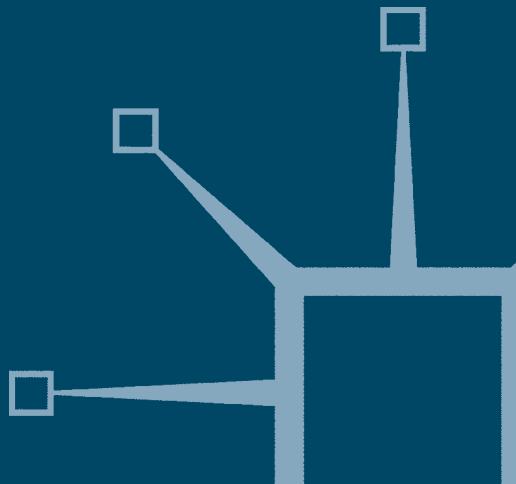


palgrave
macmillan

Sketches of the Nineteenth Century

European Journalism and its Physiologies,
1830–50

Martina Lauster



Sketches of the Nineteenth Century

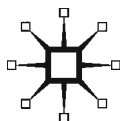
This page intentionally left blank

Sketches of the Nineteenth Century

European Journalism and its *Physiologies*,
1830–50

Martina Lauster

palgrave
macmillan



© Martina Lauster 2007
Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2007 978-0-230-51803-2

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4LP.

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The author has asserted her right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2007 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10010
Companies and representatives throughout the world

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN is the global academic imprint of the Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, LLC and of Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. Macmillan® is a registered trademark in the United States, United Kingdom and other countries. Palgrave is a registered trademark in the European Union and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-35571-6 ISBN 978-0-230-21097-4 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9780230210974

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Lauster, Martina.

Sketches of the Nineteenth Century : European Journalism and its
Physiologies, 1830-50 / by Martina Lauster.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. City and town life—Press coverage—Europe—History—
—19th century. 2. Journalism—Social aspects—Europe—History—
—19th century. 3. Flaneurs—Europe—History—19th century. I. Title.

PN5110.L35 2007
302.2309409'034—dc22

2006052960

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07

Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
<i>Note on Translations</i>	xii
Introduction: Nineteenth-Century Sketches and the Problem of Walter Benjamin's Legacy	1
1 The Dynamic Present: Sketches and Print Media	23
Edward Lytton Bulwer, 'The valet and the mechanic' <i>(England and the English)</i>	24
The serialisation of word and image	28
Wood engraving	33
French-English cross-connections	39
German and Austrian developments	43
Verbal-visual wit	48
2 The Mobile Observer: Sketches and Optical Media	59
Dickens's 'Rapid Diorama' (<i>Pictures from Italy</i>)	60
Panorama in motion: Balzac's 'Histoire et physiologie des Boulevards de Paris' (<i>Le Diable à Paris</i>)	65
The cosmopolitan point of observation: Eduard Beurmann's panorama of Frankfurt and August Lewald's panorama of Munich	75
Microscopic viewing	82
3 Physiology, Zoology and the Constitution of Social Types	85
Honoré de Balzac, 'L'Épicier' (<i>La Silhouette</i>)	94
Kenny Meadows / William Howitt, 'The Country Schoolmaster' <i>(Heads of the People)</i>	108
Stereotype or typological portrait?	110
The paradigm of Life Science	114
Karl Gutzkow, 'Naturgeschichte der deutschen Kameele' <i>(Phönix)</i>	119
'Quiz' [Edward Caswall] / 'Phiz' [Hablôt Knight Browne], <i>Sketches of Young Ladies</i>	124

4	The Devil in Europe: Sketches and the Moralistic Tradition	129
	Asmodeus	129
	La Bruyère and the <i>histoire des mœurs</i>	140
	‘Tableaux de Paris’	144
	‘Mr. Spectator’	149
	City Cries, the world as a stage and the magic lantern	153
5	Turning Insides Out: An Anatomy of Observation	173
	The <i>flâneur</i> re-examined	175
	Edward Lytton Bulwer, ‘Asmodeus at Large’ (<i>New Monthly Magazine</i>)	179
	Charles Dickens, ‘Shops and their Tenants’ (<i>Sketches by Boz</i>)	188
	Ernst Dronke, <i>Berlin</i>	194
	George Sand, ‘Coup d’œil général sur Paris’ (<i>Le Diable à Paris</i>)	205
6	The Panoramic Order: Piecing Together the City	211
	The Asmodean view and the inverted traveller’s view	212
	<i>Le Diable à Paris</i>	216
	<i>Wien und die Wiener, in Bildern aus dem Leben</i>	226
	<i>Gavarni in London</i>	239
7	The Encyclopaedic Order: Reviewing the Nation and the Century	251
	Variations of the classifying view: museums, reviews and encyclopaedias	253
	Edward Lytton Bulwer, <i>England and the English</i> , and Karl Gutzkow, <i>Die Zeitgenossen</i>	260
	The national review directed by London journalism and its European impact: <i>Heads of the People, Deutschland und die Deutschen, Wien und die Wiener</i> and <i>Les Français peints par eux-mêmes</i>	268
	The <i>Physiologies</i> : a meta-order of encyclopaedism	288
	Conclusion: Sketches as a Grammar of Modernity	309
	<i>Bibliography</i>	329
	<i>Index</i>	348

List of Illustrations

1. Gavarni, frontispiece for *Le Diable à Paris* (1845).
Private collection. 7
2. Vignette in V.J.E. de Jouy, *L'Hermite en Italie* (1824).
© Courtesy of the University of Exeter Library (848.6 JOU-9). 34
3. 'Printing-Machine', in *The Penny Cyclopædia* (1841).
Private collection. 36
4. 'Great Events and Odd Matters [for April 1837]', *The Comic Almanack*. Private collection. 38
5. Cartoon of 'the woodcutter', *Düsseldorfer Monatshefte* (1847). 44
6. Karl Gutzkow, 'Papilloten', and Brennglas [Adolf Glaßbrenner],
'Der Journal-Kirchhof', *Berliner Don-Quixote* (1833).
© Georg Olms Verlag, 2001, with kind permission. 50
7. Gavarni, vignette in Maurice Alhoy, *Physiologie de la Lorette* (1841). Private collection. 53
8. 'Pen and Palette Portraits', *Punch* (1841).
© Courtesy of the University of Exeter Library
(Brooks P/050 P75). 55
9. Gavarni, vignette in Maurice Alhoy, *Physiologie de la Lorette* (1841). Private collection. 56
10. Bertrand, vignettes in Honoré de Balzac, 'Histoire et physiologie des Boulevards de Paris', in *Le Diable à Paris* (1846). Private collection. 68
11. *Boulevards de Paris*. Section of foldout panorama (1846).
© Courtesy of the University of Exeter Library (BDC 46198). 70
12. Bertall and Bertrand, vignettes in Honoré de Balzac, 'Histoire et physiologie des Boulevards de Paris', in *Le Diable à Paris* (1846).
Private collection. 72
13. Bertall, vignettes (as in illustration 12). 74
14. Kenny Meadows, frontispiece in *Heads of the People* (1840).
Private collection. 86

15. Gavarni, ‘type’ for Honoré de Balzac, ‘L’Épicier’, in *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (1840). Private collection. 95
- 16a. ‘The Schoolmaster’, in Alexander Walker, *Physiognomy Founded on Physiology [...]* (1834). Private collection. 107
- 16b. Kenny Meadows, ‘The Country Schoolmaster’, in *Heads of the People* (1841). Private collection. 107
17. Gavarni, vignettes in Maurice Alhoy, *Physiologie de la Lorette* (1841). Private collection. 112
18. ‘Phiz’ [Hablôt Knight Browne], frontispiece for ‘Quiz’ [E. Caswall], *Sketches of Young Ladies* (1837). Private collection. 126
19. Title illustration of *Satan* (Berlin, 1848). 136
20. Title vignette of *Charivari* (Leipzig, 1845). Private collection. 137
21. Pauquet, vignettes for first and last page of contents table in vol. 1 of *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (1840). Private collection. 138-9
22. Gavarni, frontispiece for vol. 2 of *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (1840). Private collection. 141
23. Gavarni, ‘The Orange-Girl’, in *Gavarni in London* (1849). Private collection. 157
24. Theodor Hosemann, frontispiece for A. Brennglas [Adolf Glaßbrenner], ‘Nante Nantino [...]’, in *Berlin, wie es ist und – trinkt* (1843). 159
- 25a/b. A.S. Henning’s and Kenny Meadows’s volume covers for *Punch* (1841 and 1843). 165-6
- 25c. Wilhelm Böhm, wrapper design for *Wien und die Wiener*. © Adalbert-Stifter-Institut des Landes Oberösterreich. 167
26. Henry Monnier, title vignette in *Paris, ou Le Livre des Cent-et-un* (1831-4). Private collection. 168
27. Robert Seymour, cover illustration (1838 [?]) for *Sketches by Seymour*, vol. 4. Private collection. 171
28. Tony Johannot, frontispiece in Alain René Le Sage, *Asmodeus; or, The Devil on Two Sticks* (1841). Private collection. 172
29. Frontispiece for A. Brennglas [Adolf Glaßbrenner], ‘Köchinnen’, in *Berlin wie es ist und – trinkt* (1845). 196

30. Kenny Meadows, 'The Chimney-Sweep', in *Heads of the People* (1840). Private collection. 199
31. Bertall, 'Paris, le 1^{er} Janvier. Coupe d'une maison parisienne le 1^{er} Janvier 1845. Cinq étages du monde parisien', in *Le Diable à Paris* (1846). Private collection. 203
- 32a/b. Français, vignettes for George Sand, 'Coup d'œil général sur Paris', in *Le Diable à Paris* (1845). Private collection. 204-5
33. Gavarni, frontispiece, and Champin, head vignette in *Le Diable à Paris* (1845). Private collection. 217
34. Champin, vignette in Théophile Lavallée, 'Géographie de Paris, in *Le Diable à Paris* (1846). Private collection. 219
35. Gavarni, part 4 of 'Les Gens de Paris: Parisiens de Paris', in *Le Diable à Paris* (1845). Private collection. 222
36. Bertall, vignette in P.-J. Stahl [J. Hetzel], 'Conclusion', in *Le Diable à Paris* (1846). Private collection. 224
37. Wilhelm Böhm, 'Beineltierer', in *Wien und die Wiener, in Bildern aus dem Leben* (1844).
© British Library Board. All Rights Reserved (1459.k.6). 235
38. Gavarni, 'Acrobats'. Frontispiece in *Gavarni in London* (1849). Private collection. 242
39. Gavarni, 'The Casino', in *Gavarni in London* (1849). Private collection. 244
40. *M^r Albert Smith's Ascent of Mont Blanc*. Programme cover.
© Courtesy of the University of Exeter Library (BDC 17418). 252
- 41a. Gavarni and Gilbert / Henning, vignettes in Albert Smith, *The Natural History of the Flirt* (1848). Private collection. 257
- 41b. 'Chæton vagabundus'. Illustration in *The Penny Cyclopædia* (1836). Private collection. 258
42. Kenny Meadows, sequence of illustrations in *Heads of the People* (1840). Private collection. 269-70
43. Kenny Meadows, vignettes for 'Preface', in *Heads of the People* (1840). Private collection. 272-3
44. Gavarni, illustrations in Balzac, 'L'Épicier', in *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (1840). Private collection. 278

45. Page from table of contents, vol. 3, of *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (1841). Private collection. 280
46. Hippolyte Pauquet, vignettes in table of contents, vol. 2, of *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes. Province* (1841). Private collection. 286-7
47. Covers of *Physiologie de l'homme de loi* (1841) and *Physiologie du gamin de Paris* (1842). Private collection. 291
48. Henry Émy, illustrations in Louis Couaillhac, *Physiologie du théâtre* (1841). Private collection. 298
49. Frontispiece in *Physiologie de la presse* (1841). Private collection. 299
50. Archibald S. Henning, vignette in Albert Smith, *The Natural History of the Ballet Girl* (1847). Private collection. 302
- 51a/b. Illustrations in Albert Smith, *The Natural History of the Ballet Girl* (1847) and in Louis Couaillhac, *Physiologie du théâtre* (1841). Private collection. 304
52. Gavarni, 'The Street Beggar', in *Gavarni in London* (1849). Private collection. 313
53. Illustration in Honoré de Balzac, 'Monographie de la presse parisienne', in *La Grande Ville* (1844). Private collection. 316
54. Honoré Daumier, illustration in Paul de Kock, 'Les Champs-Elysées', in *La Grande Ville* (1844). Private collection. 322
55. Bertall, vignettes in P. Pascal, 'Comment on se salue à Paris', in *Le Diable à Paris* (1845). Private collection. 324
56. 'A Grammarian Declining To Be'. Vignette in *Punch* (1841). © Courtesy of the University of Exeter Library (Brooks P/050 P75). 326

Acknowledgements

My thanks go to the colleagues and friends whose shared interests have been a source of inspiration for this long-term project. David Bellos (Princeton), David Amigoni, John Bowen and Anthea Trodd (Keele) advised me in the early stages, and Carol Adlam, Mary Orr, Michael Pakenham, John Plunkett, Gert Vonhoff, Gar Yates as well as the late Chris Brooks helped me with their expertise and moral support at Exeter. Wulf Wülfing (Bochum) supplied invaluable feedback on my ‘Panorama Chapter’, Wolfgang Rasch (Berlin) assisted me as a bibliographer and fellow collector of nineteenth-century printed works, Hugh Ridley (Dublin) kindly reminded me that even long books had to be finished some time, and my husband David Horrocks, reader of and adviser on countless drafts, has become a virtual co-author. I would also like to thank Henk de Berg (Sheffield) for our fruitful exchange about Benjamin and the anonymous readers of the book proposal whose comments were a great help.

I am grateful to the former AHRB for funding four months’ study leave at the beginning of my project (1999-2000), to the Modern Humanities Research Association for allowing me to make use of materials from my article ‘Walter Benjamin’s Myth of the “Flâneur”’, *Modern Language Review* 102:1 (January 2007), 92-109, and to the University of Delaware Press for permission to re-use parts of my contribution ‘Physiognomy, Zoology and Physiology as Paradigms in Sociological Sketches of the 1830s and 40s’, in *Physiognomy in Profile: Lavater’s Impact on European Culture*, ed. by Melissa Percival and Graeme Tytler (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), pp. 161-79. Should I have failed to trace a copyright holder, I apologize for any apparent negligence and will make the necessary arrangements at the first opportunity.

Finally, I would like to thank staff in the Rare Books Reading Room of the British Library, in the Rara-Lesesaal of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, in the Adalbert-Stifter-Institut, Linz, and Michelle Allen in the Special Collections section of the University Library at Exeter for supplying reproductions of nineteenth-century originals. Special thanks to Helmuth Meyer (Stifter-Institut) for bibliographical help with *Wien und die Wiener*.

A Note on Translations

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from German and French are my own, with the relevant passages from the original texts supplied in footnotes.

Introduction

Nineteenth-Century Sketches and the Problem of Walter Benjamin's Legacy

Sketches in words and images published during the heyday of the journalistic revolution, the 1830s and 40s, are an ephemeral and seemingly amorphous genre. As such, they have hitherto not attracted much critical interest. It is the contention of this study that sketches occupy a central space in the networks of knowledge that are so characteristic of the Victorian Age and its European equivalents. The century's pronounced cognitive orientation is inseparably bound up with the 'visual imagination', recognised today as a key to the nineteenth century.¹ Seeing and knowing were thought to be in close correlation, even if they were neither conceived nor experienced as identical. What places sketches in the centre of a visual-cognitive culture is their multiple nexus between the visible and the invisible; between observation and abstraction, entertainment and education, popular culture and science, journalism and high art, fragmentary and totalising views, commercial interest and the dissemination of encyclopaedic knowledge. The French *Physiologies* of the early 1840s epitomise this pivotal role of the sketch throughout Europe, the medical term indicating a transfer of methodology from life science to the humorous study of contemporary mores.

The crucial visual appeal of the genre is highlighted by the abundance of illustrations adorning a *Physiologie*. Although only a minority of European sketches were published under the title of 'Physiology' or 'Natural History', the quasi-scientific method of observing the social body, taking the visible world as its point of departure for the categorisation of types, is common to all of them, and this is why sketches are implicitly subsumed under the genre of *Physiologies* in the subtitle of this study. The reference there to European journalism is also to be understood in a comprehensive sense. While the press

1 See, also for the following points, Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), a study which links the century's fascination with the visible strongly to its culture of knowledge.

and its *feuilleton* provided an important outlet for sketch publications, their most significant media were periodical and serial collections, an innovative form of publishing between journal and book. Nevertheless, it is in the context of the 'journalistic revolution', the unprecedented expansion of ephemeral print media and graphic journalism during the period in question, that the sketch acquires its meaning. Sketch-writers were also very often, at least for some time, active as journalists, journal contributors or editors.

Although text-image relationships in nineteenth-century sketches involve printed images, in other words, graphic reproductions, not original drawings, the derivation of the term 'sketch' from painting is important because it carries certain connotations. The Oxford English Dictionary glosses 'sketch' (German 'Skizze', French 'esquisse') as presumably deriving from the Latin 'schedius' or Greek 'σχέδιος', meaning 'done or made off-hand', 'extempore'. In use from the seventeenth century, the expression denoted a 'rough drawing or delineation', giving 'the prominent features without the detail' and often serving as the first draft for a painting. At a later stage, 'sketch' also signified a genre in its own right, 'a drawing or painting of a slight or unpretentious nature'. In England, as Richard Sha has shown, the visual sketch became prominent as an independent form of art during the second half of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth, at a time when the genre's seeming artlessness appealed to Romantic notions of the picturesque, of subjective genius, fragmentariness and truth to nature.² The emergence of an analogous, essayistic form in the sphere of letters was heralded, according to Sha, by Launcelot Temple's *Sketches or Essays on Various Subjects* (1758), 'the very first book with sketch in its title'.³ Sha sees the visual and the verbal sketch as an essentially rhetorical form which seeks to persuade the viewer or reader that 'less is more' while allowing a whole range of ideological agendas to work beneath the surface of spontaneous observation.

Such hidden ideological strategies are in fact the focus of attention in the few studies that have been produced of the verbal-visual sketch. One recent example is Sha's article on the rhetoric of appropriation in which he concentrates on English nineteenth-century sketches of landscapes and colonial cultures. He argues that the 'seeming innocuousness' of 'taking', 'seizing' or 'snatching' a scene from nature constitutes an ingredient of expansionist prac-

2 See Richard C. Sha, *The Visual and Verbal Sketch in British Romanticism* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1998), esp. Chapter 1 (pp. 22-72).

3 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

tices at home (as appropriation of land through enclosure) and overseas.⁴ The present study seeks to demonstrate that sketches are indeed a crucial, vastly underestimated form of cultural negotiation in the nineteenth century, but that their capacity for self-reflection makes them an essentially critical genre when applied to urban home environments. The metropolitan sketch of the 1830s and 40s lies at the heart of a major review of middle-class civilisation on the brink of modernity, a review that all European centres underwent at the same time and which involved major cross-cultural exchange. The rapid expansion in print media was both an indication and an engine of the dynamism that sketches thrived on. In other words, their epistemological subtlety predestined them to be cognitive tools in a culture that was increasingly organised by media.

Until now, no thorough-going examination has been made of the metropolitan sketch as a printed medium associated with the revolution in reproductive technology. The pioneering investigations of Walter Benjamin have, it is true, proved a valuable stimulus to some recent work in the field, but it is also arguable that unquestioning acceptance of his ideological critique has prejudiced the findings of such research. Urban sketches have thus often been seen as part and parcel of a middle-class attempt to gain control over a threatening social body. One example is Alison Byerly's 'Effortless Art', a study devoted to Dickens's *Sketches by Boz* and Thackeray's *Paris Sketch Book*. Following Benjamin, Byerly aims to demonstrate that the 'passive pose' of the *flâneur* in these metropolitan sketches, comparable to the leisurely sketching of the gentleman artist (who nevertheless needs a 'buyer'), masks the 'commodified nature of the sketch itself'.⁵ Unfortunately, even when discussing the sketch as a visual form, Byerly leaves out of account the actual illustrations in the works, that is to say Cruikshank's steel engravings and Thackeray's own copper and wood engravings. Yet these illustrations, as reproducible commodities in themselves, cast a very different light on the written sketches they accompany. Another scholar to echo Benjamin is Carol Bernstein who ascribes to urban sketches of the nineteenth century a 'reassuring' function, since they give the impression that the jungle of the city is knowable and therefore controllable. In this view, the observer, threatened by 'effacement', introduces order into the 'heap of available images', thus stripping the urban experience of all menace. For Bernstein, it seems the only adequate response to such

4 See Richard Sha, 'The Power of the English Nineteenth-Century Visual and Verbal Sketch: Appropriation, Discipline, Mastery', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 24:1 (2002), 73-100 (p. 75 and p. 80).

5 Alison Byerly, 'Effortless Art: The Sketch in Nineteenth-Century Painting and Literature', *Criticism*, 41:3 (Summer 1999), 349-64 (p. 350).

experience would be to reject mere observation in favour of fictional representation. Hence Boz is the only sketcher she regards as approaching the point where ‘the novelist might want to part with the journalist, the sociologist, or the statistician, insofar as the latter three share in an enterprise of collecting and classifying on the one hand, and of reassuring the public about the possibility of knowledge on the other’.⁶ What Bernstein does not consider is the potential of the verbal sketch, precisely by virtue of its fluctuating status *between* journalism, sociology, literature and the visual arts, to organise knowledge and imagery in such a way as to communicate with the reader on a more ambiguous and sophisticated level than that of mere reassurance. Moreover, the sketches she discusses, almost entirely from the second half of the nineteenth century, continue the tradition of Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor*, in other words, they are investigations of poverty by ‘social explorers’,⁷ and as such make an uneasy comparison with Boz’s 1830s portraits of *Every-day Life and Every-day People* through the medium of a ‘speculative stroller’.

Curiously, given the general reliance on Benjamin, there are only very few generic studies of the metropolitan sketch which examine textual semiotics in relation to that of the printed image. One of them, Richard Sieburth’s of the *Physiologies*,⁸ is again restricted by its own ideological preconceptions based on Benjamin’s notion of the *flâneur*. These preconceptions obscure the dynamism of text-image relationships which makes the *Physiologies* the most advanced journalistic meta-medium of the time. This achievement can, however, only be fully grasped within the vibrant context of sketch production. Sketches became *the* genre of an intellectual culture driven by publishing and the ‘diffusion of knowledge’. The sketch’s rhetoric of modesty and authenticity, to take up Sha’s point, coupled with the triumph of new journalistic media, made it a prime vehicle for promoting a comprehensive and self-referential concept of ‘type’. Thus the actual significance of advertising *Sketches by Boz* in its subtitle as *Illustrative of Every-day Life and Every-day People* lies in the awareness that the sketcher (himself identified as the professional hack, ‘Boz’, who first published the sketches in journals) provides an ‘illustrative’ medium for a world of undistinguished, ‘typical’ contemporaries like himself. Middle and lower-class life is, as it were, the humble daily

6 Carol Bernstein, ‘Nineteenth-Century Urban Sketches: Thresholds of Fiction’, *Prose Studies*, 3:3 (1980), 217-40 (p. 229 and p. 235).

7 *Ibid.*, p. 219. Bernstein here refers to the subtitle of P.J. Keating’s collection, *Into Unknown England, 1866-1913: Selections from the Social Explorers* (1976).

8 See Richard Sieburth, ‘Une idéologie du lisible: le phénomène des “Physiologies”’, *Romantisme*, 47 (1985:1), 39-60.

newspaper to which *Sketches* – Boz’s and Cruikshank’s – offer the illustrations. Developments in graphic art, especially the triumph of wood engraving, supported this move towards ‘typology’, so that sketches of the 1830s and 40s have to be understood as intermedial genre-painting and exercises in early sociology on a massive scale.

The ostentatious slightness of the sketch form lends credibility to an ambition which could otherwise be seen as hubristic. Nothing less than a ‘moral encyclopaedia’ of the century is attempted by one of the most famous sketch publications of the 1840s, *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, on the basis of hundreds of ‘pen and pencil’ portraits of professional types. Another encyclopaedic sociological study, Edward Lytton Bulwer’s *England and the English* (1833), is peppered with the author’s own verbal ‘illustrations’ in the form of dialogue scenes and character portraits. Lightness of touch and a visually appealing, entertaining style are marketed as characteristics of highly ambitious and ‘serious’ contemporary literature. An advertisement of 1848 for *Gavarni in London* praises its texts as ‘delineations of every-day character and every-day life’ in the form of ‘light sparkling essays’. As creations of writers who ‘hold an important place in the literature of the age’,⁹ they are thought to be worthy complements to the ‘Illustrations’, with a capital i, by the celebrated Gavarni. The wording of the advert as well as the joint publication of written and graphic sketches alludes to *Sketches by Boz*, published more than a decade earlier, a sign that the prominence of the visual-verbal sketch in the domain of literature is now something of which its practitioners are well aware. Ephemeral publications have taken the place of ‘great’ works. In *England and the English*, Bulwer observes that the present is indeed ‘a great literary age’, but that its significant works must be sought ‘not in detached and avowed and standard publications, but in periodical miscellanies’. Such is the import of journal publishing in the sphere of letters that, according to Bulwer, nothing less than a ‘revolution’ has been ‘effected by Periodical Literature’.¹⁰ Journalism has become the literary emblem of the age, and the fact that sketches focus so strongly on cities and their populations is linked to the metropolitan nature of journalism itself.

The rapidity with which innovative, often collaborative journalistic publications were received, translated and adapted across national boundaries is indicative of a European *feuilleton* culture that was relatively evenly developed. The journalistic revolution helped to map out the European world in a new way. International metropolitan topographies supplanted the historical nation

9 Publisher’s advertisement in Albert Smith, *The Natural History of the Flirt* (London: Bogue, 1849), [p. 113].

10 Edward Lytton Bulwer, *England and the English* (Paris: Baudry, 1833), pp. 282-3.

states, just as the Parisian Revolution of July 1830 had swept away the system of Restoration. The omnipresence of capitals through their journalism, together with the advent of the railway and the electric telegraph, seemed to make real what Karl Gutzkow still considered a fool's telegraphic fantasy in 1832, in other words, that it should be possible for the same individual to have 'one foot in London, the other one in Paris' and to 'act as a correspondent from both cities simultaneously'.¹¹ A similar image is employed by Gavarni to illustrate the frontispiece for the serial *Le Diable à Paris* (1844-46). It shows a portrait of the devil as a journalist-cum-sketcher towering over a map of the French capital on which he straddles the right and the left bank of the river Seine. This demonic observer who is dressed *à la mode* as a Parisian dandy – a *flâneur*, one might be tempted to think – transmits the results of his vision to the rest of the world in the form of collected loose-leaf sketches and *laterna magica* images (illustration 1).

This image sums up the central role of sketches, written and graphic, in re-drawing the map of Europe in terms of cityscapes and in exploring the changing social body inhabiting them. Without this cognitive re-orientation in the 1830s and 40s – decades framed by the July Revolution and the Reform Bill at one end and the European revolutions of 1848 at the other –, the cultures now most closely associated with the nineteenth century, that of the Victorian Age and of the Second Empire, would be unthinkable. Gavarni's figure is at once a reader and a creator of a completely new urban sign-system layered upon a historical landscape.

Does this map represent an attempt to make legible, harmless and reassuring what, in Benjamin's understanding, is fundamentally 'shocking', in other words, the new world of the city? Since the French sketches of the period, such as the *Physiologies*, are known today mainly because Benjamin discussed them, and since his ideas have been uncritically absorbed into a vast body of scholarship, it seems worth going back to some of his particularly influential passages, mainly from the chapter 'The *flâneur*' in the essay 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', and stating precisely where the present study offers a different and, it is hoped, liberating view.

The crucial significance of the fashionable stroller, the reader of city physiognomies, was not discovered by Benjamin, nor indeed first evident in the

11 'Wie der Koloß von Rhodus stehst Du in partieller Allgegenwart mit dem einen Fuße in London, mit dem andern in Paris. [...] so müßtest Du zu gleicher Zeit aus beiden Städten correspondiren können.' Karl Gutzkow, *Briefe eines Narren an eine Närrin*, ed. by R.J. Kavanagh (Münster: Oktober Verlag, 2003), p. 117. See Bibliography for internet edition.



Illustration 1 Gavarni, frontispiece in *Le Diable à Paris. Paris et les Parisiens. Mœurs et coutumes, caractères et portraits des habitants de Paris, tableau complet de leur vie privée, publique, politique, artistique, littéraire, industrielle, etc., etc.*, 2 vols (Paris: Hetzel, 1845-6), I (1845), opposite p. i. Wood engraving by Brugnot.

works of Baudelaire and Poe, the authors which his interpretation mainly focuses on.¹² However, Benjamin's *flâneur* has become firmly identified with the type and turned into an icon of modernism. This figure prefers arcades and gaslight, follows traces among the crowd in the manner of a detective, turns the boulevard into an *intérieur* and, as a bohemian prostituting himself on the literary market, shows an affinity with the commodities he gazes at in window displays. A critic cannot be held responsible for what posterity does with his ideas, but in Benjamin's case the iconographic cliché has to be seen as a result of the critic's own blinkeredness. John Rignall has remarked that Benjamin's *flâneur* is 'the object of the materialist historian's gaze', in other words, that he is viewed entirely 'as a social phenomenon', a manifestation of the era of high capitalism, regardless of the nature of the sources with which this 'historian's gaze' operates. These sources are not factual accounts, but highly fractured literary reflections, to be precise, Baudelaire's reflections on Poe's reflections, situated in the context of a discussion of the draughtsman Constantin Guys, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne'. Benjamin thus fails to emphasise the essential, namely, that the *flâneur* is himself 'an exponent of a certain kind of vision',¹³ of literary and visual perspectives of the city.

Benjamin the materialist historian *could* have drawn extensively on expository sources (rather than on Poe's story 'The Man of the Crowd' or Baudelaire's essay) which deal with the *flâneur* as a new social type. That is to say, he could have exploited the sketches of the 1830s and 40s. Aware of their existence, however, he makes no use of them but dismisses their cognitive claims as superficial. Not surprisingly, because the whole genre, subsumed under the broad heading of *feuilleton*, is seen by him as socially and ideologically suspect and therefore unreliable. Since I intend to foreground the function of journalism as an engine of social knowledge, I approach sketches as a valuable cognitive resource, more or less the opposite of what Benjamin sees in them. The portrait *they* present of the observing city stroller is rather different from the artistic Second Empire type drawn by Benjamin. The pre-1850 *flâneur* is not the bohemian outsider moving in the jungle of the city, but, on

12 'Das Paris des Second Empire bei Charles Baudelaire' (1938), 'Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire' (1939) and 'Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX. Jahrhunderts (1935; Benjamin's exposé for the *Arcades Project*). Translated by Harry Zohn as 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire' and 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire' and by Quintin Hoare as 'Paris – The Capital of the Nineteenth Century'; all in Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire, a Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1983). This edition will in the following be referred to as CB.

13 John Rignall, *Realist Fiction and the Strolling Spectator* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 14.

the contrary, one of a countless number of ordinary city dwellers who read metropolitan surfaces.

One publication of sketches Benjamin mentions dismissively is the collective serial *Paris ou Le Livre des Cent-et-un* (1831-34). It features a sketch of the *flâneur* which reads in parts like something well ahead of its time. The type is described as able to sharpen contemporaries' perceptions of the 'moving panorama' surrounding them: 'Nothing escapes his investigative view [...], everything interests him, everything is to him a text of observation.'¹⁴ The suggestion that the city constitutes a quasi-filmic 'text' whose language is learnt through observation is, however, by no means singular in Parisian sketches of the 1830s and 40s, as the following incisive comments by Richard Burton make clear:

To describe the *flâneur* as a semiologist *avant la lettre* is in no sense [...] to read back into the past preoccupations of the present. On the contrary, the belief that urban life consisted of a multiplicity of interlocking semiotic systems and that everything in the city was, by definition, meaningful was so widespread amongst writers on pre-1850 Paris as to be virtually platitudinous [...].¹⁵

Reading surfaces was one thing; another was the awareness of a 'multiplicity of interlocking semiotic systems' which no single act of reading could make available. The interpreter of signs was therefore necessarily also one of a 'multiplicity' of readers engaged in the same business. Significantly, the anonymous author of 'Le Flâneur à Paris' in the (also significantly titled) *Livre des Cent-et-un* (Book of the One Hundred and One) is himself listed as 'un flâneur'. Anonymity here does not imply a Baudelairean 'man of the crowd', but *the new social type*. The portrait of the professional decipherer of the city by a professional decipherer, in a collective medium which is itself characteristic of the changing social fabric of the July Monarchy, therefore possesses the highest cognitive interest both for writers and the reading public at the time and for nineteenth-century specialists today.

14 'Sous quel aspect inattendu s'offre à vos yeux, avec un pareil démonstrateur, le panorama mobile qui vous environne!' 'Rien n'échappe à son regard investigateur [...], tout l'intéresse, tout est pour lui un texte d'observations.' Un flâneur, 'Le flâneur à Paris', in *Paris, ou Le Livre des Cent-et-un*, 15 vols (Paris: Ladvocat, 1831-4), VI (1832), 95-110 (p. 102 and p. 101).

15 Richard D.E. Burton, *The Flâneur and his City. Patterns of Daily Life in Paris 1815-1851* (Durham: University of Durham, 1994), p. 2.

Although Burton thus draws attention to this social and semiotic meaning of the *flâneur* and although he clearly differentiates the type from his post-1850 variant, ‘the *homme des foules* as described by Baudelaire’,¹⁶ he makes no criticism of Benjamin whose concept is determined by the latter. Instead, there are the obligatory nods in the direction of the master.¹⁷ One of them, to be found in almost any more recent study of urban portraiture, is an unquestioning acceptance of Benjamin’s point, itself derived from Georg Simmel, that human relationships in the big city are characterised by a preponderance of visual over aural activity. The observer’s speculative faculty, which seems at least as important as the activity of the eye, is totally left out of account. It would probably be overstating the case to argue that the fixation of today’s criticism on the legibility of surfaces goes back to this particular point in Benjamin’s study of Baudelaire. However, there can be no doubt that Benjamin’s fascination with the visual world of Paris, culminating in his *Arcades Project*, is at least partly responsible for a neglect of the cognitive dimensions in nineteenth-century city portraits. My study seeks to rectify this by focusing on *the* scientific paradigm of discursive urban portraiture between 1830 and 1850, that of physiology. It enables ‘physiognomists’ of city life to link their interpretation of surfaces to a context of unseen social, intellectual, moral and semiotic interaction.

Benjamin’s scant regard for the publishing industry of the July Monarchy which produced both the concept of the *flâneur* and the genre of the *Physiologie* seriously limits the value of his comments, as others have also pointed out.¹⁸ Measured against Baudelaire, with his poetic apotheosis of the *flâneur*, the journalists who treated the subject in a more mundane way two or three decades before are condescendingly labelled ‘minor masters’ (‘Kleinmeister’).¹⁹ Or worse: the acknowledgment of the great serial publications of

16 Burton (note 15), p. 5.

17 See *ibid.*, p. 4.

18 For example, Kai Kauffmann: Benjamin’s ‘criticism of journal literature, publishing and the press, evidently derived from the romantic ideal of immediate experience and communication, is decidedly biased.’ (‘Seine offensichtlich von der sentimentalischen Idealvorstellung unmittelbarer Erfahrung und Kommunikation abgeleitete Kritik an der Gebrauchsliteratur und der Publizistik/Presse ist ausgesprochen einseitig.’) K. Kauffmann, “*Es ist nur ein Wien!*” *Stadtbeschreibungen von Wien 1700 bis 1873* (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar: Böhlau, 1994), p. 28.

19 See ‘The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire’, CB, p. 39, and ‘Some Motifs in Baudelaire’, CB, p. 121. The same kind of value judgement inherent in Benjamin’s terminology can be observed elsewhere. He juxtaposes the journalistic ‘writings’ (‘Schrifttum’), destined not to survive, to the ‘literature’ of the detective story which ‘was to have a great future’ (CB, p. 39 and p. 40). Baudelaire’s *flâneur* is

sketches, including the *Livre des Cent-et-un*, as ‘panorama literature’ contains a sting in the tail since the collectively produced panorama is seen as a market place where the professional writer, without admitting it to himself, is looking for a buyer.²⁰ To put it mildly, this does not do justice to the panorama or to panoramic sketches, and although the critic admits that there is a ‘store of information’ (‘informatiorische[r] Fundus’) in this kind of literature, from which he himself happily profits in the *Arcades Project*, he will only concede ‘background’ function to it. The ‘foreground’ of the panoramic collections, for him, is the ‘anecdotal form’ of sketches. What he sees as background is, as I will argue, in fact the structural principle. Panoramic collections organise a ‘store of information’ so that it becomes a *body of knowledge* about the city, and this system of order is to be seen as distinct from encyclopaedic collections, a category Benjamin does not develop. The eye-catching foreground of collective sketch publications is not provided by the easy, chatty, anecdotal style, but by the precise observation and delineation of the subject that is the hallmark of the genre, and relationships between written and graphic sketches (not considered by Benjamin) are very important in this respect.

The translators of *Charles Baudelaire. A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, Zohn and Hoare, tend to render Benjamin’s consistently used term ‘panorama’ as ‘diorama’.²¹ Panoramas (introduced in the 1790s) were circular paintings viewed from a platform in the middle, while dioramas (introduced in the 1820s) were screens viewed from an auditorium, showing a particular vista with changing light (and often sound) effects which, in their most developed form, suggested movement. Despite their shared ending in ‘-rama’, the two media had ‘very little in common’, as Bernard Comment points out:

then, of course, seen to be conceived substantially on the basis of a high-literature detective story, Poe’s ‘The Man of the Crowd’ of 1840 (which, lacking a crime, is not a detective story in the strict sense, but, as Benjamin has to admit, a kind of ‘X-rayed’ version; CB, p. 48).

20 See ‘The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire’, CB, p. 35. Similarly, ‘Paris – the Capital of the Nineteenth Century’, CB, p. 170. Here a mistranslation of Benjamin’s sentence, ‘Das Warenhaus ist der letzte *Strich* des Flaneurs’ (my emphasis) occurs. ‘Strich’ has obviously been misread as ‘Streich’, strike or *coup*, whereas it signifies the ‘haunt’ of the *flâneur* while also bearing clear connotations with prostitution in its allusion to the expression ‘auf den Strich gehen’.

21 See ‘The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire’, CB, p. 35, and ‘Paris – the Capital of the Nineteenth Century’, CB, pp. 161-2.

[I]n the word *panorama*, ‘pan’ is the constituent that creates the idea of totality, the total vision of a given reality dependent on a circular horizon. Yet the diorama, because it was flat and like a painting [...], did not contain either the same logic or, more importantly, the same aim. Its main concern was to incorporate the passage of time and movement into a representation whose themes were often connected to the transition from day to night or vice versa, to the changing seasons, to natural disasters.²²

Translating Benjamin’s term ‘panorama’ as ‘diorama’ is in fact a silent correction of the critic’s loose terminology, since the visual medium he calls ‘panorama’ includes dioramic effects, such as suggesting ‘the changing time of day [...], the rising of the moon, or the rushing of the waterfall’.²³ While thus making Benjamin’s text in some ways more precise, the English version loses the connotation of a circular painting which is essential to Benjamin’s comparison of socially all-embracing sketch collections with the all-round view of the panorama. Therefore the translation ‘socially *dioramic*’,²⁴ with reference to these sketches, makes no sense. This terminological problem shows that Benjamin’s imprecision in lumping panoramas and dioramas together is crucial, in that it enables him to conflate two things: the suggestion of a) an overview, turning the city into a ‘landscape’,²⁵ and b) an early cinematic mass medium imitating ‘Nature’ to perfection – both, in his understanding, expressive of middle-class false consciousness. However comparable sketch collections are with visual mass media, this analogy cannot be constructed in such a foreshortened and oblique way. Examining precisely in what respects sketches exploit the paradigms of visual media in order to establish their own distinctive, which is to say cognitive, engagement with the visual world, I will show that the model of the panorama (and of travel literature) works for sketches piecing together the city in a collaborative effort. That of the magic lantern, on the other hand (together with that of the periodical *Review*), informs encyclopaedic collections reviewing the nation and the century. Here, the emphasis is by definition on *knowledge*, and it is interesting to see that the idea of ‘passing in review’ before the reader/audience, connected as it is to magic lantern performances and to lectures accompanied by dioramic views, attaches so closely to *cognitive* processes. The sketch industry combines entertainment with instruction, and this instruction is almost always amusingly and critically self-observing. The middle classes laugh

22 Bernard Comment, *The Panorama* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), p. 61.

23 See Benjamin, ‘Paris – the Capital of the Nineteenth Century’, CB, p. 161.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 162 (my emphasis).

25 *Ibid.*

about their own thumbnail images and cartoons, as they would laugh in a stage revue.

Panoramic (and also, in my definition, encyclopaedic) sketch collections are social 'idylls' for Benjamin.²⁶ For the last time, he seems to suggest, the working man and woman are depicted here as part of a body of *citoyens*; they are soon to emerge as a class of their own which can no longer be integrated into a bourgeois panorama. A politically radical serial such as *Le Diable à Paris* hardly qualifies as an 'idyll', while even the more moderate *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* and its European counterparts present an exercise in self-scrutiny by the middle class which is difficult to surpass. A versatile draughtsman and author of dialogical and dramatic sketches such as Henry Monnier, the inventor of the archetypal Monsieur Prudhomme, is dismissed by Benjamin as a 'philistine endowed with an uncommon capacity for self-observation'.²⁷ The critic is obviously unwilling to view middle-class self-observation as a worthwhile intellectual and creative activity or to concede that it was by no means 'uncommon', but absolutely central to the sketch industry. This industry is to be understood precisely as an attempt by the century's dominant class to review its potential for social inclusion, in other words, its capacity to serve as a social model in an increasingly stratified class system. Since Benjamin's dialectical materialist approach rejects all such self-scrutiny on the part of the bourgeoisie as superficial, he does not investigate the physiological paradigm of early sociology or of sociological sketches at all. Instead, he points to the dubious 'science' of physiognomy as their model, arguing that Lavater and Gall were at least genuine empiricists, whereas the *physiologues* simply 'lived on the credit of this empiricism without adding anything of their own'.²⁸ I will show just how much further the model of physiognomy is taken by the sketches. Transformed into physiology, it becomes an instrument of *sociological*, not characterological, insight. 'Character' is superseded by 'type', and the Lavaterian business of deciphering virtues or vices from individual features gives way to an anatomy of the living social body. Of course, physiognomy remains an important paradigm within social physiology. 'Physiognomic' study from a 'physiological' angle usually means a non-moralising, yet engaged reading of social surfaces (avocational types, habits, modes, cityscapes, significant developments and so forth) and an analysis of the condition of society.

Consistently, then, Benjamin denies, or suppresses evidence of, the cognitive orientation and achievement of the sketch. This tendency has a particu-

26 *Ibid.*, p. 162.

27 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', CB, p. 36.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

larly counter-productive effect on his discussion of the *Physiologies*, a discussion perpetuated by Richard Sieburth in his much-noted article of 1985.²⁹ A cheap pocket-book genre inundating the Parisian market between 1840 and 1842, the *Physiologies* are dismissed as sedatives for the *petite bourgeoisie*, designed to divert any political caricature that might still have emerged under the tightened press laws of 1835 into innocuous portraits of social types, and to make a disturbing, dangerous urban world look familiar.³⁰ Supported by the authoritative work of Nathalie Preiss on the *Physiologies*, I argue that, on the contrary, these publications were in their very conception a parodistic form, wittily subverting the portrayal of Parisian and French types in the serial *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, and that if the mordant caricature of the earlier July Monarchy found a place anywhere, it was in these illustrated booklets.

In the context of his comments on the *Physiologies* Benjamin also formulates the idea of the *flâneur* using the street as a nature reserve for his botanical studies and turning the boulevard into an *intérieur*, where he is at home just like the bourgeois within his own four walls. Arcades, representing an intermediate space between interior and exterior, are therefore the *flâneur*'s ideal territory.³¹ There are at least three objections to be made against this argument:

1. It is inconsistent with Benjamin's own line of enquiry, as is revealed by the discussion of Poe's story 'The Man of the Crowd' and its Baudelairean reflections in which the chapter on the *flâneur* culminates. Here Benjamin asserts that Poe's unknown man (wrongly identified by him as a *flâneur* anyway),³² who wanders aimlessly through a department store, has lost his way in the 'labyrinth of merchandise' just as the earlier type of *flâneur* had lost his way in the labyrinth of the city.³³ This flatly contradicts the former assertion about the city being made a homely place by the *flâneurs* of the *Physiologies*, yet Benjamin even reiterates this point here. He argues that

29 'Une idéologie du lisible' (note 8).

30 See Benjamin, 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', CB, pp. 36-40.

31 See *ibid.*, p. 37.

32 John Rignall has pointed this error out. In the chapter 'The *flâneur*' of his first Baudelaire essay, 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', Benjamin misreads Baudelaire's reading of Poe's 'Man of the Crowd', assuming Baudelaire sees in the unknown man, not in the narrator following him through the crowd, a *flâneur*. In his second essay, 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire', Benjamin 'corrects' the error, saying that the man of the crowd is not a *flâneur*, but still assumes that this is how Baudelaire saw the figure. See Rignall (note 13), p. 13.

33 Benjamin, 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', CB, p. 54.

while the arcades had represented the kind of interior as which the street offered itself to the observing stroller, the department store into which the arcades are degenerating, now becomes a street or ‘labyrinth’ for him.³⁴ Even allowing for the associative freedom of Benjamin’s thought, this argument borders on the nonsensical, though it has not prevented the idea of streets being turned into interiors from becoming part of the critical canon.

2. Arcades are, at best, of extremely marginal interest to the observers of Parisian life in the 1830s and 40s, as Karlheinz Stierle has shown; their fascination is with street life proper, for example, omnibuses (introduced in 1828),³⁵ on which Benjamin amasses materials in his *Arcades Project* but remains silent in his two relevant essays. Dickens’s *Sketches by Boz* confirm the supreme significance of metropolitan transport in the changing social universe of the 1830s.
3. Assuming streets *are* turned into interiors, the *flâneur* must be someone who has abandoned his ‘proper’ private space. The dwindling of privacy is in fact a much more fruitful concept for an understanding of social processes and methods of observation during the period in question. I will show that the way in which sketches perform social anatomy suggests a turning inside-out, in other words, a defamiliarisation, of private, internal spaces, rather than a turning outside-in, that is to say, a familiarisation, of public, external space. In the same context one could point to the fact that a perception of the urban environment as nature (see Benjamin’s likening of the panorama to landscape and of the *flâneur* to a botanist) has ideological connotations that are alien to the observers of Parisian life. Yes, they do analyse urban environments in terms of natural history, but only inasmuch as ‘life science’ (anatomy, physiognomy, zoology and physiology) is a paradigm for social science. No *Physiologie* or related publication would at any point suggest that a place shaped by human history is to be understood as natural space. This kind of understanding, which does also exist in metropolitan sketches, has, as it were, an axe to grind. It is a reactionary view formulated against the Western, historical and dynamic interpretation of the city; – an argument I develop in my section on the Viennese panoramic collection, *Wien und die Wiener*.

On the basis of my argument so far, readers could be forgiven for thinking that this book deals mainly with Parisian portraits. It does not. Equal attention is devoted to English, French and German/Austrian sketch publications of the 1830s and 40s. What will not be perpetuated is the myth of ‘Paris – the Capi-

34 See *ibid.*

35 See Karlheinz Stierle, *Der Mythos von Paris. Zeichen und Bewußtsein der Stadt* (Munich, Vienna: Hanser, 1993), pp. 208-14.

tal of the Nineteenth Century', analysed but also cemented by Benjamin through the very choice of title for his *Arcades Project* essay. Instead, I will seek to unravel at least some of the dense network of cross-national connections in European journalism of the time and show that Parisian developments were at the cutting edge, but by no means avant-gardist compared to the rest of Europe. In fact London publishing was in many ways ahead of Paris. Thus I will be able to show, for example, how an English sketch collection, *Heads of the People*, which started in autumn 1838, was able to become the model for the famous *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, the first instalment of which appeared in spring 1839, and of *Wien und die Wiener* which was published from 1841 but conceived probably from about 1840, the year of the first German translation of the English original.

Readers whose awareness is conditioned by Benjamin will be under the impression that nineteenth-century German letters are more or less devoid of modern readings of urban surfaces as epitomised by the *flâneur*. Benjamin suggests that one of the few approximations to be found is E.T.A. Hoffmann's late story 'Des Vettters Eckfenster' (My Cousin's Corner-Window) of 1822, an example to which he gives great prominence, referring to it in both his essays on Baudelaire, each time in explicit comparison with Poe's story 'The Man of the Crowd'.³⁶ Hoffmann's observer is a paralyzed writer who takes pleasure in studying life in Berlin's busy market square below his window and in drawing conclusions from the observation of people's appearances (helped by a pair of opera glasses). Benjamin sees the limitations of this view, compared to *flâneurs* in the Poe/Baudelaire mode who observe life from the pavement and mingle with the crowd, as symptomatic of 'the difference between Berlin and London', that is to say, of Germany's less advanced socio-economic situation.³⁷ However, his argument makes little sense because Poe's 'Man of the Crowd' and Baudelaire's relevant reflections postdate Hoffmann's story quite considerably.³⁸ The only other German examples Benjamin discusses are Adolf Glaßbrenner, Friedrich Engels and Heinrich Heine. The first two fit conveniently the cliché of the 'private individual' of the German *Biedermeier* or of the provincial German visitor whose city por-

36 See Benjamin, 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', CB, pp. 48-9, and 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire', CB, pp. 129-30.

37 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', CB, p. 49.

38 The interesting question Benjamin does not ask is how an author of the German Romantic period was capable of conceiving literature based on precise observation at such an early date – especially since he himself remarks that Hoffmann's could be 'one of the earliest attempts to capture the street scene of a large city'. 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire', CB, p. 129.

traits lack the equanimity, wit and precision of their English or French counterparts. Heine is an exception, the reason being that, as a writer living in Paris, he has adopted a metropolitan outlook and learnt to read the city.³⁹ In the case of Engels's description of London (in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 1845), Benjamin is attracted by the socialist's incorruptibly critical view of poverty, but regards as provincial the sense of unease and the moral indignation in his description of the masses rushing past each other on the pavements. Any Parisian *feuilletoniste*, Benjamin remarks, could have produced an urbane and aesthetically advanced crowd portrait from the *flâneur's* point of view, but not Engels. Yet, had Benjamin taken notice, for example, of the letters from Berlin (1822) of Heinrich Heine or, perhaps more importantly, of the metropolitan portraits (1846) of Ernst Dronke, a writer who collaborated with Marx and Engels from 1848, but was in fact viewed not without a degree of suspicion by Engels, he would have encountered classic examples of city portraiture from a *flâneur's* perspective. The urbaneness of Dronke's socialism, a kaleidoscopic mixture of the latest left-wing theory forged together with physiognomic observation, was exactly what Engels found objectionable.⁴⁰

In other words, the German (and Austrian) sociological sketches which did produce equivalents of Parisian observation, and in an exact historical parallel to French and English developments, are a blind spot on Benjamin's map, which is astonishing in such an avid collector of even quite obscure nineteenth-century documents.⁴¹ The fact that he, of all critical theorists, did not take account of these sketches goes some way towards explaining the complete neglect of an important German contribution to the nineteenth-century culture of knowledge. It has also cemented the image of nineteenth-century German literature as one that only reluctantly engages 'directly with the contemporary world in the manner of a Dickens or a Balzac'.⁴² Yet, by the mid-

39 See 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire', CB, pp. 121-2 and 129-31.

40 See Rainer Nitsche, 'Nachwort', in Ernst Dronke, *Berlin*, ed. by R. Nitsche (Darmstadt, Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1987), pp. 202-11 (p. 205).

41 With the exception of writings by Marx and Engels, the German sources of the 1830s to 50s consulted by Benjamin for his *Arcades Project* are predominantly works about Paris.

42 Rignall (note 13), p. 17. Rignall's judgement of Benjamin's blinkeredness in the discussion of the *flâneur* (to which I have referred above) is very illuminating. Yet he follows Benjamin in considering 'Hoffmann's view from the window' as 'characteristic' of 'German literature in the nineteenth century and its marginal relationship to the mainstream of European realism', maintaining that 'it is not until the early twentieth century that the *flâneur* has any resonance in German literature' (ibid.).