Літературознавство
Literary Criticism

DOI https://doi.org/10.28925/2412-2491.2025.2514
UDC: 821.133.1.09-31.09 : 316.347

THE IMAGE OF THE FLÂNEUR AND ITS NEW VISION IN PATRICK MODIANO'S NOVEL 'IN THE CAFE OF LOST YOUTH'

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The article explores the transformation of the flâneur *figure in Patrick Modiano's novel* In the Café of Lost Youth*, tracing its evolution from the nineteenth-century model conceptualized by Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin to its reimagined form in the context of late modernity. Through the methods of cultural-historical and psychogeographic analysis, the study interprets the* flâneur *as both a literary motif and a socio-cultural phenomenon reflecting the experience of urban modernity. The analysis delve into the specific attributes of the flâneur figure in P.Modiano's novel, comparing and contrasting it with three established types within the modern canon: the flâneur-writer, characterized by a detached yet insightful observation of the urban scene; the flâneur-detective, marked by a keen eye for detail and a desire to uncover hidden truths; and the flâneur-marginal, whose experience is shaped by social and economic exclusion. Further, this study investigates the unique nuances of the* feminine *manifestation of the flâneur image in the novel. Their wandering through Paris reveals a city transformed into an emotional and mnemonic landscape, where streets, cafés or "neutral zones" function as spaces of memory, alienation, and fragile connection. Drawing on Guy Debord's theory of* psychogeography *and the practice of* dérive*, the research interprets Modiano's characters as* dérivants *– drifters guided by memory and affect rather than by reason or purpose. The city in Modiano's fiction thus emerges as both a topography of emotion and a palimpsest of loss, where wandering transforms into an act of remembrance. "*Le Condé"*, the café around which the novel's stories converge, becomes*

a symbolic "neutral zone" and a fixed point within the fragmented urban space – a locus of suspended time that offers fleeting freedom from the weight of modern existence. The study concludes that Modiano redefines flânerie as an introspective and mnemonic practice, revealing how the modern flâneur *evolves into a wanderer of memory, whose movement through the city traces the invisible cartography of human solitude and desire.*

Keywords: flâneur, flâneurism, modernism, image, psychogeography, drift

Кізім Н. В. Образ фланера та його нове прочитання у романі Патріка Модіано «У кафе втраченої молодості»

У статті розглянуто еволюцію явища фланерства на межі XIX-XX ст. у французькій культурній та літературознавчій площинах. Дослідження зосереджено на окресленні рис та ознак, притаманних образу фланера у романі Патріка Модіано «У кафе втраченої молодості». Увагу приділено трьом типам фланера модерного канону, як то фланер-письменник, фланер-детектив та фланер-маргінал, а також розглянуто особливості фемінного прояву образу фланера у романі. Окремо відстежено вплив ідей психогеографії середини XX ст. (Франція) на трансформацію образу фланера та появу практики «дрейфу», як прояву нового підходу до сприйняття простору міста, та формування образу «дрейфера», характеристики якого притаманні персонажам роману, що уможливлює нове прочитання образів героїв Патріка Модіано.

Ключові слова: *фланерство, фланер, модерн, образ, психогеографія, дрейф*

Introduction.

The phenomenon of *flânerie* ("strolling", fr.), which emerged in the late in the late nineteenth century, encompasses a broad spectrum of cultural notions, aesthetic practices, and figurative interpretations observable across across twentieth- and twenty-first-century world literature. Born in Paris, the image of the *flâneur* – a person wandering the city streets without any particular purpose, strolling while contemplating the urban landscape – has acquired diverse artistic embodiments in the works of modern authors. Among them, the oeuvre of the French writer Patrick Modiano, laureate of the Prix Goncourt (1978) and Nobel Prize in Literature (2014), stands out for its evocative portrayals of wanderers, dreamers, and solitary figures drifting through the labyrinthine passages of the city. In Modiano's narratives, these wanderers come alive as embodiments of memory and loss, translating the experience of modern existence into spatial and temporal reflection.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the typology and reinterpretation of the flâneur in Patrick Modiano's novel "In the Café of Lost Youth" (2007), translated into Ukrainian in 2015. By situating Modiano's work within the broader cultural and philosophical tradition of *flânerie*, this paper seeks to uncover how the author reconfigures the flâneur's archetype within a

contemporary Parisian context, intertwining it with themes of identity, memory, and psychogeographic exploration.

Methodological notes.

The analysis of the flâneur in Patrick Modiano's "In the Café of Lost Youth" is conducted within the framework of **cultural-historical analysis**, combining literary interpretation with the study of socio-cultural dynamics that shaped modern French thought. The image of the flâneur is examined as a **symbolic embodiment of flânerie**, understood not merely as a literary motif but as a **cultural and historical phenomenon** deeply rooted in the social experience of urban modernity. This study draws upon the **interdisciplinary intersection** of literary studies, cultural history, and urban sociology. In particular, it considers the **socio-cultural aspect** of flânerie – that is, the influence of cultural trends on the formation of social behavior and the evolution of patterns of urban perception. These patterns, shaped by the transformation of Parisian space, are reflected in literary depictions of the city and its inhabitants. By applying this method, the research seeks to reveal how Modiano translates the *flâneur's* gaze into narrative form – turning observation, memory, and spatial wandering into a mode of self-reflection. The methodology thus allows for tracing the **continuity and transformation** of the flâneur figure from nineteenth-century modernism to its reimagined presence in Modiano's postmodern Paris.

Theoretical Background.

Despite the considerable attention Patrick Modiano's prose has received in foreign literary criticism – among others, in the works of J.Bedner (1996), T.Laurent (1997), D.Parrochia (1997), D.Sima (1998), P.Jellin (2000), H.Möller (2009), D.Cosnard (2011), K.Nettelbeck (2012), B.Roux (2009), and F.Grenadier-Klein (2017) – his writing has gained substantial recognition in Ukrainian literary scholarship only within the last decade. Ukrainian researchers have primarily focused on the **themes of memory and identity** (V.Fesenko, 2005; Yu.Pavlenko, 2002) as well as the **psychological dimensions** of Modiano's prose (K.Shubkina, 2018). In our previous studies, we explored other artistic and stylistic aspects of his writing, including the **principles of intermediality and cinematic narration** (2015), **autobiographical writing strategies** (2007), and the **semantic expansion of narrative space** (2014).

The image of the flâneur, as a representation of a national and cultural phenomenon, has been addressed by A.Sydor and M.Shulhun (2016), and later

received a more comprehensive analysis in A.Tyshchenko's dissertation (2023), which, however, focused primarily on Spanish and Ukrainian prose. Among French scholars, the feminine manifestation of the flâneur – the flâneuse – has been examined by F.Grenadier-Klein, who pays particular attention to Modiano's female characters. By contrast, male figures have not been granted equal analytical attention as potential embodiments of artistic or philosophical reflection.

To deepen the understanding of Modiano's reconfiguration of the flâneur, this study also draws upon the theoretical insights of K.Tester, R.Shields, and D.Frisby, who examined the figure within sociological and philosophical frameworks, and upon K.O'Rourke's work, which situates flânerie within the field of psychogeography. These perspectives provide the conceptual foundation for tracing the transformation of the flâneur – from the nineteenth-century Parisian observer to the drifting, emotionally engaged wanderer of the modern metropolis.

Results and Discussion.

In twentieth-century French literature, the image of the *flâneur* becomes a reflection of the artist's response to the tangible transformation of the urban environment and to the shifting paradigms of social behavior. The reconstruction of Paris under Baron Georges Haussmann fundamentally altered the city's physiognomy. Every corner of the French capital underwent a transformation (E.Kirkman, 2007). The widening of streets, the creation of parks, and the reorganization of neighborhoods not only reshaped the city's appearance but also inspired a new way of perceiving urban space.

The emergence of spaces designed for strolling endowed those who walked through them with an aesthetic function – the act of observing the city became a form of contemplation. This observer first appeared as the *promeneur* – "an attentive and witty chronicler of his age", and later as the *flâneur*, whose distinctive characteristics crystallized in the mid-nineteenth century (A. Sydor, 2016, p. 126). Beyond mere observation, the flâneur's gaze implied an inner reflection that foreshadowed an entire philosophy of being.

A defining element of the flâneur's world is the crowd, which fills the walkable city with new faces, voices, and stories. These anonymous encounters create a paradoxical atmosphere of solitude within proximity. The flâneur's isolation does not equate to withdrawal; rather, as Keith Tester notes, the

Baudelairean flâneur is at home among strangers (Tester, 2014, p. 8). Traditionally portrayed as a solitary, detached observer, the flâneur often avoids social roles and institutions. Louis Huart offered one of the earliest typologies of the flâneur, describing both his physical traits – "strong legs, observant eyes" – and his social affiliation, suggesting that poets, artists, or clerks might naturally become flâneurs because of their endurance, alertness, and aesthetic sensitivity (cited in A. Tyshchenko, 2023, p. 23). Later, Charles Baudelaire (1863) and Walter Benjamin (1938) reconceptualized the figure, shifting from an aesthetic to a functional understanding of flânerie (A. Tyshchenko, 2023, p. 123).

For Baudelaire, the flâneur is a sensual being, attuned to the beauty of the city; for Benjamin, he becomes a social type embodying the alienation and anonymity of modern urban life. Benjamin distinguished three principal modes of flânerie: the flâneur-writer**,** the flâneur-detective, and the flâneur-marginal**.** The first transforms observation into literary production; the second mirrors the new urban anonymity of numbered streets and addresses; and the third – isolated, disconnected, and peripheral – wanders the city's boulevards as an embodiment of estrangement.

With the rise of modern technologies and shifting spatial practices, the flâneur's environment evolved. Photography and cinema introduced new ways of seeing, while urban redevelopment disrupted familiar routes. According to R. Shields, the modern flâneur perceives others through a "perambulating gaze" that maintains distance and heightens the sense of detachment and loss (Shields, 2014, p. 75). This detachment deepens the flâneur's existential void, which is filled not by his own experiences but by the stories of others. What Benjamin calls "far-away-ness" transforms into a paradoxical "nearness", maintaining the fragile boundary between the observer and the crowd (Shields, 2014, p. 76).

In Patrick Modiano's novels, the flâneur emerges as a symbol of the search for meaning in a world that has lost its coordinates. Through the metaphor of the wanderer, Modiano explores memory, identity, and time, transforming the city into both setting and psychological landscape. His protagonists – lonely men, often young, moving through cafés, hotels, and stations – embody the flâneur of modernity: restless, nostalgic, suspended between belonging and estrangement. The novel "In the Café of Lost Youth" (2007) exemplifies this paradigm. Its four narrators – a student, a young woman, a man infatuated with her, and a private detective – intersect in the Parisian café "Le Condé", a symbolic locus of convergence. The café functions as a microcosm of Modiano's Paris: a repository

of vanished lives and fleeting connections. As the city changes, familiar landmarks disappear, evoking melancholy and the fear of oblivion. The protagonist of the first narrative, the student of the Mining University, recalling the time when fate brought him there, remembers the nearby cafés – the ordinary establishments of the Latin Quarter. According to him, "Le Condé" was one of those extraordinary places in the city endowed with a peculiar kind of magnetism. "I have always believed that certain places are like magnets – they draw you in if you happen to be nearby. And it happens so subtly that you do not even realize it <…> You are led there, to that very point where you are meant to stop" (Modiano, 2015, p. 11). It seems as though the city itself guides the passer-by – suggesting where to go, how to trace one's route, as if it possessed a kind of mystical force directing one's movement through its space. The city here assumes agency, guiding the wanderer through memory and emotion.

The neighborhood with the café left a distinct trace in the student's memory, and the transformation of its familiar landscape evoked a longing for what had once been real and immutable. Now it had vanished from the city map, surviving only in the recollections of the "witnesses" of those times. "Many years later, when the streets of that district glittered with the windows of luxury boutiques, and the place where "Le Condé" had been was taken over by a fine leather-goods shop, I happened to run to Madame Chadly on the other side of the Seine, climbing the Rue Blanche <…> We walked together for a long time, reminiscing about "Le Condé" (Modiano, 2015, p.10).

The changing contours of the city and the disappearance of places imbued with memory leave an imprint of melancholy, heightening the sense of unreality in a world that once seemed permanent. In the nineteenth century, during Haussmann's vast reconstruction of Paris, the city's image was fundamentally altered, and its inhabitants witnessed the destruction of familiar sites to make room for new ones. The loss and replacement of urban landmarks have since haunted the rhythm of metropolitan life. To preserve what once existed becomes possible only through remembering – by fixing one's gaze on details or capturing them in a photograph. For the student, as for many of Modiano's wanderers, the city he once knew dissolves in the glare of new, cold, and unfamiliar shop windows. To restore it, he must follow the fragile traces of memory – recalling people, reconstructing the vanished spaces that once surrounded him. "One day a photographer came to "Le Condé" <…> He took many pictures of the regulars <…> Later, the photographs appeared in an album devoted to Paris, each one

labeled with the names and nicknames of those portrayed" (Modiano, 2015, p. 6). The student's nostalgia mirrors the *flâneur-marginal* – one who recalls fragments of the past and mourns the city's lost contours. The recollection of those times – the gathering of the bohème in the cafés of the Latin Quarter – momentarily revives a sense of belonging that soon dissolves against the backdrop of the modern cityscape. The student as the flâneur-marginal remains a detached observer, more closely connected to the streets and facades of the city than to the people he encounters within it.

In the following story, the private detective is searching for a young woman. For him, moving through the city is not mere wandering but an integral part of his professional practice. Identifying locations, establishing facts, and tracing clues are routine tasks for him. "First of all, determine as precisely as possible the routes people take, in order to understand them better. I kept quietly repeating to myself: "Rue Sèvres. The Lafontaine garage. Café Condé. Louki". And that part of Neuilly between the Bois de Boulogne and the Seine, where that man had arranged to meet me" (Modiano, 2015, p. 28). Yet Patrick Modiano endows this character with an unusual sensitivity of perception. The upcoming meeting with his client, Jean-Pierre Choureau – who wishes to find information about his missing wife – awakens a flow of images and associations in the detective's imagination. "Jean-Pierre Choureau called, and we agreed to meet <…> How old was he? The tone of his voice seemed young, but voices are always deceptive. Into what drama, into what domestic hell, would he initiate me?" (Modiano, 2015, p. 29). It is noteworthy that, in this moment of reflection, the writer does not amplify the detective's anticipation with the professional excitement of pursuit. Instead, he reveals the man's melancholy, which can only be soothed by imagining places far from the city – spaces of solitude and escape beyond its streets and alleyways. "I plunged into the Bois de Boulogne, toward the Saint-James pond and the nearby lake where people skate in winter. Alone, I felt as though I were far from Paris, somewhere in Sologne. But the despair subsided" (Modiano, 2015, p. 29).

The image of the detective Caisley corresponds to Walter Benjamin's concept of the *flâneur-detective*. For him, the city serves as a kind of "office", a site of work where one must personally walk the streets to verify hypotheses and follow routes of disappearance. Patrick Modiano repeatedly emphasizes the detective's reliance on imagination as part of his craft. He does not merely fantasize about the missing woman he has been asked to find; rather, he

reconstructs the details of her movements through the city – the traces of shared life, the possible places of encounter, and the silent choreography of their intertwined paths. The detective imagines alternative lives, reconstructs scenes, and fills empty streets with imagined presences. In doing so, he becomes the reader of the city, enacting what D. Frisby (2015, p. 81) called "the reading of streets", where faces and shop windows form the letters of an infinite text. Anonymity – the detective's professional mask – grants him both distance and intimacy. It allows him to merge with the crowd while remaining unseen, to experience fleeting belonging amid alienation. As Modiano writes: "Even if they ask you about your life, you can invent everything <...> As you tell them your invented story, a breath of fresh air enters the suffocating room" (Modiano, 2015, pp. 22–23). His detachment becomes a metaphor for the fragility of human connection in modern urban life.

The young woman, Jacqueline (nicknamed "Louki"), offers a feminine counterpart to the flâneur. Yet her experience of the city differs profoundly. For her, the streets of Montmartre and Pigalle evoke trauma rather than freedom. The city reactivates memories of childhood abandonment and maternal indifference. Familiar locations transform into imprints of childhood memory. The painful emotional experience of loneliness – waiting for her mother, who worked late at the *Moulin Rouge*, her distance and coldness – left deep marks on the girl's consciousness. While the protagonists of the previous narratives, such as the student or the detective Caisley, explore the city and its particular sites, observing the urban landscape and its inhabitants, for the young woman the city reactivates the trauma of childhood. "I had never been back to that neighborhood until Roland brought me there by taxi <…> He probably didn't notice how I gripped his hand. I was overcome by dizziness. It seemed that if we crossed the square, I would faint at once. I was terrified <…> Yes, everything was about to begin again <…> and Roland had been chosen to lead me, unknowingly, back into the fold" (Modiano, 2015, p. 52). The descriptions of urban space – her wandering, her wish to remain anonymous after acquiring the nickname "Louki", and her pervasive loneliness – bring the heroine's image close to that of the flâneur, yet Modiano deliberately emphasizes her nonconformity to this type of flaneur. The city offers no solace to Jacqueline; it frightens her with its immobility, eternally inscribed with her feelings of terror, solitude, and vulnerability. The urban space, so natural for the male flâneurs portrayed in the novel, reveals itself as a hostile

environment for a woman. While the male flâneurs explore the city to seek meaning, Louki's wanderings are marked by fear, displacement, and loss of self**.**

As A. Tyshchenko (2023, p. 55) notes, the *flâneuse* is a problematic category: "The flâneur is invisible, dominant in shaping the modern experience; the female flâneuse, always visible, exists only as an object within his gaze". In Modiano's novel, Louki's visibility becomes vulnerable. The heroine's indirect "presence", Louki's shadowed existence, is illuminated by the author through the narratives of the student and the detective – both beginning with recollections or imaginative reflections on the mysterious stranger. The student remembers the details of her appearances at Le Condé, where she "always sat at the same table in the corner of the small room", entering through the door that the regulars called "the gate of darkness" (Modiano, 2015, p. 5). The detective, having met the student, pretends to be a publisher when he visits "Le Condé" in search of Jacqueline. She seems caught in the "spotlight" against her will, experiencing visibility as danger, and longs to hide in the dim corners of the café on the Left Bank of the Seine. "No one would have guessed that just a few hundred meters uphill, one could find oneself in the dense Saturday-night crowd beneath the neon signs promising 'the most beautiful naked dancers in the world,' and the tourist buses lined up outside the "Moulin Rouge" <…> That bustle frightened me <…> But we turned back and walked downhill. And the farther we descended, toward the darkness, the easier I felt" (Modiano, 2015, p. 70). The image of the enigmatic Louki corresponds most closely to that of the *flâneur-marginal*. Yet her "version" of flânerie unfolds as a tragedy of detachment that deepens into isolation. The spaces that grant men anonymity expose women to scrutiny. Her movements through Paris represent not freedom but a tragic drift toward erasure**,** culminating in her suicide.

The last of the four narratives in the novel presents the story of Roland, who happens to meet Jacqueline by chance. It seems that every detail Roland notices in the city matters to him, as he perceives it as evidence of Louki's existence and of their shared wanderings through Paris. "An alleyway, shut off from the street by gates, with two rows of identical buildings, their façades in pink brick. The same entrance doors with wrought-iron grilles and lamps above them. The same rows of windows. Beyond the gates began a small park along Rue Alexandre Cabanel. It is important for me to write down this name, because it was there that our paths crossed" (Modiano, 2015, p. 79). Roland shows a talent for writing and occasionally records his impressions of Parisian neighborhoods. Yet he earns his

living through a more commercial form of authorship – writing "brochures about organizations or companies" for a publisher who offers him work as a literary "ghostwriter" (Modiano, 2015, p. 97). In the young man's image, one recognizes the traits of the *flâneur-writer*. His literary sensibility transforms observation into textual creation. He records the city's "neutral zones" – those undefined, transitional spaces where people drift between anonymity and belonging. "In Paris there were transitional zones, no-man's-lands, where one found oneself on the margins of everything… It was not strange that we met in such a place" (Modiano, 2015, p. 87). He roams the city, captivated by the girl, memorizing all their shared routes, gestures, and expressions, while also noting certain urban "anomalies" – the so-called "neutral zones". "I lost that text <…> There was a dedication: 'To Louki, from the neutral zones.' <…> The text was rather monotonous, listing, by district, the names of the streets that marked the boundaries of those neutral zones" (Modiano, 2015, p. 87).

These neutral zones constitute a crucial element of the novel's urban space. They are like *districts within districts*, or *spaces between spaces*, encompassing specific locations. Such places – real geographical points like "Le Condé" café or the Latin Quarter – are imbued with a unique atmosphere or aura. They create pockets of "non-being", where anyone can disappear without leaving a trace. In Roland's words, the author describes them as neutral, empty, or transitional zones: "In Paris there were transitional zones, no-man's-lands, where one found oneself on the margins of everything, in a state of transit or even suspension… They could also be called intermediate zones, but the adjective 'neutral' was more accurate <…> the Square Cambronne and the district between Avenue Ségur and Rue Dupleix <…> and it was not strange that it was there I met Louki" (Modiano, 2015, p. 87). The neutral zones are spaces devoid of definition: they have no address, no need for names. They are places where one can hide for a while, dissolve, become someone else – or no one at all – finally attaining anonymity as a form of freedom, a release from social tension and constraint. These *zones neutres* – spaces charged with emotional and mnemonic resonance evoke the psychogeographic concept of *liminality*.

Unlike Roland, who is drawn to the anonymity of neutral zones, the student is fascinated by the details surrounding the regulars of "Le Condé". He becomes fixated on preserving their memory by recording names and nicknames in a red "Clairefontaine" notebook. This practice was first initiated by another visitor, Bowing, who "sought to resist the oblivion of the great city by filling the pages of

his notebook with names". "He was obsessed with what he called "fixed points" <…> It's already something, he said, to note down our names and to 'anchor' us to a certain point" (Modiano, 2015, p. 13). The identification of such areas and their symbolic "anchoring" recalls a kind of topographic practice – the mapping, or rather *remapping*, of the city's terrain, evoking the psychogeographic concept of *mapmaking.*

A new interpretation of urban space is offered by *psychogeography*. As K.O'Rourke observes, "psychogeographic writing can be considered another way of reading the city" (O'Rourke, 2021). To "read" or perceive the city anew became characteristic of those influenced by Guy Debord, whose words serve as the epigraph to Patrick Modiano's "In the Café of Lost Youth". In the 1950s, Debord proposed the idea of rethinking urban space. For him, it was necessary to shift from perceiving the city as a physical landscape to perceiving it as an emotional landscape, introducing elements of play and spontaneity. "Space is fragmented and reflects only the way in which different places are emotionally connected to each other," wrote Debord in his "Psychogeographic Guide to Paris", 1957 (O'Rourke, 2021). This mode of exploring the city relied on the feeling of flow or drift (*dérive*): a journey without predetermined routes, guided only by the impulse of movement and awareness of a few "fixed points" in the landscape – moving through the city by trusting one's sensations. Debord advised practicing such *drifts* in small groups of two or three people so that each participant could experience their own spectrum of impressions (O'Rourke, 2021).

In Modiano's novel, the drift of characters through the streets of Paris is rendered with remarkable subtlety. They move through the city, living its spaces as deeply personal, emotionally charged narratives. The protagonists follow impulses – an accidental meeting, a memory, or an adventure – becoming *drifters* (*les dérivants)*, flâneurs of a new age. For the student, the drift expresses a longing for a place of belonging, where others like him once gathered and where one could feel part of a greater whole. For the detective, the city's streets sharpen his sense of solitude and detachment, reinforcing the transience and fragility of human connection. Jacqueline feels in the city a pervasive sense of danger and despair, seeking to escape with Roland into the "neutral zones" of Paris. Yet her hiding brings no peace; her true "neutral zone" becomes non-existence itself**.** Roland, in turn, drifts through the city in his recollections of Jacqueline, experiencing Paris as a *map of memory*, a palimpsest of their shared past. The

café “Le Condé” becomes both a neutral zone and a fixed point – a place to which the city’s streets and sensations inevitably lead, immersing one in an atmosphere of suspended time and space, where it is possible to feel freedom from the weight of contemporary urban life.

Conclusions and perspectives.

Patrick Modiano’s “In the Café of Lost Youth” presents four interwoven narratives whose protagonists – student, detective, young woman, and aspiring writer – find their lives intersecting in the café “Le Condé” on the Left Bank of the Seine. The city of Paris constitutes the unifying space of their stories, both a literal and symbolic arena of wandering, memory, and self-reflection. Through these characters, Modiano reinterprets the nineteenth-century archetype of the flâneur, described by Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, adapting it to the emotional and existential landscape of modernity. The typology of Benjamin’s flâneurs is visibly echoed in Modiano’s characters: the *flâneur-marginal* (the student), the *flâneur-detective* (Caisley), and the *flâneur-writer* (Roland). Each of them embodies a distinct mode of perception and relationship to urban space – alienated yet deeply engaged in the act of tracing, remembering, and reconstructing. The character of Jacqueline (“Louki”) diverges from these male prototypes. Her trajectory reveals the limits of the feminine flâneur, or *flâneuse*, whose experience of the city is marked not by observation and aesthetic distance but by exposure, fragility, and erasure. The tragedy of her story, culminating in self-destruction, disrupts the masculine canon of flânerie, revealing the asymmetry between gendered experiences of the urban environment. For the male flâneur, the city remains a guide, companion, and witness; for Louki, it becomes an adversary, a space of loss and dissolution. Modiano’s flâneurs hover on the threshold of what he calls *“neutral zones”* – intermediate urban spaces where identity becomes fluid and memory merges with geography. In these zones, characters re-map the city not through physical movement but through affective navigation, guided by longing, recollection, and emotional resonance. The act of wandering thus transforms into a *psychogeographic practice* that reveals the interplay between inner states and external landscapes.

Consequently, in “In the Café of Lost Youth”, the *flâneur* of Baudelaire and Benjamin acquires a new reading. His social function or lack thereof, his wandering through the city, and his observation of others recede into the background, giving way to the experiential dimension of urban emotion. Modiano’s characters remain flâneurs in the classical sense – wanderers and

observers – but simultaneously evolve into *drifters (dérivants)*, traversing the city guided by affect rather than purpose. They move between the visible and the invisible, between the tangible architecture of Paris and its intangible emotional topography. In doing so, they transform the urban landscape into a palimpsest of memory and sensation, where streets, cafés, and boulevards echo with the resonance of past lives. Modiano's Paris becomes not only a setting but also a metaphor for the fragility of identity and the enduring human impulse to seek meaning amid transience.

Future research may further explore how Modiano's reimagining of the *flâneur* intersects with contemporary psychogeographic practices and memory studies, particularly in the context of postmodern urban literature. The concept of emotional cartography – central to Modiano's representation of space – invites comparative analysis with other twentieth- and twenty-first-century writers who transform wandering into a narrative mode of remembrance and self-reconstruction.

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Дата надходження статті до редакції: 20.09.2025
Прийнято до друку: 22.10.2025