'Neill 79). Pierrot's presence in the city as a *flâneur* initially feels natural and in keeping with his personality.

Like the *flâneur*, Pierrot remains a passive observer as he walks through the city on his own. However, I would argue that Pierrot's passivity is not due to the *flâneur*'s tendency to "gaze upon the landscape of the great city" (Baudelaire 11), but rather denotes the deep psychological impact of his traumatic past. Herman infers that trauma victims often fail to gain control over their own body and to express their point of view given that the traumatic event "violate[s] the autonomy of the person at the level of basic bodily integrity" (Herman 52-53). In the case of sexual abuse, she adds, "the purpose of the attack is precisely to demonstrate contempt for the victim's autonomy and dignity. The traumatic event thus destroys the belief that one can *be oneself* in relation to others" (53). Sister Eloïse's abuse deprives Pierrot of self-respect, as he continually feels like a mad and terrible person for having allowed the abuses to take place. This violent and sexual relationship has also denied him of control over his own thoughts and body: "What perhaps disturbed Pierrot the most was that he couldn't stop thinking about their sexual acts. He would relive what they had done together the night before … He was horrified by his thoughts. They were completely mad" (O'Neill 39). The repetition of Pierrot's troubling memories throughout the novel is in keeping with Anne Whitehead's *Trauma Fiction*, in which she contends that repetition is a key stylistic figure used in trauma novels as it recalls trauma's inescapable nature, which tends to leave victims passive. As such, Pierrot's loss of autonomy in the face of a malevolent use of power leads to his passivity both in his relationship with others and his *flânerie*.

After the death of his adoptive father, Pierrot's *flânerie* takes him to the darker parts of the city, which only worsen his psychological despair. On the streets, he meets Poppy and allows her to lead him to Chinatown, where girls hop "daintily over puddles filled with grease and other horrors" (113). This quotation is evocative of the changes that are taking place within Pierrot as he moves deeper into the city: the contrast between words like "hop" and "daintily" and the grease-filled puddles and the urban horrors Pierrot witnesses not only point to his loss of innocence, but they also highlight his descent into the shadowy underworld of Montréal. Poppy leads Pierrot to a back alley and through a door that opens into a room full of heroin addicts: "There were couches and daybeds all over the room. For a moment Pierrot was shocked by all the people lying on the thin mattresses on the floor. They still had their coats on. They looked like they had been shot on their way to work" (113). This image displays the desolation Pierrot has come across, while also foreshadowing the heroin addiction that will eventually lead to his demise. As a trauma victim who has been deprived of autonomy and whose personal power has been stolen from him, Pierrot simply complies when Poppy hands him a pipe so he can light it up and inhale from it. His heroin addiction can in this sense be considered an indirect result of the traumatic events he experienced as a child. Pierrot's experience as a *flâneur* therefore changes considerably over the course of the novel: the city becomes so dark and dangerous that he can no longer see the bright opportunities Rose had once pointed out.

Because his walks tend to confront Pierrot with flashbacks from his past abuse, which, as I point out in the next few pages, is a typical reaction for trauma victims, his *flânerie* is traumatizing in and of itself. As he moves through Montréal, he casts an inquisitive look on the people and places around him, but their effect on him is different. Whereas the Baudelarian

flâneur would be delighted in these observations, the people or places Pierrot stumbles across trigger traumatic memories of his past abuse or convince him that Eloïse and the threat she represents are close. As a result, the city can no longer provide him with any sense of safety. After Pierrot does encounter Eloïse, the aspects of urbanity which had once enchanted him start to torment him: "There was a dumpy blond woman in a green velvet jacket getting ready to play the accordion on a street corner as he walked past … He adored that tune, but now it made him feel sick to his stomach. He sprinted off down the street to get away from it" (95). The effects of seeing Eloïse and being reminded of his inescapable trauma cause him to flee the crowd instead of basking in its comfort. Pierrot's need to escape from the crowd distances him from the original *flâneur*, who "hurls himself headlong into the midst of the throng" (Baudelaire 7) to soak up its energy and to convalesce. Instead, despite Pierrot's yearning for a community, he runs away from it insofar as the crowd only confronts him with the trauma from which he seems unable to heal. Pierrot's *flânerie*, unlike that of Baudelaire's *flâneur* and even of Rose, is traumatic and fails to offer the convalescence from trauma he so urgently seeks.

Later, even after finding Rose, Pierrot regularly hallucinates Eloïse on the streets of Montréal, and every instance traumatizes him further:

> Sometimes when Pierrot was nervous about feeling good, to his dismay he would find himself thinking about Eloïse. He saw Eloïse anywhere out of the corner of his eye. He saw a woman in a habit step onto the trolley when he was riding back from work. Anxiety spread through his veins like a hive that had been upset and all the hornets were buzzing out. He leaped off the back of the trolley. He dove into a roll and landed on the ground. (O'Neill 240-241)

This passage reveals the ways in which trauma puts pressure on Pierrot's presence in the city: his movements are no longer that of a man who wanders leisurely, but rather of a victim who flees every possibility that another traumatic event might occur. In other significant scenes, Pierrot dreams about the abuses, which confirms my argument that he still lives within his trauma and still experiences guilt: "He had dreams where Sister Eloïse would be sucking him off. He would have called them nightmares were it not for the fact that he ejaculated in his sleep. The shame he felt afterward sometimes made him cry out in the darkness" (O'Neill 68). These flashbacks, dreams, and memories of past abuses thus act as new traumatic events every time they occur; the city is no longer safe, and Pierrot's *flânerie* only worsens his psychological anguish.

These intrusive flashbacks or hallucinations are, according to several trauma theorists, common in the aftermath of traumatic events. Cathy Caruth, for instance, writes that the "return of the traumatic experience" in a dream or a flashback occurs in an "attempt to master what was never fully grasped in the first place" (62). Because Pierrot was young when Sister Eloïse sexually abused him, he never completely knew what was happening. The recurring trauma he experiences in the streets of Montréal and later of New York City is what Caruth would call "the repeated confrontation with the necessity and impossibility of grasping the threat to one's own life" (62). Similarly, Whitehead argues in her influential *Trauma Fiction* that repetition is a key stylistic figure used in trauma novels: repetition "mimics the effects of trauma, for it suggests the insistent return of the event and the disruption of narrative chronology or progression" (86). The repetition or return of the traumatic memory is traumatizing in and of itself, because it "replays the past as if it was fully present and remains caught within trauma's paralyzing influence" (Whitehead 86). Herman also agrees that traumatized people "relive the event as though it were

continually recurring in the present" (Herman 37), which interrupts the normal course of their lives. The theories put forth by Whitehead, Caruth, and Herman that pertain to the repetition of past trauma in the present partly draw on Freud's concept of repetition compulsion, which stipulates that trauma victims unconsciously "repeat all of these unwanted situations and painful emotions" through dreams, grim feelings, recurring memories, and hallucinations (Freud 15). These "returns" of the traumatic events manifest themselves to Pierrot in the streets, where as a *flâneur* who takes in his surroundings and abandons himself to the city, he is most vulnerable. Unable to avoid thinking about Sister Eloïse, he finds himself continually trapped inside the trauma of the recurring abuses, which results in him feeling their effects several years later.

The trauma Pierrot experiences both at the orphanage and in the streets is all-encompassing to such an extent that it thwarts the trajectory of his growth, which forces him to remain in a state of immaturity. His movements through the city are punctuated by moments that both recall Sister Eloïse's abuses and suggest his desperate efforts to cling to his childhood innocence. This is in keeping with the first stage of the trauma response, according to Ronald Granofsky. During the regression stage, individuals who have experienced trauma may revert back to a childlike behavior, to a primitive and non-responsive state of development, as a means to alleviate their anxiety (Granofsky 108). Pierrot's heroin addiction eventually allows him to escape his traumatic past: "The heroin would probably kill him within five years. Knowing that somehow took the pressure off everything. What did anything matter if you weren't going to get old? He could live the rest of his life as a child. What a blessing" (O'Neill 121). His desire to remain a child establishes both his inability to heal from his trauma and the link between his addiction and his stunted maturity. In the face of a lack of adult care in childhood and when the

traumatic events took place, Pierrot must compensate with drug use, which acts as the "only means at [his] disposal, an immature system of psychological defenses" (Herman 96). In his immaturity and weakness, Pierrot finds his only defence in drug abuse and innocence: "He stopped at a playground one day when he was high. He didn't feel that he was in any way superior to the children playing there. They were his people!" (O'Neill 121). Scenes like this one recur throughout the novel and clearly demonstrate Pierrot's inability to heal and unwillingness to grow up.

Despite the traumatizing aspects of the city, Pierrot's innocence and desire to seek the whimsical beauty of the city recall the original *flâneur* figure. Baudelaire and Benjamin both establish clear similarities between the *flâneur* and the child. Similarly, Nuvolati further explores that relationship:

> The child is an unaware *flâneur* who understands the world with an intensity that will never be allowed in the coming years, but we can recall it through memory. Hence, the double bond that regulates the relationship between the child and the flâneur: on the one hand, the experience itself of being a child wandering in the city and, on the other hand, the opportunity to refresh emotions and update them when one becomes an adult. (Nuvolati 156)

Pierrot seems stuck in between childhood and adulthood, and therefore at once possesses the child's ability to understand the world with a childlike intensity and the experiences that make him contemplate his memories with melancholy rather than fondness and comfort. However, it quickly becomes clear that, despite his attempts at clinging to childhood, there is no room for an older child like him:

> He hated being stuck in a body so much bigger than [that of a child]. He couldn't fit his ass in the swing. The slide was too narrow for him to whiz down it comfortably. Pierrot sat on one slide and discovered that his feet were already at the ground. What did that mean? … A father chased him out of the park. He thought it was inappropriate for Pierrot to be talking to children in the playground, for him to be there at all. (O'Neill 122)

Despite his attempts at finding comfort in the city and in childhood, both continually reject him, which is also traumatizing in itself.

Just as Pierrot does not belong to the world of children, his experience as a *flâneur* through the city proves that he does not belong to the urban landscape either. Because his trauma has arrested "the course of normal development" (Herman 37), he is unable to become an adult, but is rejected by childhood. The impossibility of living as a child thus results in his inevitable death at the Lonely Hearts Hotel in New York City after overdosing on heroin that significantly came from Montréal. His death is marked by the very innocence he failed to preserve: "He felt that feeling that you get when it's quiet right before the snow comes. It reminds you of being under the covers as a child, and learning that school is going to be cancelled because it is snowing so heavily. The streets are empty, but you can hear laughter somewhere in the distance" (376). The innocence and purity of his death emphasize the fact that "[h]e would never get old" (376). Pierrot's death confirms his status as an ideal *flâneur*, as it is typical that the *flâneur* should die in the modern city, according to Keith Tester (16). This tendency reveals not the weakness of the original *flâneur*, but the hostility of modernity, and the *flâneur*'s unwillingness to accept it. Nevertheless, the *flâneur* figure is traditionally in a modern urban context, which makes his presence in the city impossible and his death, inevitable. In *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, the

impossibility of Pierrot's presence in the city has nothing to do with modernity, but his death is still in keeping with the *flâneur*'s inevitable death. Pierrot is the *puer aeternus*, the eternal child whose lack of a stable home and innocent outlook on life make him an ideal *flâneur*, but one who cannot find in the city the comfort he needs in order to survive.

"Also a collector of beautiful moments": Tracing Rose's Journey through Trauma, the City, and the Development of Agency

Like Pierrot, Rose first experiences the city as a source of traumatic memories about her past abuse and abandonment. Upon leaving the orphanage, Rose gets involved in a sexual relationship with McMahon, the father of the family for whom she works as a governess. The unhealthy power dynamics at play in their union recall Pierrot and Sister Eloïse's relationship, as Rose grows entirely dependent on McMahon and offers him sex in exchange for subsistence. Furthermore, their relationship recalls the traumatic vulnerability she and the other children experienced in their early years. Certain scenes establish this link: "McMahon looked like a bear. He was always lumbering around in the house late at night. He would turn the lights on and knock things over and rattle dishes, unconcerned about whom he might be disturbing" (102). This passage demonstrates McMahon's insensitivity toward others and disregard for their well-being and comfort, which is not unlike the Sisters' attitude towards the children. More important is O'Neill's use of the bear symbol, which returns on several occasions throughout the novel but first appears as Rose's imaginary friend at the orphanage. As a child, Rose would put on little shows in which an imaginary bear would insist on marrying her. The purpose of these performances was to comfort the little girls who watched her with delight: "'I don't want the

little ones to be afraid of the dark. I want them to know that the creatures of the night are sweet'" (20). However, she would often be punished – far more than any other child – for her bear act and was once sent to sit in a dark cupboard for three days. The simile used to compare McMahon to the bear not only establishes the connection between the man and the trauma of the orphanage, but also accentuates the fact that McMahon, unlike the bear, is thoughtless and is in no way a sweet creature of the night.

During the first months of the arrangement between her and McMahon, Rose is unhappy to such an extent that she fails to see the beautiful possibilities in the city in the way that she used to. Her problematic relationship with McMahon negatively affects her, as she initially falls into a depressive state of mind: "One morning Rose woke up to discover that she had been crying in her sleep. She touched her cheeks and was surprised to find that they were damp with tears" (124). Her depression is in keeping with the gloominess she observes as she walks through the city. Noticing the effects of the Great Depression on Montréal, she realizes that although "she had thought that seeing other people would cheer her up" (126), just as gazing at the crowd contributes to the convalescence of Poe's narrator in "The Man of the Crowd," walking through the city only adds to her desolation:

> Someone had jumped out a window the night before. The landlady was pouring a bucket of water over the dried bloodstain … A group of boys passed her. They were wearing dirty clothes, and shoes that looked too big. One boy was barefoot. Their heads were shaved, surely because of lice. They must have slept in the same filthy bed, and the mites were contagious … It seemed like everyone in the city was itchy. A stray dog hurried by. It had once had a job protecting a family, no doubt. But now no one could feed it. (126)

The imagery in this passage paints a vivid picture of the poverty and destitution that were widespread in the city at the time of the Great Depression. Furthermore, this scene displays not only Rose's ability to observe the most intricate details of the urban landscape, but also the fact that she feels deeply affected by her desolate surroundings, two tendencies that are in keeping with the *flâneur* figure. Just as the city fails to heal Pierrot, it appears inhospitable to Rose, and she is initially unable to find comfort in its dirty and dangerous streets.

As the story unfolds, O'Neill reveals the damaging effects of Rose's traumatic experiences as a child, which continue to disturb her in the present, as is typical of trauma. Although she acted generally happy and brave at the orphanage, she later admits the extent of her suffering:

> I was an orphan, Pierrot. My body never belonged to me … If someone wanted to beat me, they could beat me. If someone wanted to lock me in the closet, they could. They didn't even have to have a reason. Childhood is such a perverse injustice, I don't know how anyone survives it without going crazy. (343)

Rose's feeling that her childhood years in the orphanage have denied her control over her own body is in keeping with Herman's contention that traumatic events shatter the person's rightful autonomy and bodily integrity at the basic level (52-53). Herman adds that, following trauma, "the body is invaded, injured, defiled" (53). Years after she has left the orphanage, Rose finds herself still devoid of control over her own body, which is partly observable in her relationship with McMahon as well as in her numerous unplanned pregnancies. She involuntarily becomes pregnant several times, and her body, as if it had a mind of its own, continually rejects her

babies, which leads to a series of miscarriages that constitute part of the trauma she keeps experiencing as a young adult. The correlation between the pain of miscarrying and the abuse of the orphanage is unmistakable: “Then she felt as though a great fist were punching her in the stomach, over and over again. It was just like at the orphanage all over again” (O’Neill 210). Each fetus she produces and loses, both in spite of her, emphasizes her lack of control and ownership over her own body. As a result, each pregnancy and miscarriage are meaningfully reminiscent of her childhood trauma and constitute new traumatic events.

Considering Rose’s several miscarriages, her passivity in her relationship with McMahon, and her insistence on the fact that her body had never belonged to her as a child, it follows that Rose’s survival from trauma is contingent upon her claiming control of her own body. Whereas the city continually traumatizes Pierrot, Rose finds in its streets the strength she needs to overcome her traumatic past and reclaim her body. One such instance occurs when Rose emerges from the hotel room McMahon rents for her and becomes a *flâneuse* once again. As she walks “down to the side streets that shar[e] the alley,” she can still observe the somewhat bleak urban landscape of Montréal, but suddenly sees that there is sometimes “a prettier house with a balcony or a tin molding with maple leaves along the roof” (132-133). Although the city is still grappling with the effects of the Great Depression Rose begins to rediscover the beauty that had always captivated her as a child. It is on this particular occasion that Rose seeks Poppy, who works with McMahon, so she can learn where to get condoms. In the face of her unwanted pregnancies and the losses they inevitably bring, Rose seeks ways to avoid finding herself in a situation where she feels her body does not belong to her. This simple decision is a step towards her healing from the devastating effects of her body being defiled as a child.

The first steps that help Rose find a sense of agency and personal power, as exposed in the previous paragraph, have immediate and positive repercussions on her general confidence and state of mind. This is particularly noticeable in the scene where she and Poppy explore the city on roller skates tied to their shoes. They both roll through the streets, laughing "even though it was the so-called Depression" (137). The freedom and excitement of this scene denote the warmth that Rose finds in her proximity to Poppy, a stranger she has met in the city, but whose presence seems to provide a much-desired sense of community. Furthermore, this passage contrasts with the earlier scene in which Rose finds poverty and misery on every street corner. Instead, the agency she is gradually acquiring allows her to resume her *flânerie* with the whimsical outlook on the city she once had. Feeling young and embracing their innocence, Rose and Poppy are fearless on their roller skates and feel as though they move at the speed of light: "By the time anybody could figure out the girls, they would already be gone" (137). Although speed is not one of the original *flâneur*'s attributes, the rapid and enthusiastic movements of the girls denote the freedom of childhood and could undoubtedly be integral to the nature of the child *flâneur*. The anonymity that their swift course provides recalls the *flâneur*'s desire to at once be part of the multitude and "hide in the crowd" (Nuvolati 158). More significantly perhaps, this scene marks the restoration of Rose's "abstract affiliations of community" (Herman 52) through relationships she builds out in the streets, which is an important step in the recovery process. Her friendship with Poppy is of notable importance, as it contributes to the development of her self-confidence and bodily control. Along with the beginning of Rose's recovery comes a renewed attitude towards the city and a *flânerie* that is reminiscent of the one she shared with Pierrot as a child.

As Rose gains more agency, she begins to work with some of McMahon's employees who hire actors and musicians to perform at McMahon's clubs. Booking performers, she finds all over the city not only provides her with the confidence that she needs to break free from McMahon, but also points to her future role as director of *The Snowflake Icicle Extravaganza*, which will prove integral to her emancipation process and to her recovery from trauma. It is out in the city that Rose experiences a cathartic moment that convinces her to leave McMahon and live on her own, without the help of others:

> She felt as though she had been swallowed whole by a hibernating bear. She lay in the snow just like she had when she was abandoned in the park at two days old. It had been the snow that had first comforted her. It had taken her in its big fat loving arms and it had whispered into her ears that she should just sleep, sleep, sleep and that everything would be okay … Getting up from out of the snow, she made up her mind. (176)

This scene contains several symbolic elements that emphasize its importance in Rose's evolution. First, Rose realizes she had been trapped by the bear, which, as I have already argued, is representative of McMahon's authority and recalls the orphanage's abusive environment. Furthermore, this scene acts as a symbolic rebirth, as it directly references her origins and leads to her emancipation. She emerges from the snow, washed from her past and rid of the bear's asphyxiating presence.

The importance of the city and of the cold snow that blankets its streets is evident in this paragraph and in the following passage, wherein Rose rides the trolley with several other people: "On the trolley, everyone's face seemed to have so much emotion. She could read everyone. She

understood that everyone was living a great tragedy. Her tragedy had taught her the language of tragedy – and made her able to read that of other people" (177). These two meaningful scenes thus reinforce Rose's role as a *flâneuse* who not only finds both a home and comfort in the city streets, but also becomes one with the crowd that surrounds her and shares in the significance of the moment. Rose's relationship with the crowd at this moment recalls Poe's convalescent man, who overcomes his near-death experience after having been "pleasurably absorbed in gazing at the crowd, and mingling, through the medium of thought, in the turmoil of thought that surrounds him" (Baudelaire 7). As Rose observes the people around her, people who also seem to be experiencing turmoil, she finds the community that she had been denied in her childhood years and which she had, for a time, created with Pierrot. This passage suggests that she and the people surrounding her share similar traumatic pasts, and she finds comfort in the knowledge that they understand each other's pain. Rose's proximity with the crowd is even greater than the protagonist of "The Man of the Crowd," since she acknowledges the fact that others are also able to know her tragedy. In that sense, she relinquishes the incognito that was valuable to Baudelaire's *flâneur*, and believes it is "sort of a blessing" (O'Neill 177) to know people and to be known by them. It could be argued, then, that trauma can change *flânerie* in substantial ways as the traumatized *flâneur* needs to be heard and understood in order to heal.

The events that accompany Rose's emancipation from McMahon find her able to develop a stronger sense of independence as she finds her own living accommodation. She moves to a neighbourhood of the city where "girls like Poppy plied their trades" (192) and which is devoid of particular beauty. Rose's vision of her new area is realistic, as she recognizes its ugliness and imperfections, but welcomes it as her home:

> The narrow streets perpendicular to Saint Catherine were lined with lazy buildings that had let themselves go … They were cantankerous and moody. They refused to open or shut their windows. They let the cold in through the cracks in the doors, and mice into those in the walls … But she didn't mind. (192)

The personification of the buildings that surround her establishes a sense of familiarity between Rose and the urban sites she occupies, which reinforces the significance of her relationship with the city. More importantly, her new home offers her a loving sense of pride at her ability to provide for herself, an accomplishment that had never occurred before. Despite the fact that the thin walls of the hotel deprive its occupants of any form of secrecy, Rose embraces "the proximity of all these people" which makes her "feel less alone" (194). In his article "Montreal Underground," Domenic Beneventi addresses the "blurring of boundaries" that tends to occur in poor neighbourhoods and which contributes to O'Neill's character Baby from *Lullabies for Little Criminals* seeking a sense of community out on the streets:

> As is often the case in poor neighbourhoods and poor communities, the boundaries between indoors in outdoors, between public and private realms, are easily traversed. Familial dramas, conflict, and the noises of the city and of neighbours spill through paper-thin walls and out into the street. This blurring of boundaries imprints upon psychological and embodied subjectivities, and the street itself becomes a public stage upon which needs, desires, and conflicts are expressed. (270)

This quotation from Beneventi's article is also applicable to the scene where Rose feels a sense of community with the other tenants of her building, whom she hears because of the paper-thin

walls and the lack of privacy. For the first time, she is alone, but not lonely, and she revels in the numerous possibilities that her freedom and self-reliance bring her.

Part of Rose's healing process is explained by her ability to put on her own production, *The Snowflake Icicle Extravaganza*, which I argue constitutes a testimony that allows her to articulate the extent of her trauma and to move on from it. The theory surrounding the testimony will be explored in the next few pages, but first it is worthwhile to examine the show itself. The nine acts of Rose's production present the details of Rose's life up to that point, and although the atmosphere is light and humorous, the traumatic elements of her past are central to the story, from the little chorus girls whose "woebegone faces" allowed the audience to "ascertain that they were orphans" to the clown weeping all alone in a bathtub (306). The clown, who unmistakably represents Pierrot, cries so intensely that the bathtub fills up, after which he feels shocked and humiliated. The clown desperately tries "to escape" the bathtub but has difficulty doing so because of the "huge prosthetic erect penis wrapped around his waist" (306). This act, masked under a veil of comical absurdity, recalls the setting of Pierrot's sexual abuse, which has left him inconsolable, traumatized, and ashamed. The clown's inability to escape the tub aptly represents Pierrot's powerlessness in the face of Sister Eloïse's abuse. The eighth act even stages a girl who represents Poppy, who roller-skates happily with her friend in a poverty-stricken city and who is left alone in the end, "experiencing abandon" (309). The traumas of the different people who have at some point entered Rose's life are thus part of the production.

The final act of the show is of particular significance as it indicates Rose's total recovery from trauma. In the ninth act, a group of clowns combine their efforts to pull down a giant moon so as to "bring the audience to the moon" (310). Rose then enters the stage and dances with a

bear while Pierrot plays his iconic song.[21] Pierrot is wearing the outfit typically worn by the clown version of the Pierrot character: "a ruffled white collar, large black pom-poms for buttons, and pants that drooped down at his feet like melting candles" (310).[22] The significance of the scene lies in Rose's interaction with the bear, who again threatens to steal her personal power: "Every time she leaned forward, it seems as though the bear was certainly going to swallow her" (310). The bear, a representative of McMahon and the oppression within the orphanage, as well as the trauma of the past, threatens once again to possess her body by swallowing her. However, Pierrot's song intensifies, and Rose keeps dancing elegantly, after which the bear changes his mind and dances behind her. *The Snowflake Icicle Extravaganza* acts as a testimony that allows Rose to tell her story in detail and to "reclaim both [her] life and [her] past," which, according to Dori Laub, is the desired outcome of the testimonial process (70). Her final performance denotes her real-life agency, her ability to overcome the past, and the successful retrieval of her personal power and bodily control.

Both trauma theory and studies on the *flâneur* contribute to an overall understanding of how Rose's testimony leads to her recovery, which underlines the relevance of studying trauma

[21] When Pierrot first plays this song at the orphanage, Rose is unable to resist dancing to the melody and both are severely punished for their song and dance. It is the same song they play in front of a rich audience and that allows them to become *flâneurs* together. Later, when they are apart, Rose hears Pierrot playing this song as she walks through Montréal looking for him, which results in their reunion after several years. Pierrot eventually records the song, and it becomes an important hit, *The Ballad for the Moon*. Children all over the world associate the end of the hardships their families had been experiencing for years, since it is released as the Great Depression ends (O'Neill 375-376). Despite the hope, the magic, and the beauty Pierrot's song brings to the world, he pays no attention to its success, instead using the money to buy heroin from Montréal on which he overdoses. The song therefore acts as a soundtrack to Rose and Pierrot's lives, as it is played at the most significant moments. Its presence in the important final act of the play is both noteworthy and coherent.

[22] Pierrot's costume is in keeping with the costume worn by the stock character Pedrolino ("Pierrot" in French) from the Italian commedia dell'arte: "One of the comic servants, or *zanni*, Pedrolino functioned in the commedia as an unsuccessful lover and a victim of the pranks of his fellow comedians. His costume consisted of a white jacket with a neck ruff and large buttons down the front, loose trousers, and a hat with a wide, floppy brim. Unlike most of the other characters, he played without a mask, his face whitened with powder" ("Pedrolino").

alongside *flânerie* in literature. In their influential *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub address the importance of the testimonial process in working through trauma. They argue that by sharing one's traumatic memories with an "addressable other" (68), the trauma victim allows another to confirm that the event did take place. This process involves a transfer of knowledge onto "another outside oneself" (69), and this encourages the victim to accept the traumatic past. In Rose's situation, the audience of the show acts as the "addressable other," and their awed silence followed by joyful applause confirms that the transfer of knowledge is successful. The realization that her story has truly been heard concludes the testimonial process, after which Rose can begin to heal.

Like Felman and Laub, Herman evokes the importance of testimony in the recovery process. Through testimony, the victim "tells [her story] completely, in depth and in detail. This work of reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor's life story" (175). As a result, the past traumatic event is no longer incomprehensible and unknown. By providing a comprehensive account of her story, the victim understands its ramifications and knows it well enough to assimilate it and accept its realness. The nine acts of Rose's production include a myriad of details that refer to important elements of her life, including the several traumas that have troubled her and significant people in her life. Sharing her story in such intricate details, despite the fact that she masks them under entertaining absurdity, grants her the ability to own her past and all that it involves. Laub adds that the testimony induces recovery through the "exploration and reconciliation of two worlds – the one that was brutally destroyed and the one that is" (91). Rose's recovery entails the acceptance of a past world in which her body did not belong to her, and she uses this knowledge to reclaim her

own body, thereby choosing to live in a better and safer world.

Similarly, in his article on the relationship between the *flâneur* figure and the child, Nuvolati notes that the *flâneur*'s movement through the city fosters the production of a story. He argues that urban sites are the ideal place for storytelling due to the "art and play, fantasy and fairy tales" (160) that intertwine in such a setting. O'Neill's *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, like the author's other fiction, certainly contains fairy tales and playful artistic elements that correspond to Nuvolati's description. Furthermore, considering that Rose's show has its roots in the city of Montréal, it is possible to maintain that her story is the result of her *flânerie*. I write that *The Snowflake Icicle Extravaganza* has its roots in the city for several reasons: Rose initially has the idea for the show when she and Pierrot wander through Montréal; she learns how to hire performers while visiting clubs all over town with McMahon's employee; she recruits actors, singers, clowns, and magicians "from all over the city" (O'Neill 270) for her troupe; and she wants to create a group of performers from Montréal "to make people wonder what it was like to live on the snowy island" (215). My belief that Rose's testimony is an effect of her *flânerie* is in keeping with Nuvolati's claim that "the *flâneur* (a grown-up child) at the end of his wandering in turn produces a story" (160). Although the story to which Nuvolati refers has no connection to trauma and the telling of one's narrative as a curative process, it is pertinent to apply it to Rose's trauma recovery. Since Rose's relationship with the city contributes to the production of her story, which is even more significant in light of Nuvolati's argument, it is clear that her *flânerie* plays a major role in her ability to overcome her traumatic past.

Rose's recovery process, supported first by her *flânerie* and later by her testimony, leads to her evolution from an imaginative child *flâneuse* to an independent and powerful woman.

Since the production of *The Snowflake Icicle Extravaganza* also doubles as a cover for a successful drug operation which she plots alongside New York mobster Jimmy Bonavantura, Rose seizes the opportunity to become a dominant actor in the Montréal crime scene. Her prominence in the heroin trade is not only a means to defeat McMahon, her chief competitor, and the oppression he represents, but it is also a way to ensure her own independence. To achieve this, Rose conspires with Jimmy by providing a detailed map of Montréal that will allow them to improve their strategy. As she begins to draw every intricate detail of the city, she realizes that she is mapping out her whole life:

> It was as though she were laying out her entire city and childhood for Jimmy. When she drew the hotels, he could see her standing in her stockings over a little blue sink, brushing her teeth. When she drew the café, he saw her eating chocolate pudding and reading an Honoré de Balzac novel in it. When she drew the church, he heard all the different confessions she had whispered into the ears of priests over the years. She was not at all afraid of this Montreal that she could fold up and fit into her pocket. (O'Neill 325)

This passage aptly establishes the intimacy of Rose's relationship with the city that has seen her grow up, confront, and overcome her past. The last sentence particularly emphasizes the fact that she makes the city her own and that she has successfully learned to navigate its every street with courage, confidence, and self-reliance.

The city has served its purpose in the life of the young *flâneuse*, since being part of the urban landscape is, according to Nuvolati, a proper way to achieve adulthood: "The city, explored and slowly known by the child, is also the place where traditionally the child himself

and the adolescent conquer their own independence by proving themselves" (Nuvolati 154). As this chapter has argued, the city acts as the site wherein Rose finds ways to prove herself and to reclaim her body, which results in her newfound agency and independence. Rose's evolution also involves the ability to become herself and to grow outside of her relationship with Pierrot, which had defined her for several years. Along with his death comes the end of her *flânerie*; by the end of the novel, she is no longer a child *flâneuse* who explores the city in search of meaning and beauty. She is rather a young adult whose deep knowledge of the city allows her to call Montréal her home, despite the meaningless violence and the imperfections that one can sometimes find on its street corners and in its dark alleys.

In conclusion, it is my contention that applying trauma theory to *The Lonely Hearts Hotel* confirms my postulate that *flânerie* can be both traumatizing and therapeutic. In O'Neill's novel, Rose and Pierrot embody two possible reactions to traumatic experiences in childhood. The sexual abuse Pierrot went through as a child and the violent oppression Rose experienced growing up deprive them both of the personal power required to grow into well-functioning adults. Having their bodies figuratively stolen from them has forced the two protagonists to seek comfort in the streets of Montréal, just as the original *flâneur* does. Although Rose finds in the city the means of reclaiming her body and developing agency, thereby healing from trauma, Pierrot finds his surroundings continually traumatizing. Unable to overcome the trauma that took place during the most significant years of his identity development, he finds himself caught within the realm of childhood, despite the impossibility of remaining a child. As such, Pierrot's tragic death is the result of his sexual abuse as a boy, of his inability to overcome his crippling passivity, and of his traumatic *flânerie*. As Rose navigates through the city and interacts with

different individuals, she reclaims her personal power by gaining control over her body and experiences. Her relationship with the city also leads to a testimonial process that involves her sharing the intricate and traumatic details of her past with several witnesses who can share her pain and confirm that she has been heard. The last chapters establish the extent of Rose's personal power and newfound social influence as she has both McMahon and Sister Eloïse killed. In an ultimate reversal of authority, Rose eliminates the oppressive forces that troubled her for years and that caused Pierrot's demise. Nonetheless, Rose's promise to take care of Pierrot's son, Isaac, whom Sister Eloïse brings to her moments before Rose has her murdered, constitutes her final triumph over the malevolent use of power on children. By pledging to protect Isaac from all evils and to provide him with the most magical and enchanting experiences, she offers him the life Pierrot was denied. More importantly, Rose vows to become the benign caretaker of Pierrot's son, thereby fostering the development of Isaac's "sense of safety in the world" (Herman 51), which every child deserves.

Chapter Three

"I Say unto You, the Only Way Through the World Is to Pass Through the Underground": Trauma, *Flânerie*, and Alienation in Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*

In "Montreal Underground," Domenic A. Beneventi writes that Rawi Hage's *Cockroach* presents "material realities of dispossession (dirt, insecurities, the lack of privacy, hunger, violence) [that] are often accompanied by a psychological underground – the state of mind of the marginalized, the outsider and survivor – shaping the ways in which these spaces are experienced, embodied, and represented" (281). This quotation is of particular interest to the present chapter, as it underlines the intricate relationship between the space one occupies and its effect on one's psychological state of mind. In the next pages, I aim to study the ways in which *Cockroach*'s material and physical undergrounds are represented in the novel. As I write in the opening chapter of this thesis, the modern-day *flâneur* has been allowed to evolve into different versions since the Baudelarian version of the figure; though Hage's protagonist is poor and dispossessed in a way the original never was, he is a clear performer of *flânerie* as I have defined it. Furthermore, I aim to address the traumatizing effects that navigating the urban landscape has on the narrator, as well as the ways in which trauma informs his propensity to wander. To achieve this, I will first establish the parameters that define *Cockroach* as a trauma novel through a close reading of several passages that refer to the narrator's traumatic past or that hint at his unresolved trauma complex. In the second part of this chapter, my focus will be the traumatizing

effects that the city, its people, and its places have on the narrator's "psychological underground," his mental state as a traumatized and racialized *flâneur*. This chapter makes use of the findings from trauma theorists such as Anne Whitehead, Dori Laub, and Ronald Granofsky to assess both the manifestations of trauma in the novel and the narrator's evolution or regression as the novel progresses and as he walks through the city. Far from offering the comfort one could hope to find in its streets, the Montréal underground effectively alienates the narrator and casts him further into the margins. The last pages of this chapter analyze the conclusion of the novel, which hints that recovery from traumatic events and a return to a normal life after trauma can remain decidedly out of reach.

Hage's *Cockroach* has received a considerable amount of criticism since its publication in 2008. As Maude Lapierre points out in her article on the novel, the criticism tends to fall into two categories, one of which is concerned with the Canadian context of the novel. Beneventi, for instance, reads the novel as a critique of the racism and colonialism that define the setting of the narrator's new life as a disenfranchised immigrant. Jesse Hutchison similarly argues that by representing the reality of an immigrant in Canada, Hage's novel "undermines the official ideals of Canadian multiculturalism by revealing the contradictions that are inherent within" (4). The second category of criticism focuses rather on the diasporic and traumatic elements of the novel. Rita Sakr, Syrine Hout and Julia Borossa, for example, argue that the narrator is positioned as "an immigrant with an unresolved trauma complex" (Hout 339) who also feels "alienated from almost everyone" (Sakr 344). Lapierre's article connects these two methodologies by proposing an analysis of the function of refugee narratives in the novel and of the ways in which the narrator acts both as a victim and a perpetrator of violence, namely in the last scene of the novel.

As this chapter will demonstrate, my reading also tends to bridge the gap between the two categories by addressing the traumatic elements both from the narrator's past and from his present as a *flâneur* and refugee, as well as the ways in which these elements intersect.

In *Cockroach* as in most *flâneur* narratives, the act of *flânerie* is seldom entirely alienating or beneficial, negative or positive. The *flâneur*'s relationship to the city and the result of their *flânerie* are contingent upon the context of their walks and the very reason behind them. As Chapter One points out, *flânerie* has the potential at once to bring the walker closer to the community and to isolate them from it. Similarly, the narrator of Hage's novel has a complicated relationship with the city, and his circulating is at times productive and problematic in other situations. In many ways, his wandering through the city is a means for him to appropriate the urban landscape, to claim ownership of a city whose inhabitants have either ignored him or have enacted "Canada's tendency to consume refugee narratives" (Lapierre 569) by preying on his story. By making his way through the streets of Montréal and by invading others' spaces, the narrator manages to grow in confidence. This is represented in the following passage, wherein he seems to have gained a stronger footing and self-assurance despite the snow and the ice: "The grip of my boots' soles anchored me more firmly than ever in the soil hidden beneath the street's white surface" (Hage 257). In her study of Hage's novel, Zishad Lak also reads the narrator's movements through the city as a "désir d'une appropriation réciproque" and the streets as "l'espace à maîtriser et à dévoiler" (109). Lak's use of the words "maîtriser" and "dévoiler" is quite apt, as they refer both to a sense of control ("maîtriser") he seeks through his circulating in the city and to the voyeuristic ("dévoiler") components of his urban presence. At the same time, as I will point out in the next pages, the traumatic and alienating abilities of *flânerie* will

overpower its potentially positive effects, walking thus also appears in the novel as an empowering act as the narrator attempts to find his way in the city. In that sense, *Cockroach* adequately exemplifies the potentially productive and problematic nature of *flânerie*.

Trauma in Cockroach

Having grown up in a country fractured by civil war, Hage's now-adult narrator suffers from the lingering trauma he experienced as a child and a young adult.[23] Though normally reluctant to share the details of his past, he confesses to Genevieve, his court-mandated psychiatrist, that "[v]iolence was everywhere" (Hage 168) when referring to the dynamics that defined his childhood.[24] In this passage, the narrator references the war that raged on in his homeland, the violence of which was constant in his formative years. Early in the novel, he explains that he has always been able to escape anything in order to avoid violence: "As a kid, I escaped when my mother cried, when my father unbuckled his belt, when my teacher lifted the ruler high above my little palm. I disappeared as the falling blows flowed across my hand like thunder across landscapes of lifelines" (Hage 23). The protagonist's means of escape is to "transform" into a cockroach; this defence mechanism, which is still very much necessary to his survival in Canada, originally took shape as a way to protect himself from the violence of

[23] Although the novel never specifies where the unnamed narrator grew up or which war he experienced, several elements suggest that he is a refugee from Lebanon who has escaped the Lebanese Civil War. Syrine Hout lists a few markers that point to this conclusion: "the lira (Lebanon's currency), the Phoenicians (its ancient inhabitants), Almaza (a local beer brand), and a high rock (Beirut's iconic Pigeon Rocks)" (340).

[24] Because this thesis is primarily focused on the trauma the narrator experiences in Canada and on his *flânerie*, I do not go into a detailed overview of the Lebanese Civil War. As further reading on the matter, I suggest Rima Ghazouani's thesis "History, Memory, and Trauma: Reading 'The Confusion of Stones' and *De Niro's Game*," which analyzes the traumatic aftermath of the conflict and its representation in Hage's work, namely in his novel *De Niro's Game*. More precisely, Ghazouani explores different accounts of war memory and studies the ways in which traumatic memories can affect our perception of history. Though her thesis only addresses Hage's *De Niro's Game*, some of her arguments apply to *Cockroach* as well and provide insights into the narrator's traumatized state.

childhood and of his homeland: “I watched the teacher’s ruler … I alternated my six cockroach hands and distributed the pain of those blows. And when my palms burned and ached, I fanned my cockroach wings” (23). The use of surrealism in *Cockroach*, which is namely observable in the narrator’s ability to “transform” into a cockroach, can be read as a textual representation of his trauma. In her analysis of Hage’s *De Niro’s Game*, Rima Ghazouani argues that the surrealism in the novel, “most notable in Bassam’s inner-monologue, conveyed through fragments of stream of consciousness, can be understood as a manifestation of the trauma Hage attempts to capture” (40). This assessment can also be applied to the surrealist undertones of *Cockroach,* as the image of the cockroach, like the illogical images that Bassam often evokes in *De Niro’s Game*, reflects a profound psychological suffering. Ghazouani elaborates, “[s]urrealist narratives, like trauma, often leave readers confused and disoriented, unsure of their true meaning” (40). The narrator’s recurring transformations into a cockroach are thus evocative of his unrepresentable past, and the unclear meaning behind the cockroach image is reminiscent of what Cathy Caruth would call the “unknowable” (80) nature of trauma.

Significantly, his part-insect identity comes from a game his sister Saoud initiated and which not only fostered intimacy between them, but also shielded them from their violent parents and the war:

> Come, my sister said to me. Let’s play. And she lifted her skirt, laid the back of my head between her legs, raised her heels in the air, and swayed her legs over me slowly. Look, open your eyes, she said, and she touched me. This is your face, those are your teeth, and my legs are your long, long whiskers. We laughed, and crawled below the sheets, and

> nibbled on each other's faces. Let's block the light, she said. Let's seal that quilt to the bed, tight, so there won't be any light. Let's play underground. (Hage 5-6)

This passage is rich with comparisons and motifs that Hage uses repeatedly throughout the whole novel. For instance, the narrator often imagines himself growing whiskers as a means to dissociate himself from the society that ostracizes him. This transformation, along with his desire to escape the light and the sun, recurs in the narrative and consistently recalls this childhood scene of desperate safety in the face of a chaotic world of violence and evil. The narrator's desire to block out the light and to hide under his bed sheets are also recurring images throughout the novel. The repetition of these images recalls the trauma not only of his childhood, but also of his sister's death, which he was unable to prevent.

In order to assess the deep repercussions of the narrator's traumatic past, it is relevant to examine the textual representations of trauma in the novel. In *Trauma Fiction*, Anne Whitehead elaborates "a structural approach to trauma fiction which emphasizes recurring literary techniques and devices" (Whitehead 84). In particular, she identifies three stylistic features that can often be found in these narratives and that can contribute to my analysis of *Cockroach* as a trauma novel: intertextuality, repetitions, and a fragmented narrative voice.[25] According to Whitehead, these techniques not only "mirror at a formal level the effects of trauma" (84), but also demonstrate how trauma can affect a text on a formal level. The recurrent use of intertextuality, repetitions, and fragmented narrative voices disturb the format of the narrative in ways that recall the disrupting effect of trauma on a person's psyche. In the pages that follow, I

[25] Although there are several interesting correlations to make between *Cockroach* and Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* that would suggest intertextuality, I choose to focus on repetition and the fragmented narrative voice, as I do not believe intertextuality would play a significant role in my analysis of the trauma of this novel.

argue that the repetitions and the protagonist's fragmented narrative voice in Hage's novel suggest the deeply traumatic effects of the narrator's tormented past.

Whitehead maintains that repetition is one of the key literary strategies of trauma fiction, especially at the levels of language, imagery, or plot (86). She explains that, "[r]epetition mimics the effects of trauma, for it suggests the insistent return of the event and the disruption of narrative chronology or progression" (86). In *Cockroach*, the repetition of certain words like "crawl," "whiskers," "drain," "dirt," and "underground" recalls the narrator's childhood and the insect persona he created to ensure his own survival. For example, the word "crawl" appears several times in passages wherein the narrator feels the need to hide away from others. As a child, this meant crawling under the sheets with his sister to find protection from the outside brutality. Crawling also became a necessary mode of self-preservation, as it allowed him to steal and escape like an insect would: "I crawled under beds, camped under tables; I was even the kind of kid who would crawl under the car to retrieve the ball … find the coins under the fridge" (Hage 23). As an adult, the narrator still imagines himself turning into an insect to survive the poverty and marginalization he experiences in his new land: "The speaker imagines being transformed by a cockroach at certain moments of depression caused by the urge to escape from the icy clutches of the city, or by recourse to robbery to avenge oneself against those who are privileged and sheltered from injustice" (Abdul-Jabbar 174). Indeed, as he moves through the cold and antagonizing city, he uses this defence mechanism in response to both the cold indifference of his new land and the injustices he notices on every street corner, some examples of which are going to be addressed in the second part of this chapter. Thus, the repetition of these words throughout the text is relevant, as it demonstrates the fact that the narrator's traumatic past

consistently comes to disrupt the normal course of his life, while also suggesting that the current traumatic environment forces him to use the defence mechanisms he has always needed to survive.

Hage's use of repetition is predominant at the level of imagery. In particular, images of war are so frequent that their repetition represents the ways in which the trauma of growing up in a war-torn environment unfailingly haunts him. Whitehead explains that "repetition replays the past as if it was fully present and remains caught within trauma's paralyzing influence" (86); as such, one can read Hage's use of war imagery as a way to place the narrator within a space of never-ending trauma. The narrator's movements through the city are punctuated by elements that remind him of the war and death, such as "menacing armies of heavy boots" (Hage 9) or payphones, which he compares to "vertical, transparent coffins for people to recite their lives in" (36). These recurring passages make a connection between the city and the hostility of the war, which supports my argument that the narrator's movements through the streets are traumatizing in and of themselves. The repeated war imagery suggests that, as a trauma victim, the narrator can never really escape the horrors of the past, a notion in keeping with Dori Laub's belief that trauma imposes an inescapable state of mourning upon the victim. Laub suggests that trauma results from "an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after" (Laub 69). Because trauma victims must cope with an "event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion," they tend to feel "entrapped" by the traumatic event (69). In light of Laub's comments, one could argue that the repetitions of the war imagery in *Cockroach* thus question the very possibility of normalcy after trauma.

The war imagery is particularly substantial in a later passage, when the narrator experiences an episode of nervous breakdown, during which he is overcome by a "deep, deep sense of fear and sadness" (Hage 118). In these pages, the narrator laments that he is torn between two worlds: "I was split between two planes and aware of two existences, and they were both mine. I belong to two spaces" (119). Critics read this passage as the manifestation of the narrator's inability to belong to one world, constantly torn between his identity as a "conforming exotic immigrant" and a "non-confirming cockroach" (Hutchison 3). This episode is therefore relevant, as it expresses the narrator's condition, which, as Smaro Kamboureli puts it, "encapsulates his profound sense of abjection and the disjunctive tension he experiences throughout the narrative" (142). Moreover, this passage emphasizes his ambivalent nature and his in-betweenness, as he feels at once unable to move, his feet heavy and "anchored in water," and so light "an insect or a shaft of light could carry [him]" (118-9). I agree with Hutchison and Kamboureli that the narrator's nervous breakdown is a significant result of his position that vacillates between the disempowered refugee and the nonconformist who seeks to revolt against an unwelcoming society. Nevertheless, the heavy war imagery within this scene brings another dimension, one that connects his traumatic childhood to his current depressive state. As he tries to get out of the bathtub, the narrator's feet feel "heavy with the weight of iron and chains," and he compares the sound of water to "an army on the move with chariots and horses" (118) and to "armies of galloping horses, flying beneath sabres, helmets, and bright flags held by boys, and villagers turned archers" (119). The repetition of the image of the mass of horses galloping evokes a surge of uncontrollable trauma that overtakes him, leaving him entirely naked and powerless. This passage is even more significant as it recalls the underground game the narrator used to play with his sister: "All I wanted was to … throw my carcass on the sheets of the

wounded and the dead" (119). He also adds, "I belong to two spaces, I thought, and I am wrapped in one sheet" (119). The sheet represents the only safe space he has known, a space charged with incestuous intimacy, but also warmth and comfort. It is thus relevant that during one of his most vulnerable moments, which is filled with fear and unstoppable memories of the war, he repeatedly mentions the sheet as his only refuge, a place he seeks to avoid the crushing trauma of the past.

According to Whitehead, another stylistic figure frequent in trauma literature is the use of a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice. She contends that trauma novels tend to add the voice of other characters to the protagonist's so that different traumas are shared through various perspectives. She explains that this "multiplicity of testimonial voices suggests that recovery is based on a community of witness. Through the compassionate sharing of the story, trauma resolves itself into new forms and constellations" (88). As the second part of this chapter argues, *Cockroach* complicates this idealistic outcome by placing traumatized characters within a community that is unwelcoming and unwilling to hear and validate their testimonies. Nevertheless, the novel proposes several testimonies that all add to the narrator's own traumatic past and shed light on the reality of several disempowered and marginalized characters. As Hage's narrator moves through the underground of Montréal, he encounters people who share with him the details of their traumas. Juxtaposing the narrator's trauma to that of Majeed, Farhoud, and Shohreh allows Hage to explore different refugee or immigrant narratives, all of which share a sombre dimension. One poignant example of this occurs when Farhoud shares the details of his past with the narrator. The narrator's voice completely disappears behind Farhoud's

for a few pages as Farhoud takes over as narrator.[26] While the protagonist bears witness to others' trauma, the narrative voice is fragmented as other people tell their story.

Other elements of the text point to the fact that the narrator still suffers from the violent environment of his childhood. Through dreams, flashbacks, and hallucinations, the narrator relives the horrors of the past, which further proves that traumatic events are never-ending. Cathy Caruth explains that the returning traumatic dream "is, purely and inexplicably, the literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits" (59). She specifies that the traumatic dream should not be likened to the symptoms of a normal neurosis, during which the painful memories return because of a victim's attempts at avoiding them; rather, she writes, "the painful repetition of the flashback can only be understood as the absolute inability of the mind to avoid an unpleasurable event that has not been given psychic meaning in any way" (59). Caruth draws on Freud's ideas about the dreams and flashbacks of traumatized victims: in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud establishes his theory of repetition compulsion, which holds that trauma victims unconsciously relive "unwanted situations and painful emotions" (Freud 15) through dreams, grim feelings, recurring memories, and hallucinations.

The narrator's flashbacks often occur at moments of vulnerability and break the natural chronology of the narrative. When he spends the night with Shohreh, the narrator experiences a meaningful episode wherein past and present merge, conveying the extent of his traumatized psyche:

[26] The testimonies the narrator receives throughout the novel are significant and deserve close critical attention. Since I contend that bearing witness to these traumatic accounts traumatizes the narrator further, a close analysis of some of these passages, including Farhoud's story, is included in the second part of this chapter.

> I opened my eyes in the dark and looked at the ceiling. I amused myself by imagining that I was coloring the flat obscure roof above me with school pencils, making clouds and bright suns. All that is empty in the drawing should be filled in, the teacher said to us kids. First you sharpen the pencil to fill in the thin whiskers, then you use the thick crayon to fill in the wings with brown, meticulously and without letting the crayon leave the page. Six feet can be traced below the soft belly. Now, breathing is hard to detect on paper, the teacher said to me when I asked, but it is easier to feel it in real life. Even insects breathe. So I stretched my finders from underneath the sheets and lay them on Shohreh's chest. Her half-coloured wings turned and fluttered and she quickly slipped to the other side of the bed. So instead I looked for the thickest pen available, held it, and jerked it until it burst and spilled on my lap, and my teacher came and slapped my hands and sent me to the dark corner of the room. (Hage 115)

Several elements of this passage recall the intimate moments the narrator shared with his sister as a child: the repetition of the words "dark" (and its synonym "obscure"), the fact that he opens his eyes in the dark, the sexual connotations, and more importantly, the imagined formation of the cockroach, with its whiskers, legs, and wings. In spite of Shohreh's usual warmth, this scene shows her cold, silent, and distant. One could therefore read the narrator's failed attempts to conjure the warm memory of his sister as a desire to find the comfort and intimacy she had given him. In that sense, the contradicting flashback of the teacher slapping him and isolating him suggests the insistent return of a violent and traumatic past that consistently taints the memory of Saoud, proving that he cannot retrieve what he has lost.

The narrator's hallucinations appear frequently throughout the novel, at moments when he feels himself transforming into an insect and disappearing down the drain. During one of the most important scenes of the novel, the narrator hallucinates a giant albino cockroach who has come to criticize the narrator's human half and to recruit his insect identity to join a group of cockroaches whose purpose is to eradicate all other species: "You are one of us. You are part cockroach. But the worst part of it is that you are also human … Now go, and be human, but remember you are always welcome. You know how to find us. Just keep your eyes on what is going on down in the underground" (203). This drug-induced hallucination is significant in several ways. Brittany Krause writes that the giant insect "corroborates the narrator's suspicion that he is only half human and becoming less human as time goes on" (123). According to the albino insect, the fact that the narrator has never participated in the world, "always escaping, slipping, and feeling trapped" (Hage 201), is proof of his dehumanization, which he should embrace. At the same time, the albino cockroach ironically represents "an internalized figure of white dominance, global capitalism, Western rule, and a reflection of the narrator's own abjection" (Krause 124). By telling the narrator to bury himself deeper within the dirty underground, the giant insect embodies the oppressive white society that forces the marginalized to stay in the margins.

This important scene also recalls his past trauma, as the cockroach reminds the narrator that transforming into an insect has been a necessary defence mechanism since childhood:

> I have known you since your childhood. I even bit you once … That was me. When you hid in your mother's closet I was also there, and when you stole candy from the store I was there, and when you collected bullets, and when you followed Abou-Roro down to

> the place of the massacre and watched him pull golden teeth from cadavers, I was there. (Hage 202)

The memories the albino cockroach enumerates suggest that in order to survive in a war-torn country, one has to learn to hide, steal, and ignore the monstrosities of warfare, as well as accept that participating in these horrors might be inevitable. That the narrator experiences flashes of the past in a hallucination is significant in light of modern trauma theory, according to which "the repetition of the traumatic experience in the flashback can itself be retraumatizing" (Caruth 63). As a "manifestation of the narrator's psychological trauma" (Krause 124), the cockroach's discourse not only suggests that the narrator is still "entrapped" (Laub 69) within his traumatic childhood, but also that its very presence, albeit illusory, can be considered traumatic in and of itself.

The Urban Movements of the Cockroach

My assessment of the narrator's traumatic experience of the city warrants an examination of his relationship with Montréal and of the textual representations of trauma in the novel. The different rhythms that punctuate the narrator's movements through the city are represented in the succession of events that make up the narrative, as well as in the language. Though the narrator's walks are at times aimless like the *flâneur*'s, they are generally more urgent as he skitters through the streets, walks to a café, then back to his apartment, goes to sleep, then wakes up, goes to his therapy, then chases others, spying on them, and so on. As Joseph Geha points out, the narrator's insect-like movements are stressed by an apt use of a language that is "spinning, pattering, scurrying off on remarkably manic jazz-like riffs, piling metaphors on metaphors,

building frantic accumulations of fantastic imagery." A good example of the use of language to depict the narrator's frantic rhythm as he moves through the city occurs when he watches his reflection in a shop window and picks up a dustball from his clothes:

> I let it fret against gusts of wind and then released it, watching it leave confused, pain-struck and disoriented in the whistling air, which sounded like mournful trains and sirens of war howling at the sight of fighter planes that descend and ascend and tumble in the air and land and freeze on the ground like insects with metal wings, like a child's toy in the bath brought back to the surface by the small hands of an invisible hero or tossed out and hidden under a wooden dresser until they are forgotten and invaded by dustballs, deserted in favour of the call for food and the threats of giant mothers. (Hage 75-76)

The information packed in this single, drawn-out sentence leaves the reader overwhelmed and breathless. Interestingly, this passage also reveals that the narrator, like the *flâneur*, takes in every detail of his surroundings, which recall memories of childhood toys. Furthermore, the war imagery, such as the "sirens of war" and the "fighter planes," hints at the omnipresence of war in his early years and its influence on his everyday life. The quick pace and urgency of his observations, however, are strikingly different from the rhythm of the typical *flâneur*, which only contributes to the complexity of the narrator.

While the rhythms depicted in passages like this recall the frantic movements of the cockroaches that roam the narrator's apartment, other passages show him strolling through the streets in typical *flâneur* fashion, taking "arbitrary turns" and stopping at shop and café windows to look at merchandise and displays (Hage 285). With no destination in mind, the protagonist

wanders through the streets, in search of a community of "lost immigrants" (86), often finding that there is none. As he walks, he keenly observes the stores, the people, and the buildings he encounters, but unlike the above passage, his observations feel less rushed:

> A merchant was sprinkling salt on the sidewalk like a prairie farmer. Taxis waited on the corners with their engines idling, precipitation fumes like underground chimneys … A Portuguese used-clothing store hung churchgoers' dresses in the window, dresses suspended behind glass like condemned medieval witches. A little farther down, the street, gentrified now with a strip of chic Italian restaurants, was getting ready for the lunchtime specials. (Hage 86)

This passage is rich with similes that enhance the narrator's experience of the city and which display how deeply he engages with his surroundings. With its fumes and the image of condemned witches, the picture he paints is pessimistic, which aptly represents his relationship with the cold urban landscape. Nevertheless, his acute observations are reminiscent of the typical *flâneur*'s attitude towards the city in which they walk. More importantly perhaps, the striking discrepancies between the rhythms of these last two passages reveal the different tones that are used throughout the novel and point to his unstable state-of-mind.

Unlike the original *flâneur*, who feels at home amidst the multitude and on every street, Hage's protagonist realizes that the city is to him a collection of unwelcoming places. On the streets themselves, he finds himself surrounded by people who ignore him when he asks for a cigarette, and others who refuse to light his cigarette for him when he has one (260). Inside places like the Artista Café and the Greeny bar, which he finds repulsive, he also feels

unwelcome, which leaves him no possibility of ever finding refuge. The narrator has an incoherent "habit … to choose unwelcoming places" (144): in fact, he is "drawn to dark places like a suicidal moth to artificial lights" (226). In this passage, the simile establishes his insect persona, while also suggesting that any sense of comfort or community he could find would only be artificial. Additionally, such passages reveal his ambiguous need to belong to these dark places, which contrasts with his constant return to them, as well as with his hostile attitude towards the people who visit them. As a result, the narrator's whole experience of the city not only hints at his own ambiguity, but also highlights the very impossibility of finding a home in his new land.

The narrator's *flânerie* through the city not only confronts him with others' past trauma, but it also takes him to "constrained, subterranean spaces of immigrant poverty, places of work and economic need" (Beneventi 274) that ultimately fail to provide any sense of comfort and warmth he might seek. One such place is the Artista Café, which the narrator visits regularly as a refuge from the cold of the city. As the meeting place for other marginalized people like immigrants, refugees, and undocumented migrants, the café could represent the narrator's only chance at finding a sense of community. Instead, his attitude towards them is arrogant and superior: "I find it charming, the refugees' confusions and complaints. Their overt pride in spite of their destitution amuses me. I find it endearing. Lost mutts!" (144). Krause reads the narrator's complex relationship with the other refugees as an unwillingness to be associated with what he considers to be the "inferior culture": "As the narrator is unable to experience the full benefits of 'real' citizenship, which are exemplified, in his view, by the lives of the wealthy and the white, he turns his anger against the Algerians, aligning himself with the dominant culture" (112). In a

way, he is enacting the very discriminatory behaviour to which he has been subjected and which has alienated him from society since his arrival. Despite his apparent contempt, he consistently visits the café, unsure what he seeks in these "unwelcoming places" (Hage 144) to which he feels drawn. The Artista Café therefore acts as a space that shelters a community which both disgusts him and attracts him.

As a result, through the narrator's descriptions, the café consistently stands out as a particularly hostile environment:

> It is open twenty-four hours a day, and for twenty-four hours it collects smoke *pumped* out by the lungs of fresh immigrants lingering on plastic chairs, elbows *drilling* the round tables, hands flagging their complaints, tobacco-stained fingers summoning the waiters, their matches, like Indian signals, *ablaze* under hairy nose, and their stupefied faces exhaling cigarette fumes with the *intensity of Spanish bulls* on a last *charge* towards a dancing red cloth. (Hage 6-7, emphasis mine)

As the narrator introduces this setting, the rhythm of his description is urgent, which recalls the narrator's frantic state of mind, as well as his insect half. But the rhythm of this long sentence also calls attention to the atmosphere of the café, which, described in this manner, feels like it is bustling with agitated insects crawling all over, much like the cockroaches who live in the narrator's apartment. Additionally, the use of words like "pumped," "drilling," "ablaze," "intensity," and "charge" emphasizes the hostility and unwelcoming quality of the café, hinting at the violence that exists not only in the streets, but also within the walls of a place that could have felt like home.

The narrator's urban movements also confront him with the major inequalities that exist between the rich and the poor; this is particularly noticeable when he follows Genevieve home after one of their sessions. As he waits at the entrance of the clinic for her to come out, he observes the numerous other disenfranchised people who visit the public clinic in order to obtain the care they need. As a *flâneur*, the narrator takes in his surroundings and absorbs their most intricate details. In a single, run-on sentence, the narrator proceeds to enumerate the several ailments from which these people suffer:

> I smoked and watched the newcomers to this land dragging their frozen selves into the elevator of this poor neighbourhood's clinic, where they would wait in line, open their mouths, stretch out their tongues, inflate their lungs under the doctor's stethoscope, breathe the names of uncles with tubercular chests, eject their legs like pompom girls, say "Ahh" with an accent, expose the whites of their droopy malarial eyes, chase their running noses, wives, and imaginary chickens …(79)

Although the narrator does not describe the neighbourhood of Côte-des-Neiges in itself, his description of the oppressed and marginalized people who attend the clinic reveals that this part of the city is poor and desolate. The enumeration in this passage successfully highlights the misery of the people who live in such poor conditions that their trips to the clinic have become customary and even monotonous, as they compliantly repeat the same actions. This passage suggests the dehumanization of immigrants and refugees, and this long sentence, once again written in a single breath, hints at the never-ending cycle of illness and poverty which they are unlikely to escape.

As the protagonist walks from Côte-des-Neiges to Outremont, the previous passage grows in significance as it contrasts with the subsequent description of Genevieve's neighbourhood. As opposed to his description of the poor people rather than the neighbourhood itself, the narrator proposes a description of the things, places, and wealth he observes in this rich neighbourhood:

> … shop windows displaying expensive clothing and restaurants that echoed with the sounds of expansive utensils, utensils that dug swiftly into livers and ribs and swept sensually above the surface of yellow butter the colour of a September moon, a cold field of hay, the tint of a temple's stained glass, of brass lamps and alters, of beer jars, wet and full beneath wooden handles… (80)

Whereas the description of Côte-des-Neiges emphasizes the vulgarity, the illness, and the general bad conditions of the poor, this account of Outremont reveals the abundance of the rich in terms of food, drink, and comfort. Words like "frozen," "tuberculosis," and "malarial" starkly contrast with words such as "expensive" (repeated), "sensually," "wet," and "full." Hence, in less than a page, two very long and contrasting sentences define the inequalities between the "newcomers" and the privileged born in this land. As the protagonist moves from one neighbourhood to the next, he thus crosses the barrier that separates him from Genevieve, the disenfranchised from the rich.

Although the narrator's *flânerie* through the city can be aimless as he moves from one desolate place to the next, it can also be motivated by a rageful desire for revenge. This feeling on occasion leads him to wander, or crawl into, other people's apartments. Trespassing into

others' homes is a means for the narrator to reclaim some of the power he, as a disenfranchised and generally rejected individual, has been denied. And turning into a cockroach is what makes this possible: "His transformation, literalizing and embodying his difference, allows him to violate the privacy of others and in this way to feel powerful" (Samaha 183). A clear example of this occurs when he sneaks into Genevieve's apartment and crawls into her bed, helps himself to her food, and uses her television, thereby reversing the power dynamics that have been established between them, her as a psychiatrist, and him as the patient.[27] Violating her intimacy the same way her questions tend to violate his allows him to get revenge not only on Genevieve, as a representative of an oppressive state, but also on others who have forced him into the margins. Once again, his insect persona and his ability to transform into a cockroach act as a defence mechanism, which recalls his past trauma as well as the many ploys he has engaged in to survive.

Once inside Genevieve's apartment, there is a shift in the narrative; although Hage first uses his usual first-person narration, he then moves to a third-person narration. The "I" thus turns into "the stranger"; as a result, as Samaha writes, it is unclear "[w]hether the perspective is an insect's, or still a human's" (183). This shift in the narration also suggests that the narrator is in a way distancing himself from his own actions, as if relating someone else's movements: "The stranger stood up and walked to the kitchen, opened the fridge … As he ate, he examined souvenirs, figurines, pottery, travel books and coffee-table books" (Hage 81-82). Samaha points out that the word "stranger" is used four times before the stranger becomes "the intruder," who,

[27] Significantly, the narrator crawling into Genevieve's bed recalls the scene, early in the novel, when he would seek comfort under a sheet with his sister: "I covered myself with a sheet, inhaled, and wept a little under clouds of cotton and the blue sky" (Hage 81).

"feeling at home, turn[s] on the TV, put[s] his feet on the table, and watch[s] the confessions of single ladies, sleazy men, and a talk-show host discussing relationships, sex, and betrayals" (83). The change from the stranger to the intruder is significant: "While the term 'stranger' would accurately describe an inhabitant of the same city, sharing no intimate connections, an 'intruder' denotes a person who has no reason to be in someone else's apartment, space, land" (Samaha 184). As such, the use of the term "intruder" to refer to his own movements might be a consequence of the trauma of feeling unwelcome in a hostile city, wherein inhabitants consider immigrants and refugees as intruders who do not belong.

As a *flâneur*, Hage's protagonist acutely observes the people whose paths he crosses on his endless walks. His meetings with other disenfranchised individuals confront him with their traumatic backgrounds as they share with him the horrors that have brought them to the underground. The narrator's tendency to get invested in others' stories is reminiscent of the *flâneur*'s "inquisitive wonder and infinite capacity to absorb the activities of the collective" (Jenks 146) and forces him to bear witness to their traumatic accounts. Watching others and absorbing their traumas, the narrator unconsciously begins to claim their past as if they were his own. Lapierre reads the scenes wherein the narrator receives other traumatic stories as his tendency to violate others' past to extirpate "tales of exile in order to appropriate the suffering of refugees" (561), thereby minimizing the victims' pain and perpetrating the very violations he accuses Genevieve of doing to him. Though Lapierre's arguments are compelling, I would argue that the stories do not cause "excitement," as she infers, but rather are traumatizing in and of themselves, regardless of the ways the narrator comes to hear them. In trauma theory, bearing witness is often considered a traumatic experience: as psychoanalyst Dori Laub writes, "the

listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself" (57). In *Cockroach*, this occurs when the protagonist encounters Farhouhd, Naim, Shohreh, and Majeed. A closer look at some of these passages will offer a relevant analysis of the effect of these encounters on the narrator.

One of the narrator's walks brings him face to face with a man named Farhoud, who shares the unsettling memories of his flight from Iran to Canada: how he was arrested on account of his homosexuality, was raped in jail for some time, and moved to a foreign country with a married, abusive diplomat. The protagonist's initial response to Farhoud's traumatic story is silence as his voice disappears behind Farhoud's for the duration of the testimony; for a few pages, Farhoud completely takes over as the narrator. As a result, there is an emphasis on the protagonist's loaded silence, which suggests the traumatizing effect of Farhoud's testimony on him. After his initial silence, the narrator offers to break into the diplomat's house and "wet his towel with dog piss" (Hage 112). His instinctive desire to protect and avenge his friend with his ability to "slip under anything" and "enter anyone's house" (104) recalls his tendency to "turn into" an insect as a defence mechanism. This compulsion to resort to violence in the face of trauma recurs throughout the novel and speaks to the narrator's own traumatic past. Lapierre argues that the narrator "subsequently deploys the concept of rescue as a strategy through which his violence can be resignified as 'justice'" (562). In this quotation, Lapierre refers to the ending of the novel, wherein Hage's protagonist kills Shohreh's aggressor to avenge her, thus compensating for his failure to protect his sister. His responses to the traumas experienced by

Farhoud and Shohreh are similar, and confront him with his own violent past and with his guilt at not being able to avenge his sister's death.

A significant testimony to which Hage's protagonist bears witness is Shohreh's; its troubling effect on him is even greater in light of the resemblance between her situation and his sister Souad's. After he divulges the events that led to his sister's death, Shohreh tells him about being arrested for taking part in a student protest in Iran, being captive, and kept "alone for months and months… raped… many times" (Hage 246). Shohreh's story also recalls Farhoud's, as they were both taken prisoner for illegitimate reasons – he on account of his homosexuality and she for partaking in a student movement – and had their bodies invaded and violated by men in positions of power. However, it is of Souad that the narrator is most strongly reminded, as demonstrated by the fact that both the protagonist's and Shohreh's traumatic accounts are told in the same scene; in a way, the two characters take on both roles of victim and witness as their testimonies converge: "Souad lives on in her brother's memory… and he finds her again, alive and defiant, in the figure of Shohreh, a beautiful, free-spirited woman he meets through friends in the Iranian community in exile" (Borossa 125). The two even explicitly acknowledge the similarity of their pasts: when Shohreh points out, "[m]y torturer and your brother-in-law are the same kind," the protagonist replies, "[y]ou and my sister are the same kind" (Hage 248). At this moment, the narrator is so invested in Shohreh's trauma, as well as Farhoud's, both representatives of an entire suffering community, that he can no longer separate it from his own: the narrator, in his role as a *flâneur*, becomes a "listener to trauma" (Laub 57) and in turn receives the trauma of the stories he hears.

The narrator's tendency to engage with others' traumas dates back to his youth: when he decides to hunt the cockroaches that he cannot see in his apartment but assumes are there, he is reminded of a young man he met in his homeland who had been unjustly arrested. This idea – "Guilty or not, present or not" – had led to the arrest of a number of innocent people in order to maintain a fearful atmosphere in the population; deeply affected by this notion even years later, he inflicts this punishment on the vermin of which he never manages to be rid. His memories of Naim, the young man, appear tainted by the horrors of the war that had defined the narrator's own traumatic childhood: "For no reason, they would knock on people's doors at night, line up the young men, randomly choose a few, and pack them into a jeep and off to jail. For a week or so the young men were beaten, humiliated, even tortured – all for no reason" (128). In this passage, the repetition of the phrase "for no reason" emphasizes his inability to comprehend and accept the futility of the war and of unjustified human suffering. There is a definite correlation between Naim's testimony and Farhoud's, as both men were unjustly arrested and were subsequently brutalized and abused in jail.

Similarly, several interesting connections between Naim and the narrator further suggest the inextricable impact of the testimonies to which the narrator bears witness. For instance, when both men met, Naim had just left his village and was looking for a job in the city, much like the narrator has left his homeland for Montréal in search of refuge and the possibility of a better life. During this first encounter, Naim admitted that he, like the narrator, was willing to do almost anything to survive and to avoid starving to death. The narrator's insistence that Naim appeared very hungry recalls the narrator's own perpetual hunger, as he constantly worries about food, looking desperately at the back of the cabinets, entering other people's houses to eat, or chasing

an acquaintance who owes him money in order to buy food. Hunger is a constant threat to the narrator's survival, which makes the memory of his encounter with a famished Naim all the more significant. In this passage, the narrator also mentions that Naim appears very talkative and honest: "He was either *traumatized and couldn't stop speaking* or he was naturally too trusting" (128, emphasis mine). This sentence is of particular interest in light of the narrator's own trauma and the ambiguity that exists between his need to be heard and his unwillingness to share his story with others, which I will discuss in the next pages.

The narrator's several encounters with others not only suggest that his *flânerie* through the city traumatizes him further, but they also reveal his fervent desire to protect the broken. Offering to water Farhoud's abuser with dog urine was only one of the ways in which he thinks of protecting others: when the lady from the mental institution used to sit naked on his bed, all he could think of doing is "cover her with [his] quilt and dry her wet hair with the cotton sheets that softened the harsh metal beds" (151); upon meeting a hungry Naim, he buys him food and offers him a job; when he feels his sister is in danger, he decides to save her, though he ultimately fails to do so. Every time he meets someone who, like him, has suffered through traumatic events, his instinct is to act towards helping that person, which again exposes the deep impact of these meetings on his psyche.

As this chapter has pointed out, Hage's novel addresses the implications of sharing one's trauma story and the disrupting effects of bearing witness to others' testimonies. Whereas several trauma novels conclude with the promise of recovery following the victim's testimony, *Cockroach* further complicates this ideal outcome. Indeed, the protagonist laments the fact that others are unwilling to listen to his story. According to him, the city and every one of its

inhabitants consistently reject him and are uninterested in his past. This notion is most notably represented by Sylvie and her friends, a group of Montréalers with whom the narrator spends some of his time. Sylvie's group tends to surround itself with luxury and make-believe and rejects any true feeling the narrator might need to share: "But any hint of misery from me, of problems or violence, was automatically dismissed and replaced with something happy, light, or pretty" (182). Confronted with their unreceptivity and their "denial of the bad smells from the sewers, infested slums, unheated apartments" (182), the narrator seems to resent others' unwillingness to confirm and validate his problems or traumas. At the same time, most efforts made by others to learn about his past are inconclusive; one example of this occurs when Shohreh asks him about his scar. When the narrator clearly invents stories to avoid telling the true memory of how this scar came to be, Shohreh simply understands that he "do[es] not want to talk about it" (85). Hout reads the protagonist's scar as a symbol of his "existence as an immigrant with an unresolved trauma complex," which "looks fragile, like his own life" (339). By avoiding to address the story behind his scar, he is also refusing to tell her about his trauma complex. Although he does eventually share his sister's story with Shohreh, this act of telling seems insufficient to suggest the possibility of recovery.

The narrator's visits to his psychiatrist play an important role in the narrative; as such, his sessions could have had the potential to provide him with the listener he might need in order to integrate his trauma. In fact, psychotherapy and the possibility of recovery from trauma are often contingent upon a benevolent and sympathetic relationship between therapist and patient: as Judith Herman writes, "the therapist plays the role of witness and ally, in whose presence the survivor can speak of the unspeakable" (175). To escape the entrapment of trauma, the victim

should find a way to share his or her version of the event. Laub defines this therapeutic method as a "process of constructing a narrative, of reconstructing a history and essentially, *of re-externalizating the event*" (69). The receiver of the trauma story must be able to acknowledge and confirm the authenticity of the traumatic event (Laub 68). This person, to whom Laub refers as an "addressable other" (68), is essential to the victim's therapeutic testimonial process.

However, the psychotherapy sessions the narrator has with Genevieve fail to provide him with any real testimonial experience, thereby preventing him from recovering. The language used by the psychiatrist, the person who might have been considered an "addressable other," constantly reminds the protagonist that his recovery is in fact not the objective of their meetings, as the following dialogue highlights:

> Do you want to tell me more about your childhood today? If we do not move forward, if we do not improve, I might have to recommend that you go back to the institution. Frankly, you do not give me much choice with your silence. I have a responsibility towards the taxpayers.
>
> Tax prayers?
>
> No tax*payers*, people who actually pay taxes. Some of us do. (Hage 59-60)

This passage positions Genevieve as a representative of the state whose gratification, as a taxpayer, is more important than the narrator's well-being. Not only does her statement aim to guilt the narrator into sharing his story, but it also establishes the opposition between people who pay taxes and others who are unable to do so. As such, she "turns taxpaying into a marker of difference that powerfully dispels other differences" (Macura-Nnamdi 133) and excludes him

from the society to which she belongs. The implication is that the narrator owes the taxpayers a confession or testimony and that his debts are both material and symbolic, as Macura-Nnamdi argues: "On the material level, the debt is incurred both by the narrator's failure to contribute to national economy, and, consequently, by his parasitical relation to the nation-host. Symbolically, he comes to be implicated in a sense of gratitude not only for the free and benevolently rendered therapeutic service but also for being, at least potentially, set free" (154). Genevieve's inquiries into his personal life and the reasons behind them fail to position her, the psychiatrist, as "an addressable other, an other who can hear the anguish of one's memories and thus affirm and recognize their realness" (Laub 68). The absence of an understanding listener in the testimonial context "annihilates the story" (68) and generally fails to foster the narrator's desire to share the details of his past trauma.

More importantly perhaps, the previous passage suggests Genevieve's tendency to force him to address the topics she wishes to discuss and her refusal to "read his silences, or treat them as readable" (Macura-Nnamdi 155). Throughout the novel, she remains oblivious to the performative importance of the narrator's silences, and her discontent grows whenever he finds himself unable to answer her questions. Although she reads his silences as a mere lack of cooperation, they often hold a meaning that she fails to perceive. One such instance occurs when they discuss his mother's death:

> Do you ever feel sad for other people?
>
> I did not answer this. I did not know what to say. I thought we had gone past this level of intimacy. (Hage 136)

Here, his silence meaningfully implies his disappointment upon realizing that despite the sessions they have had and the number of stories he has shared, she considers him incapable of feeling the human emotions that do define him. Instead, she disallows him to be silent and constantly tries to coerce him into talking, always relying on the notion that talking leads to progress, and that silence means "lies and duplicity" (Macura-Nnambi 156). Unable to admit that the testimonial process might involve speech and silence alike, Genevieve fails to provide an environment that would foster the narrator's testimony and subsequently benefit from the therapeutic nature of storytelling, the importance of which she consistently praises.

Given the violent murder that takes place in the final pages, the ending of the novel – as well as the narrator's ambiguous escape – has received considerable critical attention. After sharing the details of her traumatic past with the narrator, Shohreh asks him to avenge her by killing her aggressor, a regular customer of the Iranian restaurant where the narrator works. As a result, the narrator shoots Shohreh's torturer and stabs his bodyguard before turning into a cockroach and escaping down the drain, moving his "glittering wings towards the underground" (305). The narrator's symbolic last moments as a human also point to his transformation from a passive man to a fighter, able of defending another in an act that is presented as justifiable. This conclusion to the novel recalls the narrator's past failure to prevent Saoud's death, as he manages to save Shohreh from her aggressor. In the last pages, he appears, at first, similarly frozen and unable to act:

> Through the opening in the kitchen wall, I *saw* her kneeling with her arms extended, and I *heard* her voice changing. And I *saw* the man stand up straight and fix his tie. I *saw* him extend his hand again, and just when her gun took too long to fire, I *watched* as the

> bodyguard swiftly grabbed her hand … I *watched* all of this happen as if it were taking place somewhere far away. (Hage 305, emphasis mine)

Though one could read his initial reaction as a sense of detachment or apathy, I would argue that his inability to move is rather anchored in his trauma and his overwhelming "fear that fate will strike again" (Felman 67), a regular occurrence among trauma victims. Here, his fear stems from the belief that he will once more fail to protect a loved one, thereby contributing to her death. The repetition of words like "saw," "heard," and "watched" point to his initial inability to act, which might lead to the same outcome as his earlier trauma. This time, however, the narrator feels sufficiently empowered to defend his lover and kill two men to protect her. Had the final scene concluded in the murder of the two aggressors, *Cockroach* could have been considered a tale of empowerment that ends in the oppressed winning over the oppressor. Instead, by escaping down the drain and choosing to remain in cockroach form, the narrator is permanently leaving the society that has consistently rejected him, thereby revealing the impossibility of escaping his position as an oppressed and marginalized person.

Certain scholars read this dramatic final escape as a liberation from the guilt that has plagued him for years and as a manifestation of his impeding recovery from his traumatic memories. For example, Hout argues that killing Shohreh's torturer leads the narrator to "overcome his guilt complex" (339) and that his escape down the drain implies a positive denouement: "This vision constitutes a symbolic return to an equilibrium he had lost, to as self cleansed from a burden, and thus to his sister" (339). Similarly, in her review of *Cockroach*, Tamara Palmer Seiler suggests that "the narrator has finally cast off the burden of guilt and indecision that has weighed so heavily upon him" (236). Both critics thus consider the murder as

beneficial and his transformation as a final indication that the city and the people he has met have procured him the comfort and the strength he needed in order to survive.

My interpretation of the final scene of the novel is perhaps a little more nuanced. On the one hand, I believe the final plunge into the sewers might be an ultimate act of agency as the narrator chooses to remove himself from the situation. In that sense, the narrator could be owning up to his cockroach persona and opting for a life in the underground. On the other hand, I also tend to read the protagonist's murderous act as an indication of his traumatized psyche and loss of control. As I have argued, the narrator's *flânerie* through the city has proven to be traumatic for him. His transformation from human to cockroach, initiated due to his childhood trauma, appears complete in this last scene. In the end, the narrator seems unable to reconnect to humanity, including or especially his own. My reading is in keeping with other critics', like Borossa's, which acknowledge the finality of the protagonist's metamorphosis: "[T]his killing does not allow for redemption, as it completes his imagined identification with the cockroach of the title. He slithers down the drain, away from any possibility for human connectedness" (126). By escaping below ground, "the protagonist disappears into the traumatic past of his boyhood" (126) and, I would add, into his traumatic reality as an immigrant. As a result, the unsettling conclusion forces the reader not only to assume that recovery from trauma might, in some cases, be impossible, but also to reconsider their conception of humanity – both their own and others' (Lapierre 569).

The narrator's ultimate regression can be further analyzed using Ronald Granofsky's theorization of the trauma response, the three stages of which are, according to him, typically found in trauma narratives. In *The Trauma Novel: Contemporary Symbolic Depictions of*

Collective Disaster, Granofsky writes that the trauma novel presents a "quest for identity in the face of a brutal assault on the sense of self" (18). This quest, which he calls the "trauma response," can be broken down into three stages: fragmentation, regression, and reunification. For Granofsky, fragmentation is a tendency to view the world as divided into two distinct and incompatible parts. What he describes as "a polarization of a society" (108) is a means for the victim to cope with a "shattering" experience in an attempt to overcome trauma. One could read the narrator's tendency to view the underground as a refuge against the entirely cold city as a way to find comfort in this polarization. It becomes particularly clear in the striking contrast between the narrator's descriptions of the Côte-des-Neiges and Outremont neighbourhoods, between Shohreh's warm companionship and Sylvie's cold indifference. Interestingly, Granofsky adds that the use of fragmentation in the trauma novel "tends to undermine the stability of the narrative point of view" (109). Because the narrator is prone to viewing places, events, and people through highly dichotomous lenses, he can come across as unreliable. As such, the fragmentation stage of the trauma response can further explain the fact that a narrator's unreliability can be a consequence of traumatic events, which certainly seems plausible in the study of Hage's protagonist.

The second stage of Granofsky's trauma response, regression, tends to occur for victims who live with an inability to cope with a perceived responsibility for the occurrence of a traumatic event, in other words, with overwhelming guilt" (108). Confronted with the past and unable to live with guilt, the trauma survivor can regress to a "primitive and nonresponsible state of development which will relieve anxiety or guilt," such as a return to a childlike behaviour or an "atavistic relapse to an animal state" (108). Garnofsky's theory can not only be applied to

Hage's novel, but it can also provide insight into the narrator's constant regression to a state of cockroach and his ultimate transformation. Unable to accept the guilt he feels for failing to protect his sister, he reverts to this animalistic state of nonresponsibility which allows him to avoid human feelings and to be relieved of the burden of guilt he has felt for years. His transformations are more than a mere defence mechanism; they are what allow him to survive despite his traumatic loss. In the end, one could argue that killing Shohreh's aggressor does not grant him the means to "overcome his guilt complex" (339), as Hout would have it, but rather intensifies it until the regression stage becomes permanent as he crawls down the drain, away from humanity.

According to Granofsky, the final stage of the human response to trauma is reunification or reconciliation, which often hints at the victim's probable recovery from trauma. During this stage, the individual must not only accept the occurrence of trauma, but they must integrate it into their world view: "the only way for the individual to re-enter the process of maturation after the stages of regression and fragmentation is to reconcile the traumatic experience with whatever else he or she knows of life" (Granofsky 110). This process, which several theorists would argue can be achieved through the testimonial process and the subsequent restoration of the "sense of connection between individual and community" (Herman 55), consists of shattering the dichotomous systems established in the fragmentation stage and to abandon the false comfort of the regression phase. While the first two phases of the trauma response can offer temporary relief to the victim, the inability to evolve past them "will freeze the individual or society within the regressive stage of development" (110). This theory is in keeping with my analysis of Hage's narrator and the final moments: unable to integrate and accept the trauma of his past and of his

experience as a *flâneur* in the city, he chooses to embrace his polarized view of society and to escape to the underground, while regressing into an irreversible animalistic state, either literally or symbolically.

In conclusion, *Cockroach* presents a troubled character whose physical and psychological proximity to the underground, far from offering any sense of familiarity and closeness, adds to the trauma he experienced during his childhood. As a *flâneur* who strolls through the cold streets of Montréal and acutely observes and absorbs his surroundings, the narrator is consistently confronted with the economic disparities, the inequalities, and the general human depravity that populate the city. His *flânerie* not only puts him face to face with events and places that remind him of his war-town country, but it also brings him closer to others who, like him, have been traumatized and whose testimonies traumatize him further. Furthermore, as the narrator reveals fragments of his traumatic memories to Farhoud, Shohreh, Genevieve, and the reader, he is taken on a journey through his own past. As a result, Hage's protagonist becomes a *flâneur* both of the traumatic urban landscape and of his own mind, which ultimately reinforces his "social self-removal" (Resina 8) and leads him to a descend into a place even lower and darker than the underground. In the end, the combination of his traumatic past and his traumatic *flânerie* forces his final metamorphosis into a cockroach, doomed to scuttle away from humanity by roaming the entrails buried under the city, without any hope of recovery. In many ways, *Cockroach* hints at the fact that the very possibility of recovery from trauma is as elusive as the warmth one might seek on the coldest Montréal winter nights.

Chapter Four

"Born in the City from People Born Elsewhere": Postmemory and the Young *Flâneuses* of Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*

In the first chapters of this thesis, I have been concerned with the effects that trauma has on a character and the ways in which they practise *flânerie* as a response to disrupting events. In Heather O'Neill's *The Lonely Hearts Hotel* and Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*, Rose, Pierrot, and the narrator all go through and suffer from traumatic experiences that define their relationship with others and the city in which they wander. In this chapter, my analysis warrants a different approach, as the main characters of Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For* do not experience trauma first-hand, but rather live in the aftermath of their parents' traumatizing pasts. Tuyen, Carla, Jackie, and Oku, the members of the young generation, have grown up in an environment defined by a trauma which was never theirs, but whose effects on them seem unavoidable. As a result, they constantly feel "as if they inhabi[t] two countries – their parents' and their own" (Brand 20) and become *flâneurs* in the city of Toronto, which appears to offer the openness and independence they were denied growing up. In my analysis of this novel, I rely on Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory to explore the reasons that motivate the four protagonists to turn to the city in an attempt to escape their parents' traumatic pasts. Using trauma theory, I also argue that experiencing postmemory can be traumatic in and of itself for the children who grow up in the shadow of their parents' painful memories. In this light, I aim to suggest that the young

protagonists, Tuyen and Carla in particular, become young *flâneurs* in a city that ultimately fails to bring them the much-desired shelter from their family's trauma and that repeatedly confronts them with the importance of the disturbing histories that are part of the urban landscape and their personal lives alike.

Since its publication, *What We All Long For* has received considerable scholarly attention, which has been especially focused on the ways in which the novel challenges different notions of identity. Brand's characters navigate different borders within the city, be they sexual, racial, national, or cultural. Astrid M. Fellner, for example, argues that the narrative "offers a queer representation of urban space" and that "feminist environmental ethics and politics … are inherent in Brand's construction of a queer subjectivity" (232). Similarly, Emily Johansen's analysis of the novel is concerned with the "subjectivities with multiple affiliations across axes of gender, ethnicity, class, and sexuality which … are principally and firmly located in the physicality of Toronto" (49). And indeed, the characters' subjectivities and their desire to challenge social norms in the process of creating their own racial or sexual identity is exploring given the fact that their parents' pasts were forcefully passed down to them. These readings therefore offer relevant insights into how the younger generation resists this transfer of affect from their parents by choosing to live on the borders and to (re)define their own identities. My reading takes a different approach in that I argue that the traumatic memories which were passed down to the younger generations shape their identities in ways they can never really escape. My analysis explores *flânerie* as a potential solution to trauma and is rather concerned with the role of memory in the definition of the characters' identity.

Postmemory: A Definition

Before delving into my analysis of the novel, it would be useful to offer an overview of Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory, which she introduced in 1992 with her essay "Family Pictures: *Maus*, Mourning, and Post-Memory." The concept was initially developed for the children of Holocaust survivors, who, though they had never experienced the horrors themselves, grew up with "something that is akin to memory" (Hirsch, "Past Lives" 659), forever affected by the implications of the events their parents had gone through. If the survivors could consider their memories "not only as an act of recall but also of mourning," the second generation lives "at a further temporal and spatial remove" (659) that prevents them from truly remembering an event that defines them. In other words, Hirsch writes, "[p]ostmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor re-created" (659). Although Hirsch constructed the notion of postmemory with Holocaust survivors in mind, she writes in her essay "Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile" that the concept is useful when applied to "the second-generation memory of other cultural or collective traumatic events and experiences" (662). As such, postmemory can help understand the condition of children of trauma survivors in any context. As this chapter will argue, Hirsch's concept is particularly applicable to Tuyen, whose whole childhood is defined by her parents' exile from Vietnam and the loss of their eldest son on the way. It will also prove useful in the analysis of the other three protagonists: whereas Oku grows up with an "old school" (Brand 87) father who constantly lives in the past, Jackie's parents have a history of violence, and Carla lives with the memory of her mother's troubled existence and

tragic suicide. Analyzing the impact of postmemory on these characters' lives will contribute to a greater understanding of their need to turn to *flânerie* and the city.

Sharing her own perspective as a child of parents who fled the war in Czernowitz in 1945, Hirsch remembers a childhood filled with memories of the city she has never known but whose horrors led to her parents' exile. Although she grew up in Romania and the United States, and has never visited Czernowitz, its "streets, buildings, and natural surroundings – [its] theater, restaurants, parks, rivers, and domestic settings" still occupy a colossal place in her childhood memories (Hirsch, "Past Lives" 661). Her parents' memories of prewar Czernowitz and of the events that occurred during wartime have lived on through their stories, which created the backdrop of her childhood. In her experience, the fact that these memories are not hers does not mean that they are not entirely real and present to her: "For me, having grown up with daily accounts of a lost world, the links between past and present, between the prewar world of origin and the postwar space of destination, are more than visible" (664). Instead of creating a sense of absence, she adds, these constant accounts and memories create a *feeling of plenitude*, which at times leads her to feel there were "too many stories, too much affect" (664, emphasis mine) from the past. Children of survivors must thus conjugate the world they do know and all the challenges of regular childhood with the world of their parents, which they can never truly know, but whose trauma resonates in their everyday lives with heavy importance.

Because of its very definition, the concept of postmemory is often associated with trauma, so much so that the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably (O'Donoghue). Although trauma and postmemory are different and should not be used as synonyms, one could argue that their mechanics bear significant similarities. After all, as Cathy Caruth argues, the

complexity of trauma lies in "the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4), which can also be applied to a person who suffers from postmemory. In a way, both the trauma victim and the victim of postmemory live with the aftermath of a traumatic event that can never be fully known and understood. Because the child who experiences postmemory is at a further spatial and temporal remove from the traumatic event, "fill[ing] in the gaps and absences" (Hirsch 664) of the past seems even less achievable. More importantly perhaps, I contend that suffering from postmemory, that is, being continuously subjected to the traumatic past of one's family, can be traumatizing in and of itself, since the child acts as a witness to his parents' testimony. Just like Hage's narrator, who finds himself further traumatized because of the traumatic stories that people share with him, the victim of postmemory grows up being a "listener to trauma," a witness who "comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through their very listening, they come to partially experience trauma in himself" (Laub 57). Laub then adds that the listener to trauma, by definition, "partakes of the struggle of the victim with the memories and residues of his or her traumatic past" (58). One can imagine how a child who grows up being the listener to his parents' accounts of a lost and shattered world can feel traumatized and suffer from the emotional toll of a traumatic past that they can never really understand.

Traumatic Postmemory in *What We All Long For*

Some scholars have addressed the relevance of studying the presence of postmemory in *What We All Long For*. This is the case, for example, of Joel Baetz and Allison Mackey, whose readings of the novel inform some of the arguments I will put forth in this chapter. Both authors

agree that Tuyen, Carla, Jackie, and Oku are all "reluctant sufferers of postmemory [who] believe that in the city they can hide from these discomforting histories" (Baetz 397). Baetz interestingly refers to Tuyen's installation as a "postmemorial": an art project that evolves, changes in significance over the course of the novel, and becomes a means to "find the connections to the past" (401) that she had hitherto been trying to escape. Baetz's article therefore emphasizes the inescapable, yet inaccessible nature of postmemory, a contradiction which will prove useful to my own analysis of Brand's story. Mackey addresses the significance of the photographs as a vehicle of postmemory in the novel. However, Baetz and Mackey do not, in their discussions of the novel, point to the traumatizing aspect of postmemory on the second-generation characters. As such, I aim to add to the conversation by analyzing the ways in which these characters experience trauma, as well as its effect on their journeys.

In Brand's novel, postmemory plays an important role in the protagonists' need to run away from home and to escape to the city. For Tuyen especially, the diasporic past of her parents continually comes to haunt her family and to define every aspect of their lives. Tuyen's parents fled Vietnam before her birth, with their three eldest children, but lost their only son as they were waiting for the boat that would take them to a safe land. In the years following this tragic loss, Cam, Tuyen's mother, kept writing letters and sending money to strangers in the hopes of finding her eldest son. This event and its aftermath have had a lasting traumatic effect on the members of the family. Growing up, Tuyen could hear her parents "argue about who was at fault for leaving him, for taking their eyes off him for a second" (Brand 65). They both had different, but deep traumatic responses: on the one hand, her mother would stay up at night, pacing and replaying "the vision over in her head, trying to regain the moment when she did not see, trying

to alter the sequence of events so that she would arrive at herself in the present with her family and her mind intact" (122). The last words of this passage stress the impact of the traumatic event on all of them, since they suggest that both her family and her mind are broken, despite the mother's attempts at fixing them. On the other hand, Tuyen would often notice her father, Tuan, spending nights at his table, "drawing all the buildings in the city as if he had built them" (113). This practice of drawing tangible and unchanging structures could be read as a means to gain a sense of stability and control as he keeps suffering from a tragedy over which he has no control. His need to draw is mostly a way to prevent himself from thinking about the past the way his wife does: "if he did [think about that moment], he would have days of paralysis when he could not get out of his pajamas, his limbs felt weak, and he could not work" (114). Both Cam's obsessive need to revisit the event and Tuan's depressive state acted as the backdrop of Tuyen's childhood, so much so that her parents' past has become her own traumatic postmemory as she has borne witness to their suffering.

Like Cam and Tuan, who have different trauma responses, their four children experience postmemory in different ways. Tuyen's sisters, who fled Vietnam with their parents, grew up having to negotiate their own memories of the tragic loss of their brother and the postmemories that plague their entire family. For Tuyen, her sisters Lam and Ai act as "reminders of their parents' past, their other life; the life that was cut in half one night on a boat to Hong Long" (59). As such, Lam and Ai "had become shadows; two little girls forgotten in the wrecked love of their parents" (59). In these passages, the use of the contradictory terms "reminders" and "forgotten" both highlights the role that (post)memory plays within their family and suggests that some members are stuck between past and present, between remembering and forgetting. In a way, the

two girls are the embodiment of their parents' traumatic past and the bridge between their lives in Canada and Vietnam, constantly but involuntarily muddling the boundary between past and present. As a result, they at times feel "wrong for surviving, wrong for existing in the face of [their] parents' tragedy" (59). Unsurprisingly, survivor guilt is common for people who have been through trauma and have witnessed the death of others: "To be spared oneself, in the knowledge that others have met a worst fate, creates a severe burden of conscience" (Herman 54). Herman adds that survivors who have witnessed the tragic death of a family member are likely to have "an intractable, long-lasting traumatic syndrome" (54). Thus, as the last passage from Brand expresses, not only do the young girls feel guilty for surviving when their brother likely did not, but they must also cope with the never-ending traumatic effect of losing Quy.

Although Tuyen and Binh were born in Canada and therefore never knew Quy, their childhood, too, was shadowed by the loss of their "mythic tragic brother" (Brand 122). Tuyen views her childhood home, which she has left in a hurry to move to the heart of the city, as a cold, unwelcoming, and empty place despite it being filled with old photographs, papers of all kinds, and "generations of furniture and generations of pots and pans and generations of all the things a house can use" (62). The repetition of the word "generations" in this passage is evocative of the heavy weight of the past in their lives, which creates a sense of plenitude comparable to Hirsch's feeling that the constant traumatic mementos lead to "too much affect" (Hirsch 664). Theirs is a home filled with everything they might need, but only own as "a matter of course" that brings them no joy or satisfaction (Brand 62). Andrea Katherine Medovarski pertinently argues that, for Tuyen's parents, "owning a house is a sign of 'arrival' …, marking both newfound economic stability and spatial permanence" (43). Ironically, they fill their house

"with the things they can't 'let go of,' either literally or figuratively" (43). Similarly, the relationship between each member of the family is dutiful and devoid of any warmth or embrace: "[H]er family did not embrace. They fed you, clothed you, they fatted you, but they did not embrace" (61). Again, the repetition in this passage reveals the effect of this environment on Tuyen, as the phrase "did not embrace" emphasizes the fact that Tuyen, who "wanted an embrace so tight, and with such a gathering of scents and touches" (61), could never find the affection she needs from her own family.

As an artist, Tuyen tends to channel her personal turmoil and emotions through her art. As a result, the prominence of postmemorial trauma during her childhood leads to the production of art projects that speak to the effect of the past on Tuyen. In fact, one of her installations is inspired by her mother's desperate need to cover everything in plastic or to laminate every document for safekeeping. Cam's obsession principally concerns birth certificates, identity cards, and citizenship documents, but extends to every object in the house that can be protected and preserved, such as chairs, carpets, and couches. This compulsive tendency to protect everything comes from her continuous sense of failure for not having been able to protect her son, but also from a general anxiety of not being allowed to belong in their new land and a "mad fear of being caught without proof, without papers of some kind attesting to identity or place" (63). Tuyen's installation, called *Traveller*, involves her being covered with "bubble wrap, with stickers from various countries pasted on her naked body" as she tells the audience to "lift her and pass her around the room in silence for ten minutes" (64). This installation not only points to her cold and plastic-covered childhood environment, but also recalls her family's diasporic history. The use of silence as part of her installation also hints at their home, which Tuyen herself calls

"schizophrenic" (62) when she attempts to explain her need to leave. As this chapter will later argue, Tuyen's art plays different roles in the novel, one of which is to express the effect of traumatic postmemory on her as clearly evoked through her bubble-wrap installation.

The complexity of Tuyen's relationship with postmemory further lies in the guilt that accompanies her feelings of resentment towards her cold childhood and distant family. Despite the very real impact of her parents' traumatic past on her, she understands that they are not to blame for the behaviour: "But then there was the other side of the eccentricities: she hated knowing that they came from a real moment of devastation, not personal quirkiness – her mother's insomnia and her frantic retrievals of hidden or lost papers at night, her father hiding money in shoes and books. And the incoherent fights between Cam and Tuan about who was to blame [for the loss of their son]" (64). Her understanding and compassion for her parents' past experiences therefore lead to feelings of guilt for wanting to leave in search of another home that could allow her to be herself without being defined by postmemory. Tuyen's guilt also manifests itself in several interactions that she has with her brother, sisters, and parents over the course of the novel. Whenever she meets with them, Tuyen tries to put her feelings aside and "be more sensitive to Lam and Ai, more understanding to her parents" (61). However, this resolve often fails as she constantly "falls into the traps of anger and pettiness she abhorred in them" (61). As a result, most scenes that show Tuyen interacting with another member of her family ends with her feeling guilty for acting on her resentment and feeling the need to apologize to them.

Though the effects of postmemory is most apparent in the context of Tuyen's family, Oku, Carla, and Jackie all experience it in different ways. The four protagonists' parents were all once new to Toronto, and almost all of them are immigrants. The four of them grow up living

with the burden of the "back home" and "back then," which they ultimately want to escape. For Oku, the weight of his parents' past is manifested in his father's harsh and overbearing attitude towards him. The fundamentally "unhappy man" (84) feels he has been held back from doing grand things in this country (86), which explains his confrontational nature and his tendency to impose "old-time lessons" (83) on his son. Both Oku's parents live in the past, the weight of which presses over their son: "This was how Oku experienced his mother and father each day. As people who somehow lived in the near past and were unable or unwilling to step into the present" (190). His parents, like most characters that belong to the first generation, seem to experience the contradictory feelings of wishing for inclusion in the present and their actual environment, while longing for a past that they keep claiming was better in almost every respect.

Similarly, Jackie's parents perpetually suffer from the destruction of a community to which they used to belong and which, for a time, had defined them. Upon their arrival in Toronto, the Bernards devoted their lives to the Paramount, a nightclub that became a home for "black people and a few, very few, hip whites" (95). It is within this tight community of young, hip, and dangerous people that Jackie's parents found their identity. However, their community being so close-knit and dependent upon the physicality of these nightclubs, it was completely shattered when the Paramount went under, leaving them in total dismay. In this, as Kit Dobson argues, Brand's novel suggests "that communities formed through racial limitations are fragile, given the power of the wealthy and white" (Dobson 95). Growing up in the aftermath of this event, Jackie eventually wishes to escape the violence of her parents' past, but also attempts to stay away from relationships based merely on racial affinity, having witnessed her parents'

downfall. As such, Oku's resemblance to her father and the fact that he reminds her of this community explain her desire to resist his romantic advances.

Like her friends, Carla's childhood was marked by her parents' troubled past. Although Brand offers little information about the relationship between her parents, Derek and Angie, the brutal scene that occurs in Angie's apartment before her suicide suggests the violent nature of their relationship. Despite the fact that they never developed a secure relationship, Derek having been married to another woman the whole time, their union forced Angie to abandon her Italian-Canadian family and move downtown: "Her mother must have made her choice for a good reason: good or bad she had crossed a border" (107). Carla's trauma thus not only involves her mother's troubled past, but also her own traumatic memories of her mother telling her to hold her brother before jumping off the balcony. When Carla was old enough to leave her father's house and run off to the city, she tried to escape the violence that existed between her parents, the responsibility of taking care of her brother, and the haunting memories of her mother's death.

The City as a Site of Possibilities

As I have described in the last few pages, the four protagonists of Brand's novel all have traumatic family history they wish to flee, which leads them to the city of Toronto. In an attempt to "resist the nostalgia that marks their parents' existence or [to] ward off the harmful effects of their diasporic journeys" (Baetz 396), they wish to dismiss their legacies entirely. Their attitude is described in the first few pages of the novel:

> They all, Tuyen, Carla, Oku, and Jackie, felt as if they inhabited two countries – their parents' and their own – when they sat dutifully at their kitchen tables being regaled with

> how life used to be "back home," and when they listened to inspired descriptions of other houses, other landscapes, other skies, other trees, they were bored. They thought that their parents had scales on their eyes. Sometimes they wanted to shout at them, "Well, you're not *there*!" But if any of them had the temerity to say this, they would be met by a slap to the face or a crestfallen look, and an awful, disappointed silence in the kitchen. (Brand 20)

This passage, and especially the mention of being made to feel like they simultaneously inhabit two countries, is once again reminiscent of Hirsch's feeling of plenitude of affect, caused by "the links between past and present, between the world of origin and the space of destination" (Hirsch 664). This in-betweenness leads to the young characters feeling split between "their parents' nostalgia and their own open, global sense of themselves" (Dobson 97). The passage also reveals the feeling of entrapment that accompanies the prominence of postmemory on their lives, as they feel forced to witness the events of the past while being forbidden any kind of reaction. The contrast between their need to shout and the silence that fill their respective houses is suggestive of the fact that their homes allow them no room to grow and to become individuals that are not defined by their family's diasporic pasts.

The four young people view the city as a place to be themselves outside of their family's histories. Their desire to emancipate is, again, established early in the novel:

> Each left home in the morning as if making a long journey, untangling themselves from the seaweed of other shores wrapped around their parents. Breaking their doorways, they left the sleepwalk of their mothers and fathers and ran across the unobserved borders of

> the city, sliding across ice to arrive at their own birthplace – the city. They were born in the city from people born elsewhere. (Brand 20)

The use of words like "untangling," "wrapped," and "breaking" in this important passage again highlights the suffocating nature of postmemory and the protagonists' need to break away from the traumatic past. Opposing the first generation's sleepwalk to the second generation's running and sliding to another place within the same sentence underlines the discrepancies between the parents and their children: whereas one generation is unable to move forward, the other is in a hurry to distance themselves from a past that is not theirs, but which is strikingly oppressing. Most importantly, this passage establishes not only their sense of belonging in Toronto, but also what is arguably the main relationship of the novel: the one that exists between the city and the protagonists. As Dobson argues, "the children in the novel are Torontonian first and foremost, viewing the city as the site of their being" (97). The city thus presents itself to them as a site of possibilities, one of which is embracing the significance of Toronto as their birthplace and leaving trauma behind.

In their attempt to escape their family's diasporic histories, the young characters of the novel long to find in each other a way of belonging that has nothing to do with family, ethnicity, or clan and that has everything to do with the relationships they form in the city. Their desire to be liberated from "the personal histories they find so restrictive" (Baetz 394) at home is the very element that leads them to the city and to each other:

> Most days they smoked outside school together, planning and dreaming their own dreams of what they would be if only they could get out of school and leave home. No more

> stories of what might have been, no more diatribes on what would never happen back home, does east, down the islands, over the South China Sea, not another sentence that began in the past that had never been their past. (Brand 47)

This important passage not only stresses the horrors of the past that they wish to forget, but also establishes their need to belong to a space without a sense of an imposed community. As such, this quotation also points to the fact that their city experience is informed both by their need to avoid their family's traumatic past and to form friendships that are based on "an unspoken collaboration on distancing themselves as far as possible from the unreasonableness, the ignorance, the secrets, and the madness of their parents" (19). In other words, the fact that they "actively choose one another and the city as alternative sites of affiliation" (Medovarski 52) demonstrates their need to reject the "narratives that preceded their birth [and the] stories of the previous generation" (Hirsch 662), which characterize postmemory. With each other and the urban landscape, they instead long to create their own narratives.

The novel presents the city as a hopeful, welcoming, and inclusive environment where everything is possible. All four characters are enthusiastic about its multilingual, multicultural, and multiracial nature, which allows them to be themselves and to form relationships that are not based on a given affiliation. Tuyen is especially interested in "the city's heterogeneity" (Brand 142), which she finds on every corner and crossroad. Like the *flâneur*, who enjoys watching the crowd and learning from the people they encounter, Tuyen always "finds herself in the middle of observing [Toronto]" (142). What she observes is a city that is diverse in every way, or so it seems to her and her friends:

> In this city there are Bulgarian mechanics, there are Eritrean accountants, Colombian café owners, Latvian book publishers, Afghani dancers, Iranian mathematicians, Tamil cooks in Thai restaurants, Calabrese boys with Jamaican accents, Fushen deejays, Filipina-Saudi beauticians; Russian doctors changing tires, there are Romanian bill collectors, Cape Croker fishmongers, Japanese grocery clerks, French gas meter readers, German bakers, Haitian and Bengali taxi drivers with Irish dispatchers. (5)

This very long enumeration of the people that make up the population of Toronto emphasizes not only the vast diversity of the city, but also the endless possibilities that are available to all. Brand offers several such "catalogues of countries and cultures" (Baetz 390) throughout her novel, which the young characters all find beautiful and exciting.

The "polyphonic, murmuring" city that fills Tuyen with hope is also directly connected to her art, which she has always meant to be a "representation of voices and longings that summed themselves up into a kind of language, yet indescribable" (Brand 149). Tuyen's wish to represent the diversity of the city through her art is once more reminiscent of the original *flâneur* figure as defined by Baudelaire: as the first chapter of this thesis reveals, Baudelaire's *flâneur* is first and foremost an artist who captures the changes in the city with a keen interest and who translates them into poetry as a means to share his observations with others. Much like Tuyen, Oku at times also adopts the attitude of the *flâneur* as a wandering artist: "[H]e was thinking how quiet it was and how he loved the city. He was thinking that he was all out of money and had to walk home, and he was thinking that it wouldn't be so bad because it was balmy, and anyway, the quietness of the city would help him write a poem as he walked" (164). In this passage, the repetition, a stylistic figure widely used in the novel, emphasizes the meditating nature of the city

at night, which allows the *flâneur* to concentrate on turning his observations into poetry. Interestingly, the two passages, though they unite the two friends in their desire to use Toronto as a source of artistic inspiration, also demonstrate how different they are, both as *flâneurs* and as artists: whereas Tuyen seeks the polyphony of the city and the new language that the several voices form, Oku finds his inspiration in the silence he finds on the streets of Toronto during nighttime. The different creative approaches that Tuyen and Oku are allowed to employ therefore point to the endless possibilities that Toronto seems to offer.

Given the characters' contagious enthusiasm towards the openness of the city, it can be easy to consider the Toronto of Brand's novel as perfectly inclusive and liberating. Certain critics, like the characters, tend to believe in the city's ability to free them from their parents' traumatic pasts. Allison Mackey reads *What We All Long For* as a "cautiously hopeful narrative" that suggests the possibility of "new and more genuine ways of relating to otherness" (249). Mackey argues that the novel is about "crafting a new relation to complex origins that, in turn, potentially generate new possibilities for social relations" and allows "for the possibility of belonging as informed by planetary consciousness" (228). Her optimistic reading therefore proposes that the characters achieve the very thing they set out to do when leaving home: to accept or move on from the past while finding ways to be themselves in relation to others who also belong in the city. Johansen's reading similarly celebrates the liberating fluidity of "cosmopolitan citizenship" (Johansen 48) of Brand's novel, arguing that "Tuyen, Carla, Oku, and Jackie work to make public spaces ones where hegemonic cultural values are not imposed, but where new, cosmopolitan identities can be forged" (61). Although Dobson is generally more cautious than other enthusiastic critics, he is also optimistic when he suggests that

"transformative, open modes of being seem readily available to the generation of children born in the city" (96). In fact, Baetz points out that Dobson uses the word "open" so often in his analysis that his exploration of the characters' modes of being in the city can only come across as hopeful.[28]

My reading of the novel tends to be less optimistic, as I argue that the city is not as "open" as it seems and ultimately fails to offer the liberation that the characters seek, which I will set out to explain in the next pages. Though Tuyen rejoices in the polyphony and heterogeneity of the city, Brand's Toronto presents real problems that the characters fail to account for. Baetz reads the novel in a similar light:

> Whether it's the boutique multiculturalism … that greets Cam and Tuan's Vietnamese restaurant, the 'things … [that] were unknowable, unshareable' between even the closest neighbours (38), the warnings from old women that 'you have to be careful when you speak' (149), the obvious and brutal racism of the police, or the disjointed and unfinished conversations …, Brand's city foregrounds not only the continual pleasures of coming in contact with different people from different places, but also the obvious challenges and failures that come with it. (Baetz 390-391)

By enumerating these examples, Baetz demonstrates that the novel also presents the linguistic, socio-economic, and generational unbridgeable gaps that fill the city and that exist "between people that live in close proximity to one another" (391). A comparable sense of distance existed

[28] Baetz cites several passages from Dobson's article to highlight his use of the word "open": "Carla 'comes to embrace an open-ended future' (99); Oku 'looks to open boundaries'; Jackie maintains 'an openness towards difference' (101); and the city itself is a site 'for being that is open' (89)" (Baetz 391).

in the world of the original *flâneur* as well, and Baudelaire's urban walker even rejoiced in the anonymity that it procured. As such, Brand's version of the city also illustrates this unavoidable distance and the struggles that it brings, despite the characters' wish for an entirely open and close community.

Brand's Flâneuses

To continue my discussion of the *flâneur*'s presence in *What We All Long For*, I first wish to recall the three traits of the figure I identified in my introduction as a means to demonstrate how the protagonists of Brand's novel qualify as modern-day *flâneurs*. First, the contemporary young *flâneur*, like the one described by Baudelaire and Benjamin, is a person who wanders through the city and is, as such, always associated with movement. The second characteristic of the *flâneur* figure is their keen sense of observation and tendency to absorb elements that they observe to an extent that their endless walks inevitably affect them in several ways. Finally, the *flâneur* tends to seek the proximity of the crowd, despite the fact that they might not directly engage with it. In the contemporary novels studied in this thesis, including *What We All Long For*, the characters all seek a sense of community from the multitudes that occupy the city streets.

Tuyen and Carla, in particular, are clear modern-day versions of the *flâneur* figure. The two women spend many moments moving through the streets of Toronto. In fact, Tuyen's *flânerie* began as a teenager, as her desire to emancipate from home and to look for discarded objects would take her to numerous places of the city: "Even back then she disobeyed Bo's warnings to stay close to home, scouring the beaches, the railroads, and the construction sites at

night to look for unattended wood" (Brand 21). This passage establishes a clear correlation between Tuyen's need to escape postmemorial trauma and to move through abandoned spaces, which suggests that the two are, in fact, indissociable. Even as an adult, Tuyen often finds herself walking the streets, the process still bringing her comfort: "Now, walking towards home with Carla, the uncomfortable feeling she'd had observing her father seemed already to belong to another world" (128). As this quotation reveals, their *flânerie* is not always a solitary practice, as they at times walk alongside other *flâneurs* or *flâneuses* who experience the city in their own individual ways.

Like Tuyen, Carla can be considered a *flâneuse* as she is often associated to movement. Whereas Tuyen moves mostly on foot, Brand uses Carla's job as a bike carrier to have her move around Toronto. Like some critics, such as Caroline Rosenthal and Astrid Fellner, I interpret Carla's biking as "a form of wandering that evokes the concept of *flânerie*" (Fellner 236), as the effect of her movements on the bicycle is similar to the effects of the *flâneur*'s walking; as such, I make no clear distinction between Carla's walks and her bicycle rides.[29] Her movements through the city are reminiscent of Tuyen's in that they bring her comfort: "Identifying the direction of the wind, she would turn and turn in the blizzard and be lost, walk with it, walk against it, driving her feet through the thick gathering wall of it. Nothing like a snowstorm to calm a city and make things safe and quiet" (Brand 105). Here, it is clear that Carla embraces the rhythms of the city and allows them to guide her aimless movements. Even when she wanders on her bike, she seems to move as if transported by the happiness, the excitement, and the "hopeful

[29] Fellner does, however, make a distinction between Carla's walks and her rides, arguing that biking acts as "the novel's preferred concept of spatial practice because it seems the more fitting concept for an anti-neoliberal, working-class stance that the novel clearly endorses" (236). Although Fellner's arguments are convincing and pertinent, I do not include them as part of my assessment as they do not directly relate to my own arguments.

breeze" (28-30) of Toronto. Early in the novel, Carla feels she is "slipping through the city on light" (30); in these few pages, the word "light" is often repeated, and so are other related words such as "glow" and "sun" (28). This early passage, by stating that "she was light and light moves" thus establishes her character as a *flâneur* figure who moves according to the different rhythms of the city with no clear destination in mind.

Tuyen's and Carla's keen observations of the city and their tendency to absorb every detail they witness also make them clear representatives of the *flâneur* figure. As I have already noted, Tuyen enjoys observing the city and the diversity that she finds on every street corner. Like Tuyen, Carla spends a fair amount of time watching the ebb and flow of the people and "the changing moods of the city" (Rosenthal 237), although she often does so from her apartment window, taking advantage of the fact that their building is in the centre of Toronto:

> The street below the window seemed distant, blurred, soft-lit last evening. She'd watched the street people haggling, the store owner trying to move them along, the man who went to the Mars ten times a day for ice cream, the lottery ticket man, the café sitters, the trail of plastic-bag-laden people coming from the market. She watched and watched until the light went and the street lights came on and the crowd changed, with the exception of the regular homeless – the man who always told her, "Have a nice day, have a very nice day"; the chain-smoking woman who, on bad days, declaimed herself ugly to anyone within a few feet; the other woman who waited in the alley each day to tell the unsuspecting passerby that her dog had died; and the short, swollen, barefoot man with black hair. Then she watched the sun set. (Brand 38-39)

In this passage, the purpose of the enumerations is twofold: first, they once again bring the reader's attention to the different rhythms that make up the city, which Carla notices. If, as previous passages have shown, she sometimes finds herself in the middle of these rhythms and participates in city life, she sometimes spends hours watching "the urban spectacle as a stage of life" (Rosenthal 238). The second purpose of the enumerations here is to emphasize the vast diversity of the body of the city by listing the different types of people that occupy the streets. In fact, in her analysis of this particular passage, Rosenthal points out the anthropomorphic nature of Toronto: "Through [Carla's] eyes, the city is personified and becomes a round character with different traits, faces, and moods; a character that acts and is acted upon" (237). There are numerous vivid descriptions like this throughout the novel that serve to characterize Carla as a *flâneur*-type figure who not only engages with the city, but also takes in every detail that constitutes its urban spaces.

Finally, Tuyen and Carla both share the third *flâneur* trait I have identified, as they, like the original *flâneur*, seek the proximity of the crowd. Tuyen frequently finds herself enjoying the various possibilities offered by the urban setting and the fact that "you can stand on a simple corner and get taken away in all directions" (Brand 154). As she watches and listens to others, Tuyen rejoices in the formation of "a kind of new vocabulary": the diversity of the city and the proximity to other city dwellers make her "feel the thrill of being someone else" (154). As a result, Tuyen's meticulous observations of Toronto bring her a joy and a sense of anonymity that is comparable to that of the original *flâneur*. Carla also feels at home amidst the multitude, walking alongside others "aimless and directionless as they really are" (105). The fact that she feels a sense of kinship towards those who are aimless and enjoys being in their company.

During her endless strolls through the streets of Toronto, Carla seems to find comfort in the sense of community that accompanies the act of walking with strangers who, like her, simply wander.

Several scenes establish Carla and Tuyen as clear *flâneuses*, namely in the fact that they, like the original figure of the *flâneur*, are portrayed as liminal and elusive figures. As Rosenthal writes, the works by Benjamin and Baudelaire show the *flâneur* as "present/visible and at the same time hidden/invisible in the new semi-public and semi-private places of the city, such as cafés, parks, and arcades" (Rosenthal 235). This elusiveness is what allows the *flâneur* to observe the crowd from a distance while also being able to belong to it. In Brand's novel, as Tuyen and Carla make their way through the city, they often adopt a similar elusive behaviour in relation to the crowd. More importantly perhaps, this in-betweenness is represented in Tuyen's and Carla's very identities. For example, Tuyen is described as "androgynous, a beautiful, perfect mix of the feminine and the masculine" (Brand 22), which points to her liminality in terms of "the construction of ethnic, racial, and sexual identity throughout the novel" (Rosenthal 233). Similarly, Carla is a bisexual woman whose skin colour would have allowed her to "disappear into this white world" (106), but who instead chooses to honour her black heritage. Carla's sexual and racial identities, like Tuyen's, thus mark her as a "border-crosser," a feature that is also observable in the way she "travels, reads, and interprets socially and racially marginal places in Toronto" (Rosenthal 234). Therefore, the two women's in-betweenness, which is noticeable both in the construction of their selves and in their relationship with the city, is reminiscent of the liminal nature of the original *flâneur* figure.

Tuyen's and Carla's in-betweenness is also a definite consequence of their parents' traumatic past and an impact of postmemory on their lives. In an early passage of the novel, the four friends are drawn together by the feeling that they belonged to two countries at a time, to both the past and the present: "They each had the hip quietness of having seen; the feeling of living in two dimensions, the look of being on the brink, at the doorway listening to everything" (Brand 20). This passage highlights the notion that the young generation feels trapped between the memories they have been imposed – the "things they have seen" – and the lives they want to lead. This state of in-between, which draws them closer, also compels them to walk. This is reminiscent of Michel de Certeau's theory that "to walk is to lack a place" (de Certeau 103). In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau writes that walking "is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place" (103). In this sense, Tuyen and Carla are walkers continually searching of a "proper," a space they can claim as their own and wherein they can define their own ways of being and relating with the world. Additionally, Rosenthal likens de Certeau's concept to "the multiple displacements of subjects in the Diaspora and to how the younger generation embraces the 'placeless place' of the city as the end of traceable origins" (239). As children of people who have been displaced, the younger generation grew up "lacking a place." One could thus argue that the characters' *flânerie* is therefore a direct impact of past traumatic events as well as a means to work through their postmemories, embrace their own in-betweenness, and find their "proper."

Toronto, the Archive

So far, this chapter has outlined the effect of traumatic postmemory on the young generation of the novel and has illustrated the characters' relationship to the city and to *flânerie*. In the next pages, I aim to demonstrate that the act of walking through Toronto brings them even closer to their postmemories. The more Tuyen, Carla, Oku, and Jackie insist on occupying the different places of the city as a means to escape the trauma of the past, the more Toronto is revealed to be what Baetz calls "an irresistible archive," which consistently "puts on full display your personal and cultural memories that you can't help but acknowledge" (Baetz 398). This is in keeping with the notion that I set forth in my introduction, in which I articulated that the *flâneur* is more susceptible than most to be affected by the different aspects of the metropolis that might confront them with their pasts. As such, the city continually forces the observing *flâneur* or *flâneuse* to engage with their memories, despite their attempts to run away from them. In a sense, in the process of circulating the city to avoid the resurgence of personal and cultural memories, the *flâneur* is rather walking towards them.

This is true for Carla, who frequently rides her bike frantically through the city as a means to "stop thinking" (32) about the past, tends to end up in front of the old apartment where she used to live with her mother and brother, and where her mother committed suicide. Despite her attempts at escaping, she finds herself sitting "on the small grassy spot out front," feeling "exhausted from the long walk and from the ride, from the whole thing" (109). In the end, her movements through the city, as they keep bringing her back to the place of trauma, force her to accept her traumatic memories and, ultimately, to "vow to remember [her mother] Angie" (315).

In the last few pages, Carla thus actively chooses to embrace her memories, instead of trying to escape them.

Similarly, Oku and Jackie's presence in the city ultimately leads to their failure to forget the past and their family history. In an attempt to leave her dangerous childhood neighbourhood of Alexandra Park and the dark, depressing energy that has "driven [her] father and mother to drink like it had" (261-261), Jackie opens a store in another part of town and maintains a romantic relationship with a white man who acts as a foil to her parents and could therefore allow her to escape her past. However, she finds herself unable to resist her attraction to Oku, who consistently reminds her of the violent community she tries to escape: "He knew that to Jackie he probably looked like so many burned-out guys in Vanauley Way. Young, but burned out, so much wreckage" (265). As Jackie keeps coming back to her old neighbourhood, both physically and metaphorically through her relationship with Oku, it becomes clear, by the end of the novel, that she "ha[sn't] left Alexandra Park" and owes "a loyalty to her mother and father" (265). As for Oku, the conversation he has with Jackie's father near the end of the novel suggests a "newfound understanding, if not acceptance, of the role of paternal figures (if not the significance of his own father)" (Baetz 398):

> As Jackie's father disappeared west along Queen, Oku felt wistful for him. He felt the concentration of the man, the insecurities that had to be gathered up, the opportunities that were imagined but never came, the vanity that his body allowed him, all gathered in that limp like some bird feigning weakness to protect what was valuable. (Brand 260)

In this passage, Oku understands how the weight of the past has affected Jackie's father, which demonstrates the young man's acceptance of the past, or at least his recognition of its importance.

The most significant example of the young generation's inability to disentangle itself from their postmemories lies in the evolution of Tuyen's art project. In the beginning, her *lubaio* is a mere "mess of wood rails and tree stumps, twigs and rope, debris" (14) with a focus on the urban landscape of Toronto, since her project involves the important presence of "messages to the city" (17). Throughout the novel, the structure and meaning of the *lubaio* remain undefined as Tuyen attempts to understand exactly what it stands for. One could argue that this confusion is the manifestation of the conflict between Tuyen's desire to be free of her family's history and her need "to reclaim" (17) something that has been lost. Tuyen is initially unsure what she wishes to reclaim through her art, but its meaning becomes clearer as time goes by: "At the centre of one cylinder would be the *lubaio* with all the old longings of another generation … In another cylinder there would be twelve video projections, constantly changing, of images and texts of contemporary longing. This one would be celebratory, even with the horrible" (308). This passage is very significant; first, it suggests Tuyen's understanding of the ever-changing and always moving nature of the city, which is observable through her "constantly changing" art. The description of the artwork, which unites past and present longings, also establishes the palimpsest dimension of the project and, by extension, of the city itself. As such, the evolution of the installation and her way of belonging to the city suggest her newfound acceptance of the past, or at least the realization that past memories and present longings are inextricable: "Her art – she had pursued it to stave off her family – to turn what was misfortune into something else. She had

devoted all the time to it, and here they were – her family – returning again and again" (149). Although it was initially focused on the city, Tuyen's *lubaio* gradually embraces her parents' past and her origin story, which points to the fact that Tuyen's strong familial belonging defines her and her way of experiencing the city.

Furthermore, Quy's miraculous return confronts Tuyen to her family's inevitable past. Because Quy is, from the very beginning of the novel, "the embodiment of the losses that occurred on their trip from Vietnam" and "a corporeal reminder of where they came from and what it cost them" (Baetz 398), his reappearance reminds Tuyen that she can never truly escape the past, her postmemories, and "her diasporic inheritance" (398). More importantly perhaps, Quy's return prompts Tuyen to feel a new sense of fidelity towards her parents, whom she had been rejecting in several ways heretofore. Whereas she used to blame her parents for "dragging her into their survival" (Brand 303), the return of her long-lost brother spurs in her a fierce desire to protect them: "One thing, she decided, her mother and father could not be hurt. She'd see to that … At any rate, whatever, she would stick by her mother and father … Would [Quy] be kind to her mother and father? In the end that is what she meant, she realized, that is what she wanted. They deserved kindness" (300). In this passage, the repetition of the words "mother" and "father" emphasize Tuyen's genuine desire to protect her parents and her unprecedented resolve to return to them after years of fleeing to the city in an attempt to escape her postmemories. It is this newfound loyalty towards her family that hints at Tuyen's ultimate acceptance of the past and of its importance (Baetz 398).

The circumstances of Tuyen finding out about Quy's return are significant. First, she sees him for the first time while walking in the streets, which once again reveals that the city acts as

an archive or palimpsest in the young characters' lives. Second, she first recognizes his face through a photograph she takes of him and their brother Binh. It is significant that Tuyen should find out about Quy's existence through a picture, considering the importance of photographs hold in her life: "Throughout her childhood Quy had looked at her from every mantel, every surface, and now she thought she had looked at him" (266). Growing up, their house was filled with pictures of this "mythic tragic brother" (122), as Cam would make several photocopies of Quy's pictures to send out in her frantic effort to find him. As a result, "these photographs littered the house" (225). The abundance of these photographs, the "signs of their former life" (224), once more reflects the first generation's insistence on holding on to the past. Even though she has left home and all manifestations of a past life, the city confronts her with the past in the form of pictures that she finds as she moves through Toronto: "At the ATM machine in the bank, Tuyen found a photograph. It was lying there as if waiting for her. This always happened to her. She would turn around and find frames filled in with the life of the city" (142). In light of these three instances that suggest the importance of photographs in Tuyen's life, it is interesting to consider Hirsch's belief that photography is the medium that clearly connects memory and postmemory: "Because photographs are often read as traces, material connections to a lost past, and because many photographic images have survived even though their subjects did not, photography provides a particularly powerful medium of postmemory" (659-660). The fact that Tuyen discovers Quy through a photograph, the ideal medium of postmemory, hints at the impossibility of actually escaping the past.

The more time Tuyen spends in the city and works on her art, the more she finds herself returning to her own memories. Her *lubaio* becomes her chance to accept and engage with the

past, and perhaps even to heal from its trauma. Quy's return reinforces this possibility and helps her define the nature of her artwork; what she wants is to make a postmemorial out of *lubaio*: "she must help [Bihn] rescue Ma and Bo. They must, she and he, translate now the years between [Quy] and their parents. They must stand between them to decode the secret writing of loss and hurt … Wasn't that what her art was all about in the end?" (307) The passage that follows this one describes how she plans on making very small copies of Quy's photograph to include it among the many longings of the city, bringing past and present together. The idea of making copies of Quy's photograph not only recalls Cam's endless copies in a desperate attempt to find her son, but also suggests Tuyen's wish to "recover the past … to offer a translation, a kind of decoding and recoding" (Baetz 399). Baetz makes an insightful connection between Tuyen's goal to "recover or transmit a past she was not a part of" (399) and Hirsch's postmemorial work, which she defines as "sites where subsequent generations can find a lost origin, where they can learn about the time and place they will never see" (Hirsch 665). I would argue that the *lubaio* exists in a time and place of its own, one that is beyond the past and the present, beyond her parents' Vietnam and her Toronto. Tuyen's *lubaio* is the postmemorial work through which she gradually hopes to recover, translate, and heal from past trauma. It is something she is able to claim as her own and might even be a means to find a "proper" she has been looking for.

As the last pages have outlined, the four characters (particularly Tuyen) seem to be taking advantage of the archivistic nature of the city to learn about their parents' past and to accept it in their own way. Doing so could potentially allow them to heal from their traumatic postmemories, just as they wanted all along, but through the acceptance of their family's pasts instead of

through a complete rejection of them. However, as Baetz argues, Quy's beating in the last moments of the novel hints at Tuyen's (and her friends') ultimate failure to recover (from) the past. Since Quy represents the importance of the past and leads Tuyen to her desire to embrace her postmemories, the description of his attack reveals the impossibility of a successful postmemorial work: "And he leans his head as he had over the side of the boat, longingly, and Bo and Ma are finally running out of a doorway, running toward him, and the road between them is like water, and they both grabbed him as they should have and his mouth splits open and all the water spills out" (317). This passage makes evocative references to the event from the past that has caused such trauma in their family: losing Quy loss upon leaving Vietnam. By juxtaposing this moment to the image of water spilling out of his mouth, the description of the beating conveys the distance that will forever separate him from his family, the same distance that makes it impossible to recover what was lost years ago. The water acts as an "image of entropy or disappearance or erasure, and suggests that the past cannot be recovered or transmitted" (Baetz 400). Whether or not Quy survives the beating is irrelevant, and Brand's writing offers no way of knowing his fate. Nevertheless, these final moments indicate the very impossibility of postmemorial work.

In conclusion, it is my contention that Brand's *What We All Long For*, through its use of postmemory, points to the impossibility of truly recovering from past traumatic events. Like the narrator in Hage's *Cockroach*, the four members of the young generation turn to *flânerie* and the city in order to find a community that will allow them to escape their past. However, their presence in the urban landscape of Toronto confronts them not only with the impossibility of escaping past traumas, but also with the impossibility of knowing, accepting, and healing from

them; the city, as Baetz accurately writes, is "an archive that is present but inaccessible, unrealized but longed for" (401). This intense longing is represented by their urge to walk; circulating the city is thus a means to access the archive it represents, which is decidedly unreachable. In that sense, the events of Brand's novel suggest that the second generation can never properly heal from postmemory: "[Postmemory] mourns a loss that cannot be repaired. And, because even the act of mourning is secondary, the lost object can never be incorporated and mourning can never be overcome. In perpetual exile, [this] generation's practice of mourning is as determinative as it is interminable and ultimately impossible" (Hirsch 664). This impossible practice of mourning recalls Caruth's belief that the complexity of trauma lies in its "very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance" (4). Because of the time and distance that separates Tuyen, Carla, Oku, and Jackie from their traumatic postmemories, they paradoxically can never escape them nor access them in a way that would allow them to *know* and heal from them. The "gaps and absences" (Hirsch 664) that define traumatic postmemory perpetually stand in the way of recovery, just like water will always prevent, both figuratively and literally, Tuyen's family from reuniting with their long-lost child.

Chapter Five

The City as a Liminal Space: The Urban Traumas of the Queer *Flâneuse* in Zoe Whittall's *Bottle Rocket Hearts*

In this last chapter, I propose an analysis of Zoe Whittall's *Bottle Rocket Hearts* and of its young *flâneuse*, who navigates issues of sexuality, social belonging, and trauma as she grows from childhood to adulthood in a city divided by linguistic and political concerns.[30] Through the point of view of its English-speaking narrator, Whittall's novel, which Heather O'Neill describes as "a woeful and hilarious ode to the last days of a girl's childhood," offers a realistic representation of a troubled Montréal caught in the long-standing conflicts between Anglophones and Francophones. As a *flâneuse*, Eve becomes invested in the city and in the issues that define it; as a result, the chaos of her life is often reflected in the chaos of Montréal, and as an extension, of the province of Québec. Megan Butcher notes in her review of the novel that "[t]he city in flux underlines the changes Eve is going through personally" (51), and Eve's movements through the city force her to confront the changes that operate both on the political and personal

[30] *Bottle Rocket Heart*s, like *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, is a *Bildungsroman* as it traces the evolution from childhood (or teenagehood) to adulthood. Though it is not necessarily a focus of this thesis, it is interesting to consider the relationship between psychological growth, trauma, and *flânerie*. There is, in trauma theory, supporting evidence of trauma's ability to hinder a child's maturation process; Felman contends that trauma victims are unable to develop and are forced to remain in a stagnant state due to their overwhelming fear that "fate will strike again" (67). Moreover, trauma theory typically avers that traumatic events tend to compromise a victim's sense of place and familiarity, while also maintaining the ability to shatter "the construction of the self that is formed in relation to others" (Herman 53). Both identity and community are thus disturbed by the occurrence of a traumatic experience. Throughout this thesis, I have pointed to the therapeutic potential and educational value of walking and engaging with one's surroundings. Because *flânerie* allows a better understanding of the world, the *flâneur* learns from his observations and his encounters. As such, the educational properties of *flânerie* are valuable to traumatized subjects who roam the streets in search of meaning after a traumatic event has shattered their experience of "time, self, and the world" (Caruth 4) and has obscured their ways of being themselves in relation to others (Herman 53).

levels. As this chapter argues, the events of this "queer urban twist on the *Bildungsroman*" (51) also reveal the violence of the urban landscape, which becomes traumatic to her and her entire community and has life-altering consequences for Eve. As the first chapter of this thesis outlines, the city is the ideal setting for the male and adult *flâneur*, but tends to put women in a position of vulnerability. In *Bottle Rocket Hearts*, Eve experiences a double precarity as a woman and a representative of the queer community. As a queer *flâneuse*, Eve often finds herself on the receiving end of unwanted male attention and homophobic assaults, and in this sense does not enjoy the incognito of the traditional *flâneur*. In Whittall's novel, the presence of trauma thus reframes the ways in which one can be a *flâneur*(*euse*) in the city by bringing attention to a community for whom the mere act of aimless walking can be dangerous. This chapter namely argues that the male social construct of the original *flâneur* can and should be adapted in order to make room for queer *flâneuse*s (and *flâneur*s).

Beyond the potentially traumatic effect of *flânerie* on a protagonist, *Bottle Rocket Hearts* also suggests the therapeutic nature of walking the city, as Eve develops a sense of community that allows her to heal through this proximity and, later, through art. In fact, her evolution throughout the novel is very much informed by her traumatic urban experiences as well as her ability to overcome them and to feel empowered enough to reclaim her space in the city. As such, I will demonstrate the ways in which the trauma Eve experiences as a *flâneuse* in the city defines her coming-of-age. The first section of this chapter analyzes Eve's connection with the city and the influence her relationships have on her urban experience. It will also identify the characteristics that make her a modern day *flâneuse*. In the second half of this chapter, the focus will be on the trauma she experiences as a queer young *flâneuse*, on the formation of her

individual and social identity, and on her ultimate ability to reclaim the urban spaces from which she and her community have been alienated.[31] This thesis set out to answer one main question: can contemporary *flânerie* have both traumatic and therapeutic effects on a young protagonist? Since *Bottle Rocket Hearts* presents a character who both suffers from the trauma of walking in an urban landscape and benefits from being a *flâneuse*, this chapter will prove that both are possible. Consequently, it seems fitting that my analysis of Whittall's novel should be the last one of this thesis.

Before analyzing Eve's relationship with the city and the effects of *flânerie* on her development, I will demonstrate the characteristics that make her a *flâneuse*. First, like the *flâneur* as defined by Baudelaire and Benjamin, she is in constant movement through the city, perfectly at ease with "the sidewalks and bustle, the proximity and urgency of real suburban life" (Whittall 96). Second, she is also a keen observer of the city that surrounds her, consistently offering a detailed commentary of the places she goes and the people she meets. As such, she observes with equal interest the strangers she passes by and the streets and buildings she comes across. Third, like the original *flâneur*, she enjoys "feeling so insulated by the crowd" (82), often seeking the company of other like-minded people on the streets, which eventually leads to the development of a strong sense of community, as I will demonstrate in this chapter. Finally, Eve also acts as an artist who finds inspiration through her urban experiences and transforms them into writing as a form of testimony in the wake of the traumatic events she goes through.

[31] The term "queer" does not have a definitive definition. For the purpose of this chapter, I use the term as it is used in Whittall's novel, that is to refer to a range of sexual orientations and subcultures that cannot be reduced to a single and reductive form. Chris Baldick defines queer theory as the study of "the historical variability, fluidity, and provisional or 'performed' nature of sexualities" (302); this basic definition is useful in understanding the use of the concept in this thesis, though I acknowledge that the term "queer" is much more complex than this.

As a *flâneuse* who moves through Montréal, Eve witnesses the various effects of the political climate of the province on the city and its citizens. Whittall's novel takes place during a tumultuous and defining moment of Québec's history, the 1995 referendum, during which the majority of the population voted against the province's independence.[32] As a representative of a troubled province, the city of Montréal is divided over the political and linguistic conflicts that serve as the backdrop to Eve's life. Through *flânerie*, she comes across the visual marks of the province's division: "The downtown core is covered in graffiti. The words 'Yes' 'No' 'Oui' 'Non' painted across brick and wood" (Whittall 54-55). As a *flâneuse*, Eve pays close attention to the political statements that are inscribed on the walls of the buildings she walks past. The *flâneur* notices urban details that other people might not necessarily acknowledge in their everyday movements through the city. Not only does Eve see them, but she also reflects on these statements and feels the weight of their significance. To her, the fact that "the city seems sad" with its "seething leaves and greying rivers" is a direct result of the nation's "inability to decide" (55), which is observable on every street corner. As this chapter will point out, the conflicts that she observes reflect her own, both in terms of her personal relationships and her political leanings.

Eve's general ambivalence is observable in her attitude towards the result of the referendum: as she is caught between people who fervently support either side of the issue, she is

[32] On October 30, 1995, the Parti Québécois, led by Jacques Parizeau, held a referendum on the question of Québec's sovereignty. The intent to separate from Canada and to have Québec become an independent country was attributable, in short, to the failure of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown constitutional accords as well as to the alienation of the province of Québec. A "poisoned atmosphere" and a sense of uncertainty characterized the months leading to the vote, as the "Yes" side gained momentum ("Québec Referendum"). Ultimately, the "No" side won – very narrowly – with 50.58% of the votes. The first referendum held on the question of Québec's independence in 1980 had also resulted in a narrow (59.56%) win for the "No" side.

divided between the two positions and, as such, represents the city in which she lives. On the one hand, her Anglophone family encourages her to vote No: on the night of the referendum, her aunt Bev insists, "Come on! Do it for your country … We're going to win! We have to" (60). On the other hand, Eve is also influenced by her girlfriend Della, who was raised by a Francophone mother and an Anglophone father, and who fiercely defends the separatist movement. Eve attempts to understand both positions in the conflict, which complicates the whole issue for her: she in fact does not know which outcome she hopes for, "not sure where [her] opinion lies on Quebec separating" (58). Eve often feels as though she is being pulled in both directions:

> Finally able to vote – and this is my vague question.
>
> "Do you agree that … (Our father who art in…) Quebec should become sovereign (Do I believe what my mother told me? 'Fucking Bill 101!' she yelled at the radio while I was in my car seat.), after having made a formal offer to Canada for a new Economic and Political partnership (Della believes what her father told her. Separation is a victory for the working class. Autonomy is a warm nesting place… Blah blah blah – light a smoke here, inhale.), within the scope of the Bill respecting the future of Quebec (English people have no rights anymore, said my father, defiantly putting English signs in the window of his store with sloppy paint.) and of the agreement signed on June 12, 1995?" (Exhale, a stream of smoke, looking heavenward.) (Whittall 55)

In this important passage, Whittall includes the actual question that voters could read on their ballots on October 30, 1995, and punctuates it with Eve's thoughts and memories. As she reads her ballot, Eve's deliberation is disturbed by arguments from people who stand on the two opposite sides of the conflict. The use of parentheses in this paragraph suggests the weight and

influence of past generations on Eve's decision. The irregular use of punctuation here also conveys her nervous state of mind during this historic moment.

Interestingly, when her roommates Seven and Rachel ask her which way she voted, Eve remains silent. Although the outcome fills her with relief and a "strange and solemn sense of calm that nothing will change" (73), her vote is never actually revealed, which insinuates that despite the two sides pulling her in opposite directions, Eve remains in the middle where she can acknowledge the fact that the separatist question is more than an us-against-them discourse. This shift away from the traditional "two solitudes bullshit" (65) hints at the possibility of a more united Montréal and Québec.[33] In fact, Sherry Simon notes that "there are some indications in the novel of the new Montréal" (Simon 83), such as the inclusion of characters like Katherine, Della's ex-girlfriend, who "flows between French and English seamlessly, like it's all one language" (Whittall 23) and the frequent use of both languages in the dialogues. A later dialogue points to Katherine's ability to see past the divides in which the whole province still seems trapped: "I see both sides. And it's really not an us-against-them thing, for most Quebeckers" (Whittall 68). The inclusion of characters like Katherine nuances the question of the political tensions that surround Eve at this important stage in her life.

However, despite hints of the "new Montréal," the age-old "two solitudes" friction is still very much present in the city and in Eve's life. In fact, her relationship with Della embodies the political conflict that causes division among the citizens of Montréal (and, by extension, of

[33] The expression "two solitudes" is believed to have been coined by German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, and it was later applied by Canadian author Hugh MacLennan in his 1945 novel *Two Solitudes*. In MacLennan's novel, the phrase refers to the "situation of English and French Canada, considered as socially and culturally isolated from each other" ("two solitudes").

Québec as a whole), which is particularly observable in their interactions on the night of the referendum. When they go to a bar with Della's friends, Eve at first feels like she is "a part of everything," content amidst the excitement and warmth of the crowd (65). However, this feeling, which recalls the *flâneur*'s desire to be at the centre of everything and to be lost in a crowd, is only fleeting, as she rapidly starts to feel a shift in the energy of the group. Suddenly, Della berates her for not being committed enough to the cause and accuses her of being apolitical. This sudden personal attack and subsequent embarrassment shatter the feeling of belonging that Eve had until that moment: "People start to stare. I'm definitely the only anglo in the bar" (66). Because Eve is not fluent in French, she feels even more disconnected from the crowd and from Della's friends, who have "no discernable accent in French or English" (66). Feelings of jealousy quickly surface, so much so that the question of independence becomes secondary. In reference to this scene, Simon writes that "Eve's commentary on the referendum is a playful one, the personal winning over the political" (83) given that Eve seems more preoccupied by her jealousy when it comes to Della and her friends than by the historic event taking place. While I agree that, on the surface, Eve's interest in the result appears superficial, I believe that the conflict works on a deeper level and that this scene demonstrates not Eve's indifference towards the cause, but rather the heavy impact of the political issues on Eve's life, especially given her connection to the city.

Both the city and Della play instrumental roles in Eve's growth, and their significance is further emphasized by the parallels which Whittall frequently draws between them. Early in the novel, Eve marvels at Della's fearlessness, unpredictability, and rawness, noting that her complexity is not unlike that of a city: "When she's asleep, I like to try to peer under her skin

and see if someone accidentally put a city there, some sort of ancient civilization trapped where most of us have pores and hair follicles and derma papilla" (Whittall 7). In a later passage, Eve compares the level of romanticism she finds in Montréal to Della's, saying that she "is more romantic than this city, and that is something you can't fake" (54). Not only do these passages establish a clear correlation between Della and the city, but they also speak to Eve's admiration towards Della and her intrinsically unique character. It is noteworthy that passages that display Eve's developing independence and emancipation tend to include both Della and the city: "I settled in, inviting Della over for dinners I made excitedly, so hyper and energized by my own space, my new independent life in a city so seductive I tried to emulate it with every kiss on Della's neck, every look across the room" (54). These scenes further suggest that Eve's growth throughout the novel is contingent both upon her relationship with Della, the space she occupies within the city, and the influence of the numerous conflicts that they represent have on her personal life.

Despite Eve's *flânerie* and her love for Montréal, the city consistently presents itself as a cold and unwelcoming environment, much like it does in Hage's *Cockroach.* Almost every description of her *flânerie* is punctuated by references to the "almost frozen" city (18), to the stairs and sidewalks that are "caked in ice" (19) and to her body which is often "raw from the cold" (63) in this "winter hell" (155). In a way, the cold of the city, which Whittall emphasizes from the onset of the novel, foreshadows the traumatic events that occur later in the novel and that turn the streets into spaces of alienation for Eve and the members of her community. Eve also regularly juxtaposes the cold of Montréal to the warmth of Della's presence: "Montréal is an ice cube" (10), Eve notes, but she and Della are the "thaw embodied" (44). For part of the novel,

Della fulfills Eve's "need to be warm at night" (21) and represents a haven from the hostility of the urban landscape. In its beginning, their relationship feels utterly safe to Eve: "A relationship starting in January in this cold city shouldn't feel so optimistic, it should feel practical and insulating. But it doesn't. The winter can't touch this" (16). This passage not only highlights once again the importance of the city and of Della in Eve's life, but also foreshadows of the inevitable demise of their relationship; in the end, as Eve learns to reclaim the streets as a space of belonging, she also walks away from Della.

As Eve gets to know more people from the queer community, she becomes a witness to all kinds of stories wherein others have been victims of violence, rejection, or prejudice because of their sexual orientation. She hears of Katherine, who "has been exiled since she came out" (23), recalls "Seven talking about his father's work boots on his back like an iron branding" (96) for being gay, and listens as Rachel talks about her parents, who "told her she was going to burn in hell" and that "she wasn't welcome in their home" (132). Eve thus becomes aware not only of her friends' rejection by their families, but also of stories that expose the violence and prejudice that the community experiences in different contexts. For example, Della recalls having been to a gay event where the cops intervened, beating some partygoers almost to death for no reason. In the aftermath of the event, the community took to the streets in order to protest what had happened, but were never given the chance to do so. Della describes: "We were just peacefully protesting outside the police station and they dragged my friend into the station by her hair. They took my other friend out the back of the station in an ambulance when it was clear they'd really fucked him up" (31). Not only does this passage foreshadow later traumatic events such as Rachel's death, but it also exposes from the onset the traumatic violence to which the queer

community is subjected on the streets, which they are not allowed to occupy even in the context of a peaceful protest.

On several occasions, Whittall paints the portrait of a violent city; Eve, as a *flâneuse*, is left deeply troubled by the numerous acts of violence that occur all around her. In one instance, a bomb goes off near Della's building, shattering windows and any sense of safety and intimacy that the couple had been feeling moments before. In an instant, the danger of the city invites itself inside their home:

> The building settles and shakes like a person coming down from a seizure. All the windows are shattered up and down the block. A woman is screaming, swearing. Sirens approach what seems almost instantly. More urgently than usual.
>
> Upheaval is a steady exhale in this neighbourhood – red lights and red eyes. But this is different. Car alarms continue to blare like experimental techno. Dogs bark in chorus …
>
> Our hearts are accordions. I slip into jeans and a wool sweater, the first things I find with my hands, itchy against bare skin. The power is out. It's still light out but the darkness of her apartment makes it hard to see. I follow her wordlessly as she scuffles five steps ahead of me, trying unsuccessfully to get her right foot into an orange Converse sneaker, through the front door. We head south towards Ontario Street in a stumbling jog. (Whittall 33-34)

In this passage, the several references to the sounds of the city as they brutally permeate through the walls of the apartment demonstrate the prominence of violence both in the streets and in their lives. The urban sounds (the screams, sirens, alarms, and barks) contrast with their sudden

wordlessness as they move through the streets to join the crowd of stricken bystanders. The comparison of their hearts and a musical instrument in juxtaposition with the "experimental techno" made by the car alarms underlines the way the chaos of the outside has forced its way into their safe and intimate haven. In the previous passage, the emphasis on their silence in the midst of this upheaval is suggestive of the overwhelming effect that this violence has on them, as it leaves them momentarily speechless.

This scene reveals the psychological impact of the city's violence on Eve. Because outside forces have violated her sense of home, they have broken the boundary between inside and outside, between safety and danger. The explosion has literally left "another fucking hole" (34) in a window, thus creating the sense that the walls of their home are "porous" and unable to uphold "the illusion of impermeability in attempting to keep the familiar within and the stranger without" (Beneventi, "Underground" 267).[34] As a result, Eve goes through an episode during which she feels her heart pounding and believes she is "having a heart attack" (Whittall 35). She manages to recreate "the illusion that inside is safe and the landscape outside is precarious at best" (35) by taking pills, which, once they have worn off, only highlight the fact that any senses of safety and home were only imagined.

[34] In his article "Montreal Underground," Domenic A. Beneventi defines the boundaries of the home as such: "The boundaries of the home, like those of the nation, create the illusion of impermeability in attempting to keep the familiar within and the stranger without; but the home, as a privileged space of familiarity, security, and domesticity that protects its inhabitants from an unwieldy and dangerous outside, is itself porous and already inhabited with difference" (267). Beneventi applies this definition to his analysis of O'Neill's *Lullabies for Little Criminals* and of Baby's developing sense of home, but I believe it is also useful in understanding the impact of urban violence on Eve's development. Beneventi's comparison of the boundaries of the home and the boundaries of the nation is especially relevant in light of the 1995 referendum, which serves as the setting of Whittall's novel.

Similarly, the cold and sometimes inhospitable city often ruins Eve's *flânerie*, which she would otherwise experience as a positive and hopeful practice. In several passages, Eve's mood as she moves through Montréal changes from enthusiasm to a more sombre state of mind:

> I get on my bike and peddle [*sic*] south fast in the cold drizzle, the charged air begging for a downpour … I'm a silver pinball bouncing against curbs, averting car doors by fractions of seconds, the yells of angry pedestrians like the high-pitched pinks signalling points, speeding through yellow lights, a little out of my head.
>
> I glide down Pine Avenue and turn right onto St-Denis … I feel like a tourist twisting east. My knuckles are raw from the cold … By the time I get to Beaudry I feel deflated, not the confident pinball from the Plateau but a rain-soaked minnow, muddied gills uncertain, gasping for oxygen. I think I might be developing asthma. (Whittall 63-64)

In this passage, Eve's bicycle ride through the city is reminiscent of Carla's in *What We All Long For*: like Carla, Eve wandering on her bike evokes the concept of *flânerie*, and both characters are associated with motion. At first, the use of words like "fast," "bouncing," "speeding," and "glide" suggests that Eve's movements are light and carefree. As she rides east, the cold slows her movements as well as her confidence, which is also expressed in her comparison to a minnow, a word that is both the name of a fish and the term used to describe a person who "has little influence or power" ("Minnow"). Significantly, the change occurs as she turns to the east side of the metropolis, which is prominently known as the Francophone part of Montréal; this passage therefore reinforces the narrative of the east-west conflict as well as the political and

linguistic issues that are at the heart of the novel. Whereas she begins her journey with a distinct feeling of being perfectly in sync with the urban landscape, she suddenly feels like a tourist, having lost all sense of belonging. The east end appears so unwelcoming to Eve that it crushes her energy and leads her to believe that she is becoming asthmatic, an anxious response that is quite reminiscent of the aftermath of the explosion, when she believes she is having a heart attack.

A similar situation occurs later when Eve is walking contentedly through the streets at night. As in the previous passage, her *flânerie* begins on a positive note as she feels at one with the urban landscape:

> I'm heading west along Rachel towards my bike where I'd locked it up outside of work. I feel warm and satiated and independent. Shooting through my veins is the lifeblood of being single and young in this city that shines like vintage jewellery all around me … I look up at the cross on the mountain and walk towards it without looking at my feet, playing games with the lights in my head. Completely and entirely content. This city is flawless, this body is so strong right now. I wonder if this is going to be one of those moments I think of when I'm older and my body is frailer and I conjure up moments of strength and adventure, drunken walks home at 2:00 a.m., strutting and smiling. (117)

This passage aptly illustrates Eve's relationship with the city as a *flâneuse*: not only does she feel a strong, almost physical connection to the landscape, but she is also amazed by its beauty. Like the typical *flâneur*, Eve does not focus on the act of walking itself but rather on looking and absorbing every detail as she walks. The several references to her strong, strutting, and warm

body are reminiscent of the previous quotation in which she compares herself to a bouncing pinball gliding through the streets. In this scene, also similar to the explosion scene, any sense of safety is suddenly shattered by the hostility of the city. The city, which was "flawless" moments before, now confronts her with the violence that exists within its streets as a drunk stranger approaches Eve. When she responds that she is not interested, the man blames her rejection on her homosexuality, calling her "a fucking dyke" (117) and attacking her. After fending him off, she runs to another man walking his dog, looking for temporary safety, but he ends up violently cursing women after Eve rejects his advances. The two encounters chase her off the streets, as she no longer feels safe, and she rushes back to her apartment, completely terrified. Even her home seems to have lost the ability to make her feel safe from the violent city, which is reminiscent of the aftermath of the explosion:

> I check every seam between inside and out. I turn on all the lights, I open and close each cupboard. I turn on the stereo, turn up the shooting sounds of Tiger Trap. I pull on a nightgown and relax into its ugly comfort. I check all the locks on both doors and look closely at each window in my bedroom that overlooks the street, wondering if they could be pushed open. I walk from room to room monitoring each strange sound. (119)

The frantic rhythm of this passage matches her panic, and the several short sentences reveal her desperate state of mind. Here, Whittall lists a series of actions that Eve carries out in an attempt to find safety inside a home that, once again, feels porous and powerless against the outside violence.

Not only does this scene indicate that *flânerie* can be traumatic for Eve, but it also brings attention to the city as a space of alienation for certain groups of people. The hostility that these two men show towards women and the queer community exhibits a pattern of violence that makes it difficult, and in some cases, impossible for the victims to claim these spaces as their own. In fact, this whole passage anticipates the most traumatic event of the novel, Rachel's murder in the streets of Montréal, which occurs on the same night. The fact that Eve's attack occurs while she is walking on Rachel Street is significant, as it not only foreshadows Rachel's death, but also establishes a parallel between the two events. While Eve is being violently cursed for rejecting two men, Rachel is "followed and targeted for being gay" (124) as she is walking home. The heinous attack is, according to the spokesperson for the Lesbian and Gay Student group at McGill in the novel, "a clear case of gay bashing" (124). Rachel's murder and Eve's attack support the argument that the urban setting portrayed in Whittall's novel tends to alienate women and members of the queer community, as Eve is literally chased off the streets by two men and Rachel is killed by two others in the middle of the street.

Rachel's death is traumatic for Eve and for the entire queer community of Montréal. In its aftermath, Eve enters a state of depression during which she needs the company of others, a need that she feels unable to express properly:

> "Can I do anything for you, Eve? Anything at all."
>
> "No, that's okay." Stay. Just stay the night. Don't leave me alone.
>
> "Are you sure, sweetie? 'Cause I can just call Nicky and cancel."
>
> "No, no, I'm totally fine." See that I'm lying. Please notice.

> Melanie got up and hugged me … I hoped Seven would come home. He didn't … My mother called and offered to pick me up. I said I was fine. She didn't push it. (126)

Eve's unspoken need to be surrounded by friends or family is, according to Judith Herman, common in the aftermath of a traumatic event: "The survivor who is often in terror of being left alone craves the simple presence of a sympathetic person. Having once experienced the sense of total isolation, the survivor is intensely aware of the fragility of all human connections in the face of danger. She needs clear and explicit assurances that she will not be abandoned once again" (Herman 61-62). Eve suffers both from the trauma of having been attacked out on the street, where she was all alone in the face of danger, and from the loss of her friend and roommate, which has left her alone in her home and "overwhelmed with the need of someone familiar" (Whittall 126). Although she is unable to voice it, this desperate need for the proximity of a "sympathetic person" is evocative of the devastating effect that this night has had on her.

The extent of Eve's trauma is noticeable in her behaviour even days after the event. In tears, she admits to Della that she has been having recurring dreams about Rachel's aggressors: "I dream every night about killing those skinheads. I picture it, I picture stabbing them until they're dead. I picture hurting their fathers, whoever made them who they are, just blood everywhere" (127). In my analysis of O'Neill's *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, I pointed out that intrusive dreams and flashbacks are a common response to traumatic events. As Cathy Caruth writes, the traumatic experience can return to the victim in an "attempt to master what was never fully grasped in the first place" (62). The recurrence of these dreams is a means to understand the traumatic event, which can be difficult or impossible to achieve: "Not having truly known the threat of death in the past, the survivor is forced, continually, to confront it over and over again"

(62). In the conversation that occurs between Eve and Della, the repetition of the words "I picture" expresses the insistence of these intrusive and recurring dreams. In fact, repetition is, according to Whitehead, a stylistic device that "mimics the effects of trauma, for it suggests the insistent return of the event and the disruption of narrative chronology or progression" (86). Eve's use of repetition in the description of her recurring nightmares thus points to the highly disruptive consequences that trauma has on her life.

The violent nature of her dreams expresses not only a subconscious attempt at understanding the violence of which Rachel was a victim, but also a desire for revenge. According to Herman, the "revenge fantasy" is a frequent form of resistance to mourning in the aftermath of a traumatic event. She writes that, "[t]he revenge fantasy is often a mirror image of the traumatic memory, in which the roles of perpetrator and victim are reversed" (189). In her dream, Eve assumes the role of the victim who gets to take revenge on her friend's perpetrators. Eve's recurring dreams also denote a subconscious need to retrieve some of the control that she has been denied as a member of the marginalized community both she and Rachel represent. She confesses to Della the feeling that she is never going to recover from the events of that night:

> "You're going to be okay."
>
> "I'm not. I'm really not." I feel myself falling. (Whittall 127)

Her belief that she is never "going to be okay" and her feeling that she is falling communicate the extent of her helplessness, out of which often arises the desire for revenge: "In her humiliated fury, the victim imagines that revenge is the only way to restore her sense of power" (Herman 189). One could thus read Eve's revenge fantasy as a desire to avenge every member of the community that has been harmed, since she fantasizes about killing not only Rachel's

perpetrators, but also their fathers who have raised them to be violent discriminators; in other words, she dreams of gaining control over the people who have been perpetrating hateful crimes against others on account of their sexual orientation.

The trauma of Rachel's death affects Eve's relationships with others, as she begins to avoid her family and to cling desperately to Seven and Della. Herman argues that these "oscillations in the regulation of intimacy" are natural, as "[t]rauma impels people both to withdraw from close relationships and to seek them desperately" (56). On the one hand, she writes, "[t]he profound disruption in basic trust, the common feelings of shame, guilt, and inferiority, and the need to avoid reminders of the trauma that might be found in social life, all foster withdrawal from close relationships" (56). In the aftermath of the tragic event, Eve withdraws from her parents, who feel "like strangers" (Whittall 144), and refuses to visit them: "I stopped going home to visit my family, not able to handle the suburbs, risk seeing skinheads while on my way to the corner store to buy my mother milk" (135). The loss of her sense of trust in others leads Eve to pull away from her parents. The fear of running into people that would remind her of Rachel's murderers also compels her to avoid going home and to isolate herself. Conversely, as Eve is pulling away from her family, she begins to seek the presence of Seven and Della, and the trio forms a tight-knit group in their attempt to survive the depressive state in which they find themselves: "At home Seven, Della and I have started bunking up at night, curling around each other in sleep, or fake sleep. All I could do was run through Rachel's last days like a movie … I woke up in the middle of the night crying. My dreams were tears" (135). This passage draws attention to the repetition of the dreams as "the insistent return of the event and the disruption of narrative chronology or progression" (Whitehead 86), clearly pointing to

Eve's inability at this moment to move past the trauma of Rachel's death. In fact, there are several mentions of her troubled sleep, recurring dreams, and insomnia in the aftermath of the event. It is significant that she should desperately seek the proximity of Seven and Della during the night, when she feels most vulnerable. United in their grief, they anxiously cling to each other, an understandable coping mechanism considering that "the terror of the traumatic event intensifies the need for protective attachments" (56), as Herman argues.

The event has proven to be traumatic not only for Rachel's closest friends, but also for the entire queer community. A "collective grief" (Whittall 134) takes over its members, and Eve witnesses it on every city street. On top of grieving Rachel's loss, "[e]veryone is also fearful about being next" (134). As a direct result of this fear, more "Dyke Defence" classes are being given, the university women's centre teaches women how to physically defend themselves against men, and journalists are interviewing more people presumably as a means to raise awareness (Whittall 134). Women are given resources to survive should they be the next target of an attack. Though she grew up in the city and had never felt threatened by men like Rachel's aggressors, Eve realizes that being openly queer on the streets puts her at risk of being assaulted: "I realized I was no longer someone who could hide in my privileged skin at the bus stop when the skinheads passed by, who could afford to spit at their boots and give them nasty looks. Kissing Della goodbye at the Metro now made me a target as well" (134). Eve and her community thus feel like the mere act of displaying their true selves to the world puts them at risk of meeting the same fate Rachel did. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub have argued that trauma victims often experience a "fear that fate will strike again": it is the fear that the traumatic event will occur once again, but this time, the victim "might not be spared or have the power to

endure" (67). In the aftermath of Rachel's death, Eve notices that the whole community lives with a fear that fate will strike again and that they might not survive an attack.

In the weeks that follow this tragedy, however, Eve notices several changes that occur within the community, as people seem to unite in their grief. Their shared experience and loss bring Eve closer to the people she meets as she moves through the city: "[This collective grief] made me bond to anyone who looked queer on the street, or anyone I knew from the bars, or actions" (Whittall 134). Herman argues that the community plays a valuable role in a victim's recovery from trauma: "Sharing the traumatic experience with others is a precondition for the restitution of a meaningful world. In this process, the survivor seeks assistance not only from those closest to her but also from the wider community" (Herman 70). Although Eve's pain is received and acknowledged by her close friends, it is the community's response that allows her to heal and gradually stop living in fear: "It gave us all the permission to look each other in the eye, to smile or nod, to acknowledge each other's presence and it felt oddly like we were forming this army together, silently, without anyone really ever leading us" (Whittall 134-135). The proximity to others that she acquires through *flânerie* and through the process of reclaiming her space in the city thus brings her closer to others who publicly acknowledge the trauma she experienced, which is the first essential step in the "restoration of the breach between the traumatized and the community" (Herman 70). Significantly, she also acknowledges others' grief and trauma and thus becomes part of their narrative and of the entire community's healing process.

According to Herman, the second step that leads to the victim's reunification with her community is the knowledge that some community action is being taken "to assign responsibility

for the harm and to repair the injury" (70). As the queer community rallies to overcome Rachel's death and the threat of violence that surrounds them, Eve takes comfort in the efforts that everyone makes to "repair the injury" and to empower themselves and each other:

> The women's centre becomes a home base for anti-violence action. Someone suggests renaming the centre after Rachel, another person starts a mural. A 'zine of poetry is edited. I watch it all happen with a detached sense of wonder and relief, empowered but exhausted … I sleep on the women's centre couch" (Whittall 135).

As this passage suggests, members of the community are finding a number of ways to acknowledge the realness of what has happened. They also publicly, through art, writing, and public statements such as renaming a well-known refuge for women, stand up against the discriminatory violence that has been perpetrated against them and that has caused Rachel's death. The use of words like "relief," "wonder," and "empowered" demonstrates that Eve feels understood and comforted by these actions, which in her case do contribute to a "restoration of the breach between the traumatized person and the community" (Herman 70). The fact that she chooses to sleep in the women's centre is meaningful, considering that places she should normally call home (her parents' house, her apartment, or Della's) no longer feel safe. As a "home base for anti-violence action," the centre becomes a space of community, defiance, and agency that feels safe enough for her to sleep.

The changes that occur within their "silent army" in the wake of Rachel's death prompt changes in Eve's general behaviour as she becomes a more assertive and confident member of the queer community. Led by this collective strength that refuses to give in to fear, she finds new

courage: “Instead of feeling scared, I got bold. I made out with girls on the streets, I held Melanie’s hand just to be visible. I wore Queer Nation and ACT UP T-shirts I’d borrowed from Della months before, I scrawled Everybody is HIV+ across T-shirts my mother had ordered me from the Sears catalogue” (135). This passage holds several significant elements that denote the changes that lead to Eve’s growth. For the first time, Eve begins to claim the streets, a space from which she, like other members of the queer community, had been alienated. By displaying her homosexuality in the very places where she was attacked and where Rachel was killed for being queer, she insists that she can claim the streets as her own. Kissing girls and holding their hands in the streets thus act as a form of protest for the right to be herself wherever she chooses. Lauren Elkin argues that arguments against the very possibility of the *flâneuse* have always involved the question of visibility: because a woman cannot be entirely invisible, how can she possibly perform *flânerie*?[35] Elkin also argues that the *flâneuse* is born from the “transgressive act” of walking in the centres of the cities, where she traditionally was not meant to (20). If plunging into the heart of the city allows women to feel empowered, kissing in the streets is the transgressive act that allows the queer *flâneuse* to claim her place in the streets. The visibility of women, and especially of lesbians, is the very aspect that used to make it impossible for them to perform *flânerie*. By presenting a *flâneuse* who voluntarily exposes her queerness in the city, Whittall’s novel demonstrates that the concept of the *flâneur* and the dynamics of *flânerie* have evolved and that they now make room for the queer *flâneuse*.

[35] When arguing that the *flâneur* should necessarily be gendered as male and not female, Luc Sante writes, “It is crucial for the *flâneur* to be functionally invisible” (Sante qtd. in Elkin 11-12). For Elkin, Sante’s statement is both unfair and cruelly accurate: “We would love to be invisible the way a man is… it’s the gaze of the *flâneur* that makes the woman who would join their ranks too visible to slip by unnoticed” (12). For years, then, women have been “denied” *flânerie* based on the unwanted male gaze and comments.

Eve's way of being and protesting in the city evolves over the course of the novel: whereas before Rachel's death, she would feel more comfortable protesting in the street while being "insulated by the crowd" (82), she later is able to protest on her own, not hidden by a crowd, but entirely exposed to others. Moreover, by writing "Everybody is HIV+" on her shirts, she not only displays her sense of belonging to the queer community, but also showcases the solidarity that unites its members, especially in light of the violence perpetrated against them. This acts as a "form of community action" which Herman argues is fundamental in the resolution of the trauma (70). This act also brings attention to the changes that occur in Eve, as one could interpret the Sears shirts as symbols of her old life and childhood years: by modifying them to reflect her identity and to diagram a collective solidarity that extends beyond the queer community, she establishes herself as the bold woman she is becoming. This is her transgressive act.

Eve's growth after Rachel's death manifests itself not only in her new ability to claim her place in the streets, but also in her *flânerie* as a whole. If *flânerie* had proven to be traumatic in many ways, it becomes therapeutic as Eve grows more assertive. Walking becomes a means to occupy urban spaces without giving in to the fear which she experienced:

> Last night I was walking home from work holding my hands encased in thin dollar-store black gloves, the kind that could only be cool if you snipped off the tips à la "Lucky Star" era Madonna, but were otherwise useless against the cold. Some asshole on Ste-Catherine Street did the sly walk-by tit rub, the one that's just inadvertent enough not to really have happened. I pictured grabbing him by the throat and slamming his head into the window of the Gap. Violence and sweater vests. I channelled my rage into walking fast … By the

> time I got to Parc and Mont-Royal, I was feeling okay again, all I needed was enough space between my body and someone else's. (154)

Here, Whittall's narrator again refers to the biting cold of the city, which she is unable to avoid despite her attempts at keeping warm. The cold atmosphere is adequate considering that it is the setting of yet another albeit more subtle attack. This passage contrasts with two other scenes in which Eve begins her journey through the city in a light and positive state of mind, only to be confronted with the violence of the urban landscape. In these previous passages, the traumatizing aspects of the city get the better of her and chase her off the streets: when Eve is physically and emotionally attacked, she runs and locks herself in her apartment, completely terrified. In this later passage, she is violated by a man on the street, but this time, walking provides her with the strength and the distance, both physical and emotional, that she needs to recover from the assault. Furthermore, like in previous scenes, Eve experiences what Herman calls the "revenge fantasy." This time, however, this fantasy is not all-encompassing and obsessive; it is only fleeting. Because "repetitive revenge fantasies actually increase [the victim's] torment," being able "to come to terms with the impossibility of getting even" (Herman 189) is an important part of the mourning process. Instead of focusing on the attack and on revenge, she channels her anger into walking, thereby taking both a literal and a figurative step towards finding a sense of personal power and, ultimately, towards recovery.

Part of Eve's healing process relies on the act of writing her story. In the first chapter, as she and Seven are anxiously waiting in the hospital where Della has been admitted, she reveals that she has "been journaling like mad" (2) since Rachel's death. Writing appears to bring her closer to Rachel, since Rachel would spend most of her time writing, whether it was a novel, her

daily thoughts, or several endless lists. Eve also sees the process of writing her story as potentially therapeutic: "People who journal always seem a little more grounded. I could use some perspective" (2). This is in keeping with Dominic LaCapra, who argues in his important *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, that writing trauma involves "processes of coming to terms with traumatic 'experiences,' limit events, and their symptomatic effects" (186). LaCapra believes in the importance of writing in the healing from trauma as it provides a distance from the events that allows the victim to understand their significance and to get closure. As such, the whole narrative appears to be the result of Eve's intensive journaling, as each chapter relates the story that has led her to the emergency room visiting Della, which is where Eve finds herself in the first and last chapters. The somewhat disorganized narrative, which goes back and forth in time, creates a timeline that can be confusing for the reader, but which is an appropriate representation of Eve's tumultuous life as she grows up and makes sense of the events that occur.[36] Writing down these events thus helps Eve feel more grounded and allows her to reclaim her own voice. Through journaling, she is able to overcome her victimization, and that of her community, and to find the personal power she had been denied.

The importance of art as a medium to tell one's traumatic story is not only conveyed through Eve's writing, but also through Seven's play, which he writes and performs in the aftermath of Rachel's death. In this play, which is more of a performance piece than an actual play, Seven gives a frantic testimony of the pain he has been in as a result of Rachel's death: "It's like someone handing you a new world and you're not used to the air quality … It's like

[36] According to Whitehead, the use of a non-linear narrative is common in trauma fiction: "[i]f trauma is at all susceptible to narrative formulation, then it requires a literary form which departs from conventional linear sequence. The irruption of one time into another is figured by Caruth as a form of possession or haunting" (Whitehead 6).

getting punched in the face really slowly … All I can think to write is, *I can and have lived with almost anything but I can't be alone with this*" (175). Through this performance piece, Seven is able to put into words his grief and the pain of losing his best friend. Seven's testimony resonates with Eve and moves her in ways she cannot even begin to demonstrate (175). His play not only allows him to share with others the extent of his traumatic grief, but it also gives him a channel to denounce the oppression that the queer community experiences. When confiding to the audience the harsh words Rachel's mother told him after her daughter's death, he voices the kind of discrimination he, like many other members of the queer community, has been through: "*You were supposed to die first. You have the disease God gives to all you sinners. You disgust me. You ruined her. She was such a sweet little girl once … You were supposed to die first. It's God's punishment. I can't even look at you*" (172). Exposing this hurtful and traumatizing discourse to others acts as another kind of protest in the name of his marginalized community, which allows him to give them a voice and to unite them.

The audience's enthusiastic response to Seven's play is significant in their recovery from trauma. Like the audience that attends Rose's show in *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, the people who listen to Seven's testimony act as what Felman and Laub call the "addressable other" (68), which is a person or a group of people who, by truly hearing the victim's traumatic account, confirms the realness of the event. Telling the details of his story to an audience who offer applause and hollers in response, Seven undergoes a "work of reconstruction [that] actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor's life story" (Laub 175). Significantly, because Seven grants a voice to his community, his testimony contributes to Eve's recovery as well as his own. As a result, instead of being traumatized by his performance, having

others acknowledge and accept the trauma they have been through allows her to overcome her own grief and start healing. That is why, after Seven's play, Eve celebrates with her friends, smiling to herself "goofily" and "aware that things fe[el] okay again, even if just for a moment" (Whittall 180). This quotation not only reveals the liberating feeling that she experiences as a result of Seven's testimony and the audience's receptive listening, but it also suggests that she will successfully recover from her trauma.

Throughout Whittall's novel, several elements point to her evolution as she grows from an insecure teenager to a confident young adult. Early in the story, she admits that she is essentially a child on the verge of her "impending adulthood" (22) who navigates a "new life of queers and artists and adulthood" (25), trying to ascertain her place in the world. The formulation in this passage is significant, as she acknowledges not only the fact that she is maturing, but also that the process of growing up is non-linear and often complicated. For Eve, maturity involves the importance of forging her identity as an artist and as a representative of the queer community. Several aspects of the novel point to this growth. For instance, the first pages offer a significant number of references to childhood games and toys that establish her as a child, such as feeling like a Charmkin (5) or imagining that her heart is playing a game of cat's cradle with her arteries (7). The most obvious and important imagery that refers to childhood is the bottle rocket, from which the novel gets its title. Eve uses the bottle rocket imagery to express her hopes with regards to her relationship with Della, who does not believe in monogamy: "I hope that if anything, this jealousy will toughen my heart until it feels like a dollar-store bottle rocket. Common, sturdy, but still potentially explosive" (28). In other words, she wishes she will grow to have a heart that is strong and independent, yet still able to burst with passion, which she

compares to a bottle rocket, a "firework rocket launched in a bottle for extra potency" ("Bottle"). Prone to somewhat jealous juvenile reactions when it comes to Della, she regularly keeps score of whom is winning between her and jealousy until she appears to be losing, halfway through the novel:

> Jealousy: 50,000,000,000
>
> Me: 0
>
> Merry fucking Christmas. (Whittall 87)

This is the last score she notes, however, as she is leaving the realm of childhood, feeling "suddenly apart from adolescence" (95). In the last pages, her behaviour towards Della tends more towards indifference, as she realizes that she is "no longer keeping score" (186). When she finds out that Della had been lying to Eve since the beginning, Eve leaves the hospital, having acquired the distance and growth to stop depending on Della: "Bottle rocket diffused" (187). Here, Whittall uses the imagery of the bottle rocket to illustrate that Eve is not a child anymore, but rather an independent young woman. Eve understands the importance of this moment: "Della is a story I will tell to reference my last stretch of innocence" (189). As such, Eve's relationship with Della is instrumental to her coming-of-age, which is complete at the end of the novel.

The very last moment of the novel reveals the extent of the changes Eve has been through, in reference to her growth, her relationship with Della, and her *flânerie*. When she and Seven step outside of the hospital, the cold of the city hits her as it has always done, but this time, she welcomes it as a positive wave of change: "The cold air hits me like a punch of new ideas" (188). Unlike Hage's narrator in *Cockroach*, who never seems to recover from the cold atmosphere of the city, Eve has evolved in ways that help her defy the cold of the night with

courage and agency. Eve is literally leaving behind her "last stretch of innocence," and even her movements through the streets are different: "We walk down the paved incline, and with each icy step I'm decidedly changed … My heart beats strong and purposefully, no longer a panic-driven metronome … I am anywhere I choose to be" (188-189). It is significant that Eve notices the changes in herself and associates them with walking; she realizes, to some extent, that her *flânerie* has contributed both to her recovery from trauma and to her emotional growth. Whereas she appears frantic in most of the previous walking scenes, she now makes her way, fully in control: she has acquired the strength of the bottle rocket she had been aspiring to find. And she uses it to be a strong queer *flâneuse*, thereby redefining the very figure of the *flâneur*.

The last paragraph aptly confirms that she has found a way to reclaim the streets, from which she and her community had been alienated on countless occasions: "Seven and I walk away like a duo in the last panel of a comic book, fading from bright colours to black and white. I fasten an invisible cape around my neck, lean into Seven's shoulder. I feel soft and furious" (189). First, this passage highlights the importance of her "chosen family" (Butcher 51) as she leans on Seven while figuratively walking into adulthood. The proximity to her friend reinforces the sense of community she has found in the aftermath of Rachel's death, as she is no longer a lonely *flâneuse*, but rather an active member of a strong and united community. As Eve is walking away, she imagines the colours changing; one could read this as her moving away from the bright colours of childhood into the more sober, black-and-white hues of adulthood. The invisible cape refers to the changes which might not be visible to others, but which make her feel much stronger, more confident, "soft and furious" (189). Her final attitude towards the city is reminiscent of Beneventi's arguments about the "culture from below," which he applies to the

protagonists of O'Neill's *Lullabies for Little Criminals* and Hage's *Cockroach*, who "are alienated from space, but demonstrate intentionality in creating senses of dwelling in unexpected or undesired locations" (Beneventi 280). Similarly, Eve and Seven demonstrate intentionality by reclaiming the city as their own and occupying the urban spaces, no longer afraid of being chased off the streets by the violence that once was a source of trauma.

In conclusion, *Bottle Rocket Hearts* presents a protagonist who successfully finds ways to form her own identity despite being caught in the political divides of her city and suffering from the traumatic violence perpetrated against the queer community. Her formation of a strong community leads to the "restitution of a sense of a meaningful world" (Herman 70), which allows Eve to cope with Rachel's death. Furthermore, instead of accepting the urban landscape as a space of alienation, she turns it into a space of belonging wherein she can understand and act upon the world. In the first and last chapters of the novel, Eve refers to the hospital as a liminal space (Whittall 2). This is significant, as the word "liminal," which comes from the Latin word *limen* or "threshold," is used for something or someone that is "at a boundary or transitional point between two conditions, stages in a process, ways of life" ("Liminal"). The hospital is thus a true liminal space, as it is where she leaves her adolescence behind, her bottle rocket heart officially diffused. I would argue that the city also acts as a liminal space, because it is the setting of her passage from childhood to adulthood, where she learns to understand the two sides of the separatist question, and where she evolves from an alienated young woman to an active and defiant member of the queer community. For the duration of the story, Eve is a *flâneuse* who wanders not only in the city, but also in this liminal space that serves as a transitional point between these different conditions and stages of life. As such, her departure from the hospital not

only denotes her newfound adulthood and recovery from trauma, but also her leaving behind this liminal space of individual and social growth.

Conclusion

In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Cathy Caruth cautions against the danger of assessing different trauma responses as various renditions of the same narrative. Instead, she asserts that each trauma narrative should be analyzed as a distinct and singular experience: "The difficulty of listening and responding to traumatic stories in a way that does not lose their impact, that does not reduce them to clichés or turn them all into versions of the same story, is a problem that remains central to the task of therapists, literary critics, neurobiologists, and filmmakers alike" (*Trauma* vii). One of my aims while writing this thesis was to consider the realities of each individual narrative and to bear witness, in a way, to each traumatic account. In that sense, I, as a literary critic, assumed the role of the "addressable other" and confirmed through this process that each trauma response is and should be considered unique. Building on this quotation from Caruth, I hope to have also applied this process to the notion of *flânerie*, insofar as I argued and demonstrated that there is no longer one and only way of being a *flâneur*. Because they depict characters who experience trauma in different ways, but who also reframe the very modes of performing *flânerie* in the city, the four novels display a certain spirit of resistance in their interruption of the dominant discourses on *flânerie*. Though some similarities between the texts make it relevant to study them all collectively, each narrative addresses trauma, *flânerie*, and the intersections between these two processes in meaningfully distinctive manners.

While it is true that the characters from my corpus experience trauma and *flânerie* in different ways, they all share the four enduring traits that, according to my assessment of original and contemporary *flâneurs*, define the figure across different epochs. It is these four

characteristics – the *flâneur*'s association with movement, their relationship with the crowd, their keen sense of observation, and their artistic point of view – that have allowed me to establish that these characters are indeed contemporary versions of the *flâneur* figure. As these novels demonstrate, however, *flânerie* can be performed by anyone who meets those basic criteria, without regards to their class, gender, age, or background. Through the analysis of *flânerie* in the four selected novels, this thesis creates a space for the exploration of various types of *flâneurs*, beyond Baudelaire's nineteenth-century definition of the figure. As such, I have sought to answer Lauren Elkin's request to "redefine the concept [of the *flâneur*] itself" (11), or at least to broaden the definition to make it more comprehensive and inclusive.

Upon analyzing the different trauma responses and performances of *flânerie* in the corpus, it was not lost on me that, of the five *flâneurs*, the only two characters who failed to overcome their past trauma are the two men. For both O'Neill's Pierrot and Hage's narrator, *flânerie* proved to be more (re)traumatic than therapeutic, and their fates – Pierrot's overdose and the narrator's ultimate descent into the underground – hint at the fact that the healing process can be inaccessible. It is worthwhile to mention that these are also the only characters who fail to properly turn their observations of the city into art, or rather into a means of sharing their traumatic stories. Conversely, Rose, Tuyen, and Eve all enter the testimonial process and successfully tell their traumatic account through one art form or another. This contrast between the *flâneurs* and the *flâneuses* of this corpus is particularly striking in *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, which tells the story of two young orphans who experience similar traumas and *flânerie*, yet who

meet highly different fates.[37] The fact that the only surviving characters analyzed within the scope of this thesis are women is most likely coincidental, yet it is interesting to consider that they better represent the ideal *flâneur* as Baudelaire defined it, despite the fact that they are not white heterosexual men: they are, in a way, descendants of both Poe's convalescent narrator, who recovers from his near-death experience by engaging in *flânerie*, and Monsieur G., who is an artist with a thirst for knowledge and an appreciation for all people, places, and objects he encounters. Through the depiction of marginalized women who not only successfully perform *flânerie* but who also grow and heal through the process, these novels disrupt the original and widely accepted discourses of *flânerie*.

Beyond these observations, the discussions of the four novels have allowed me to demonstrate the relevance of studying trauma alongside *flânerie*. On the one hand, the stories of Rose, Tuyen, and Eve point to the fact that being a *flâneur* in the city can provide a subject of trauma with a sense of community that fosters their recovery process. By engaging in the act of *flânerie*, Rose establishes meaningful connections and has experiences that empower her to reclaim her body and develop a sense of agency, thereby allowing her to retrieve the personal power she had been denied throughout her childhood. She also undergoes a testimonial process by creating *The Snowflake Icicle Extravaganza,* through which she shares the complex and traumatic details of her past with multiple addressable others who bear witness to her story. This enables her to feel heard and validated and leads to her recovery from trauma. For Tuyen and her

[37] This trope is in keeping with O'Neill's entire body of work, as her heroines often exist in precarious situations and thrive despite or even because of this sense of precarity. O'Neill's female characters often find ways to develop subjectivity and agency in spite of their inherent marginalization. This is particularly true for Baby in *Lullabies for Little Criminals*, but it also applies to Nouschka in *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* and, to some extent, to Marie and Sadie in *When We Lost Our Heads.*

friends, this process is more complex in that the trauma from which they suffer is not their own, but their parents'. By escaping into the city of Toronto where they can perform *flânerie*, the younger generation gains a sense of community and acquire the necessary distance to *want* to understand the intricacies of their familial trauma. Through her presence in the city and the production of her art project, Tuyen begins to reappropriate this past and to make it her own, accepting its importance. This suggests that Tuyen's identity is closely tied to her family and informs her experiences in the urban environment. At the same time, it is suggested in the end that her parents' past remains out of reach and cannot be entirely known, there is hope for a recovery as Tuyen engages in a sort of testimonial process that allows her to unite past and present in a meaningful way. For Eve, being a *flâneuse* in the city proves to be both traumatic, as she suffers from the murder of her friend and from the violence perpetrated against the queer community on the streets, and therapeutic, as she finds in the community a sense of belonging that allows her to cope with her traumatic experiences. Furthermore, through writing about her traumatic journey, Eve engages in a form of testimonial process that allows her to overcome her victimization and to reclaim the personal power that the attackers had previously denied her. Ultimately, these experiences empower her to reject the notion that the urban landscape is a space of alienation, as she instead redefines it as a space of belonging.

On the other hand, the four novels also demonstrate the ways in which the act of *flânerie* can be (re)traumatizing. For Pierrot, the sexual abuse he experienced in his childhood has impeded his capacity to acquire a sense of agency and to grow into a well-functioning adult. To cope with the loss of personal power imposed upon him, Pierrot turns to the streets of Montréal, where he engages in *flânerie*, but the city proves to be a source of constant distress and trauma.

Instead of providing a sense of community or agency, performing *flânerie* confronts him with reminders of the trauma of his formative years. As such, Pierrot's drug overdose can be read as a result of both his childhood sexual abuse and his traumatic *flânerie*. In the case of Hage's narrator, the city of Montréal similarly confronts him with reminders of his past trauma, which he experienced growing up in a country at war. Unlike *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*, *What We All Long For*, and *Bottle Rocket Hearts*, *Cockroach* highlights the fact that the testimonial process can fail in helping a subject of trauma cope with the past, and this is shown in two distinct ways. First, the narrator's *flânerie* brings him closer to other disenfranchised individuals who, by sharing their own personal stories of trauma and violence, retraumatize the narrator. Second, though the narrator is in court-mandated therapy, his unwillingness to share the details of his past and the therapist's inadequate response and lack of genuine compassion fail to foster a testimonial process that could allow him to heal from his trauma. Though the narrator's *flânerie* and ability to adopt a cockroach persona appear in the novel as empowering acts, the traumatic and alienating abilities of *flânerie* ultimately overshadow any potential benefits.

This thesis contends that the *flâneur* figure can take on numerous forms, and studying the role of *flânerie* within a trauma narrative allows for a nuanced and comprehensive analysis of both the characters and the setting in which they walk. As such, it would be interesting to consider intersections between trauma and *flânerie* in narratives that take place in drastically different contexts. The corpus could therefore be expanded to include novels like Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* or Miriam Toews's *A Complicated Kindness*, two novels which demonstrate the ways in which *flânerie* has the potential to be equally traumatic and therapeutic. The first is a Canadian science fiction novel that chronicles the journey of a group of actors and

musicians as they walk from one place to the next to give artistic performances in a post-apocalyptic world ravaged by a pandemic that wiped out the majority of the population. The second novel depicts a young *flâneuse*'s aimless movements through a small and oppressive Mennonite town as she attempts to understand the brutal disappearance of her mother and sister. These two novels, like the four novels studied in this thesis, not only point to the relationship between trauma and the *flâneur* figure, but they also reveal the very possibility of *flânerie* in different settings, such as a post-apocalyptic world or a rural environment. This thesis thus marks a significant step in the exploration of new modes of *flânerie* in contemporary literature, especially within trauma narratives. Throughout this project, I have underscored the importance of navigating the intersections between *flânerie* and trauma, as doing so provides valuable insights into the social, literary, and psychological dimensions of these processes. It is my belief that recognizing the interconnectedness of trauma and *flânerie* also allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the human experience and of the world that surrounds us.

Works Cited

Abdul-Jabbar, Wisam Kh. "The Internalized Vermin of Exile in Montréal: Rawi Hage's *Cockroach.*" *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2017, pp. 168-182, https://doi.org/10.1177/0021989415585586. Accessed 2 November 2020.

Baetz, Joel. "Now and Then: Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*, the Desire to Forget, and the Urban Archive." *Canadian Literature and Cultural Memory*, edited by Cynthia Sugars and Eleanor Ty, Oxford UP, 2014.

Balaev, Michelle. "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2008, pp. 149-166. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44029500. Accessed 13 March 2023.

Baldick, Chris. *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford UP, 2015.

Barthes, Roland. *Image – Music – Text,* translated by Stephen Heath, Hill and Wang, 1977.

Baudelaire, Charles. "To a Passerby." 1857. *Charles Baudelaire's Fleurs du mal,* www.fleursdumal.org/poem/222. Accessed 15 October 2022.

--. "The Seven Old Men." 1857. *PoetryVerse*, www.poetryverse.com/charles-baudelaire-poems/the-seven-old-men. Accessed 15 October 2022.

--. *The Painter of Modern Life.* Penguin, 2010.

Beneventi, Domenic A. "Montréal Underground." *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2012, pp. 263-286. *Project MUSE*, www.muse.jhu.edu/article/519874. Accessed 2 September 2019.

Benjamin, Walter. *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*. Belknap Press, 2006.

--. *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism.* Verso, 1983.

--. *The Arcades Project.* Harvard UP, 2002.

--. *Selected Writings: 1913-1926*. Harvard UP, 1996.

Borossa, Julia. "Violence, Trauma, and Subjectivity: Compromise Formations of Survival in the Novels of Rawi Hage and Mischa Hiller." *The Ethics of Representation in Literature, Art, and Journalism*, edited by Caroline Rooney and Rita Sakr, Routledge, 2013, pp. 119-134.

Brand, Dionne. *What We All Long For*. Vintage Canada, 2005.

Buck-Morss, Susan. "The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering." *New German Critique*, vol. 39, 1986, pp. 99-140. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/488122. Accessed 11 November 2020.

Butcher, Megan. "Bottle Rocket Hearts." Review of *Bottle Rocket Hearts,* by Zoe Whittall. Herizons, vol. 22, no. 2, Fall 2008, p. 51. *The Free Library*, www.thefreelibrary.com/Bottle+Rocket+Hearts.-a0185653928. Accessed 12 October 2021.

de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. U of California P, 1984.

Dobson, Kit. "'Struggle Work': Global and Urban Citizenship in Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*." *Studies in Canadian Literature*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2006, pp. 88-104, www.journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/SCL/article/view/10215. Accessed 20 April 2021.

--. "Neoliberalism and the limits of the human: Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*." *Textual Practice,* vol. 29, no. 2, 2015, pp. 244-271, https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2014.993519.

Donn, Katharina. *A Poetics of Trauma after 9/11: Representing Trauma in a Digitized Present*. Routledge, 2017.

Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. John Hopkins UP, 1995.

---. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History.* John Hopkins UP, 1996.

Doyle, Briohny. "A woman walks alone at night." *The Monthly*, 2018, www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2018/november/1540990800/briohny-doyle/woman-walks-alone-night#mtr.

Elkin, Lauren. *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016.

Fellner, Astrid M. "'Translating Toronto on a Bicycle': Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For* and the Challenges of Urbanity." *REAL; Berlin*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2010, pp. 231-246, www.proquest.com/openview/a30b92549e22c60757b3bdde2dd100a6/1.pdf?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=5001978. Accessed 2 April 2021.

Festa, Beatrice Melodia. *Walking the Walk: Defining Moments in the Literary Evolution of the New York City Flâneur*. 2015. Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, M.A. thesis.

Ferguson, Priscilla Parkhurst. "The Flâneur and the Production of Culture." *Cultural Participation: Trends Since the Middle Ages*, edited by Ann Rigney and Douwe Wessel Fokkema, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1993, pp. 109-124.

--. "The Flâneur on and off the Streets of Paris." *The Flâneur*, edited by Keith Tester, Routledge, 1994, pp. 22-42.

"flâneur." *Dictionary.com*, 2019, www.dictionary.com/e/word-of-the-day/flaneur-2019-12-19/. Accessed 10 August 2022.

Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Norton, 1961.

---. "Mourning and Melancholia." *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on*

Metapsychology and Other Works. Hogarth P, 1917, pp. 237-258.

Friedberg, Anne. "Les Flâneurs du Mal(l): Cinema and the Postmodern Condition." *PMLA*, vol. 106, no. 3, 1991, pp. 419-431. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/462776. Accessed 6 January 2023.

Geha, Joseph. "Review of Rawi Hage's Novel 'Cockroach'." *Lebanese Studies,* 15 April 2015, www.lebanesestudies.news.chass.ncsu.edu/2015/04/15/review-of-rawi-hages-novel-cockroach/. Accessed 23 October 2020.

Ghazouani, Rima. *History, memory, and trauma: reading Marwan Hassan's "The Confusion of Stones" and Rawi Hage's De Niro's Game*. 2022. Université de Montréal, M.A. thesis.

Gill, Bonnie Susan. *Movements of the Posttraumatic Flâneur in Marker, Resnais, and Varda.* 2016. University of Virginia, PhD dissertation.

Granofsky, Ronald. *The Trauma Novel: Contemporary Symbolic Depictions of Collective Disaster*. Lang, Peter, 2012.

Hage, Rawi. *Cockroach*. Anansi, 2008.

Hartman, Geoffrey. "Trauma within the Limits of Literature." *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2003, pp. 257–274, https://doi.org/10.1076/ejes.7.3.257.27984. Accessed 4 March 2023.

Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror.* Basic Books, 2015.

Hirsch, Marianne. "Family Pictures: Maus, Mourning, and Post-Memory." *The Emotions, Gender, and the Politics of Subjectivity*, special issue of *Discourse*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1993, pp. 3-29. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41389264. Accessed 24 March 2021.

--. “Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile.” *Poetics Today*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1996, pp. 659-686. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/1773218. Accessed 24 March 2021.

Hout, Syrine. “Cultural Hybridity, Trauma, and Memory in Diasporic Anglophone Lebanese Fiction.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2011, pp. 330-342, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2011.569376. Accessed 2 November 2020.

Hutchinson, Jesse. “Immigration and Liminality in Rawi Hage’s *Cockroach*.” *Perception, Meaning and Identity*, edited by Irena C. Veljanova, Brill, 2010.

Jenks, Chris. *Watching Your Step: The History and Practice of the Flâneur*. Routledge, 1995.

Johansen, Emily. “‘Streets are the dwelling place of the collective’: Public Space and Cosmopolitan Citizenship in Dionne Brand’s *What We All Long For*.” *Canadian Literature,* vol. 196, 2008, pp. 48-62, www.ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/canlit/article/view/192929. Accessed 4 April 2021.

Joanne, Adolphe Laurent. *The Diamond Guide for the Stranger in Paris*. Hachette, 1867.

Kamboureli, Smaro. “Forgetting, Remembering, and Unforgetting: Collective Memory and the Nation-state in Rawi Hage’s Cockroach.” *Towards Critical Multiculturalism: Dialogues Between/Among Canadian Diasporas*, edited by Ewelina Bujnowska, Marcin Gabryś, and Tomasz Sikora. Agencja Artystyczna Para, 2011, pp. 134-53.

Kraus, Brittany. “The Roach’s Revenge: Suicide and Survival in Rawi Hage’s Cockroach.” *ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2020, pp. 105-129. *Project MUSE*, https://doi.org/10.1353/ari.2020.0008. Accessed 22 September 2020.

LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma.* John Hopkins UP, 2000.

Lak, Zishad. *Noms et déplacements : Étude de l'espace-temps dans les romans autochtones, canadiens et québécois du XXIe siècle*. 2020. University of Ottawa, PhD dissertation.

Lapierre, Maude. "Refugees and Global Violence: Complicity in Rawi Hage's *Cockroach.*" *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 50, no. 5, 2014, pp. 559-570, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2014.904245. Accessed 15 September 2020.

Laub, Dori, and Shoshana Felman. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History.* Routledge, 1992.

"liminal." *YourDictionary.com*, www.yourdictionary.com/liminal. Accessed November 2022.

Mackey, Allison. "Postnational Coming of Age in Contemporary Anglo-Canadian Fiction." *ESC: English Studies in Canada*, vol. 38 no. 3, 2012, p. 227-253. *Project MUSE*, https://doi.org/10.1353/esc.2013.0001. Accessed 9 March 2021.

MacPherson, Sandra. *From Spectator to Citizen: Urban Walking in Canadian Literature, Performance Art and Culture*. 2018. University of Ottawa, PhD dissertation.

Macura-Nnamdi, Ewa. "Cockroach: Compassion, Confession and 'Wonderful Stories'." *Beirut to Carnival City: Reading Rawi Hage*, edited by Krzystof Majer and Brill Rodopi, 2020, pp. 151-173.

Mallan, Kerry. "Strolling Through the (Post)modern City: Modes of Being a *Flâneur* in Picture Books." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 56-74, https://doi.org/10.1353/uni.2012.0002. Accessed 26 September 2019.

Medovarski, Andrea Katherine. "'A Kind of New Vocabulary': Dionne Brand's (Re)Mappings in What We All Long For." *Settling Down and Settling Up: The Second Generation in Black*

Canadian and Black British Women's Writing, U of Toronto P, 2019, pp. 35-58, https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442685338-003. Accessed 3 March 2021.

Middleton, Peter, and Tim Woods. *Literatures of Memory: History, Time, and Space in Postwar Writing.* Manchester UP, 2000.

Milburn, Kevin. "Following the *Flâneur*: A Methodological and Textual Critique." *University of Nottingham,* www.nottingham.ac.uk/cas/documents/landscapes/kevinmilburnfinal.pdf.

Nuvolati, Giampaolo. "Between *puer* and *flâneur*. Discovering the city." *Journal of Theories and Research in Education*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2017, pp. 149-163, https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1970-2221/6716. Accessed 17 September 2019.

O'Donoghue, Samuel. "Postmemory as Trauma? Some Theoretical Problems and Their Consequences for Contemporary Literary Criticism." *Politika*, www.politika.io/en/notice/postmemory-as-trauma-some-theoretical-problems-and-their-consequences-for-contemporary. Accessed 16 July 2022.

O'Neill, Heather. *Lullabies for Little Criminals*. Harper Perennial, 2006.

---. *The Lonely Hearts Hotel*. Harper Collins, 2017.

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Man of the Crowd." *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, edited by Thomas Ollive Mabbott, Harvard UP, 1978, 506-518.

"Pedrolino." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2020, www.britannica.com/topic/Pedrolino. Accessed August 2019.

Resina, Joan Ramon. "The Concept of After-Image and the Scopic Apprehension of the City." *After-Images of the City*, edited by Joan Ramon Resina and Dieter Ingenschay, Cornell UP, 2003, pp. 1-22.

Rimstead, Roxanne. *Culture from Below.* Université de Sherbrooke, www.culture-from-below.recherche.usherbrooke.ca/further_info.html.

--, and Domenico A. Beneventi, editors. *Contested Spaces, Counter-narratives, and Culture from Below in Canada and Québec*. U of Toronto P, 2019.

Rosenthal, Caroline. "Transgressing the 'poetics of the anglicized city': The Figure of the Flâneuse in Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*." *Space and Gender: Spaces of Difference in Canadian Women's Writing/Espaces de différence dans l'écriture canadienne au féminin*, edited by Doris G. Eibl and Caroline Rosenthal, Innsbruck UP, 2009, pp. 231-246.

Sakr, Rita. "Imaginative migrations: An interview with the Lebanese-Canadian writer Rawi Hage." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 47, no. 3, pp. 343-351, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2010.534617. Accessed 18 October 2020.

Samaha, Dima. "'Not Settling for Half the Story': Speech, Fantasy and Empowerment in *Cockroach*." *Beirut to Carnival City*. Brill, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004417304_012. Accessed 18 October 2020.

Schers, Joni. *Queering the City: Queer Flânerie in Djuna Barnes' Nightwood and Sarah Waters' Tipping the Velvet*. 2019. Utrecht University, M.A. thesis.

Seiler, Tamara Palmer. "*Cockroach* (Review)." *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 41, no. 1-2, pp. 233-236. *Project MUSE*, https://doi.org/10.1353/ces.2009.0014. Accessed 19 October 2020.

Shaya, Gregory. "The *Flâneur*, the Badaud, and the Making of a Mass Public in France, circa 1860–1910." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 109, no. 1, 2004, pp. 41-77, https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/109.1.41. Accessed 12 February 2023.

Simon, Sherry. "Montréal Marginalities: Revisiting Boulevard Saint-Laurent." *Contested Spaces, Counter-narratives, and Culture from Below in Canada and Québec*, edited by Roxanne Rimstead and Domenico A. Beneventi, U of Toronto P, 2019, pp. 76-87.

Tester, Keith. *The Flâneur.* Routledge, 1994.

Thoreau, Henry David. "Walking." *The Atlantic*, 1862.

Toews, Miriam. *A Complicated Kindness.* Vintage Canada, 2007.

Tribunella, Eric L. "Children's Literature and the Child Flâneur." *Children's Literature*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2010, pp. 64-91. *Project MUSE*, www.muse.jhu.edu/article/380763. Accessed 20 September 2019.

Trites, Roberta Seelinger. *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*, U of Iowa P, 2000.

"two solitudes." *WordReference.com*, www.wordreference.com/definition/two%20solitudes. Accessed November 2022.

Vila-Cabanes, Isabel. *The Flaneur in Nineteenth-Century British Literary Culture: "The Worlds of London Unknown."* Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018.

Walcott, Rinaldo. "The End of Diversity." *Public Culture*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2019, pp. 393–408, https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-7286885.

Whittall, Zoe. *Bottle Rocket Hearts*, Markham, Cormorant Books, 2007.

Whitehead, Anne. *Trauma Fiction*. Edinburgh UP, 2004.

Wolff, Janet. “The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity.” *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1985, pp. 37-46, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276485002003005. Accessed 19 December 2022.

Woolf, Virginia. “Street Haunting: A London Adventure.” *The Death of the Moth, and Other Essays,* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970, www.gutenberg.net.au/ebooks12/1203811h.html. Accessed November 2022.

Wordsworth, William. “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud.” 1807. Poetry Foundation, www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45521/i-wandered-lonely-as-a-cloud. Accessed February 2023.