Masculinity Studies has enjoyed steady progress for the last three decades within the disciplines of sociology, psychology, and cultural studies (Lea & Schoene, 2002, p. 319). In response to the entrenched belief of a universal masculine essence, scholarship within the field has demonstrated that masculinity is a historically contingent construction (Foucault 1981; Connell 1987, 1995; Butler 1990; Kimmel 1996, 2000). Despite these advances within the fields of sociology and psychology, it is only in the last ten years that the field of Masculinity Studies has begun to recognize the wider cultural and social value of literary representations of men and masculinities. Studies such as Ben Knights’ Writ-
In this article I wish to propose that there is one literary figure that provides a viable metaphoric and methodological tool for negotiating the role of American fiction in portraying and shaping American masculinity: the flâneur. Flânerie, originating in 19th century Paris, began as the pastime of a seemingly passive languid ambler. The flâneur has evolved, however, during the course of modernity to enjoy various reinterpretations. Beginning with Flaubert’s “disinterested idler,” to Balzac’s “flâneur-artiste” and Baudelaire’s “lyrical poet,” “anonymous artist,” and “philosopher,” the flâneur has evolved into Walter Benjamin’s “detached reporter” and Edgar Allan Poe’s “urban detective” (Barger, 2008, pp. 351-372; Werner, 2004). Contemporary readings of the figure have emphasised the role of the flâneur as “sociologist,” in the view of David Frisby (1994), or “analytic form” according to Chris Jenks (1995). As a sociological type engaged in the analysis of urban discourse, the flâneur, as Deborah Parsons elaborates, continues to exist “in theoretical and historiographical means, as a model for [our] own methodology and the cultural climate we are studying” (2000, p. 228).

Investigation into the issue of masculinity and the flâneur can be traced to the research of feminist critics of the 1980s led by Griselda Pollock, Janet Wolff and Elizabeth Wilson. It is Wilson who declares, “the very idea of the flâneur reveals it to be a gendered concept” (1992, p. 98). Despite this apparent position of power of the male figure in the city of modernity, Wilson suggests that it is the city itself, traditionally regarded as feminine, which forms and deconstructs masculinity.
the flâneur’s masculinity. Wilson argues that the urban labyrinth leads to the “disintegrative effect” on masculinity. In her view:

the flâneur himself never really existed, being but an embodiment of the special blend of excitement, tedium and horror aroused by many in the new metropolis, and the disintegrative effect of this on the masculine identity. The flâneur does indeed turn out to be like Poe’s Man of the Crowd—a figure of solitude, he is never alone; and, when singled out, he vanishes. He is a figure to be deconstructed, a shifting projection of angst rather than a solid embodiment of male bourgeois power.... He floats with no material base, living on his wits, and, lacking the patriarchal discourse that assured him of meaning, is compelled to invent a new one. (1992, p. 109)

Wilson’s stance on the invisibility of the male flâneur shares notable parallels with the major debates within Masculinity Studies itself. With the majority of research in the field focusing upon historically marginal masculine groups, I would go as far to suggest that this trend has led to an over-tipping of the balance toward the invisibility of the hegemonic category of masculinity—a development mirrored by the invisibility of the flâneur. With a refocus on flâneurial figures in fictionalised Manhattan, it is my contention that a fresh critical insight can be achieved in the research on representations and constructions of hegemonic American masculinity.

To fully gauge the value of the flâneur in literary representations of masculinity, I would like to begin with what many would argue to be the classic piece of flâneurial writing on Manhattan: E.B. White’s Here is New York (1949). A work of “non-fiction,” Here Is New York is the product of White’s voyage through the waves of wandering New Yorkers who lived the reality of Manhattan during this period. Although written in the first person, Here Is New York is much more than dry journalistic reportage—it is White’s love poem to the city, a piece of urban poetry that affirms Manhattan as the ideal arena for the twentieth century flâneur.

In contrast to the view of the disintegrative effect of the modern metropolis propagated by Wilson and her cohorts, at various points in Here is New York White emphasises the protective nature of this urban arena. White sees New York City as succeeding in “insulating the individual (if he wants it, and almost everybody wants or needs it) against all enormous and violent and wonderful events that are taking place every minute” (p. 22). To those suffering “a deficiency of spirit” it can offer “sources of excitement for spiritual sustenance and maintenance of morale” (p. 25). Ultimately White believes that the city’s inhabitants “find in New York a protection” (p. 25). The point White is making is that

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7 For discussion on the gendered nature of the city within the context of flânerie see chapter one, ‘Into the Labyrinth,’ of Wilson (1991).
8 See also Kimmel (1993) for further rumination on the invisibility of gender to the American male.
New York is peculiarly constructed to absorb almost anything that comes along… without inflicting the event upon its inhabitants; so that every event is, in a sense, optional, and the inhabitant is in the happy position of being able to choose his spectacle and conserve his soul. In most metropolises, small and large, the choice is often not with the individual at all. (pp. 23-24)

Admittedly, as the capital of the twentieth century, New York City has experienced unprecedented growth and expansion. White does not hide the tensions and strains of this urban concentration. As White reports, “New York has changed in tempo and temper during the years I have known it. There is greater tension, increased irritability. You encounter it in many places, in many faces” (pp. 51-52). Furthermore, “the normal frustrations of modern life are here multiplied and amplified…. There is greater tension and there is greater speed” (p. 52). White is writing about Manhattan in the late 1940s, but his acute awareness of societal conditions of the time foretells the state of this dense urban arena to come, whilst evoking the concept of “time-space compression” coined by David Harvey (1989). Manhattan, put simply, “has never been so uncomfortable, so crowded, so tense” (p. 52).

Despite this seemingly inevitable urban malaise, White does not reach the conclusion suggested by Wilson. White celebrates the special relationship between the subject and his urban environment. As White denotes, “Mass hysteria is a terrible force, yet New Yorkers seem always to escape it by some tiny margin…. The city makes up for its hazards and deficiencies by supplying its citizens with massive doses of a supplementary vitamin—the sense of belonging to something unique, cosmopolitan, mighty and unparalleled” (pp. 32-33). The American male, therefore, need not automatically suffer dissolution of his masculine subjectivity due to the stresses and strains of everyday urban life. Conversely, it is the very urban environment itself that can offer a sense of (re)generation of selfhood.

As White begins *Here Is New York* commenting on the link between the city and its people, he also ends *Here Is New York* with his final proclamation of New York as “the City of Man” (p. 56). Certainly on one level this would seem a pun on Manhattan, but it also refers to the changing social and political landscape of New York City. In 1947 it was decided that the permanent headquarters of the United Nations would be situated in the Turtle Bay area of Manhattan. It is in Manhattan that diplomacy, democracy, and international relations between members of the human race (“man”) would be situated. This, I would argue, is further evidence for the choice of Manhattan as the urban arena to study the development of the American urban male of the twentieth

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9 Throughout *Here is New York* White writes about the various male figures that exist within this urban arena. As he states, “New York is the concentrate of art and commerce and sport and religion and entertainment and finance, bringing to a single compact arena the gladiator, the evangelist, the promoter, the actor, the trader and the merchant” (p. 19).
century. Manhattan turned out to be the city of modernity in which male subjectivity, particularly American male subjectivity, would be debated and defined. This unique urban labyrinth therefore became the product and producer of diverse and often competing masculinities. Manhattan, in housing the United Nations headquarters, can be considered both factually and figuratively as the location of what White terms as “the Parliament of Man” (p. 55).

Contemporary research on the flâneur, particularly the American flâneur, has read this literary figure as a casualty of postmodernity. A cluster of critics brought together by the nihilistic and negating strand of postmodern theory, namely Zygmunt Bauman, Jean Baudrillard, and Graeme Gilloch, have led the call for the death of the flâneur. This view is crystallized in Gilloch’s article, “The Return of the ‘Flâneur’: The Afterlife of an Allegory” (1999). Gilloch states his intention to explore “how and why such an eccentric and arcane allegorical figure has become a key trope in contemporary social and urban analysis” (1999, p. 101). Gilloch goes as far as to suggest that our contemporary era calls for a resurrection of the flâneur. However whether this is a heroic reinvention or merely a simulated by-product of the period is less clear. Rejecting any suggestion of the power of the flâneur to offer acute critical insight, Gilloch states:

The return of the figure is symptomatic of the postmodern. The flâneur no longer perambulates as a pedestrian, but circulates as a sign. As the flâneur comes to adopt more and more guises, proliferating as a trope, an allegory for more and more tenuous figures and experiences, it becomes a pure sign, a signifier freed from, bereft of, any specific signified. (p. 108)

Using the lexis of the post-structural school of thought, Gilloch argues that the flâneur in this contemporary postmodern era, which Gilloch sees epitomised by Baudrillard’s America (see Baudrillard, 1989), is not a propagator of progress. The flâneur has regressed once more into the languid stroller, walking aimlessly amidst the attractions of flashing neon lights promising instant satisfaction and excitement.

From this reading Gilloch states that “the flâneur returns as a definitive postmodern figure” (p. 108). I would reformulate that statement to say that the flâneur returns as the definitive figure of what some might call our postmodern age. The flâneur is not negated by postmodern society, but has a particular postmodern sensibility, that is, he is conscious of the various discourses at play within contemporary society. Although not necessarily in control of them, he does not exist outside of them. He is an observer, he is a consumer, but most importantly he is a self-reflexive figure who studies, and who should be studied, in literary representations of contemporary American masculinity.

Stefan Morawski, in his essay “The Hopeless Game of Flânerie,” proclaims the figure of the flâneur as “the last intellectual” (1994, p. 187). Morawski’s

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10 Interestingly Gilloch’s article appears in the same year as the anniversary edition of Here Is New York.
flâneur is the individual who would not surrender to the total lure of modern
day Manhattan. In lieu of the typically postmodern drives of instant gratification
and mindless stimulation, Morawski adds definitively: “The flâneur as the
artist’s (the intellectual’s) probe and shield is today super-heroic in his chal-
lenge to the drills of our civilization, the narcotizing market supply of idiocies,
the lifestyle-tied shibboleths” (p. 187). In a period when fatalistic prophecies are
fashionable, it is reassuring that there still remains a voice willing to speak in
support of the flâneur. Yet I would distance my position from Morawski’s view
that the flâneur occupies an elevated position of intellectualism—it is my con-
tention that the flâneur is not “the last intellectual” but the everyman.

It is evident that what drives the flâneur is not simply the desire to observe
his urban surroundings and produce aesthetically pleasing literary reflections
of this environment. The issue of masculinity—its formation and deconstruc-
tion—is fundamentally linked to the figure of the flâneur. This raises the key
question that I hope to answer with this article: How does the flâneur lead us
into new avenues of studying contemporary American masculinity represented
in novels based in Manhattan?

The sustained significance of the concept of the flâneur in examining the so-
cial construction of American masculinity is best illustrated in Joshua Ferris’

The Unnamed. The protagonist of The Unnamed is Tim Farnsworth, an ex-
tremely successful partner in a law firm in the heart of Manhattan. He has the
perfect family, the perfect house, and the perfect job. However, Tim begins to
develop a condition that disturbs this ideal existence: without warning, re-
gardless of where he is or what he is doing, and unable to control it, he gets up
and walks. At first this may appear as a gimmick used by Ferris to drive the nar-
rative. Further consideration, however, reveals Ferris’ protagonist as the ideal
figure to be analysed in the context of literary representations of American mas-
culinity.

Ferry: Reintroducing the Flâneur

11 Ferris’s first novel, Then We Came to the End (2007), is a comedy of contemporary
American manners set in a recession-hit ad agency in Chicago. Its dry dark humour
satirises the absurdities of office culture and the interactions between people forced into
the constrictive stressful environment of the office. Yet beyond its appearance as a com-
edy of manners, the novel also deals with the intricacies of the social relationships be-
tween differing categories of men within this microcosm of the office. The sharp cultural
insights that define Then We Came to the End are further developed in Ferris’ The Dinner
Party (2008), a short story published in The New Yorker. Although appearing to share the
comedic sensibility of Then We Came to the End, there is a sharp shift in the tone of the
piece toward a darker rumination on the underlying tensions in social relationships.
The Dinner Party can therefore be identified as the transitional piece in the published
work of Ferris. The satirical social commentary of Then We Came to the End is transposed
and transformed, through The Dinner Party, into a more profoundly existential ques-
tioning of the effects of contemporary existence within an all together different social
arena in The Unnamed: the streets of Manhattan.

12 Versions of the literary figure of the flâneur have reappeared in a number of recent
American novels, namely Paul Auster’s Invisible (2009) with the aptly named protago-
nist Adam Walker, Don DeLillo’s Point Omega (2010), and Teju Cole’s Open City (2011).
The Unnamed engages with one particular strand within the field of Masculinity Studies that has been investigated by David L. Collinson, Jeff Hearn, and Raewyn Connell: masculinity in the workplace. The law firm is a gendered institution. Its structure, practices, values, and language reflect these socially established notions of masculinity. Furthermore it is also a gendering institution in that it creates masculine identities that are shaped by the various discourses at play. Tim is the archetypal hegemonic male. He is White, middle class, and, as a city lawyer, has a job that gives him a high degree of power and influence. As such, it is his job that is central to his masculinity. His increasingly erratic impulse to walk, however, raises various problems that force him to reevaluate his masculinity and the meaning of being an American male in 21st century Manhattan.

Tim lives to work. Even in his darkest moments, exhausted and broken after another endless bout of walking, and having been found by his wife curled up by the side of the road, he repeats his mantra, “I have to go in” (Ferris, 2010, p. 14). Tim is the embodiment of the American Dream. Having worked his way up the firm from a junior position to partner, it is clear that he believes that it is work that defines him:

The trial, that was the point. The clients. The casework. The war room. He took on a few pro bono causes. And he worked in midtown amid the electricity and the movement. And his view of Central Park was breathtaking. And he liked the people. And the money was great. And the success was addictive. And the pursuit was all-consuming. And the rightness of place was never in doubt. (p. 37)

Despite the fact that “there were no official hierarchies among partners at Troyer, Barr” (p. 56), it is evident that the patriarchal system is ingrained into the psychology of the male employees. Tim’s self-positioning within this hierarchical masculine framework is played out in his interactions with the law firm’s managing partner Mike Kronish. Tim’s egotistical nature is shaped and driven by his obsession with achieving a more dominant hierarchical position, what Collinson and Hearn term as “careerism”. Kronish occupies the top position, and masculine power struggles are evident in their every exchange. When coming face to face with his corporate adversary, it is Kronish’s physicality that is prominent, especially when compared to Tim’s physical state after spending other night walking Manhattan: “[Kronish] seemed to hover. Proximity to him felt like sudden contact with a grizzly bear risen up on its hind legs” (p. 56). It is not only his physical stature but also his ability and willingness to push himself to the limits of physical endurance that Tim begrudgingly admires. Tim is extremely envious of the fact that Kronish once worked a

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13 For comprehensive overviews of studies of masculinity in the workplace see David Collinson and Jeff Hearn (2000, pp. 144-169; 2005, pp. 289-312).

14 See David Collinson and Jeff Hearn on “careerism” (2000, pp. 144-169). As they state, “competition for career progress comes to be synonymous with conventional masculinity. Upward mobility can therefore become a key objective in the search to secure a stable masculine identity” (2000, p. 161).
twenty-seven hour day, which “made Tim want to leap across the desk and eat his lucky, healthy heart” (p. 57).\(^\text{15}\)

The destructive force of this masculine hierarchy is best illustrated in the trial of R.H. Hobbs. Hobbs, whose private equity firm provides a lot of business for Troyer, Barr, is accused of stabbing his wife to death. The general consensus within the company is that he is innocent. The evidence against him is entirely circumstantial, and the district attorney only manages to bring charges against him by the skin of his teeth. Tim believes that he is the lawyer to ensure that Hobbs will be acquitted and yet, as the court date approaches, the worsening of his condition means that Tim pays little attention to the case. Despite Hobbs arriving into the law firm and breaking down in Tim’s office, with Tim unable to show any compassion, “He didn’t know what to say” (p. 74), he remains adamant in his repeated refusals to allow any other lawyer to take on the case. Furthermore, later in the novel, Tim is approached by a man claiming to know details about the murder. Not only does the man suggest that he is involved, he also has a knife which he hints at being the murder weapon. Tim, however, is unable to find out for certain if this nameless man in the street is a suspect in the case, as Tim’s uncontrollable urge to walk returns. Eventually Kronish has to take overall control, but by that point it is too late. Hobbs is convicted and ultimately takes his own life in prison. Hobbs is a victim of the power discourses that shape the masculine hegemonic framework.

Michael Kimmel argues that men view masculinity as “a defence against the perceived threat of humiliation and emasculation in the eyes of other men” (1994, p. 135). It is this fundamental component of the male’s subconscious that makes Tim continue to go to greater lengths to hide his condition from his colleagues. After finally admitting his condition, and hoping for some sense of compassion, Tim loses his position as partner and finds he has been replaced by a new up-and-coming lawyer, “that kid,” Masserly: “Peter’s favourite...with that air of entitlement that some junior associates acquire when they sense they are favoured by one or another partner” (Ferris, 2010, p. 123). The irony is, of course, that Tim is describing himself years before when he got his break by “impressing the right people” (p. 37). Yet the work that Tim took so much pride in, which defined him, has now been rejected and, to his complete disbelief, repeatedly “guffawed” at (p. 177).

Tim’s dismissal is due to the development of his condition—the “unnamed” to which the title of the novel refers. Experts within a range of medical disciplines offer Tim a variety of possible causes: dietary deficiencies (p. 38); psychiatric problems (p. 38); naturopathic issues (p. 38); a possible reaction to his environment (p. 39); and the suggestion of a genetic cause (p. 40). The failure

\(^{15}\) For an insightful study on the role of physical characteristics in the shaping of hegemonic masculinity within the workplace see Frank J. Barrett’s case study on the US Navy (2000, pp. 77-100). Barrett finds that “throughout all communities in the Navy, the image of masculinity that is perpetuated involves physical toughness, the endurance of hardships, aggressiveness, a rugged heterosexuality, unemotional logic, and a refusal to complain” (p. 81). This finding can be easily transposed onto other organizational structures, particularly that of a Manhattan law firm.
of science to explain what is happening to Tim is summed up with one physician’s definitive diagnosis: “There is no laboratory examination to confirm the presence or absence of the condition ... so there is no reason to believe the disease has a defined physical cause or, I suppose, even exists at all” (p. 41). It is finally given a name: “benign idiopathic perambulation” (p. 41), that is to say, a need to walk but arising spontaneously from an unknown cause.

Future readings of the novel will most probably focus on the physical and psychological deterioration of Tim as the narrative develops. Reading his condition as a strict medical illness is, in my view, somewhat of a reductive approach to this complex flâneurial character. In contrast with this reading, I would argue that the cause of Tim’s condition is more in line with the diagnosis of the bodhisattva who offers a sociological insight into Tim’s malaise:

The bodhisattva has encouraged him to look deeply into his reliance upon technology. Email and PDA, cell phone and voice mail were extensions of the ruinous consuming self. They made thoughts of the self instantaneously and irrepressibly accessible. Who’s calling me, who’s texting me, who wants me, me, me. The ego went along on every walk and ride, replacing the vistas and skylines, scrambling the delicate meditative code.

The self was cut off from the hope that the world might reassert itself over the digitized clamour and the ego turn again into the sky, the bird, the tree. (p. 49)

The origin of Tim’s condition may be uncertain, but it does affect every area of his life. He loses his position in his law firm, his marriage breaks down, and his daughter sees him as a freak. A possible answer to the riddle may be that it is a manifestation of the subconscious desire that Leslie A. Fiedler (1960) underlines as the key theme of American fiction: the male’s escape from the responsibilities of society. Following the example of our hegemonic male literary figure Huck Finn, Tim also makes his way through the wilderness. Yet, in contrast to the natural wilds of the forest and the river, Tim’s wilderness is the street: “for everywhere was a wilderness to him who had known only the interiors of homes and offices and school buildings and restaurants and court houses and hotels” (p. 247). The metropolis is Tim’s wilderness but one that he repeatedly calls his “home.”

With the various tenets of what shape conventional understandings of masculinity disintegrating around him, it is his reinvention as the urban spectator that provides Tim with a renewed sense of self. The city becomes his sanctuary but also his subject of study. Outside of the closed capsule of the office environment, he begins to recognise the dynamics of his hegemonic masculinity. This can be broken down into two separate but interrelated categories: “external hegemony,” i.e., the dominance of the hegemonic group over women, and “internal hegemony,” i.e., the dominance of the hegemonic group over other males.16 This realisation is played out in a number of scenes. Firstly, Tim listens

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16 These dynamics of hegemonic masculinity are explored by Demetrakis Z. Demetriou (2001, pp. 337-361).
to the conversations between two Latina girls. Listening to their everyday problems he recognises that these girls are victims of the patriarchal discourses that define society. These girls, in Tim’s view, are “the subculture of women who did not get the respect they deserved from men” (p. 151). Secondly, later that day, he also overhears two men talking. Although they are speaking English, he struggles to hear exactly what they are saying: “He got only the tone of complaint. He understood that the speaker had been wronged in some way, and that the injustice was more than just a minor slight” (p. 153). This is a striking metaphor for the awakening of Tim. A lawyer, gifted in the use of language, able to listen to clients, and to understand, interpret, and shape their case into a convincing narrative, is unable to make out what the average man in the street is saying:

He strained to recall a single exchange—on the street, from the next table in a restaurant—overheard in all the years he had lived in the city, within the inescapable nexus of babble he had sat in most of his life, and not one came to mind. Not one. Had he never unplugged his ears of the self-involvement that consumed him about work, when he wasn’t sick, or about sickness, when he couldn’t work? Had he never listened? (p. 151)

Evolving into the Manhattan flâneur, Tim begins to recognise the power of observation, the self-educating power of watching, and perhaps more importantly, the self-nourishing potential of urban narratives for him and his ill wife:

For the first time he began to pay attention to the things he saw on the walks so that when he returned to her, he had observations of the outside world to share. They were fleeting, they were middles without beginnings or ends, but they were diverting—for him to witness, for her to hear. (pp. 287-288)

This urban wilderness is Tim’s refuge. He returns to the city with Jane after she recovers from cancer. Leaving their eight-bedroom mansion in the suburbs, they move into a one-bedroom apartment in the heart of the city, “a tenth of the size of their house in the suburbs” (p. 184). Leaving behind all “their stuff,” letting go of his masculine pride in wanting to assert himself as the dominant member of the law firm, and realising he does not need to feel any greater sense of social status, Tim begins to delight in the small details of urban living. The smells and sights of the inner city streets, in particular, their “physical touch,” gives Tim “a greater containment of the world” (p. 188).

When Tim started roaming the streets of Manhattan he had been an aimless wanderer lead by his own self-interest and caring little about those around him. After opening his eyes to the city the change is telling:

He realized he might have been doing it wrong for years. He might have seen interesting things had he been able to let go of his frustration and despair. He wondered what kind of life we might have had if he had paid attention from the beginning. (p. 288)
From these passages there is the clear indication that becoming a 21st century incarnation of the flâneur gives Tim a greater sense of selfhood, a belief in the significance of his own existence within the increasingly chaotic and disorientating urban environment. Crucially, it also demonstrates to Tim the various dynamics of the social construction of his hegemonic masculinity.

Throughout the narrative Tim embodies various flâneurial personas; in the complex internal monologues he is Baudelaire’s philosopher; in search of the murder suspect in the Hobb’s case he is Poe’s urban detective; trying desperately get a look at the face of this man walking through the densely populated metropolis he re-enacts the narrator of Poe’s “Man of the Crowd”. Ultimately, Tim is employed by Ferris as a counter-hegemonic figure, a commentator on the dynamics of hegemonic masculinity in the urban wilderness of Manhattan as we move into the second decade of the twenty-first century.

One of the recurring charges put to this literary figure in the contemporary era is the invisibility of the flâneur, particularly that of the straight White male. I have aimed to demonstrate that the flâneur symbolizes a creative attitude of urban investigation and inquiry, “a procession from scepticism to sight” (1995, p. 149) in the words of Chris Jenks, a shaking off of a typically postmodern blasé attitude and a movement towards a critical appreciation of literary representations of American masculinity shaped within Manhattan. As Jenks states:

The flâneur, though grounded in everyday life, is an analytic form, a narrative device, an attitude towards knowledge and its social context. It is an image of movement through the social space of modernity…. The flâneur is a multilayered palimpsest that enables us to move from real products of modernity, like commodification and leisured patriarchy, through the practical organisation of space and its negotiation by the inhabitants of a city, to a critical appreciation of the state of modernity and its erosion into the post-, and onwards to a reflexive understanding of the function. (1995, p. 148)

This study of the flâneur has been based upon the close reading of two literary cases studies: E.B. White’s Here Is New York and Joshua Ferris’ The Unnamed. Although examples of flâneurial writing, they may appear to be profoundly divergent texts. Employing White’s classic piece of urban reportage to contextualise the contemporary imagining of the flâneur has demonstrated that the Manhattan flâneur has existed, and continues to exist, as a counter-hegemonic methodological tool through which the discourses of power that shape American masculinity are dramatized and, crucially, made visible. Not only is the flâneur a documenter of his environment, a producer of literary reflections on the modern city, these texts underline the fact that the flâneur is a self-reflexive figure, an analytical agent of masculinity shaped by the various discourses at play within the urban arena. E.B. White’s modern enactment of the flâneur walking the streets of “the City of Man” in 1949 and Joshua Ferris’ postmodern reincarnation of the flâneur in the guise of the counter-hegemonic Tim Farnsworth sixty years later exhibit, as literary representations, the sociological and cultural paradigm of flânerie.
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