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Aspects of Immorality in the depiction of urban Central
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(1918-1939)

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1. Introduction

I have never seen a place like Paris for varieties of sexual provender. As soon as a woman loses a front tooth or an eye or a leg she goes to the loose. In America she'd starve to death if she had nothing to recommend her but a mutilation. Here it is different. A missing tooth or a nose eaten away or a fallen womb, any misfortune that aggravates the natural homeliness of the female, seems to be regarded as an added spice, a stimulant for the jaded appetites of the males (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.166).

Wasn't Berlin's famous decadence' largely a commercial 'line' which the Berliners had instinctively developed in their competition with Paris? Paris had long since cornered the straight girl-market, so what was left for Berlin to offer its visitors but masquerade of perversions? (*Christopher and His Kind*, p.29)

Citations like those listed above undoubtedly convey an image of Central European major metropolises, and certainly most notably Paris and Berlin, as places of total abandon, where the importance of moral codes and standards is gradually lessened and where individuals abandon themselves to utmost vice.

By the time the authors of these quotes (the first being taken from Henry Miller's unforgotten Surrealist vision on Paris eternalized in his probably most influential and best known work, *Tropic of Cancer*, and the other one going back to Christopher Isherwood, who recounted a good deal of the experience he made in the German capital in the early Nineteen Thirties in his memoir *Christopher and His Kind* as well as in his famous Berlin stories, which were published in the form of two short novels, *Mister Norris Changes Trains* and *Goodbye to Berlin*) made their experience, both cities had established themselves as hubs of vice. Additionally, Isherwood's remark points to the two metropolises' competition in being the most decadent city in the world.

By the Nineteen Twenties, Paris had already for a long time been known as a city that knew no feelings of shame and as a city of love and commercialized sex abundant. After a short period of hedonistic recession during the First World War, Parisian notoriety returned to the fullest in the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties. Excesses of all kinds were possible, particularly with respect to drinking and sexuality. Alcohol was cheap and brothels were scattered all over the city. Thousands of prostitutes roamed Paris' streets at night and the young girls and women in the numerous whorehouses often specialized on a wide range of sexual practices in

order to be able to satisfy the most deviant and perverse tastes of their cosmopolitan and international customers.

Very soon, Berlin, however, started to be in no way inferior to Paris in terms of satisfying citizens' and visitors' wildest erotic daydreams. The German capital rapidly became THE metropolis of vice and its name a synonym for debauchery, decadence as well as creativity. There seemed to be no limits to people's fantasies and the lack of censorship fostered Berlin's ascent to the world's hotbed of vice. Its numerous theaters turned into stages of rampant sexuality as almost all sketches presented involved allusions to eroticism and sex.

Certainly, the war, its disastrous outcome and the financial crisis in its aftermath did its bit to the chaos in the Central European metropolises. Particularly Berlin suffered from severe inflation and the overwhelming unemployment rate further widened the gap between the rich and the poor in the capital and in the rest of the country. Commercialized sex started to flourish as many citizens prostituted themselves in order to survive.

Like Paris, Berlin did not only offer bodily or worldly pleasures, but also sheer unlimited space for artistic expression and experience. The mixture of sexual liberty and tolerance as well as the openness towards new trends attracted crowds of artists, writers and intellectuals, not only from abroad but also from the more rural areas of Germany and France. Thousands of Americans crossed the Atlantic in order to escape the stifling provincialism at home and to become part of the international avant-garde that gathered in these Central European metropolises or simply to forget about their past, which often haunted them in the form of traumatizing memories of the war. A major incentive to come abroad was the fact, that, particularly as a foreigner, you could be as wild as you wished to be. For ten dollars, the world and all its pleasures virtually lay at your feet. Furthermore, many former American soldiers had already been familiar with what Paris had to offer since the days when they had visited the city as enlisted men. In both cities, alcohol was easily available in contrast to the United States, where, due to Prohibition, the legal sale of alcohol had been banned from 1920 onwards. Drugs could be procured without difficulties. In Berlin, morphine and cocaine were prescribed by doctors and pharmacists in order to soothe hypoactive sexual desire or to dope oneself.

Hedonism seemed to reign in all corners of these two cities. Black American jazz provided the soundtrack to the cities' nonchalance and indicated, besides the growing influence of American artists, the increasing Americanization of local culture as well as the fusion of different civilizations.

Women's self-confidence rapidly grew as their sexual identity increased in complexity and it now became common for women to have their own sexual desires and tastes. Homosexual love and sex between females as well as between men was wide-spread, accepted and, to a certain extent, even seemed to be the fashion. Many artists and intellectuals with homosexual inclinations from all over the world came to Berlin and Paris because they may have felt more accepted and secure in this liberal, live-and-let-live atmosphere. Likewise, nudism had found its way into all forms of artistic and creative output. Particularly Berlin was known as a hub for nudist culture in the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties.

The open display of bare skin and sex cemented Berlin's and Paris' reputation as sinful cities that attracted so many foreigners even up to the late Nineteen Twenties and early Nineteen Thirties, when most of the members of the so-called Lost Generation, due to the U.S. stock market crash and resulting financial straits, had moved on and were thus replaced by ordinary tourists who had fewer artistic ambitions.

In the course of the early Nineteen Thirties, Berlin, however, witnessed the rise of a political power that had always abhorred the nonchalant spirit and atmosphere prevailing in the city.

Berlin, which had hitherto been full of leftist ideas, saw the rise of an extreme right wing power, which soon began to put an end to what it perceived as sources of chaos and evil, gradually killing all forms of hedonism by regulating or banning a vast amount of intellectual output.

Many intellectuals were forced to leave Germany, so that the country was robbed of some of its shrewdest and most creative heads.

Prior to these somber days that eventually ended in one of the greatest human tragedies in history, World War II, many American artists and intellectuals crossed the Atlantic in order to spend some time in Berlin or Paris, because the two capitals combined richness in cultural artefacts as well as seemingly infinite possibilities to enjoy life.

These groups of expatriates, who virtually streamed to Europe in waves in the course of the two decades, included a fairly remarkable number of writers using their stay for creative

purposes. That is to say, they drew inspiration from dwelling in the cities of their choice and sometimes even used them as literary setting for their work.

Thus, the present thesis is going to be dedicated to an analysis of instances which testify to Berlin's and Paris' reputation as metropolises of vice. Moreover, it will be shown that sin and vice encountered on European soil in the interwar period were in many cases the result of socio-political circumstances and processes, and that the chaos associated with moral laxity again triggered off new socio-political developments which were even more devoid of moral responsibility.

2. Imagological reflections

2.1. A study on national character and national stereotype

When investigating the depiction and delineation of, for instance, Germany and the German people, a great number of historians and journalists were inclined to focus on non-fictional texts, as for instance press articles and material found in specialized fact books, because they regarded them as providing more accurate and up-to-date information on Germany and its people. In fact, they often conveyed stereotypes in a fairly large measure.

Likewise, the images literary scholars focused on were no less stereotypical since they had always been, more or less, influenced by the author's own mental picture of the nation under consideration. Since such biased notions usually do not reflect the dynamic character of national development, they can logically be only seen as snapshots of attitudes towards a given nation. Instead, they ought to be seen as part of the cultural heritage prone to be used for propaganda or its contrary.¹

A profound study of the image of vice in Central European capitals in the literature of American authors in the interwar period may hardly evade a reflection on the questions of

¹ Cf. Zacharasiewicz 2007, p.11

national thought as well as national character and identity. Since this paper is going to focus on renditions by American authors, it logically follows that the images of the cities and the people mentioned have invariably been drawn from American perspectives.

As literature may be seen as a sort of discursive cultural practice that forges notions and images of national identity, oscillating between the conflicting priorities of creators' own nations and those of foreign countries, particular attention must be paid to instances featuring national and foreign characters. For, it will be shown that Europeans are, by far, not the only ones to succumb to vice or to reveal patterns of behavior devoid of moral responsibilities.

Particularly the representation of immorality on European soil may thus not only involve censure on European individuals, but indeed very much criticism of the New World, as for example, snide remarks on Americans dwelling in the Old World or censure on American society in general.

Not only being concerned with national character and identity in literature, but also dealing with public attitudes towards other countries as they are reflected in literary works², imagology represents an adequate theoretical background for the analysis of the aspects that are central in the present paper. After all, the present thesis is very much concerned with the idea and opinion many Americans in the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties may have had of Central European major cities and which was probably influenced by a number of sources, most notably, earlier literary output.

Having emerged as a sub-branch of comparative literature in the early Nineteen Sixties, imagology as a scholarly discipline heavily draws on findings by psychologists studying the origins of stereotypes and the dissemination of clichés, as well as the highly complex process of constructing a fairly stable image of one's own group (auto-stereotype) and others (hetero-stereotype).³

While literary scholars up to the middle of the Twentieth Century concentrated on enumerating and collecting instances of national character in literature, imagologists later on paid tribute to the complexity of discursive identity construction by acknowledging that representations of nations and national characters have to be studied against other texts on the country depicted. That is to say, that a variety of texts dealing with the character of a nation should be taken into account in order to reasonably study the image of a certain nation in

² Cf. Leerssen 2000, p.269-270

³ Cf. Zacharasiewicz 2007, p.5

literary works. Since literature is very much intertwined with other disciplines, this may mean to also look at historical texts or other sources, such as political discourse.⁴

The present analysis will thus not only include works belonging to traditional literary genres. Even though imagologists regard, for instance, narrative texts as a particularly fertile soil for national stereotyping since characterization and rendition of behaviour and particularities of nations are easier in a narrative context⁵, semi- and non-literary accounts, such as autobiographies and memoirs, will also be included, in order to relate relevant instances from texts to their socio- historical context and the personal experience of authors.

Totally in line with imagological thought, it ought to be demonstrated that representations of nations and their people are neither solely determined by political, military or cultural relationships between countries nor fixed over time. Indeed, images of nations and their representatives may be flexible, changing from context to context and tend to alter from epoch to epoch, according to the needs of the situation. Furthermore, images are likely to be subject to change even though older images may re-occur at later moments in history.⁶ The image of Germany as a country where control is exerted beyond measure and the restriction of people's individual freedom thus common practice, can, for example, already be found in the work by Mark Twain. It was re-activated no later than in those years when Germany witnessed the empowerment of the Nazi regime with all its interventions into people's private lives. In both cases (though certainly not to the same extent), the image created aims at casting a negative light on Germany and its population.

2.2. On American innocence and diligence as well as European vice and nonchalance. Hypocrisy versus decadence

The notions of Central European metropolises which are the basis of this paper may be regarded as biased or stereotypical. The first general assumption is that settings in the heart of the Old World, particularly larger cities, represent literal haunts of immorality, inviting citizens as well as travellers and dwellers from other countries to forms of conduct devoid of moral obligation. After all, cities have always been likely to be associated with a different set of attributes than rural areas. Whereas peripheral regions tend to carry connotations of

⁴ Cf. Leerssen 2000, p.287

⁵ Cf. Ibid., p.282

⁶ Cf. Ibid., p.278

innocence, quietness and backwardness (because they are often regarded as having been bypassed by time), central or urban areas are rather linked to ideas of development and historical dynamism.⁷ In such a context, immorality, in the sense of sin and vice, may be more likely witnessed in urban surroundings than in the countryside. The city, which represents a symbol of modernity, was not only frequently associated with ideas of progress and development, but also with risks for the individual. Apart from dirt and pollution, which may negatively impinge on citizens' health, the city was often conceptionalized as a place of moral debasement, particularly at night, when prostitution was a common phenomenon.⁸

The second major assumption is that the behaviour and lifestyle in Central European major cities between the two world wars stand in a sharp contrast to the American way of life as well as to American bourgeois morality. The clash between Puritan Americans' striving for decency, thrift and respectability and Europeans' inclination to forms of abandon and decadence, may then be a hardly avoidable consequence. Thirdly, it ought to be demonstrated that particularly the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties, due to their special socio- political reality, were extraordinarily wild days in urban areas in the heart of Europe.

Almost all authors of the works under consideration were aware of entirely diverging conceptions of life on the two sides of the Atlantic as they, predominantly coming from a mid-western American background, spent a longer or shorter period of time in one of the major metropolises in the Old World.

Fleeing American provincialism, they often appreciated Europe's liberty and atmosphere of lassitude and nonchalance. Robert Mc Almon, for instance, obviously suffered from the repression he felt at home. As a member of a provincial family from Kansas, who vividly engaged in communal life, he may have indulged in European's live-and-let-live atmosphere even more.⁹

For Ernest Hemingway, coming to Paris may also have marked an important caesura in his life as the sojourn provided him with an entirely new experience that was so distant from everything he had encountered in Oak Park, the suburb at the Western side of Chicago, where he was brought up in a traditional Puritan manner valuating the virtues of industry, piety and sobriety.¹⁰

⁷ Cf. Ibid, p.277

⁸ Cf. Schonlau 2005, p.100

⁹ Cf. Smoller, quoted in *The Nightinghous Of Paris*, xii

¹⁰ Cf.Kennedy 1993, p.80

Sinclair Lewis, who was born in Sauk Center, Minnesota, may have had a similar social and educational background. His values and virtues were probably American and middle class. While masterly attacking the provinciality and constrictions of Mid Western small town life, rejecting all its representatives' hypocrisy, narrow-mindedness and triviality in *Main Street* as well as in *Babbitt*, *Dodsworth* also includes satirical censure on critics of Mid-Western American provinciality. This fact is a reminder that he was probably one of the harshest critics of American expatriates in Europe and that such a re-assertion of American values would, back then, stand against the general spirit of the 1920s during which the country witnessed rather a decline of traditional Mid-Western middle-class values.¹¹

Even though he did not undergo Puritan socialisation like many of his American writer colleagues, but came from a German Catholic background, Henry Miller was no less critical of America in his work. He revolted against religion and bourgeois morality, and deplored the growing mechanization of life in America, while praising Europe's richness in art and culture.¹² Not only due to its explicitness with respect to sexuality, but also because of its seeming formlessness and revolt against common forms of composition like order, symmetry, restraint and proportion, *Tropic of Cancer*, for instance, clearly rejects traditional bourgeois morality.¹³

2.3. Diverging self-conceptions

Miller's censure (which is often based to the contrast between materialism, progress and mechanization as well as civilization, tradition and humanization) hints towards a core unit of transatlantic differences, namely the diverging forms of self conception on the two sides of the Atlantic. For while American identity seems to be more based on the adherence to legal political categories, such as freedom, liberty and egalitarianism, European self conception seems to work along historical, cultural and ethnic categories or dimensions.¹⁴

America's conviction of being the ideal nation among all nations and thus simultaneously a role model to the rest of the world may facilitate the establishment of extreme positions and

¹¹ Cf. Schorer 1963, p.25

¹² Cf. Kennedy 1993, p.159 and Pizer 1996, p.127

¹³ Cf. Pizer 1996, p.124

¹⁴ Cf. Prisching quoted in Zacharasiewicz 2004, p.114

opinions. Political fundamentalism still plays a role throughout the country and even though church and state are strictly separated, one may speak of a sort of generalized and omnipresent religion in the country.¹⁵

In their never ending endeavour to realise the American Dream that is built upon the concepts of continuous progress and staggering possibilities, individual freedom, liberty and happiness, Americans seem to constantly oscillate between tolerance and rigorousness.¹⁶

Some argue that such strong convictions may smooth the way for hypocrisy and prudishness. Consequently there may also be an increased likelihood for the establishment of extremely tight moral standards, particularly with respect to sexuality. Reality shows that Americans may, for instance, be comparatively easily penalized for sexual harassment. In this context, the country has already seen the punishment of a minor-aged citizen for having kissed a girl of the same age or the need of university professors to avoid closing the doors of their office while talking to female students. Likewise, someone in possession of drugs is likely to be punished severely in the United States.¹⁷

2.4. An easily scared folk

America's sheer happiness, which stands behind their unquestioning obedience of rules and orders, may be regarded as an unstable façade that can easily be threatened. Particularly artists play with its fragility. Otherwise, a figure like Marilyn Manson would neither be as successful in the United States as he repeatedly manages to spark indignation by including sex and blood into his performances.

Paradoxically, it seems as if Americans needed specimens of evil in order to present themselves as good and to nurture and perpetuate their cult of heroism and their fascination with images of catastrophe and apocalypse.¹⁸

So while Americans may have felt disconcerted about the open display of sexuality in Europe during the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties, they may have, at the same time, been fascinated by the image of chaos, danger and havoc that helped them to epitomise the Old World as a

¹⁵ Cf. Ibid, p.146

¹⁶ Cf. Toma, Dieter. "Unter Amerikanern. Eine Lebensart wird besichtigt". 2001., p.58 quoted in Zacharasiewicz

¹⁷ Cf. Ibid., p.117 and 138

¹⁸ Cf. Ibid., p.125

place of sin and evil unknown at home. Indeed, it will be shown that Americans, although frequently disgusted at the sight of explicit indecency, often walked on a very thin line between curiosity and indignation concerning Europe and its inherent evil and immorality.

After all, not an inconsiderable number of Americans may have been impressed by renditions and accounts on France's notoriety, which started to reach American audiences no later than by the middle of the Nineteenth Century and which can be said to have decidedly shaped American's vision of Central European metropolises. In *Dodsworth* Tub Pearson's conception of the French capital is that of a city of lust and sexual excitements, as his question whether "they whoop it up all night in Paris" (*Dodsworth*, p.179) indicates. As a citizen of the American Middle West with enough geographical and cultural distance to the European continent, Pearson shows a vivid interest in Paris' nightlife, eagerly questioning his friend on his experiences with the city's hang-outs and night clubs Paris was so famous for in the early decades of the twentieth century. Slightly annoyed by this interrogation, Sam remains rather evasive, especially when asked whether he "didn't pick up a little cutie on the side [...]" (*Dodsworth*, p.180). Thirsty for further adventure stories, Tub is virtually craving for a "vicarious excursion into blazing restaurants full of seductive girls, marvellous food, wine unimaginably good at fifty cents a bottle, superb drunks without a headache and endless dancing without short breath" (*Dodsworth*, p.180). Likewise, it is, above all, curiosity and excitement that lured Steve Rath, the whimsical and aggressive lesbian in Mc Almon's short story "The Lodging House" to Berlin because she knew that this was THE place where one had to be as a homosexual and because its nightlife and gay subculture were said to be so diverse and wild.

Already in the first part of the Nineteenth Century, for instance, the grisette, a sort of poor young woman willing to enjoy herself with young students and artists in exchange of little gifts, was made famous through operas, novels, plays and short stories. American men were not rarely tempted to meet these young women when travelling to France. Stories of artists seducing their young female models in the Latin Quarter, as for instance in the English novel *Trilby* (1894), may have dazzled some Puritanical Protestants, who were used to be fairly reticent about his feelings and sexuality. Americans' fascination with watching gambling, which was particularly common among American middle class Protestants, was probably shaped by accounts found in American books and magazines. Although it represented a marked contrast to all ideals of cultural tourism advocated by the American upper middle

class, it must have stirred them as a symbol of rottenness and as a sport bringing misery and corruption.¹⁹

In the course of time, critics have often stressed Europeans' openness in terms of love and sexuality. Arts were the perfect channel for the presentation of both. France had obviously been a fertile soil for erotic literature. In this context, Levenstein mentions the continuous outrage of American intellectuals at French novelists' preoccupation with sexuality. No later than in the second half of the Nineteenth Century their works often began to be dismissed because they were regarded as propagandizing loose sexual morals and where thus feared to corrupt American readers.²⁰

Sometimes, these pieces were appreciated. Remembering the long French tradition of aesthetic and refined erotic writing, which she missed in the United States, Anaïs Nin became increasingly fascinated with the idea of establishing a new form of erotic writing in America. With the support of writers from all over the country Nin set out to support her friend Henry Miller, who had been asked in 1940 by a collector to compile some erotic writing for one of his most dedicated clients. All the marvellous erotica written by the contributors went into Nin's startling collection of short stories. The anthology, albeit compiled during the Nineteen Forties, was only published posthumously in 1977 under the fairly alluding title *Delta of Venus*.²¹

Nin herself was certainly deeply infatuated with Paris' erotic charm. The latter had probably developed over centuries. Nin's interest in the field of eroticism was decisively shaped when, having arrived in Paris for the first time, she came across erotic books that stood in the shelf of the apartment she had rented from an American spending the summer somewhere else. Thoroughly innocent and entirely unversed in sexual matters, Nin literally devoured those books which were like those sold along the quais and which all were to have a lasting effect on her. From her diaries one knows that:

These books affected my vision of Paris, until now a purely literary one. They opened my eyes and my senses, they sensitized me so that I became aware of maisons closes, red-light districts, prostitutes on the boulevards, the meaning of drawn curtains in the middle of the afternoon, hotels by the hour, the role of Parisian hairdressers (the great procurers) and the acceptance of the separation between love and pleasure (*The Diary of Anaïs Nin*, vol. I, p. 96).

¹⁹ Cf. Levenstein 1998, p.174

²⁰ Ibid, p.65-70

²¹ Cf. *The Diary of Anaïs Nin*, vol. III, p.72 and p.147

In the Nineteen Twenties, the moral debasement of Paris' expatriate community and the seductive qualities of Parisian women were presented in a number of cultural products, which, despite often featuring exaggerated portrayals, became highly popular and thus helped to cement Paris' reputation as a haunt of cheats and sexual abandon. Homer Croy's *They Had To See Paris* (1926), which shows the voyage of an American small town car dealer and his family to France in the course of which all the family members fall for the amorous advances of French artists and demi-mondaines, was even turned into a film and was followed by numerous articles and stories.

In the course of the same decade, several works drew the image of expatriates in Paris as young aspiring artists or writers living in meagre conditions but nonetheless enjoying life to the fullest; i.e. by drinking hard and hooking up with models and grisettes. Meanwhile the American press critically reported on the Parisian nightlife as there were more and more attacks on the expatriate movement by writers such as H.L. Mencken and other expatriated authors like Sinclair Lewis and Ernest Hemingway.²²

Even though indignation among Americans was remarkably high until the close of the Nineteenth Century (for particularly parents feared that their young daughters or sons might be corrupted when being sent on a trip abroad), moral outrage seemed to have been tamed as Freudian theories, which regarded oppressed sexuality as a major reason for the development of neuroses, gained in popularity.

Particularly novels like Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* attracted Americans and Americans' interest to visit France. With its romanticized version of Paris and its gripping delineations of the protagonists' tours through a wild and flamboyant Parisian nightlife it especially appealed to a young generation of culturally interested young Americans, who despised America's practice of consumerism and capitalism, and to another generation of even younger Americans who, albeit showing fewer artistic ambitions, simply wished to revolt against the Puritanical fundamentalism and the provinciality of their ancestors.²³

2.5. A self-chastening folk

²² Cf. Bradbury 1995, p.321

²³ Cf. Levenstein 1998., p.235-240

Regardless of the strong influence of Puritan Protestant ideology in America, there were also critical voices within the United States. In her 1911 essay on the hypocrisy of Puritanism, the political activist and anarchist Emma Goldman takes a clear stand against Puritan commandments. She dismisses them for undermining all sort of genuine emotion and thus making truth and sincerity impossible-both in life as well as in Arts. Goldman pointedly criticizes one core concept of Puritanism, namely the need to evade or to ban all sorts of hedonism, particularly with respect to sexuality and drugs. She rejects the Puritan ideology as an attempt to control individuals and society. Turning one's back on joy and beauty as a symbol of penance for the dreadful burden of life would, according to her, mean to ignore normal and healthy impulses.²⁴

While condemning America's Puritanism and discursive practices perpetuating it, Goldman appreciates European literature and arts in general as successfully addressing personal and sexual matters of the present, caricaturing America's piety.

The following pages will be dedicated to a study of instances in which traditional Puritan American concepts and notions of morality may have been challenged. A special focus will be given to Berlin and Paris, European major capitals, which were certainly among the most decadent cities in the world and thus prone to be considered virtual haunts of vice and immorality.

3. Berlin and Paris-European major metropolises. THE cities of vice in the fiction by American writers between 1918 and 1939

3.1. Berlin's metamorphosis: From the city of art and poetry to the capital of decadence

Even though Berlin and Paris stirred many an American writer's fantasy in the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties, it must be noted that both cities had not always been a fairly fertile literary subject. Nor was Berlin, for example, always the city of abandon, sheer infinite liberty and nonchalance as one may know it from many of the narratives which are going to be analyzed in the present paper. Very often, these cities were rather used as a picturesque backdrop or simply as a setting for the stories that authors were eager to narrate. Sometimes, a

²⁴ Cf. Goldman 1911 quoted in Ward 2003

sojourn in Paris or Berlin was aspired to in order to provide writers with the necessary creative input for their work.

3.1.1. Berlin's negative reputation and shadowy existence

Interest in Europe already goes back to the beginning of the 19th century. Back then this was, however, a phenomenon predominantly shared among American intellectuals. Especially in North America there had been considerable interest in Germany, probably because this part of the country had seen a longer period of settlement by people of German stock than many other English speaking regions.²⁵

Up from the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars on, there had been intensive contact between Germany and America. Yet, it was not Berlin that was central to intellectuals' interests. Instead, cities like Göttingen or Heidelberg were more desired destinations of travelers. The possibility to study at a university offering courses in English was a major incentive for American intellectuals to come abroad. Additionally, the lovely and picturesque scenery was considered divinely capable of stirring travelers' romantic fantasies while they could indulge in reverence of the numerous cultural artefacts and treasures they were missing in their home country. Studying abroad was back then considered a most noble way of broadening one's own intellectual horizon. Paris, too, was appreciated for its richness in culture even before 1850, and learning French before travelling to France was already common among America's better educated population by the 1820s as more and more academies and schools had begun to teach the language in the late Eighteenth Century.²⁶

Largely owing to thoroughly unfavorable accounts and reports, such as that of the American law student Henry Adams, the city of Berlin suffered from a fairly negative reputation that caused many American writers not to include the city in their tour through Germany.

Adams, the grandson of the sixth American president, abhorred Berlin (where he had arrived in 1858) as a dirty, evil and uncivilized place. He was particularly estranged by the militaristic methods and the bureaucratic pettiness encountered in the Prussian metropolis. Furthermore, he pointed out the lack of manners (that didn't even halt before the imperial court) and

²⁵ Cf. Zacharasiewicz 2007, p.3

²⁶ Cf. Brüning 1990, p.112 and Levenstein 1998, p.37

complained about outdated teaching methods at university. Yet, despite all his criticism, Adams retained nostalgic feelings for a Germany of a bygone past and the image of a romantic country of music, romance, nature and idyll.²⁷

However, Adam's criticism and Americans' distrust of German morality and decency were taken up and further enhanced when authors like William Dean Howells pointed out the social rottenness of Germans which was inferred from the open display of their vices.²⁸

3.1.2. Berlin- the modern city of growth, discipline and order

It was eventually Mark Twain, who did not follow the trend of drawing a negative portrait of Berlin and who decisively contributed to a revision of Berlin's image. Twain had embarked on an extended tour throughout Europe, which led him to Germany, where he stayed in Berlin from 1891 to 1893 together with his family and a friend of his wife. The city seems to have somehow irritated him as it didn't correspond to what he had expected to find, namely a typical city of the Old World rich in medieval charm. (Twain was deeply fascinated by the isolation and remoteness of little villages in the Schwarzwald, where an earlier tour through the Continent in 1878/79 had led him to. That trip was reported to have given him the feeling of travelling into an ancient past.²⁹)

Contrary to Adams, Twain's Berlin was not a poor, keen-willed, provincial, uncivilized and utterly disgusting town, but an amazingly modern city whose striking hugeness makes the foreign visitor immediately feel lost. The city's swiftness of growth was as remarkable as its people's exceptional sense of discipline and order that made the city one of the best governed in the world:

[...]- in a multitude of ways, to speak strongly and to be exact. It seems to me the most governed city in the world, but one must admit that it seems to be the best governed. Method and system are observable on every hand-in great things, in little things, in all details, of whatever size...It has a rule for everything, and puts the rule in force (Twain, "The German Chicago", p.246 quoted in Brüning, p.114).

Yet, despite his appreciation for Germany, Twain does not fail to point at the reverse of the shining coin; that is to say the drawbacks of overdone discipline and order:

²⁷ Cf. Brüning 1988, p.4-5

²⁸ Cf. Ibid

²⁹ Cf. Rodney 1993, p.102

[...] Everything is orderly...and the police do not like crowds and disorder here. If there were an earthquake in Berlin the police would take charge of it and conduct it in that sort of orderly way that would make you think it was a prayer-meeting (Twain, "The German Chicago", p.246, quoted in Brüning, p.115).

Good and bad qualities are thus juxtaposed in Twain's delineation. Discipline, efficiency, cleanliness and orderliness are overshadowed by a constant fear of being spied upon or of being curtailed in one's private freedom and individual lifestyle.

However, Twain's image of Berlin was to remain highly influential and found an echo in the work of some of his contemporaries and even in that of writers coming to Berlin between the two World Wars. Despite feeble hints of criticism, Twain's image of Germany and its people was a fairly positive one. He was certainly enchanted by the country's beauty and its remarkable cleanness and orderliness, and charmed by the German's kind-heartedness.³⁰

From an African-American perspective, Edward Burghardt du Bois illuminated the drawbacks of living in an urban center like Berlin. Having come to the city in order to study history, sociology, philosophy and economy, du Bois used his own impressions and experience for a trilogy of novels on the life and education of an Afro-American staying in Berlin in the middle of the Nineteen Thirties.

While visiting Siemens-Stadt, Germany's city of electrical industry before the Second World War and a virtual city within a city, Mansard, the protagonist, critically comments on the aim of industry, which is nothing but turning men into "a human product of the most careful and precise nature, to be used in the "productive processes of this mighty industry" (*World of Colours*, p.57-58).

It is amazing how Twain and du Bois denounce developments which were predominantly imports from the New World, and how much they thus anticipate censure voiced by other, later critics of mechanization, such as Henry Miller. Both Twain and du Bois share a certain appreciation for Germany as a country of education and science as well as music and art, while reflecting on the possible implications of continuous progress and the risks of discipline, precision and orderliness beyond control.³¹

³⁰ Cf. Ibid, p.100 f.

³¹ Cf. Brüning 1990, p.116

3.1.3. World War I and its consequences

Portrayals of Germany and the Germans became utterly unfavorable in the course of the First World War. Particularly with the United States' entrance into the war, the Creel Commission, the agency established by the U.S. American government to influence American public opinion on the country's participation in the war, strongly contributed to the dissemination of a highly stereotypical image of Germany. While war propaganda suffused various forms of media, starting from books over newspapers onwards to motion pictures, cultural associations with Germany were gradually lessened or even cut.³²

The image of Berlin underwent another considerable modification in the aftermath of the First World War. The United States' dissatisfaction with the outcome of the peace negotiations encouraged more balanced scholarly analyses of the image of Germany in the United States.³³ Strong sentiments against the peace treaty of Versailles fuelled support for the former enemy to get out of its economic disaster. A pro-German spirit manifested itself in the appreciation of German architecture, literature and painting, and in predominantly neutral images of Germany created by journalists and writers. Biased and stereotypical renditions declined in numbers and were sometimes even replaced by fairly positive images (as, for instance, found in the work by Louis Untermeyer, who exploited Germany's image as a country of breathtaking romantic beauty and idyll, particularly in *Blue Rhine, Black Forest*, which recounts his trip to the Rhineland and to the Black Forest).³⁴

Additionally, the disastrous outcome of the war and the distressing inflation in its aftermath ruined Berlin's reputation as a glamorous, glorious imperial metropolis. Instead, many young American writers coming now experienced Berlin as a mysterious place far too complex to understand. After all, Berlin represented a place that was, on the one hand, struck with socio-political unrest but, on the other hand, the home of unparalleled creativity.

Even though Americans profited enormously from the low exchange rate in this still extraordinarily lively and advanced center of modern art and culture, the increasing materialistic spirit to be felt in Berlin made many American writers prefer to stay in Paris. The French capital was a place even richer in culture, artistic amusements and thereby offering excitements and radical spirit as well as sexual liberty. For many intellectuals, Paris simply

³² Cf. Zacharasiewicz 2007, p.4

³³ Cf. Ibid.

³⁴ Cf. Zacharasiewicz 1998, p.166

represented THE place to be. After all, it was the city where writers from all over the world gathered. For here, the merger of American literature and arts and the European idea and spirit of the Modern facilitated the emergence of a generation of writers with a unique spirit of cosmopolitanism.³⁵

Stirred by the vision of living a prosperous life without Prohibition or at least enjoying oneself at low expense, however, masses of Americans crossed the Atlantic in the following years, initiating the gradual Americanization of Berlin's cultural life to be witnessed in the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties. According to some estimations, 25000 people belonged to the group of expatriates from the United States, a third of which came from smaller Midwestern towns.³⁶

3.1.4. The Nineteen Twenties: Berlin's most decadent days

In the course of the Nineteen Twenties, Berlin established itself as the capital of decadence attracting numerous American and British intellectuals and writers, who made use of Berlin's moral deterioration and corruptness in their works. Thereby, the particular frankness of vice (which manifested itself primarily in an offensively open display of sexuality and drug consumption) was one of the major points of opposition brought forward by critics of Berlin. Paris, in contrast, and, in spite of its competition with Berlin for the role of the most decadent city in the world, was considered the more desirable and preferable destination where its vices, namely its frivolity and freedom of sexual pursuits, did neither contradict nor hurt aesthetic feelings, as they would be lived with delicacy, subtlety, playfulness and handsomeness.³⁷

The German capital became the epitome of modern decadence, a virtual playground offering endless possibilities for entertainment and sexual diversion. This reputation certainly stood in sharp contrast to that of a bourgeois and respectable Mid America of the days as well as against the image of an utterly reputable and decent Prussia of the 19th century. It was primarily due to this candid form of sexual abandon practised and witnessed that some spectators were inclined to compare Berlin to the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

³⁵ Cf. Bradbury 1995, p.336 and 339

³⁶ Cf. Brüning 1990, p.117 and Zacharasiewicz 1998, p.178

³⁷ Cf. Ibid., p.124

The notion of a far too extreme, vulgar and violent display of sexuality in Berlin and the city's depressing nightlife was taken up by several authors whose works splendidly illustrate the encounter of Americans with a European society in increasing troubles. A list of renditions worth mentioning definitely ought to include the work of Robert Mc Almon (especially his tales in *A Companion Volume* and his Berlin stories in *Distinguished Air*), Glenway Wescott's stories in *Goodbye, Wisconsin*, the novel *A Voyage to Pagan* by William Carlos Williams and Elliot Paul's *A Narrow Street* as well as the works of Djuna Barnes, Kay Boyle, Louis Bromfield, Henry Miller and Katherine Anne Porter.³⁸

In addition, the depiction of Americans and Europeans had undergone a marked change. American figures were no longer that innocent and naïve as they had, for instance, been delineated by Henry James. Europeans were no longer represented as morally complex socialites but rather as the victims of a war-stricken, corrupt and desperate society in a deep crisis. In a certain way Europe and its inhabitants may thus mirror America's cultural and historical confusion, leading to a form of ambiguity that had a crucial influence on the works of those Americans coming abroad.³⁹

Opinions on Berlin were divided. While some indulged in the vastness of escapist opportunities, others harshly condemned them. Whereas Ernest Hemingway rejected Berlin as being vulgar and despicable (because it was dominated by heavy cocaine abuse rather than by more noble enjoyments as, for instance, the consumption of champagne⁴⁰), others, as for example W.H. Auden or Robert Mc Almon (who had succeeded in accumulating a considerable fortune by simultaneously working as a writer and as a publisher as well as through his marriage to Winnifred Ellerman, the daughter of Sir John Ellerman, a prosperous English shipping magnate, writing under the pseudonym Bryher), fully exploited their financial superiority, knowing how to entertain themselves. To Auden, who was inclined to the male sex, Berlin literally represented the "bugger's daydream" with its about 170 male brothels under police control.⁴¹

In general, the image of Berlin in the late Nineteen Twenties and early Nineteen Thirties is a fairly negative and depressing one. Even though individuals enjoyed

³⁸ Cf. Bradbury 1995, p.340

³⁹ Cf. Ibid.

⁴⁰ Cf. Zacharasiewicz 1998, p.10

⁴¹ Cf. Carpenter 1988, p.90

considerable personal liberty, their opportunities were at the same time limited by numerous economic restrictions if they were not in the lucky position to be a member of the upper class or a tourist or an expatriate benefiting from the low exchange rate. A number of American authors staying in the city at the time, as, for instance, Robert Mc Almon or Langston Hughes, commented on the depressing atmosphere in Berlin, which had turned into a place without future, inhabited by a people without perspective:

Berlin was getting under my skin and depressing me. The innumerable beggars, paralytics, shell-shocked soldiers, and starving people of good family became at last too violent a depressant. At nights along the Unter den Linden it was never possible to know whether it was a woman or a man in woman's clothes who accosted one. That didn't matter, but it was sad to know that innumerable young men and normal Germans were doing anything, from dope-selling to every form of prostitution, to have money for themselves and their families, their widowed mothers and younger brothers and sisters" (*Being Geniuses Together*, p. 110 quoted in Zacharasiewicz 1998, p. 180).

3.1.5. Nazi Germany: Condemnation vs. Romanticizing

In the course of the Nineteen Thirties, the image of Germany further deteriorated. With the rise to power of Adolf Hitler and the rise of National Socialism in 1933, Germany inherited the role of an enemy nation to the United States and Berlin was often seen as a kind of damnation jail. The fiction and reports of anti-fascist authors, such as Dorothy Thompson, Edward Dahlberg, Josephine Herbst, Martha Dodd, Katherine Anne Porter would then testify to the city of Berlin as a wicked and awful place.⁴²

In sharp contrast to the investigatory zeal of their colleagues, many authors failed to interpret the ongoing changes and turmoils as a premonition of bleaker developments. Thomas Wolfe, for instance, kept a much more idealized and thoroughly romanticized vision of his beloved Germany, letting himself be blinded by the promises of the new regime. It is undoubtedly enthusiasm and pride one feels when reading about "the great crowds thronging the Kurfürstendamm, the gay and crowded terraces of the great cafés and [...] the solid, liquid smack of booted feet, and young brown faces shaded under their steel helmets goose-stepping by beneath of the Kurfürstendamm". (Nowell 1960, p.270 ff. and Donald 1987, p.384 ff.) . It

⁴² Cf. Brüning 1990, p.125

was to take him another visit until Wolfe was finally able to realize the Nazis' appalling inhumanity and to anticipate bleaker future developments.⁴³

3.2. Paris-city of love, abandon and nonchalance. The long tradition of Parisian notoriety from the late 1870s to the early 1930s: From aristocrats' ruses to prostitutes and sex abundant

Like Berlin, the French capital enjoyed a reputation as a city of vice. Probably Paris' notoriety was even more linked to the general image of France and particular to the image of its capital on the River Seine, which had for long been known as and (by many a discursive output) been labelled a city of love and liberal sexuality. As has been shown earlier, many Americans were familiar with Parisian notoriety. Their image was largely formed by books and articles testifying to a form of individual lassitude unknown in America. The idea of Parisian wickedness, however, did not remain stable over time, but underwent changes that coincide with transformations in the cultural as well as socio-political landscape of France.

3.2.1. Aristocrats' intrigues cause "the fall" of American travellers

A scrutiny on Parisian notoriety in American literature cannot evade taking a closer look at the various settings of stories and the social realms associated with it. For, as will be shown, the idea of Paris as a place of vice is always linked to forms of conduct displayed by the various characters which are set in a particular social and spatial framework.

While in works by North American authors set in Paris before the First World War, the haunt of immorality was largely confined to the realms of nobility and the demi-mondaine, these spheres were gradually opened up in the aftermath of the ceasefire when they would include wider parts of society.

For a long time, the image of Paris in American literature was closely linked to what was called and especially tackled in the work by Henry James, namely the International Theme focusing on the adventure of Americans in Europe. In respective works, many of the American male protagonists coming to Europe were millionaires or, in the case of female protagonists, heiresses that had profited from an opportune marriage or divorce that left them economically well-off. These rich newcomers would hope to become part of Parisian nobility

⁴³ Cf. Ibid.

through marriage, but eventually often felt tremendously distressed by the intrigues spun by their fortunate fellow countrymen.⁴⁴

Additionally, American colonies in Paris usually showed a rigid social hierarchy and an amazing eagerness to deter fellow newcomers from entering their circles. These clans were actually made up of impoverished individuals, representatives from bourgeois milieus as well as the so-called “dyed-in-the-wool-aristocracy”, who travelled around Europe and stopped in Paris merely out of pleasure. Especially in *The American* by Henry James, the French nobility was represented as a class entirely devoid of moral obligations. In his particular case, it can be said that this negative representation reflects the author’s own anger and disappointment about French society.⁴⁵

Yet and despite the considerable weakening of the French aristocracy in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, many Americans seemed to have shared a certain fascination with the French nobility, aristocrats and individuals with titles. They all conveyed the idea of ancestry, long tradition and history as well as notions of elaboration and refinement.⁴⁶

Their fascination notwithstanding, fictional representatives of Americans abroad are forced to realize that within Parisian chic circles, political or moral duties were replaced by social obligations that became an increasing burden the higher one climbed up the social ladder.⁴⁷

Already by the beginning of the Nineteen Century, American observers reported on immorality and hypocrisy on French soil. Washington Irving, for instance, noticed the acceptance of adultery in Bordeaux already in 1804.⁴⁸ The obviously high number of cases of adultery among the French nobility in American fiction may be seen as a sign of their lacking moral standards. Their concept of honour was tacitly defined as a set of social codes and rituals that had to be followed. In order to preserve the image of harmony and order, families had to be defended against outsiders (instead of fighting domestic problems and adultery). Newcomers, who were often caught between rigid conventions, expectations and morals, were very likely to fail in their fight to adapt to these conventions or to rebel against them and eventually experience a tragic end.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Cf. Méral 1989, p.44

⁴⁵ Cf. Ibid, p.51-53

⁴⁶ Cf. Levenstein 1998, p.142

⁴⁷ Cf. Méral 1989, p.55

⁴⁸ Cf. Levenstein 1998, p.69

⁴⁹ Cf. Ibid,p.57

One may also get the impression that in American fiction particularly young women from a wealthy urban background were especially prone to be thrust into emotional distress on European soil as they tended to confuse noble birth with virtue. Some works illustrate how much they found themselves torn between their own Puritan conscience and upbringing and the lack of moral seriousness displayed by the Parisian nobility. Henry James' *Madame de Mauves* (1874), for instance, reveals the deteriorating effect of being part of the Parisian nobility, as the protagonist, Euphemia de Mauves, has to acknowledge that her initial estrangement from Parisian society and its individuals gradually turned into contempt. Margery Palffy in *The Transgression of Andrew Vane* expresses her repulsion of Parisians' shallowness and insincerity, which she dismisses as an illustration of their shameless immorality.⁵⁰

Indeed, there was an increasing number of American women travelling to Europe towards the end of the Nineteen Century, either in the company of men or alone. The growing importance of young women from a wealthy urban background in North American literature at the time may reflect the emergence of a new sort of self confident woman who started to play a greater role in society and professional life than her predecessors did. Nonetheless, there seems to be hardly any evidence that these women were frequent victims of European aristocrats or noblemen. The notion of innocent Americans being corrupted by sophisticated and malicious Europeans always presupposed the fairly romanticized idea that many of the characters crossed the Atlantic primarily in order to become part of French nobility and/or to increase their social status. In fact, marriages between American women and French noblemen were fairly rare because of considerable language and cultural barriers. Since most of the expatriates were Protestant they were largely excluded from the top of French society, which was mainly made up of Catholics. Mothers did not travel to France with their daughters in order to marry them off to men of aristocratic background but, rather, in order to ensure their cultural and intellectual improvement.⁵¹

The striving for cultural enlightenment, however, shows that a stay in Paris might have thoroughly positive effects and that not all stories of Americans coming to Europe set before the First World War must end in tragedy. Not all American protagonists saw their romantic notions of Paris shattered. Louis Leverett in Henry James' short stories "A Bundle of Letters"

⁵⁰ Cf. Méral, p.65-67

⁵¹ Cf. Levenstein, p.142, 184 and 192

and “Point of View” would, for instance, show his great enchantment with France by continuing to wallow in romantic day dreams full of clichéd notions about Paris (, which are mostly inspired by the wide range of cultural artefacts and historical landmarks all over the city), when already dwelling in Boston again.⁵²

It could be argued that Americans coming abroad in fiction are not merely transformed from innocent, inexperienced individuals into jaded and exhausted ones, but usually simultaneously undergo a process of personal development which involves a considerable broadening of their horizon.⁵³ Samuel Dodsworth, who is rich but unversed in cultural matters, gradually widens his intellect in the course of Lewis’ novel on the International Theme. By gaining cultural knowledge and developing a valuable vision of a better life, he may eventually, among all the characters in the book, be the best judge of America’s and Europe’s advantages and their deficiencies.⁵⁴

However, Paris’ instructive qualities were obviously manifold. Apart from architecture, painting, writing, dancing and singing, the city seemed to offer space for exercises of a fairly different nature. Especially men were believed to undergo instruction in the game and science of love when staying in the French capital. The sheer infinite opportunities to indulge in sensual pleasures and the often highly demanding nature of Parisian women must have been a real challenge for many American males and may have sparked off a discourse and rhetoric within American literature to present the city of Paris as a woman and to refer to the French capital by the third person pronouns “she” and “her”.⁵⁵

After all, Paris had a reputation of being a city of love and free sexuality already at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. Nudity, which was common in the arts, or lightly dressed women on the stage, had, already back then, caused indignation among American travellers to France. French women were known for their beauty, their kinky talk and their capacity to beguile men with all their female charms. Since they did not disguise themselves but accentuated and proudly presented their beauty to the world, their comportment was so different from that of their American counterparts, who were fairly shy and would never dare to display their sexuality in public.⁵⁶ Even though written more than a century afterwards, Nin’s erotica illustrate the famous Parisian old school charms. From reading “Linda”, the

⁵² Cf. Méral 1989, p.74

⁵³ Cf. Ibid , p.76

⁵⁴ Cf. Grebstein 1962, p.115

⁵⁵ Cf. Ibid., p.82

⁵⁶ Cf. Levenstein 1998, p.68-71

reader learns that the city's fashion and style, its fastidiousness of detail, which made the famous Parisian chic, are already seen in dressmakers' and hairstylers' devotion to heighten any woman's physical attributes. It seems that the French were simply aware of "the mystery of veils, of lace over the skin, of provocative underwear, of a daring slit" (*Delta of Venus*, p.200).

3.2.2. World War I and Paris' expanding notoriety

With the First World War and in the aftermath of the battles, Parisian immorality gained further facets as, due to profound social changes hitting the country, the borders between classes and layers of society became increasingly porous and members of different socio-economic classes and educational backgrounds started to mix on European ground. Involvement with the Army or charities allowed a wide range of Americans to come to Paris and thus enjoy what had hitherto been a privilege to wealthier Americans or members of the upper-middle class. American writers like John Dos Passos and Elliot Paul, who served in the Army Corps as well as Edith Wharton or Dorothy Canfield, who worked for the Red Cross and engaged in various charities, became thus familiar with Paris during and after the war. Their work, which largely drew from their own experience, can hence be called more realistic than that of their predecessors.⁵⁷

It seems that Parisian notoriety gains particular momentum in this period when, probably due to the lifting of lighting restrictions, night time activities started to excel day time festivity. Secluded cafés as well as bars, theatres and restaurants now occurred much more frequently in literary works as they reflected people's demand for indoor activities which were supposed to be found in rather dark enclosed places rather than in the cafés scattered all over the streets and pavements.⁵⁸

Sexual pleasure started to play an increasing role in representations of Paris as Montmartre, its hillside and cabarets became the centre of night time life and THE haunt of prostitution, a topic that had heretofore not been dealt with frankly in American literature but had only been slightly insinuated. Especially colourful are the renditions in the novels by John Dos Passos (particularly in his *U.S.A.* trilogy) featuring descriptions of the numerous whores strolling

⁵⁷ Cf. Méral. 1989,p.88

⁵⁸ Cf. Ibid, p.110

through the dusky streets of Paris at night, harlots amusing soldiers and sexual transactions in dingy, sleazy spots such as closely shuttered houses.⁵⁹

The action often shifted to bedrooms of *hôtels de passé* (hotels used by prostitutes) where lovers could anonymously indulge in the immediacy of their liaisons or love affairs. These private rooms now became an integral part of Parisian life and were, most notably, introduced as settings into American fiction by John Dos Passos.

The figure of the soldier acquired a particularly remarkable erotic status as he became an object of desire and sexual activity. It was he who managed to heighten Paris' erotic charms by stirring gradually emancipating women, who, striving for sexual liberation, sought to live out life to the fullest.⁶⁰

Even though images of Paris conveyed can be called fairly melancholy, as they (and here especially in the case of Dos Passos) testify to a city taken over by soldiers and whores, the growing interest in the city itself rather than in Franco-American relationships makes these presentations more refreshing than contributions by many other fellow writers and predecessors.⁶¹

Another interesting thing is that, even though prostitution had flourished in Paris for already more than one century, literary renditions and accounts by travellers theretofore used to mention only decent forms of pleasure, such as dancing and singing, while they omitted, for example, the presence of whores in the cafés, bars and dance halls. Entries from private diaries kept in the first part of the Nineteen Century suggest that Americans often shared a desire to resist temptation that went hand in hand with the fear of getting corrupted abroad.⁶²

For the first time, one may thus actually speak of Paris in terms of a city symbolizing human failure, sin and moral decay as works (for instance by Edith Wharton, Dorothy Canfield or John Dos Passos) start to include social criticism directed at country fellowmen as well.

Canfield's *The Deepening Stream*, for example, illuminates how materialistic aspirations overshadowing humanitarian intervention and Americans' willingness to profit from the postwar misery the city and indeed all France suffered from, present American characters no longer in a morally superior position. John Dos Passos' *1919* shows that Americans are now likely to represent disoriented and devitalised individuals, who are full of neuroses and constantly aware of a sense of failure that makes them unable to enjoy the pleasures of Paris.

⁵⁹ Cf. Ibid.,p.113

⁶⁰ Cf. Méral 1989,p.121

⁶¹ Cf. Ibid.,p.134-135

⁶² Cf. Levenstein 1998, p.77f

They consequently fail to experience the invigorating and regenerating effect of artistic creation. The idea of Paris as the stage for human degradation is conveyed in Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers* and in *Chosen Country*, which elaborate on the image of Paris as a city lost to soldiers and whores, who are both associated with destructive qualities.

Problems with respect to these works' authenticity and accuracy are either related to their authors' exploitation of the work for their own social and political ambitions (as, for instance, in the case of Dos Passos, who included his anti-capitalist ideology in *1919*) or the sheer ignorance of socio-political changes with the First World War (which flaws, for instance, Canfield's and especially Wharton's image of Paris).⁶³

3.2.3. The high time of Parisian notoriety: The Nineteen Twenties and Thirties

Undoubtedly, the heyday of nocturnal revelry and debauchery beyond control in the city of Paris were the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties. In this period, the Parisian Bohemia continues to play an important role in the work of American expatriate writers lingering in the French capital. As Bohemian life expands to include not only the Latin Quarter but also Montparnasse, which becomes the hub of artistic life where many American writers lived and worked during those decades, the atmosphere of Parisian Bohemia becomes more cosmopolitan than ever before. Authors set out to create figures representative of their milieu, which is, of course, an artistic one. Hence, one can see a predominance of artists among the protagonists and characters in the works of The Lost Generation. It is this artistic or bohemian milieu that becomes the most notable stage of vice. The following pages will show that prostitution, hard, excessive drinking, drug taking, homosexuality and sexual debauchery became major aspects of Montparnassian life.⁶⁴

American characters come to Paris in order to indulge in the city's night time activities which causes the action presented often to be set by night. Locations with festive character, such as cafés, bars or restaurants as well as theatres and varietés and sometimes even brothels function as settings.

Even though renditions of Parisian nightlife differ greatly in tone and attitude, Méral generally senses evidence for the dissemination of a rather unfavorable image of the city throughout the Nineteen Twenties. The foregrounding of topics like excessive lifestyle and sexual deviancy in many works by writers of the Lost Generation reflected their interest in

⁶³ Cf. Méral 1989, p.128-135

⁶⁴ Cf. Ibid, p.155-156

Freudian themes and the general spirit of a new era that was marked by a revolution of morals and values, the victory of a new inspiring wave of black humour and the advent of Dadaism.⁶⁵

Despite rather unfavourable representations of Parisian Bohemia throughout the 1920s, one can neither find an invariably rigorous condemnation of these circles nor are Americans automatically in a morally superior position. Indeed, censure on the New World's capitalism and materialism as well as controversial images of Parisian bohemian circles exist side by side. The fairly negative connotation of expatriation was reflected by the derogatory use of the term "expatriate" and "tourist" as well as in the rather unflattering term "Lost Generation" in order to refer to a deracinated and disillusioned post-war generation of Americans in Paris, who were, due to their experiences at the front, robbed both of their cultural identity as well as their moral and psychological sanity and security.⁶⁶

Paris may be seen as a gathering place for restive individuals devoid of morality and sense in life. Expatriates' futile attempts to flee from reality is splendidly illustrated in *The Sun Also Rises* while works, such as Harold Loeb's *The Professors Like Vodka*, show that the presence of expatriates in the French capital results from self-deception and that especially failures felt more welcome and secure in Paris where they found an older and more generous civilization than back home.⁶⁷

Besides, the French capital also witnessed the arrival of new types, such as pushers and addicts, all emerging from the slums and bas-fonds. Their favorite realm still was the night, and Parisian nightlife virtually became a playground for their sins and vices, allowing an exploration of the dark abysses of the human soul. This game of introspection was in full harmony with the general spirit of the Nineteen Twenties' Bohemia that advocated personal liberation and sexual freedom. Vainly searching for happiness and liberation, characters often indulge in orgies and parties beyond measure, engage in drug addiction or show sexual obsession. With the work of writers in the late 1920s and 1930s constituting another wave of expatriation (that included authors like Henry Miller, Djuna Barnes or Anais Nin) these representations and interests into characters' psyches were pushed to an extreme and finally embedded in shocking representations of Paris as a city marked by numerous ambivalences.⁶⁸

These writers' image of Paris was profoundly shaped by their own strong passion for the city, their avant-garde ambitions as well as their dedication to either Surrealism or Symbolism. Their portrayals of Paris as a notorious city of debauchery and sex abundant often provoked

⁶⁵ Cf. Ibid. 1989, p. 142

⁶⁶ Cf. Bradbury 1995, p.330

⁶⁷ Cf. Méral 1989, p. 169

⁶⁸ Cf. Ibid, p.178

scandals and indignation. The often pessimistic vision of Paris can be said to derive from the general spirit inherent in the decade they were writing in. Deplorable socio-political developments throughout Europe probably darkened people's vision now that gloomier and uncertain prospects had to be faced. Paris, as so many times before, inspired writers' creativity to dwell on ideas which were no longer restricted to national or transatlantic matters but, indeed, of global relevance. The French capital may thus be seen as a valid indicator of human disintegration in general; of deterioration and misery that mankind should have to witness to the utmost no later than with the outbreak of another World War.⁶⁹

The following section is going to be dedicated to an illumination of Berlin in the fiction by American writers in the interwar period. Thereby, particular attention will be paid to the German capital's reputation as a city of total abandon and vice that can be inferred from several works written during the period. The analysis of the city's notoriety is going to include contributions by the following authors: Sinclair Lewis' novel *Dodsworth* (1929), Joseph Hergesheimer's *Berlin* (1931), from Josephine Herbst's family trilogy *Pity Is Not Enough* as well as the two later volumes *The Executioner Waits* (1934) and *Rope of Gold* (1939) and Robert Mc Almon's collection of short stories published under the title *Distinguished Air. Grim Fairy Tales* (1925). All of these authors spent time in the German capital and included more or less of their experience in their fictional work.

Since he was much more familiar with Berlin than many other fellow writers at his time, this analysis is going to take a closer look at some works by Christopher Isherwood, who acquired the American citizenship during the Second World War. The British-American author's Berlin stories published in the form of two short novels entitled *Mister Norris Changes Trains* (1935) and *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939) reflect the author's insight into Berlin life and social milieus and belong probably to the finest fictional accounts set in Pre-Hitler Germany.⁷⁰

Parisian notoriety will be examined with the help of references to works by American authors writing in and on the city of Paris during the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties. Among these, the following analysis includes Ernest Hemingway's novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), Sinclair Lewis' novel *Dodsworth* (1929), Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* (1934) as well as Anaïs Nin's collection of erotic short stories published under the title *Delta of Venus* (1940),

⁶⁹ Cf. Ibid, p.173 & p.208

⁷⁰ Cf. Brüning 1988, p.19

and Robert Mc Almon's thinly fictionalized memoir *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, which, having existed solely as a typescript at Yale University, was eventually published by the University of Illinois Press in 2007.

4. Cities of vice

It must be stressed that an analysis of Central European metropolises as cities of vice cannot rightfully evade reflections on concepts like national character and identity, as well as auto-stereotype and hetero-stereotype. Likewise, scholarly observation has to take into account socio-political and historical factors. Since the present thesis focuses on representations of Berlin and Paris in the period between the two World Wars, i.e. the Nineteen Twenties and Nineteen Thirties, attention is going to be paid to the socio-political context of the period in which the literary works under consideration were written.

It can be seen that the prevalence of many forms of vice (which are to be defined in American Puritan terms as various manifestations of worldly pleasures, like drinking alcohol, taking drugs, sexuality and other forms of recreation beyond measure) in Berlin and Paris as found in American accounts on these major Central European metropolises must be read against the socio-historical context of the two interwar decades.

4.1. Devastation and depravity

The end of the First World War went hand in hand with the collapse of several monarchies in the heart of Europe, such as Germany, Russia and Austria- Hungary. All the nations that had lost the war were both physically severely affected and economically ruined. Lack of money provoked a rather slow replacement of war production by the provision of consumer goods. Even victorious nations, like France, were financially deeply indebted to the United States which had provided large amounts of war material. The reduction of industrial production in the years after the war caused a surge in unemployment rates, while the unavailability of

goods provoked a tremendous increase in prices and a dramatic rise of inflation, particularly in Germany and Austria.

Certainly, living in Germany and France after the war must have been a fairly depressing affair. Apart from financial hardships, many cities were simply devastated. The rather poor living conditions of many families in Berlin in the interwar period may be reflected in the way of life of the Nowaks, whom Christopher joins in *Goodbye to Berlin*. Their apartment in Wassertorstraße is described as a rather small and dingy place, located in a run-down area which bears a close resemblance to a gutter. The atmosphere at their place is at times so stifling (not only due to the omnipresent stench of rancid butter, but also because of the frequent quarrels between Otto and his mother), that the protagonist frequently flees to the Alexander Casino at night.

Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, which may, to a certain degree, be read as an account of the author's early experience in Paris, testifies to the somewhat miserable existence the writer must have led back in his early days in the French capital. It is true that Miller was extremely poor when he arrived in the French capital in 1930. He had no job, no friends, and June, his wife, hardly wired any money. Like the narrator of *Tropic of Cancer*, he used to roam about Parisian streets, begging from American tourists until he managed to make some friends (most notably Alfred Perlès, an Austrian writer, and Richard Osborn, a bank clerk whose boss was Anais Nin's husband) among whose apartments he would rotate until the spring of 1931, when he finally found a job as a proof reader for the European edition of the *Chicago Tribune*.⁷¹

Paris in 1928, from which the narrator particularly remembers all the tiny details, appears thoroughly gloomy. They all testify to a dilapidated city robbed of glory and splendour: "the toilets that wouldn't work, the prince who shined [his] shoes, the Cinema Splendide where [he] slept on the patron's overcoat, the fat cockroaches" (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.22). Even if the narrator, who frequently refers to himself with the personal pronoun "I", recalling himself "a bewildered, poverty-stricken individual who haunted the streets like a ghost at a banquet" during his first months in Paris (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.22) may be considered to represent the author, Miller had been bestowed with a certain love for ugliness that enabled him to avail himself of the creative potential of the environment. It was at the time of his move to the Cadet Quarter of Montmartre in March 1934 (which is chronicled by his friend and lover,

⁷¹ Cf. Brown 1986, p.12f.

Anais Nin, in the latter's diary) that Miller was absorbed in working on the final version of *Tropic of Cancer*. In this fairly run-down quarter of Paris, Miller had found the perfect milieu to finish his book, for the place was "full of whores, Arabs, Spaniards, pimps, artists, actors, vaudevillians, night club singers".⁷²

In Miller's description of Paris the momentary interaction of colours, sounds and smell in combination with the sight of poverty and sordidness creates a unique atmosphere of desolation and melancholy:

The sun is setting fast. The colours die. They shift from purple to dried blood, from nacre to bister, from cold dead grays to pigeon shit. Here and there a lopsided monster stands in the window blinking like an owl. There is the shrill squawk of children with pale faces and bony limbs, rickety little urchins marked with the forceps. A fetid odour seeps from the walls, the odour of a mildewed mattress. Europe-medieval, grotesque, monstrous: a symphony in b-mol (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.47).

4.2. Fertile soils for scammers, swindlers and prostitutes

Many Germans in Berlin had to pursue more than just one occupation in order to sustain a living. Some of them may not have always remained on legal grounds. In *Mister Norris Changes Trains* Olga, for instance, earns a living by letting lodgings, taking in washing, occasional exquisite fancy needle-work and, most strikingly, as a procuress, a cocaine-seller and a receiver of stolen goods.

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Just as political crimes soared throughout the Twenties and Thirties due to the ongoing political instability and the fights between adherents of both right and left wing radical parties, the normal crime rate rose tremendously in the Weimar Republic. Robbery and burglary flourished as much as the activities of criminal gangs involved in pornography, prostitution and gambling did.⁷³

Theft must have been a huge problem in Central European metropolises. In the morning after the tour through Berlin's nightlife, Kepler in "Distinguished Air" has to discover that he has a thousand marks less than he had thought he should have. At Miss Knight's Thanksgiving Party, Foster Graham appears "violently despondent and reckless" because he has been

⁷² Cf. *The Diary of Anais Nin*, vol.I., p.320

⁷³ Cf. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

robbed of his evening suit, his diamond cuff and watch that was an old family heirloom by his blond German lover boy.

Pick-pockets virtually seem to haunt the German capital. In *Goodbye to Berlin*, Pieps is introduced to the reader as a run-away from home ,who, having made his way throughout Europe, has come to Berlin where he now divides his time working in an amusement hall (equipped with lots of pinch-balls, peep shows and try-your-grip-machines) located in Friedrichstraße and as a clever pick-pocket. Gerhardt, another juvenile delinquent, has specialised in a seemingly more noble business than Pieps, for he prefers stealing from the larger and more renowned department stores, such as Landauers.

Due to their economic superiority, American tourists were particularly attractive targets of criminals. In this context Levenstein stresses women's likelihood of becoming victims of scammers and swindlers. For, throughout the Nineteen Twenties, an increasing number of American women became used to travel alone or with female company.⁷⁴

Having spent a night with Sally, Paul Rakowski (or P. Sanders), the putative European agent of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, does not only try to lure his unknowing victim into some kind of dubious business, but also robs her of her money.

Of course, women were not the only victims of theft. W. H. Auden, who stayed in Berlin from the autumn of 1928 to May 1929, certainly fully indulging in the Berlin's homo-erotic nightlife, seems to have made similar experience. The boys he usually enjoyed himself with are reported to have often been like children, capricious, materialistic and fairly whimsical. In most cases, they were notoriously unfaithful and very likely to disappear all of a sudden, frequently taking away their client's money.⁷⁵

Similar instances were probably witnessed in Paris. In *Tropic of Cancer* Ginette is obviously versed in cleaning out her partners. Having tricked Fillmore into staying with her, the hard-boiled prostitute invites other men to their shared hotel rooms not only to have sex with them, but also to receive all kinds of gifts from them, even if they were in fact "impotent old farts".

⁷⁴ Cf. Levenstein 1998, p.249

⁷⁵ Cf. Kemp, 2010, p.172

4.3. Stifling poverty vs. flamboyance and dissipation

The disappearance of three European empires as well as new demarcation of borders and the loss of former colonial possessions provoked the dissolution of former economic zones. All over Europe industrial production dropped by a third. In some European countries, particularly in Germany and Austria, the unemployment rate soared to about ten per cent of the whole labour force.⁷⁶

The contrast between the lives of the poor and those of the rich was particularly strong in Berlin. While many Berlin citizens had to live in rather poor conditions, wealthier individuals (including American tourists and expatriates) could enjoy life to the fullest. While the German mark had already fallen to 8000 marks for one dollar in December 1922, one dollar amounted for unbelievable 4200 billion marks at the peak of German hyperinflation in November 1923.⁷⁷

In contrast to the Nowaks and Isherwood (who could have always had afforded better accomodation if he had only wanted to, especially when earning money as a tutor⁷⁸), who are carving out a rather miserable existence in their fairly dingy apartment, Lester Tolman in Josephine Herbst's family trilogy leads a much more comfortable life in Germany. As an American traveller profiting from the low exchange rate he virtually led the life of a bon vivant when travelling through the country. He reports on the country as a virtual paradise for artists and connoisseurs of wine. When dining with his friends, Jonathan and Victoria Chance, the reader learns that Tolman has spent "several years in cafés", that he "knew Ezra Pound and that he had sat behind James Joyce at a recital of George Antheil's music" (*The Executioner Waits*, p.339). He speaks of Munich as a magnet for American painters, who could celebrate here the wildest orgies because they were "valuta wealthy".

⁷⁶ Cf. Rettinger-Weissensteiner 1996, p.6

⁷⁷ Cf. Gaettens 1982, p.237ff.

⁷⁸ Cf. Isherwood 1976, p.38-45

In a letter received by Jonthan and Victoria some time before his arrival, the image of Germany conveyed is indeed that of a cheap country, where almost everything can be purchased at a very low price:

[...] it's wonderful. He's wandering all around Germany on next to nothing. Took a train to Dresden from Berlin, cost him a dime. Went to the Rhine from Berlin. A quarter. Lives in the best hotels. Buys Rhine wine at each meal. One dollar (*The Executioner Waits*, p.258).⁷⁹

That Tolman's experience is just one version of actual reality soon becomes obvious. Herbst's account is full of empathy and sensitivity to social facts and circumstances. She does, for instance, not fail to grasp the socio-political tensions and turbulences on both sides of the Atlantic. Probably due to her own experience in the Weimar Republic, where she had been living for more than one year from the fall of 1922 onwards, and, because of her marriage to John Hermann, a member of the Communist party, Josephine Herbst had an eye for the troubles and misery of ordinary people.⁸⁰ Criticism is aimed at tourists' gluttony and willingness to exploit their financial superiority, particularly when Berlin is described as a city crowded by tourists "eating the Germans out of house and home for a few cents", for they were dining and drinking in rich places that would never make you suggest that "the Germans couldn't pay their war debts" (*Rope of Gold*, p.217).

Tolman, indeed, becomes fully aware of the huge socio-economic contrasts in Germany, when sitting together with his decadent companions over a bottle of expensive wine and a cigar in the evenings, while, actually, "the world was rocking" (*Rope of Gold*, p.218). His reflections do not fully relieve him of his unease as he continues to notice the scrutinizing glances of the Germans "looking them up and down, accusing them for their good foreign clothes and shoes" (*Rope of Gold*, p.219).

Likewise, several American travelers and expatriates must have been well aware of the enormous gap between their own economic situation and that of Berliners. Sometimes, the awareness even conjures up feelings of helplessness and pity. Having forgotten the first anger about having been robbed of his watch, Foster Graham in "Distinguished Air" does not seem to fume any longer. Instead, reflection brings him to the conclusion that, "perhaps, [the boy]

⁷⁹ Cf. Zacharasiewicz 1998, p.181

⁸⁰ Cf. Ibid

needed them worse than I do” (“Distinguished Air”, p.11). Driven by feelings of being responsible for the condition of the people he has spent the night with, Kepler decides to give all of his night companions a share in five hundred marks.

4.4. A deflation of love and interpersonal relationships

Among the businesses one might label “impure” according to traditional American moral conceptions, prostitution was certainly one of the most flourishing ones in Berlin and Paris during the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties. In many cases, poverty virtually forced people into prostitution.

Christopher Isherwood’s short novels illuminate many Germans’ necessity to prostitute themselves. Like so many other young Berlin women, Frl. Kost, one of the other lodgers in Fr. Schroeder’s flat, has to walk along the line for her living, which does nonetheless not prevent her from regularly failing to pay her rent on time. In an attempt to embarrass Arthur Norris in front of William, Helen Pratt reveals the whores standing at the corner of the Kaufhaus des Westens as the “speciality” of the most famous Berlin shopping mall. At a later moment in the story Fr. Schroeder, in a fairly naïve and cynical remark, even gives voice to her consideration of prostituting herself, well aware of the fact that prostitution was “the one kind of business still going well nowadays”. After all, the reader learns right at the beginning of the novel about the three whores over fifty for whom there is considerable demand, especially among younger men and even boys who were too shy with girls of their own age.

Some of the books under consideration help to draw a mental map of commercialised sex in Berlin. From *Goodbye to Berlin*, the reader learns that Friedrichstrasse is the realm of Gerhardt’s aunt. The relative of Pieps’ co-lodger is described no less colourfully than as “an elderly Friedrichstrasse whore whose legs and arms were tattooed with snakes, birds and flowers” (*Goodbye to Berlin*, p.458).

In Josephine Herbst’s family trilogy, Lester Tolman, in order to feel the spirit of real Germany, is advised by Cora Constanze to go to Wedding, where there were not only the workers’ homes but also “girls ‘peddling themselves for a few cents on every corner, in every café swarming like flies on dead meat” (*Rope of Gold*, p.217).

That the Parisian night is also the realm of the whore, the unrecognized queen of the Parisian night, may be inferred from Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*. In Miller's Paris, harlots are scattered all over the city and, thanks to the narrator's detailed and vivid delineations, the reader has no difficulty envisioning "the whores in the doorways, seltzer bottles on every table; [...] and a thick tide of semen flooding the gutters" (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.23) or the "leprous streets which only revealed their sinister splendour when the light of day had oozed away and the whores commenced to take up their posts" (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.48-49).

The reader of Miller's novel is explicitly informed about the narrator's numerous sexual escapades and his sheer insatiable sexual drive. A little peculiar may be at first the narrator's ambivalence that is revealed in his obvious indulgence in the sex-laden atmosphere, while occasionally giving misanthropic and misogynist comments. He seems, for instance, to be constantly thrilled of being plucked into a doorway by one of the, what he calls, "vultures croaking and flapping their dirty wings" or of being "taken in by one of these buzzards" (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.49) on the boulevard leading to the Bastille.

In the course of the book, the narrator even metonymically refers to Paris as a whore. The slightly negative metaphor and the occasional misogynist tone in his work may be part of the author's overall agenda to irritate and shock, and, to some degree, derive from the resentment of his over-critical and rejecting mother surfacing when he is angered by the way Paris has got hold of him, "grab[bed him] by the balls, one might say, like some lovesick bitch who'd rather die than let you get out of her hands" (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.176).⁸¹ After all:

Paris is like a whore. From a distance she seems ravishing, you can't wait until you have her in your arms. And five minutes later you feel empty, disgusted with yourself. You feel tricked (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.211).

Miller's real feelings were probably even more ambiguous than these lines would suggest, considering the fact that he is reported to have shown great sympathy for whores, especially for those of his Quarter whom he would watch walk home at dawn with great interest and passion, and whom, above all, he would consider mostly free of the annoying vanities of ordinary women, the constant desire for flirtatious talk, love letters and confessions of one's admiration.⁸²

⁸¹ Cf. Kennedy 1993, p.170

⁸² Cf. *The Diary of Anaïs Nin* vol. I., p.16

Certainly, prostitution was not a new phenomenon, nor was it restricted to France or Germany. As far as France was concerned, the country had seen a long tradition of sex for sale and had gained a reputation as a country of higher class prostitution. The tradition of French commercialized sex is said to go back to the days before the revolution, when the Duke of Orléans was reported to have sponsored excessive orgies in the Palais Royal, hiring hundreds of prostitutes. While in the aftermath of 1830 it were mainly impoverished people from the French provinces that came to Paris in order to sell their bodies, commercialized sex on the highest level started to be offered in the second half of the century by the so-called *cocotte*. These were very attractive, cultivated women who received prosperous men in their luxurious apartments. They were usually paid in the form of little gifts, loans and stipends.⁸³

4.5. Sex abundant

Financial hardships in both France and Germany may have led to an increase in prostitution after the First World War. Sex for sale thus ceased to be a rare phenomenon. Some of the works under consideration convey the impression that, in terms of quantity and quality, sex can be found everywhere in the two capitals.

In Paris, almost any corner seemed to offer an opportunity for erotic diversion. Both public and private places turn into nests of love. Apart from the notorious (homosexual) *cafés*, bars, restaurants and dance halls, one gets to know about little dark rooms where love is secretly consumed (as, for instance, in *Delta of Venus* by Bijou and her juvenile lovers she finds in the art classes she poses for), the dark boxes of theatres and operas where women are made love to, or the private dining rooms created for lovers. The cubbyhole of an Arab restaurant becomes the love nest for the narrator of “Marcel” when having sex with a young Arab boy in this tiny narrow place, where only the protective pile of coats above them saves the lovers from being uncovered by the sudden entrance of a half-drunken soldier.

Artist parties were probably known for their extraordinarily nonchalant atmosphere. In Nin’s erotic stories as well as in Robert Mc Almon’s fictionalized memoir the reader is virtually taken to such merry gatherings, where a sufficient amount of alcohol helps to make all

⁸³ Cf. Levenstein 1998, p. 70-73

attendants so happy and relaxed that they may not even be disinclined to embark on amorous or erotic adventures. In some cases, as for instance, in “Manuel” (where a young man roams about artist parties in order to pursue his exhibitionistic needs) characters reveal obsessive traits or at least a tendency towards erotic debauchery. In “Linda”, the (namesake) protagonist is invited to a (befriended) painter’s party, where she is not only made familiar with her host’s extravagant habit of gathering masked society people, but soon finds herself on a beautiful clearing covered with moss on a hot summer evening. Linda now has to realize that she is in the midst of an orgy in full bloom, where all the guests seem to stick to no law but the rules of their innermost desires. The atmosphere of utmost abandon is accentuated by the soundtrack of passion, aggression and bestiality in the form of “cries of resistance”, grunts and shrieking:

Women caressed one another. Two men would set about teasing a woman into a frenzy and then stop merely to enjoy the sight of her dress half-undone, a shoulder strap fallen, a breast uncovered, while she tried to satisfy herself by pressing obscenely against the men, rubbing against them, lifting her dress”(*Delta of Venus*, p.197).

The city’s numerous dark streets are the areas where some sexual deviant may look out for a potential victim. Manuel, the obsessive exhibitionist, is known to be standing at dark street corners, naked under his overcoat, which he opens in order to shake his erected penis when a woman passes him. Similarly, the dark quays of the Seine seem to be a favoured haunt for libertines and sex-maniacs, particularly when only dimly lit at night.

Even taxi cabs turn into private rooms. Leila in “Elena” virtually falls over Elena on the backseat of her limousine as they are on their way to the tea shop in the Rue de Rivoli (which is, by the way, a gathering place for homosexuals). Georgette, the prostitute in *The Sun Also Rises*, tries to arouse Jake Barnes’ interest in a horse-drawn cab on their way to the Right Bank, before eventually being rebuffed by him. So is Sudge when trying to get affectionate with Colette Godescard in the taxi on their way to Raymond Duncan’s party in *The Nightinghousls of Paris*. From these instances, one may catch a glimpse of what Anais Nin called the state of erotic intoxication lovers feel when riding in taxi cabs. For here one was allowed to feel a variety of emotions in a sort of dream-like situation that would only keep participants exhilarated as long as the vehicle was in motion. Such stolen kisses in taxi cabs, would, according to Nin, reflect the transitory character of life and the impossibility to capture any moment as they bore the “flavour of life and time slipping by”.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Cf. *The Diary of Anais Nin* vol.II., p.215

Berlin's and Paris' notoriety is further emphasized by the fact that many scenes are set at night or in dark surroundings. Settings like night bars, secluded cafés as well as brothels (usually frequented by night) occur frequently. Probably, darkness and night have always been and will always be associated with notions of the hidden and forbidden. Cities' harmful potentials were often considered to be even stronger at night so that urban night life was frequently associated with notions of sin and vice.⁸⁵

Sometimes urban nightlife even gets an almost mysteriously obscure quality, for instance when "night hawks" are befallen by a feeling of entering some sort of secret underworld when roaming about Paris at night, as happens, for instance, to Marcel and the narrator of the story as they enter a new dive. The lasciviousness and obscurity of Parisian nightlife could hardly be expressed more metaphorically:

Black, like the black underwear of the Parisian whore, the long black stockings of the cancan dancers, the wide black garters of the women especially created to satisfy men's most perverse caprices, the tight black corsets which set off the breasts and push them upwards towards men's lips, the black boots of flagellation scenes in French novels (*Delta of Venus*, p.220).

4.6. Paris' famous brothels

The notoriety of Central European capitals was certainly fuelled by the sophistication of their erotic attractions. Several of the works analyzed show that in terms of quality, commercial sex must have become increasingly diversified and professionalized in the course of the Nineteen Twenties. While Samuel Dodsworth somewhat scathingly remarks that "there are few professional prostitutes to be found at the Dôme or the Select, no matter how competent were some of the amateurs" (*Dodsworth*, p.321), prostitution seems to have become highly sophisticated by the time Henry Miller and Anais Nin visited the city.

First of all, the number of instances set in brothels is fairly striking. In their books establishments offering commercialised sex seem to be strewn all over Paris and every week there seem to be new whorehouses opening their doors. In Paris, brothels have obviously flourished since the days of the famous Duke of Orléans and his notorious parties which led to an increased number of bordellos in the streets around the Palais Royal and must have

⁸⁵ Cf. Schonlau 2005, p.100

mushroomed after 1830, when poverty drove many French men and women into prostitution.⁸⁶

Sex tourism to Berlin and Paris must have played an economically important role. Particularly Americans, who were regarded as potentially wealthy clients, were targeted by the cities' pornographic industry. The narrator of *Tropic of Cancer* temporarily earns a living by writing pamphlets for an establishment in the rue Edgar Quinet. That not only Americans amused themselves with prostitutes is shown by the re-occurring notion that the customers of these brothels are made up of clients from all over the world. There are, for instance, Kepi, Nanantee's friend in *Tropic of Cancer*, who spends almost all his money for sex, in spite of having a wife and eight children back at home in Bombay or the Gandhi disciple who accidentally defecates into the bidet at Miss Hamilton's in the Rue Laferrière, causing shock not only in the lady proprietor, but also among her numerous young female employees.

In the course of a one-hour conversation with an escort girl over a plate of caviar and a bottle of special champagne in a place tellingly called the Casanova, the narrator of *Berlin* learns that men from the United States usually are "the most niggardly with their money", whereas the Japanese as well as the German and Austrian nobility spend "great sums of money for entertainment" (*Berlin*, p. 245).

At the Rendezvous Place, a gathering place for mannish looking lesbians in Berlin, Steve Rath voices her anger and disappointment with the women present since they are, according to her, nothing more but "German bitches [who] try to get off with [her] simply because [she was] a foreigner, and they thought [she] was wealthy" ("The Lodging House", p.62).

The fact that the narrators are often led through cities' notorious night dives illustrates what Levenstein calls the easy availability of guides that would show tourists all the cities' nocturnal attractions, especially brothels.⁸⁷ Like Harold Files, Kepler is guided through Berlin's night life by the narrator of "Distinguished Air". Sudge Galbraith and Ross Campion in *The Nightinghousls of Paris* benefit from the knowledge of their benevolent guide, Kit, who is obviously a quarter habitué, having known the city for years.

Autobiographical sources suggest that Mc Almon himself also liked to play the guide for unknown travellers. It was he who initiated Sudge's and Ross's real life counterparts (John Glassco and Graeme Taylor, two youngsters from Montréal, who were eager to pursue a

⁸⁶ Cf. Levenstein 1998, p.71

⁸⁷ Cf. Ibid. , p.242

literary career in Paris) to Parisian night life⁸⁸. Additionally, Sylvia Beach mentions Mc Almon's remarkable familiarity with the places where one had to be at the time. Even though the bookshop keeper herself was not in the habit of strolling about the city's nightlife with her friends, she seemed to have very much liked Mc Almon's presence in the rare cases she went out at night.⁸⁹

In February 1932, Henry Miller acted as a guide to Anais Nin and took her to a brothel in Rue Blondel, a place so marvellously corresponding to many people's image of a den of vice; namely a smoke-filled café, full of men and naked women trying to get the visitors' attention even before the patron of the place has led them to their table. The visit, however, seemed to have left her apparently much more irritated and stupefied than enchanted or stimulated. For, during the indifferent performance entirely devoid of erotic suspense she could not restrain from wondering how anyone could ever get stimulated by such a spectacle.⁹⁰

The number of brothels occurring in the books considered notwithstanding, whores' repertoire of fulfilling their job professionally had obviously increased in sophistication as well. There seemed to be no taste or sexual preference that could not be fulfilled. In "The Basque and Bijou" Maman's brothel was obviously a notorious place known for its vast supply of different types of whores, ranging from playful girls rolling themselves around men like ribbons to more violent ones, who were attacking men and thus satisfy particularly the needs of guilty males who long to be raped in order to be able to put all the blame on the whores. Here, the Basque accidentally bumps into a wildly passionate foursome between Bijou, Viviane (the whore with the finely defined muscles) and a foreign-looking couple.

Due to his eternal cruising and strolling through Parisian streets and notorious establishments, the narrator of *Tropic of Cancer* gradually becomes familiar with the wide range of Paris' erotic diversions and what he would call "varieties of sexual provender". Unlike some more wealthy predecessor, Paris does not really turn him into a connoisseur of ordinary women, but, in fact, into an expert on prostitutes, as can be seen in the account of his encounter with Germaine, whom he classifies "a whore from the cradles":

As she stood up to dry herself, still talking to me pleasantly, suddenly she dropped the towel and advancing to me leisurely, she commenced rubbing her pussy affectionately, stroking it with her two hands, caressing it, patting it, patting it. There was something about her eloquence at the moment and the way she thrust that rosebush under my nose

⁸⁸ Cf. Smoller in *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, xxix

⁸⁹ Cf. Beach 1970, p.37-38

⁹⁰ Cf. *The Diary of Anais Nin* vol.I.,p.58

which remains unforgettable, [...]. As she flung herself on the bed, with legs spread wide apart, she cupped it with her hands and stroked it some more, murmuring all the while in that hoarse, cracked voice of hers that it was good, beautiful, a treasure, a little treasure. And it was good, that little pussy of hers! (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.50)

American expatriates' and travellers' fascination with prostitutes in Paris or Berlin may not only have derived from their sexual pursuits. Sometimes, whores simply were the only natives they came into contact with. Robert Mc Almon's own sympathy for prostitutes may probably have resulted from the fact that, due to language barriers, they were among the few French with whom he could communicate (even though this sort of communication was certainly of a different kind than mere verbal exchange).⁹¹

In *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, Kit seems to accept and sometimes even to enjoy the presence of prostitutes. He occasionally defends their reputation by saying that "they merely get paid for what others often make an effort to give away" or by calling prostitution "straight enough a business among the selective and fastidious poules" (*The Nightinghousls of Paris*, p.115).

4.7. Deviant sexuality

With respect to eroticism, Berlin and Paris in the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties had more in stock than just commercialized sex. The cities flourishing nightlife was attractive to all kinds of night hawks and knew no restrictions to any form of creativity, but instead a boundless love of experimentation. The forms of sexuality encountered and practised were as highly diverse as the interests of the very often intellectual clients.

4.7.1. A flourishing homosexual subculture

Sexual relations with persons of the same sex probably represented one of the most harmless of deviating sexual preferences. Particularly among bohemian circles, homosexuality was a wide-spread phenomenon. Due to the liberty and openness associated with these circles, there appears to be more space for individuals to live out their sexuality and to socialize with

⁹¹ Cf. Smoller in *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, xviii

greater ease. Particularly among musicians, poets and writers, who were often regarded as a little crazy, homosexuality was widely accepted.⁹² Thus, like many other characters in the works discussed, homosexuals were often artists.

One should not, however, fall for the misconception that all France or Germany hailed homosexuals. Indeed, like the United States, France and Germany regarded homosexuality as something unnatural. In contrast to America and Germany, homosexuals were not punished in France. In more refined salons during the Belle Epoque, they were even appreciated as honourable visitors.

Even though Paris before 1914 was not an overly attractive destination for male homosexual tourists, it was the more luring for lesbian travellers. After all, the city had a reputation of being a lesbian capital, where females could openly show their sexuality. Art depicting lesbian sexual encounters was accepted and there was a well-established homosexual subculture that manifested itself in a remarkable number of lesbian cafés and numerous lesbian artists living and working in the city. Famous women like Sarah Bernhardt or the writer Colette did not make a secret out of their inclination for the same sex. They may have thus been models to American females such as Gertrude Stein or Natalie Barney. While the former lived together with her friend Alice B. Toklas, the latter was the owner of a lesbian salon in her house that attracted lesbians from the English speaking World already before 1914.⁹³

Throughout the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties, Paris must have continued to be attractive for lesbians. The frequent occurrence of homosexual women in Nin's short stories and McAlmon's memoir shows the authors' familiarity with women inclined to the same sex and lesbians' growing self-confidence throughout the decade.

Even though portrayals often feature stereotypical versions of lesbians (e.g. as embodied by the strong mannish-looking woman also known as "lumberjack lesbian"), the image of women frankly showing their sexual preference is conveyed in most cases. The reader of "Elena", for instance, is introduced to Leila, the highly charismatic nightclub singer, who is presented to be even proud of being lesbian. Her activity and masculinity testify to her being "a woman of dubious sex" and her remarkable audacity seems to automatically turn her into a sort of role model for other lesbians, particularly for those who considered themselves

⁹² Cf. Ibid, xii

⁹³ Cf. Levenstein 1998, p.204

“condemned by their vice”. Leila pays full tribute to her role as a personified antidote to bourgeois morality by flaringly hating passive women who are obedient to men and by whipping her lovers “into being proud of their deviations” (*Delta of Venus*, p.105).

As fate would have it, Nin herself got familiar with the vanities of strong women in Paris. From her diary it becomes obvious that the author had a liaison with Henry Miller’s wife, June, whose beauty she adored and towards whom she felt a strong emotional affection, right from the beginning of their acquaintance. Yet, their relationship seems to have been characterised by fairly ambivalent feelings for each other. In spite of affection and understanding, Nin also confessed temporary feelings of hatred towards June for the latter’s strength and courage to be hard, cruel, egoist and proud, as well as jealousy about June’s life being filled with men. Their mutual trust, however, can be seen in June’s confession to Nin of her feelings towards women she had been unable to live out due to the lack of a suitable partner.⁹⁴

However, rather than considering Elena and Leila as fictional representations of Anais Nin and June Miller, the reader may recognize closer similarities between the love affair of Nin and June Miller and the relationship of Lillian and Sabina in Nin’s novel sequence *Cities of the Interior*⁹⁵.

The picture of a lumberjack lesbian is probably most recognizable in the character of Steve Rath, who appears both in Paris and in Berlin as she occurs in Robert Mc Almon’s Berlin short stories as well as in his fictionalized memoir *The Nightinghousls of Paris*. While being simply characterized as an adventurous lesbian in Paris, she appears as a bullying female in Berlin, lambasting herself through the city’s homosexual nightlife.

Homosexual men occur as Donald and Miguel, the gay couple befriended by Elena in *Delta of Venus*. They may be modelled on Robert Duncan, an American poet, and Paul Rosenfeld, a musician and literary critic, who were both acquainted with Nin. Entrances in her diary show that Nin was familiar with the troubles in the two men’s relationship, which predominantly rooted in a conflict about establishing roles of activity and passivity in their sexual life.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Cf. *The Diary of Anais Nin* vol.I., p.25-30

⁹⁵ Cf. Méral 1989, p.197

⁹⁶ Cf. *The Diary of Anais Nin* vol.III, p.90

In Miller's work, however, homosexuals only play a minor role. Among the few instances worth mentioning in *Tropic of Cancer* are the narrator's reminiscence of sharing a bed with a gay man and his visit to Madame Delorme, a lesbian.⁹⁷

In Le Havre, the narrator, Fillmore and Collins enter into a bar for homosexuals, indeed "a rough point which was packed with drunken sailors on shore leave", where they stay for a while in order to enjoy "the homosexual rout that was in full swing" (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.107).

4.7.2. Berlin- the one and only homosexual capital in the Nineteen Twenties

Going on a tour through Berlin's nightlife with Steve Rath teaches the narrator of Robert Mc Almon's "The Lodging House" that Berlin was the only real queer capital of the Nineteen Twenties. Apart from getting familiar with a number of homosexual dives, where Steve formidably manages to show her eccentricity, irascibility and petulance, the narrator learns that for a homosexual visitor from abroad, Berlin may have had instructional functions. In the course of the evening Steve confides in Files that "it took Berlin to teach me what the trouble with me was" and that she must have suffered from a strong feeling of oppression and alienation back home in America. In contrast to the rather prudish attitudes towards sexuality to be found in her own country, Berlin as THE haunt of both homosexuality and sexual licentiousness, offered her the perfect milieu to find herself (and obviously to realise that "I'm no girl") and to gather new experiences. Additionally, Steve seems to have been driven by an unquenchable thirst for adventure and Berlin, she knew, "was so wild, and anything could happen there without question" ("The Lodging House", p.66).

Apart from the numerous cafés, bars and dives that testify to a flourishing gay subculture in the German capital, there can be found factual evidence for Berlin's reputation as a Babylon for homosexuals.

By the Nineteen Twenties, the German capital had established itself as a focal point of scientific research into sexuality. This, of course, included, the scientific enquiry into homosexuality, transsexuality and other forms of sexual behaviour that were regarded as deviating from the norm. Apart from being homosexual, Jewish and a socio-democrat,

⁹⁷ Cf. Méral 1989, p.196

Magnus Hirschfeld was a leading expert on homosexuality and had been fighting against the punishment of sexual acts between males according to paragraph 175 of the German Criminal Code (which had been criminalizing homosexuality in Germany since 1871). The Institute for Sexual Science, which he initiated and which was set up in Berlin as well as its adjacent museum attracted and fascinated homosexual visitors from all over the world.

Together with a friend, Christopher Isherwood moved into a room in the apartment of Doctor Magnus Hirschfeld's sister during his third stay in Berlin, which began in late 1928. The experience Isherwood made on his visit to the Institute must have had a formative influence on him. First of all, the sight of transvestites among the guests, their relative quietness and the acceptance they met by all the other guests did not only disturb his "latent Puritanism", but also encouraged the revision of formerly naïve conceptions about transvestites. Secondly, the vast repertoire of the Institute's Museum; "whips and chains and torture instruments designed for the practitioners of pleasure pain, the high-heeled, intricately decorated boots for the fetishists as well as the erotic fantasy pictures by Hirschfeld's patients and galleries of photographs showing sexual organs of hermaphrodites or famous homosexual couples stirred him tremendously. The open display of sexuality both estranged and embarrassed him in the same way as it aroused his curiosity."⁹⁸

4.7.3. Of curiosity and shock. Two closely related emotions

Reactions to Berlin and Paris were as divided as feelings about forms of conduct encountered and witnessed in the cities' nightlives. Probably, Berlin stirred more controversial sentiments among visitors than Paris, predominantly due to the frank display of sexuality. While some travellers and expatriates condemned Berlin as far too vulgar (as, for instance, Ernest Hemingway did), others seemed to indulge in the prevailing laissez-faire atmosphere. There thus seems to be a truth in what Toma considered to be an ambivalence inherent in American thought and feeling; the co-existence of curiosity and shock about immorality.

Sometimes, even Germans may have been disconcerted by overly offensive conduct as, for instance, the German couple at Charlie Knight's Thanksgiving Party in "Miss Knight". Even though they own a café for homosexuals in the city, they decide to leave the protagonist's

⁹⁸ Cf. Isherwood, 1976 p.18-20

Thanksgiving Party, dismayed at the sight of Foster Morris “being unduly familiar with his soldier lover in front of them” (“Distinguished Air”, p.11).

Albeit annoyed, they do not appear as shocked as, for instance, the party of totally drunk American youths, whom Christopher and Fritz Wendel encounter in front of the Salomé and who are hesitant to enter a dive full of homosexuals and men dressing up as women.

Americans’ indignation at European vice is finely illustrated by the Dodsworths in Sinclair Lewis’ novel on the International Theme. Led through Berlin’s nightlife by a descendant of an Austrian aristocratic family, the couple end up in one of the city’s notorious dives. The place bearing the fairly alluding name “Die Neueste Ehe” soon turns out to be a gathering place for homosexuals and transvestites, who obviously excel in irritating the American couple with their eccentricity and flamboyance. The Dodsworths’ image of Germans thick as pancakes and solid as plow-horses conveyed by American comic weeklies is rapidly discarded by the sight of men dressed in lavender and rose and talking in shrill voices. Before they hastily leave the spot, the Dodsworths’ estrangement is minutely described. The encounter with offensively flirtatious homosexuals makes the protagonists feel totally aghast as well as flabbergasted:

He stood gaping. His fists clenched. The thick, reddish hair on the back of his hands bristled. But it was not belligerence he felt- it was fear of something unholy. He saw that Fran was equally aghast; proudly he saw that she drew nearer his stalwartness (*Dodsworth*, p.239).

Outrage and shock may also have been conjured up by reports of very anomalous forms of sexuality frequently witnessed by observers in the two major European capitals.

Berlin’s reputation as the capital of sex soon turned the city into a playground for everyone interested in (s)experiments and abundant sex . It may be suggested that Christopher Isherwood, for instance, had great expectations when coming to Berlin. By staying in a foreign city distant from home he may have hoped to re-discover the lost sexuality of his adolescence. Together with W.H. Auden and one of the latter’s friends, Francis, he roamed about Berlin nightlife, particularly focusing on the boys’ bars in working class districts. Isherwood pretty much enjoyed himself with the lads

he met there and must have been fairly promiscuous during his stay in the German capital. A list he compiled during his nine-month stay in Berlin contains no fewer than nine names of young men who must have been even more to him than mere one night stands.⁹⁹ The fact that he hardly knew any German probably enabled him to address and voice his erotic desires even more directly. Besides, the boys he met were usually impoverished and came from the working class. In most cases they were in need of what he had to offer, namely money.¹⁰⁰

Isherwood's ambivalent feelings at the sight of utensils designed to give pleasure, which were exposed in the museum of the Department for Sexual Science, may stem from his own sado-masochistic inclinations. He seemed to have been sure that in Berlin he would find the kind of light aggression in the act of love-making between men which he so desired. He obviously liked to play with boys who liked to be beaten and to whom it was the most natural thing to give him what he had been longing for so much: "a struggle which turned gradually into a sex act" (*Christopher and His Kind*, p.31).

It may thus not come as a surprise that, together with the reader of *Mister Norris Changes Trains*, William Bradshaw accidentally stumbles into a sado-masochistic session between his friend Norris, Anni and Olga, the party's host. The whole incident bears a thoroughly bizarre and scurrilous quality right from the beginning on, when William is already led into the room by Norris' agonized cry and immediately stupefied by the comical sight of his friend's posture on the floor. The whole episode becomes even kinkier, because the protagonist is all of a sudden integrated into the passionate game. The blows from Olga's whip eventually cause him the pains that follow him even a few hours later, when the party is already over. It is only then that William, stepping over the bodies of about half a dozen people lying "insensible about the dismantled room, cannot help feeling that the whole building "seemed to be full of dead bodies" (*Mister Norris Changes Trains*, p.34).

Similarly, Paris appears to be a virtual playground for sex maniacs and everyone inclined to deviant forms of sexuality. Particularly Nin's renditions in *Delta of Venus* provide a startling mosaic of sexual perversities in the French capital. Apart from Manuel, the obsessive exhibitionist standing at dark street corners and roaming about drunken artists at parties in studios in order to satisfy his fetish-laden drives, her stories feature the most peculiar sexual

⁹⁹ Cf. Kemp 2010, p.165

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Isherwood 1976, p.30

preferences. Exhibitionism and voyeurism often appear in conjunction as sadism and masochism do. Characters sometimes reveal paedophilic tendencies as, for instance, Bijou, who is frankly described as gradually taking off her clothes with the highest form of enjoyment in front of the drawing class she poses for. Mary Ann's cunning performance of undressing herself in "Pierre" clearly aims at enchanting and seducing her teenage admirer. The same story even involves an instance of necrophilia in the form of Pierre's wild love-making to a dead female pulled out of the Seine.

4.8. Gradual moral debasement

4.8.1. Changing one's partners like changing one's clothes

The hypersexualisation that could be observed in both cities during the Nineteen Twenties and Nineteen Thirties may have conjured up emotional distress. Characters in the works observed, regardless of their sexual orientation, often display promiscuous private lifestyles and a marked tendency towards shallow interpersonal relationships.

If the reader is to believe in Sally Bowles, women's lack of selectivity in the choice of (sex) partners is already justified by the sheer "surplus of women" (which may not be dismissed as totally absurd given the fact that many young men had died on the battlefields in the course of the First World War) in the German capital and the obvious abundance of commercialized sex.

Considering the rampant poverty that affected many German and French people, purely financial interests may have played a decisive role in many a love affair or relationship. Sally Bowles' numerous hook-ups, for instance, seem to primarily result from financial or professional tactics. Her 'consumption' of men is a rather high one, largely due to her willingness to have sex with anyone as long as this may help boost her career.

The narrator of Robert Mc Almon's story "Distinguished Air" comments critically on the situation of Berlin, where love and sex are virtually devaluated like the German mark due to what he calls the "hand-me-down, quick order, bargain variety, wholesale" (Miss Knight and others, p.50) mentality which can be observed in the city and which is considered by the narrator to be robbing interpersonal encounters of all its mesmerizing charms.

Characters' promiscuity and infidelity may not only be a result of the very wide and easy availability of sex in European metropolises after the First World War. Besides financial hardships that forced people into prostitution, many people must have felt the need to escape their stifling lives, even if this flight from the melancholy of everyday reality was only meant to last for a few hours. Sexual debauchery may then, for instance, be justified as a form of solace from the overall disastrous and depressing state Germany was in. Flora, the girl the narrator of "Distinguished Air" picks up at a night club in the Kurfürstendamm, does not seem to care much about faithfulness and devotion to just one man. This is illustrated by her ogling and dancing with the narrator while actually having a boyfriend because

I like dancing and a good time. Even if there hadn't been the war, things must be boring when one gets old. What's the use of being serious about it all as Jack is. One only lives once, but that's enough. It isn't as though this country weren't all smashed to pieces either. I'm half English, but my nationality is German, and I couldn't get on in England, so Jack stays with me. He won't marry me though, but that doesn't matter ("Distinguished Air", p.42).

In *Tropic of Cancer*, the narrator and his companions change their partners and sex buddies as frequently as does Charlie Knight or his entourage in "Miss Knight". Regardless of place, no man or woman seems to be totally secure of not being picked up by one of the protagonists in Mc Almon's Berlin stories. Already at the beginning of "Miss Knight" one can literally see the protagonist jerking his/her head coquettishly to any man in uniform passing his/her gaze. In *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, Hilaria is described as someone who is willing to start with anyone coming across her as long as he/she invites her to a drink.

Sometimes, characters' behaviour and experience might even reflect those of their creators. The immediate beginning of Forest Pemberton's liaison with Lady Mart in *The Nightinghousls of Paris* while dancing wildly with her at the Montparnassian Bar before the eyes of his wife, who resolves into tears, may allude to Hemingway's liaison with Duff Twysden, who was also fictionally immortalized as Brett Ashley in *The Sun Also Rises*. Twysden had, in fact, been engaged to Pat Guthrie, an alcoholic (who is represented by Mike), but started an affair with Harold Loeb while simultaneously flirting with Hemingway. The affair eventually caused the

Hemingways' marital crisis in 1925. Additionally, Hemingway had started an affair with Pauline Pfeiffer (whom he later married), one of Hadley's friends, before *The Sun Also Rises* was published.¹⁰¹

4.8.2. Indecent characters become pioneers in literature

Despite occasional autobiographical and factual accuracy one should, however, not regard the renditions mentioned as authentic representations of what Berlin and Paris were actually like back in the Nineteen Twenties and Nineteen Thirties. Rather than providing fully fledged portraits of characters that really existed or one-to-one renditions of instances that actually happened, the authors of the works discussed were rather solicitous to capture the general ambiance of their time.

Even though the character of Charlie Knight (as well Dr O'Connor in Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*) is actually based on a real person (a certain Dan Mahoney, who was an illegal abortionist living in a Parisian brothel), Mc Almon never intended to give an authentic representation of Mahoney. Instead, he was primarily eager to create and present a type common in Berlin of the Nineteen Twenties by using Mahoney as his model.

By letting Miss Knight publicly show off his/her particularities Mc Almon additionally helped to introduce a new type to literature; namely the extrovert homosexual frankly displaying his or her eccentricity and difference.

Even Ross and Sudge, despite never openly showing their love for each other, might be easily recognized as having an affair. Already at the beginning of *The Nightinghousls of Paris* Kit is amazed about Ross' tender way of talking about his friend and his remarkable interest in analyzing Sudge's moods like someone brought up on psycho-analysis. The reader literally sees Ross biting his fingernails and scratching the back of his hands out of nervousness when Sudge is not there, or can hear them "twittering like love birds" when relating to each other the news of the last evening. Their mutual love is revealed in the letters exchanged between Ross and Sudge, which Kit gets to read. Finally, even Stanka seems to notice the emotional

¹⁰¹ Cf. Kennedy 1993, p. 96 and p.119

bond between the two youths as she had realized that they love each other. The boys' admission of having enacted a show for a dirty old Englishman, in which they pretended to make love, is as startling as it is revealing to both Kit and to the reader.

The initial obscurity about the true nature behind the bond between the two boys parallels the secret John Glassco kept about his relationship to Graeme Taylor (who had both come to Paris in 1928 and got soon acquainted with Mc Almon, who showed them around Paris' nightlife). Even though Glassco's and Taylor's friendship was purely platonic, Glassco would never admit his homosexual inclinations and obstinately stress his heterosexual nature.¹⁰² One may be reminded of Ross, who even tries to fight Kit when the latter once voices his suspicion of him and Sudge having a love affair.

For a very long time, homosexuals in American and British works of fiction were predominantly repressed characters (as for instance in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* or those in some of the poems, plays and short stories by Tennessee Williams). Even Otto von Pregnitz, the monocle-wearing aristocrat in *Mister Norris Changes Trains*, who is the target of Arthur Norris' scheme (involving William Bradshaw as a sort of decoy to win the baron) to get the money necessary for his journey out of Germany, appears as a closeted homosexual.

Likewise, the narrator of *Goodbye to Berlin*, Christopher Isherwood, is not an out homosexual. Otto, who can be seen as his lover in the fiction, is introduced to him in the summer of 1931 on the island of Ruegen by an Englishman called Peter Wilkinson, who seems to be Otto's current lover. The author, however, met Otto's real life counterpart already in May 1930 and enjoyed his presence so much that he, delighted by the young boy's beauty and vigour, frequently went swimming with him on the Wannsee or to the Cabaret. In October of the same year, Isherwood (persuaded by Otto) moved out of his room in In Den Zelten to join the young man and his family, who had originally come from the Polish Corridor to Berlin, in their slum tenement in the district of Hallesches Tor.

In the book, the relocation is encouraged by the protagonist's shortage of money due to the British government's lowering of the gold standard and the resulting lowered value of the pound. The chronology of events in the story allows other characters (like Sally Bowles, Fr. Schroeder, etc.) to be introduced first, and thus provides the readership with a plausible reason and a decent explanation for the acquaintance of the narrator with Otto.

¹⁰² Cf. Kokotailo, p.100, quoted in *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, xxi.

The real Frau Nowak, however, must have known about the affair between Isherwood and her son and obviously tolerated it. After all, she was said to have been fairly delighted about being able to welcome Isherwood as a guest in her house.¹⁰³

Mc Almon's achievement to introduce an open homosexual into literature, however, was certainly facilitated by his lucky position of being a publisher (which rendered him independent to write about any topic he wanted to elaborate on) and his familiarity with a number of homosexuals. Apart from being inclined to his own sex himself, he knew, for instance, several lesbians, of which the most famous then were Gertrude Stein, Natalie Barney, Sylvia Beach or Adrienne Monnier and, last but not least, his wife Bryher, who had been keeping an affair with Helga Doolittle even before he had embarked on a marriage of convenience to her.¹⁰⁴

4.9. Fundamental social changes

The amazing frequency of themes and topics related to love and sex in the works under consideration may not simply be seen as mere coincidence, but rather as an indicator of a changed social reality on both sides of the Atlantic. The United States' gradual turning into a consumer society went hand in hand with a change in people's mindsets. Older beliefs ceased to fit with the requirements of the present. Changing ideas about religion and sexuality were, according to W.C. Hodapp, the major reason for the social revolution in American morals during the Nineteen Twenties. While women before used to experience sex only as a means of procreation, the emergence of contraceptive methods provoked a change in the discussion of female sexuality. With the growing self-confidence of women, the control and chaperonage of their chastity became impossible. Additionally, it should not be forgotten that the female sex' increasingly important role in society was further fuelled by the fact that many young men had been killed in the war or were at least severely injured so that women had a new role and represented the pillars of society.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Cf. Isherwood 1976, p.38-45

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Lorusso in *Miss Knight and Others*, xviii-xix

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Hodapp 1948, p.199

Motivations for travelling abroad changed as well. Whereas travellers from the upper and upper middle classes up to the second half of the Nineteenth Century primarily hoped to find cultural uplift or physical recovery (as, for instance, in one of the numerous German or French spas) in Europe, other European recreational potentials started to be increasingly appreciated no later than the Twentieth Century was born. Desiring sex, for instance, became a major incentive to embark on a trip to Central Europe as well as reclaiming male authority by fighting what was seen as a feminization of several aspects of American life, as, for instance, tourism. Since the middle of the Nineteenth Century, travelling to Europe, due to its foregrounding of cultural tourism, had been regarded as a female dominion.¹⁰⁶ This circumstance was partly ascribed to the emergence of a new type of self-confident woman in the course of the second half of the Nineteenth Century, who played a greater role in professional life and was thus often regarded as a threat to the traditional social order.¹⁰⁷ The “flapper”, who became an icon of the Nineteen Twenties, was the perfect image of this new type of woman, for she dismissed the traditional role of the obedient woman in society. This revolutionary sort of woman, who was made popular particularly by the work of F. Scott Fitzgerald, was known to reveal qualities traditionally associated with males. The flapper, who used to have a short haircut, was inclined to drinking, smoking, wild dancing and petting in public.¹⁰⁸

High culture additionally underwent some sort of internationalisation as steadily improving travelling facilities enabled artists to tour the world, and more and more new museums in America profited from an increasing number of donations. Experiencing life started to be seen as an respectable way to achieve personal growth and no places were regarded more apt to serve this purpose than Central European metropolises.¹⁰⁹

In France, however, pleasure tourism was not restricted to Paris but permeated the whole country. In the course of the Nineteen Twenties, the Riviera turned into a virtual party zone. Accounts, as, for instance, found in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Tender Is The Night*, show the frequency of boozing and drunken parties in this area. Partying, flirting, shopping and having a romance had obviously replaced wandering from sight to sight or from one cultural or

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Levenstein, p.209

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Ibid, p.187

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Hodapp 1948 p.3

¹⁰⁹ Cf. ibid, p.209 f.

historic landmark to the next.¹¹⁰ The same message is conveyed by *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, in which the protagonist and some of his companions head for Nice where they indulge in fairly boozy parties.

A certain change of mind was also noticeable among stricter Puritans. Even though Puritanism continued to play an important role in America, some Puritan hardliners, too, started to appreciate enjoyment as an acceptable reason for travelling and increasingly considered trips to Europe as welcome distraction from ordinary life and as a break from hard and disciplined work. The group of Americans Kit meets at the White Pelican in Paris obviously belongs to this sort of leisure travellers. Even though furnished with what the narrator calls a certain ‘Bible-belt-mindedness’¹¹¹, these Americans seem to have already been infested with the Parisian celebratory mood. One of the women admits “slipping a little” whereas back home she was rarely used to drinking alcohol. Likewise, Moodie Groper, another newcomer to the Quarter, is so eager to get gay that night that she orders absinthe in order to get “spiffy”.

Even though reminiscent of some Jamesian types (particularly due to her aspirations to mingle with the high society), Fran Dodsworth, for instance, embodies the needs and aspirations of (upper) middle class travellers in the Nineteen Twenties. Fran’s inability to cope with aging mingles with the general desire among her peers to simply enjoy life (e.g. by having a romance and socializing) instead of paying too much attention to high culture.¹¹²

In contrast to her husband, Fran is absolutely eager not to be seen with a Baedeker in public, which may reveal her role as an ordinary tourist. She thereby even displays the sort of contempt for average American tourists, which had gradually risen since the end of the 19th century. They were regarded as dull and vulgar and, due to their fast pace of travelling, as unable to gain real pleasure and to learn from the places they visit. Their dependence on travel guides was seen as evidence for their ignorance and inability to speak the French language.¹¹³ Instead, Fran sees herself ordained to roam about the more elevated and chic circles of Paris and Berlin. Guidebooks to Paris, for example, would reflect this marked shift in needs of

¹¹⁰ Cf. Ibid, p.246 ff.

¹¹¹ probably in order to stress the tourists’ conservative ppearance nd attitudes. The Bible Belt refers to an area in the South of the United States, where many people have strong and strict Christian beliefs.

¹¹² Cf. Ibid, p.246

¹¹³ Cf. Ibid, p.183

travellers as their sections on famous sights and cultural landmarks were now rather brief in comparison to stories on the ruling class and high society, their life and love affairs.¹¹⁴

5. Europe's destructive qualities: The danger of enjoying life to the fullest

While the transition to a consumer society lessened fears of American travellers of getting corrupted, new capitalism and materialism increased pressure on Americans. They were now often prone to believe that consumption would change their personality. Travelling thus started to be regarded as a sort of consumer object, which helps to complement one's personality and to discover aspects of life one had not known before.¹¹⁵

It is striking, however, that even a closer look at present western societies shows that the sheer infinite possibilities of consumer and fun societies stir (probably more than ever before) compulsory feelings among individuals, primarily the putative necessity to experience (for instance, via consumption) as much as possible in order not to miss anything in life.

The idea of experiencing life, however, is usually particularly luring to all those feeling a certain emptiness or void in their life. Between the two world wars, feelings of boredom and dissatisfaction certainly occurred on both sides of the Atlantic. On the one hand, considering the given socio political conditions throughout the Nineteen Twenties, it appears to be almost self-explanatory that people in France and Germany who suffered from poverty and misery were eager to forget their unfortunate lot and to experience at least a little joy in life.

On the other hand, Americans, particularly young intellectuals, writers and artists were increasingly dissatisfied with the growing materialistic and consumerist spirit suffusing all public spheres of American life. Enlisted men returning to the United States frequently felt displaced in their home country. Ernest Hemingway, for instance, was reported to have felt tremendously restive at home where his mother wanted him to settle, be respectable and diligent by supporting the household.¹¹⁶ Far away from Mid-Western American's provinciality and consumerism these individuals hoped to experience life.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Ibid, p.246

¹¹⁵ Cf. Ibid, p.255

¹¹⁶ Cf. Shaw 1973, p.22

5.1. Scarred by the War

People's desire to live life to the fullest did not only stem from their dissatisfaction with conservatism at home, but was also deeply rooted in the wide-spread wish to forget about the past. The latter, however, which in many cases was, in fact, the First World War, cannot be wiped away that easily. Reminiscences of the war tend to re-surface sooner or later. Traces of the battles are still perceptible and found on people's bodies as well as in their minds. Many veterans were lined with wounds or other consequences of the war. Some returning soldiers had their limbs amputated while others suffered from the effects of mustard gas that continued to harm their lungs even though the war was over. Likewise, psychological impairments were quite common, as, for instance, the well-known shell shock phenomenon, which resulted from the traumatising experience of life in the trenches under artillery fire and the constant threat of being killed.

Jake Barnes, for example, is both physically and mentally wounded. On the one hand, a war injury virtually emasculated him in such a way that he is no longer able to have sexual intercourse with women. On the other hand, he sometimes still lies awake in bed at nights when his head won't stop working and he starts to cry.¹¹⁷ Mike, Brett's fiancé, is described as a war veteran and the Count Mippipolous, who has been involved in seven wars, three revolutions, and in the conflict in Abyssinia, proudly shows Brett and Jake his scar from an arrow wound. Having witnessed enough calamities, this older, wealthy man has decided to concentrate on living in the moment, enjoying life to the fullest. He now seems similarly careless about the future and the past as does the Countess Margot in *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, whom Kit encounters in Nice and who, after her dreadful experience in Moscow during the Revolution as well as in Constantinople and Berlin of the post-war days, is only interested in happiness and excitement. This sort of carelessness matched perfectly with the spirit of hedonism predominant in Berlin and Paris. Both cities were probably dominated by the beliefs that their countries had suffered enough in the course of the war and that it was time to enjoy life.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Young 1966, p.13

5.2. Refugees from reality

The eternal quest for happiness seems to be a major topic of almost all the works under consideration. Very often, though, characters experience more or less short-lived forms of pleasure and recreation, which are in many cases nothing more than mere distractions from a burdening and depressing everyday life. These rare moments of relief are often found in drinking or other forms of addiction.

Particularly the Nineteen Twenties must have been an exhilarating, turbulent time. The decade, which became also known as the Jazz Age, was sometimes compared to a great party which only came to an end with the crash of the New York stock market and the beginning of the Depression in 1929. The Jazz Agers, among whom Scott Fitzgerald was probably one of the most important and best known figures, were occasionally referred to as a colony of displaced individuals fleeing from reality.¹¹⁸

Among American tourists, boozing became highly popular in the course of the Nineteen Twenties, because the Volstead Act, which enforced the Eighteenth Amendment, banned the legal production and selling of alcohol in the United States between 1919 and 1933.¹¹⁹

Many Americans greeted the opportunity to consume alcohol legally in Europe. Likewise, the characters in the stories under consideration often exploit this privilege to the fullest. This circumstance matches perfectly with the fact that cafés, bars and restaurants play a major role as settings and background for the action presented. They all help to illustrate and to emphasize the party lifestyle of American expatriates on European soil which was so marked by the participation in all sorts of behaviour deviating from Puritan values and moral conceptions.¹²⁰

The Sun Also Rises and Robert Mc Almon's thinly fictionalized memoir *The Nightinghousls of Paris* offer a great overview of the most important night stops and dwelling places for American expatriates in Paris as Jake Barnes repeatedly roams about Paris at night and the two young protagonists from Canada (Ross and Sudge, who probably represent John Glassco and Graeme Taylor) are led by Kit (who probably corresponds to Mc Almon himself) through the city's nightlife, thereby meeting various more or less shimmering figures of its night festivity. Places like the Dôme, the Dingo (which is said to have been the place where Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald met for the first time), La Coupole or the Select appear in

¹¹⁸ Cf. Hodapp 1948, vii

¹¹⁹ Cf. Bradbury 1995, p.307

¹²⁰ Cf. Field 2006, p.30-32

many of the works discussed as backdrops for characters' encounters and conversations. It is, for instance, at the Select where Samuel Dodsworth's affair with Nande Azeredo starts and where he is persuaded by Elsa, a young American woman, to buy champagne for her and her artist friends before actually disappearing.¹²¹

The narrator of *Tropic of Cancer* repeatedly stops at bars and cafés in order to interrupt his incessant walks through Parisian street at night and Kit's competence as a guide through Parisian night life is based on his familiarity with all the various inns and dives throughout the city. Having known "the town for years", Kit is obviously welcome at any stop (particularly at Bricktop's where he is known as a good client, frequently bringing with him swells and rich people) and would show no selectivity in his choice of drinking companions, being ready to drink "with tarts, gendarmes, taxi drivers, or whatever nightlife type [he] encountered" (*The Nightinghousls of Paris*, p.61).

That Mc Almon himself very much enjoyed strolling about Paris' night life was already mentioned. Owing to the fortune he inherited through his marriage to Bryher (who did not share her husband's passion for nocturnal boozing tours), he was able to entertain his friends and to indulge in the wordly pleasures of Paris, particularly at the Dôme and the Dingo on the city's Left Bank, where he met most of his literary companions.¹²²

Several sources, however, suggest that Mc Almon was, by far, not the only one inclined to excessive drinking. Among contemporary writers, Hemingway, Fitzgerald and James Joyce (who was Mc Almon's occasional drinking companion¹²³) were certainly no less frequently involved in boozy episodes. Miller's love for drinking was even mentioned by Anais Nin in her diary.¹²⁴

5.3. The dark side of Central European festivity

Even though pleasure and hedonism may have been the driving forces behind many a boozy tour through European major cities' nightlife, the majority of instances provided by the narratives suggest more somber reasons for excessive behaviour.

In most cases, unrequited love or the loss of a beloved person are sought to be drowned in alcohol. Heartache, for instance, seems to be the major reason for Robert Cohn to start drinking in the course of the party's journey to Pamplona. Feelings of loneliness and not

¹²¹ Cf. Méral 1989, p.152f.

¹²² Cf. Beach 1970, p.136-137

¹²³ Cf. Smoller in *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, xix.

¹²⁴ Cf. *The Diary of Anais Nin* vol.I., p.15

being needed by his family and friends turn Samuel Dodsworth into a frequent visitor of bars where he seems to find as much solace in alcohol as Dale Burke does in *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, who feels sorrow about her lover's wish to have another child from her while she is already overburdened as the mother to a two-year old daughter, or Mat Powers, the young Oxford student in Paris, who started drinking after the death of his twin brother.

In Berlin, Steve Rath is presented as distracting herself with a whiskey at the Rendezvous Club and Kurt, a less frequently seen guest at the Alexander Casino, whom Christopher meets in *Goodbye to Berlin*, is a completely lethargic man trying to drown his sorrows with alcohol.

Taking drugs as another way of numbing one's senses is occasionally mentioned in the works under consideration.

In the early Twentieth Century, Germany was known for its lenient laws on drugs. Even though the actual number of drug addicts can only be guessed, it is a fact that both heroin and morphine were used in the Weimar Republic and that the increase in the number of users after the First World War was a result of wounded soldiers returning from the battlefields. Morphine and opiates were manufactured in Germany and physicians throughout the country used to prescribe heroin to patients suffering from tuberculosis, because it was known for its cough soothing qualities. Cocaine, which had first been extracted from coca by German chemists, became the second most popular drug in Germany after the ceasefire, when military stocks of the drug were made accessible to the civilian market.¹²⁵

That drug trafficking was a fairly flourishing business in Berlin in the Nineteen Twenties is already made clear at the beginning of "Miss Knight", when the protagonist remarks that coke is being sold "by the bowlful" (*Miss Knight and others*, p.4) for ten marks a deck and that one may even get it by the barrel if one only gives them the sign.

Obviously, Berlin was rich in places where drugs could easily be procured. Even though the image of Berlin as a drug capital was primarily created by images of cabarets and wild, debaucherous bohemian parties, it cannot be denied that drugs could be bought without difficulty in the city. Cocaine vendors roamed the streets and particularly its hot-spots, such as

¹²⁵ Cf. Lewy 2008, p.145-147

the Zoo, the Potsdamer Platz or the Wittenbergplatz.¹²⁶ In “Distinguished Air”, the party of nighthawks, before eventually drifting to the “O-la-la”, stops at an after-hour night club which serves as a meeting place for dope addicts. Here, they are offered cocaine by a Russian girl and pick up a couple of girls.

Drug dealers start to play a role in some of the works under discussion, as for instance the German cocaine dealer, who, in “Distinguished Air”, joins the group, and who later even tries to get affectionate with the narrator. In *Goodbye to Berlin*, as already mentioned, selling cocaine is only one job through which Olga earns a living.

If solely judged by taking into account Mc Almon’s rendition in “Miss Knight”, one may be cajoled into believing that sniffing cocaine must have been the latest fashion among Berlin bohemians. All the guests at Miss Knight’s Thanksgiving Party show up semi- or totally intoxicated. Anne Simpson is reported to have taken six decks of cocaine and her lover, Kate Matthews, is said to be “driven to drink and dope for company” (“Miss Knight”, p.13).

Indeed, by the middle of the Nineteen Twenties some scholars and critics were tempted to speak of cocaine use in Germany as an epidemic because it was widely used and particularly taken by homosexual men and women. Nonetheless, the outrage and craze about, for instance, opiate addiction was disproportionately high compared to the scope and threat of their actual use. While the highest rate of cocaine addicts in Germany was reached in 1927, statistics showed that the number of drug users all over the decade was comparatively low (some sources speak for Berlin of a consumption rate of one gram per 1000 people) and that the German “drug capital” was in fact Karlsruhe and not Berlin.¹²⁷

However, due to the easy and wide availability of drugs, the narrator and his friend, the cartoonist in “Distinguished Air” are not disinclined to try cocaine themselves, mainly, according to the narrator, “in order to keep awake if they were to go on through the night” (“Miss Knight”, p. 34).

Likewise, one can see Sudge snort some of Hilaria’s crack right at the beginning of *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, but Ross finally abandons Fern because of her drug addiction and the bad influence of her entourage, who were all taking dope. For Anne Simpson, a guest at Charlie Knight’s Thanksgiving Party in Berlin, sniffing cocaine is supposed to help her cope

¹²⁶ Cf. Ibid, p.147 f.

¹²⁷ Cf. Holzer 2007 in Lewy 2008, p.148

with the chagrin of having been left by her woman lover, who has just gone to Paris to join the man she is going to marry. Miss Knight himself/herself appears to be fairly prone to feelings of emptiness, frustration and very low self-esteem. Within short intervals, one sees him/ her sniffing cocaine in order to solace herself for having being criticized for having given a party that somehow brought all the guests in the wrong mood and then changing to cocaine to overcome the grief, anger and desolation about Kate Matthew's advances to his/ her policeman lover.

Besides cocaine, opium smoking seems to have been wide-spread in Paris. Particularly in Nin's short stories in *Delta of Venus* this sort of habit is mentioned several times. Probably, the act of smoking opium and its effects are used to emphasize stories' dream-like moments, as for instance in "Elena", where the reader is literally taken to an Arab opium den in which the protagonist is seduced in the ambiance of ecstasy and nonchalance.

5.4. Individuals ruining themselves

All of the works mentioned show, to varying degrees, how characters gradually ruin themselves. The omnipresent availability of alcohol and drugs made it far too easy for natives, as well as for expatriates and travelers, to destroy their lives.

In an undoubtedly depressing manner, the reader of the works under consideration is often confronted with the most negative consequences of drinking alcohol. In *Tropic of Cancer*, Fillmore is, in the end, depicted as a fallen man, "prostrated with alcohol poisoning", and Maccha, the Russian princess, has totally succumbed to alcohol. In a state of total intoxication, she would even attempt to commit suicide by throwing herself into the river Seine. Marlowe, a frequent visitor to the Dôme, is presented as a severe alcoholic, having been drunk for the previous five days without interruption. His outward appearance has obviously suffered from his addiction for he's already showing "a bony emaciated face looking like a skull perforated by two sockets in which there are buried a pair of dead clams" (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.57).

Several of the characters appearing in *The Nightinghous of Paris* are ravaged by alcohol. Betty, a poule from the quarter, appears one day at the Coupole, having a swollen black eye

from falling down a flight of stairs, when she was drunk a few nights before. Her unhealthy lifestyle is later on exemplified in her roaming through the Quarter, not drinking for two days but then “two bottles of whiskey in one night” (*The Nightinghousls of Paris*, p.68).

Some characters virtually drink themselves to death. Emptying several bottles of alcohol within a very short time seems to be as common a competitive discipline as are drinking bouts that last for nights. Characters certainly feel the consequences. Jimmy, a barman from Montparnasse, suffers from high blood pressure, but does not care about it. The patron of the Falstaff Bar is troubled by stomach ulcers he got from drinking. Gaylord Showman’s long drinking career is probably responsible for his ruined kidneys.

Excessive drug abuse in Berlin takes its toll in a similar way. In “The Lodging House”, Steve appears as a woman worn out by life in such a way that she doesn’t even care any longer about the effects of drug use, but instead makes an impression of being entirely oblivious to anything around her. Irresponsible, because of a cocaine overdose, she deliberately mixes cognac and whiskey, remaining deaf to Files’ benevolent advice to take care of her.

Miss Knight is described as being hooked on the white powder for about ten years and as obviously ravaged by his/her drug career. One gets to know that his/her nose is paralyzed by now and that he/she is indeed a hopeless addict as can be seen in his/her frequent rushing off to lavatories in order to replenish his/her state of intoxication and to return “with his/her eyes more concentrated into black pupils” (“Miss Knight”, p.8).

6. Societies heading for decay

6.1. Exploring the dark abysses of the human soul

Given the often rather negative, depressing and shocking representations of Berlin as well as Paris and particularly the descriptions of the forms of conduct, it may not be far-fetched to speak of cities, and, indeed, whole countries and societies in a deep crisis. This notion can be supported with a closer look at the socio-political reality of the Nineteen Twenties and even more so by a consideration of the developments throughout the Nineteen Thirties. Instead of illuminating the political reality of these decades, the writers of the works under consideration

were often more interested in depicting a troubled society than providing authentic accounts of Berlin and Paris. In order to do so, the range of figures in, for example, Mc Almon's Berlin short stories and also in his fictionalized memoir includes the whole set of "deluded, feebly talented, lost and abandoned men and women of a decaying world" (Knoll 1962, p.225).

Additionally, the choice of tone and topics of the works under consideration was decisively influenced by the authors' ambition to create something new, revelatory and revolutionary. Some of the authors under discussion (particularly Henry Miller and Anaïs Nin) shared an affiliation with Surrealism and its preoccupation with the hidden, unexpected and absurd. The movement that had gradually developed out of the Dada philosophy was initially centered in Paris, where it gained great popularity among bohemians and intellectuals. Surrealist arts, be it painting, writing, film or photography, focused on the particular feeling of crisis and displacement and on the need for mental re-orientation, while showing a deep commitment to the unconscious.¹²⁸

The interest into the latter was fuelled by the growing acceptance of psycho-analysis. Unlike Sigmund Freud and his disciples, Surrealists, however, were not interested in the therapeutical aspects of psycho-analysis, but in its revelatory potentials to uncover the hidden forces oppressing the subconscious. Authors with an interest in psycho-analysis were often also fascinated by looking into the deep and dark abysses of the human soul and to gather information on the revolutionary psychological theory.

By reading the books of Dr. René Allendy, whom she first consulted as a psycho-analyst and with whom she worked together later on, Anaïs Nin, for instance, became familiar with pathologic aspects of sexuality and with concepts hitherto unknown to her. Among these were aberrations, sadism, masochism, perversions, abnormalities, etc. They all stimulated her interest in psycho-analysis and the depths of the human soul and play a role as themes in her compilation of erotic short stories.¹²⁹ Thus, *Delta of Venus* is full of stories involving topics that (like many a Surrealist's creative output) address the emergence of the subconscious: childhood, fantasy, dreams, mental disease and, above all, sexuality.

The desire to illuminate the subconscious went hand in hand with Surrealists' eagerness to undermine traditional bourgeois morality based on principles and concepts of family, religion

¹²⁸ Cf. Bradbury 1995, p.304

¹²⁹ Cf. *The Diary of Anaïs Nin*, vol. I, p.97

and patriotism. Hardly any topic may have been regarded as more apt to cause indignation than the open display of sexuality, which Berlin and Paris were so known for.

In *Tropic of Cancer* the often highly detailed accounts of the narrator's sexual encounters since his arrival in the French capital and the shamelessly exact descriptions of his erections fill pages of the novel as do the numerous affairs and one night stands of his and his companions. Due to their intensity and ribaldry, all these accounts bear witness to a marked erotic obsession of sexually insatiable characters. Creating scenes like these enabled Miller to realise his personal wish to be as explicit and offensive as possible, i.e. to be obscene in tone, as, for instance, when the narrator vividly envisions making love to Tania, the girlfriend of a man called Sylvester¹³⁰:

Your Sylvester! Yes, he knows how to build a fire, but I know how to inflame a cunt. I shoot hot bolts into you, I make your ovaries incandescent. Your Sylvester is a little jealous now? He feels something, does he? He feels the remnants of my big prick (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.13).

After me you can take on stallions, bulls, rams, drakes, St. Bernards. You can stuff toads, bats, lizards up your rectum. You can shit arpeggios if you like, or string a zither cross your navel. I am fucking you, Tania, so that you'll stay fucked. And if you are afraid of being fucked publicly, I will fuck you privately. I will tear off a few hairs from your cunt and paste them on Boris' chin (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.13).

Moral decay is metaphorically exemplified by the shocking instances found in the books under consideration. Demise is conceived as a form of rampant sexual gluttony. Characters start to get increasingly insatiable and soon demand much more severe treatment or extremer forms of erotic games. In Paris, as depicted by Anais Nin in her collection of erotic short stories, Pierre longs for taking Mary Anne in a rape-like manner like the soldiers did during the occupation of Alsace-Lorraine, and Linda gradually develops a passion for violent sex, which is so different than what she gets from her husband. In "The Basque and Bijou", the prostitute protagonist's flight from her African lover's hands is triggered by the clairvoyant's emerging desire to pierce her vulva in an African like manner once he can no longer be satisfied by ordinary sexual intercourse.

Societies' deterioration is reciprocally marked by a gradual blunting of spirits. This is illustrated by the presence of highly peculiar sexual tastes that justify, for instance, the

¹³⁰ Cf. Pizer 1996, p.155

popularity of whores with bodily malformations or the existence of child prostitution. It is probably worth mentioning the legendary harlot with the wooden leg, standing at a corner near the Boulevard Clichy. The woman, who appeared in several works of literature, really existed and seems to have had many admirers. She obviously exerted fascination on Nin, when being shown the famous whore by her friend Henry Miller, who pointedly commented on new sexual tastes indicating moral debasement¹³¹:

As soon as a woman loses a front tooth or an eye or a leg she goes to the loose. In America she'd starve to death if she had nothing to recommend her but a mutilation. Here it is different. A missing tooth or a nose eaten away or a fallen womb, any misfortune that aggravates the natural homeliness of the female, seems to be regarded as an added spice, a stimulant for the jaded appetites of the males (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.166).

Writers sharing an affiliation with Surrealism and Symbolism did not revolt only against society by the choice of their tone and topics but also on an artistic, creative level. Miller and Nin rejected traditional forms of literary expression as well as political ideologies of the time. Instead, they were solicitous to create their own style of expression and literary forms.¹³²

Tropic of Cancer is mostly written in the first person and in the present tense, which bestows on the narrative a strong sense of the speaking voice. In spite of the inclusion of Miller's actual experience that emphasizes the book's autobiographical quality, *Tropic of Cancer* clearly involves fictional techniques as well as elements of poetry. Miller marvellously mixes fiction and non-fiction by linking his own experience in Paris between 1930 and 1932 with Dadaist revelries in the form of highly colourful images, as, for instance, right at the beginning of the book, when the narrator solemnly announces the absence of place and gives himself up to sensual impressions. The narrator's stream of consciousness is masterly conveyed by the fragmentary nature of the narrative in which incidents are followed or interrupted by sights, hallucinations, daydreams, ruminations, conversations and sometimes even nightmares. The overall chronology of the narrative is broken up by frequent flashbacks, flashforwards and the narrator's excursions into dreams and fantasies. The prominence of interior monologue helps to account for the hero's state of mind and all the sensations as he encounters and perceives them.

¹³¹ Cf. *The Diary of Anaïs Nin* vol.I., p.78

¹³² Cf. Brown 1986, p.17

6.2. Aged and infirm: Moribund Central European societies

Apart from sexual debauchery, which Puritanical moral discourse often associated with notions of decay and demise, sickness represents another symbol of social deterioration. Particularly religious moralists taking a Puritanical line may regard the origin of disease as a moral one. Such moralists may support their belief with the relative rarity of diseases among animals and plants and see ailments as a consequence of humans' ability to deviate from patterns of accepted behaviour and as a punishment for rotten morals.¹³³

Sexually transmitted diseases were certainly a problem in Paris and Berlin during the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties. Up from 1880, syphilis, for instance, was virtually flourishing all over Europe and continued to be a scourge until its curability with the help of penicillin around 1945. By the end of the First World War, the spread of syphilis had reached epidemic proportions. Relocation and the contact between different groups and populations led to a surge in new infections.

Besides alcoholism and tuberculosis, which were often discussed by scientists in the same context, syphilis particularly affected urban areas. Additionally, all these ailments were primarily regarded as an illness of the proletariat. Modern critics used sexually transmitted diseases as a topos to criticize society and its developments. After all, these ailments were often associated with adultery, prostitution and extramarital sexual intercourse.¹³⁴

Miller's Paris in *Tropic of Cancer* is indeed a city haunted by disease, plague, cockroaches and rats, as well as being the location of abattoirs and morgues. Prostitutes suffering from sexually transmitted diseases roam the city's streets.

The fall from decency and innocence is boldly illustrated in the character of Maccha, the Russian princess. Lured by the fairly promising prospects of becoming a famous actress, the formerly beautiful and innocent young woman started an affair with a French director and thus got infected with the clap. Abandoned by her lover, she starts to have sex on a regular basis with a timid lawyer, who, owing to Maccha's dishonesty and irresponsibility, soon finds himself confronted with the diagnosis 'gonorrhoea'. The Russian princess, probably due to her own erotic debauchery, that made her stay all night around Montparnasse drinking and fucking, develops an anaemic condition that forces her to have sex with women despite her lack of passion for the same sex.

¹³³ Cf. Morrell 1999

¹³⁴ Cf. Schonlau 2005, p.97-104

In *The Nightinghousls of Paris* Sudge is described as suffering from a disease that he contracted from a girl he and Ross had picked up at the Noctambule. It seems justified to suggest that the young man, like so many others in Paris, is suffering from tuberculosis, an advanced version of which had also afflicted Glassco, who consequently even had to undergo surgery.¹³⁵

Tubercular characters occur throughout Mc Almon's memoir. Although "no one could look more of a cadaver than he did" (*The Nightinghousls of Paris*, p. 39), Eustace Green, the tubercular cousin of the princess of Faraway, competes successfully with Kit and the others in hard drinking. Much weaker appears his friend, Jaques, another youngster suffering from consumption, whom Kit has to take to a quieter place than the Coupole, namely to the Falstaff, where they drink cherry, because Jaques wouldn't stand stronger drink. Later on, the reader learns that Jan, the Polish boy Hilaria has an affair with, got tuberculosis from Betty, another poule of the Quarter.

Syphilitic individuals, particularly prostitutes, appear throughout *Tropic of Cancer*. Keeping in mind the sheer omnipresence of infected

prostitutes, Kit's reluctance to have sex with poules from the quarter is only too reasonable, despite his rather favourable attitude towards whores and his awareness of regular prostitute health checks. Examinations conducted by police doctors had indeed been common practice in France and Germany already since the turn of the century as syphilis was not legally punished in these countries like, for example, in Sweden, Denmark, Czechoslovakia or Russia. Some prostitutes, however, tried to evade these checks which they regarded as discriminatory acts of singling them out deliberately. Kit thus successfully evades Stanka's advances, doubting the latter's health as she had "no card giving even mild assurance of her health" (*The Nightinghousls of Paris*, p.129).

Apart from acquiring (sexually transmitted) diseases, madness appears as another consequence of excessive lifestyle or, in Méral's opinion, a result from a failure to adapt to the city of Paris.¹³⁶

Otherwise, madness may be seen as a final manifestation of syphilis as it represents one of the symptoms of its latest stage, the so-called progressive paralysis. Interestingly, there was often established a link between sickness, madness as well as creativity and arts. Fever attacks of

¹³⁵ Cf. Smoller in *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, xxx.

¹³⁶ Cf. Méral 1989, p.198

the tubercular were associated with increased artistic creativity and the progressive paralysis was believed to promote ecstatic genius culminating in madness and dementia. Whereas someone suffering from tuberculosis was widely regarded as being especially prone to all forms of arousal (particularly to those of a sexual nature), syphilitics were considered to suffer because of their careless and promiscuous sexuality. Alcohol was often seen as having a similarly inebriating and stimulating effect as syphilis. In art and literature, the syphilitic prostitute became thus as popular as the alcoholic writer walking along the thin line between genius and madness.¹³⁷

In *Tropic of Cancer*, Fillmore, ruined by syphilis and depression, ends up in a madhouse. What Ginette encounters on her visit to the lunatic asylum is a totally despondent man, who has lost his hair and whose dentition has been mutilated by the doctors “until he didn’t have a tooth left in his head”, before eventually developing a paranoid streak (*Tropic of Cancer*, p. 297).

In this context, Nin mentions the madness of Richard Osborn, a friend of her and Miller, who obviously suffered from schizophrenia. In contrast to the narrator, who does not want to visit Fillmore in the chalet, Miller is reported to have virtually jumped with joy and desire to see him and indulge in the sight of an entirely insane man.¹³⁸

The idea of madness among intellectuals becomes even more delicate, given the fact that Osborn was not the only famous victim of such psychological decline. Scott Fitzgerald’s wife, Zelda, was struck by a similar fate. After her first nervous breakdown in April 1930, the relatively young woman, diagnosed as schizophrenic, spent many of her remaining years in various psychological clinics all over France and Switzerland.¹³⁹

Méral remarks that insanity also plays a role in Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood*, where the break-up of Robin Vote’s and Felix’ marriage causes the first to go mad, while the latter succumbs to alcohol. Zora remains unaware of her mental decline and eventually even attempts to kill Djuna in a fit of rage.¹⁴⁰

Sometimes characters do not go insane but simply display a distorted sense of reality. Very often alcohol is the reason for a loss of reality, as for instance in the case of Lady Mart in *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, who is a real wreck, ruined by alcohol and her sexual escapades. Even

¹³⁷ Cf. Schonlau 2005, p.104-105, p.112

¹³⁸ Cf. *The Diary of Anaïs Nin* vol.I., p.108

¹³⁹ Cf. Milford 1970, p.161

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Méral 1989, p. 198

her former lover, Forest Pemberton, starts to shun her but yet, she is absolutely convinced of his undying love for her. Rose Morgan, who is even more hopelessly addicted to alcohol, is known for her traits of mythomania that usually surface when she is drunk.

The notions of sickness and death are particularly apt to describe the ultimate deterioration of society and to shock one's readership or audience. Henry Miller's pessimism and desire to scandalize are masterly joined with black humour and passionate sarcasm when the narrator of *Tropic of Cancer* somewhat solemnly announces that "We're all dead, dying, or about to die" (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.46) and he further elaborates on the streets where there were "no exit signs anywhere, no rescue save death" and he perceives "a blind alley at the end of which is a scaffold". The image of characters vainly trying to get deloused and to get rid of bedbugs, feeling the constant need to scratch themselves-until there's no skin left, is a proof of what Parisians have in their blood, namely "misfortune, ennui, grief, suicide" (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.20).

Miller's revelry is at its best when he fully indulges in this atmosphere, which is so saturated with disaster, frustration and futility and voraciously gloats for further calamities. Enjoying the omnipresent feeling of misfortune, he wishes "the whole world to be out of whack [...] [and] everyone to scratch himself to death" (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.20). His fascination with the sheer idea of malaise and death is furthermore reflected in his enthusiastic reaction to an account of the city in the dark, sinister days of Charles the Silly. The narrator's delight with squalor and his sense of calamity may be said to reflect Miller's ambition to criticize humanity and society.¹⁴¹

Nonetheless, Miller's frequent violent outbursts, his explicitly and extraordinarily shocking portraits can hardly be apt representations of reality. On the one hand, the desire to provoke indignation may go hand in hand with a tendency to exaggerate. Particularly the numerous daydreams of the narrator in *Tropic of Cancer* as well as the repeated excursions into surrealist painting certainly distort reality. The same can be said of Nin's portrayal of Paris, which may not be seen as an accurate representation of Paris in the 1930s due to the author's sophisticated symbolism. The collection of erotic stories, for which she was paid one dollar a page, may furthermore be dismissed as unauthentic literary output and of minor significance compared to the rest of Nin's fictional work, as it was mainly made up of stories Nin had

¹⁴¹ Cf. Wickes 1966, p.22

heard, rewritten or replenished in an effort to caricature sexuality by deliberately writing as much tongue-in-cheek, outlandish and exaggerated as possible.¹⁴²

Robert Mc Almon perhaps goes very far when letting Steve Rath at the beginning of “The Lodging House” claim that the whole police force of Berlin is made up of homosexuals. Even if one cannot say whether homosexuality was common among Berlin policemen, some sources suggest that the German police widely accepted homosexual bars. In his memoir, Christopher Isherwood, however, debunks the wide-spread belief that bars for homosexuals in Berlin were frequently raided. In fact, police raids were rather rare. It seems that, until the empowerment of Adolf Hitler in early 1933, the Berlin police silently connived at the existence of homosexual bars.¹⁴³

6.3. Expatriates’ burden

Bearing in mind the socio-political conditions of the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties, the idea of Germany and France as deteriorating societies may certainly be justified to a certain degree. Undeniable facts, such as enormous unemployment rates and overwhelming poverty all over Central Europe, support the image of nations in deep crisis.

However, even though they had only contributed little to the chaos of Central Europe, the literary works under consideration often established a fairly close link between the economic and moral demise in France and Germany and the presence of expatriates from all over the world, particularly Americans.

In fact, all of the authors discussed in the present thesis had a more or less negative attitude towards this particular group they actually belonged to themselves, namely the expatriates. They often looked down upon them as failures as well as inadequate and weak dilettantes, while regarding themselves as capable of achieving liberation by making use of Paris’ creative potential and thus evading the risk of getting corrupted in the French capital.

The inability to avail oneself of the Parisian creative potential results in a negative portrayal of American expatriates. The aspect of artists’ failure is particularly noticeable in *Tropic of Cancer*. Miller strongly associated Paris with artistic genius and revolutionary creativity,

¹⁴² Cf. Méral 1989, p.208 and *The Diary of Anaïs Nin* vol.III.,p.58

¹⁴³ Cf. Isherwood 1976, p.30

which is shown in the occasional reference to artists of the past, such as Henri Matisse, August Strindberg or Walt Whitman.¹⁴⁴

The narrator and his compatriots are all writers, but instead of being absorbed in writing, they keep constantly strolling around the city like hungry wolves eager for sexual adventures, putting their literary ambitions and efforts aside.

Sylvia Beach, who recounted Mc Almon's passion for roaming about Paris' nightlife, also remembered his love for taking the centre stage in whatever group he dwelt. Both a great teller and listener, Mc Almon is said to have been so interested in the dramatic fates and disappointments of others that he totally neglected his own writing career.¹⁴⁵ In *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, Ross is perceived by the narrator as the one whose easy life prevented his literary aspirations from materializing in literary production.

Expatriates often appear as loafers having neither any goal nor zeal in life. Instead of appearing on stage and making a career as an actress he/ she has constantly been speaking of so boldly, Miss Knight keeps on hanging around Berlin bars and cafés. Sally Bowles appears to be chronically unambitious as well. In spite of always talking to Christopher about her stupendous future plans and her intentions to become famous as an actress and singer, she does not do anything to realize her dreams except making love to supposedly important men who might later turn out to be useful for her career. Nihilism as a cover for ineffectuality is illustrated by Miss Knight's professional gaiety, which, according, to the narrator, is primarily a means to bring relief to the "pretentious intellectuality, personal antagonisms, and the morbid personalities of escaped Americans" ("Miss Knight", p.9).

6.3.1. First deracinated, then corrupted

Within America, there seemed to have been a considerable amount of prejudice against fellow Americans dwelling in Europe. Expatriates were often regarded as idlers, and ne'er do wells hanging around at cafés and bars. Many Americans at home may have shared Jerry Gladwin's

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Pizer 1996, p.125-126, 132 p.132 and Brown 1986 , p. 111-112

Whitman's poetry has inspired Miller as much as the transcendentalist teachings of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Miller and Whitman shared a love for details and the sheer unremarkable day-to-day things as well as a certain preoccupation with sexual topics. Additionally, both writers praised the natural and the sensual while condemning the mechanic and the technical, even though Miller's overall vision of humanity is certainly much bleaker than Whitman's.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Beach 1970, p.37-38

wish that expatriates in Europe “go back to America and face their responsibilities“(The *Nightinghousls of Paris*, p.44), instead of wallowing in futility and triviality.

Resentment to expatriates is directly voiced in a fairly simple and brief manner in *Tropic of Cancer*, when the narrator comments on living in a morally decaying environment where individuals are only too tempted to succumb to idleness and futility: ‘You get used to doing nothing. You sit on your ass and whine all day. You get contaminated. You rot’ (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.56).

Americans’ uprootedness and Europe’s contaminating influence are even more clearly expressed in *The Sun Also Rises*. Sitting in an inn in Burguete, a little village where Jake Barnes and Bill Gorton stop to go fishing, the latter pointedly explains the misery of expatriates in Europe like them in a fairly scathing remark:

You’re an expatriate. You’ve lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time walking, not working. You are an expatriate, see? You hang around cafés (*The Sun Also Rises*, p.118).

The tone of the lines would never raise doubts about the speaker’s attitude towards expatriates. Hemingway himself, however, seems to have been slightly ambiguous about the whole issue of American expatriates’ behaviour in Europe. While openly condemning Berlin and all its folks’ (including expatriates’) open and vulgar display of vice, he at first sight seems to prefer Paris as a place to stay and write in. In the French capital, however, he also criticized expatriate artists gathering in the cafés and bars of Montparnasse, whom he disliked for their eccentricity, which particularly showed itself, according to him, in their strange appearance and peculiar forms of conduct. Furthermore, he voiced occasional distaste for what he called the “derelicts” of the area, as for example the male and female drunkards frequenting the Café des Amateurs on the Place de Contrescarpe, who “stayed drunk all the time, or all of the time they could afford it” (*A Moveable Feast*, p.3).¹⁴⁶

Yet, Hemingway himself indulged tremendously in Parisian idleness and revelry, becoming a frequent visitor to Montparnassian bars and cafés and thus being acquainted with the Latin Quarter’s nightlife he occasionally roamed about with his wife, Hadley.¹⁴⁷ It may thus not come as a surprise that the image of deracinated, idle expatriates in Europe continued to

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Kennedy 1993, p.85

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Ibid, p.86-87

persist in American public's mind, even though Hemingway repeatedly distanced himself from the other expatriates on the Left Bank.¹⁴⁸

The remarkable dissatisfaction with expatriate culture may have shaped the negative portrait of expatriates in the works under consideration. Apart from all the excesses related to love, sex and alcohol, which are, in fact, only makeshifts that eventually bring neither relief nor lasting felicity, expatriates hardly experience psychological or physical development. Indeed, they rather undergo circular movement and are eventually exhausted, dispirited or simply blunted. The lack of sense inherent in expatriates' actions is probably best conveyed in *Tropic of Cancer* and its characters' constant love adventures, which they do not really enjoy and which never culminate in serious and lasting relationships. When the narrator brings a whore to Van Norden's room, the sexual encounter is totally devoid of passion, but rich in absurdity, as the whole encounter is described as the form of battle or war game everybody is fed up with but which no one dares to stop, because there are 15 francs at stake.

Jake Barnes' incessant roaming about Montparnassian bars (in spite of his impotence that forces him to remain ascetic) in combination with the fact that Brett Ashley, after a number of unsuccessful affairs, eventually returns to Jake (even though their love affair has no future perspective), shows that the action in *The Sun Also Rises* leads nowhere.¹⁴⁹

The action of *The Nightinghousls of Paris* even ends in the same manner as it started. After his unsuccessful return to the United States, where he failed to find the sort of decent life he may have been supposed to lead, Kit is about to set out for another tour through the Parisian nightlife and festivity. The sobering realization that those despising expatriates were themselves "neither happy, contented, interesting or interested" causes Kit's return to Paris as he follows "the call of French terrace cafés, good beer, wines, and spirits" (*The Nightinghousls of Paris*, p.178).

Kit's ambivalence may, to a certain extent, reflect Mc Almon's own opinion on expatriation to Europe. He was certainly a divided one. On the one hand, he claimed to have never felt himself an expatriate or anything but American while, on the other hand, admitting the lack of patriotism that many of his country fellowmen displayed. Mc Almon seems to have been well aware of the highly diverse and polyglot nature of his home country which had always

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Baker 1952, p.29

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Young 1972, p.13

troubled him when eager to define the qualities which one would have to possess to call oneself a typical American.¹⁵⁰

In fact, he must have been tremendously bored by the communal life in Kansas and the provinciality of his own family. As a homosexual, he benefited from the liberal atmosphere of Berlin and Paris in the Nineteen Twenties.¹⁵¹ The depiction of Midwestern American provincialism, which finally motivates Kit's return to Paris, is thus used as a means to censure his home country.

6.3.2. Incessant wanderers

Expatriates' futility may have been associated with their nomadic lifestyle. Eternal wandering and travelling are widely seen (but also often misunderstood) as a means of giving sense to one's life or filling a void in it. In *The Sun Also Rises*, Jake Barnes eagerly attempts to convince Robert Cohn that moving from one country to the next is no way of solving one's problems. The reader of *The Nightinghous of Paris* knows about Kit's openness to anything, which makes him dwell in Paris as the spirit moves him and ready to move at any time. Similarly, the characters in Mc Almon's Berlin short stories are mostly made up of deracinated expatriates, who immediately leave the city once hangover sets in and they are caught by an everyday reality they obviously cannot bear. Almost six weeks after his last appearance in Berlin, Kate Matthews receives a letter from Charlie Knight, who is now dwelling again in New York. The habit of never settling down at any place undoubtedly relieves characters from all forms of responsibilities. Love relationships are usually as loose as that between Harold Files and Hilda Gay in "The Lodging House", for they both know about the transitory nature of their stay in Berlin. Expatriates know that a change is as good as a rest, as for instance Hilaria and Steve Rath in *The Nightinghous of Paris*, who are well aware "that anybody gets tired of seeing the same face too much" (*The Nightinghous of Paris*, p.68). Hence, characters move from one relationship or one night stand to the next as they wander from city to city or from country to country.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Mc Almon, 1938 in Smoller, xii

¹⁵¹ Cf. Smoller in *The Nightinghous of Paris*, xii.

Sometimes, interpersonal bonds gradually dissolve on European soil, as for instance the marriage of the Dodsworths, which is given a final blow by Fran's affair with Kurt von Obersdorf in Berlin or the break-up of Robert Cohn's affair with Frances Clyne in Paris.

Additionally, expatriates' tendency to behave in a similar way wherever they dwell, does, by no means, cast a favourable light on them. In *The Sun Also Rises*, the party's ongoing binge drinking and carousing in Pamplona is as revealing as the roaming tour about brothels and bars on which the narrator of *Tropic of Cancer* and his companions embark when staying in Le Havre. Well aware that speakeasies are flourishing back home, Kit, at the sight of abundant alcohol at Raymond Duncan's party in *The Nightinghous of Paris*, cynically wonders whether expatriates "wouldn't do nightlife and drink as much as in Europe" (*The Nightinghous of Paris*, p.44).

The somber vision of expatriate existence would only be a too gloomily romantic fairy tale of extravagant vagabonds if there wasn't at least a grain of factual truth in it. Indeed, many expatriates were worn out of life (as for instance Hemingway, who must have felt exhausted by his experience in the war, his marital problems and his heavy drinking) and faced severe domestic problems. Djuna Barnes and Thelma Wood had broken up, as had Laurence and Peggy Vail. Sinclair Lewis had been divorced from Grace in 1927 and there were increasing signs of Zelda Fitzgerald's growing dementia. The latter had also started an affair with a young French aviator called Edouard Jozan and eventually sought a divorce from her husband. Scott would even go so far as to lock up his wife so that she couldn't see her lover and would finally withdraw all requests for divorce.¹⁵²

6.3.3. American expatriates as bogeymen

To make matters worse, expatriates did not only stir resentment among fellow country men at home, but also gradually incurred the hatred of native people.

In this context, Smoller stresses the existence of considerable mutual animosities between Frenchmen and Americans in Paris after the First World War. The French frequently despised American's haughtiness about their role in the war, feeling injustice about the comparatively high number of their losses in the battles. These emotions are also voiced by the Frenchman at the Coupole in Mc Almon's fictionalized memoir, who declares himself a soldier "who had

¹⁵² Cf. Smoller in *The Nightinghous of Paris*, xxxv. and Milford 1970, p.108-112

been wounded in the war while America was not doing her duty” (*The Nightinghousls of Paris*, p.19).

When these hostile sentiments were combined with a certain level of alcohol, tempers not rarely flared and caused insults and brawls. These were probably the most obvious manifestation of mutual hatred between the French and Americans, particularly in Montparnasse and in the Latin Quarter.

In *The Nightinghousls of Paris*, Kit gets repeatedly involved in such fights, which he ironically calls “one of life’s fine spectacles comparable to the dance, the theatre, the opera, a boxing match, or a bullfight, and with the added charm of a hot reality” (*The Nightinghousls of Paris*, p.18). In *The Sun Also Rises*, Michael continuously gets drunk and then displays tremendously rude behaviour, occasionally initiating fights in bars with other guests or with Robert Cohn, whom he reproaches for stalking his fiancée.

Mc Almon, himself inclined to heavy drinking, would not only marvel at these rows but occasionally participate in them. Like Kit, he would find himself ejected of a place or sometimes even in court, as for instance when being asked to testify together with Laurence Vail on behalf of Malcolm Cowley, who had been arrested after a fight with the patron of the Rotonde.¹⁵³

As restrictions on enlisted Americans (who were theretofore largely kept out of Paris by the Army to prevent their getting corrupted) were lowered, drunken Americans became a common sight in Paris. Throughout the Nineteen Twenties, incidents of misbehaviour began to increase. The pages of French newspapers started to be filled with stories of Americans involved in violent brawls, assaults, thefts and sometimes even killings.

The relationship between enlisted American soldiers and Frenchmen deteriorated markedly after the War. The already tense atmosphere was even aggravated because of the economic turmoil in France. Americans were blamed for increased prices and living costs, while Americans dismissed Frenchmen’s attitude as an expression of ingratitude for America’s help during and after the War. Ill-blood was also bred as America, despite France’s terrible economic situation, insisted on the repayment of war debts and refused to grant France loans for its reconstruction.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Cf. Ibid, xix

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Levenstein 1998, p.221-223

In the course of the Nineteen Twenties, anti-American sentiments in France got even stronger, as the French had abandoned all hopes of being able to refine their civilization with America's spirit of directness and modernity. Instead, American production methods began to be seen as inhibitors of intellect and creativity. American industry started to be condemned as featuring dehumanizing production methods, while American pop culture was feared to besot French youths. America's ignorance of Darwinism and obvious racism (inferred from news of racial segregation and discrimination of black African Americans throughout the country) was seen as a further evidence of its people's narrow-mindedness. By the middle of the Nineteen Twenties, hostility sometimes boiled over and resulted in menacing confrontations which were virtual chases of Americans to drive them out of the country. Hatred started to flare up and provoked the harassment of Americans by Frenchmen in cities as well as in the provinces.¹⁵⁵

Additionally, the power of the dollar made some Americans in Europe prone to over-spending and conceitedness. Sometimes, bullying behaviour was reported and critically commented upon. The group of drunken American soldiers and prep school boys in "Distinguished Air" obviously regard the girls in the clubs and cafés as commodities or goods at their disposal. Having bought a round for all the guests at the bar, one of the young men makes a fairly unpleasant pass at a blonde German girl standing nearby treating her like a prostitute that can be lured into chumminess with the help of money.

Because of its economic depression, Germany may have, on the one hand, greeted many an affluent American tourist to the city. On the other hand, Germans' anger with Americans' insolently boundless consumerism is marvellously exemplified in Josephine Herbst's family trilogy, when, in *Rope of Gold*, Lester Tolman and his American companions, apart from realizing Germans' malevolently envious glances at their fine clothes, are even attacked by children meagerly dressed in cotton smocks (on their tour through the Harz Mountains toward Eisenach and through the Thüringenwald to Berlin). The youngsters accuse them of being criminals in the sense of traffickers ('Schieber') shamelessly benefiting from their unfavorable conditions of the locals.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Ibid, p.221-223 & p.257-260

7. Transatlantic differences literarily redefined?

Even though the books under consideration sometimes seem to present Europe's destructive potentials, it must be noted that it was no longer the authors' primary intention to depict Americans getting corrupted on European soil as it may have been in the early works of Henry James. In the course and the wake of the First World War, however, the American literary tradition gradually witnessed a decline in the significance of the International Theme as hardly any writers were elaborating any longer in a Jamesian manner on the deplorable fate of innocent Americans in a morally corrupt Europe (as, for instance, in Henry James' *The American*). Apart from a few exceptions (as, for instance, in the case of Fran Dodsworth, which was mentioned above or of her husband, who is, in fact, rich and unversed in high culture, but eager to learn and to enjoy himself and arts¹⁵⁶), Jamesian characters play no significant role any longer.

Even though works by writers made famous in the previous century, as for instance Henry James or Nathaniel Hawthorne, continued to be read and to shape American readerships' notions of Europe¹⁵⁷, young authors were no less popular. Contributions by writers such as Ernest Hemingway or Scott Fitzgerald, however, did not only appeal to a generation of readers familiar with the atrocities and calamities of the war, but had indeed even more influence on the following younger generation for they were attracted by the spirit of revolt. To rebel against their elders, their standards and conventions as well as the morals of middle-class society was in total accordance with the growing pacifist mood that resulted from increasing prosperity in the late 1920s. In terms of their lifestyle and writing, these figures were leading figures of the Jazz Age and representatives of its primal ideals, hedonism and liberty.¹⁵⁸

7.1. Indicators of global developments

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Schorer 1963, p.114

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Grebstein 1962, p.115

Grebstein argues that Lewis must have been influenced by the work of Henry James. They both share an appreciation for Europe's culture, manners and cosmopolitan air, as well as a belief in America's vitality, creativeness and zest. Yet, rejection of America's vulgarity is found in the work of both authors, even though Lewis can be said to be the one of the two to display more patriotism, while James would look at America with a sort of cool detachment.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Farrell, cited in Mc Caffery 1950, p.222

7.1.1. Persistent old notions

With the revelations of psycho-analysis and the growing interest in psychological topics, literary accounts gained additional subversive character in the Nineteen Thirties. Writers were often primarily eager to question bourgeois values in society and to revolt against them. The juxtaposition of the Old and the New Worlds now appears to be primarily aiming at general, more global social criticism, rather than on presenting a direct contrast between the two sides of the Atlantic.

Comparisons between America and Europe are rare, but found, for instance, in *Tropic of Cancer*. Here Miller compares Paris and New York. While the ambiance of the first is seen as being suffused with a certain cosiness and intimacy, which made someone feel at home and almost forget about the city's stifling poverty, the latter is, despite its overwhelming richness, "cold, glittering, malign" and a place that makes "even a rich man feel his unimportance" (*Tropic of Cancer*, p.74). In *Quiet Days in Clichy* (which recounts the time when Miller shared an apartment with Alfred Perlès in Clichy), Broadway is compared with Montmartre. The first one is seen as fast, dizzying and dazzling, while the latter is described as "sluggish, lazy, indifferent", and at the same time somewhat shabby and seedy-looking, not glamorous, but seductive and glowing with a smouldering flame. Broadway represents the "brilliantly illuminated asbestos display" and "the paradise of advertising agents", while Montmartre is "worn, faded, derelict, nakedly vicious, mercenary, vulgar [...] insidiously repellent, like vice itself" (*Quiet Days in Clichy*, p.6-7, quoted in Méral 1989, p.204).

Miller's criticism primarily applies to what he regards as the deplorable consequences of the mechanization in several sectors and spheres of American life. Paris, in contrast, is seen by him as an epitome of civilisation and culture. Its famous artists from the past represent the spirit of rebellion, as do sex and erotics.¹⁵⁹

Nin, too, commented on the difference between Paris and New York when she tried to establish herself in the United States as a psycho-analyst. To her, Paris was a city that seduced the body and enlivened the senses, while New York was all unnatural and synthetic to her, and, most notably, full of hectic action.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Pizer 1996, p.128

Her initial contempt, however, does by no means mean that Nin entirely dismissed America. In fact, she was later on even fascinated by the potentialities of progress and emerging technology that replaced the image she had of the New World when arriving there for the first time as a young girl. This first encounter, back then, had been very much overshadowed by the unsettling experience of immigrant life and the loss of the bohemian lifestyle she had led in Paris and which was closely associated with the figure of her father. Due to her artistic background, she sensed a certain cultural depravity among Americans, which made her feel uneasily displaced. In the course of her second stay, however, Nin learned to appreciate New York as a contrast to “old moribund Europe” and to the constrictions and smallness of Europe. Furthermore, psycho-analysis was then greeted in New York with much more enthusiasm than in Paris.

Forced to emigrate in 1939, she once again felt a stranger in New York. Similarly to Miller and other European emigrants (like André Breton or Marcel Duchamp), she complained about New York’s coldness, the lack of comfortable cafés, casual meeting places to share life. She dismissed Americans for showing no receptivity for subtleties and sophistication, and missed expression of consciousness in the works of American poets and writers whom she mostly found rigid, cold, harsh and, above all, ignorant of and ungrateful to their European influences.¹⁶⁰

As a novel on the International Theme, *Dodsworth* also elaborates on differences between America and Europe. Life in Europe is seen and evaluated from an American’s perspective and can be said to largely reflect Sinclair Lewis’ own impressions (particularly with respect to architecture, food and city life) in Europe. Certainly, the novel also features social criticism on America. In Kurt von Obersdorf’s apartment, Sam Dodsworth patiently listens to Professor Braut’s lengthy rhapsody on Europeans’ excellent education and refinement. He directly calls continental Europe a “last refuge of individuality, leisure, privacy, quiet happiness” (*Dodsworth*, p.250), where a good talk between intelligent friends is still appreciated with as much enjoyment as a good concert or opera. Even though calling himself not an anti-American, Braut clearly displays a rejection of consumerism and materialism, which he regards as American developments. His censure is slightly tamed by the fact that the professor openly admits to praise only a small section of German society (obviously aristocrats, for he calls German culture an aristocratic one) and his reverence for just a few Americans, such as Edith Wharton, who, in his opinion, belongs to what he calls “Europeans”.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. *The Diary of Anaïs Nin* vol.III, v-xi

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Bradbury 1995, p.381

Indeed, Samuel Dodsworth himself gradually realises that moneyed American are drinking too much and don't know anything about culture, politics or women. His friend, Tub Pearson, is portrayed as a dull, provincial and fairly narrow-minded man, which becomes even more obvious in Europe. Although Sam despises Madame de Penable and Endicott Everett Atkins, he eventually longs to be like them and to acquire their curiosity and interest in new things.¹⁶¹

7.1.2. From individual drama over collective tragedy to global misery

Regardless of the contrasts between the Old and the New World in American literature of the interwar period, the image of Paris and Berlin in the 1930s was quite often a scandalous one. It was shaped by the frustrations resulting from the perceived historical debasement and sterility that had paved the way for economic and political corruption and, eventually, complete disaster.

The obscene, wild and free sexuality along with all the other ideals of anarchistic Surrealism was not only conceived as a weapon to shock audiences and readerships, but also as a possibility to come up with the grimness of reality. The French capital, for instance, thus became an epitome of disorder and inhumanity, representing a symbol of decay while still combining all civilization and humanity absent in modernized America.¹⁶²

No matter how tragic events unfold in Paris or Berlin (whether the reader is invited to witness the breakup of the Dodsworths' marriage, the desperate escapades of American expatriates to cope with the tormenting emptiness and futility in their lives or the fall of characters into drunkenness, addiction, madness or disease), Paris, and also Berlin (and particularly the forms of private and public conduct observed in these cities), as represented in the fiction by several American writers of the interwar period, may be seen as indicators of human misery and decline. The two cities may take the role which the narrator of *Tropic of Cancer* assigns to Paris, which he sees as the "revolving stage that permits the spectator to glimpse all phases of the conflict". For, even though European metropolises may have been the stage of many individual and collective dramas, there is a clear statement that the root of all evil is not to be found on European soil exclusively. If one trusts the narrator of *Tropic of Cancer*, one may

¹⁶¹ Cf. Grebstein 1962, p.114 and 115

¹⁶² Cf. Bradbury 1995, p.381

believe that “Paris initiates no dramas”. (because “they are begun elsewhere”)(*Tropic of Cancer*, p.35). This can be seen in the fate of several characters in the works under consideration. Steve Rath, for instance, comes from a divorced family and could not stand the new wife of her father. These unfavourable preconditions enhanced her restlessness at home in America. Additionally, one knows that it was only in Berlin where she finally realized her real sexual inclination. Finding herself and accepting her sexual orientation, however, turns out to be a much more difficult and arduous task than she had probably imagined before.

Miss Knight’s fate is a similarly tragic one. The reader learns that he/she has been a disgrace to his/ her family, due to his/her deviant sexuality and eccentricity. Obviously shunned by his/ her clan, he/she took farewell of his/her home country, the United States, by starting to work for a road show circus, and later on came to Europe. Apart from his/her apparent inability to keep a relationship, the frequent change of personal pronouns to refer to the protagonist throughout the story reflects Charlie Knight’s profound identity crisis.

The Dodsworths’ marital breakdown may be the result of a gradual decline in their relationship over the years reaching only a climax on European soil. Travelling as well as staying in foreign cities like Paris and eventually Berlin, both far away from home, can be seen as an epitome of mutual estrangement from one another.¹⁶³

As symbols of global disaster, the characters’ tragedies may, however, anticipate calamities and miseries of a whole generation, that soon were to culminate in an even more tragic humanitarian catastrophe, as socio-political turmoils all over the European continent heralded the advent of another war.¹⁶⁴

8. Vice generates vice: From moral decline to maximum inhumanity

8.1. Berlin- a bubbling pot full of ingredients for havoc and misery

The fairly chaotic situation in Berlin in the two interwar decades proved to be a thoroughly fertile soil for further misery. The atmosphere of nonchalance and recklessness conveyed in

¹⁶³ Cf. Dooley 1967,p, 150f

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Méral 1989, p.208

the works discussed in the present thesis were to be a premonition of the more somber future that lay ahead of Germany. That the country was moving towards even greater tragedy remained, however, long unnoticed by foreign observers.

In contrast to Great Britain which managed to overcome the economic crisis that had put the country deeply in debt to the United States, Germany's economy further deteriorated at the end of the Nineteen Twenties and the beginning of the Nineteen Thirties. Between 1928 and 1932 numerous German enterprises collapsed and thus provoked an overwhelming unemployment rate that soared to about six million of the whole German labour force. At the same time, the number of Germans supporting the National Socialists increased tremendously. While the Brownshirts only gained about 2, 4 per cent of all votes in the German Federal Elections in 1928, about 37, 8 per cent of Germans supported them in the 1932 elections. The Nazis thus became the strongest power in the German Reichstag and were supported by large sections of German society, particularly by impoverished members of the middle class and disgruntled working class people who shared the Nazis' rejection of the administration's policy of appeasement and the required reparation payments. Instead they greeted the Nazis' enthusiasm and will to restore Germany's power and to clear off all misery, chaos and evil.¹⁶⁵

With loving detail, Christopher Isherwood describes the gradual rise to power of the National Socialists and the steadily growing acceptance of their ideology among Berliners. Lothar Nowak, Otto's elder brother, for instance, has joined the party and begins to frequent their meetings on a regular basis, very much to the disgust of his mother, who thinks that "they put all kinds of silly ideas in his head" (*Goodbye to Berlin*, p.444). Others are right from the beginning described as already indoctrinated by the Nazis. Apart from intriguing together with Frau Schroeder in order to bully and denigrate their Jewish neighbour, Frau Mayer reveals her ardency for the new regime in a shocking comment on one of the pogroms after the 1930 elections:

Serve them [the Jews] right! She exclaimed. This town is sick with Jews. Turn over any stone, and a couple of them will crawl out. They're poisoning the very water we drink! They're strangling us, they're robbing us, they're sucking our life-blood. Look at all the big department stores: Wertheim, K.D.W., Landauers'. Who owns them? Filthy thieving Jews! (*Goodbye to Berlin*, p.487).

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Rettinger-Weissensteiner 1996, p.16

Fr. Schroeder's behaviour also shows the urgent need to align oneself with the political majority. Initially being a Communist voter, Christopher can hardly trust his eyes and ears when, towards the end of the narrative, he learns that his landlady has become a passionate supporter of Adolf Hitler. However strange and irritating her conversion from Communism to National Socialism may appear to Christopher, he does not condemn her, for, after all, "she is, like many other co-citizens, adapting herself, as she will adapt herself to every new regime" (*Goodbye to Berlin*, p.582), merely acclimatizing herself in accordance with a sort of natural law, like an animal which changes its coat for the winter. People like her cannot help acting the way they do since they are, whatever government is in power, "doomed to live in this town" (*Goodbye to Berlin*, p.582).

Strolling through the streets of Berlin in March 1933 after the general elections, William Bradshaw feels people's support for the Nazis. The Brownshirts marching in the streets attract the curious as well as benevolent and admiring glances of the people on the streets. The strollers and the newspaper readers seem to share a feeling of invigoration and activity. Germany is virtually thrilled by the promise of becoming a grander nation and of having the vision of a brighter future:

They smiled approvingly of these youngsters in their big swaggering boots who were going to upset the Treaty of Versailles. They were pleased because it would soon be summer, because Hitler had promised to protect the small tradesmen, because their newspapers told them that the good times were coming (*Mister Norris Changes Trains*, p.181).

The optimism that can be noticed within these lines bears a resemblance to that found in other contributions by American writers staying in Germany in the early Nineteen Thirties. However, not always is this sort of amazing euphoria among Germans recognized as a potentially dangerous and harmful energy.

Even though he notices German youngsters' fatalistic attitudes and their poverty, the narrator of Joseph Hergesheimer's *Berlin*, for example, is totally blinded by what he sees as the new German spirit that can be felt all over the city and which is characterized by energy and future optimism. He is spellbound by the sight of German youths doing exercises at a high school for physical education, marvelling reverently at the young people's self-assuredness, their straightforwardness and cool discipline. Greeting this new mentality for "it led to simplicity of life and act" (*Berlin*, p.25) he comes to the conclusion that the new German youth's hard vigour is to be appreciated and to be seen as a good sign for the country's future.

In only brief remarks does he mention the existence of “young political organizations in the form of marching clubs with banners and Spartan rules”. This kind of youth, who are remarkable for the “grimness of their young faces”, are seen as “small organized communions of hate” (*Berlin*, p.25ff.), but yet unable to compete with the “sunny liberty” of the Wannsee, where more or less impoverished young people enjoying the sun on a Sunday evening on the lake still represent an image of idyll and nonchalance.

Even if one might reproach Hergesheimer for his socio-political short-sightedness, it has to be kept in mind that, like so many other writers at the time, he was not primarily interested in providing an authentic portrayal of Berlin in 1931/32. *Berlin* rather consists of vignettes of and comments on German lifestyle and the codes observed. The book thus reflects the author’s interest in German popular culture. Hence, the action is predominantly set in restaurants, beer cellars, bars and dance halls.¹⁶⁶ The narrative is shaped by a very personal subjective vision of Germany, which is probably best illustrated by the narrator’s statement that German youth’s new asceticism, which is supposed to show itself in youngsters’ eating sparingly and drinking wine as well as light beer, marks a form of renunciation of Prussian decadence and hypocrisy. The narrator warmly greets Germany’s development as “preliminary to all greatness in states and to the integrity of individuals” (*Berlin*, p.252).

8.2. Political instability, insecurity and violence

Isherwood, however, does not fail to illuminate the preconditions of Germans’ willingness to support a new, promising regime, namely political instability, frequent riots, persecutions of and violence against minorities and the killing of political opponents. Especially the last pages of his Berlin novels, which are set during the first months of 1933, render the image of Berlin as a kind of police state, where, due to constant demonstrations and marches, policemen are scattered all over the city.

Particularly the renditions in *Mister Norris Changes Trains* capture the explosive atmosphere in Berlin during the early Nineteen Thirties that resulted from an embittered competition of rival parties, most notably the Communists and the National Socialists, and their repeated attempts to weaken the other one’s power. Communists’ attempts to seize power often

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Justus 1973, p.64-66

resulted in bloody terror, which became more or less the daily bread in the city. Some sources speak of about 450 riots in Prussia alone during the six weeks before the general elections in July 1932.¹⁶⁷

At some point, the narratives of Isherwood's Berlin stories rightfully gain a slightly apocalyptic quality evoking reminiscences of end game- like scenarios:

Berlin was in a state of civil war. Hate exploded suddenly, without warning, out of nowhere, at street corners, in restaurants, cinemas, dance halls, swimming-baths, at midnight, after breakfast, in the middle of the afternoon. Knives were whipped out, blows were dealt with spiked rings, beer-mugs, chair-legs, or headed clubs, bullets slashed the advertisements on the poster-columns, rebounded from the iron roofs of lanterns. In the middle of a crowded street a young man would be attacked, stripped, thrashed, and left bleeding on the pavement; in fifteen seconds it was all over and the assailants had disappeared (*Mister Norris Changes Trains*, p.89).

A few trams were running, policemen posted fore and all. Some of these were attacked, the windows smashed, and the passengers forced to get out. The streets were deserted, wet, raw, and grey. Van Papen's government was expected to proclaim martial law. Berlin seemed profoundly indifferent. Proclamations, shooting, arrests; they were all nothing new (*Mister Norris Changes Trains*, p.113).

8.3 The subtle tactics of a perfidious terror machinery

In order to underline the general insecurity in Berlin, Isherwood refers to actual events taking place, such as the accession to power of Hitler, the Reichstag fire and the elections of March 1933 that cemented National Socialists' power as they managed to double the number of their seats in the German parliament. In *Goodbye to Berlin* Germans' dwindling confidence in politics is described as a sort of oblivion and melancholy displayed by the population. People's reluctance to speak about politics is rooted in anger about the frequent restructurings within the political system, for instance, when Adolf Hitler was sworn in as Chancellor of Germany in January 1933 and "nobody would dare any longer believe in the government's stability, thinking it won't last until the spring" (*Goodbye to Berlin*, p.577).

8.3.1. Cruelty abundant

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Wainwright 1981, p.177

National Socialists' cruelties are illustrated in the form of individual and collective violence against their fairly well defined enemies, "the Jews, their business rivals, and the Marxists, a vaguely defined minority of people, who didn't concern them [...], found guilty of the defeat and the inflation" (*Mister Norris Changes Trains*, p.181).

Systematic attempts to deafen politically and ideologically opposed voices also took the form of organized confiscations of books and other cultural artefacts. Walking down the Bülowstrasse in the spring of 1933, Christopher becomes the witness of a Nazis' raiding of the house of a small liberal pacifist publisher and the following book-burning ceremony.

At the end of *Mister Norris Changes Trains*, William has to painfully acknowledge a partial victory of the National Socialist terror machinery as he learns about Bayer's and Kuno's deaths when trying to escape the police.

Incidents as, for instance, the one featuring three S.A. men kicking and stabbing a seventeen-year-old boy with the sharp metal points of their banners and leaving the wounded victim in a corner like an abandoned sack, show the reader in a very disconcerting way the cruelty of the Nazi regime. The meticulousness of the Nazi terror is also well illustrated in Lester Tolman's report in Josephine Herbst's Trexler trilogy. Obviously ravaged by his experience in Germany, Tolman is not immediately realized by his old friend, Victoria Chance, when the two meet each other in a bar in New York. In the course of the conversation, in which Tolman displays symptoms of severe traumatization, it is revealed that his ongoing fear and paranoia of being caught and killed is rooted in her witnessing the Nazis' attack on his friend Ernst, when he was beaten up in such a gruesome way that his head "bounced like the dummy [they] used to try the gloves on in the gym" (*Rope of Gold*, p.128) before actually being transported into a concentration camp.

The secrecy about concentration camps and Jewish fates is rendered in the story of Bernhard Landauer's fate. When listening to a conversation between a German and an Austrian in a cellar restaurant in Prague, Christopher learns more about the real circumstances of Bernhard's decease, namely that he was just one of those many "heart failures" these days; which meant, in fact, that he was one of the many Jews who were deported to concentration

camps as part of the overall mission to clear the whole Jewish population right out of the country and to ensure racial purity.

Jewish emigration is also alluded to in Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*. Here, the narrator states that "the Jews are snowing me under" and the reader learns that many of his artist friends are Jewish.¹⁶⁸

The fate of some Jews is exemplified in Nin's diary, which includes a story of the boat owners (a German couple) next to her house boat. The German painter and his wife were reported to be trying to sell their boat to Nin in order to flee to Africa or South America, because they were too afraid to return home, where they might be put into concentration camps.¹⁶⁹

Even though Nin's erotic stories include no direct reference to political changes in the Nineteen Thirties, the author was certainly not deaf to political turmoils all over Europe. Indeed her diaries show that Nin was well aware of the rise of Fascism in Spain or Hitler's annexation of Austria. Predominantly owing to her being surrounded by devoted Marxists (most notably Gonzalo, the Guatemalan revolutionary involved with Parisian Marxist groups), Nin, who had formerly used to only believe in a creative and spiritual revolution from within as the only key to human salvation (being convinced of the dubiousness of politics), gradually throughout the Nineteen Thirties developed an interest in political commitment. In spite of supporting Spanish refugees coming to Paris and thus facing human tragedy, Nin regarded writing as a means to create her own inner world of creative, non-violent resistance rather than as a channel to articulate political messages. Miller, by contrast, seemed to be eager to camouflage the tragedy of the events in the outside world by using black humour. This kind of cynicism may be mistaken for indifference towards actual developments. A fallacy might be read into Miller's satisfaction with the fact that the narrator of *Tropic of Cancer* works as a proof reader, which renders him superior to all atrocities he is obliged to deal with and which sets him aloof from all human cruelties and misery.¹⁷⁰

Robert Mc Almon, as already shown, was primarily interested in the social aspects of Berlin and Parisian life. He thus avoids referring to political changes. Yet, the author had an insight into social and political unrest in Germany and France. In Paris, he became a witness of riots

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Méral 1989, p.185

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Ibid.,p.306

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Méral 1989, p.186 and 207

and clashes between Fascists and Communists as well as of police aggression while he watched a Nazi parade in Munich. He could not ignore the hatred and distrust that infested the atmosphere in both countries throughout the Nineteen Thirties, so that he, already in 1934, scented the imminent arrival of revolution and war.¹⁷¹

Josephine Herbst, whose empathy and sympathy for socio-political facts was already mentioned, was certainly more politically committed than the other authors of the works under consideration in the present thesis. Inspired by the growing radicalism among the American working class in the interwar decades and well aware of women's disadvantaged position in politics as well as in society, Herbst may have desired to change society. Together with her husband, John Herrmann (who had joined the Communist party) she even participated as a guest delegate in the Kharkov conference of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers in 1930. Once her marriage was over and socio-political upheavals struck the whole European continent, she became more politically active than ever before. In 1935, she once again travelled to Germany in order to report on the opposition to Hitler, and in 1937, she became a witness of the uprising in Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War. The shattering, depressing experience in Germany, Spain and Russia and the signs of an upcoming war obviously disappointed her so much that Herbst eventually withdrew from all political activism.¹⁷²

8.3.2. Facing the unadorned truth

Probably like many Berlin citizens at the time, William Bradshaw eventually had to take farewell from friends and comrades. The situation in Berlin as it presented itself in the Nineteen Thirties may have probably led many a spectator to speak of the end of an era. While Christopher in *Goodbye to Berlin* cannot help witnessing the last night of an epoch and participating in a "dress-rehearsal of disaster" when joining the seemingly merry mingling of guests at Bernard Landauer's garden party in the summer of 1932, it took others considerably longer to see clearly. In spite of being an eye witness of all the socio-political upheavals in Austria and Germany throughout the Nineteen Thirties, it took Kay Boyle several years to markedly dissociate herself from the National Socialist ideology. It was not before the publication of her story "Anschluss" (1939) in *Harper's Magazine* that Boyle, who had

¹⁷¹ Cf. Mc Almon, *Being Geniuses Together* 1938, p.372

¹⁷² Cf. Langer in Herbst, *Rope of Gold*, p.438f.

hitherto displayed a pro-Nazi attitude, would shift towards an entirely anti- National Socialist world view.¹⁷³

His second stay in Berlin in the summer of 1936 and his contact with the American ambassador William E. Dodd finally made even Thomas Wolfe realize the Nazi's abominations. The shattering awareness found its way into his short novel *I Have a Thing to Tell You*, one of the sections in Wolfe's posthumously published novel *You Can't Go Home Again* (1940).

Here, the metaphor of sickness resurfaces, when the narrator speaks of a psychically wounded people "desperately ill with some dread malady of the soul" and "infested with the contagion of an ever-present fear" (*You Can't Go Home Again*, p.488-489). George Webber, Wolfe's autobiographical protagonist thus also becomes aware of the end of an era and the arrival of even more insecure times¹⁷⁴:

Then suddenly, the sharp command, and instantly there would be the solid smack of ten thousand leather boots as they came together with the sound of war (*You Can't Go Home Again*, 1947, p.506).

9. Résumé/ Conclusion

The previous chapters have illuminated Parisian and Berlin's notoriety in the works of major North American authors writing in the interwar period. It has been shown that Berlin and Paris were depicted as the most decadent and libertine European cities at the time. From an American point of view, and especially for Puritanical Protestant observers, the witnessing of many dubious forms of conduct in these cities were received with moral indignation or at least with discomfort, though the variety of instances rendered in literature is a highly faceted one and can equally be found in a number of works by North American writers who spent more or less time in one of the major Central European capitals.

Both cities, however, had developed a reputation of cities of decadence and vice. Basically, Berliners as well as foreigners coming to the German capital tended to indulge in the same

¹⁷³ Cf. Zacharasiewicz 1998, p.184

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Zacharasiewicz 2007, p.121

vices as they would in Paris, although renditions vary in terms of explicitness attributed to the laissez-faire lifestyles. Sometimes, delineations suggest the assumption that, while both cities competed for the role as world's hotbed of immorality, conduct in Berlin was often regarded as much more disconcerting, as its nightlife was characterised by a markedly open display of vice, whereas Paris, even though offering plenty of opportunities for debaucheries of various natures, retained a certain decency and was primarily appreciated and visited for its artistic and cultural treasures.

Even though both cities had, to varying degrees, gained the reputation as haunts of the immoral already in the Nineteenth Century, the heyday of abandonment and debauchery witnessed in the cities can be said to have been reached not before the Nineteen Twenties and Nineteen Thirties. Whereas stories set in Paris before the First World War primarily dealt with the cunning ruses of a morally jaded aristocracy, Germany's evil was considered to be rooted in the predominant Prussian spirit that was thought to have turned Germany into an over-orderly country controlled by the military and the police.

The First World War and its outcome marked an important turning point in the conception of Germany's and France's notoriety. French immorality after the ceasefire is no longer restricted to acts of characters from the upper classes. The International Theme that constituted a major aspect of the works set in Paris during the Belle Epoque and which was most notably dealt with by Henry James, gradually decreases in significance as the Parisian life becomes more and more cosmopolitan and social borders between different classes get increasingly porous. American writers' presence in Paris since the war and in its aftermath shaped the authors' knowledge of the city and their awareness of everyday hardships encountered in the daily struggle of survival.

The breakdown of the German Empire also had far-reaching consequences. The country's decline after the war was literarily interpreted in different ways. Some may have seen it as an opportunity for a new beginning. Joseph Hergesheimer, for example, who worked his impressions on Germany into *Berlin* does not employ any stereotypes spread by the Creel Commission, but primarily takes a closer and indeed very personal look at German popular culture. The vitality and enthusiasm of the German youth he concentrates on appears to him as evidence for the country's bright future. Writers like Robert Mc Almon, in contrast, draw a more sombre picture of Germany and German society. Particularly in his accounts on Berlin nightlife, the German capital is described as a place of total abandon heading directly towards moral chaos.

However, the idea of rapid moral debasement on European soil was often linked to the presence of numerous American expatriates in the Old World, especially in Paris and Berlin. Particularly the excesses of this large group, which was sometimes referred to as the 'Lost Generation' (because they were conceived as a bunch of deracinated individuals) resulted, on the one hand, from the challenge to adapt to the life in a foreign city and ranged, on the other hand, since it was, in fact, a generation that had just witnessed the war, from attempts to cope with the past to desires to flee from reality and free oneself from one's individual social background.

Europe's economic decay invited travellers to exploit the advantages of an almighty dollar to the fullest, while the demise in moral values accompanying it turned the Continent into a playground for expatriates, where they could escape the provinciality at home. Besides cultural and artistic riches, sexual permissiveness and the possibility to consume alcohol legally strengthened the live-and-let-live spirit of nonchalance.

While to most intellectuals it was fairly obvious that Germany, and indeed large parts of Central Europe, were no longer the complex world predominantly inhabited by highly sophisticated people but indeed a conglomerate of societies shattered by the war and struck with total economic and moral decay, hardly anyone noticed the gradual rise of a fairly radical and thoroughly inhumane movement that aimed at re-establishing discipline and order in Germany. Indeed, balanced images of Germany continued to be disseminated until the news of political persecution, mass killings and concentration camps in the country started to shock the world¹⁷⁵, but thanks to the contributions of some writers such as Josephine Herbst or Christopher Isherwood, the English-speaking world was probably made more familiar with the atrocities of the National Socialists. In their investigatory zeal they succeeded in rendering the bleak social reality of Germany and its population during the Weimar Republic, and the even grimmer social-political developments which finally culminated in utmost immorality and human misery, namely the outbreak of the Second World War.

Even though delineations of Berlin and Paris may not provide a fully-fledged authentic portrait of the two capitals in the Interwar Period, authors' familiarity with the city did not only help them to free themselves of preconceptions and stereotypes of previous generations. Their experience undoubtedly also supported them in making the resulting image bear a closer resemblance to the actual Berlin and Paris of the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties. However, a combination of the authors' inclination to either Surrealism or Symbolism, their profound

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Zacharasiewicz 2007, p.12 f.

interest in psycho-analysis and their desire to bring about a change in social morals and values as well as their stylistic playfulness may have supported the creation of portrayals that do not fully reflect Berlin and Parisian reality of the era. Nonetheless, the stories provide interesting insights and observations into the cities' life. Authors' familiarity with certain circles and milieus in the cities, which is identifiable in their works, makes the cities easily recognizable to the reader.¹⁷⁶

It remains to be noted that a paper with the scope of the present thesis may only marginally tackle the highly complex topic of immorality on Central European soil in North American fiction. The present analysis deliberately focused on the period between the end of World War I and the beginning of World War II, as particularly the Nineteen Twenties the Nineteen Thirties are known to have been epochs of great personal liberty and hedonism, especially in Central European metropolises.

Further studies may elaborate on the development of the Berlin and Paris images since the heydays of their notoriety. It may be examined whether these cities still bear the reputation of places with an extra portion of erotic charm or moral laxity.

After all, topics related to the idea of increased permissiveness on European soil still seem to stir interest as can be seen in other artistic genres, as for instance film. The French-German drama *Two Days in Paris*, produced and directed by Julie Delpy, elaborates on certain aspects of transatlantic differences tackled in the present thesis. In the motion picture, the protagonist, a hypochondriac American interior designer (played by Adam Goldberg), gets familiar with Paris' unique charm, when he visits the city with his French-born photographer girlfriend Marion in order to rekindle the passion in their relationship and to pick up her parents' cat. The man is both startled by the language barrier and resulting comprehension difficulties as well as by the omnipresence of Marion's ex-lovers who seem to be scattered all over the city.

The 2011 romantic fantasy comedy *Midnight in Paris* by Woody Allen, which offers a thoroughly nostalgic voyage back into the French capital of the 1920s, elaborates on notions of adventurous love and erotic hedonism. The protagonist (played by Wilfried Owen), a successful American screenwriter coming to Paris with his fiancée (Marion Cotillard) and her conservative parents, is repeatedly transported back to the Nineteen Twenties when drunkenly strolling through the city at night. In the course of his nocturnal tours, the young man, who tries to establish himself as a writer, does not only get acquainted with numerous important

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Méral 1989, p.208

literary and intellectual figures of Paris' bohemia, such as Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway or Salvador Dali, but also learns about the seductive qualities of Parisian women.

Finally, notions of immorality and indecent behaviour will probably always pique the curiosity of people all over the world. Due to the numerous ambivalences within Americans' mindsets, moral discussions may continue to remain on the country's agenda. America's obsession with repressing sexuality and penalizing seemingly an over-explicit display of sex and eroticism apparently continues to play a role in the United States, as Evangelical Christians continue to play an important role in the country and religious participation is still wide-spread in the United States. Creationists throughout the country tend to reject Darwin's Theory of Evolution and other groups condemn worldly pleasures like alcohol, cosmetics or dance. It does not come as a huge surprise that they dismiss homosexuality as well as abortion and the unconditional equality between men and women. The chorus of outrage within the country and the remarkable media frenzy caused by the scandal around married Democratic U.S. American Congressman Anthony Weiner, who was recently accused of having sent sexually explicit photos and messages via Twitter to about six women over a period of three years, clearly shows how easily American indignation may be aroused, particularly with respect to sexuality. Similarly telling, as already mentioned earlier, may be the country's repeated indignation at the figure of Marilyn Manson and his often provocative performances, which may be seen by many a critic as a proof for a tendency within American society towards an increased sensitivity with respect to ethical issues.

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German abstract/ Deutsche Kurzfassung

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Bild eines amoralischen, im Sinne eines lasziv-verruchten und lasterbehafteten Mitteleuropas, wie es sich im Werk einiger nordamerikanischer Schriftsteller, die sich zwischen dem Ersten und dem Zweiten Weltkrieg kürzere oder längere Zeit als Expatriaten in Europa aufhielten, findet.

Insbesondere Metropolen im Herzen der „Alten Welt“ stachen hierbei als Zentren von Dekadenz und sündhaftem Verhalten hervor.

Berlin, beispielweise, galt in den 1920er und 1930er Jahren als regelrechtes Sündenbabel sowie als Welthauptstadt des Lasters und größte Sexhauptstadt. Der Name „Berlin“ wurde zum Synonym für Dekadenz, Ausschweifung, aber auch Kreativität, da zahlreiche Künstler und Intellektuelle aus aller Welt von der einzigartigen Freizügigkeit und der bemerkenswerten Offenheit, sowohl gegenüber Kunst und Kultur, als auch in Bezug auf Liebe und Sexualität, angezogen wurden.

Schlagartig rang die deutsche Hauptstadt somit Paris den Ruf als Kultur und Sexhauptstadt der Welt ab. Nichtsdestotrotz tummelten sich auch in der Metropole an der Seine weiterhin Tausende kultur- und liebeshungrige Reisende. Sowohl Alkohol, Drogen als auch Sex waren in beiden Städten leicht erhältlich. Alkohol floss beiderorts buchstäblich in Strömen und Prostitution florierte wie nie zuvor.

Deutschlands und Frankreichs Wirtschaften, die nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg danieder lagen und mit schweren Rezessionen bzw. Inflationen zu kämpfen hatten, waren zum Billig-Reiseland, insbesondere für Amerikaner, die nicht selten Europas wirtschaftliche Misere auszunutzen wussten, geworden. Somit wurden Mitteleuropas Metropolen nicht nur Anziehungspunkte für zahlreiche kreative Köpfe, sondern auch für Betrüger und Kriminelle. Da sowohl Deutschland, als auch Frankreich den Ersten Weltkrieg verloren hatten und folglich die etablierten Gesellschaftsordnungen verloren gegangen waren, soll aufgezeigt werden, dass jener „Alles-ist-möglich“- Lebensstil, der in beiden Städten vorzufinden war, zu einem Großteil das Resultat sozio-politischer Veränderungen war, und gleichermaßen die Ursache neuer, bedauernswerter Entwicklungen darstellte, als in Deutschland sich im Zuge der Dreißiger Jahre immer mehr desillusionierte Bürger von den Versprechungen der Nationalsozialisten überzeugen ließen und damit jenem Regime zu Macht verhelfen, welches sich zum Ziel gemacht hatte, Berlin und das gesamte Deutsche Reich vom ihrer Meinung nach ausufernden Chaos und Übel zu befreien- und folglich weiteres, viel größeres, untragbares Leid heraufbeschwören.

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